

HKVCA Annual General Meeting

President's Report

December 10, 2016

The previous AGM was in Ottawa, in August 2015, as part of the bi-annual national convention. In response to changes to the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, the HKVCA must conduct annual elections, and annual general meetings. Today, December 10, 2016 is our first such general meeting. We will continue to learn and improve the manner in which these meetings are organized and conducted; feedback is welcome and encouraged.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the Battle for Hong Kong. With each passing year, I see more references to this part of our history, and I encounter more people who have heard of it. Those who do learn of it, respond appropriately to the particular horrors of this story. You will read about commemoration activities in the regional reports; these activities include our participation but we are not the organizers. This week, coincidentally on Dec 8, there was a meeting of a Veterans Affairs Minister's Advisory Group. At this meeting, the start of the attack on Hong Kong was mentioned, and after a brief description of what our vets went through in battle and as POWs, two minutes of silence was held in their memory.

From time to time, I review our mission and goals, available on our website (<http://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/index.htm>). As I reflect on the growing awareness of this part of Canadian history, and when I consider that the HKVCA started in 1997 and received charitable status in 2001, it's clear that we have done tremendous things.

In August, 2015, the board reported that a few projects were underway or about to start. Some were completed, and some remain on our to-do list. Other projects or activities arose that were not planned for this year, but for different reasons were adopted. All these items are described greater detail in past newsletters, or in the regional reports presented today. Many activities have a national interest, but are mentioned in regional reports simply due to proximity of a special site or the particular involvement of a HKVCA member.

Completed work from Sept 2015- August 2016

1. Governance changes to our by-laws, nomination and election process, and AGM.
2. Portraits of Valour Writing competition improvements.
3. Continued website improvements
4. HKVCA Facebook page – Dan James has made this an ongoing, integral way to stay connected and share our stories.
5. HKVCA banner - now available for sale.
6. Assisted the Canadian Mint with the Hong Kong Commemorative Coin
7. Assisted the Voltigeurs Regiment with their ceremony in Quebec City
8. 75th anniversary activities in several regions
9. China Peace Medal presented to all living veterans
10. Order of St. George presented to more veterans

11. Quarterly newsletters – online edition is now distributed via bulk email distribution service (MailChimp)

Plan for the next two years

As we look ahead, we have a list of 8 items that we would like to complete over the next two years. Some of these activities are already begun.

Arrange a short-stay / handicapped parking spot at the Memorial Wall

As we know well, parking near the Wall is not permitted. This is a significant barrier for visitors who wish to see it, take pictures, and reflect.

Communications plan

Our activities rely on communication to our membership. A communications policy and related procedures are needed to ensure that communication is consistent, coordinated, effectively managed, and responsive to the needs of our membership. In addition, it will manage the risk of overuse of our bulk email service to protect the privacy of our membership and to simplify the work required to use the software.

Membership database improvements

We want one shared system that

1. coordinates all provincial data and requires designated individuals to use the same format & software
2. allows all provincially designated individuals to enter their own updates directly
3. supports the acceptance, monitoring, and reporting of electronic payments of dues and/or donations
4. allows reports to be produced at any time by designated persons
5. checks for duplicates or discrepancies and informs the provincially designated person so they can correct the problem
6. can cross-reference our membership list to confirm veterans, widows and their families with names of people who say they have a family member who is a vet
7. can use a bulk email service to send out notices, invitations
8. records subscriptions, and flags renewal dates
9. has daily back ups
10. is easy to use by the provincially designated data entry persons, and members of the Board.

Provide an online option for membership renewals, and new members who wish to join

Paying bills online is the new standard. Fewer Canadians have chequing accounts. Some young adults have never addressed an envelope. We need to make it possible to conduct such business online.

Website improvements

Our website is something we should all be proud of, and we very lucky to have such a committed volunteer as our webmaster, Jim Trick. He continues to make improvements to support the collection and retrieval of key information, and looks to improve usability in general, and specifically for mobile devices.

Educational initiatives continue

I have noted before that any time anyone says something about the HK story, we are living our mission of educating all Canadians. Sharing a story on Facebook, commenting on a particular day in history to a friend, sharing a book with a teacher...all these small daily things add up. I remember a story my sister told me last year. She works in a bookstore, and a customer was looking at their selection in the history section. A conversation began, which led to the HK story. This customer is now more aware of this special part of Canadian history and of the HKVCA website as a source of more information.

Here are just a couple of things that are ahead of us:

- Last year with help from Linda Miller, one of Ontario members, we started a record of every Portraits of Valour entry we've received since it began. When it is complete with all past entries (7 years' worth) included, we can conduct an analysis to objectively recognize patterns of adoption and where we should be focusing our promotion efforts.
- Continuing to add content to the Teachers Zone will keep it fresh and support ongoing educational projects at the classroom level.

Assist where possible, in the obtaining of an apology from Mitsubishi for using POWs as slave labour

Some POW groups have received an apology from Mitsubishi where documentation was available to prove those individuals were forced to work. About a year ago, we were approached by the Simon Weiesenthal Center with an offer to do the same for our HK veterans; however, no paperwork can be found (fire, etc). Lately another angle has been raised; we shall see where it leads.

Assist the Order of St. George

You will remember that the Order of St. George elected to honour our living veterans with the title Field Knight at last year's convention. Those veterans who were not in attendance can be invested, but special arrangements must be made. The challenge is that to be invested, there is a specific ceremony involved that requires the attendance of other Members of the Order. As possible, we assist the planning of investitures until all our living veterans are so honoured.

The HKVCA board, like all members, are volunteers. We receive no compensation at all, and we pay our own way. We all have families, responsibilities, and even jobs. The desire to accomplish these projects is strong, but we need help. If you have knowledge or expertise in an area that would be valuable to any of these initiatives, I encourage you to contribute some time. We don't require our helpers to be members of the HKVCA either...you might have a friend, a neighbor, or a colleague....

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Angel, President