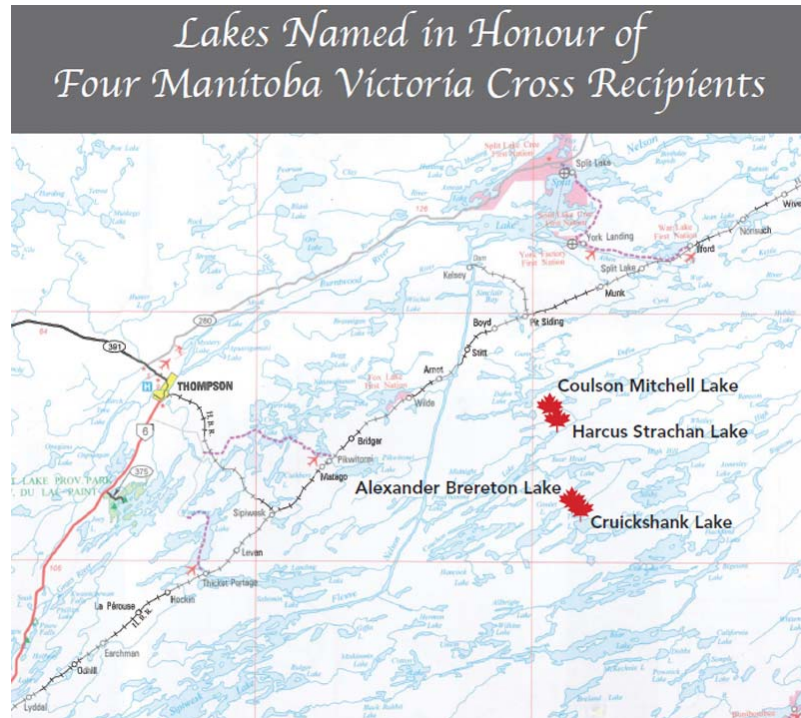


Naming of Manitoba Lake Honours Lt-Col. Coulson Norman Mitchell, VC, MC, RCE



The province of Manitoba has an active geo-naming program to honour its servicemen. To-date some 4200 lakes, islands, bays and various other geographical features have been named.

Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger recently announced that four Victoria Cross recipients from Manitoba have been recognized with lakes named in their honour. With this announcement, the provincial government has now named geographical features in honour of all 14 Manitoba Victoria Cross recipients.

All four men who received this highest medal of valour in the Commonwealth served in the First and Second World Wars. **Coulson Mitchell** Lake, named after Lt-Col Coulson Norman Mitchell, VC, MC, RCE is located approximately 100 kilometres east of Thompson. The name of the lake is being modified to "**Norman Mitchell Lake**" at the request of the family to reflect that Lt-Col Mitchell was commonly referred to by the name "Norman".

Lt-Col Coulson Norman Mitchell was born in Winnipeg on 11 December 1889 and served with the Canadian Engineers and the Royal Canadian Engineers. He is the only Canadian Military Engineer to have been awarded the Victoria Cross. As a captain with 4th Canadian Engineer Battalion during the First World War, on the night 8/9 October 1918 during the Canadian attack north of Cambrai, he was honoured for his leading of an engineer party that disarmed and removed the explosives from the main bridge across the Escaut Canal in the face of the enemy and under fire.



The Victoria Cross Citation reads:

"For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on the night of 8-9 October 1918, at the Canal de l'Escaut, north-east of Cambrai. He led a small party ahead of the first wave of infantry in order to examine the various bridges on the line of approach, and, if possible, to prevent their demolition. On reaching the canal he found the bridge already blown up. Under a heavy barrage he crossed to the next bridge, where he cut a number of 'lead' wires. Then, in total darkness, and unaware of the position or strength of the enemy at the bridgehead, he dashed across the main bridge over the canal. This bridge was found to be heavily charged for demolition, and whilst Captain Mitchell, assisted by his NCO [Sergeant Jackson], was cutting the wires, the enemy attempted to rush the bridge, in order to blow the charges, whereupon he at once dashed to the assistance of the sentry, who had been wounded, killed three of the enemy, captured 12, and maintained the bridgehead until reinforced. Then, under heavy fire, he continued his task of cutting wires and removing charges, which he knew well might at any moment have been fired by the enemy. It was entirely due to his valour and decisive action that this important bridge across the canal was saved from destruction."

Lt-Col Mitchell died on 17 November 1978. This memorial joins several others that honour him. The main building of the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering in CFB Gagetown is named in his honour. He is also honoured in the naming of the Married Quarters community in the former CFB Chilliwack as "MITCHELL GARDENS." A plaque dedicated on 12 October 1973 commemorates his contribution to Canada as a gallant soldier during two world wars and his contributions to Camp Chilliwack from 1944 to 1948. A panel at the All Sappers' Memorial Park and Cenotaph also recognizes his personal vision and leadership.

For information on additional memorials to Canadian Military Engineers, see: [Chapter 4 Annex A CME Memorials](#) .