

Unit 1 – Focus On

3. Never better than outside

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Host: November the 11th can be a day for kids to learn about the past, but for one class in Alberta, it also became an opportunity to experience a bit of it. Lynda Calvert explains.

Mike McKay: Everybody make sure you're smiling and your eyes are open!

Lynda Calvert: A quick snap, then with shovels and pickaxes and the Canadian flag in tow, and this group of high school students from northern Alberta is off to learn a lesson about Remembrance Day – one that involves a lot of hard work.

Mike McKay: They are digging typical World War I slit trenches.

Lynda Calvert: “It’s a living history class”, says their teacher and former reservist Mike McKay.

Mike McKay: I’m trying to erase this idea that Remembrance Day is just a day off school or a day off work. That Remembrance Day is really thinking seriously about those who served and the hardships and the deprivations they had to go through.

Lynda Calvert: It’s gonna take about four hours to dig these trenches and they have to be big enough for two people, and chest deep. And then they’re gonna stay here tonight – two hours of sleep, two hours on patrol. There’s snow on the ground and the temperature is below zero. Morning arrives, and with it, a new understanding of the vulnerability of soldiers.

Lane Hartman: It was cold and not very much sleep.

Lynda Calvert: Lynda Calvert, CBC News, Eaglesham, Alberta.