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# The Beaver

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plus **9** visionaries who made the difference

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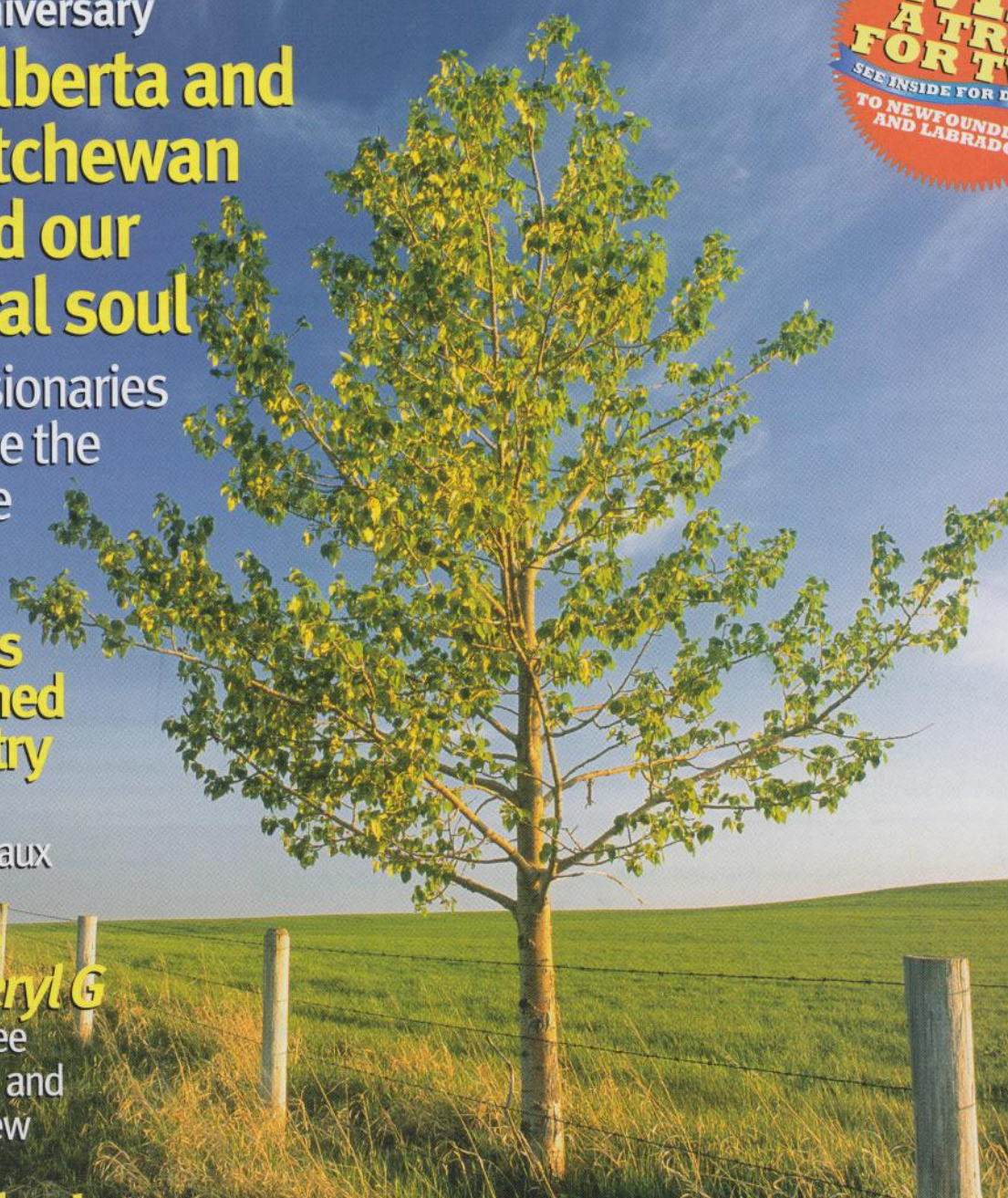
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TO NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR



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## Uniform

A 1911 catalogue of artifacts Niagara Historical Society was displaying at Memorial Hall listed this red wool coat with white tiebacks and green hearts as belonging to “Capt. Daniel Servos, of Butler’s Rangers, donated by Mrs. D. Servos.”

Daniel Servos never served in Butler’s Rangers, a loyalist militia raised during the American Revolutionary War. In 1779, he was commissioned as a lieutenant of the Indian Department, which from 1755 to 1830 acted as a branch of the British Army, and which during the American Revolution maintained close relationships between the British Army and its native allies. Servos was involved in the 1777 battle at Oriskany, New York, and the 1778 battle at Wyoming. After the war, he, along with thousands of others loyal to the Crown who had lost their homes, settled in Niagara at Four Mile Creek, near present-day Niagara-on-the-Lake, where he became a miller.

Whether there was an official uniform for the Indian Department is unknown. Most likely an officer for the department like Servos would have had a uniform tailored to look similar to those worn by British officers at the time. The coat, which most closely resembles the cut of a late eighteenth-century

French coat, has been recut – perhaps modified by Daniel Servos himself. Experts at the Niagara Historical Society & Museum believe it is possibly the only pre-1822 Indian Department jacket in Canada. Indian Department uniforms were only standardized after that date.

Further information on the Niagara Historical Society & Museum is available at <[www.niagara.com/~nhs](http://www.niagara.com/~nhs)>.

## Poet

Greek mythology and Canadian history? Believe it or not, there are some interesting connections between the two. So says Jack Mitchell, a Ph.D. candidate in classics at Stanford University, who has composed a seven-hundred-line, Homeric-style poem about the battle on the Plains of Abraham. Like the ancient siege of Troy, Quebec’s pivotal battle happened long ago (though clearly not as long ago as the Greek brawl), encompassed a long list of incidents, and, perhaps most dramatically, involved the two main characters dying tragic deaths. (Homer’s Achilles and Hector died at Troy; Wolfe and Montcalm perished on the Plains of Abraham.)

Mitchell, who was born in Sackville, New Brunswick, and grew up in Ottawa, has always been fascinated by the genre of the epic poem. In fact, at fourteen, he wrote his own short epic about a Napoleonic battle. Later, in university, Mitchell’s exposure to the classics piqued his interest in creating poetry. But what would he write about?

Mitchell shied away from writing about his own life: “I wanted a grand theme.” He says he chose the siege of Quebec in a flash, seeing it as the one truly mythological event in Canadian history. “I was sensitive, of course, that it’s still a very important part of the francophone consciousness, but in a way, that was all for the better – there was no denying its relevance.” And like a good epic, the story of the French-British battle (which ended in a British victory and ultimately the demise loss of New France) is larger than life, says Mitchell, and a true tale of the past.



Jack Mitchell uses ancient Greek poetry to tell a Canadian story.

Mitchell conducted much research to write the epic, and after some experimenting, decided on iambic octameter for the line of verse: “I wanted a line that was of a weight equal to the dactylic hexameter – Homer’s meter.” Dressed in black, with wooden staff in hand, Mitchell has performed *The Plains of Abraham* for many school groups, community groups, and general audiences across Canada since 2000. He created his epic for performance to give spectators a chance to embrace history. “The idea is to inject the past into the present in a way that can’t be denied,” explains Mitchell. “While I’m performing, the book of history can’t be shut – the channel can’t be changed.”

For more information, visit <[www.plainsofabraham.ca](http://www.plainsofabraham.ca)>.