

PROUD TO BE CANADIAN

I sat on the floor near the auditorium where my class was to be held, leaned against the wall, and made myself comfortable. In front of me was a wall of floor to ceiling windows with a view to a courtyard. Students roamed through the yard or sat around in groups or alone, enjoying the warm autumn day.

The sound of voices in excited chatter rose from the direction of the library below and dissipated in the vast open space of the second floor. All around me people were hurrying about, talking, laughing, and sipping coffee from Tim Horton's cups, disappearing in different directions.

Suddenly a few feet away, something red on the ground caught my attention. It was a little Remembrance Day poppy, which had most likely slipped off somebody's jacket lapel. These little red flowers that had bloomed across the battlefields in Flanders during the First World War became a symbol of recognition of the sacrifice of all soldiers who served their country during times of war. Today was 11th of November. It was Remembrance Day in Canada.

I pulled the camera out from my bag and photographed the poppy on the ground. People kept on going up and down the stairs, stepping or jumping over the little poppy flower as it lay on the floor near the stairs. Some cautiously stepped over the poppy, some jumped over it when they saw it, and others simply passed by without even noticing it. But nobody stepped on the flower. It was like a crime scene, with shed blood on the floor. With increasing interest I continued to chronicle "the story of the day" with my camera.

Then a group of students came up the stairs and spread around in front of me. I suddenly noticed that the poppy had disappeared and only a young boy was moving quickly away down the staircase. I rushed after him. He was now by the exit door.

"Excuse me!" I yelled out after him.

He turned around. On the left side of his jacket, close to his heart was my poppy flower.

"May I take a picture of you?" I said, pointing to the poppy. "You rescued it off the ground."

The young lad's face radiated pride as he posed for the photograph.

Both of us felt exactly the same at that moment – proud to be Canadian.