



Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command
The Royal Canadian Legion

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All Branch Mail Out #5 - 2018

Date: January 25, 2018

To: NS/NU Command Executive Council
NS/NU Command Zone Commanders
NS/NU Command Past Presidents
NS/NU Command Branch Presidents

From: Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte
Executive Director
NS/NU Command, RCL

Subject: Communication from President Melvin Crowe

Message: Comrades, please see attached



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To: NS/NU Command Executive Council
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Comrades:

As senior leaders within Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command I ask please that you accept personal responsibility in relating the following information provided by Dominion Command to all Members by all means available to you.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and commitment in moving this message forward so that all Members and the public alike can be reminded of the true mission of The Royal Canadian Legion.

In Comradeship

Melvin Crowe
President
Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command
The Royal Canadian Legion



As you can well appreciate, the Legion has been receiving a fair amount of feedback in the wake of the incident in PEI last week whereby a man was asked to leave the Tignish branch because he was wearing a religious headdress, a turban.

On behalf of our Dominion Command PR Committee and its Chair Bruce Julian, we would like to follow up with some updates and PR-related suggestions pertinent to this situation.

Here are links to two of the latest stories for your information:

- *The CBC PEI story about the Legion's policy on religious headdress, and what we've done in the aftermath of the Tignish situation: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-tignish-legion-turban-apology-1.4498355>*
- *The Pioneer Journal story about the Tignish incident and local political reaction: <http://www.journalpioneer.com/news/local/incident-at-tignish-legion-involving-sikh-mans-head-covering-characterized-as-unfortunate-179575/>*

Further below, is a sample of the sort of the feedback coming in. The note below is but one example of a comment that is alarming in that it reflects a sentiment that is at odds with our mission. To turn a negative into a positive, messages such as this could be used to spark conversations about Legion inclusivity, policies, handling sensitive situations, and branch culture in general - not just with staff but with membership at upcoming meetings. It's a reminder about respecting everyone who walks in a Legion door – from those who may not be Veterans, to new Veterans who may not have fought in the Second World War.

As for the actual custom of removing headgear in Legions, our understanding is that it grew out of general manners and good etiquette, but over the years, many have instead come to see it as a sign of respect for Veterans. Whatever the custom's true origin, there is no question that religious headgear is welcomed at all branches as per our Ritual & Awards manual, which was shared last week (see p. 2). <http://www.legion.ca/who-we-are/how-we-operate/by-laws-and-publications>

From a PR Committee perspective, we believe it's important for district/zone commanders, branch executive and Legion members to communicate that the Legion is a place of inclusion. What happens in one Legion can also have ramifications across the country. People can draw incorrect conclusions which can affect the reputation of Legion branches everywhere, and overshadow the amazing work we do.

We suggest it would help the Legion as a collective, if colleagues in leadership roles share an update about this situation with each of their branches, and use this incident as an opportunity to educate members, volunteers, and staff.

your organization needs to educate its' members on the broad minded approach to what freedom means in Canada and why some of your members fought and died for. How about organizing a lecture at the Tignish PEI legion on historical treatment of Sikhs, ie "Justin Trudeau apologizes in House for 1914 Komagata Maru **Message**incident", the inclusive nature of Canada and how Legion members will be EXPELLED if they do not subscribe to the "RULES" of democracy. That old drunk at the bar should be penalized and made an example. This story is disturbing, particularly because your Org clearly permits a culture of patriarchal colonialist mentality.