

# Book recounts Battle of Vimy Ridge

John Arendt

A children's book by Yasmin John-Thorpe presents the Battle of Vimy Ridge in World War I to a young audience.

During the Battle of Vimy Ridge, from April 9 to 12, 1917, the Canadian Corps fought to take control of high ground held by the Germans.

The Canadians captured most of the ridge during the first day, but the final fortified knoll near the village of Givenchy-en-Gohelle did not fall until April 12.

John-Thorpe's book, *Grandpa's Gift*, was published this year, in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the historic battle.

The book begins at Skaha Beach, with a grandfather telling his grandson, Jackson, the story of how the Canadians came to Vimy Ridge.

In the end, Jackson's birthday gift is a trip to visit Vimy Ridge for the 100th anniversary of the battle.

John-Thorpe is working to get the book distributed to students between the ages of eight and 14, so they can learn this part of Canada's history.

She said the story is important since many of the Canadian soldiers during World War I were not much older than her target audience.

Many lied about their ages and enlisted when they were 15 and 16.

By the end of the battle, 3,598 Canadians had been killed and 7,004 had been wounded.

"In our schools we don't teach Canadian history any longer," John-Thorpe said.

She explained that students will not learn about this battle unless they choose to take Canadian history in Grade 11 or 12.

"I really wanted the younger students to know what we are celebrating on April 9, 2017," she said. "By reading the story, the students will know what the Canadians did to help the Allies win the ridge."

Paul Randall, who will visit some of the schools with John-Thorpe, said the book presents the history in story form.

"I enjoyed the balance of the story of *Grandpa's Gift*," he said. "It covered the main points on the cause of the war, and the preparation and battle at Vimy Ridge by the Canadian soldiers. I liked the interaction between the grandfather and his grandson and the connection with the iPad and the curiosity of the grandson to learn. The tie in with a local soldier was a nice touch."

The Royal Canadian Legion of British Columbia and the Yukon has asked for 4,000 copies of the book and will put two copies into every public, private and First Nations school library which serves students in Grades 4 to 8.



## Retelling history

Yasmin John-Thorpe shows a copy of her book, *Grandpa's Gift*, which presents the story of the Battle of Vimy Ridge for elementary and middle school students. The book will be distributed to schools in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.