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Two Sea King helicopters fly over HMCS Yellowknife off Esquimalt on Nov. 27. The helicopters were conducting a media day over southern Vancouver Island ahead of their final farewell flight. The Sea King was officially retired on Dec. 1 in a ceremony at 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron after 55 years of service to the Canadian Armed Forces and Canada.

Photo by Peter Mallett, Lookout

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Kerry Vance, MFRC champion, visits staff

Peter Mallett
Staff Writer

When Kerry Vance stopped by the Colwood Pacific Activity Centre (CPAC) Nov. 23, she made it clear she was excited about the visit but encouraged everyone she met to drop the formalities.

"Call me Kerry, I don't want to hear Mrs. Vance, I want you to feel comfortable talking with me about whatever concerns you," said Vance, wife of the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance.

Vance was in town to participate in Pacific Women's Day at Royal Roads University on Nov. 24. Ahead of that engagement, she toured the CPAC and met with members of the Esquimalt Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC).

She visited with children in the MFRC Daycare Centre and had a roundtable discussion with MFRC staffers.

The next day she attended Pacific Women's Day held at Royal Roads University and organized by the MFRC. The event celebrates the role of female military members, spouses and partners, mothers, DND employees and friends of the military. It featured a keynote address

by popular military family lifestyle blogger Kim Mills of *She is Fierce*, specialty workshops, and a mix and mingle lunch.

Vance said women need to take the time to think of themselves and their own needs.

"Take time for yourself because in the end it will make you stronger. If you are weak, either emotionally, spiritually or physically, you won't have the power to be effective in life."

Her unique perspective on selflessness comes from experience since Vance is both a mother and a soldier who served in the United States Army. She retired from the military in 2015 as a Colonel after more than 25 years of active service. The child of Irish and Italian immigrant parents, Kerry was born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Kerry is such a great champion for the cause of military families and our community," said Jackie Carlé, executor director of the MFRC. "It's lovely that she is so warm and inviting, and so very interested in the work we do with military families."

This year's Pacific Women's Day was the best attended event in the past five years with 101 registered participants.



Photo by Peter Mallett, Lookout

Kerry Vance, wife of Chief of the Defence Staff General Jonathan Vance, meets with members of the Esquimalt Military Family Resource Centre at the Colwood Pacific Activity Centre on Nov. 23.

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Peter Mallett
Staff Writer

Public school students in Esquimalt have been busy creating heart-felt messages of joy and peace for Canadian Armed Forces personnel who won't be home for the holidays.

Students from Rockheights Middle School completed over 200 hand-drawn Christmas greeting cards for Canada's troops deployed to faraway places over Christmas and New Year's. Complete with colourful artwork and personalized messages, the cards were put into a large

Santa Sack on Nov. 28 before being mailed. The project was initiated by a parent of a Grade eight student.

"I thought it was a nice and kind gesture for us to do, and we know they will feel good when they see people back home are wishing them safe travels and thanking them for everything they do," said Grade 6 student Ryan.

"I feel like it's a good thing to do, to show that we are thankful for everything Canadian Forces members do for us, and we know they have left their families to represent Canada around the world

during Christmas," added classmate Isabella.

Rockheights Middle School Principal, Maryanne Trofimuk says she and the students are hopeful the letters will make it to the troops in time for Christmas.

"We are always honoured to support anything that has to do with the community," she said. "Within our community of Esquimalt, being able to support our Canadian Forces any time of the year is always meaningful for our students and staff. Connecting with the base also has a special place for me on a personal level too."

That's because her late

father, Master Warrant Officer Phil Trofimuk, enjoyed a lengthy career in the Royal Canadian Air Force as an Aviation Systems Technician.

"I know if he were alive today, he would be pleased to see messages and other similar initiatives like this coming from the schools," said Trofimuk.

Children and adults interested in getting their holiday messages of support and cards to the troops can write them at the following address: Any Canadian Armed Forces Member, PO Box 5140 Stn Forces, Belleville, Ont., K8W 5W6.



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WHAT SAY YOU

When two worlds collide

Captain Jenn Jackson

Operation Caribbe Public Affairs Officer and Ballroom Dancer

These days, when I practice ballroom and Latin dance, I plug into my mp3 player, tie up my practice shoes, set my interval timer, and take a deep, cleansing, breath.

Then I carve out some room on the bridge, avoid radars and boatswains cleaning weapons, and claim my real estate. The Royal Canadian Navy ship where I am practicing, slips away as I immerse myself in my dance exercises.

Right now, I am deployed as a Public Affairs Officer to the Eastern Pacific in HMCS Nanaimo for Operation Caribbe – the Canadian contribution to the US-led Operation Martillo, which aims to intercept and disrupt the shipment of drugs from Central America to Canada and the United States.

I am also an avid competitive ballroom and Latin dancer and I usually train up to seven hours a week. With more than two months on a Royal Canadian Navy vessel, I am taking two usually separate aspects of my identity – the military member and the dancer – and merging them together on the high seas.

Navy ship obstacles

This is my first extended sail, so figuring out how to transform an area on a warship into a temporary dance studio took some thinking.

The ship on which I am deployed is only 55-metres long overall, and almost all the spaces are small and cramped. The “gym” is in the back part of the bridge and consists of a treadmill, rowing machine, some bikes, and free weights. Space is a luxury everywhere, and there certainly is no ballroom – or even wooden floors – on board.

The floors themselves are an obstacle. Instead of the smooth and shiny floors I am used to, maintaining safety at sea means the decks have rough surfaces to keep sailors from slipping and sliding as the ship rocks and rolls with the waves.

Finally, the heat – even though it is November, we are close to the equator and the average temperature is 28 degrees Celsius – before adding in about 75 percent humidity. There is some air conditioning on the bridge, but it is limited. There are days I feel I am swimming instead of dancing!

A lot of challenges to overcome, but not impossible.

The best laid plan...

I look at this deployment as an opportunity to really nail down some of the little details that have been on my dance ‘to do’ list. All



the exercises I chose can be done in a small space without needing the floor to be too slippery – so on paper it works!

Well, that’s the plan, but here is the reality...Kingston-Class ships move a lot on the open ocean! This adds an unexpected challenge to all my exercises – but on the other hand, the core work needed to maintain my balance is going to pay dividends when I get home. I have discovered there is a real art to doing Cuban motion on a platform that sways beneath you and rocks forward and back. The bonus is there are handrails that act like Barres for stability.

Doh! Sea sickness!

My first couple weeks at sea were a little rough. I had to wear a sea sickness patch that made me feel fuzzy in the head and a little dizzy. Since I stopped wearing it, I feel okay most days, but there are those few rougher days at sea where my stomach is a little iffy as I dance. I have adjusted now, but it was rocky there for a while.

She is doing what?

My fellow sailors were not sure what to make of a new officer on the ship doing some-

what odd exercises. Even my Commanding Officer, who knew I was a dancer ahead of time, took a few moments on one of my first days to figure out that I was walking through dance routines on the forecastle (front deck of the ship). However, once it became a regular routine, the fact that I was doing rumba walks to the radar and back on the bridge didn’t seem unusual anymore. I became the same as everyone else working out in our little gym.

Needing to just dance.

One of the hardest things is there really is no space to just go and full out dance on the ship. Dance is a big part of my personal stress relief so when we get busy (and boy do we!) and I don’t get the opportunity to practice for a couple days, I start to feel a bit stressed, frustrated, and irritable. It usually resolves with a good practice to burn off the steam and disconnect from ship life, but there are still times when I just want to dance full out.

Keeping it realistic until I get home

I came into this deployment knowing dance was going to be a challenge, and I am staying positive simply because I take time to look after myself and just dance. I may find myself stumbling around trying to keep my balance, but even the rockiest days at sea are great days when they are dance days.

I usually keep my military and dance identities separate, but since I live where I work on this ship, I have had to find a way to blend them together. In many ways my overall understanding of who I am is growing with each nautical mile we travel. I firmly believe that as people we are always changing and evolving, and most limits we encounter are those we place on ourselves. I came on board not knowing how these two parts of who I am would come together. It was a personal challenge to take those first dance steps on the bridge – but I am proud that I did and that I figured out how to be a truly military dancer.

I’ll be home in time for Christmas, and I am looking forward to getting back inside a studio and working with my instructor again. But until then, I am absolutely loving what I am doing on board Nanaimo for Operation Caribbe. From telling the stories of my fellow sailors to snapping photos of the Gnaval Gnome, I am slowly and surely dancing my way through my navy days at sea.

Although, I should mention that I am actually in the Royal Canadian Air Force. But that’s another story.

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Naden Band in Chile

Lt(N) Melissa Kia
MARPAO PAO

The Naden Band of Maritime Forces Pacific is currently representing the Royal Canadian Navy in the 200th Anniversary of the Chilean Navy celebrations.

The group of musicians, totalling 35 members, is presently in Renaca, where they are brushing up on their latest tunes to add to their musical program for this milestone celebration.

Music is but one of the events for this group, as they have also been liaising with the Chilean Armada.

The band's official events started Nov. 24, when they were welcomed on board the Chilean frigate *Almirante Blanco Encalada*. They also toured the historical Naval Museum of Chile located in the hills of Valparaiso that overlooks the Fleet and Chilean Naval Base.

Their second visit was to the Torquemada Air Base in Concon, where the musicians were shown some Chilean airpower. They were also treated to a view of Canadian technology at work during a demonstration of submerged helicopter escape training for Chilean pilots.

Later in the week, the Naden Band was warmly welcomed by the Chilean Marines at the Aguayo Marine Base where the Chileans put on an impressive showcase of their weaponry and technical expertise. Tanks, field artillery and mountain and dive experts from the 51 Chilean Marine Brigade were on hand for the Canadian visit.

The Naden Band will perform live with the Chilean Navy and the Royal Marine Band of the Royal Navy in four major events during the first week of December.

Until then, they will be working on their best material and sharpest drill to be in fine form for the big events that are expected to draw thousands, and even the president of Chile and the Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Right: The piccolo section of the Naden Band hit the high notes.

Below: The Naden Band's PO2s Lang on drums, MacDonald on guitar and Ross MacDonald on base practice at the Chilean Naval Academy.



The Naden Band marches to Heart of Oak while practicing at the Chilean Naval Academy.

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IN MEMORIAM LT(N) CYNTHIA ANN LAWLESS

SEPT. 5, 1972 – NOV. 22, 2018

Cyndi passed away in the company of her family after a challenging fight with cancer. She is survived by her loving husband Michael, and her three incredible children - Patrick, Brian and Erin - as well as her mother Diane (Doug) and father Stew (JulieAnne) and her siblings, many cousins, nieces and nephews.

Cyndi was born in Vanderhoof (because Fort St. James did not have a hospital at the time!) and is the younger sister of Maria and older sister of Sean and Michael Coulter.

After graduating from Fort St James Secondary School, she attended BCIT where she earned a structural and architectural drafting certificate.

Cyndi enrolled in the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Program as soon as she was permitted and quickly demonstrated the leadership, interpersonal, and citizenship skills that have served her and others so well.

As a cadet she was engaged in all aspects of the program and developed many strong friendships that continued throughout her life.

She served in her local community and at the national summer training centre *HMCS Quadra* reaching the rank of Chief Petty Officer First Class.

It was at *Quadra* that she met her husband Michael and, after marrying in 1992, they served together at RCSCC Captain Vancouver

as well as *HMCS Quadra*.

As Cyndi and Michael started a family, they moved to Victoria, which has remained home ever since. With three incredible children, Cyndi was active within her school community and served on the board of St. Patrick's Elementary School and later volunteered at St. Andrew's Regional High School. She was a very talented artist; it is rumoured that her husband once, at great peril to himself, had to 'steal' one of her artworks away from his mother-in-law's house so he could proudly display it at their home (where it remains to this day!)

Cyndi enrolled in the Royal Canadian Navy as a CIC officer in 1991 and continued in that service until her death. She had the privilege of commanding three different Sea Cadet Corps (RCSCC Admiral Budge, RCSCC Admiral Waller, and RCSCC Beacon Hill) where she was an inspiration to all who had the opportunity to serve with her.

She was a passionate and

effective mentor, coach, instructor and leader. She ensured that each cadet and officer was empowered to achieve success in a respectful, positive, and safe environment.

Frequently, former cadets would approach her years after they had left the cadet program to thank her for her personal commitment to their development and to share their successes.

In addition to her work at the cadet corps, Cyndi was employed full-time at the Regional Cadet Support Unit (Pacific) in various roles directly supporting the Canadian Cadet Organization.

The depth and breadth of her skills allowed her to succeed as an instructor at the officer training school, the administration officer for the Army Cadet program in B.C., the movements/transportation officer for B.C., and in her last posting as the Sea Training (Plans) officer. At Sea Training she was truly there to help and she actively empowered sea cadet corps to deliver dynamic and effective train-

ing in support of the aims of the cadet organization. (She sometimes described herself as the 'moneybags' and her goal was to spend every possible dollar in support of program delivery at each cadet corps and through RCN and international training deployments!)

Cyndi was a tireless and passionate advocate of the cadet program who spent countless hours outside of work to ensure that each cadet and officer was challenged to meet their potential. In this respect she was the consummate professional and a critical contributor to not only the cadet community, but the wider Canadian community.

The cornerstone of Cyndi's life has always been her family. She treasured her children and was incredibly proud of them. They each carry with them the very best attributes of Cyndi - her passion, intellect, humour, and commitment to serve others.

Cyndi's legacy lives on through not only her children but also each person whom she has inspired, mentored and guided throughout her life.

A celebration of Cyndi's life will be held on Friday Dec. 7 at 2 p.m. in the Gunroom at Work Point.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the *HMCS Quadra* Scholarship Fund (c/o Regional Cadet Support Unit (Pacific)) in memory of Lt(N) Cynthia Lawless, CD.

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SAILOR PROFILE | PO1 TREVOR LINFOOT | COXSWAIN, HMCS NANAIMO



Hailing from Calgary, Alberta, Petty Officer First Class (PO1) Trevor Linfoot enrolled in the Regular Force in 1999 as a Cook, briefly, until realizing that the hospitality aspect of the Steward trade was more suited to him.

He has served onboard HMC Ships *Protecteur*, *Algonquin*, *Calgary* and *Winnipeg*, as well as completing a tour as a Flight Steward with 437 Squadron based out of Trenton, ON. He also worked as a Senior Instructor at Naval Fleet School Pacific and is currently the Coxswain of *HMCS Nanaimo*.

PO1 Linfoot is the first Steward to be appointed Coxswain of a Kingston-Class Vessel on the west coast. He hopes that other Stewards will be granted the same opportunity, as it has great potential for professional development and preparation for senior appointments.

"Onboard a Kingston-Class ship, the coxswain is responsible for personnel management, sleeping quarter allocation, morale, and discipline. Further to this, I am the Ship's Office; dealing with leave passes, pay and posting issues, and managing correspondences," explains PO1 Linfoot.

Kingston-Class crewing can be challenging as personnel frequently move from one ship to the other within a short period of time. The Coxswain often acts as a sounding board for the Commanding Officer when trying to keep the 33-personnel crew as constant as possible.

HMCS Nanaimo and *HMCS Edmonton* from Esquimalt, *HMCS Moncton* from Halifax and two CP-140 Aurora aircrafts are currently taking part in Operation *Caribbe*, the Canadian contribution to the U.S.-led Operation *Martillo*. The goal of the mission is to intercept and disrupt the shipment of drugs from Central America to Canada and the United States of America.

"Caribbe is an important operation to which the Royal Canadian Navy contributes. The ability to integrate with our American partners (in the form of a Law Enforcement Detachment from the U.S. Coast Guard) to fight the war on narcotics trafficking directly impacts the flow of drugs to Canada," said PO1 Linfoot.

When asked how he feels about his appointment, he says, "I feel the greatest reward for a Coxswain is seeing the success of the ship, whether it is successful mission-specific readiness training or an operation. If the crew is happy, smiling and enjoying their day, that's the best reward as it means they are in a good place."

In his spare time, PO1 Linfoot enjoys camping on Vancouver Island and watching his two sons play lacrosse and rugby. He also dabbles in wood working and, more than anything else, loves to spend time with his family.

"Without the support of my family, I couldn't do what I do," adds PO1 Linfoot.

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The lengthy deployments of *Her Majesty's Canadian Submarines* (HMCS) *Chicoutimi* and *Windsor* – for 197 and 133 days respectively – highlight the RCN's ability to concurrently deploy its submarines and provide support to Canada's allies.

They also underpin the wide-reaching capability of Canada's submarine fleet, and the professionalism and dedication of Canadian sailors.

"The work that both submarines did with our closest allies ensures that our submarines are ready to provide defence in depth to Canada," said Commander Mike Mangin, Deputy Commander of Operations for the Canadian Submarine Force. "By conducting both

offensive and defensive anti-surface warfare scenarios, the crews of both boats are better prepared to fulfill this task should it ever be called upon."

Canadian submariners are well-trained and when combined with the stealth of a Victoria-class submarine, they form a formidable capability. Throughout their months-long deployments, both *Windsor* and *Chicoutimi* proved their value as instruments of power projection on the international stage and demonstrated to both allies and adversaries that Canada is a credible, reliable and effective player in the under-sea domain.

Western Pacific region

In September 2017, *Chicoutimi* commenced its deployment to the western Pacific, visiting Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, Yokosuka and Sasebo in Japan, and Guam along the way.

During its deployment, *Chicoutimi* took part in ANNUALEX – a bilateral

training engagement between the United States Navy (USN) and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force – marking the first time another nation has been invited to participate. This trip also marked the first visit by a Canadian submarine to Japan since HMCS Grilse in the late 1960s.

Chicoutimi worked closely with the USN, building combined experience in countering the submarine threat. USN maritime patrol aircraft flew numerous missions against *Chicoutimi* during the transit to and from Japan, as well as in the northwestern Pacific Ocean. These missions allowed U.S. aircrew to hone skills that would be essential if an unknown submarine was approaching the North American continent.

Chicoutimi was also able to train with other Pacific partners, notably a brief event with French Navy ships and anti-submarine warfare engagements with Australian aircraft. As well, the integration of a liaison officer

from the RCN into the USN Seventh Fleet Headquarters was critical to the success of the deployment and further served to strengthen ties with regional allies.

The Submarine Force marked an additional milestone, which saw the first deployed extended rest and maintenance period (RAMP) conducted by staff from Fleet Maintenance Facility Cape Breton in Esquimalt, B.C.

Mediterranean region

While all of this was happening in the Asia-Pacific region, *Windsor* was preparing to deploy to the Mediterranean Sea to support NATO.

While there, *Windsor* conducted certification training as part of a major NATO engagement called Dynamic Manta before deploying into NATO's Sea Guardian, a maritime security operation aimed at working with Mediterranean stakeholders to maintain maritime situational awareness, deter and counter terrorism, and



Cdr Ouellet oversees operations on the bridge of HMCS Chicoutimi.

enhance capacity building.

While *Windsor* was in the Mediterranean, staff from FMF Cape Scott in Halifax supported a deployed RAMP for the submarine in Souda Bay, Greece.

Crews' perspective

Cdr Mangin says that from the crews' perspective the deployments have been "tremendously successful."

"We train so much for these types of missions that to actually get out there and 'do the business' and perform intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance to support maritime situational awareness was fun. The opportunity to put so much of our training and drills into practice in a real operation just seems to heighten the enthusiasm."

During long deployments there is also an opportunity to train and generate newly qualified submariners. During *Chicoutimi*'s deployment, the crew qualified almost 25 new submariners – just about half of an entire Victoria-class subma-

rine crew.

Additionally, there is ample time to provide crew members with time and experience to advance their qualifications to allow them to take on more senior roles within the crew.

The way ahead

Cdr Mangin says the next few months will be a bit calmer for the Submarine Force. It is focused on returning *HMCS Victoria* to sea in late 2018 after it has completed its planned maintenance work in the Esquimalt dockyard. *Victoria* is expected to carry out the yeoman's work of generating new submariners through 2019.

Windsor is just about to enter a transitional docking work period that will include maintenance and introduce some capability upgrades to the platform.

Chicoutimi is in an intermediate post-deployment docking period and on completion will transit to the East Coast for a transitional docking work period.

Corner Brook is in the home stretch of its extended docking work period with industry in Esquimalt and should be ready for operations in late 2019/early 2020.

"These transitional work periods will extend the operating cycle of the Victoria-class and should allow for some of the work to modernize the class to commence at the same time," explains Cdr Mangin.

HMCS Victoria receives mail from a Sea King helicopter.



Photo by MCpl Patrick Blanchard

HMCS Victoria near Fisgard Lighthouse.



Photo by Cpl Michael Bastien

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Canada's four-legged memorial honours animals

Jeff Pelletier
Army Public Affairs

There is a special memorial in Canada's capital that is located a few blocks down Elgin Street from the National War Memorial.

Under the shade of trees in Confederation Park, just across from Ottawa City Hall, a unique memorial named the Animals in War Dedication honours a special group who have served, and continue to serve, in harm's way.

Many species remembered

Animals have been, and continue to be, a part of military operations in many ways. Soldiers on horseback led cavalry charges in Canada's earlier conflicts; mules transported ammunition to the front; pigeons carried messages that were often vital to the safety of troops; and dogs have helped with a variety of tasks, including sniffing out explosives, helping to string miles of communications wire, and contributing to troop morale as mascots.

Mice and canaries have served to warn of gas attacks, camels and elephants contributed in various ways and even glow-worms have provided light to read maps.

Estimates show that more than eight million horses perished in service in the First World War alone.

In 2004, Great Britain unveiled its Animals in War Memorial, a large stone and bronze installation in London that cost more than a million pounds. Australia has a simpler version, a bronze horse's head on a tear-shaped base, which was unveiled in Canberra in 2009.

Ottawa's Animals in War Dedication memorial was unveiled on Nov. 3, 2012. It was funded and supported by private and public means, including the Government of Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada, the National Capital Commission and the Royal Canadian Legion.

An idea was born

The project was the idea of Lloyd Swick, a veteran of the Canadian Army who

served in the Second World War and the Korean War. In 2010, Swick approached David Clendining, an Ottawa-based artist and sculptor, to create the memorial.

"I realized at one point that most of the animals that went over to Europe in the First World War never returned, and I thought that was kind of shocking," said Clendining about the beginning of the process of creating the memorial.

"When Lloyd approached me and we exchanged that information, right away we became a team, and eventually very good friends."

He credits Swick, who passed away in 2017 at the age of 94, with the idea of making the memorial.

"He just wanted to explain the essential things animals in war had done."

Plaques, animal footprints and a military dog statue

The creative process started with a few initial designs that Clendining and Swick showed to a few friends and focus groups.

The chosen design includes three bronze plaques with animal tracks on a concrete base. Clendining added a life-sized First World War-era service dog wearing a medical backpack to serve as the centerpiece of the memorial.

The first plaque describes the memorial and its significance.

The second plaque is an image of First World War soldiers guiding mules, horses and dogs through muddy trenches as doves fly overhead.

The third plaque is based on a 1916 painting called "Goodbye, Old Man" by Italian artist Fortunino Matania. It portrays a British soldier hugging his horse after it had been mortally wounded in battle.

Located beside South African War Memorial

When it was time to choose a location, Clendining and the National Capital Commission (NCC) discussed several possibilities. He and the NCC decided on the location in Confederation Park, right next to the

existing South African War Memorial. During the Boer War, thousands of Canadian cavalry horses and mules were killed in battle.

"I suggested that location to the NCC because it was very central, and they thought it was a good idea and accepted it, and thus, we had the monument placed there," Clendining said.

The 2012 unveiling ceremony was attended by an assembly of military and police members, civilians and politicians, as well as several kinds of animals, such as RCMP horses, service dogs and homing pigeons.

Then Ottawa mayor Jim Watson issued a proclamation that the date would be recognized as War Animals Day, and the memorial has been a place of interest for residents and tourists ever since.

"I think it's important that we have, as a general population, an awareness of the contribution the animals – all animals – have offered," said Clendining. "They'd been conscripted, really."



Photo provided by David Clendining

The artist and sculptor David Clendining with his creation on Nov. 4, 2012, the day the Animals in War Dedication memorial was unveiled in Confederation Park in downtown Ottawa, Ontario.

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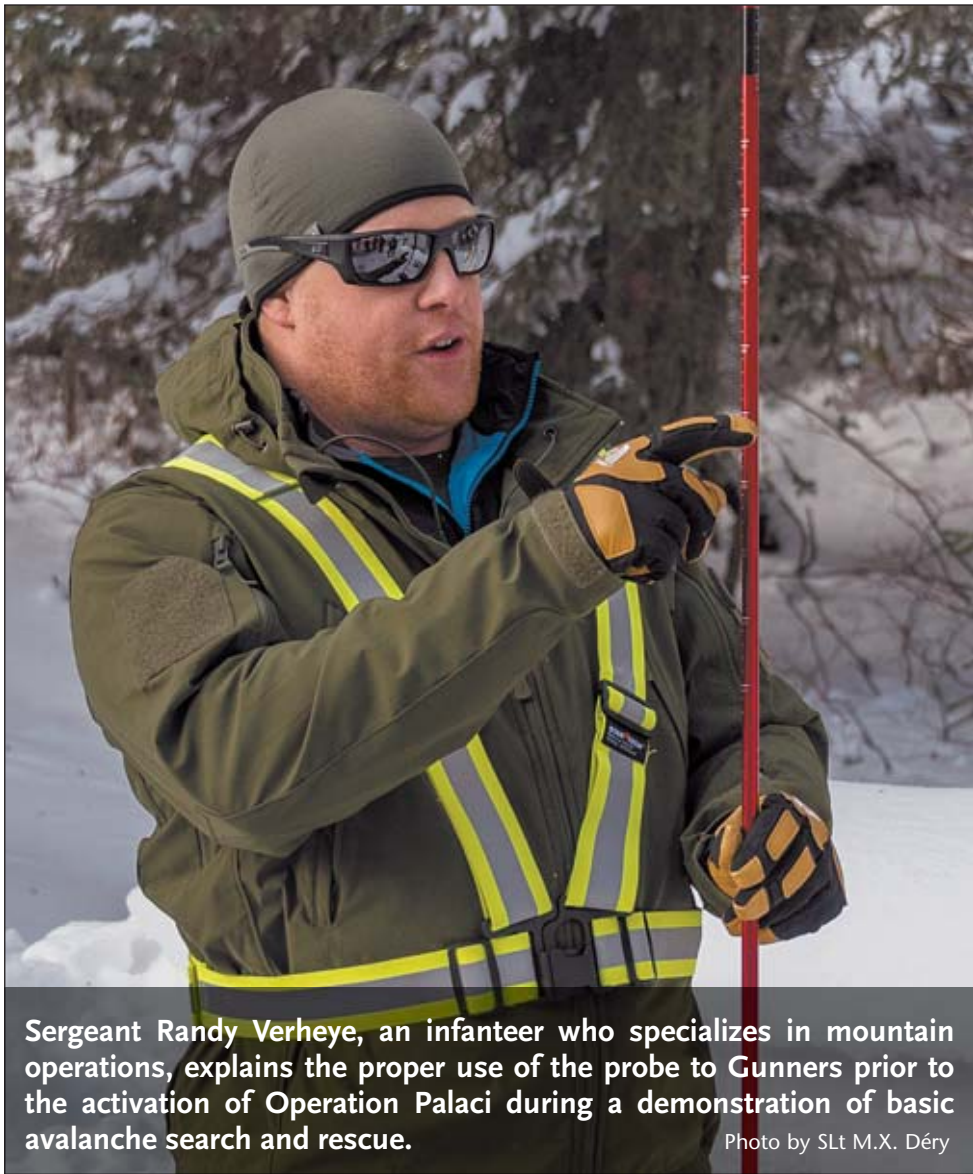
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Sergeant Randy Verheye, an infanteer who specializes in mountain operations, explains the proper use of the probe to Gunners prior to the activation of Operation Palaci during a demonstration of basic avalanche search and rescue.

Photo by SLt M.X. Déry

Mountain operators prepare gunners for Operation Palaci

SLt M.X. Déry
MARPA PA Office

Whenever the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) deploys large guns and high explosives there is a certain amount of risk involved and therefore safety is paramount. However, when operating said guns in the most active avalanche territory in Canada during the height of winter, that risk increases quickly and must be mitigated with equipment and specialized training.

When the first rotation of avalanche control gunners arrived in Rogers Pass, British Columbia, this month for Operation Palaci, their first briefing was on avalanche safety provided by the Parks Canada Agency (PCA). This training involved identifying where in Glacier National Park it was safe to stop along the Trans-Canada Highway, being issued avalanche beacons, and learning how to report naturally occurring avalanches to PCA to contribute to the comprehensive monitoring and snow science data that is used to forecast avalanche conditions.

The second part of their training came from three

infantry sergeants that specialize in mountain operations from the Canadian Army Advanced Warfare Centre based in CFB Trenton.

"Basically, mountain operations is a skill-set that allows us to move through complex terrain, over mountainous terrain, even through terrain with a lot of exposure to cliffs, gullies and rivers," explained Sergeant Randy Verheye.

These experts instructed the gunners in how to avoid getting in the path of an avalanche and how to maximize their odds of survival if they do.

Lastly, they showed the gunners how to search for individuals trapped under the snow after an avalanche using beacons, probes and shovels.

"This training is a requirement for them to be out here doing avalanche control," said Sgt Verheye. "It has come a long way, since before Parks Canada conducted the training, but now we are in a position to provide that."

Once the gunners are trained, the mountain operator sergeants take a few days to further their own professional development with the PCA, going to tall

peaks and skimming ridgelines, which helps hone their skills in how to move through the area without causing an avalanche.

Moving through snow with skins attached to their skis that allow them to grip snow, they can cover large areas of terrain and gain elevation, despite the rucksacks on their backs, before removing the skins and skiing down the mountains. Skiing with that extra weight can be a challenge.

"Once you add your equipment, full fighting order and rifle, it makes it a lot harder," said Sgt Verheye. "It is a lot easier to get off balance if your body position isn't right."

Operation Palaci is now underway. For over 60 years, the CAF and Parks Canada have been preventing avalanches using the best-known method: creating avalanches. In 1961, Rogers Pass opened as a mountain pass where the Trans-Canada Highway and the Canadian Pacific Railway cross the Selkirk Mountains. To prevent naturally-occurring avalanches, Parks Canada and the CAF partnered to create Canada's largest avalanche-control program.

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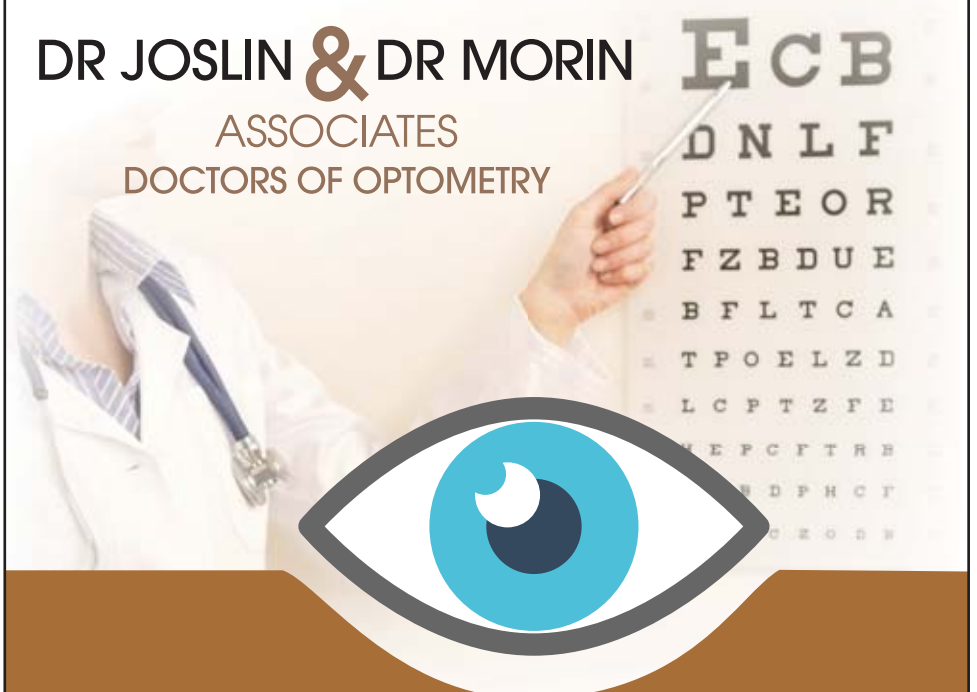
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PROJECTS

Bravo Zulu

Photo: Leading Seaman Valerie LeClair,
MARPAAC Imaging Services

Lieutenant Commander Todd Verge (right) promotes Acting Sub-Lieutenant Sylvain Dostie to Sub-Lieutenant with his partner Renata Dostie (left) during an Awards and Presentations Ceremony held at Maritime Forces Pacific Headquarters on Nov. 22.



Doug Hox is presented the FMF Employee of the Month Certificate by Capt(N) Ed Hooper, Commanding Officer FMF.



CPO2 Craig Foley is presented with his Retirement Certificate for 25 years of loyal service from Capt(N) Hooper. By his side is his wife Tracy Urquhart.

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Canadian Fleet Pacific Headquarters



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Chief Petty Officer Second Class Greeley is awarded a Canadian Forces' First Clasp by Commodore Topshee.



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Left to right on the bow of HMCS Ottawa: LCdr Todd Kennedy (Division Commander), Cmdre Angus Topshee (Commander Canadian Fleet Pacific), Lt(N) Michael Vanderveer (Fleet Navigating Instructor), Lt(N) Adrian Thow, Cdr Alex Barlow (Commanding Officer HMCS Ottawa), Lt(N) Matthew Noonan, Lt(N) Josh Askett, Lt(N) Graham Austin, and Lt(N) Curtis Dollis (FNI).

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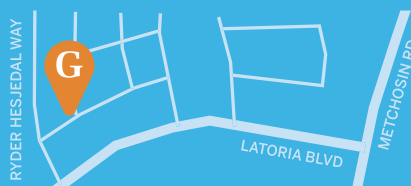
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