



**ARP 798 – Special Study Project**  
**Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931 – 1945**  
**Focus: Canadian Hong Kong Veterans**

**A Resource Guide for Teachers of Senior Social Studies – Rationale**

As a high school History / Social Studies teacher, my curriculum responsibilities relate to 20<sup>th</sup> century world history and historical / contemporary Canadian history. Throughout high school, college, university, and as a student teacher I molded my studies, interests, and pursuits to this field in order to become a “specialist”. It is difficult to sufficiently cover every topic related to this field of study, in fact it is impossible. Teachers are fortunate that the B.C. Ministry of Education identifies topics deemed curricularly important as prescribed learning outcomes (PLO’s). These PLO’s are a guide of essential content and found in the Integrated Resource Packages (IRP’s) for every subject taught in B.C. schools.

The PLO’s of Social Studies 11, History 12, and Law 12 give students across B.C. uniformity in what is taught; regardless of their schools’ geographic location, socio-economic status, race, gender, and so on. Problems arise in teaching the Social Studies content when individual teachers are not on the same page curricularly. There are many factors which contribute to a teacher’s content omissions – purposely or not. Individual teacher’s personal interests, school location within the province, field study opportunities, cross grade departmental exams which have a school focus, funding / budgets, and time constraints are examples.



Perhaps tied in to all such issues surrounding what gets taught is resource availability. If teachers are afforded the opportunities to have accessible, teacher friendly, self explanatory, and student orientated lessons related to content area, curriculum uniformity can occur. This is a must for students to be on a level “playing field”. A key to overcoming this problem is resource availability.

Case in point; **Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931 – 1945**. Despite the wide range of topics within this subject it tends to be ignored, bypassed, or neglected. As a senior social studies teacher with a vested interest in this topic this is most baffling. Like the European theater of W.W.II, Canadians had a significant role in the Asia-Pacific theater during and after W.W.II. Yet the story in the Asia-Pacific is not known, or often told. Why? Can partial factors be related to the Canadian government’s shame? The fears of offending a valuable trading partner in Japan? Wanting to forget what happened and move on? The silence of veterans because of their many years of neglect? Often resources are available to cover subject matter, yet in the case of the Asia Pacific War, there is limited coverage in available resources. Traditionally, Canadian textbooks have focused on the European theater of W.W.II. It is difficult enough within a department, school, and / or district, let alone a province to expect teachers to teach the same topics as prescribed by the Ministry without adequate resources. A third factor is teachers being unaware or lacking the knowledge in this area – a combination of a lack of exposure and limited resources. Within the subject of Human Rights in the Asia – Pacific during W.W.II, for Social Studies / History teachers and students, this needs to change.



This chapter of history relates to Social Studies 11 as prescribed learning outcomes

clearly states that it is expected students in S.S. 11 will:

- Describe Canada's role in international conflicts, including World War II, and assess the impact on Canada
- Describe and assess Canada's participation in world affairs
- Identify and assess political issues facing Canadians
- Demonstrate skills associated with active citizenship
- Recognize connections between events and their causes, consequences, and implications

The subject of Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945 can be applied to broader topics in History 12 with the following PLO's:

- analyze historical evidence to assess reliability, distinguish between primary and secondary sources, identify bias and point of view, corroborate evidence
- demonstrate an understanding of the struggle for human rights
- compare the nature of democratic and totalitarian states and their impacts on individuals

Similarly, Law 12 has clear connections to this subject. Students can use case studies on

Hong Kong Veterans to:

- define law and evaluate its purpose in society
- distinguish between moral and legal issues
- demonstrate an understanding of legal principles such as the rule of law and natural justice
- describe how and why laws change and the consequences of such change on society
- analyze why society criminalizes certain behaviors

The Ministry of Education mandates this topic, yet for various reasons teachers are provided limited resources to teach it. Initially, I worked with scant resources before developing a personal collection of resources.



My experiences to date are that students, teachers, and colleagues alike feel this is an important topic to be covered in senior social studies classes. To quote a student of mine:

There are many parts of World War II that are well known to many people, and are an integral part of the high school Social Studies curriculum. However there are many lesser-known battles that were fought during this war, battles that all Canadians should be taught about, such as the 1941 battle of Hong Kong and the aftermath. This battle tells of Canadian loyalty, the betrayal of the British Government, and about how our government turned their backs on these [Canadian] Hong Kong Veterans ...their actions should be acknowledged, commended and appreciated by all. (Jody Dawson, October 2000)



### **Relevance Of 798 Project, A Need!**

**Human Rights In The Asia Pacific 1931-1945**, with my focus on Canadian Hong Kong Veterans, is available to every secondary school in British Columbia. Every one! The Ministry of Education deemed this curriculum important and relevant to the lives of students across our province, thus invested time and money into ensuring a quality resource would be produced to aid teachers. There is no longer a need to search out this topic, or flip past it in a textbook. There is a base for all to start with. **Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931 – 1945** is available in a teacher friendly booklet and broken down into sections: introduction, teacher backgrounder, lessons (one through five), resources and handouts. It is complete with maps, testimonials, pictures, quotes, details of peace treaties and international conventions on war, assessment and extension possibilities. Both young and old, new and experienced, exposed and unexposed teachers now have the opportunity to share a story with students before the 247 (calculated as of August 2001 by Lionel Speller) veterans who fought valiantly and bravely, both in battle and as prisoners of war, are gone. The resource is there to help teachers with their courses and recognize the sacrifices of Canadians in W.W.II beyond what is already covered. It is unprecedented in terms of curriculum. Perhaps even more relevant is bringing history alive for students and getting across to them that history is not just about dates. Teaching is my passion and my love of it is heightened when my enthusiasm, compassion, and interest is picked up on by my students and they in turn show an interest. Making my courses relevant to students is a challenge but when I present materials to them and they



embrace it, I know I have connected with them. It shows in their attitude, efforts, enthusiasm, interest, and work produced. I have had many students come into my classes with a preset notion that Socials Studies, History, and Law are boring. Why do we have to study this? Who cares about a bunch of dates? This is old news? P.O.W.'s aren't relevant anymore? Rarely do my students leave with such an attitude. After teaching my W.W.II unit there is a more positive attitude in my class towards history. My coverage of the Asia-Pacific war, within the context of W.W.II, goes beyond what is covered in the [Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945](#) resource. I have stories, letters, articles, testimonials, book readings, and insight that others do not have (I have had an interest and taught this subject since 1995). Despite all the resources that I use, I conclude with the question set found on page sixty-three of the resource (see insert titled: Response Guide For Canadian Prisoners Of War, Handout 2.3). One example of the responses I have received from students is courtesy of Maria Karogiannis (see Maria Karogiannis student sample) Maria was part of an energetic, bright, and active class who all handed in great work that showed insight, opinions, and compassion for Hong Kong Veterans. They did not all share the same concerns or views but they all took a stance and made their views known to me. I selected Maria's, with permission, for this section because her answers speak volumes about the subject. Students are so interested in this topic yet in the past students potentially were denied learning about our Hong Kong Veterans. It is my hope that the teacher friendly resource will expose students to this, spark interest, and serve as a basis for teachers and students to explore even further. Relevant indeed!



A second, significant part, of my special study project is exposing the resource. It has been made available to schools throughout the province but if teachers are not made aware of the resources' potential and relevance to their curriculum / courses it runs the danger of becoming "shelved". In creating the resource I assume that some teachers already teach this topic. For them, the resource presents an opportunity for enhancement. For those who are not exposed to the Hong Kong veterans' story this is a great addition to their course. It is useful and put together to assist them. My biggest fear throughout developing this curriculum was that the resource would not be used. As previously stated this project has not been re-done, or re-introduced, it is brand new and unprecedented. Many teachers may not want to take on new curriculum but the curriculum is not new, the booklet is curriculum! Teachers need to know this. I have exposed colleagues in my school and those whom I mark provincial exams with to **Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945**. I have also given two presentations. My first presentation was when the resource was still in the development stage, October 2000. This presentation was mostly material I had been using in the classroom prior to working on the resource. It included potential Hong Kong material within the proposed Ministry of Education resource on the Asia-Pacific and bringing a veteran to tell his story to Social Studies teachers (see booklet titled NO SWEAT: Getting Fit for Active Citizenship). This proved to be one the most rewarding experiences in my teaching career. The interest and exposure proved very inspiring to Don McPherson (guest speaker), the twenty-five teachers who attended, and myself. I gave a second workshop in Panama on Friday, October 19, 2001 (see booklet titled Making Waves: Teaching Controversial Issues in the



Classroom and More...). My presentation, Canadian Hong Kong Veterans: Their Story, Struggle, And Survival introduced Hong Kong veterans, with former P.O.W. of the Japanese, Larry Stebbe, speaking on behalf of all veterans. I incorporated **Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931 – 1945** as part of my presentation / workshop as the resource had been distributed, or was in the process of being, administered to all secondary schools in British Columbia. In order for the teacher resource to get continued exposure and have teachers see what is available, presentations / workshops are essential. Further to the October 2001 presentation I gave on Canada's Hong Kong Veterans, I received the following e- mail from a former University friend (see next page e-mail dated Thursday, December 6, 2001). Julian had often heard about Hong Kong veterans and after attending my workshop and meeting Hong Kong veteran Larry Stebbe, Julian was compelled to take the Hong Kong Veterans curriculum a step further. Showing initiative and leadership had paid off. I can only imagine if once exposed to and aware of Hong Kong Veterans W.W.II sacrifices, that more teachers will tell this story to their students. I dedicated myself to getting Hong Kong curriculum developed on behalf of the veterans and their families, students and teachers, and the public. Words of encouragement reassure me that leading through example results in meaningful and purposeful curriculum growth – my goal!



## **Leadership in the field of Curriculum and Instruction**

Throughout high school, and as a university student, I was taught very little about the Asia – Pacific theater of war. Specifically, I was never taught about Canadian Hong Kong Veterans: their story, their struggle, or survival. On a professional development day, as a student teacher in 1995, I was given a video to watch titled, The Valour and the Horror: Savage Christmas Hong Kong 1941. Why had I not seen this before? It was relevant to the lives of all Canadians as it featured Canadians in battle. It depicts the inhumanity, death, and torture faced by our brave soldiers. Government neglect and political indifference is exposed. Immediately after watching the video I wrote Veterans Affairs Canada to get in touch with the two Hong Kong veterans featured in the video. I began an instant friendship with Bob “Flash” Clayton, and now deceased, Bob Manchester. They were both thrilled and surprised to have a teacher show interest in their story as prior to the release of Savage Christmas: Hong Kong 1941, little interest had been expressed. For forty-six years they were virtually silent, or silenced! Despite limited resources, I made a commitment to Hong Kong Veterans across Canada, and myself, to expose this topic of history. I came about this subject by accident and I don’t want other teachers and students to be denied access or resources to this chapter of Canadian history. As of August 2001 there are a mere 247 Canadian Hong Kong Veterans left who are “aging faster and dying sooner”. Their stories, sacrifices, suffering, and heroics need be recognized and acknowledged.



Getting the Hong Kong Veterans curriculum out to Social Studies educators in British Columbia is an ambitious endeavor. No thorough or detailed resource, beyond scant textbook coverage, is available to teachers. As a result there is no scope or sequence to what one teacher is doing compared to another. I have been approached on various occasions by the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (HKVCA) about putting together curriculum to “do what I do in the classroom for other teachers”. This has always interested me but the timing and initiative did not mesh. With the dwindling number of veterans, the friendships that I have gained throughout the network of veterans and their families, the support of colleagues, and for the sake of my students, the time is now to take a leadership role in this curricular field. I plan on changing the current situation by developing curriculum. I want to produce a quality product that will not become “shelf insulation”. Part of the leadership process is networking, sharing, developing, and making people aware of what is available. The teacher friendly resource, [Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945](#) (with my focus on Canadian Hong Kong Veterans) will be accessible and publicized. My liaison with teachers, and leadership by example(s), are essential components to this curriculum being effectively implemented throughout British Columbia.



### **Skills to Develop and Strengthen**

Throughout the process of developing, implementing, and “spreading curricular news” related to Canadian Hong Kong Veterans, there are four areas I focused on, and continue to develop and strengthen.

#### **Develop and Strengthen: Collaboration of ideas within a group of educators (working with others)**

This has been fundamental to developing and presenting Hong Kong Veterans curriculum. I have been teaching Hong Kong curriculum to my students since 1996 and in doing so, have compiled, collected, and refined material to spark an interest in my students. I have gathered valuable information from colleagues, parents of students, Royal Canadian Legion members, and Hong Kong Veterans (and their families). When I became serious about curricularly pursuing this material at a province wide scale, I first had to see what other teachers were doing in this field. I have made a genuine effort to collaborate with other experts; both teachers and those outside of the education field. With a working resource guide for senior social studies teachers completed, there is still a need to liaison with other teachers, Veterans – their families, special interest groups, administration, district and Ministry of Education personnel. Completing the curriculum resource involved many meetings and group work sessions with Veterans, Ministry of Education personal, human rights consultants, special interest group (B.C. ALPHA),



university professors, colleagues, editors, and students. I then came to realize the need for sharing, accepting, and compromising with others. I have learned a great deal about sharing ideas, presentation techniques, as well as diplomacy with diverse groups. As my 798 project continues, the need still exists in presenting information and using diplomacy. These needs include refining material, “reading groups”, continuing effective and purposeful collaborations, planning, giving presentations (within the classroom and at workshops), and speaking with shareholders. These skills are invaluable and on an ongoing basis need to be fine-tuned in order to get this curriculum successfully implemented and understood throughout high schools in British Columbia.



**Develop and Strengthen: Computer skills, Internet use, interviewing skills, and research**

Computer, Internet, interviewing, and research skills are intertwined and ongoing. They are essential in creating quality and lessons to be applied and developed in the classroom, in communications with colleagues, veterans, and others who are involved in both curriculum development and curriculum presentation. When I developed lessons for my students in the past, it was simple word processing and photocopying. In order to produce quality content and quality lessons there was, and remains, a definite need for the Internet, interviewing and dialogue, and further research skills. My computer skills have increased throughout the development of Hong Kong material and fortunately during the draft production, through to the final draft of the actual resource, I had the expertise of an editor. The editor and layout design specialist hired by the Ministry of Education provided excellent insight into what goes into producing a document of this magnitude. Throughout the development of my 798 project I have experimented with and successfully adopted running headers, internet searches, inserting page numbers, scanning, cutting and pasting, transferring, word processing, and many other computer techniques that have become “doable”. In the past this was not the case. These skills are fundamental to the success of my 798 project, as well as essential in adapting lessons associated with Hong Kong veterans. I was able to grasp what potential there was in making the content workable and presentable for a diverse group of students and teachers. During the creation stage I was made aware of the need for greater research, for



accuracy, pinpointing histories, clarification of content, and legality issues. The need for historical authenticity and a clear understanding has been made paramount to me during presentations in my class and at Provincial workshops. People want to know all the answers, all the stories, all the participants, and all the angles. Continued research keeps me sharp and aware of current developments related to Hong Kong veterans. These skills (internet, interview & research) are components that are essential to be an expert in curriculum development. People skills are also essential to collect information, facts, and stories to make retrieval as simple as possible.



**Develop and Strengthen: Broadening teaching and presentation horizons**

As a teacher I am always looking for ways to develop and better myself, my lessons, and find new ways to present material. I am passionate about the Hong Kong curriculum and know it's essential to spark students' interest in order to have them become interested.

This also holds true in the presentation of material that was developed in order to promote this topic. Feedback from student responses in their written work, our discussions, and the level of interest throughout lessons, as well as discussions and evaluations during presentations at provincial workshops are all key to my continued improvement in presenting this subject material. Continued Quality Improvement and setting high standards for my audience and myself are essential parts of both broadening and strengthening my horizons.



**Develop and Strengthen: Working on various tasks and components with the big picture in mind**

Undertaking curriculum development, refinement, growth, and building up a continued knowledge base, coupled with confidence and effective presentations, are big tasks. This is combined with continued building of resources. On top of a full time teaching load, these tasks serve a curricular purpose – to get their story, struggle, and survival of Hong Kong Veterans out. This subject has been paramount in my curricular focus for senior social studies and it is what I think should be taught throughout B.C. social studies classes. Development and presentation is an ongoing task but commitment and focus on future acceptance keeps me going. Time management, collaboration, Internet research, student and teacher support, strengthening and improving content and delivery, and life long learning are the strengths and skills needed.

When narrowed down, it is these four strengthening / acquiring skills (collaboration, research, teaching & presenting, the “big picture”) that are the most relevant and are my focus. I am striving for the recognition of Canadian Hong Kong veterans, as part of **Human Right in the Asia Pacific 1931 – 1945**, knowing there will be trials and tribulations. I began this curriculum undertaking with the end in mind and in doing so am aware that these four components will be expanded, this year and beyond, as Hong Kong curriculum gets recognized.



**Foundation Supporting Special Study Project:**  
**Human Rights In The Asia Pacific 1931-1945**  
**Focus: Canadian Hong Kong Veterans**

**Literature Review / Curricular Description**

World War Two is an enormous 20<sup>th</sup> century history subject in terms of scope, perspective, battles, politics, personalities, theatres, lessons to be learned, and so on. I would argue that W.W.II is one of the biggest topics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Canada played a microcosmic yet significant role in W.W.II; one such contribution that Canadians played was in the 1941 battle for Hong Kong. This was the first fighting Canadians did in W.W.II after independently declaring war on September 10, 1939. W.W.II is fundamental to the Social Studies 11 and History 12 curriculum and issues related to war and human rights are relevant to Law 12 (see curriculum links detailed on pages 2 and 3). Yet the Ministry of Education mandated textbook I listed in my bibliography for grade 11 Social Studies, Canadian Issues, does little more than lip service to the significance, suffering, and sacrifice made by brave Canadian soldiers in their gallant attempt to stave off a Japanese fighting force of 50, 000. A three hundred and ninety-six page text focuses on "... the key issues that have affected Canada in the twentieth century" (p. 1). To no fault of the authors, despite thirty five pages dedicated to W.W. II, coverage on the Hong Kong veterans gets a mere insert. This highlights the need for **Human Rights In The Asia Pacific 1931-1945** with a focus on **Canadian Hong Kong Veterans**. The case study from Canadian Issues, page 157, is inserted here for perusal.



CASE STUDY

### THE BATTLE FOR HONG KONG, 1941

The former British colony of Hong Kong at the edge of China was a long way from the European war zone. But the Allies were also at war with Japan, and the British believed that their colony needed defending. When Canada was asked to supply the troops, a force of Canadian soldiers crossed the Pacific by ship and took up positions around Hong Kong.

When the Japanese attacked, the Canadians were sitting ducks. They were outnumbered and most of them were not yet trained. In any case, all

the experts agreed that the colony was indefensible. After a fierce fight lasting less than three weeks, the Canadians surrendered on Christmas Day, 1941.

But the ordeal was far from over. Survivors were rounded up by the Japanese. They spent the rest of the war in prison camps where they suffered terrible mistreatment. In total, 555 Canadians—more than one-quarter of the entire force that had gone to Hong Kong—did not return home.

The prescribed grade 12 textbooks for History 12 cover W.W. II in great detail, but without reference to the Battle for Hong Kong. Law 12 prescribed texts also cover issues related to human rights and war, yet no mention is made of Canadians role and sufferings in the Pacific (as such none of these texts are listed in my bibliography). As a Social Studies / History teacher and member of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association I find it very disheartening that I can not rely on text material to teach this chapter of history (especially given it's curricular connections).

I have relied heavily on Hong Kong veterans themselves as primary sources. They have inspired and informed me, despite difficulty in retelling the horrors, hardships, and inhumanity of battle and captivity. They share with me their memories because they want their story to be told, and have had very little interest shown towards their contributions to Canada's W.W. II efforts. In the case of teachers, they are either unaware or ill equipped, not because they have a lack of compassion. It is the veterans I have listed who have been able to really provide insights for my students. These primary



sources gravitate student interest to all history, not just this story. Primary accounts make history real. I have had many students tell me that they have always found history boring until learning first hand what young men such as Lionel Speller, Don McPherson, Larry Stebbe, and Bob “Flash” Clayton had to go through while at war. These four heroes represent all Hong Kong Veterans. I feel that I owe it to them to help get the Hong Kong story told, on behalf of all Canadians.

Two other primary resources have been invaluable in my teachings; The Valour and the Horror: Savage Christmas Hong Kong 1941, and Hong Kong Veterans: The Compensation Story. The veterans and the videos relate specifically to curriculum, but videos alone, to teachers who want to search them out, are not enough to supplement the limited textbook coverage provided to teach this subject. Coverage when combined with affordability and accessibility are two other issues that prevent teachers from becoming informed, or informing their students. Social Studies, History, and Law are massive subjects that cater to broad interests. Unless teachers have an existing interest in veterans, books on Canadian Hong Kong Veterans are not an option.

Books relating to Hong Kong veterans are not readily available so the task of locating them is time consuming. They are not on bestseller lists but the books I have listed are amazingly detailed, descriptive, and curricularly relative. The two I recommend are Dave McIntosh’s book, Hell On Earth: Aging Faster, Dying Sooner Canadian Prisoners of the Japanese During World War II, and Charles G. Roland’s, Long Night’s Journey Into Days: Prisoners of War In Hong Kong and Japan, 1941-1945. I suggest these books to my colleagues, friends, and at presentations I have given.



I have also listed sources that are very valuable and available on the Internet, in particular the Veterans Affairs web sites. In November – December 2000 there was a pilgrimage back to Hong Kong for surviving veterans and their families, government personnel, and various others associated with the events of 1941-1945. Veterans Affairs Canada, both “55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the liberation of the Hong Kong Prisoners Of War” and “Canadians In Asia 1945-1995”, give great description and insight into the veterans, their battles, and the present situation. The Internet is an area that is ever expanding and as veterans age, their story is getting expanded with new coverage. Current generations of students and teachers are beginning to get an insight into the vast coverage of information, which is now emerging on the Internet.

The sources in my bibliography and briefly discussed here are the most relevant and available sources I have come across in teaching and researching of this chapter in Canadian history. I continue to actively research and network with those involved in this subject in order to keep my working bibliography updated. Because of the lack of teacher resources available, prior to the release of the teacher friendly **Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945**, my bibliography has served as the basis for teaching this contemporary and relevant subject.



**Journal Of Experiences**  
**Human Rights In The Asia Pacific 1931-1945**  
**Focus: Canadian Hong Kong Veterans**

**September 1995 – January 2001**

My curricular project was six years in coming. I never envisioned developing curriculum on Hong Kong Veterans outside of my own classroom upon my initial discovery of them in September 1995. Through teaching the Hong Kong Veterans story and gauging the keen interest of my students, colleagues, and friends when hearing about these veterans, I was compelled to probe deeper into this chapter of history. After contacting the two veterans I saw in a 1995 video, Savage Christmas: Hong Kong 1941 – 1945, Bob Clayton and Bob Manchester, I also contacted their Hong Kong Veterans Association. Instantly I became friends with Lionel Speller and nationally began corresponding with the President of Hong Kong Veterans Roger Cyr. It was suggested to me in the 1997 / 1998 school year to develop curriculum for others to learn about Canadians role in the battle for Hong Kong and as prisoners of war. At this suggestion I started to organize and expand what materials I already had, sharing it with colleagues in my school, at provincial exam marking sessions, and at various professional development activities. I sent copies of lessons that I was doing in my social studies classes, along with student samples, to Hong Kong Veterans within B.C. and across Canada, and to the Hong Kong Commemorative Association. These actions were a start in curricular leadership but still on a small scale. It was further suggested to me in 1999, by Fran Berube, then president of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, to consider taking my



teachings a step further. An undertaking of such magnitude was difficult to co-ordinate and get started, but the seed was planted in the back of my mind. In the six years prior to fully immersing myself in curriculum development it would be a modest guess to say seventy plus hours of time was spent researching, teaching, exploring, presenting, meeting veterans, writing letters, marking student work, reading veterans stories, and strategizing how to develop the Hong Kong Veterans story beyond the realm of my class. When the opportunity to develop curriculum, as part of a Ministry of Education / British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) initiative, was posted as a **Social Studies**

**Learning Resources on World War II in Asia**, I knew the time to get started was now!

### **November 1999 – April 2001**

I was granted a new and fresh start to my teaching career upon my arrival at George Pringle Secondary School in September 1999. I was instantly surrounded by colleagues who were, and are, real “doers” in an environment conducive to professional development. It was within my new teaching situation that I came across the two essential ingredients behind developing Hong Kong curriculum at a level accessible for all Social Studies teachers in B.C. In early 2000, the posting for developing a resource on World War II in Asia was displayed in our staff room. This resource project would consist of a group of four teachers, Ministry personnel, human rights consultants, ALPHA (organization for learning and preserving W.W. II in Asia), and university professors. Hong Kong Veterans fit perfectly in this category of W.W.II in Asia. I made sure to include their story and relationship to social studies curriculum in my application.



My application was accepted and I put together my materials in preparation for the first meeting at the University of British Columbia – ingredient number one.

Murray Chalmers, an SDSU grad and ARP 680 advisor, got wind of what I was involved in and started to sell me on the links between my curricular pursuits and the IELP program. Aside from Murray, George Pringle has other SDSU grads that have taken the IELP program and they suggested I pursue my masters through the SDSU route. I hummed and hawed for a few months before getting serious along with three colleagues that were also interested in the program. It was a perfect match; develop curriculum and work towards my masters in curriculum. This is an area that I am interested in pursuing within my teaching future. My proposals for content were not guaranteed of inclusion within the W.W. II resource so would have to be “sold to” the writing committee. I contacted Lionel Speller about getting a speaker to tell his experiences as a Hong Kong Veteran. Lionel put me in touch with Don McPherson. Don was an amazing guest speaker who agreed to tell his story at a meeting of all members of the writing team held at the University of British Columbia. Between Don’s personal story, which had university professors and Ministry personnel near tears, and my student tested lessons and examples, it was agreed upon that this story should be part of the resource we were about to develop. The curriculum writing process was underway. With the project started I actively pursued the SDSU program, and although late in my interest for the 2000 / 2001 session I was able to audit courses commencing January 2001. My auditing corresponded with curricular writing for the Ministry of Education sanctioned W.W. II in Asia resource, a resource which now would include lessons on Hong Kong veterans.



## **May 2001 – September 2001**

Although I had a clear agenda in mind for what I thought best regarding Hong Kong veterans curriculum, I had a lot to learn. Group dynamics, timelines, content limitations, collaboration, appeasing, regulations, condensing, formalizing, working with an editor, and keeping the end in mind were all in the equation. It was an eye opening experience, and also very time consuming. Besides teaching full time, I was constantly researching, phoning veterans and their organizations to verify and cite information, editing, proofing, lobbying, and taking in what was required for a successful resource lesson. In short, I was doing everything possible to make the Hong Kong story sell itself and fit Ministry regulations. I had a great working relationship with Arnold Toutant, the project editor. Arnold was based in Victoria, and I spent many hours on a B.C. ferry, at his home in Victoria, on the phone, and on line getting the Hong Kong story to fit within the resource. He was an easy person to work with, focused, fair, sticking to deadlines, calm, hard working, and he also took a personal interest in the curriculum that was being developed. An editor with his passion and skill was essential to completing the resource on time, efficiently, and maintaining the integrity of the resource while, at the same time, keeping all shareholders happy with the final product. The last time our group met to work as team was April 2001 in Victoria. Our B.C. Ministry of Education project supervisor, Greg Smith, summarized the curriculum writing experience to date as challenging, educational, and eye opening. It was at this point that a little humor was added when I was told by Greg Smith that perhaps I was in need of “honing my Ministry skills!” Given the progress we had accomplished to this date, despite the stresses, this was very



humorous. It epitomized the amount of time, effort, and the challenges presented in working with a diverse group. There was a strong realization that all involved had their own agenda coming in to the project, but would all have to make compromises in order to get the resource published. It took many more months of editing, changing, and adjusting by all involved, before the resource was given the go ahead by our writing committee and final stamp of approval by the Ministry of Education. Forty-five hours is a modest guess as to hours spent and these felt all consuming. I had to keep reminding myself of the vision I had throughout the writing process; Social Studies teachers throughout B.C. armed with a powerful resource to effectively and justly teach the story of Hong Kong Veterans.

### **September 2001 – May 2002**

With the resource being released to every secondary school in British Columbia, the second phase of getting the resource exposure, noticed, and utilized began. I contacted the Social Studies Professional Association about presenting material to teachers at their annual provincial workshop. I also started contacting veterans about accompanying me in a presentation (I had done a presentation a year earlier in Burnaby before the official Ministry of Education resource had been completed). It was at this time that I received many excited phone calls from veterans and their families. I had sent out copies and many whom I had worked with (Speller, McPherson, Clayton) had done the same thing. I didn't want this project nor their sacrifices to go for not. Presenting and keeping the story alive are essential components to preventing this. It was a busy time as I began to officially start proposing this curriculum as my 798 project. I had completed summer



courses and knowing what was expected of us in terms of course work for 2001 / 2002.

Once my proposal was accepted by Ray Latta, I started to formulate how I would go about getting started, setting goals and guidelines for myself to stay on top of time parameters. The biggest difficulty I have found to date is spending more time on my 798 project over the two other courses we are taking (ARP 680 and ED 690). I find myself prioritizing this project, sometimes to the detriment of my classes, so am continuously reminding myself to stay focused on all tasks (SDSU masters, teaching duties at G.P.S.S., my new wife, etc). It seems clear where my course interests lie. I work on this project in the car on the way to Victoria, or Invermere, on the B.C. Ferry with the laptop, late at night after rec hockey, when I have a spare few moments jotting down points before a squash match, and when there is quiet time in my History 12 class. I enjoy it having spent so many years involved in making this curriculum a reality because I very much want this resource to be a success.

## **October 2001**

The presentation I gave at the S.S. Provincial workshop in Nanaimo took many hours to coordinate, prepare, and travel to. As a result the presentation went without a hitch. I was able to both tell the Hong Kong Veterans story and get the resource and other lesson possibilities out to Social Studies teachers (see booklet titled **Making Waves: Teaching Controversial Issues in the Classroom and More ...**). As part of my preparations, after a little coercing, I was able to get a Hong Kong Veteran, Larry Stebbe, to meet me in Nanaimo and tell his story. This was much like what I had Don McPherson do for me a year earlier at the Social Studies workshop in Burnaby. Larry and I had never met before



but spent many hours on the phone talking about life, fellow veterans, and how to make our presentation effective. In reality, he stole the show. This is what I want the resource to be able to do, speak to teachers and students, and make this story real. To quote Walt Werner, 1995, “Hope falters when content learned by students does not lead to better understanding.” An initial estimate of ten hours could be doubled, if I calculate the hours of driving, ferry line – ups, phone calls, editing, creating overheads, making stories come alive to spark interest, photocopying, lobbying, and sending out information after meeting and presenting. I was thrilled to get a response back from a colleague in Ladysmith who took a real interest in Hong Kong Veterans (see e – mail dated December 6, 2001 – in Relevance of 798 Project, A Need! page 20).

### **September 2001 – ongoing**

Twenty hours could be turned into hundreds of hours over the course of my teaching career. I have twenty-five years before I retire and in that time, all of the Hong Kong Veterans I have come to admire so greatly (247 as of August 2002) will be lost forever. The only memories left of them will be in stories, videos, and personal family acquaintances. For kids in high school, the lessons of inhumanity, cruelty, and hardship endured by these Canadians, many their own age, as warriors and prisoners of the Japanese in W.W. II need to be taught. In the words of George Santayana, “those who can not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Let’s hope not!





**ARP 798 – Special Study Project**  
**Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931 – 1945**  
**Focus: Canadian Hong Kong Veterans**

Dedicated to some of the bravest, most heroic, and inspiring Canadians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century I first came across in teaching senior Social Studies

Canadians who served in Hong Kong – You deserve long awaited recognition, an apology, and compassion

Thank You For Making History a Reality  
On Behalf of all Hong Kong Veterans:

**Lionel Speller** – Royal Canadian Corps of Signals  
**Don McPherson** – Winnipeg Grenadier  
**Bob “Flash” Clayton** – Royal Rifles of Canada  
**Larry Stebbe** – Winnipeg Grenadier

