

# 39 COMBAT ENGINEER REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION



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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello all, it remains quiet on the Western Front, at least from the perspective of the Association. Like all, I am looking forward to seeing the "light at the end of the tunnel". Hopefully this will allow us to get back to being able to reconnect with each other in person in the next few months, as opposed to virtually.

The sale of masks is closing in the next few days so this is the last chance to support the museum with a purchase of one.

Until you get your shot in the arm, please stay safe.

Chimo

Bill White  
President

## **OP UNIFIER ROTO 8 PRESENTATION TO REGIMENT**

Majors Piers and Ferg having returned from Op UNIFIER Roto 8, presented the Regiment with some souvenirs of their tour. These items include the subunit patches that they both lead (the Officer and NCO Development Group for Major Piers, while Major Ferg was the lead Canadian and Chief of Staff for the Multinational Coordination Centre), the UNIFIER patch and coins from the Op ORBITAL (the contingent from the UK), the Defense Education Advisory Group (DEAG one of the American contingents), CJOC and Op UNIFIER. This memento was presented to thank the regiment for permitting their extended absence as well as to memorialize the Security Force Capacity Building (SFCB) Operation that is currently ongoing in Ukraine.



Maj Stephen Piers, and Maj Vicki Ferg making the presentation to LCol James Julien.

## **COVID-19 KIBOSHES SILVER CITY POLAR BEAR PLUNGE**

Sheri Regnier Trail Times

The 44 Engineer Squadron is hoping to be back on the beach Jan. 1, 2022. Locals will have to find another way to brrrr-ing in 2021 other than a dip in the Columbia River.

Yes, it's true. COVID-19 has cancelled the Polar Bear Swim, a touted cure-all for too many evening-before-libations that has taken place on Jan. 1 at Gyro Park beach in East Trail for more than 30 years.

“As 2020 draws to a close, most of you must be wondering if there will be a polar bear swim to start of 2021,” began Shane Batch, Master Warrant Officer for the 44 Engineer Squadron / 39 Combat Engineer Regiment.

“Unfortunately the COVID 19 pandemic has forced our hand, and we regretfully have to cancel the swim. With the province’s social distancing policies in place until early January, we are unable to ensure a responsible and safe way to conduct the swim,” he said. “Hopefully by next year (2022) we will be able to resume this event. Thank you all for your understanding, and have a safe and happy holiday season. See you in 2022!”

The first Polar Bear Swim in the Silver City, on record that is, was in 1988. The popularity of taking a dip on Jan. 1 has grown over time with the organizers – the 44 Engineer Squadron – drawing hundreds of spectators and up to 200 on deck for the noon-sharp plunge.

The 44th Engineer Squadron has served in Trail since it was formed in 1947. Over the decades, members of the squadron have put their skills to work on community projects, responded across B.C. during floods, fires, and other emergencies, and deployed on missions around the world, from Bosnia to Afghanistan.

The squadron has a satellite location in Cranbrook and is part of 39 Combat Engineer Regiment. Soldiers from the unit are trained as combat engineers and engineer officers. Engineers build everything the army needs and ensures that the units can get everywhere they need to go. They are the army’s experts on road, bridge, and building construction, as well as fortification, boat operations, demolition, and explosives.

## **FRANK MARTIN SAM 17 OCTOBER 1925 - 8TH OF JANUARY 2021**



On the 8th of January 2021 a warrior’s casket was draped with the National Flags of the Shuswap Nation, Ktunaxa Nation and Canada. The warrior, Frank Martin Sam, served in WW2 as a member of the Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders and was one of the last surviving WW2 veterans of the Shuswap and Ktunaxa Nations to which he held ties. These nations honoured him as a “Crazy Dog” - a member of an indigenous warrior society charged with protecting the

nation's members at all costs. A limited military guard of honour from the 44th Engineer Squadron stood for the service while remaining compliant with COVID-19 restrictions.



Frank Martin Sam was born 17 October 1925 into the Columbia Lake Band and at the age of 5 entered the St Eugene's Mission School in Cranbrook, BC, a residential school that he attended for 11 years.

Frank enlisted in the Canadian Army on 30 May 1943 when he was 17 years old and was deployed to the European Theatre on 7 July 1944 through Normandy, France while serving with the Queen's own Cameron Highlanders, 6th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division.

Frank was wounded in action on 14 August 1944 and was returned to England for 12 days to recover. Rejoining the Camerons' front lines, Frank continued with the Allied advance and on 18 September 1944 was wounded a second time, which resulted in his repatriation back to Canada, where he was honorably discharged on 31 May 1946. Frank returned to the Columbia Lake Band.

Frank said "My memories of the Army always make me sad; many times lead me to tears, but I am proud that I was one who fought for all the Aboriginal people. I hope no one thinks I didn't. I have the holes in my body to prove it."

Continuing his service to his community Frank participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2007 which brought forward the treatment of Aboriginal people in the residential school system. Frank's time at St Eugene's was difficult for him to discuss, according to his daughter Gladys, Frank felt the information "needed to be talked about" and it was his courage that gave him the strength to tell his story. Frank was also given the honour of cataloguing his Nation's Aboriginal Veterans burial sites and headstones to ensure their markers met the standard veterans deserved.

Frank remained a pillar of his community and family and many favored memories were shared at his service, like his favorite activity of sitting on a bench downtown, discussing many things with those stopping to say hello. His love of Orange Crush and Coffee Crisp was heartfelt and

known by all. These items were left with him for his journey to the Creator. During his service the military presence was appreciated by his family and their appreciation towards the Canadian Army was expressed.

Frank was interred on the Shuswap Reserve in the beautiful Columbia Valley where the mountains will now stand watch.



This day was difficult for many reasons: The family lost their father. The Shuswap and Ktunaxa Nations lost an Elder and WW2 veteran. The Queen's own Cameron Highlanders lost a soldier.

Cpl Chris Buckley, CD  
44 Engineer Squadron  
39 Combat Engineer Regiment

## **HONOURS AND AWARDS**

### **44 ES Annual Awards**

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions 44 ES did not have a traditional Sapper Appreciation Dinner last year when the annual presentation of awards occurs. Instead they held a virtual presentation via Zoom on their normal parade night of Thursday 14 January 2021. We do not have photos of the presentations, as they were virtual. The recipients of awards are as follows:

Sapper Of The Year = Pte Dorner  
Warrior Of The Year = Pte Mark  
NCO Of The Year = Sgt Wenman  
Other Trades = Cpl Buckley  
OC's Cup = Pte Redding

## **ENGINEER FACE MASKS**

39 CER will be ending the sales of 39 CER COVID Masks on Feb. 9th. If you would like to buy your own or more masks, go to the 39 CER webpage at [39cer-museum.net](http://39cer-museum.net) and hit the “Masks” tab. You will find directions on ordering masks. Be sure to provide your name, and unit on the order or by separate email to [39cer.museum@gmail.com](mailto:39cer.museum@gmail.com).

## **MEMBERSHIP**

For those wishing to become members of 39 CER Association, a membership form can be acquired from: [membership@39cer.ca](mailto:membership@39cer.ca)

### **39 CER Association Contacts**

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The 39 CER website can be accessed at: <http://www.39cer-museum.net/>

For more Engineer news please visit the Canadian Military Engineer Association website at: <https://cmea-agmc.ca>