

The Megaphone

Edition # 6 – Posted On-line November 10, 2008

meg·a·phone [meg-uh-fohn] –noun

1. a cone-shaped device for magnifying or directing the voice, chiefly used in addressing a large audience out of doors or in calling to someone at a distance.

www.dictionary.com

Hello everyone! Today's issue is being posted one day earlier than usual as our MAS office will be closed tomorrow for Remembrance Day.

In honour of this special holiday, I was able to find some time in the very busy schedules of the volunteers at the Saskatchewan Military Museum and take a tour of its home base at the Regina Armoury.

Major Keith Inches (Retired) is the curator of the museum, which has existed since 1984 and gained Canadian Forces accreditation in 1992. Its mandate is to “collect, preserve and display Saskatchewan military history”, Major Inches says, focusing on the activities of Saskatchewan military personnel, rather than whether they were posted here or not.

This Remembrance Day, Major Inches wants people to remember the value of volunteering to our communities and our country.

“Think of the people that have volunteered and what they have accomplished in our society – in our local communities and in our national society – and ask, ‘What can *I* do? Or maybe, why shouldn't I try to do something?’”

“I'm trying to instill through the stuff we have here what they did – why can't *you* do?”



Maj. Keith Inches (Ret'd)

Major Inches points out that many or most of Saskatchewan's military volunteers were also volunteers in their own communities, both before and after their service. He fears we are “losing that spirit of volunteerism” and hopes the outreach efforts of the museum will remind people of the importance of continuing to volunteer.

The museum has been busy this Remembrance Day season, as it always is, taking our province's military history out to the community. From schools to seniors centres, malls to other museums, the Saskatchewan Military Museum is willing to take its show on the road. “If a community phones and wants a display, we'll go,” Major Inches says.

The value of taking history into the schools was shown to Major Inches again this year, when he and a few active service personnel went to St. Francis School to talk to students. “They wanted to know things and they weren't intimidated to ask,” Major Inches says. He says the presenters were peppered with a wide variety of questions, with each class

going past the bell in the students' efforts to gain knowledge about Saskatchewan's military history. It's that interest and satisfying that quest for knowledge that Major Inches most values about outreach programs, and the reason he and others associated with the museum keep up such a hectic schedule around this time of year.

Of course, this isn't the only time of year people can take advantage of the wealth of knowledge offered by the museum and its displays. The museum is open all year round, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-3 p.m., and Saturdays from 2-5 p.m. It will also open by appointment for tours, and is especially popular with groups such as the Cubs, Scouts and Guides.

There are also a number of permanent displays from the museum in a variety of places, Major Inches says, including the Signal Hill Arts Centre in Weyburn, the Regina airport, and at RCMP headquarters in Regina.

Volunteers have also travelled to other centres across the province, such as Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Estevan and Weyburn. The travelling displays have even gone on tour to other provinces, such as Manitoba, and even outside Canadian borders, to Plentywood, Major Inches says. The museum's displays tell decades of stories of the heroism and service of Saskatchewan's military volunteers, from the 1800s through the Second World War.

But perhaps one of the most poignant displays is the one just outside of the museum's walls, a tribute to 12 service personnel killed since 2006 in the line of duty. Their photos, along with a brief write-up about their lives, military careers and connection to our province are displayed around a map of Kandahar, along with samples of the medals awarded to troops in Afghanistan.

These current stories of sacrifice may give hope to those who fear Saskatchewan's history of military volunteerism has fallen by the wayside, or fears that Saskatchewan no longer recognizes the value of the service of its personnel. This Remembrance Day, I know many of us will be thinking of these young people and the value they could have contributed with service to their communities had they not been lost – and the value they have contributed by serving in this way instead.

- Lisa