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THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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August 2019

Mary Greyeyes

Mary was nine when the Great Depression struck and the Cree Nation reserve was hard hit. It is therefore no wonder that this reserve had the highest enlistment during WW2. Her older brother David George Greyeyes-Steele, with whom she was closest in age and in heart, left to find work so he could send money back to their mother. He soon enlisted in the Saskatoon Light Infantry in 1940.

With few opportunities on the reserve, Mary decided to join the army as well. Her son Stephen later commented that his mother "saw the Army as an opportunity to learn and expand her knowledge." So she wrote to the War Department and eventually received a letter asking her to present herself in Regina to take a test. The Canadian army was just starting to recruit women and each of the twenty-two girls ahead of her in the recruiting office had been rejected. So with her limited education, she was somewhat apprehensive. However, she did pass the test with flying colours and became the first Native to join the new Canadian Women's Army Corps.



This Corps, a non-combatant branch of the Canadian Army, had been officially established on July 30th, 1941, in response to a shortage of personnel caused by the increase in the size of Canada's navy, army and air force. In all, 21,624 Canadian women served in the CWAC and approximately 3000 of these served their country overseas. The founding driving force to the unit's creation was Mrs. Joan Kennedy, of Victoria, British Columbia. She initially faced a great deal of opposition from conventional (male) military authorities. One senior army officer sneered at the very idea of what he called a "petticoat army." But, on March 13, 1942, the first female volunteers were inducted in the CWAC and became subject to the same military discipline as in the Canadian Army

After enlisting, Mary probably trained at the Vermilion military camp, in Alberta. As the white women did not readily accept her in their barracks, she was forced to board outside.

Mary was sent to Aldershot, England, where she first worked as a laundress, a task which she detested. When she asked her sergeant for a transfer, her sergeant wrote on the papers: "Does not speak English." But she was eventually sent to headquarters in London to become a cook for the war centre. There, she came to be known as "the Indian". But it wasn't all bad. As one of the few Native Americans in service in the region, her picture often appeared in newspapers and she was invited to events where diversity was needed. This is how she eventually got to meet King George VI, the Queen Mother and princess Elizabeth who would succeed her father in 1952. Mary remained in London until 1946, cooking for the officers as the paperwork was processed to end the war. Later, she admitted that these were some of the best years of her life.

CMHS Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on

**Tuesday,
August 20th
2019**

7:00 pm

At the
Petty Officers' Mess
HCMS Tecumseh

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CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The
CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is a non-profit registered society
which fosters the study of the
military and the police, and the heritage of
Canada, the British Empire, and the world
as well as the preservation of military
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month
at: Petty Officers' Mess
HMCS Tecumseh
1820 - 24th Street SW
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on
Tuesday August 20th, 2019
19:00 (7:00 pm)

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.
Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:
Introduction of guests, Minutes of last meeting Correspondence, Membership report Treasurer's report, Old business / New business Break, Show & Tell
The President, **Allan Ross** would like to invite everyone to remain after the meeting for an informal time of fellowship.



This staged photograph hung for decades in the National War Museum in Ottawa with its subjects labeled “unidentified”, until Mary’s daughter-in-law learned of its existence in 1995. The photo was taken to encourage more women to join the army, and its staged “Indian blessing” proving popular, it was widely reprinted during the war, then forgotten.

Mary Greyeyes was from Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan. This tiny community (only 367 people live on the reserve) has a remarkable military history. 56 of its youth served in the armed forces, including seven women, most of them named Greyeyes, Arcand or Lafond.

Muskeg Lake Cree have fought in Europe, Korea, and Afghanistan. Muskeg Lake is also the birthplace of the ballet dancer, choreographer and film actor Michael Greyeyes.

Mary returned to Canada after finishing her service in 1946, married, and made a career as an industrial seamstress in Vancouver. She died in 2011.



The other participant in the staged photo was Harry Ball, a Cree from Piapot First Nation, who was a World War I veteran. His Plains Chief regalia was scrounged up on that reserve, where the photo was taken.

Mary’s brother “David Greyeyes

Minutes of last meeting / Calgary Military Historical Society

Minutes of General Meeting held on July 16, 2019
Petty Officers Mess: HMCS Tecumseh

Meeting called to order by President Alan R. at 7:01 pm.
13 members present and 0 guests.

Minutes of last meeting. Acceptance moved by Barry E. Second by Martin U.. Approved.
Newsletter – once again thanks for the great article from Roy.
Treasurers Report provided by Al R. for Floyd. Moved acceptance by Mike C. Second by Barry E. Accepted.
Membership report by Al R - Currently 39 regular members. 3 Life members 2 Honorary. Approval moved by Mike C. Seconded by Brian H. Approved.

Correspondence: Newsletter from Saskatchewan Gun Collectors letter

OLD BUSINESS:

Military show June 22 had 116 tables and was quite a success - small profit was made for the first time.

NEW BUSINESS:

AGM is due in either September or October. Please consider running for a position on the executive.

Any special resolutions requested must be received by Al R. by August to be posted in newsletter.

A vote must take place for the Maurice Harvey award.

Motion: Club Christmas party should be held in alternating north / south locations every other year.

Vote: Yes 5 No 2 Passed

Comment; vote is redundant as we vote on location each year anyway.

Question to members posed: Do we wish to still hold meetings in July & August and if so would we have to cancel newsletter those months. Tabled till AGM.

AGM Motion: Maurice Harvey Award winner should receive a \$50 gift card.

AGM Motion: Club should pay for annual Christmas party.

Resolution for AGM: Vote for Maurice Harvey trophy should take place at AGM and award be presented at Christmas party.

Indra R is working of a Caribbean display for the museum.

BREAK: Raffle conducted by Dave G.

Auction –Black Wings book donated by Mike C.

SHOW & TELL:

James B. – Nephew is an intern at the WW1 memorial in Washington DC

James B. #2 - Book from 1941 of art and trench art.

Mike C. – 18k gold Waltham watch dated 1901 and South African Town Guard medal

Alan Mc. – Canadian medals WW1 & WW2 to 50th with photos

David G – History of Uncle Jim and his POW records & telegrams.

Al R – Army temperance medals - India.

Motion to adjourn at 8:22 pm by Mike C. and Seconded by David G.

Note from Member Floyd S. “This is the association we contributed to.....great news for them and the work they are doing.

*** We are now the Only Registered Not For Profit Veterans Food Bank in Alberta

*** We are now the Only CRA Registered Veterans Food Bank Charity in Canada ***



Note from Member Marty U. -Glad the Veterans Association Food Bank has attained Charitable Non-Profit Status, they were waiting, as most due to have this process wrap up. I started sponsoring them before the 2019 June show, contacting them to participate in the 2019 Show. They were delighted with the offer and had a booth in the Veterans Support area in the hearth room. Starting with the June 2019 Show, I decided to give veterans support organizations that participate in the Show, up to two free tables. Six Veteran Support groups participated in the 2019 show and increase of four over the 2018 Show.

Thank you Marty for this and a great show.



George Armstrong Custer
December 5, 1839 – June 25, 1876

Native American Humour.

Vine DeLoria, Jr. (Sioux) "On Indian Humor "

One of the best ways to understand a people is to know what makes them laugh. Laughter encompasses the limits of the soul. In humor life is redefined and accepted. Irony and satire provide much keener insights into a group's collective psyche and values than do years of research. It has always been a great disappointment to Indian people that the humorous side of Indian life has not been mentioned by professed experts on Indian Affairs. Rather the image of the granite-faced grunting redskin has been perpetuated by American mythology. The most popular and enduring subject of Indian humor is, of course, General Custer. There are probably more jokes about Custer and the Indians than there were participants in the battle. All tribes, even those thousands of miles from Montana, feel a sense of accomplishment when thinking of Custer. Custer binds together implacable foes because he represented the Ugly American of the last century and he got what was coming to him .

- "Indians say that Custer was well-dressed for the occasion. When the Sioux found his body after the battle, he had on an Arrow shirt. "
- "Custer is said to have boasted that he could ride through the entire Sioux nation with his Seventh Cavalry and he was half right. He got half-way through. "
- Custer's Last Words occupy a revered place in Indian humor. One source states that as he was falling mortally wounded he cried, "Take no prisoners!" Other versions, most of them off color, concentrate on "Where those **** Indians are coming from."
- My favorite last saying pictures Custer on top of the hill looking at a multitude of warriors charging up the slope at him. He turns resignedly to his aide and says, "Well, it's better than going back to North Dakota."



Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington

After a hostess at a reception in Vienna apologized to the undefeated British general Arthur Wellesley for the rudeness of some French officers who had turned their backs on him, he replied.

" I have seen their backs before, madam"