

# Dream of LAV monument becomes a reality

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The mother of a fallen Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan in 2007 says it was happy-sad experience to see the new LAV III monument unveiled Wednesday in Oromocto, the first of its kind in Canada.

Laurie Greenslade said her son, Pte. David Robert Greenslade, who died in the central Asian country nine years ago, was enthusiastic, outgoing, loved life and believed in the mission he was serving on.

"It's bittersweet to see the LAV because his last experience here in earth was being in the LAV when he died," Greenslade told reporters. "It is wonderful to have it here in Oromocto, so handy to the base. It stands for sacrifice and service, and it reminds others of what our freedom costs."

David Robert Greenslade and five of his comrades were killed when a roadside blast destroyed the LAV III light-armoured vehicle they were travelling in west of Kandahar, Afghanistan, in April of 2007.

"I was able to go on a LAV when we went to Afghanistan as members of next to kin," she said. "It's tough but I think it's all a process. We wouldn't not think of being here. We're supporting David and his decisions and his life by being part of these ceremonies and memorials."

The dream of having a LAV III Afghanistan War Memorial in Oromocto became a reality with its unveiling Wednesday before a large crowd of military personnel, civilian officials and politicians.

Ken O'Quinn, who lost his son, Cpl. Chad O'Quinn, in Afghanistan seven years ago, said the monument was awesome.

"It's a constant reminder about the sacrifices everybody made," he said in an interview. "Something like this will keep [people] remembering. That's the way I think."

Cpl. O'Quinn, a former Oromocto High School student, died March 3, 2009, along with two other soldiers, after an improvised explosive device detonated near their armoured vehicle during a patrol northwest of Kandahar.

O'Quinn said when he helped unveil the monument he was flooded with emotions - everything from elation to sadness.

"Knowing what your son has done and where he's been" makes it all worthwhile, O'Quinn said.

Fredericton West-Hanwell MLA Brian Macdonald, a military veteran who led the campaign to have the community named the first in Canada to receive the distinction, said he couldn't be prouder.

"It's pretty emotional," Macdonald said in an interview. "I have come to know a lot of the families of the fallen and developed relationships with them, so it is an emotional thing. I knew a lot of people who served and I served myself in Afghanistan. It is a very personal day."

The announcement that the Fredericton-Oromocto area would be the first location in Canada to receive the LAV monument was made in June of last year by Erin O'Toole, then minister of veterans affairs.

It followed months of promotion by members of the #MakeFrederictonFirst campaign, a regional co-operative bid among the municipalities of Fredericton, New Maryland and Oromocto.

Macdonald said the monument will stand forever as a tribute to the service and sacrifice of Canada's troops and families.

"It's a physical thing. People can come and touch and better understand how our troops served in Afghanistan by seeing the equipment that they used."

Macdonald said it was a great moment for New Brunswick and to win the national award is quite something. He said they have proven that nowhere is the connection to the military stronger than it is in this province.

Oromocto MLA Jody Carr said he had mixed emotions.

He said the monument was both to honour the successes and the sacrifices.

"Brian Macdonald has really spearheaded a community effort to make Oromocto-Fredericton first and this LAV monument is a great testament to the Town of Oromocto, surrounding areas, and New Brunswick for the contributions and the sacrifices in enhancing and preserving democracy, education and values in Afghanistan."

The competition to be the first community in Canada to receive the memorial was led by Canada Company, a nationwide military charity.

It was hoped the memorial could have been in place by Remembrance Day 2015, but the process got enveloped in bureaucratic red tape which delayed its arrival in the model town.

Oromocto Mayor Bob Powell said the LAV III memorial will serve as a reminder and a tribute - one that people will never forget, especially in Oromocto.

Base Gagetown commander Col. Dan MacIsaac said the unveiling, among other things, represents support by the Canadian public.

Its location in the centre of Oromocto is a testament to that relationship, he said.

The LAV III, recognized as the workhorse of Canadian troops in Afghanistan during this country's military mission there, is being upgraded, making the discarded hulls of 250 former machines available for other uses.

As a result, they are being converted to LAV III memorials, all of which are intended to honour 158 Canadian Armed Forces personnel, a Canadian diplomat, a Department of National Defence contractor and an embedded Canadian journalist who lost their lives during this country's role in the conflict.

As many as 40,000 military members, including many from Base Gagetown, took part in the Afghanistan mission.

The list of fallen soldiers from this area, or had a connection to it, includes O'Quinn, Corey Hayes, Geoff Parker, Gregory Kruse, Darrell Priede, Allan Stewart, Donald Lucas, Brent Poland, Aaron Williams, Kevin Kennedy, Frank Mellish, Robert Short and Greenslade.