

# Miltonians find lots to celebrate during Canada Day festivities at fairgrounds

By Melanie Cummings  
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Martin Boomsma milled through the crowd of veterans who gathered at Victoria Park on Canada Day, shaking as many of their hands as he could and simply saying "thanks" to each one.

Boomsma remembers well the Canadian troops who brought food and liberation to his native Holland.

"It was April 15, 1945. I was eight years old," said Boomsma.

While this July 1 was cause to celebrate the nation's 139th birthday — and the start of a new lower, six per cent GST — organizers of Milton's Canada Day celebration also saw fit to honour local war veterans who assured our country's freedom remained intact.

Among the people Boomsma thanked were Huck Kelman and Harold Coulson, 91.

While the ceremony at the cenotaph competed with the bustling scene at the nearby farmers' market, and Canadian flags shared space on car windows alongside the markers of favourite World Cup teams, Coulson wasn't resentful in the least.

"It means people are enjoying life as Canadians in as many ways as they can," he said.

Kelman spent five-and-a-half years in battle with the 48th Highlanders, out of Toronto, during the Second World War. It has been his tradition to visit the cenotaph every July 22 to keep the memory of his best friend alive. He died that day beside Kelman, during combat in Italy.

During the ceremony, about 30 veterans from Branch 136 of the Royal Canadian Legion made two lines leading up to the cenotaph where Dewart Downs, a 58-year veteran, laid a wreath.

"Thanks to all that you did," said Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh. "Canada can celebrate its 139th birthday as the best country in the world."

Milton is one of the few communities that combine a Remembrance Day ceremony of sorts with the July 1 holiday. It's why Boomsma, who lives in Georgetown, has been making the trip to Milton for the past two years since the festivities have included recogni-

tion of the veterans.

According to Boomsma, an amateur historian, Newfoundland did so for years in recognition of the 90-year-old Battle of Somme. On July 1, 1916, the first day of the battle, the newly-formed 1st Newfoundland Regiment was virtually annihilated on the Beaumont-Hamel battleground. Casualties numbered more than 700, one-third of which were fatal. Every officer who went into battle that day was either killed or wounded. Only 68 of the reg-

iment escaped serious injury.

Aside from the honours bestowed Saturday, fun was also infused into the celebrations as the fairgrounds were filled with pony rides, a petting zoo, face painting, bouncing balloons, a rock climbing wall, trampoline demonstration, music and, of course, fireworks.

Organizers are already gearing up for next year's celebration, which will not only mark 140 years of confederation, but Milton will turn 150.



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Madison Holman, 3, enjoys a treat after having her face painted.

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