



## New Site Approved for Memorial

On April 28<sup>th</sup> the National Capital Commission approved a new site for the Memorial to Victims of Communism.

The site is at the Garden of the Provinces and Territories on Wellington St. across from the National Library and Archives. The exact site is just west of the terraces in the Garden.

Project milestones will be finalized later this spring, but a new design competition is what Canadian Heritage is focusing on right now. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

The government is proceeding with construction cost of \$3 million, with half to be funded by the government and the rest to be raised by Tribute to Liberty. Currently, Tribute to Liberty has raised \$1.1 million, or \$1.4 million including pledges tied to the actual construction.

"Not only am I confident that we're moving ahead but I'm also particularly happy with the personal approach of Minister Joly," said Ludwik Klimkowski, Chair, Tribute to Liberty Board. "Her spirit of cooperation and transparency, the freshness of her view... it gives a different dimension to this whole process."

"The period of uncertainty and ups and downs is behind us, and I think the refocus on this memorial under the leadership and partnership with Joly removes any ambiguity or any doubt," Klimkowski said.



Tribute to Liberty is a Canadian organization whose mission is to establish a memorial to the victims of Communism in the National Capital Region.

Tribute to Liberty's Newsletter is published four times a year. If you would like to add an email address to our subscriber list please email [info@tributetoliberty.ca](mailto:info@tributetoliberty.ca).

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## The Garden of the Provinces and Territories



## Canadian Heritage Roundtable

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage, held a roundtable with key stakeholders to share the results of a survey on the Memorial to the Victims of Communism – *Canada, A Land of Refuge*, and to hear their views and insights about the design considerations for the memorial. The roundtable discussion is considered the final step in the consultation process for the Memorial.

Stakeholders present at the roundtable included local members of Parliament; municipal leaders; Tribute to Liberty directors; representatives from the National Capital Commission and community groups and organizations.

A key part of the meeting was a review of the results from the online survey conducted in February 2016 the government launched as part of the consultation

process to review design considerations for the Memorial.

Over 8,500 Canadians took part in the survey. The following are several highlights:

- Over 72 percent of respondents want the memorial to “Remind visitors about core Canadian values of freedom, democracy and human rights,” while 36 percent believe it should “recognize the experience of Canadians who emigrated from communist countries.”
- In terms of visitor experience, 52 percent feel the memorial should be “A place for reflection and contemplation,” followed by 43 percent who see it as “a catalyst that prompts discussion and inspires visitors of all ages to learn more about the past.”
- For size and scope, 53 percent prefer “A human-scaled monument set in an intimate environment.”

Feedback received from the survey and the roundtable will be provided to the design teams competing for the project so they can take these ideas into account when developing their submissions. [Survey results are now compiled and available on-line.](#)

“Tribute to Liberty was grateful for the opportunity to articulate the views of Canadian victims of communism, who were the initiators of this project, and to emphasize its national scope and its educational role. We are hopeful that the design of the memorial will meaningfully reflect the difficult experiences faced by victims of communist tyranny that led them to seek and find refuge in Canada,” said Ludwik Klimkowski, Chair, Tribute to Liberty.



Minister Joly with Tribute to Liberty board members, from left: Ivan Grbesic, Ludwik Klimkowski, Paul Grod.



Minister Joly addresses roundtable meeting Apr. 22<sup>nd</sup>.



Roundtable participants talk with Minister Joly.



The roundtable in session.

## Meeting with Latvian Speaker of Saeima

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, representatives from Tribute to Liberty met with the Speaker of Saeima (the Latvian parliament), Inara Mūrniece.

The following is a short article published on the

Latvian Saeima website and has been translated from Latvian.

**Speaker of the Latvian parliament, Inara Mūrniece: The Victims of Communism Memorial in Ottawa will also be a tribute to Latvia.**

After the Second World War, Canada became home for thousands of Latvians. We will never forget the totalitarian Communist regime's crimes against humanity. The Victims of Communism Memorial to be established in Ottawa will be a tribute to Central and Eastern European origin ethnic communities. The Speaker, Inara Mūrniece, stressed this during her official visit to Canada at the meeting with the non-governmental organization Tribute to Liberty's leadership—Ludwik Klimkowski and Alīde Forstmanis. This organization is working on the Memorial to Victims of Communism in Ottawa. Latvia has also donated funds to this memorial.

“The Communist regime's brutality broke many nation's peoples destinies, including Latvia. Almost every Latvian family history has been touched by tragic stories of the past, of which it is important to speak today, it is important to explain our Latvia's history. Therefore, on behalf of Latvians I express my deepest gratitude to the organization's activists, who brought attention to the need to explain and inform about this sad page of the history of the international community,” said the Speaker.

Canada is home to about eight million citizens who have been affected personally or through their heritage by Communist repression and crimes, including 25,000 Latvians. “The Memorial will promote public awareness and knowledge about Communist regimes' repression against affected nations,” the Speaker said and thanked the organization Tribute to Liberty for their efforts.



From left: Alīde Forstmanis, Ojars Eriks Kalnins, Member of Saeima, Inara Mūrniece, Speaker of Saeima, Juris Audarins, Ambassador of Latvia in Ottawa, Ludwik Klimkowski.

## 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong Fundraiser for Memorial

Tribute to Liberty joined Canadian War Veterans in British Columbia on April 9<sup>th</sup> to observe the 65th Anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong, regarded as one of the most significant contributions by the Canadian Army in the Korean War against Communist aggression in 1950-1955. The Minister of Environment of British Columbia, The Honourable Mary Polak, and the Mayor of the City of Coquitlam, Richard Stewart, also joined the commemoration. This special event would not have been possible without the efforts of Senator Yonah Martin, and Tribute to Liberty Board member and Chair of the National Unification Advisory Council, Ron B. Suh, as well as Grace Seear and other volunteers.



The \$18,800 raised at the event will go towards the construction of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism in Ottawa.

Tribute to Liberty would like to thank its British Columbia donors for their generous support of the Memorial and encourages others to donate as Tribute to Liberty fundraises across Canada.

For donations, please visit:

<http://tributetoliberty.ca/contribute>

## History Unhidden *Finnish Sisu During the War Years*

Anyone who lived in Finland during the war years has a story to tell. My family is no different. When the Russian bully picked on its smaller neighbour in 1939, what she could not anticipate was the unwavering defense the underdog would rally to defend her borders. The Finnish people exemplified *sisu*, stoic determination in the face of great adversity, as it faced its foe not once, but twice: first during the

Winter War, and soon after during the Continuation War.

My father, Aarne Kovala, was only eleven years old when the first Russian planes dropped bombs on his hometown of Oulu on New Year's Day in 1940. As he fled for safety, Aarne witnessed a Russian airman parachute from his disabled plane and watched with horror as he summersaulted through the air before crashing nearby. Some witnesses snatched buttons from the body as souvenirs. Later, he huddled with family members in a root cellar, the family's makeshift shelter, as the bombs rained down from above. Screaming air raid signals became an everyday reality.



Only months before, on November 26, 1939, a shelling in Mainila at the Soviet frontier post between Russia and Finland resulted in four Soviet soldiers dead and a further nine injured. The Russians blamed Finland for the attack, but historians have since determined the Russians manufactured the incident themselves. After failed negotiations, Soviet forces invaded Finland on November 30.



The Russians outnumbered the Finnish soldiers by as many as threefold and far outstripped their aircraft and tanks. Approximately 300,000 men defended their country with limited resources, including 32 tanks, 114

aircraft, and aged weaponry. A further 100,000 Lotta Svärd, members of the women's auxiliary, volunteered in hospitals, fundraised, staffed air-raid warning posts, prepared aid packages and performed other vital tasks. The Russian forces had as many as 998,000 soldiers, 6,541 tanks and 3,880 aircraft. For one hundred and five days, Finnish forces fought their foe valiantly, demonstrating ingenuity and perseverance through the harshest recorded winter conditions in a hundred years.

Although Aarne was too young to go to war, his oldest brother took up the cause. While fighting on the eastern border, Heimo Kovala was injured when shrapnel struck his leg. The conditions were too dangerous to evacuate the wounded right away, so Heimo's leg was packed with snow until he could be moved. By the time he reached a hospital, his leg was frozen and shortly after it was amputated below the knee. While recovering, the Russians bombed his hospital. Heimo survived, but others were not so fortunate.

When the Winter War ended on March 13, 1940, Finland suffered 25,904 dead or missing and 44,000 wounded from a nation of only four million. Russia claimed 22,000 square miles of land, including Viipuri, Finland's second largest city, the Karelian Isthmus, as well as key ports, industrial areas, and power stations. Four hundred and fifty thousand Finns found themselves homeless.

Although the Winter War ended, the struggle between Finland and Russia was far from over. The Continuation War resumed the conflict on June 25, 1941.



My uncle, Veikko Kovala, an avid skier who had won numerous skiing events in his youth, was now skiing for his life and for his country. Unlike, the Soviet soldiers' standard brown uniforms, the Finnish ski troopers wore white capes to camouflage themselves

in the wintery terrain. Skiing allowed Finns to have greater mobility and employ guerilla tactics in the dense forests. The conditions were difficult and many of the ski troopers, including Veikko, caught pneumonia. Veikko was sent to the hospital to recover, but when he arrived home to his wife and held his newborn son for the first time, he began to cough blood. He did not recover. Veikko died on March 21, 1942 at the age of twenty-two.



By the time Aarne was fifteen years old he was anxious to leave his hometown, now overrun by German soldiers, but he was too young to join the war. He travelled to Helsinki and found work on a merchant marine ship ferrying goods between Germany, Finland and Poland. His brother Kalle, a few years his senior, also went to Helsinki to train as a soldier.

The Continuation War ended on September 19, 1944 with the signing of the Moscow Armistice and as part of the conditions of the peace agreement, Finland had to sever ties with Germany. Days later, Aarne's ship was detained in the port of Danzig, Poland. The sailors of the S/S Wappu, along with those of three other Finnish merchant ships, were arrested and sent to Stutthof Concentration Camp. He would not see his home again until June 10, 1945.

Every member of my father's family was affected by the Russian aggression on Finland during the Winter and Continuation Wars. Sadly, our story is not unique. Finnish mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters experienced the effects of war at their doorsteps. Despite great losses of life and land, the Finnish people managed to preserve their liberty in an astounding show of Finnish *sisu*.

Text: Liisa Kovala  
Photos: SA-kuva