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**Sapper Gill Leclair (retired) from Rouyn-Noranda, Second World War veteran, has been awarded the highest Honour bestowed by the French government.**



The **Canadian Military Engineers** are pleased to announce that on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2014 at the town hall of Rouyn-Noranda the Government of France awarded Sapper Gill Leclair (Retired) the French National Order of the Legion of Honour. Mr Leclair was personally presented with the award by the Consul General of France in Montréal, Bruno Clerc, before an audience of dignitaries, French nationals living in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and his family. “I am very honoured and would like to thank everyone for the reception. Something like this doesn’t happen every day,” noted Mr Leclair.



(Photo TC Media-Karina Osiecka)

As part of an initiative launched by the President of the Republic to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Normandy Landings, 16 Canadian veterans who participated in D-Day have received the French Legion of Honour. At the age of 90, Mr Leclair is one of the last living Quebec veterans to have taken part in the liberation of France and Europe. “On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1944, with the Allied landings on the coast of Normandy, Operation Overlord marked the start of an invasion of North West Europe. Sapper Gill Leclair, who was 20 at the time, took part in this operation. He was one of the soldiers who fought to liberate France. He owes his life to a heavy sea that diverted his barge away from the landings. A few hours later, he took part in the liberation of Belgium and Holland. “He was one of that brave band of fighters,” noted the French Consul General in Montréal, Bruno Clerc.



"According to Mr Leclair, he served with 5<sup>th</sup> Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers. He came ashore at Bernières-sur-Mer on D-Day+1 with several pieces of engineering equipment needed to support the advance. His main job during those first days on the beach was to disarm mines. He participated in the assault that liberated the airport at Caen."

In 1946, following the war, Mr Leclair arrived with his family in Rouyn-Noranda, where he spent almost all his working life with Brazeau Transport. During the presentation of the insignia of Knight of the Legion of Honour, he was accompanied by his wife Cornelia Fielmeg, with whom he recently celebrated 69 years of marriage.