



# WASURERU-NAI "Never Forget"



**National Newsletter of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association**

**Spring 2025 Edition**

**Editor: Jim Trick**

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## Book the Dates!

**80th Anniversary Reunion August 14th to 17th, 2025  
Ottawa**

### **Greetings from the 80th Anniversary Reunion Planning Committee!**

We hope this update will help you with your plans and provide further details of the many exciting, interesting and poignant events planned for this historic 80th Anniversary of V-J Day to commemorate the release of our Canadian Veterans of the Battle of Hong Kong, after almost 4 years in POW camps in Hong Kong and Japan,

Hard to believe but we are almost there! It is now just 5 months and counting (very James Bond). Come and join us as it's happening right around the corner.

Everyone is welcome! Bring family and friends for an incredible weekend of commemoration, learning and camaraderie.

If you plan to attend, and have not yet done so, please email to [2025reunion@hkvca.ca](mailto:2025reunion@hkvca.ca) to advise us of your intentions to attend, or call 1-(403)-327-2799, as we need this information to be able to plan, make arrangements, and send out registration packages in late March 2025.

We hope you will make this historical commemoration and reunion in Ottawa, in our wonderful nation's capital, a part of your family's summer vacation, as we are making every

effort to keep costs low during this time of economic uncertainty, so as many as possible may attend.

Even if you are not an HKVCA member, we welcome you to join us. We will require a mailing address when you confirm your attendance.

You'll find information about booking your hotel at the end of this article.

### **Many Memorable Events**

We are excited to provide you below with an outline of the many events and activities planned for this fantastic weekend.

Remember, besides the two significant major events, the Memorial Wall Commemoration, and the War Museum on Saturday, August 16th, there are many options and choices as well as time on your own to gather and visit or to do some sightseeing in Ottawa.

Starting on the next page are some highlights of the weekend's agenda.

## Commemoration Ceremony



© Richard Lawrence Photography

On Friday a solemn and moving ceremony will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the release of Canada's POWs from camps in Hong Kong and Japan.

The service will include dignitaries from the Military, Provincial and Federal governments. The Military Wives Choir will perform along with the Canadian Military Band. You will have an opportunity to lay a family wreath.

There will also be an opportunity to spend time at the Memorial Wall and find your father's, grandfather's, or relative or friend's name inscribed there.

## War Museum



© Canadian War Museum, photo Harry Foster, CWM2015-0029-0005-Dp5

Saturday morning we will be bused to the War Museum. After lunch you'll be able to enjoy a guided tour of the Museum, highlighted by special displays of the Battle of Hong Kong. Well-known historian, author and resident of Hong Kong Tony Banham will give a fascinating keynote talk in the theatre, with an opportunity to ask questions.

Following a career in research and development with Royal Dutch Shell and the European Space Agency, Tony moved to Hong Kong in 1989 and founded the Hong Kong War Diary Project- which studies and documents the 1941

defence of Hong Kong, their defenders, their families, and the fates of all until liberation. He was awarded a PhD in History by the Australian Defence Force Academy in 2014. Banham has aided many historians, governments, broadcasters, students, and others in their research. He speaks regularly on history and is Honorary Editor of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Hong Kong.

## Breakout Sessions



These 45-minute sessions are an opportunity to learn and exchange information. We are confirming the subjects this month and will highlight them in the registration package. Some of the possible topics

are:

1. Gander – His legacy, Our Hero! Learn about this famous Newfoundland dog, the mascot of the Royal Rifles of Canada, who accompanied the soldiers to fight in World War II in the Battle of Hong Kong. It's a compelling story with a short film and even T-shirts to buy as a souvenir!
2. Tales of Sabotage by Prisoners of War. Can you imagine what these courageous prisoners figured out to do to mess up the enemy in every way they could, not only in the Battle of Hong Kong but in other war theatres? Stay tuned!
3. History Of Indigenous Veterans from Canada. For many years, HKVCA knew that Indigenous (Métis and First Nation) veterans served in the Battle of Hong Kong, but documentation was unclear, as many veterans were not identified with their correct full names. Find out what happened when these courageous men returned to Canada.
4. Hong Kong in 1941. Experience a 22-minute documentary showing Hong Kong as it was seen by our Hong Kong Veterans when they arrived off the ships in 1941. See pictures of Japanese soldiers invading, fully equipped and trained to go into battle as well as Canadian soldiers on the march.
5. Métis Beading Workshop, and its Cultural Heritage. An artisan from Manitoba will be illustrating how beading was introduced into the Métis culture, and the role it has played for many decades.
6. For the Love of Food. Anyone who has heard from their father or grandfather about the ghastly food the POWs were given, or read any of the Battle of Hong Kong veterans' books, knows the role food, or lack thereof, played in their daily existence to stay alive. This session will edify and answer the question - how did they ever survive?
7. Nurses as Prisoners of War in Hong Kong. You will be astounded to hear that only two Canadian nurses in all of



World War II were Prisoners of War. Hear their story and be amazed at how they beat the odds of survival.

## Memorabilia



Did your father or grandfather leave mementos of his service in “C” Force or as a POW? Bring them with you and display and discuss them in our Memorabilia room. The

Memorabilia room will be monitored by volunteers, providing security throughout the open hours. Our Memorabilia room coordinator is Randy Wing. Please contact him by email at [wingrt88@gmail.com](mailto:wingrt88@gmail.com) so he is able to make arrangements.

## Gala Reception and Banquet – Saturday

This will be an opportunity to dress up, relax and enjoy yourself, and a last chance to visit with new and old friends, along with sharing a meal together. There will be a reception with hors d'oeuvres followed by a delicious dinner, live entertainment and an opportunity to hear our guest speaker

Mark Sakamoto's unbelievable story.

Mark is a Canadian born lawyer, writer, producer and entrepreneur, who lives in Toronto. Mark currently is Executive Vice-President of Think Research, a digital health company. He is most noted for his book

“Forgiveness – A Gift from my

Grandparents” –a family memoir, which was published in 2014. He won the CBC Canada Reads Award Giller Prize in 2018. He is originally from Medicine Hat, Alberta, and is the son of a Japanese-Canadian father, Stan Sakamoto, and a Scottish-Canadian mother, Diane Maclean. Mark's grandfather was Ralph Maclean, Royal Rifles of Canada, who was in the Battle of Hong Kong, and a POW in Hong Kong and Japan.

His book was made into a play which successfully ran in Calgary in 2023 at the Jubilee Theater for many weeks. It is now going to be presented at the Stratford Festival, beginning in August.

## Registration



Registration packages will be sent out in late March to all members, and to those who have emailed [2025reunion@hkvca.ca](mailto:2025reunion@hkvca.ca) to express their interest in attending.

The registration fee will be \$300 per person, which includes all the events, transportation between venues and most meals. This is an incredible value, as the meals alone amount to over \$400! The fee for children 12 and under is \$150.

If you are unable to attend this fantastic event, please consider making a donation of at least the registration fee of \$300 instead.

## Westin Hotel Booking



The Westin Hotel is holding a block of rooms for this Commemoration at a special discounted rate of \$239 per night plus taxes, so be sure to

book as soon as you are able to ensure availability.

To book on-line click [here](#) or go to our HKVCA website and you'll find a Reservation link that connects directly with the Westin Hotel. When booking, please refer to V-J Day Reunion. Confirm the number of people who will be in the room and the number of beds in the room. The discount rooms offered contain a King bed or 2 Double beds and all rooms start on the sixth floor and up. The Reunion meeting rooms and eating facilities are all on the 3rd and 4th floors.

Or you may book by phoning 1-(888)-627-8528, but be sure to ask for the V-J Day Reunion special rate. If you need an accessible room book early, as they are in limited supply. Accessible rooms must be booked by phone. Please advise Westin staff if you require a wheelchair accessible room with either tub or shower. Remember, to book an accessible room you need to book directly with the Westin staff and not another booking agent.

The Westin Hotel is located at #11 Colonel By Drive in downtown Ottawa. The Westin does not have a hotel shuttle, so if arriving by air, a taxi will be required from the airport. If you are driving, parking is available, and details are on the HKVCA website. Please refer to our website [www.hkvca.ca](http://www.hkvca.ca) for updates and additional information.

## Anniversary Fund Raising

Fundraising to help reduce registration fees is a major focus of the planning committee, and we can use your help! We have developed an extensive sponsorship package that is available by emailing [2025reunion@hkvca.ca](mailto:2025reunion@hkvca.ca) which you can use to describe the event to potential donors. Please look into your own community for potential sources of donations. No donation is too small!

If you are unable to attend the event, please consider donating at least the registration fee of \$300 instead.

All donations can be sent to our Treasurer Mark Purcell at Apt. #602, 70 Drury Street, Bradford, Ontario L3Z 1W9. Donations can also easily be made online at [www.hkvca.com/donations](http://www.hkvca.com/donations). Charitable donations tax receipts are provided for donations \$20 and above.

## President's Message



*Mike Babin*

The excitement is building! Just over 5 months from now we will begin our commemoration of the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of V-J Day. Your 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee has been working hard to bring you an action-packed event, full of

opportunities for you and your families to honour our Hong Kong Veterans, to learn more about their experiences, and to share stories.

The HKVCA has held reunions before, in many locations across the country. They have been a wonderful way to recognize and remember. But this year, for the first time, there will not be any Veterans present. That's a big reason why this year's event is such an important one. It's now up to us to keep the stories of our Hong Kong Veterans alive.

Many of you have items given to you by your Veteran relating to their service. We will be holding a display of these memorabilia at the 80<sup>th</sup> event and encourage you to bring yours to show off and discuss! Please contact our Memorabilia coordinator, Randy Wing at [wingrt88@gmail.com](mailto:wingrt88@gmail.com) for more details.

If you are unable to attend the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event in Ottawa, please consider making a donation to the HKVCA in lieu. Donations are easy to make from our website by clicking [here](#).

There's lots more information in the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary article above.

## Come Join Us!

Our 80th Reunion is meant to honour all of our Veterans who have passed, but also to honour all of you, the families and friends who have supported the HKVCA all these years.

Our theme "**Legacy of Remembrance**", our beacon, is the incentive for our 80th Reunion Committee to do all that we can to make this historical commemoration memorable.

Take care everybody, and be sure to join us in Ottawa!

Spring is right around the corner. Stay warm – stay well and hope to hear from you soon.

Respectfully submitted by the 80th Anniversary Reunion Committee

## Election and AGM

We are required to hold an election every year for our Board of Directors. Please consider nominating yourself or someone else who you think could contribute to the HKVCA. We especially encourage grandchildren of Hong Kong Veterans to come forward.

Our Annual General Meeting will be on Tuesday, May 6 at 2pm ET.

Please see the Elections article later in this newsletter for details.

## King Charles III Coronation Medal

I am delighted to announce that seven members of the HKVCA have been selected to receive this significant honour.

The medal is being awarded to individuals who have demonstrated sustained and significant contributions to their volunteer organizations. Our medal recipients certainly exemplify this. They are:

Lori Atkinson Smith	Kathie Carlson
Carol Hadley	Pam Heinrichs
Lucette Mailloux Muir	Barry Mitchell
Jim Trick	

Recipients of the medal must have been alive on May 6, 2023, the date of The King's Coronation. We are very pleased that Hong Kong Veteran Hormidas Fredette, who passed away November 29, 2023, will be awarded the medal posthumously.

Please join me in congratulating our King Charles III Coronation Medal awardees, and in thanking them for their very meaningful and long-term contributions to the HKVCA and to our Hong Kong Veterans!

As we head into spring and the reawakening of our environment from winter, I wish for you to have nothing but blue skies and sunshine!

## In Memoriam

Joyce May Clarkson Harmon passed away on Nov. 18, 2024 at home Lodi, CA, USA (widow of Kenneth H. Clarkson RRC E29901)

Audrey Lowe, passed away on Sept. 6, 2024 at Wales Home, Cleveland, QC (widow of Arthur Lowe RRC E30157)

I look forward to seeing you in Ottawa in August!

**We will remember them.**

HKVCA member - Robert Alan Ouellette, grandson of Joseph Ouellette H6526, on December 29, 2024.

## Gems and Nuggets



*Jim Trick*

### Improving the “Individual Report”

Those of you looking for information on a family member who was in ‘C’ Force or who are doing research will sooner or later take advantage of the “Individual Report”. This allows you to view the extent of the information that we have gathered, and in the “Related Documentation” block lists various other sites and services that may provide additional assistance such as links to Facebook.

We’ve just added another: [Find a Grave®](#) This site is a huge database focused, not surprisingly, on burial places. When you arrive at the site search page, fill in as much detail as you can for best results. It does not play well with small

errors in your search criteria, so it pays to do your homework when you intend to use it.

### Books

If you’re researching any aspect of ‘C’ Force you’ll find a wealth of references on our [Suggested Reading](#) library. It contains a varied combination of references to hard copy volumes from various sources, but right at the top of the page is a short-list of books in digital format that we host right here on our HKVCA site. These are viewable on all devices.

Thank you to these authors for allowing us to convert them from paper and host them for free as a public service.

## Call for Nominations and Notice of Annual General Meeting

### Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 6, 2025 at 2pm Eastern Time, by telephone. Please see the details at the end of this newsletter.

### Election of Directors

A key item on the agenda of the AGM is the election of the Board of Directors. We are seeking candidates to serve as Directors and would especially welcome grandchildren of

Hong Kong Veterans to volunteer. The role of our directors is to:

- Ensure that the HKVCA’s mission and goals are properly executed.
- Ensure the HKVCA’s financial resources are managed and utilized correctly and consistently in accordance with our mission.
- Represent the needs and desires of the HKVCA’s members, and to maintain communication with the membership.



- Ensure that Veterans Affairs Canada continues to manage the welfare of the widows of Hong Kong Veterans in accordance with established programs.

Our Board meetings are held once per month via Zoom, so access to, and ability to use a computer, phone or tablet equipped with a webcam and microphone/speakers or headset is required.

Please consider volunteering for this vital role in the HKVCA or nominate a member you feel can contribute to our association.

## Ontario Offerings

*Shelagh Purcell*

Barry Fair (John Grey Fair-RRC) survived the mail strike by phoning friends at Christmas. Now he's catching up on all the letters and cards sent to him. Meeting in Ottawa in August will provide time to share Hong Kong stories. Something we haven't had an opportunity to do for a while. Plan to attend.

Barbara Drew (Winston Cunningham-CDC) and her daughters may not be able to be in Ottawa. Work times and mobility might be difficult.

Donna Drimmie (Victor Oliver Fehr-RRC) had a quiet Christmas with family visiting slowed down by colds. Still making cards, Donna has a special relationship with her niece who gets her own important cards.

Susan Ewing (Kenneth Ewing-RRC) in her new location is close to family members for getting together. They plan to be in Ottawa for the 80th celebration- looking forward to seeing friends.

Grace Thornton (Howard Thornton-WG) moved to a new place recently and discovered an old friend there. The location is more country, with no stores around, but it will be good for walking once the snow is gone.

Jim Hurd (Edmund Lionel Hurd-RRC) is still dealing with some health issues. Plans to check with his brother Fred about Ottawa and the 80th celebration.

Mavis Martin (John Martin-RRC) was in hospital when I called. Hoping to go home soon. Thankfully, her daughters have been a good help.

Oda Barlow (Edwin Barlow-RCASC) spoke to Oda on January 31st to say we are thinking of her. She has her 102nd birthday coming up in March.

Cara Worthington (Bert Worthington-British) when I mentioned Oda, Cara immediately spoke about remembering her and the talks they would have. Cara was visiting her daughter in the Yukon when she fell and fractured several ribs. She's recovering but it always takes time.

YES! I would like to put my name forward to join the HKVCA Board of Directors.

Please send your name and telephone number, a brief biography, and a brief summary of your skills to nomination@hkvca.ca by **deadline April 1, 2025** or mail to our postal address (see end of newsletter).

If you know of someone who would be a positive asset to the Board, and if they agree, please submit their name to the same address.

Jean Killoran (John Killoran-RRC) feeling good and enjoying her place. Jean tells me that she was born in 1927, so she will be 98 on her next birthday. She and her husband John were very involved in the Legion.

Esther Jane Geraghty (Donald Geraghty-RRC) her daughter Kelly says she is pretty good. She will be 90 in May.

Sad Goodbye to Irene Firlotte. Her daughter Susan phoned to say she had passed at age 99. A long time part of this calling list.

## Anniversary of the "Battle of Hong Kong"

*Deborah Legg*



*In memory of Royal Rifles Lawrence, Raymond and Leo Ross of Bury, Quebec.*

On Christmas Day, 1941, the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers were captured by the Japanese. This marked the beginning of a 3-year, 8-month imprisonment of 1689 Canadian soldiers. To commemorate the 83rd anniversary, Remember November 11th Association gathered in Remembrance Gardens for a "Lighting of the Lights" ceremony.



*Hazel, Noah and Ella*

Third generation children of WWII veterans lined the pathways with tealights, while group members installed a large spotlight in front of the Hong Kong monument. The tealights

had a 48 hour charge, lasting until Christmas day. The larger lights are solar and will illuminate the Stone indefinitely. Our Director Sean Wilson of info@RememberNovember11.com, posted an article on Facebook about this anniversary.

#### LEST WE FORGET - WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



*Lana and Yvon Chartrand. Daughters of Lawrence Ross*

Permission to use pictures and names as per Debbie Legg

## Announcements

### Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association will be held on: Tuesday, May 6 at 2pm (Eastern Time).

Agenda:

- Approval of Minutes of last AGM, held May, 2023.
- Presentation of 2024 Financial Statement
- Election of Directors
- Appointment of Officers
- Brief presentations by Regional Directors
- President's Remarks
- Questions from Members
- Close

The meeting will be held via toll-free conference call. Watch your email for an invitation containing the instructions in late April.

### Gravestone Marker Project update

It's almost that time of year!! Dare I say- a walk outside. The perfect time to honour your favourite 'C' force veteran with the red HK emblem on their final resting place.

Derrill, Roxanna and I are endeavouring to get the HK gravestone marker on every 'C' Force member's gravestone. Our thanks to Marie Kennedy for her donation to the fund to help us with this HKVCA project.



Here's the [link](#) explaining how YOU can purchase or donate (we are a charitable organization - donations over \$20 get a tax receipt)

<https://www.hkvca.ca/projects/gravestone/index.php>

And as always- we welcome people to jump on board with us.

## Commemorating the 80th



After accidentally scratching a child's face, Gander's original owner gave him to the Royal Rifles of Canada, a regiment of the Canadian Army stationed at Gander Airport, Newfoundland. The soldiers there "promoted" him to Sergeant and took him along with their unit to Hong Kong in the fall of 1941. In Hong Kong Gander helped fight the Japanese invaders on three occasions.

Due to space limitations in this printed copy, some detail that appears in the online version has been omitted, and some photos cropped and resized.

**Please note:** underlined words in articles refer to links that are active in our online version or are active if you view our PDF copy on screen.

Want to contact us by mail? Here is our postal address:

HKVCA  
Suite 164  
1826 Robertson Road  
Ottawa, ON K2H 1B9

*(Submitted by Lori Atkinson Smith)*

## Gander T-Shirts

The last time, Gander picked up a Japanese hand grenade and while rushing it back to the Japanese he sadly died in the ensuing explosion, but saved the lives of several wounded Canadian soldiers.

These T-shirts, created by HKVCA member JP Bear, are a tribute to his memory that you can wear proudly.

Mens and Ladies sizes (also, in youth) Sizes are: S, M, L, XL, 2XL

**\$25.00 CAD**

To order: send an email to Bear at [jpbearganderfilm@gmail.com](mailto:jpbearganderfilm@gmail.com), including the following information:

1. Quantity requested
2. Sizes
3. Your mailing address for postal delivery. Not needed if you intend to pick up the items at the 80th.

After he receives your email for your order Bear will send you an invoice that you will click on and then pay for your order using PayPal. Orders are shipped from Canada and include tax and postage.

Note: **Orders must be received no later than May 16.**