Hatter hopes to see Canadian flag raised at site of crash that killed several rail workers

BY COLLIN GALLANT ON MAY 29, 2018.

A local woman, who lost a relative in a “horrific” crash that killed 22 railway workers in 1980, says more needs to be done to remember the accident near Gull Lake.

Marina Beach said annual observances like the one held Sunday, and a memorial at the site that was dedicated 11 years ago, are important.

But, the Medicine Hat woman says, a roadside sign drawing attention to the site is not enough, and she would like to see a Canadian flag raised there to catch the eye of motorists.

“A lot of people have forgotten, a lot of people just drive by,” Beach said Monday.

“Quite a few of the workers were from Newfoundland, my cousin was from Manitoba; a Canadian flag covers them all.”

Her cousin, Michael Beach, was the bus driver of a Canadian Pacific Railway steel gang that was travelling to work on May 27, 1980 when it was side-swiped by a passing car.

It then overturned, and an asphalt tanker coming in behind could not stop in time. The impact and resulting explosion killed 22 of the 30 workers on the bus in what remains the deadliest highway accident in Saskatchewan history.

“If was horrific,” said Beach. “They could only identify my cousin from the watch he was wearing.”

CPR in 2007 placed a monument at the site, at Webb, Sask., located about 30 kilometres west of Swift Current.

It features a plaque denoting the names of those involved, and a small section of track adorned with a crucifix furnished from rails.

In April, the crash involving the bus of the Humboldt Broncos hockey team, resulting in 16 fatalities, drew national and international media attention, fundraising and condolences.

The worst transportation accident in the province’s history remains a plane crash near Moose Jaw in 1954 that claimed 37 lives.