

Airdrie to unveil memorial to Afghanistan veterans

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Once a part of Canada's military might, a light armoured vehicle is patiently waiting for its debut as a monument.

Part of the Light Armoured Vehicle (LAV) III Program, the decommissioned LAV is the first of its kind in Western Canada. The LAV was delivered to Airdrie's Nosecreek Valley Museum on Oct. 19 and will serve as a memorial to veterans who served in Afghanistan.

The LAV III Program recognizes the service and sacrifice of the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan by providing a full-sized, demilitarized replica of the LAV III to qualified, deserving communities throughout Canada.

A veteran of peacekeeping missions in Egypt and Cyprus, retired Canadian Forces Sgt. Bob McNevin led the Airdrie LAV committee. McNevin said it is time for Canadians to start honouring the younger generation of veterans and their families, and the LAV monument is a way for the older generation to pass the torch of remembrance to veterans of more recent conflicts, such as Afghanistan and Bosnia.

"It's these young men and women — that's what it's all about,"



The LAV III is lowered onto its new resting place in front of the Nose Creek Museum on Thursday in Airdrie. *DAWN SMITH/AIRDRIE ECHO*

McNevin said. "I did not realize how many veterans we have in the city of Airdrie."

Retired British Armed Forces Sgt. Bill Drummond is also with the Airdrie LAV Committee, and said many people only associate the Legion with veterans of the First and Second World Wars, and echoed McNevin's wish to honour younger veterans.

"I think it's a fitting tribute for

the young fellas and women who put their lives on the line for world peace," Drummond said. "To them, it means that they are being recognized — especially someone who has any kind of PTSD problems."

The LAV III is a versatile fighting vehicle, able to reach speeds of more than 100 km/h. Drummond said Canadian Forces members were "seen as the envy of all of the United Nations troops" because

the LAV is "so adaptable."

"They were used as ambulances, they were used as mobile offices, they were used for taking troops out to advanced outposts," Drummond said.

"And they were taken there in relative safety."

Drummond said the project to bring the LAV to Airdrie was estimated to cost around \$70,000, but local businesses took the brunt of the financial load by donating money, transporting the LAV from Ontario and even pouring the concrete pad for the monument.

McNevin said he was stunned to see so many members of the community show their support for the LAV project by donating time, money and supplies to bring the monument to Airdrie.

"I want (veterans and their families) to see what we've done for them as a community," McNevin said. "I've been involved in a lot of things and this is the largest rally I've ever seen of the community coming together."

Currently sitting under camouflage netting, the LAV III monument will be unveiled during a ceremony Nov. 6 at the Nosecreek Valley Museum at 1 p.m.

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