

LOOKOUT

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Developing tomorrow's leaders

Deborah Morrow
Contributor

This year marks the 100 anniversary of the Navy League in British Columbia, and to kick off the year of celebration cadets from the Navy League Cadet Corps Captain Rankin of Vancouver toured the base and dockyard, and had a sleepover in the Work Point barracks over the March 4 weekend.

The weekend included a tour of HMCS Regina, Dockyard, and the base Naval and Military Museum, where the youth received lessons from Navy League Lieutenant Commander Cliff Mah about the history of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN).

A visit from Rear Admiral Art McDonald, Commander Maritime Forces Pacific, was an added bonus. He chatted with the cadets, asking about their program and giving them a sincere navy welcome. Nine-year-old Ordinary Cadet Connor Tse beamed with delight when RAdm McDonald held him up high so he could see over the heads of his colleagues and view the dockyard landscape.

"The navy is now real to them," says LCdr (NL) Mah. "Spending time with working members of the RCN is the only way to give

them a firsthand glimpse inside the navy."

On Sunday the cadets travelled back to Vancouver with a lifetime of stories for their families and peers.

Over their three days on the base they learned it takes a fleet of ships to make a navy, which not only includes warships, but other types of ships in support roles.

The Navy League Officers gave ordinary kids extraordinary opportunities and will lead the path to the next hundred years of British Columbia's Navy League.

About the Navy League of Canada

The Navy League of Canada was initially formed in 1895 to advocate for an effective naval

defence for Canada, as a navy had not existed in Canada prior to that date.

Once the task of establishing the RCN was accomplished, local branches of the Navy League began to take shape throughout Canada and its mission was expanded to include three elements: the Navy League Cadets, the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets

and Maritime Affairs.

The Royal Canadian Sea Cadet programme is funded and operated in partnership with the Department of National Defence and is for youth aged 12 to 18; however, the Navy League Cadet Program is unique and is entirely funded and operated by a cadre of Navy League volunteers. It is for youth aged 9 to 12.

In keeping with the traditions of the RCN, Navy League officers teach the children respect for the uniform, traditions, structure, values, history, fitness and elemental seamanship skills of the naval service.

Retired naval Captain Harry Harsch heads up the Navy League's national Maritime Affairs portfolio, and is a strong supporter of the Navy League Cadet programme.

"The Navy League Cadets is a great opportunity for 9 to 12-year-olds and has been a unique Canadian success story since 1948," he says. "In many respects it is similar to the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet programme, but modified to serve the needs of the younger age group. These youngsters learn citizenship, seamanship, a sense of duty, self-discipline, teamwork, healthy living and respect for others, and have a lot of fun at the same time."



Photo: Deborah Morrow

Little Ordinary Cadet Connor Tse couldn't see over the heads of his Cadet friends until Rear-Admiral McDonald picked him up and held him high above his colleagues.