



the Ensign

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Summer 2017



**news, views and seagoing tales from the
Naval Museum of Alberta Society**

OUR COVER

Tunisian Navy fast attack craft TNS Himilcon (507) and HMCS St. John's (FFH 340) sail in formation as they transit the Mediterranean Sea during Operation REASSURANCE on April 30, 2017.

Photo: Leading Seaman Ogle Henry, Formation Imaging Services.

FROM THE EDITOR

SCOTT HAUSBERG



It is intended to hold another edition of Navy Days this year and the dates that have been selected are October 28 and 29. The location will again be the NMA and the intent is to get as many naval veterans to attend as possible. There are still thousands of naval vets in Calgary who are not engaged in any way with the naval community. Mark your calendars now.

In my research for articles for *The Ensign* I have found a number of very good Canadian naval websites which you may want to check out.

Ready Aye Ready – readyayeready.com – this site includes naval news, ship listings, ship badges, traditions and jackspeak.

For Posterity's Sake – forposterityssake.ca – chock full of information on ships, bells, trade badges, history and photos.

The Nauticapedia – nauticapedia.ca – a site celebrating the stories of the nautical heritage of British Columbia, western and northern Canada and Canada's naval forces.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

KEN SVERTSEN



In November 2011, the Society approved a strategic plan at its AGM. At that time, it was agreed that:

(1) The *core value* of the Society is a belief that the Canadian

Navy story, past and present, is exciting, engaging and worth telling.

2. The *mission* of the Society is to tell the story of Canada's Navy.

3. The *vision* of the Society is to have a community that is informed, excited about and engaged with Canada's Navy and its naval heritage.

Three strategic objectives were approved:

1. Enable the development and educational awareness programs that tell Canada's naval story by:

- 1.1 Establishing a speaker's bureau,
- 1.2 Building programs with teachers,
- 1.3 Providing navy content for TMM programmes, and
- 1.4 Supporting scholarly research;

2. Promote and support the Naval Museums of Canada (NMC) and Calgary's The Military Museums (TMM) by:

- 2.1 Maintaining strong positive relationships with NMA/TMM,
- 2.2 Maintaining a strong, positive relationship with the University of Calgary,
- 2.3 Enabling the development and enhancement of permanent, virtual and portable displays/exhibits, and
- 2.4 Re-establishing and updating the NMAS website; and

3. Liaise with local, national and international organizations to tell Canada's naval Story:

- 3.1 Establish a distinct NMAS identity,
- 3.2 Explore social media as a communication tool,
- 3.3 Engage local naval organizations to assist NMAS with our objectives,
- 3.4 Develop and publish an annual report, and
- 3.5 Continue to improve and publish *The Ensign* newsletters.

Since November 2001, a number of significant things have

occurred, including the formalization of the “Naval Museum of Alberta” by DND, the establishment of a local Board (NMA Board) chaired by the Commanding Officer of HMCS *Tecumseh* to operate the museum and the employment of an individual to act as the Project Manager of the museum until a permanent manager/curator can be hired.

Accordingly, it appears that we should be examining the objectives set forth in 2011 and see where we are and what the Society should be focussing its attention on in the years to come.

The CO of HMCS *Tecumseh* has indicated that involvement in the community is a goal of his and that he sees the NMA as one of the ways to accomplish this. This should mean that the Society’s interests and artefacts should be well taken care of in the future. The Society still owns most of the artefacts contained in the Museum and as such, has an obligation to the donors who so graciously contributed their “memories” to the Society.

In the next *Ensign* I shall try to outline how we have done in respect to the Plan and what the Society needs to do from hereon.

PROJECT MANAGER’S REPORT

BRAD FROGGATT



With the summer coming upon us, the Museum is making the transition from welcoming the many school programs that visit during the year, to the influx of out-of-town visitors who come with the season. Visitors, especially first-timers, are always impressed with the range of the collection and the various large naval artefacts on exhibit. One of the most asked questions we receive (other than “what is the Navy doing in Alberta—a land-locked province”) is how many of the artefacts got to Calgary, and what are they doing here?

The first part of the answer to the question is, of course, to illustrate the naval participation of people from the prairies during the Second World War and afterwards, and how the naval tradition has been kept alive by veterans, former members, current members, and the dedication of the founders and volunteers of the Naval Museum over the years. Another part of the answer is to refer them to the fact the Naval

Reserve units have existed in the “inland provinces” since the 1920s.

Of the five naval museums in Canada, Calgary has the largest collection of naval weapons, and arguably one of the best ship model collections as well. Collecting over the years has amassed one of the most comprehensive collections of naval artefacts in Canada.

This was not achieved accidentally, but by the dedicated efforts of the founders and volunteers of the Museum over the years since its inception when it was realized there must be an effort to preserve the history of the RCN and, in particular, the contribution of Albertans to this history. The Naval Museum of Alberta has changed much since the original *Tecumseh* Historical Society was formed that later became the Naval Museum of Alberta. Change is constant. The Museum has evolved, grown, and changed locations, improved through the efforts of those people who dedicated a major portion of their lives to its purpose. Sacrifices of time, energy and a great portion of people’s lives, created a great museum and raised funds for the Museum’s original building, and the building it now occupies as part of The Military Museums.

It is the legacy of these people who have served to build the Museum, and of those who continue to serve it through their efforts, that is the backbone of what this Museum is. Though times have changed and the Museum governance has evolved, the Museum cannot forget where it came from, and it is this legacy that must be honoured.

Over the past year, the NMA Board and the Museum have been reaching out to the naval community in order to increase awareness of the Museum and the history of the RCN, and to make the Museum a focal point for the naval community for tours, special events and celebrations. One aspect of this is the Navy Days event held in the fall which was inaugurated by NMA last year. This event brought together members of the naval community and revived awareness of what we are here to do. HMCS *Tecumseh* held its Battle of the Atlantic commemoration at the Museum this year, as well as its BOA dinner. Various Sea Cadet corps have not only visited the Museum, but participated in special events, put on demonstrations, participated in Remembrance Day and held their annual ceremonial revues at the TMM and the Naval Museum, and have been involved in creating exhibits. In this way we are not only educating on the history of the RCN, but increasing awareness of naval history to a new generation.

The Museum continues to be dedicated to building

relationships and improving our exhibits to tell our story. Our current volunteers have been instrumental in building new exhibit cases and developing the galleries to improve our narrative and add content. If you have not visited the Museum lately, you will note a lot of work in progress. Exhibits are being added, updated and improved.

Interpretive panels are being redeveloped to be included in a more comprehensive timeline that reflects not only the original intent of the Museum, but will address some more “recent history.” This of course, is a long process, but one that will bear fruit as we work at it.

In the end we cannot lose sight of the history of the founding and building of the Museum, and of those who were involved in it. It is our responsibility to honour those individuals and groups that started the legacy we enjoy today.

On another note, as many of you are aware, the interactive periscope exhibit in the gallery has been redeveloped with the assistance of Ambient Interactive and now incorporates a new experience including virtual reality. This is proving to be a popular aspect of the U-boat exhibit, as the pictures below will illustrate.



TOP & BOTTOM: Young visitors to the museum enjoy the virtual reality, interactive U-boat exhibit.



FROM THE WORKSHOP



Mike Potter

Time has flown since the last *Ensign*. As you can see by the following photographs, we have installed two uniform platforms. We have yet to paint the drop ceiling over this display flat black but that will happen in the next few weeks. The background of these platforms will remain white in order to show off the uniforms.



TOP: Female uniform display. **BOTTOM:** Male display.

The cap tally display is in place and the respective cap tallies are being installed. All that is now required for this display [see *photo page 5*] is to install lighting and the glass.

Between the uniform displays, we will be installing a



LEFT: Cap tally display in position and waiting for tallies.

RIGHT: HMCS *Huron*, one of many WWII ship models which will be in new display wall.



40' x 3' x 1' base to support all of our Second World War model ships, including the refurbished HMCS *Athabaskan* and HMCS *Halifax*. The back wall behind this display will be painted flat black and the models will be on shelves supported by flat black wall brackets. The idea here is to use new overhead lighting to show off the details of each of the models.

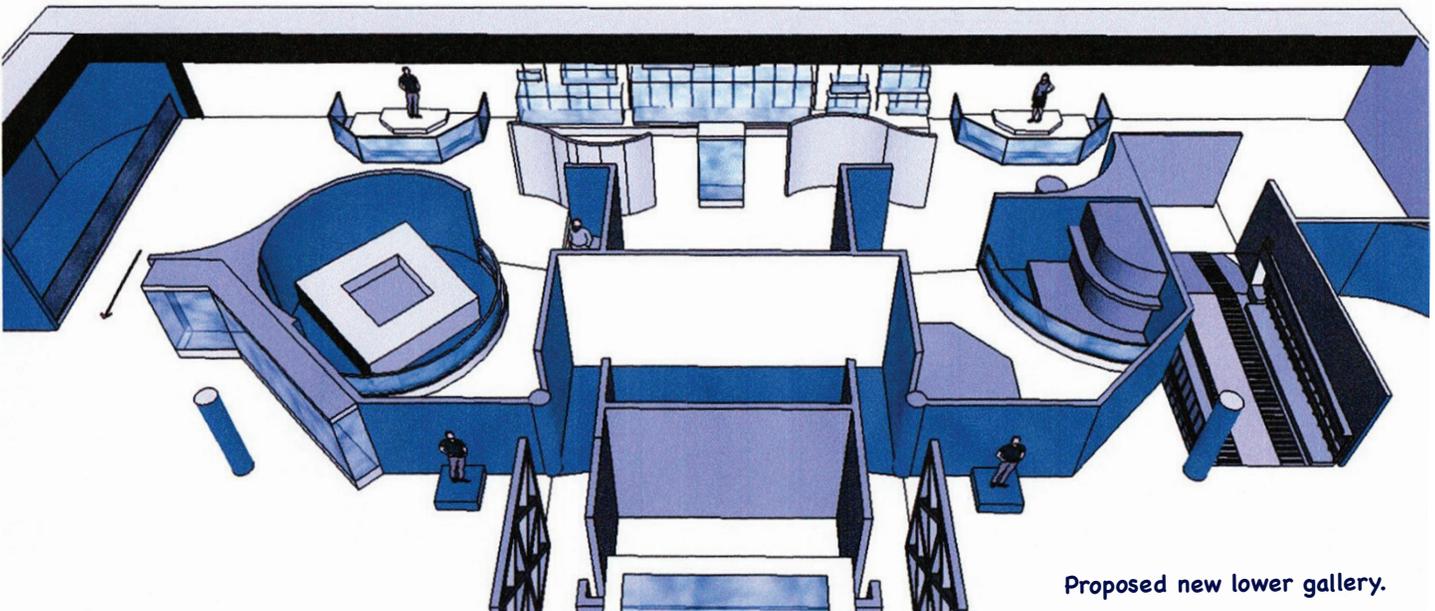
The next display will be several curved walls located between the mess deck and the new WW II model ship display. This display will showcase various items as selected by Brad.

Below, I have included the proposed new gallery plan including all of the preceding exhibits. This plan shows several proposed new exhibits, including a new entrance to the historical part of the gallery. The idea is to provide a new visitor

experience by entering this area through a mock-up LCI landing craft.

The surrounding walls will lead you to the Doc Seaman Theatre where visitors will be immersed in a video of the landing at Juno Beach. When exiting the theatre, visitors will come across the female uniform display. Turning the corner to their left into the current U-boat and Canadian Navy exhibit, visitors will find a completely new look (TBA). Walking past the current mess deck as well as the new curved walls and WWII model ships, visitors will come across a renovated Merchant Marine display complete with a repositioned rescue float (currently sitting on top of a rack and difficult to see). More later on this display.

At the outside of this area, the model ships of the Cold



Proposed new lower gallery.

War will be installed. Included will be a newly constructed HMCS *Protecteur*.

As time moves on the next display will be located on the upper east gallery and this will be called "Ships Named After Cities in Alberta."

In closing, I would like to recognize Mike G., Bruce and John for all their help in the workshop. Sometimes the work takes up more time than we would like, but with the help of these friends, it all seems to come together.



Navy Days 2017 ... Can you help?

Last year's **Navy Days** illustrated a fairly robust demand in Calgary for naval memorabilia. Models, shell casings, lanterns, plaques, books and badges surplus to the Naval Museum of Alberta Society's needs were put up for sale and over \$6,000 was raised.

It is intended to repeat **Navy Days** this year on **October 28th and 29th** and more naval memorabilia will be offered for sale. In that regard, NMAS has only so much surplus material and so the call is being made for your surplus items.

Many of us have homes full of plaques, prints, plates, bells, etc., and there comes a time when some of it has to go. If you are at that point, please consider donating some or all of your collection to the Naval Museum of Alberta Society to be sold at a future garage sale. **ALL FUNDS RAISED WILL GO TOWARDS THE PRESERVATION OF OUR NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE.** If you have items to donate, please bring them to the NMAS Annex at HMCS *Tecumseh* — the first building on your right when you enter the grounds. There is almost always a volunteer there on Mondays from 0900 to 1400.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT SCOTT HAUSBERG AT SCOTT.HAUSBERG@OUTLOOK.COM

WRENS ... MAKE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION ... AGAIN

BY BRAD FROGGATT, NMA PROJECT MANAGER



One of the roles of the Naval Museum of Alberta is not only to collect artefacts that reflect the history of Canada's Navy, but to collect the stories of those people who have served. An artefact in itself is significant, but when artefacts come to the museum attached to the history of the person to which they belonged, we can interpret the history from a more personal perspective.

Over the past two years, the Naval Museum of Alberta has been fortunate to acquire uniforms, artefacts and records from Alberta women who served in the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS) in various capacities during the Second World War and also members who served during the later time when the "WRENS" were amalgamated into the RCN.

These additions to the RCN story help to broaden our interpretation of the roles of women and add to our exhibit by highlighting the changing roles of women in the Navy. This article will highlight a few of these women whose artefacts have made it into our collection.



Marie Ann White (nee Murray) (at top), joined the WRCNS in 1943 and served in Canada and Scotland. Her job in the WRCNS gave her access to many publicity photos, some of which are included in the collection. Among the documents donated by her daughter is a transcript of the message

written in 1945 regarding the awarding of the Victoria Cross to Robert Hampton Gray, with typographical errors circled.



Muriel Ewing (nee Wilbraham), WRCNS Messenger. The NMA is pleased to have been gifted the uniform of WRCNS Messenger Muriel Ewing (nee Wilbraham). From Wainwright, Alberta, Muriel joined the WRCNS in HMCS *Nonsuch* (Edmonton) in 1943 following her brother OD Robert Wilbraham RCNVR. Her father was the Commanding Officer of RCSCC *Exeter* in Wainwright. Muriel trained at HMCS *Conestoga* and served at Naval Service Headquarters in Ottawa.

The collection comprises her tunic, tie and cap with an HMCS cap tally. Included in the collection are photographs and a mounted copy of a 1943 Edmonton Journal entitled: "brother and sister serve," that features Muriel in the *Nonsuch* recruiting centre.

Lt Ramona Humphreys (nee Oland), Special Branch RCN. Newly on exhibit is the uniform that belonged to Lieutenant Ramona (Oland) Humphreys who served in the WRCNS during the Second World War. Of note is the rank insignia on the sleeves and the green band which denotes her as belonging



Lt Ramona (Oland) Humphreys' uniform on display in the Naval Museum of Alberta.



CPO1 Kaye Hyde's uniform on display in the Naval Museum of Alberta.

to a special branch—in this case intelligence—attached to the RCN—hence her rank of Lieutenant rather than Second Officer. The undress ribbon on the left breast indicates she was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal (CVSM).

Prior to the war, Ramona attained an undergraduate degree from United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba. After the war she returned to the University of Manitoba to complete her diploma in social work and, in the 1970s, earned her Master of Social Work degree at the University of Calgary.

Ramona worked in the mental health field at Canadian Mental Health, the Alberta Guidance Centre and the Foothills Hospital. Later she returned to the University of Calgary and completed her degree in fine arts, majoring in sculpture.

Ramona served on the Board of the Kirby Centre and assumed the presidency from 1985-87. Ramona Humphreys passed away in 2002. The uniforms had been donated to the Kirby Centre which subsequently donated them to the NMA.

CPO1 Vera "Kay" Hyde, Coxswain, HMCS *Tecumseh*. Chief Petty Officer First Class 'Kay' Hyde began her Naval Reserve career as a Wren in HMCS *Unicorn* while attending business college in Saskatoon, Sask. She graduated as "Best New Entry Wren" in 1965.

Kay trained as a communicator, instructed the Naval Reserve Summer Student Training Program, participated in Naval Control of Shipping exercises and sat on merit promotion boards.

In 1986, Kay was promoted to Chief Petty Officer First Class, the highest non-commissioned rank in the Canadian

Navy. She served as Coxswain at HMCS *Tecumseh*. In 1989 Kay was transferred to Calgary as the Executive Assistant to Commodore Laraine Orthlieb, Senior Naval Reserve Advisor for Canada.

Kay was awarded the Order of Military Merit in 1993 by Governor General Ramon Hnatyshyn.

She was one of the founding members of the Tecumseh Historical Society, which laid the groundwork for the Naval Museum of Alberta. She retired from the Navy in 2000.

Thelma Barnhouse (nee Martin), Officers Steward / Mess Caterer. The NMA was fortunate to obtain objects and archival material of M. Thelma Martin, WRCNS Mess Caterer / Officers' Steward / Wardroom Attendant from 1943-45, donated by her son, Don Barnhouse of Edmonton.

Objects include uniforms, memorabilia, photos and items from WRCNS reunions over the years. What makes this collection unique is that the uniforms are complete from the caps down to the shoes—including a many-times repaired "undergarment." The collection includes her identification disc, kit bag, personal effects and such hard-to-find items as her working smock, PT Jumper (see image page 9, item on right—have we got this wrong?) and shorts. Also included in the collection was Thelma's "mascot" teddy bear that travelled with her during her time in the Navy.

Thelma maintained a connection with her wartime Wrens and attended reunions over the years. The collection includes many mementos of these reunions.

Archival materials including some of her notes used in

organizing mess functions, have been deposited in the Naval Museum of Alberta Archives at the University of Calgary Library and Archives.



'Jackspeak'

The following naval terminology comes from ReadyEyeReady.com/Jackspeak

20 feet of shoreline ~ A non-existent substance, usually something that a new person is asked to fetch as a joke in which everyone else in the crew is aware of, but not the victim. Also see: "Relative Bearing Grease" and "Bucket Prop Wash."

Pig Boats ~ Slang term for the Porte Class Gate Vessels that were used mainly for Naval Reserve training up until the 1990s.



Pig Boat Roundup (or ... whatever happened to our gate vessels?)

By Scott Hausberg

I was recently checking out the website nauticapedia.ca and came across a write-up about the sale of two of the west coast gate vessels and it got me wondering as to the fate of all of them. As a former naval reservist, I served in all five gate vessels between 1982 and 1985 and therefore my interest in their fates.

Gate vessels, or 'pig boats' as they were more commonly called, were built in 1950 and 1951 with their purpose being to open and close anti-submarine gates. They never performed this function. They were 125' long with a beam of 26' and a draught of 13' and displaced 347 tons. With their

single screw they could make about 13 knots. Originally, they were fitted with a deck gun and they were the last ships in the RCN to have hammocks. When the 280-class destroyers were introduced as *Sisters of the Space Age*, the gate vessels were unofficially nicknamed *Sisters of the Stone Age*.

Further exploration of nauticapedia.ca forposteritysake.ca and "[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/)" revealed the following:

Porte St. Jean (180) and **Porte St. Louis** (183) – these two gate vessels were based on the east coast. After decommissioning, they were sold in September 2000 and taken to New

Jersey for conversion into yachts. Clearly, this idea did not work and *Porte St. Louis* ended up somewhere in the Caribbean and may still be there hauling goods between islands or fishing. *Porte St. Jean* was renamed *MV Miss Dania Beach* and sunk in 2004 as an artificial reef off Dania Beach, Florida.



HMCS *Porte St Jean* in Toronto.

Porte Dauphine (186) – This is the only gate vessel confirmed as still in service. It was converted to carry fish and renamed *Salmon Transporter*. It is working in support of fish farms in the Campbell River area.

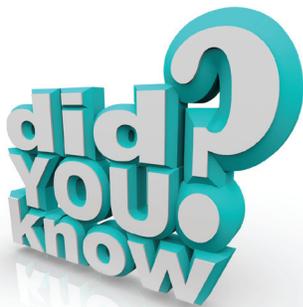


The former HMCS *Porte Dauphine* renamed *Salmon Transporter*.



Either HMCS *Porte De La Reine* or HMCS *Porte Quebec* undergoing conversion to become a yacht in Anacortes, Washington.

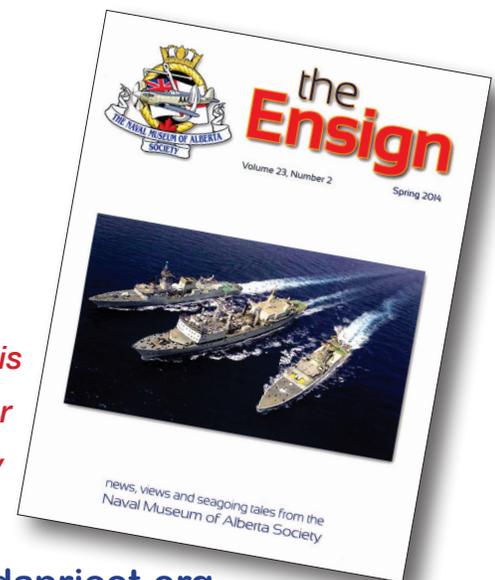
Porte De La Reine (184) and *Porte Quebec* (185) – Like their east coast sisters, these two ships were sold with the intent to convert them into yachts. Some conversion work was undertaken in Anacortes, Washington but clearly this project failed. In 2013, they were declared derelict by the State of Washington and moved to the Seattle area.



... that back issues of 'The Ensign' are available on the NMAS website?

The NMAS website has many great features but surely the best is the ability to view past issues of 'The Ensign.' Read them over and over again in magnificent colour (for those who have only seen the black and white versions). The site is located at...

<http://navalmuseumofalbertasociety.wildapricot.org>



PLEASE COMPLETE, CLIP AND MAIL THIS FORM TO THE ADDRESS SHOWN BELOW

**PLEASE RENEW OR PURCHASE A MEMBERSHIP IN
THE NAVAL MUSEUM OF ALBERTA SOCIETY
FOR THE YEAR 2017**

YES, please renew/accept my Naval Museum of Alberta Society membership for 2017. A cheque for \$20.00 payable to the Society is enclosed to cover my membership for one year and my information is included below (kindly print):

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____



TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Please check this box only if you would like to receive The Ensign by mail rather than by email (because we do not have a colour copier, (these will be in black and white while emailed copies are in full colour, PDF format and save the Society both paper and postage.)

Please check this box if you would like to make a donation to the Society. A tax receipt will be issued for all donations in excess of \$20.00.

**Please return this form with your cheque payable to NMAS.
Mail to: Naval Museum of Alberta Society, c/o HMCS Tecumseh,
1820 - 24th Street SW, Calgary, AB T2T 0G6**

THANK YOU! FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



We always have a 'pressing' need for volunteers to serve as Naval Museum Watchkeepers!

If you would like to enlist in our fine body of Watchkeepers, please contact Bill Buchanan at 403-274-7535 or by email to cutknife@telus.net and we will promise not to send the Press Gang to your door!

2017 Membership Drive

The Naval Museum of Alberta Society is actively seeking new members! Every new member adds to our ability to provide credible support to our museum. Kindly do your part ... help us grow in 2017!

Content is always wanted for The Ensign

If you have any material you think would be appropriate, please send it to Editor, Scott Hausberg scott.hausberg@outlook.com

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LCdr (Ret'd) George A. Moore, President
1871 Primrose Crescent, Kamloops, BC V1S 0A5
Phone 250-314-1284 • Fax 250-314-1286 • cascadecreek@shaw.ca

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4520 Crowchild Trail, SW, Calgary, Alberta T2T 5J4
Telephone 403-974-2807

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Adults \$10.00, Seniors \$5.00, Youth 7-17 \$4.00
Serving personnel (past and present) and their families FREE
NMAS members FREE • Ample free parking

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Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Weekends and holidays 9:30 am to 4:00 pm

The Naval Museum of Alberta Society

1820 - 24th Street, SW, Calgary AB T2T 0G8
Telephone 403-242-0002
Facsimile 403-240-1966
execdir@navalmuseumssociety.ca

The Ensign Editor

Cdr (Ret'd) Scott Hausberg
scott.hausberg@outlook.com