



Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School

130 York Blvd. Hamilton Ontario L8R 1Y5

Tel: 905-528-8363 Fax: 905-527-6220

e-mail: macdonal@hwdsb.on.ca

17 Nov 2011

Subject: Reflections on Visits by Andy Barber, Mike Vencel & Ron Kirk, "Friends of HMCS Haida" to Sir J. A. Macdonald SS Annual "Tribute to Our Community's Veterans", Friday 4 November 2011.

Dear Friends of HMCS Haida:

On behalf of all the students and staff at Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School who have been fortunate enough to attend the visitations from Friends of HMCS Haida during the current school year, I would like to offer my most sincere thanks to you all for what you have done to assist us in our annual "Tribute to Our Community's Veterans" held this year on Friday 4 November 2011.

The recent visit by RCN Veterans who are active members of and leaders in "Friends of HMCS HAIDA" was a wonderful recent chapter to the "FOH" established tradition of "first rate" educational programmes sponsored by our local business community and delivered by effective, interesting, and distinguished representatives of "Friends" and our Veteran Community.

The Sir John A Macdonald History Department found the programme delivered by these articulate Naval Veterans to be well-prepared, appropriately-paced and overall, a very rich learning experience for every one of the hundreds of students and teachers who attended their three presentations. Student reflections related after their presentations included many references to HMCS Haida Korean War Veteran, Andrew Barber, HMCS Iroquois Korean War Veteran, Ronald Kirk and his fellow presenter, Mike Vencel, FOH Ed. Director, who, among many Cold War Naval Sorties he participated in, was with the RCN when it formed a vital part of the Blockade of Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Sir John A. Macdonald SS students and teachers also mentioned they learned much from the colourful presentations made by Friends of HMCS about World War II. They also learned much about Canadian Social History, i.e.. the Canadian experience during the Great Depression, The Canadian contribution to winning the Korean War, and the peacetime maritime patrol of Canadian coastlines. The presentation also further enhanced student understanding of and appreciation for *Canada's role* in the War at Sea (The Battle of the Atlantic & The Battle of the St Lawrence) during WWII, and made many students who live in the North End better appreciate their old heroic neighbour, HMCS Haida. All agreed that it was an effective multi-media presentation that utilized powerful excerpts from the *Canada: A People's History*. I witnessed the students go along mentally with Andrew Barber & Ron Kirk as they took us back to the sorties carried out by HMCS Haida & HMCS Iroquois during their Train-Busting missions during the Korean War. We were also fascinated to hear how amazingly Haida righted herself after listing 90 degrees on her side after being hit by a rogue wave during a South China Sea Typhoon and about the tension our sailors went through during the Cuban Missile Crisis. One could have heard a pin drop whenever Mike, Andy and Ron spoke. Mr. Vencel, Mr Kirk & Mr. Barber form a very effective educational team for Friends of HMCS Haida's School Out-Reach Programme.

I would also like to express our sincere thanks for all the supplementary materials left with our school. The generous presentation by Mr. Mike Vencel of Bern Horn's impressive work, Forging a Nation, Barry Gough's HMCS Haida: Anatomy of A Destroyer, Tom Douglas's D-Day: Canadian Heroes of the Famous WWII Invasion, and the VHS copy of In a Class of Her Own. These sources are all very, very valuable resources that I pledge shall be used by many SJAM students for the foreseeable future when completing assigned essays and oral presentations examining Canada and WWII and the Korean War. These materials will prove to be long-lasting valuable resources in our school's Library Resource Centre. All agreed the Friends of Haida presentations were a valuable part of our school's "kick-off" of National Veterans' Week. Everybody enjoyed the variety in their programme. Students and teachers all appreciated the warmth, openness and friendliness of the presenters during the valuable question & answer period and only regretted that we only had two periods. As closing proof of the success of this programme, all students were asked if they would like the Friends of Haida to return and every single student said yes! Our History Dept. has made these visits a regular and absolutely vital component of our Gr. 10 Canadian History Programme. SJAM staff and students can hardly wait until the spring when we will once again host a visit by "Friends" and then follow up their great presentation by a visit to Canada's most decorated ship.

Thanks a lot, Friends of Haida. Thanks so much to all who sponsored these visits. We are very grateful for your generosity. Your efforts to preserve the contributions to expanding student learning and to the preservation and commemoration of Canada's honoured naval volunteers and RCN/RCNVR make us all proud to be Canadians.

Good luck, stay well, and please keep up the great work. We hope your programme will continue for many, many years

Respectfully,

[Richard L. Moll](#)

Richard L. Moll
Dept. Head of History
Sir John A. Macdonald S.S.

"We Will Remember Them"

PS. These presentations were "pusser" and we feel lucky to be in the neighbourhood of such fine men as these RCN Veterans. Thanks gents!