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WELCOME HOME HMCS CALGARY



It was a happy homecoming for Master Sailor Julien Lacasse who was greeted by his family: wife Demi Williams, son Reid, and daughter Novah. HMCS Calgary and crew returned home Aug. 30 after a seven-month deployment on Operation Artemis and Operation Projection. Read the full story about their deployment on page 8 and 9.

Photo by S1 Kendric C.W. Grasby



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HMCS Calgary connected with students in namesake city with Ship to Shore program

Capt Jeff Klassen
HMCS Calgary

In the middle of the night during their deployment, in the midst of a counter-terrorism mission in the Arabian Sea, sailors on board *HMCS Calgary* took a pause from their work, or got out of their racks mid sleep, to video conference grade school classrooms back in Canada.

The video chats were part of the Ship to Shore program, established to connect the warship with school children in their namesake city.

"Essentially, we got up in the middle of the night while deployed to do video conferencing calls with students in Grades four to six from four different public schools around the City of Calgary," explained Sailor Second Class (S2) Audrina N'Guessan. "We also talked to them by email and they sent us questions and we answered them on the call. We sent them imagery and videos of the ship; it was just a way for the children to learn about what their navy does."

S2 N'Guessan, 26, a boatswain by trade, was one of 20 sailors that participated this year.

The program started in the 2019-2020 school year as a collaboration between the Royal Canadian Navy, the Calgary Board of Education, and other stakeholders, with the intention of giving children a unique opportunity to learn about what their navy does.

A success in its first year, the program continued into 2020-2021, and satellite internet on ship permitted them to continue while on deployment.

"Trying to find the perfect time to do the phone calls was the biggest challenge," said S2 Patrick Pilon, a Marine Technician who participated in the program. "We were very busy and everyone had a different schedule and of course we are limited by the children's school hours. When you're deployed it's not a 9-5 job, so calls could be done even if we had intense operations that day."

Children's questions ranged from astro navigation, to engineering, to simple questions such as what is a bollard? Participating sailors passed that knowledge back to them via video conferencing calls or email, which, because of the time difference, frequently took place in the mid-

dle of the night. The ship also sent children imagery, helped them with special projects, and even tutored them in subjects such as math.

The program is designed around inquiry-based learning, an approach to education driven by the natural inquisitiveness of the learner rather than a pre-determined curriculum.

"Each class you'd always have that one student who'd ask a very specific question about the ship that an average sailor might not know. Something specific to a trade and so we would have to pool resources on board to get them answers," said S2 Pilon. "They were very intrigued about what was done on ship. We'd go in assuming a set of questions would be asked but their curiosity would take them down a road and they'd ask us something really random."

Participating Calgary schools were Buffalo Rubbing Stone School, Fish Creek School, Douglasdale School,



Carol Stapleton's Grade 5 class at Fish Creek School in Calgary pose for a photo after receiving hats from HMCS Calgary's Petty Officer Second Class Joseph Chisling, who did regular videoconferencing calls with the class while deployed in 2021.

Image supplied

and University School. S2s N'Guessan and Pilon did regular video conferencing calls with Sarah Kessler's Grade 4 class at Douglasdale School. Their class made a huge model of the ship using cardboard, art, and modelling supplies.

"I don't know what it was with our class but they got really excited about our sailor overboard dummy named Oscar. They just thought he was really cool and so they made sure to include a mini Oscar in the final model," said S2 N'Guessan.

Also participating in the program was Naval Reserve Division

HMCS Tecumseh, based out of the City of Calgary. They had sailors assigned to the schools and supported navy resources and in-class visits.

The success of the program could branch out to other ships. For now, *Calgary* will continue the program in the 2021-2022 semester.

"It is just so amazing being able to talk to them and see that they have interest in us telling and showing them about what we do," said S2 N'Guessan. "To see their excitement makes me even more proud to be in the Royal Canadian Navy."

As part of the Ship to Shore program, Sarah Kessler's Grade 4 class at Douglasdale School made a model Halifax-class frigate. Image supplied



HMCS Calgary Ship to Shore program volunteers took a group photo in Vietnam while deployed on Operation Projection.

Image by Corporal Lynette Ai Dang



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VOTER À L'ÉLECTION FÉDÉRALE DE 2021

A Federal General Election will be held Sept. 20 and a military polling station for CFB Esquimalt will be set up at the Chiefs and Petty Officers' Mess Upper Lounge (1575 Lyall Street, Esquimalt, BC) Sept. 7 to 9 from 0900 -1400 daily.

Am I a CAF Elector?

A CAF Elector is:

1. A Canadian Citizen
2. 18 years of age or older on Sept. 20, 2021; and
3. A member of either the Regular or Reserve Force, including a member of any of the subcomponents of the Reserve Force:
 - a. The Primary Reserve;
 - b. The Cadet Organization Administration and Training Service;
 - c. The Canadian Rangers; and
 - d. The Supplementary Reserve.

Civilian personnel cannot vote at Military Polls. These civilian Electors should consult Elections Canada's website: www.elections.ca. Military members can vote at civilian polling stations at the advance polling dates (Sept. 10 to 13) or on the date of the election.

My place of Ordinary Residence for a CAF Elector

The place of ordinary residence for a CAF Elector is now determined the same way it is determined for every other Canadian Elector. As a general rule, the place of ordinary residence of a person is the place that has always been, or that has been adopted as their dwelling place, and to which the person intends to return when away from it. In other words, it is the place the person calls home.

If a CAF Elector is unable to determine where their place of ordinary residence is located then the following rules should also be used:

1. A person can have only one place of ordinary residence and it cannot be lost until another is gained;
2. Temporary absence from a place of ordinary residence does not cause a loss or change of place of ordinary residence;
3. If a person usually sleeps in one place and has their meals or is employed in another place, their place of ordinary residence is where they sleep; and

4. Temporary residential quarters are considered to be a person's place of ordinary residence only if the person has no other place that they consider to be their residence.

Where can I vote?

CAF electors who wish to vote must register on the list of electors. They may do so online at www.elections/forces. They may also register and/or vote in one of the following ways:

1. At the military polling station set up at Chiefs and Petty Officers' Mess; or
2. At a civilian registration and voting opportunity such as:
 - a. Any local Elections Canada office in Canada;
 - b. By mail, within Canada or from abroad;
 - c. At the Advance Polling Station associated with the Elector's home address, from Sept. 10 to 13 inclusive; or
 - d. At the Polling Station associated with the Elector's home address on Sept. 20.

What do I need to bring with me to vote at a Military Polling Station?

In order to register and/or vote at the military polling station at the Chiefs and Petty Officers' Mess, CAF electors must provide identification documents:

1. Military ID (NDI 10, NDI 20, NDI 60); or
2. One piece of ID issued by a Canadian Government (Federal, Provincial/Territorial or Local) or Education Institution with the Bearers name; and
 - a. Posting Message;
 - b. Course Loading Message;
 - c. Military Personnel Record Resume (MPRR); or
 - d. Enrolment Transfer Posting (ETP) Instruction.

COVID-19 health and safety precautions will be in place – ensure that you do not have any symptoms and bring a non-medical mask for inside the Chiefs and Petty Officers' Mess.



Military Polling Station Bureau de scrutin militaire

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Not registered to vote? Go to Elections Canada On-line:
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www.elections.ca/forces

matters of OPINION

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WHAT SAY WE

Champion's Message

TO MARK THE END OF PRIDE SEASON 2021

To commemorate the closing of this year's Pride Season, I want to highlight how honoured I am to experience Pride Season and all the events that were led to bring LGBTQ2+ communities and allies together.

Fifty years after the initial Pride gatherings came to be and the spirit of Pride has only become stronger.

Pride Season has become an integral component of the Government of Canada's approach towards inclusion in the workplace, from the virtual flag raising kickoff to the end of Public Service Pride Week. I thank everyone involved for taking the time to stop, open their hearts and minds, and come together to remember and celebrate the LGBTQ2+ communities and the people who make up these communities.

This year Public Service Pride week focused on intersectionality to create awareness of its importance in everyday life. Through multiple efforts to support diversity in the public sector, we have, and continue to advocate for a more complex understanding of how central intersectionality connects to Pride, and the importance of listening to learn. It demonstrates the significance of inclusion to eliminate any other forms of discrimination that lingers, keeping our voices loud and proud.

This year was our first-ever Government of Canada Public Service Pride Awards, which included various awards that highlighted employees and groups/organizations that promoted and strengthened the LGBTQ2+ diversity, inclusion, and pride in the federal public service in 2020-2021. I was proud to see everyone come together as one to celebrate Pride and support the LGBTQ2+ communities. Congratulations to all the recipients.

I encourage staff to continue to get involved. Whether through acts of ally ship or being a member of the LGBTQ2+, Pride Season gives us the opportunity to unite together and use our voices to the world to say: Diversity and inclusion are one of Canada's greatest strengths.

Engage in your own learning process with the National Public Service Pride Network Resources. If you have any questions or want to learn more about the LGBTQ2+ communities at National Defence contact LGBTQ2Questions@forces.gc.ca

RAdm Luc Cassivi
Defence Champion for LGBTQ2+ communities



RAdm Luc Cassivi



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CADETS TAKE SUMMER CAMP TO B.C. COMMUNITIES



Above: Cadet Caden Chiu, from 637 Arrow RCACS in Burnaby, shoots biathlon targets with a water gun.

Left: Cadets in Victoria learned about the challenges of injured Canadian Armed Forces members by participating in some Invictus Games paralympic sports.

Photo by Capt Tim Townley

Capt Melodie Fallah and Capt Tim Townley Regional Cadet Support Unit (Pacific)

Resilience is all about adapting to changing circumstances and that's exactly what the Cadet Program did this summer in the delivery of its summer training.

All across B.C. cadets gathered at Cadet Activity Programs (CAP) site locations to experience in-person training, many for the first time since the pandemic began last year.

Usually cadets in B.C. attend summer training at one of our four Cadet Training Centres in Vernon, Albert Head, Comox, and HMCS Quadra. With health restrictions in place over the past two summers, the Cadet Program adapted first to a virtual training program and then to CAP, maximizing the use of DND and community facilities across the province.

Offering a variety of activ-

ities close to home meant more cadets could participate overall, and more staff were able to support the program. Senior cadets had the added benefit of leadership opportunities without giving up weekend jobs or other summer activities.

CAP offered a one-week basic course in the form of day-camps, as well as junior and senior levels of marksmanship, fitness and sports, and drill and leadership.

Courses were one to two weeks long and each CAP site operated for one to six weeks depending on the population density at each location. Cadets were able to participate in more than one course, or both levels of a program. Over 820 cadets, 112 staff cadets, and 68 adult staff across British Columbia had the opportunity to return to in-person training.

For some cadets this was their first time experiencing in-person training and some of the unique aspects of the program such as learning drill and being able to shoot

a Daisy Air Rifle. Feedback from first- and second-year cadets was very positive as they had the chance to meet new people within the program.

"It was cool to be around friends again and learn some new things along the way. I would definitely recommend CAP to anyone thinking about doing it," says Cadet Caden Chiu from 637 Arrow RCACS in Burnaby.

The Cadet Program continued to offer virtual training to thousands of cadets online throughout the summer, with courses ranging from ground school to cyber security, to music, to survival skills.

The Cadet Program demonstrates the Canadian Armed Forces' commitment to strengthening Canadian communities by investing in youth. Cadets become self-sufficient leaders who make friends and contribute to their communities, experiences they can't get anywhere else in a safe environment that promotes physical fitness and healthy living.



A cadet tries a bomb suit used by the 19 Wing Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit.

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Support for Canadian Armed Forces members nursing and/or pumping

Lactation plan



DND

When Major Shannon Archer went back to work in June nine weeks after the birth of her son, there was a room in her building she could have used to pump her breast milk. But it was a public space with clear windows that didn't provide adequate privacy.

Instead she would go to her car to pump her breast milk several times a day.

With CANFORGEN 116/21, Support to Members Pumping and/or Nursing (information accessible only on the National Defence network) being issued July 28, all that changed in a matter of days.

"I came back to work after the August long weekend, and they had a dedicated lactation room set up that was adequate

and appropriate, with a chair and a desk, and just around the corner from a washroom and the kitchen area," she says. "My chain of command was very supportive. The CANFORGEN lays it out clearly."

The CANFORGEN directs Commanding Officers to put in place a lactation plan that includes a minimum of one lactation room for every 400 personnel.

Potential secondary spaces for future use will also be considered, as well as how this need can be met in a field or operational environment.

Designated lactation rooms should be located in safe, central, and accessible areas, and supervisors must make every effort to accommodate as much time as is needed by the member. Each designated room must have a locking

door and should include a comfortable chair with arms and in close proximity to an electrical outlet. Other requirements include a cooler or mini fridge in which to store the milk, cubbies or drawers to store pumping materials, and a sink located nearby to wash hands and pumping pieces.

While some units have promoted the use of offices, provided they meet some or all of these criteria, bathroom facilities are not considered appropriate.

Once the rooms are established, they will be open to DND employees and CAF members.

Maj Archer, who joined the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in 2008, says her mother was also in the CAF at a markedly different time. She had to give up breastfeeding when she went back to

work 16 weeks postpartum because of a lack of accommodation. This was in the 1980s.

Today, Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society recommend providing human milk to infants for up to two years and beyond, and many of those returning to the workplace continue to pump and/or nurse. This is a human right and should not be treated as a burden on the organization, regardless of the gender identity of the member.

CAF members are not required to produce evidence to prove or to justify their decision and their need to pump or nurse during work hours. Any members facing issues acquiring space and time can contact their local conflict and complaint management office.

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 COMMISSIONAIRES



Vanessa Nicholson, a member of the Defence Women's Advisory Group, has started a collection drive for menstrual hygiene products.

Period Poverty campaign seeking donations

Peter Mallett
Staff Writer

A campaign to collect menstrual hygiene products for people in need has been launched by members of the Defence Women's Advisory Organization (DWAOW).

Vanessa Nicholson, DWAOW member, has a target of amassing 10,000 menstrual hygiene products by May 28, 2022. The end date coincides with the World Menstrual Hygiene Day.

"People are normally very generous when it comes to supporting food banks with donations. However, when we donate to these organizations we don't typically think of donating menstruation products," she says.

To kick off their "end period poverty" campaign, the DWAOW members will host a virtual discussion on MS Teams, Sept. 15 at 8:30 a.m.

World Menstrual Hygiene Day

On World Menstrual Hygiene Day the United Way of the Lower Mainland will release its annual Period Promise research report. It is funded by the Government of British Columbia's Ministry of Social Development and



Poverty Reduction and captures information about how period poverty is affecting local residents.

The last study found that more than 51 per cent of respondents have struggled to buy [menstruation] products at least once in their lifetime.

Period Promise also supports grants to 15 non-profit agencies that provide free menstrual products.

"Not having access to these products can lead to unsanitary measures and have huge impacts on people's lives," says Nicholson. "A good example is people using tampons longer than is recommended to maximize use and save on products. This can lead to infections such as toxic shock syndrome, a potentially fatal condition."

The first beneficiary of the donations will be The Sooke Transition House Society, a non-profit that provides shelter to women and their children who have experienced trauma resulting from family violence.

For more information about volunteering for the campaign or to set up a donation box in your unit or workplace, contact +DWAOW-MARPAC@MARPAC@Esquimalt

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CHALLENGING YET SUCCESSFUL DEPLOYMENT

HMCS CALGARY RETURNS HOME

Photos by Corporal Lynette Ai Dang

Sailor First Class Mark Dupuis is lowered from a CH-148 Cyclone by members of HMCS Calgary's embarked air detachment during a hoisting exercise over the ship's forecandle on Aug. 13.



The ship's company stand for a group photo in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, on March 30 while the ship was deployed on Operations Projection and Artemis.

Lt Jeff Klassen HMCS Calgary

After seven months away from home, HMCS Calgary returned to Esquimalt Aug. 30 after two successful Operations: Artemis and Projection.

"For most of the ship's company this was the most challenging deployment of their entire career. The success we had is a testament to their resilience," said Commander Mark O'Donohue, Calgary's Commanding Officer.

In January, the ship's company went into quarantine before participating in intensive pre-deployment workshops on Task Group Exercise 21-01 throughout February. Calgary left Esquimalt for their deployment on Feb. 28.

Deploying under COVID-19 conditions was challenging. The typical shore leave, crucial for sailors' morale on long deployments, was reduced to restricted port visits, mostly confined to the ship or small isolated sections on the jetty.

From February to April, the ship journeyed through the Indo-Pacific on Op Projection, making restricted port visits in Hawaii, Guam, Brunei, Vietnam, and Singapore. During this time, the ship conducted cooperative deployments with the Bruneian Navy, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, the Royal Australian Navy, and the United States Navy, and transited through Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.



Commander Mark O'Donohue, Commanding Officer of HMCS Calgary, salutes as the ship sails into Pearl Harbor on March 5. The ship conducted a port visit to Hawaii while travelling through the Indo-Pacific on Operation Projection.

Op Artemis began in late April in the Arabian Sea under the Canadian-led Combined Task Force 150, who are under the 34-nation Combined Maritime Forces. The ship was more successful in the counter-terrorism mission than any other ship in the operation's history.

Ships on the operation perform maritime interdictions, stopping smugglers of illicit cargo that is intended to fund regional crime and terror. For Calgary, this involved using their embarked Cyclone helicopter air detachment and other assets to survey waters for suspicious fishing-type vessels, known as dhows, and then board and search them. The ship made the largest single heroin bust in the operation's history and also set the record for the most successful interdictions by any ship on a single rotation of the operation's history.

Most of Calgary's successful interdictions were conducted with the use of their Naval Tactical Operations Group team, call sign Reef. However, during interdictions in the latter part of this operation, the ship had the unique opportunity to use their own organic boarding party, call sign Alpha Wave, who were also successful.

From June until August, the ship was again on Op Projection as they transited back from the Indian Ocean through the Indo-Pacific by way of Oceania. During this time, the ship made a visit to the United States Naval Support Facility on the remote island of the British Indian Ocean Territory of Diego Garcia, made restricted port

visits in Indonesia, Australia, and Fiji; and participated in Exercise Talisman Sabre off the coast of Australia with the Royal Australian Navy, the United States Navy, the Republic of Korea Navy, and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.

After Talisman Sabre, the ship had its only free port visit of the deployment in Auckland, New Zealand, in early August. In order to have this visit, the ship needed to follow strict COVID health and safety procedures including spending 18 continuous days at sea with daily medical screenings and COVID testing of every member before going ashore.

While ashore, the ship's company was hosted by the Royal New Zealand Navy at a traditional Powhiri ceremony, and in their time at sea before and after the visit, the ship participated in cooperative deployments with the Royal New Zealand Navy. Overall, the visit highlighted the strong relationship between Canada and New Zealand.

From New Zealand, Calgary transited home, but not before crossing where the equator and the 180th meridian (roughly the international dateline) meet. The ship crossing at this precise point is significant in naval tradition making every member of the ship's company an official Golden Shellback.

"We are so happy to be back in Canada and with our families again. Difficult operations like this are only possible with the amazing support of our families and from people ashore," said Commander O'Donohue.



Above: HMCS Calgary crewmembers stand with 1,286 kilograms of heroin seized from a dhow during a counter-smuggling operation on April 23 in the Arabian Sea during Operation Artemis. With this seizure, the ship broke the record for the largest single heroin seizure in the history of the operation.

Left: Calgary's embarked Naval Tactical Operations Group conduct counter-smuggling operations on May 4.

Image by Captain Jeffery Klassen, produced by Corporal Lynette Ai Dang

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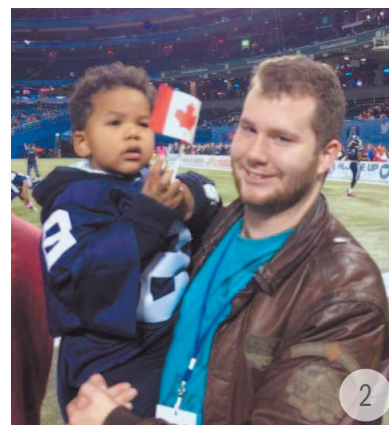
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1. Lt Aaron Niles and his little brother Sean, who is now 11.
2. Lt Niles and Sean at a Toronto Argonauts football game after his successful cancer treatment was completed.
3. Sean underwent more than three years of treatment for leukemia.
4. Lt Niles at 16 Wing CFB Borden.



It's a responsibility to give back. Even though we were lucky, it doesn't mean the battle is done. There are people out there still struggling who could use help."

— Lt Aaron Niles

Emily Nakeff Borden Citizen

The number 30 holds a special significance for Lieutenant Aaron Niles from CFB Borden. It's how many days his little Sean brother was given to live in 2010.

At four months old his younger brother was diagnosed with infantile acute lymphoblastic leukemia. The aggressive cancer attacks the blood and bone marrow. Those diagnosed at under a year, like Sean, have a survival rate of 20 per cent.

After three years of constant treatment at the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), three years of Lt Niles and his family holding onto hope, they got the news they feared most. The treatment wasn't working.

There was nothing more they could do.

The then three-year-old Sean was given 30 days to live. Hearing those words,

Lt Niles was overcome with dread.

"Everything sort of slows down. You stop comprehending time, you just get lost in your own thoughts."

While the family tried to wrap their heads around giving Sean the most joyful, pain-free experience with the time he had left, his care team continued to work behind the scenes.

As a last resort, doctors suggested a treatment that, at the time, was still experimental and primarily being used in the U.S.

Sean underwent a kind of chemotherapy he hadn't received before that tricked his body into fighting the cancer. The chances of it working were low. But it was still a chance.

Miraculously, the treatment worked.

They weren't out of the woods. But after finding a match Sean underwent the painful bone marrow trans-

plant that would ultimately save his life.

Today, 11-year-old Sean is cancer-free. The Fifth Grader likes video games and spending time with his family, though he is still coping with the physical effects of chemotherapy and radiation he received as a young child.

Lt Niles knows just how lucky his family is to have Sean with them today.

"There is that emotional damage in a sense. Even though he has lived, I carry that burden forever in my heart about how I almost lost someone. People are losing people they love every day, and I could have felt that as well."

Which is why Lt Niles, a Public Affairs Officer for 16 Wing at CFB Borden, is embarking on a special journey called Ruck for a Cure.

On Friday, Sept. 10 he will march 30 kilometres starting at 16 Wing headquar-

ters at Base Borden and ending at the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Centre in Barrie. The 6.5-hour walk will be done carrying 30 lbs of weight; his goal is to raise \$30,000 in support of the Regional Cancer Centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH).

Though it's a solo march, he is inviting his CFB Borden community to get involved by donating or walking with him for part of the journey. He is also asking military personnel affected in any way by cancer to let him carry their name tag and in so doing take a turn carrying their burden.

"We all carry the burden of those who have been affected by cancer. We carry their pain, their memory, and their loss. But it's a burden that can be shared."

To donate in support of Lt Niles and his Ruck for a Cure, visit <https://foundation.rvh.on.ca/ruck-for-a-cure/>



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Veteran Farm Project: Healing through nature and nurture

Jessica Miller, pictured, and her husband Steve Murgatroyd operate the Veteran Farm Project in Hants County, Nova Scotia.

Joanie Veitch
Trident Newspaper

The property Jessica Miller and her husband Steve Murgatroyd bought in 2018 and now operate as the Veteran Farm Project in Hants County, Nova Scotia, had been abandoned for several years. The farmhouse was dilapidated and the seven acres it resided on was overgrown.

They cleared the debris to make space for vegetable boxes and garden beds, and Murgatroyd built a small potting shed for Miller to plant seeds.

She laughs now at the memory of the ramshackle property they saw that spring day at Sweet's Corner, not knowing at the time what it would become.

"I knew it would be a lot of work, but I fell in love with it pretty much at first sight."

Released from a 21-year career in the military, Miller was struggling with injuries, both physical and mental, and was hoping to find a place to heal and recover.

She had worked as a medic with

Canadian Forces Health Services Centre (Atlantic), served on Royal Canadian Navy ships, and completed a tour in Afghanistan.

Murgatroyd had also served in Afghanistan, and Bosnia before that, but it was in 2015 at home in Nova Scotia, on a highway near Truro, where he lost the lower half of his left leg after a car sideswiped him on his motorcycle.

They began to experience the healing and recovery that comes from being outdoors working on their farm. It was the early seeds of the Veteran Farm Project.

The idea took root after hearing about veterans and their families struggling financially and not being able to buy nutritious food. So, they harvested from her garden and created food packages of vegetables for delivery to veterans.

She reached out to Valerie Mitchell-Veinotte, executive director of the Royal Canadian Legion's Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command, for further support. Now, four years later, the Veteran Farm Project works with the Legion to identify veteran families

and individuals in need, and then, with help from a dozen female volunteers, harvests, packages, and delivers fresh farm produce to 40 families and 150 individuals in mainland Nova Scotia, and another 30 families in Cape Breton.

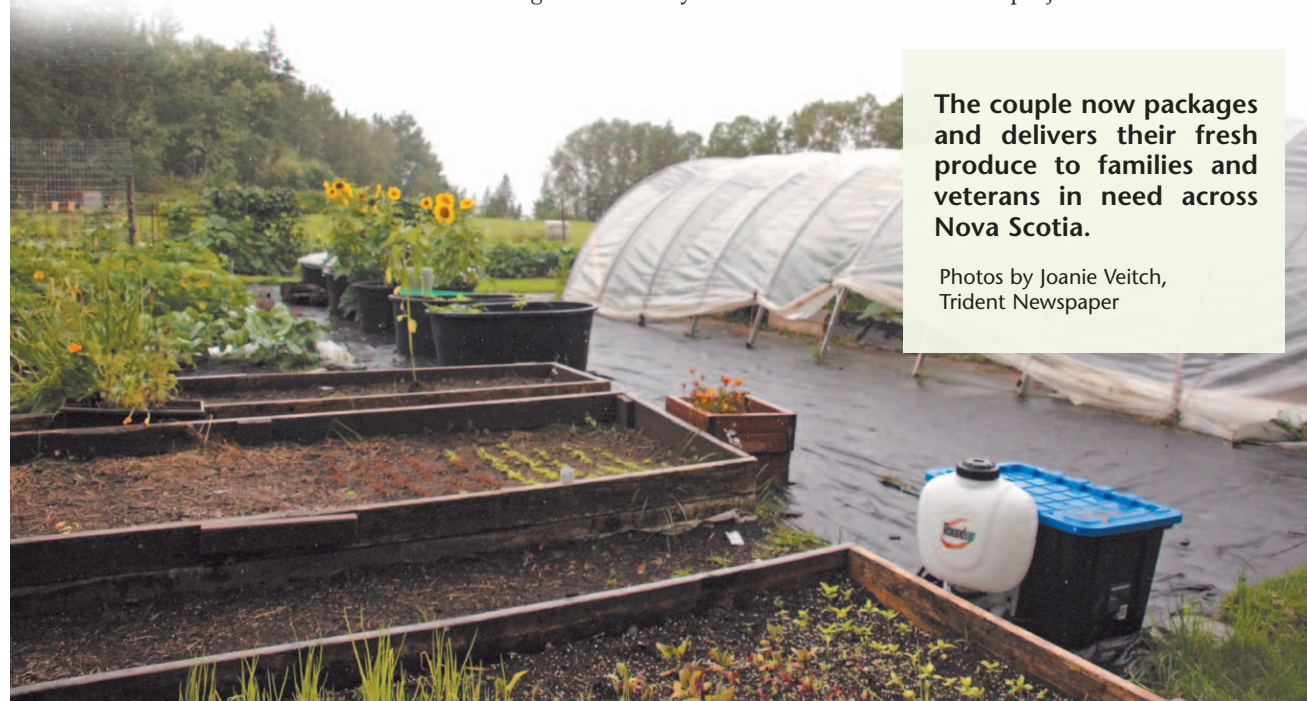
Miller has created a healing farm and garden as well. She researched horticulture therapy programs and read books on mindful garden layout and purposeful planting. She thought carefully about how to build the structure of the farm while keeping the needs of the women volunteers in mind, many of whom are retired military dealing with trauma related to PTSD and other life events.

"In a typical farm you try to get as much out of the land as possible and use all the space, but we're not about that. We're about healing and coming together as a tribe of women. We support each other, that's our purpose. The food we grow is the by-product of that."

For more information about the Veteran Farm Project, visit www.veteranfarmproject.com.

The couple now packages and delivers their fresh produce to families and veterans in need across Nova Scotia.

Photos by Joanie Veitch,
Trident Newspaper



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MCpl Windy Lafreniere and her family.

Photo Courtesy of MCpl Windy Lafreniere

MASTER CORPORAL WINDY LAFRENIERE

Reclaiming her Indigenous identity is a family affair

Holly Bridges
Royal Canadian Air Force

MCpl Windy Lafreniere is a member of the Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne along the St. Lawrence River. She was put into foster care at birth to a

non-Indigenous family and never really knew her birth parents or siblings. She later discovered she had 12 brothers and four sisters.

She met her birth parents when she was a teenager, but they both passed away shortly afterwards. She lived with var-

ious foster parents until the age of eight when she met the Kinsellas, with whom she would remain with until aging out of foster care at 18, and who remain her parents today.

"I owe huge thanks to the Kinsellas for me becoming the driven person I am today. If not for their love and support I would not be who I am today."

She is a Mobile Support Equipment Operator for the Royal Canadian Air Force at 16 Wing and Military Co-Chair of the CFB Borden Defence Aboriginal Advisory Group.

Now, MCpl Lafreniere is on a journey to discover more about her Indigenous connections and to instill a strong sense of identity, culture, and pride in her three children.

"As my husband is Algonquin and I'm Mohawk, all of my kids recently got their status cards so they are super excited. We have tried to teach our children about their roots as we ourselves learn about them as well. My daughter was chosen by our elders at a very young age to become a jingle dress dancer

(medicine dancer), which is quite an honour."

PIVOTAL AT 16 WING

At 16 Wing, MCpl Lafreniere has been instrumental in raising awareness of Indigenous culture and supporting local Indigenous Canadian Armed Forces members and their families. Some of the events she has helped coordinate include sweat lodges, sharing circles, and Indigenous awareness day activities.

She is hoping to continue this work when she gets posted to 8 Wing, which is located close to the Mohawks on the Bay of Quinte, a sister reserve of her birthplace.

"I've been Military Co-chair of the Defence Aboriginal Advisory Group for the past three years, so I've been learning quite a bit. I'm hoping I can get something similar started in Trenton."

INDIGENOUS YOUTH NIGHTS

One idea she would like to see implemented is a weekly Indigenous Youth Night led by the local Military Family Resource Centre to help

Indigenous members and their families feel more connected and able to celebrate their culture.

As for her family, MCpl Lafreniere is particularly proud of her children who are beginning to understand their roots and celebrate their culture with others.

"My main goal is they learn it and spread it," she says.

Recently, her children placed teddy bears on their doorstep in memory of the Indigenous children whose remains were found at the former residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia. The gesture caught on with their neighbours as well.

STRONG & STEADFAST

If there was every any doubt of MCpl Lafreniere's commitment to teaching her children about their roots, connecting with her culture, and supporting other Indigenous CAF members, one need only look at the word beside her name on her email signature block, "tekonwatahston," which means "standing up for my people" in Mohawk.



MCpl Lafreniere with her family during her swearing in ceremony.

Photo courtesy of MCpl Lafreniere.

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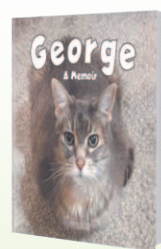
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