

Annual report from Prairie Region: 2022

Prairie Region has 172 members - 156 regular members, 16 widows and no veterans.

Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic, we have been able to hold regular monthly meetings in Winnipeg at the Viscount Gort Hotel and keep members informed by email. In May we changed the monthly meeting place to Smitty's Restaurant as they had a separate room which cut the noise during our meeting.

In Alberta, under the direction of Kathie Carlson and her area reps, they stay in contact with our members and participate in area events.

We attend the Board of Directors monthly meetings and send out a quarterly communication to our members through the national newsletter.

HK flag flies at the Cenotaph in August and December in Winnipeg, thanks to the Provincial government and Stan Lopata for looking after dropping it off and picking it up.

There have been several projects carry into 2022. Four plaques in various places were completed and this project will be ongoing if other requests come in; lawn signs are available through Judy Preston in Russell, MB with the supply dwindling; and Pam Heinrichs coordinating the Indigenous/Metis Project and waiting for the grant to assist with the costs.

There has been interest in the banners that the Legions are coordinating, and several members and smaller communities have initiated this in our Region. The Lethbridge Royal Canadian Legion in cooperation with the City of Lethbridge, initiated a Banner program, "Salute to Veterans" in the summer of 2022. In their first year, 90 veterans were honored by placing banners on light poles throughout the downtown core of the city. All banners will be displayed for six weeks every year prior to the end of November. Kathie Carlson's family was able to honour her father, Hong Kong Veteran Leonard Corrigan, Winnipeg Grenadier, by having his banner included in this project.

BC Region had a poetry contest and information was distributed throughout Prairie Region. The results posted on the website.

We are working with the Last Post Fund people to locate and report veterans unmarked graves and have marker stones placed on them. Also, for Indigenous veterans their traditional name can be added. For veterans' grave markers, the stone can have the regimental crest of their unit as well as their wife's name. Anyone who is aware of an unmarked grave, we can arrange to have a marker placed on the site to honour the individual.

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Four names from Prairie Region were submitted to be interviewed by the museum people in the **War Museum Oral History Project**.

A request for more HK grave markers involved a search for another supplier. One was found and an order placed and received.

Red River Heritage Fair did not take place in May 2022 due to the uncertainty of Covid 19. However, we were able to attend the MSSTA PD day, October 21, 2022. Stan Lopata and Alex Taylor participated at this conference with our display and new banners.

A decision was made to replicate the banners that are used in ON Region for added information with our displays, so we had 2 sets made – one for Alberta for their events and one set in Manitoba. They are easier to transport, informative and make a great display on their own.

Plans began for the VJ Day in August. Thank you to Eirik Bardal, grandson of Njall Bardal (WG HK) who donated his facility for the reception. The service was held in the Field of Honour in Brookside Cemetery with several dignitaries – VAC rep, political reps, and representatives of other veteran groups, laid wreaths. Many members and families also attended the reception following. Padre, Rev. Murray Still, (grandson of Joseph Oige, WG HK) officiated at the service. Our Colour Party (Alex Taylor and Stan Lopata) and a piper and bugler were a welcome addition to our service.

We decided to have a Battle in Hong Kong event in December as our members asked for more information. We requested items from the Manitoba Museum and St Vital Museum to add to our usual displays. Thank you to Eirik Bardal, grandson of Njall Bardal (WG HK) who donated his facility for the reception. We invited the WG Cadets, other veteran groups, a guest speaker (Dwight MacAuley, former Protocol Officer for Manitoba) and other dignitaries (Bob Holliday and Brian Mayes assisted in the Arden 7 project) and arranged for refreshments. Padre Paul Lampman officiated.

We attended and laid a wreath at the Provincial Remembrance Day service at the Convention Centre and showed off our Display with the new banners. This became a backdrop for several interviews of the media. There were also Remembrance Day services for the Aboriginal Veterans at Minto Armouries and

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for the Red River Metis at the Royal Aviation Museum with HKVCA representatives at each service.

We attended the Remembrance Day Service at St. Luke's Church where the WG colours are retired. St. Luke's Church have given the Manitoba Museum the WG Colours to try to refurbish – however they are to deteriorate with age so they will stay in the Museum and a duplicate set of Colours will be created for the Church.

Our banners are such a hit we have decided to expand their content and add a couple more. Pam Heinrichs and Kathie Carlson will collaborate on a 4th banner designating the Battle of HK with Indigenous/Metis content. A fifth banner will be dedicated to the POW camps – especially the ones in Japan. The WG Cadets agreed to investigate and prepare the information. These 2 banners are work in progress.

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. She also chaired our Elections Committee with Norma Fuchs, Cynthia Melanson, and Jim Trick.

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

We are contacted every year by family members and friends of C Force for more information on their family member. We encourage them to use the website as an excellent resource and if they have information to send it along to our researchers to include in the history of the member.

Indigenous Veterans of C Force Project—Co-ordinated by Pam Heinrichs

We have reached out in our newsletters, on social media, and by word of mouth, asking families of Indigenous veterans of C Force to contact us regarding the project. We are gathering information about these members of C Force and, with their families' permission, placing their names on our List of Indigenous Veterans of C Force that is on our website. We have retained the services of the Centre des patrimoines/St. Boniface Historical Society to assist us in identifying the Indigenous vets, starting with the Winnipeg Grenadiers. This work is ongoing. Thank you to Pam for her work and dedication on this project.

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

Respectfully submitted, Carol Hadley, Board of Directors - Prairie Region, Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association www.hkvca.ca