

The pupils at Kinlochbervie High School followed on from the highly successful ceremony in memory of Robert McBeath VC, a Kinlochbervie War Hero in September, with their much awaited trip to Vancouver at the start of this month. McBeath emigrated to Vancouver after the war but was killed in the line of duty as a Vancouver Police Constable in 1922. This is the third trip the school has taken to Vancouver as part of the McBeath Project, the previous trips happening in 2010 and 2014 and as in the previous trips there were three days set aside to spend with the VPD as their guests.

The first activity planned by Constable Alan Mah was a trip to King George Secondary School, a school with ten times more pupils than the 45 pupil Kinlochbervie High. The pupils were given a tour round the school, met some pupils and shared experiences of schools and countries. After lunch the school arranged for the group to join some of their own pupils to do some ice skating. Some very interesting shapes were thrown by the Sutherland group before they finally got the hang of it! After this, the school youth worker and school ambassador Jesse Coomes took the group on a walking tour of beautiful Stanley Park, Jesse is a former park ranger so knew lots of interesting facts and stories to tell the group.

Day 2 with the VPD was spent visiting some of their unit headquarters, first stop was the Canine Unit. The pupils were given unique access to the base and met police dog handler Jeff and his canine officer Griffin. Jeff and Griffin showed us some agility and then invited Head Teacher Graeme Smart to enter the enclosure for a take down! Mr Smart looked suitably worried as he donned the arm shield and he was right to be, Griffin's speed and strength had Mr Smart on his knees in no time at all. After this excitement Griffin enjoyed some petting and tummy tickles from the pupils and staff, showing his softer side to the group. The Tactical Training Centre was next where the pupils viewed the sister cairn to the one in Kinlochbervie, (which the group in 2010 attended the dedication of), were shown a taser working (on a dummy!) and how the VPD Officers are trained. After lunch the next stop was the Mounted Unit in Stanley Park where the group met the officers and the horses and saw some training in action. Then on to the Marine Unit where the pupils were to get rides out on the marine unit vessel the RG McBeath, this was such an honour and very unique way to see Vancouver. They are some of around only 100 people to do this and Constable Gordon Stokes explained why "Because of how you remember our fallen brother, you are now part of our family and only family get to do this". A lucky group of people indeed. They also had the amazing experience of visiting the Marine Mammal Rescue service next door, which is not open to the public, to learn about their rescue work with mammals such as seals, sea lions etc and to see some of the "patients".

The last day with the VPD was a very special day indeed; the group were picked up first thing and whisked to Police HQ at the Gravely Building where they were honoured guests at a special ceremony to mark the 95th anniversary of McBeath's death. Following this they were addressed by the Chief Constable and were free to ask questions before enjoying a lovely lunch and getting to do a bit of shopping in the Police Shop. Next the group were driven to Mountain View Ceremony to pay their respects at the grave of Robert McBeath, it was very moving for the Scottish contingent to finally be at the graveside of their local hero and to know that a little bit of Kinlochbervie lies in Vancouver. It was then off to the Police Museum where the pupils were given a tour, a forensic challenge and of course to see the gold watch of Robert McBeath. One of the group was lucky

enough to be allowed to hold the watch, an emotional moment. The culmination of the time spent with the Police was the evening activity, a Vancouver Canucks ice hockey game! Constable Mah accompanied the group to the Rogers Arena and what a spectacle it was! The pupils may be looking for an ice rink in the school grounds sometime soon!

When the group were not with the VPD, time was spent seeing the beautiful natural attractions of BC, the Vancouver Lookout, Capilano Suspension Bridge and Rainforest, Grouse Mountain for a bit of zip-Lining and amazing views on a spectacular sunny day and a trip to Whistler to take the Peak to Peak Gondolas. The APC of Vancouver were so kind as to arrange a traditional Canadian Thanksgiving dinner for the staff and pupils in their hotel. Pastor Norm and some of his congregation put on a beautiful home cooked turkey dinner so the group wouldn't miss out on the holiday weekend. Some of the congregation had links to Sutherland and to the Western Isles so much chatting and reminiscing took place!

All in all an amazing and truly unique trip for all involved. The hospitality shown by the Vancouver Police was second to none and it's hoped it can be repaid if they ever get over to Scotland! Constable Alan Mah has been renamed MacMah and the pupils took time to buy and personalise a gift to say thank you for all his work on making the trip unforgettable. And unforgettable it was. The legacy left by Robert McBeath is meaningful and priceless and for such an adventurous spirit, truly fitting.