

Prairie Region has 167 regular members, 18 widows and 1 veteran for a total 186 members. We have not been able to hold regular monthly meetings in Winnipeg and the special lunch gatherings in Alberta under the direction of Kathy Carlson and her area reps have also been on hold due to the Covid 19 virus. However, we have had regular monthly virtual meetings of the Board of Directors and quarterly communication with our members through the national newsletter.

We have several items on hold until we are allowed to travel, and we can meet again. One item is to get a definitive answer from VAC or Last Post Fund regarding the repair or replacement of a grave marker for Alexander Contois of the Long Plains community.

Another item is the commemorative plaques. We have 4 plaques that need to be ordered when we can deliver and dedicate them and 2 plaques that have been placed in the facilities, but we haven't been able to dedicate them yet.

We annually hold a VJ Day observance on the closest Sunday to August 15 and an Annual Reunion in October on the nearest Sunday to October 25th, the date when the Winnipeg Grenadiers left in 1941 but due to the pandemic these too were cancelled. We observed Remembrance Day on November 11 virtually in various communities in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

We were pleased to have about 40 people attend the Winnipeg, MB service for VJ Day on August 15, 2020 that took place in the Field of Honour at Brookside Cemetery at the Winnipeg Grenadier Memorial stone. **George Peterson, our last Winnipeg Grenadier, Hong Kong veteran**, was unable to attend but he was acknowledged in our ceremony and we felt he was thinking of us. There were no widows in attendance as most of them are in care homes and cannot travel. There were several of our HKVCA members in attendance and some participated in our service. We also had several veteran associations represented and a few carried their Colours with our Colour Party. The piper and bugler added to our service.

Our guest speaker was Mr. Jon Reyes, MLA and Military Envoy for Manitoba expressed his appreciation of the efforts of our Canadian military in keeping Canada free. Wreaths were laid and many pictures taken. The event was recorded for Facebook by Dan James (grandson of John James, WG HK vet) and we had a cameraman from CKY TV News.

Several members throughout Manitoba participated in services for VJ Day and Remembrance Day – Dennis Stewart in Selkirk, Gord Arbuckle of Pilot Mound, Helen Prieston, widow of Riley Prieston in Swan River, Judy Preston in Reston sent a picture with her grandchildren laying wreaths.

Thank you to Kathie Carlson for keeping in touch with the Area reps in Prairie Region and to the Area reps for keeping in touch with the members.

Regina, Saskatchewan - Marion Pho, Area Rep for Regina, sent information on Saskatchewan's approach to November 11th, 2020. No formal gatherings would be held, but a four-minute video is available at www.youtube.com/watch, done by the Saskatchewan government.

Calgary, Alberta – On Friday, August 14th, Marilyn and Blake Pridgen (Ralph Maclean RR) and Norma and Glen Fuchs (John Doiron RR) were invited to an event at the Calgary Military Museum. It was a celebration of the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day.

Lethbridge, Alberta – A ceremony was held on August 15, 2020, at the City of Lethbridge Cenotaph, recognizing the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day. Approximately 60 people attended on what was a very, hot day. It was a collaboration of the Lethbridge General Stewart Legion Branch #4, the Blackfoot community, and HKVCA. A Videographer captured the entire ceremony, which was carried on Lethbridge Live, and now on YouTube for anyone who wishes to see it. Thank you to Kathie Carlson for her efforts in this ceremony.

Beaumont, Alberta – Not having a Legion or Cenotaph in the community, Area Rep Mik Bergersen submitted an article of the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day, to the regional newspapers.

Thank you to all our members that remembered VJ Day in their own way and to those who sent information on their event.

We are grateful to the Manitoba Legislature for allowing us to have the Hong Kong Veterans flag fly in August and December at the Cenotaph on Memorial Blvd in Winnipeg. It is a great tribute to C Force and their service.

Thank you to all our members who remember C Force in their own way. In this challenging time as we observe the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Hong Kong there are many ways that people can say “thank you” to our veterans. It can be a display of flags, wreaths on doors or in windows, crosses or lawn signs, wearing a member pin or just wearing a poppy. We also have our virtual presentations that you see noted on our website.

In May 2021, I was invited to attend a presentation by a **grade 10 Balmoral Hall student, Hope Hinchey**, who has spent this past year researching the Canadians who were killed or died in Hong Kong and who have a **geographical place** in Manitoba named after them. She also incorporated this information into Google Earth with a poppy placed at the geographical place. In her presentation when you click on a poppy the name and picture, if available, comes up and the story of the person. It is such a wonderful asset for our members, teachers, students and anyone researching or looking for a family member. Please check out the website for her presentation the link for the results of her research. <https://jetnjag70.wixsite.com/my-site-1>

Every year people contact us for information on the Canadian participation in Hong Kong or a person who may have been part of the contingent. We are thankful that there is still an interest in the Battle and the men and women who participated.

Please celebrate the birthdays of our veterans - **Happy Birthday greetings were sent to George Peterson on his 100th birthday on February 8. We also celebrated birthdays for:**

Eugene Lapointe on Jan 16, 2021 who turned 97 years young; Phil Doddridge on April 2, 2021 who turned 99 years young; Hormidas Fredette on April 11, 2021 who turned 105 years young; and to George McDonell on August 5, 2021 who will turn 99 years young.

However, we were saddened by the loss of veterans, widows and members whose names will appear in the Last Post at this meeting and we will remember them.

We invite any family member or friend of the members of C Force to review the information that we have on our website and add to it by sending us a picture, family history or write a short story to give us more insight into the amazing Canadians. You can do this by sending the information to our website – www.hkvca.ca and using the **contact us** button.

Another HKVCA project we would like to initiate nationally is a project to recognize our Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) veterans. This project is undertaken as a way for our Association to contribute to reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) defines reconciliation as the process of “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country.” The TRC went on to say that in order for reconciliation to happen in Canada, “there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.” **Through this project, the HKVCA hopes to partake in the reconciliation process.** To do this we require the assistance of our members, families and friends, if they are comfortable to do so, to supply information on their C Force member. We are pleased to have **Pam Heinrichs (daughter of Fred Poitras)** to coordinate this project. She will be introduced in a separate article in the latest newsletter and give you an outline of this project. As she is from a Métis family, she has some insight to the issues that others experienced.

We have added to Barry's store when we located copies of **“NO REASON WHY “– by Carl Vincent.** This book, of which we have a limited number of copies, has been called the best book written about Canada's involvement in the defence of Hong Kong. It covers the background of the regiments; the politics involved; the battle; years of imprisonment; and the return to Canada. No library on the subject on Hong Kong is complete without this book!

Hoping that everyone is staying safe and keeping well. God Bless

Respectfully submitted

Carol

Carol Hadley,

Board of Directors - Prairie Region

Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association

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