

▶ A MONUMENT CELEBRATING FRANCO-CANADIAN FRIENDSHIP AT BEECHWOOD NATIONAL CEMETERY

op-ed from French Ambassador to Canada Kareen Rispal



AFTER MORE THAN four centuries of shared history and 90 years of official diplomatic relations between France and Canada, a new monument celebrating Franco-Canadian friendship will soon be unveiled at Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa.

The construction of an intergenerational monument in the exceptional historic

site of the national cemetery of Canada, in the heart of the nation's capital, responds to a real expectation of the Franco-Canadian community: to benefit from a place of gathering, remembrance and celebration. "AMICITIA France-Canada" is the Latin phrase that was chosen to name this monument. This national monument will be an important educational tool around which Canadians and French will evoke the Franco-Canadian friendship in all its aspects, past, present and future. It is about passing on a torch to the youth of both countries – to remember the Canadian sacrifices made to liberate France, to celebrate the many partnerships and joint actions for the maintenance of peace, and to encourage the youth to carry the Canadian and French humanist and democratic values. This monument will carry the hopes of future generations; it must allow us to celebrate the living and honour our dead.

Made of granite and bronze, "AMICITIA France-Canada" is 8 meters long and 3 meters high. It is decorated with sculptures made

by the renowned Canadian artist, Jan Stohl. This monument has a strong symbolism that unites the two countries. It is composed of the effigy of Marianne centered within a veined maple leaf, symbols *par excellence* of France and Canada. A torch, inspired from the one at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, is carried by the arms of a woman and a man symbolizing freedom, hope and knowledge. Eight Canadian and French decorations (four on each side) are carved on the "FRANCE" and "CANADA" wings of the monument.

Launched in 2018 by the "Monument Amicitia France-Canada" association created especially for the project, this monument owes much to the investment of its initiators, two former French and Canadian military personnel, Christophe Raisonier and André Levesque, but also to all the actors working for friendship between Canada and France. Partners from the outset, the French Embassy in Canada, the Beechwood Cemetery Foundation, and the Canadian and French armed forces actively support this beautiful citizen initiative endorsed by more than a dozen French and Canadian associations and foundations (including the George & Helen Vari Foundation and the Toronto French School) as well as by Canadian private partners and everyday citizens. The official inauguration of the "AMICITIA France-Canada" monument is expected to take place at the end of January 2022 during an official visit by high-level French and Canadian political authorities.

France wishes to reiterate its commitment to the duty of remembrance and its desire to recognize all Canadians who participated in the liberation of the country and as such, issues a call for applications. 🍁

ABOVE: Monument Amicitia France-Canada

ABOVE LEFT: Ambassador Kareen Rispal (© FRENCH EMBASSY IN OTTAWA)