

Poignant tributes to service at first Remembrance dinner since pandemic's start

It had been more than two-and-a-half years since community members were last able to gather together in the Legion Hall to break bread with veterans and thank them for their service face to face.

While the time spent living through the global pandemic meant that there were fewer veterans of World War Two and the Korean War able to be on hand, the first Remembrance Dinner hosted by the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion since 2019 was no less poignant last Saturday.

It has been a couple of years since we've been able to gather together and it does make a difference to be here in person with one another, to honour our community's veterans, and the women and men who serve and continue to serve the country," said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy. "I have not sacrificed anything for my freedom. It was given to me by those who came before me and sacrificed so much. So now it is my responsibility to never forget the service and the sacrifices of all the Canadian soldiers, air crew and merchant seamen."

Representing the Town was Councillor Harold Kim, who was in attendance along with Ward 1 Councillor-elect Ron Weese. In his speech, Kim recalled his parents' experience growing up in Korea during the conflict.

"They have vivid memories of grabbing their most prized belongings when told they had to flee their homes to escape the invaders," he said. "They had to flee on foot amidst the throngs, each person clinging desperately to the hand of their loved ones so no one would be separated from the rest. It was a terrible time of unimaginable fear, cold, pain, hunger and suffering. But even in the midst of suffering there was hope.

"My mother recalls in particular the feeling of great hope and relief when her parents told her that help was coming, that Korea was not alone in its struggle. This is the great paradox of war; different nations may be at war at any given time. Those that were once enemies may today be allies. For this reason, war is always a tragedy for all of humanity, for it is a fight not against the human enemy, or even a nation. Rather, it is a war against hate and evil. The only thing that joins us all at all times is our love for one another and as human beings.

"How do we love? We respect and honour each other's right to live in freedom, from oppression or tyranny. We seek not to destroy but to understand. We live kindly towards each other. We step up to defend and protect one another, especially those who are vulnerable. Unfortunately, throughout history, unworthy people wielding great power have overstepped their own rights by violating those of others' brutalized and tyrannized, and would have continued doing so until they were stopped by brave people who have stepped up."

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter