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 MORALE & WELFARE NEWS | CFB ESQUIMALT, VICTORIA, B.C.

the LOOKOUT

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Crew members from His Majesty's Canadian Ship *Ottawa* and Japanese Ship *Amagri* pose for a group photo to conclude an arrival ceremony in Yokosuka, Japan on Nov. 22. Read about how holiday parcels are being sent to the ship while they are deployed, keeping their spirits bright on page 2. Photo: Sailor 3rd Class Jacob Saunders

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Morale Mail:

A Gesture of Gratitude for HMCS Ottawa



Paul Dagonese

Lookout Staff

As the holiday season approaches, a heartwarming collaboration between Island Health's Cowichan District Hospital (CDH) and the Esquimalt Military Family Resource Center (MFRC) has ensured that the 250 sailors aboard His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Ottawa won't feel forgotten while deployed far from home. A collection of care packages and handwritten notes from hospital staff is heading to the Pacific, carrying with it a simple message: *We care*.

"It's a small but meaningful way to say thank you," said Cynthia Turgeon, Business Support Associate at CDH. "Our staff (at CDH) are frontline healthcare workers, and they too stand in the gap." For Turgeon this donation is about saying "We didn't forget you. We don't know you, but we so appreciate all that you do, the sacrifice you make, and the sacrifice your family makes by letting you go for many months at a time."

The initiative began when Turgeon, inspired by Remembrance Day events and the military connections within the hospital's staff, spoke to the CDH BE WELL Committee, and reached out to the MFRC to explore how they could support deployed service members. The initiative quickly evolved into a months-long project involving donations of snacks, puzzles, and personalized holiday notes – complete with word searches and games – designed to brighten the sailors' days.

A PARTNERSHIP WITH PURPOSE

Jackie Carlé, Executive Director of the Esquimalt MFRC, emphasized the significance of the donation. What's so special about this for Carlé is it's an 'inclusive' show of kindness. Members may not get packages from home, but she says with this donation 'nobody's going to feel left out. Everybody's going to get a package.'

The care packages will be distributed to the crew while they're deployed across the Pacific during the Christmas season. The hope is these gestures will be a welcome reprieve from the challenges of being away from their families during such a meaningful time of year.

Carlé explains donations are typically sent by parents of crew members, who will often send gifts enough for a whole crew. But she says "This is the first time we've had such a big donation."

Care packages collected by the Esquimalt MFRC and Cowichan Valley Hospital are packaged and sent off to HMCS Ottawa while deployed over the holidays. Photos provided.

THE HUMAN CONNECTION

Behind the logistics of organizing such a big venture lies a deeply human story. Turgeon's dedication to making each sailor feel individually valued was evident in the 250 handwritten cards she prepared with help from two colleagues.

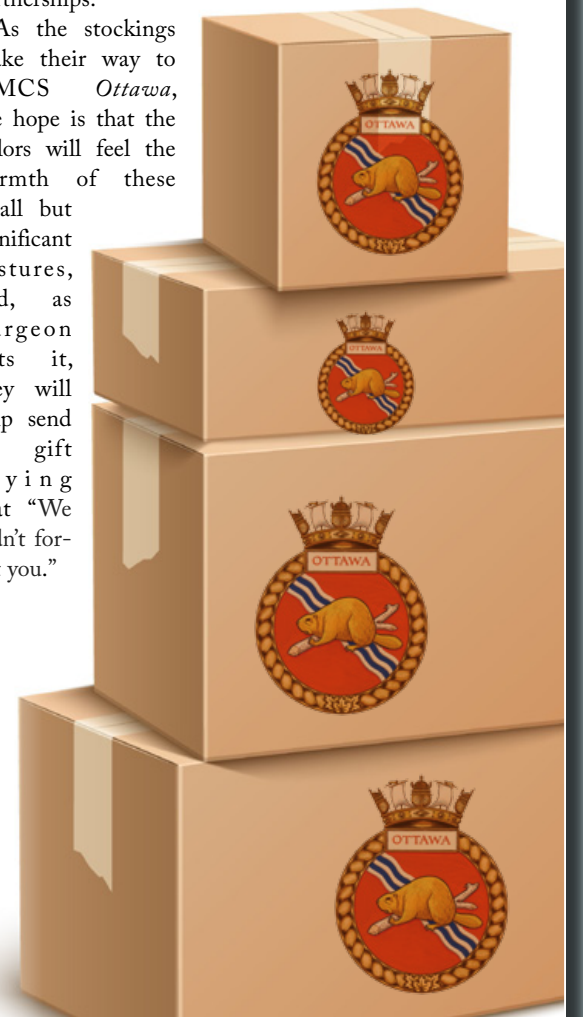
"We had little cards here from an event, so on the front piece of the card I composed a handwritten note. And on the card's backside I created a word search. Some of them had a word search, and some had an acrostic."

For Carlé, the project reflects the resilience and generosity of local community. "It's quite lovely coming from the Cowichan Valley because we do actually have a lot of members who live over the Malahat and who would potentially be patients and clients of the Cowichan Valley Hospital."

A BROADER IMPACT

The collaboration also highlights the values of service and community. For hospital staff, who have weathered their own trials during the pandemic, the project offered a way to extend compassion beyond their immediate roles. For the MFRC, it served as a reminder of the power of partnerships.

As the stockings make their way to HMCS Ottawa, the hope is that the sailors will feel the warmth of these small but significant gestures, and, as Turgeon puts it, they will help send a gift saying that "We didn't forget you."



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MARPAC Holiday Greetings

As we gather to celebrate this festive season, we want to take a moment to reflect on the past year and express my heartfelt gratitude for each of you – my dedicated military and civilian teammates.

This year was filled with remarkable achievements along with some challenges and opportunities. MARPAC welcomed and commissioned our first Harry DeWolf-class ship, HMCS *Max Bernays*; HMCS *Windsor* deployed on multiple surveillance patrols; HMC ships *Edmonton* and *Yellowknife* successfully took part in Operation *Caribbe*; and HMC Ships *Vancouver* and *Ottawa* deployed across the Pacific on Operation *Horizon*. We also surged hundreds of people to support RIMPAC 2024 and hosted another incredible Fleet Week in North Vancouver. Our training system has made remarkable strides to streamline training and produced thousands of new graduates in every naval trade and rank level. In service to Canada, our ships have sailed far and wide, from the heights of the Arctic circle to the heat of the equatorial Indo-Pacific.

Your commitment to excellence, on deployment, in training, or within your communities, has not gone unnoticed. We are particularly proud of our progress in fostering an inclusive environment for all personnel. These initiatives are crucial as we prepare for the future and ensure that our Navy remains ready to help, lead, and fight.

As we enjoy this holiday season, let us also remember the importance of family and the sacrifices made by our loved ones. They are a critical support structure, and we encourage you to take this time to connect with them, recharge, and celebrate the joy of the season. Our thoughts are particularly with the deployed members of HMCS *Ottawa* (including those supporting them from ashore) as they spend a holiday season separated from their loved ones while conducting their mission of promoting peace, stability, and the rules-based international order.

Let's also keep in mind those who may be facing challenges during this time. A simple gesture of kindness or a check-in with your military and civilian coworkers can make a significant difference.

A reminder that the CAF Member & Family Assistance service is a bilingual counselling service that is voluntary, confidential, and available to military members and their families who have concerns affecting their well-being. 1-800-268-7708 (TTY: 1-800-567-5803 for persons with hearing challenges), 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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As always, we consider ourselves blessed to be a part of the MARPAC team. Together, we will continue to build on our successes and face new challenges with the same determination and enthusiastic spirit that defines us. We wish you all the best possible winter holiday and a joyous New Year filled with happiness and good health. Thank you all for your unwavering dedication to our mission and for the pride you bring to MARPAC.

Yours Aye,

*Rear-Admiral Christopher Robinson,
Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Arvid Lee, &
Master Sailor Hayley LeClair*



CFB Esquimalt Holiday Greetings

CFB Esquimalt Teammates,

It is with gratitude and appreciation that we wish you a warm and healthy holiday season. Most importantly, we hope that all have opportunities to connect with your friends and loved ones, even for a short rest.

As the end of 2024 approaches, we pause and reflect on the many achievements of the Team. We see your hard work and dedication to keep the Base running every single day, and we deeply appreciate it. In 2024, the Base supported the busy operation schedule of the Fleet. Internationally, we've participated in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise by Naval Replenishment Unit *Asterix*, HMCS *Max Bernays*, HMCS and *Vancouver*. This was followed by successful deployments into the Indo-Asia Pacific with HMCS *Vancouver*, and now HMCS *Ottawa*, and their helicopter air detachments. Domestically, our fleet has supported tremendous Force Generation and Task Group Exercises in our local waters.

Not only have we supported operations, but we've also fostered and strengthened our connections, both with our local communities and with each other as members of the Defence Team. Through various ceremonies, days of recognition, and events such as the National Public Service Week BBQ, the Victoria Class Cup in support of the Esquimalt MFRC, Healthy Workplace Month, Go by Bike Week, the Royal Canadian Navy Bike Ride, the Navy Run, CAF Appreciation Nights, Remembrance Day, and so much more, we came together as a team to laugh, to recognize others, to improve our mental health and fitness, and to remember the sacrifices of those who have come before us. As part of our collective group effort to give back to our communities, this year we surpassed our local National Defence Workplace Charitable Campaign goal of \$80,000 raising over \$115,000. We would like to highlight the exceptional work of the campaign administrative team and ambassadors who have supported, drafted, and executed creative efforts to support the Campaign – it makes a lasting difference, and the positive impact that this has on the most vulnerable within our local communities cannot be overstated.

Everyday, we continue to see the diverse, hard-working Defence Team at CFB Esquimalt embody and demonstrate the Base motto, '*Portare per omnia*' – 'Support for All'. From the most senior leadership to the most junior members of our team, every one of us are critical in making this happen, and we owe our successes to you. We said in our Holiday Message last year that it has been exciting and encouraging to see everyone exemplify the teamwork and community spirit that we are known for at the Base, and we continue to be energized and emboldened by the immense amount of pride that we see in the Defence Team.

We recognize that for many this season may be difficult for a variety of reasons, and we encourage everyone to extend grace and kindness to each other. Your dedication and resiliency as members of the Defence Team of CFB Esquimalt continue to amaze and encourage us and it is amongst one of many reasons why it is an honour to be your teammates as Base Commander and Base Chief Petty Officer. We cherish the time and friendships that we have created with members from our surrounding Indigenous communities, the Township of Esquimalt, surrounding local municipalities, and most importantly, with you, our valued Defence Team members.

As we move into the holiday period, we urge everyone to spend quality time with those you care about. Look after yourself, take time to rest and recharge, and take care of each other – please endeavour to check in with your colleagues and shipmates as you can. Whatever holiday you celebrate, in whichever way you choose, from our families to yours, we wish you Happy Holidays and a bright and prosperous New Year.

Yours Aye,

*Capt (N) Kevin Whiteside
Base Commander*

*CPO1 Susan Frisby
Base Chief Petty Officer*



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Chaplain's Corner

It's a Long and Winding Road

Padre Turkington
Chaplain, CFB Esquimalt

The first day of December marks the point in the year when it is perfectly acceptable to start listening to Christmas music. The standard jingles are inescapable; flooding stores, malls, restaurants, radio stations, and seemingly occupying every vacant quiet space. For some this is welcomed, for others it is dreaded. I used to be in the later camp, but over time have learned to enjoy my own festive soundtrack; religious carols mixed with a few sentimental, if not slightly absurd, tracks, along with Bob Dylan's festive album that encapsulates it all. There is no shortage of songs out there, and we have become quite accustomed to the classics being played incessantly, even when a good number of

them have not aged well (*Do They Know It's Christmas?* comes quickly to mind).

One such standard is John Lennon's *Happy Christmas (War Is Over)*. After spending two years actively protesting the Vietnam War, and releasing the popular anthem, "All we are saying is give peace a chance," Lennon released this as a protest song that put his 'political message across with a little honey.' He wrote it because he was tired of the sentimentally optimistic white Christmas and wanted to motivate people to action. *So this is Christmas, and what have you done?*

It has been over 50 years since this song was released, and what have we actually done? If we look around at our world, war is far from over and we can be forgiven if these lyrics now ring sentimentally and optimistically hollow in our ears. At least one line stands out as true. Originally, *The*

world is so wrong, was later replaced with, *The road is so long*. Both lines ring true, as some have argued the world hasn't stopped being at war since 1914. It has been a very long road to peace indeed.

So, what are we to do this Christmas season? Like this song, we must resist both the slide into sentimental optimism and into hopeless pessimism. We must persist in our motivation towards promoting peace. The saying is still true; *Blessed are the Peacemakers*. However, we can only extend peace if we have peace to give. Christmas is the season when we pause to receive and be filled with peace, so that we can continue to be motivated as peacemakers throughout the rest of the year and for as long as the road takes. So take time this Christmas and find that peace that you have been long looking for.



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From Stoker to Legacy:

The "Trailblazing" Career of retired Petty Officer Arthur A. Horn

Paul Dagonese
Lookout Staff

As Canadians, we honour those who paved the way for future generations, setting new standards and shaping the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) into what it is today. Among these trailblazers is Petty Officer 2nd Class (Retired) Arthur A. Horn, a Bellville, Ontario native who dreamed of becoming a sailor at just 12 years old. Enlisting in the RCN at 17, Horn not only fulfilled his dream but went on to redefine how Canadian Armed Forces instructors train their soldiers, leaving an indelible mark on military education.

Now 81, when Art's asked how long his military career spanned, he responds "42 days short of 23 years". But he remembers like it was yesterday how it all started with the Belleville Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps. As a Cadet aboard ships like HMCS *St. Lawrence*, he experienced his first "love" for Navy life. Later, in September 1960, during his first official posting at HMCS Cornwallis, his "taste" for Navy life truly began.

But it wasn't until 13 years later, July of 1973, that his career changed.

On an Any Trade Required billet, Art was posted to the Canadian Forces School of Instructional Technique at CFB Borden. They were short on instructors then, and, as Art says, "I was asked—I wasn't ordered—if I would like to take a course to do some instructing. And I said 'Sure, I'll give it a try. I'll try anything once'. So, they started me on a Standard Instructional Technique (SIT) One course right away, and two thirds of the way through it they pulled me off and threw me to the wolves in front of a classroom instructing."

That room of 'wolves' was really a group of corporals and sergeants, even two officers, which he says prepared him for a career to instruct every rank right up to major.

During his time there, Art was loaded onto a SIT Two course. He was then selected for a Junior Leaders Course, designed to develop and enhance leadership skills within the CAF. Among 260 total trainees—and as the "only Navy guy" in the course—Art ranked second out of the 60 individuals in his platoon.

His exceptional performance in the course highlighted his leadership skills and personable nature, earning him the honour of serving as Parade Commander for the graduation ceremony.

"I thought it was pretty good, considering here I am, a *Stoker*," he said.

Stokers were today's marine technicians,

those who specialized in engine-room duties, and whose term originated from the days when sailors were tasked with shifting coal to fuel the ship.

He carried on with his engineering training up to Trade Group 4 and was promoted to Petty Officer 2nd Class when he left Borden for HMCS *Assiniboine*. He was then posted to Fleet School as an instructor, reposted to HMCS *Stadacona*, and took an Instructor Supervisor Course. In 1980 he was named *Instructor of the Year*.

And Art wasn't just good at training members, he could design a course too.

While posted to HMCS *Stadacona*, he helped develop programs like a JP-5 Aviation Fuel Handling course, which set up the program he later taught at the Fleet School. He also recounts how he was one of the first instructors who taught Helicopter Hauldown and Rapid Securing Device (HHRSD) courses.

Art's career is a special one, so much so that in his retirement he received the Special Service Medal (SSM NATO), an award where the CAF recognizes its member for taking part in activities under special circumstances.

Art's dedication to achieving high levels of performance and recognition didn't end here. In 1965, while serving aboard HMCS *Cape Scott*, he was selected as a member of an

Honourary Guard to commemorate Winston Churchill's funeral—an achievement that he accomplished just five years into a Naval career that would eventually span a total of two decades, two years, and 323 days.

Art retired from military life at 40 and from the workforce at 77, giving him ample time to reflect on his years with the CAF. He's often looked over his PERs (Personal Evaluation Reports) with fond memories. "The things that are in there, some of the comments, I can't believe it was me! I can't really recall that I walked on water, but some of the stuff they said was a walk-on-water kind of thing," he said.

It's dedication like Art's that laid the groundwork for the calibre of instruction the CAF is producing today. The final position he held was Instructor Supervisor, which was the highest CAF designation for instructors at the time. This was a time before the Level Three Classification instruction that's possible today. Though they didn't have that title back then, he was one of the first RCN instructors performing Level Three caliber training, and often, he says, beyond. He wants people to remember that even back in the late 1970s and 1980s, stokers like him were doing good things.

"I think I had a storied career if nothing else. I'd done some things that I'm very proud of based on the achievements I had."



Arthur Horn then and now



Arthur Horn receiving one of many recognitions for his work with the Royal Canadian Navy.

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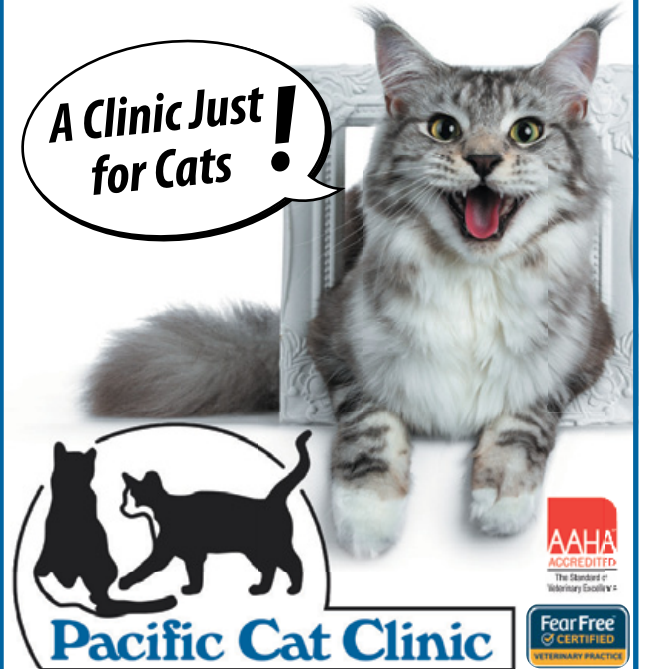
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HMCS Vancouver: A Homecoming Marked by Tradition

Paul Dagonese
Staff Writer

After a six-month deployment starting in Hawaii and continuing throughout the Indo-Pacific region, HMCS Vancouver returned to CFB Esquimalt early in the morning of Dec. 5. As the ship waited just outside Esquimalt Harbour, excited onlookers gathered early at Duntze Head for the ceremonial sail-past, catching distant glimpses of their friends and loved ones. Others waited at C-Jetty where the homecoming celebrations began.

Vancouver docked and before crew members and their families could embrace, one lucky first kiss sailor won the privilege of disembarking first.

"I got one ticket ... and that's all I needed," says Sailor 1st Class (S1) Dante Brum-Letourneau, the winner of the first-kiss raffle. "That's some good luck."

His partner of four years, Nadia Tymoshuk, met S1 Brum-Letourneau at the center of the brow. They embraced, kissed, and leaned back into a pose mimicking that of the iconic U.S. Navy sailor photo in Times Square taken on V-J Day in 1945.

The couple took a selfie while hundreds watched and cheered. Winning this raffle is considered to be prestigious as even the ship's Captain had to wait to disembark until after the first kiss. "It's a great coming home gift for my first deployment," said S1 Brum-Letourneau.

When he asked Nadia if he should buy more than one ticket for the raffle, she said, "You'll only need one ticket to win." But when he told her he won, she admitted she didn't believe him at first.

While waiting to disembark, Vancouver's Coxswain, Chief Petty Officer 1st Class (CPO1) Ian Billerd, waved to his kids Hailey and Colton.

When asked what he was going to do with dad that night,

Colton said, "Dad owes me a game of Fortnite." In addition to playing video games, CPO1 Billerd was excited to be home to watch his daughter's hockey skills.

"Little Hailey has hockey practice tonight, and I want to see her play because I haven't seen that since March," he said. "I'm really looking forward to it".

S1 Alex Bautista brought his wife Jhem and son Leander aboard Vancouver's main deck to take in the view. Alex shared that when he left in June, Leander was just beginning to talk, but now he's riding his bike and chatting away nonstop.

The 184-day deployment began with Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), the largest joint maritime exercise, in Hawaii and continued with participation in Operations Horizon and Neon before concluding in the Philippines.

Welcome home, Vancouver!

HMCS Vancouver returns from OP Horizon at C Jetty, Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt on Dec. 5. Photo: Sailor 3rd Class Mouhameth Cisse Drame, MARPAC Imaging

HMCS Vancouver passing Duntze Head on Dec. 5. Photo: Sailor 1st Class Brendan McLoughlin, MARPAC Imaging.

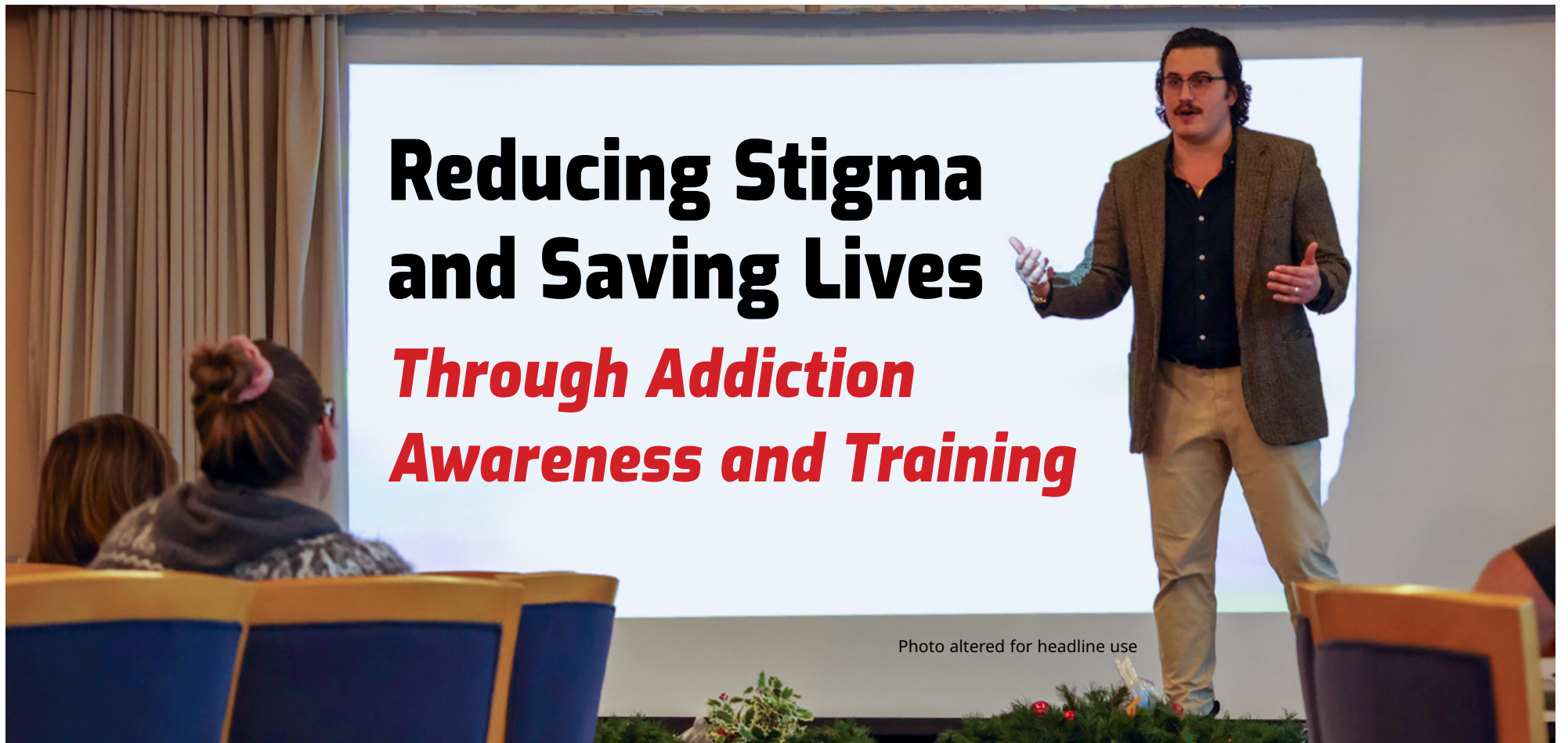


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Reducing Stigma and Saving Lives Through Addiction Awareness and Training

Paul Dagonés
Lookout Staff

Every day people in British Columbia lose their lives to an overdose. National Addictions Awareness Week (NAAW), held annually during the third week of November, confronts this crisis by building awareness and promoting practical solutions.

Led by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA), NAAW workshops explore innovative approaches to reducing the harms of substance use. Each year, a unique theme shapes these efforts. For 2024, the theme was *Forging Connections*.

Locally, CFB Esquimalt and MARPAC hosted their third annual NAAW workshop, reflecting their growing commitment to tackling addiction through a comprehensive, evidence-based approach. These workshops aim to educate Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members about addiction's widespread challenges while promoting solutions rooted in empathy and science.

The 2024 lecture series, titled *Addiction and Recovery Stigma: Tools and Methods for Supporting Addiction Recovery*, focused on breaking down stereotypes and removing barriers to support.

"One of the themes for today is on the topic of stigma," said Vicky Doucette, Health Promotions Specialist at CFB Esquimalt and

Health Promotion Representative for MARPAC Health and Wellness Strategy Addictions Free Living Working Group. "We feel like there's a lot of stereotyping that creates a barrier for working together to provide solutions and show support for addiction."

Doucette highlighted the importance of inviting an expert with a strong foundation in the science of addiction and stigma. To meet this need, she invited Max Weselowski, a Social Sciences doctoral candidate at Royal Roads University specializing in addiction recovery and stigma reduction.

Doucette observed an increasing interest among CAF members for in-person connection, which shaped the workshop's format. Weselowski's lecture combined cutting-edge research with actionable strategies. He introduced tools such as screening questions developed by the Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) to assess addiction involvement. He also explained the Stages of Change Model, which outlines the cyclical progress and setbacks often experienced during recovery, and emphasized Recovery Capital, a framework for fostering self-worth, building social connections, and improving physical health.

Weselowski underscored the societal impact of understanding addiction through evidence-based methods.

"The more we know, the less we are being

emotional and irrational about our beliefs around addiction," he said. "I think the benefit of this workshop provides simple steps for helping build someone up, rather than accidentally knocking them down in our efforts to support them."

The workshop transitioned to a hands-on session led by Paige Aoki, Education Team Coordinator with AVI Health Community Services in Victoria. Drawing from her extensive experience in overdose response, Aoki stressed the life-saving potential of naloxone.

Each attendee received a naloxone test kit, and Aoki provided detailed instructions on its use.

"It's a crucial skill that allows us to save lives," she said. "Naloxone is very easy to use, very safe, and it's the only way to support someone experiencing an overdose in a way that can save them."

Aoki's call for naloxone training reinforced the urgent need

for society to challenge its biases about addiction.

"We are living in a time of crisis," she said. "The toxic drug poisoning crisis is hugely impactful. We are losing people every day. I believe it's now up to seven deaths per day in B.C. alone for overdose deaths."

Workshops like these exemplify how communities can forge meaningful connections, dismantle harmful stigmas, and save lives. Doucette encourages anyone interested in organizing events or supporting addiction-free initiatives to contact

her at vicky.doucette@forces.gc.ca.



HMCS Calgary wins the December Intramural Volleyball Tournament

In a five-set nailbiter against Base Administration (BADM), Calgary continues their intramural winning streak, remaining undefeated for the 24/25 season. Congratulations to HMCS Calgary, BADM and all other unit teams who participated in this month's intramural competition. Intramurals will be returning to CFB Esquimalt with 3-on-3 basketball Jan. 27-31.



the LOOKOUT

NEWSPAPER & PUBLISHING

This holiday season, we are grateful for those who serve in uniform, veterans, civilian workers who support those who serve, our local community members, and the families with unwavering strength who feel like home to members ashore and afar.

Your dedication, sacrifice, and resilience continue to inspire the work we do each day. The Lookout Newspaper is committed to writing your stories and sharing important information to improve morale and welfare at CFB Esquimalt.

This year, the Lookout shared stories from the Navy past, present and future. The past was specifically highlighted in our three Remembrance-focused editions in November as veterans reflected on their unique experiences with the Canadian Armed Forces and we honoured those we lost this year who had a tremendous impact on the Navy and local community.

We shared stories of the present as we captured the ever-changing nature of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and its members, ongoing operations and exercises, and the units and sailors who continue to strive for greatness at CFB Esquimalt.

Looking ahead to the future, we shared updates as local and RCN leaders discussed what the new Navy will look like and how changes will support the CAF's goals while maintaining peace, security and global support.

This year, the Lookout Newspaper also experienced some changes. We went from publishing weekly to biweekly, we said goodbye to some beloved team members, and we brought in a new team to support the redesign of our website to be launched this Spring. It will offer new tools, resources, and ways to communicate quicker with our dedicated readers. Whether you enjoy reading the paper in print, online, or with your mobile device, we're working hard to ensure you can continue to do so effectively.

We'd like to take this moment to thank all our readers who continue to support us and those who connected with us this year to share photos and stories of the incredible things the Navy is doing. We'd also like to take a moment to thank our advertisers and sponsors as without their support, this newspaper would not continue to exist over the past 81 years.

May this holiday season bring an abundance of joy, peace and connection to our extended Defence community, and may the new year be filled with opportunity, adventure, and many editions of the Lookout Newspaper. Thank you for your service and support.

Happy Holiday to all! The Lookout Newspaper

Sapientia Ex Diciplina: NWO III Fraser Steps Off the Parade Square

SLt Simon Gonsalves
MARPAQ PAO

The long path to becoming a trained Naval Warfare Officer is notoriously not for the faint of heart. However, on the Dec. 11, after four months of challenge and adversity, Naval Warfare Officer (NWO) III Fraser Division had their formal graduation ceremony HMCS *Venture's* Nixon Drill Deck.

This event marked the culmination of a rigorous training program aimed to transform junior naval officers into the future leaders of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). All NWO candidates attend an extensive program at HMCS *Venture*, the center of Excellence in Naval Training located in Esquimalt. They partake in three critical milestone courses, each building on the last prior to joining the fleet. Training consists of classroom instruction, simulator sessions, and practical training at sea. These experiences are necessary to build expertise and hands-on experience in navigation, bridgemanhip, ship safety, emergency procedures, and seamanship, amongst other vital subjects.

Families, friends, and distinguished guests, including Rear-Admiral Christopher Robinson, Commander Maritime Forces Pacific, gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduating class. The Reviewing Officer, Commander Eric Isabelle, Commanding Officer of HMCS *Corner Brook*, spoke to all those in attendance. Commander Isabelle stated that the completion of NWO III "marks a significant milestone for Warfare Officers as their first true career course, giving the candidates a taste of what it means of having Charge of a ship as [Officer of the Watch]."

Fraser's Course Training Offer, Lieutenant (Navy) (Lt(N)) Joe Cheng, delivered the closing

remarks. Always coaching and encouraging his students to do their best, "your success is my success" is his motto, noting that the combined course academic average was well above normal at an outstanding 91%. While the graduating officers wait for their next phase of NWO training, Lt(N) Cheng enthusiastically recommended that they "take every opportunity to grow, develop, and challenge themselves."

The ceremony also served as a platform to honour the achievements of exemplary candidates within the advancing class. The Welland Shield, the award granted to the student exhibiting the highest standard of leadership, was presented to Acting Sub-Lieutenant (A/SLt) Mitchell Keay. A reservist from HMCS *York*, Toronto's Naval Reserve Division, A/SLt Keay mentioned that receiving the prestigious award was "something I will dearly treasure for years to come." When asked to advise future NWO candidates, the recent father quoting Winston Churchill, stated: "success is not final, failure is not fatal – it is the courage to continue that counts that most in this world."

All NWO courses are named after a renowned ship from naval history; the Fraser course was named after two previous RCN warships – the latest being the second HMCS *Fraser*, the last vessel of the St. Laurent-class, which were the first Canadian designed and built warships. The lead ship of Canada's next generation of surface warships, the upcoming River-class, has been selected to carry on *Fraser's* glorious name for decades to come. With the next *Fraser* expected in the early 2030s, many graduating students might find themselves sailing on their namesake further along their illustrious careers!

Fair winds and following seas Fraser – remember, destiny rarely calls at a time of your choosing!



Top: Acting Sub-Lieutenant Mitchell George Grieveson Keay, alongside his wife and child, is presented with the Welland Shield by Commander Isabelle, Commanding Officer HMCS *Corner Brook*.

Bottom: NWO III Fraser pose for a group graduation picture at Naval Fleet School Pacific (Venture Division)'s Nixon Building. Photos supplied

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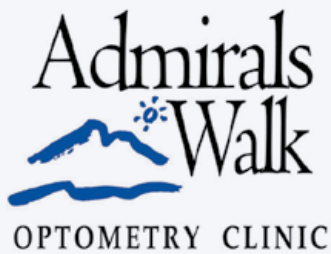
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Exceptional Sailors



Sub-Lieutenant Jonathan Robinson is presented with his Exceptional Sailor Award by Vice-Admiral Angus Topsyhee, Commander Royal Canadian Navy.



Master Sailor Jeffrey Harding and Sub-Lieutenant Jonathan Robinson stand with Rear-Admiral (Ret'd) Senator Rebecca Patterson in the Senate Chamber in Ottawa, Ontario.

SLt Simon Gonsalves and A/SLt Josh Grinstead
MARPAAC Public Affairs

On an annual basis, the Navy League of Canada's Exceptional Sailors Programme recognizes outstanding sailors across the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) formations, who've gone above and beyond professional expectations. During Navy and Coast Guard Appreciation Day, those awarded travel to Ottawa to receive their commendation within the Canadian Senate. Welcomed by Canada's Senators and Members of Parliament, this ceremony is designed to highlight the best of the RCN, and showcase their dedication, professionalism, and performance.

Every year, this commendation publicly recognizes two junior officers, one senior non-commissioned member (NCM), and three junior NCMs. Candidates must be nominated for a Commander RCN Commendation and meet several criteria, such as demonstrating devotion to duty, integrity, and leadership. Furthermore, they have to have contributed significantly to the RCN, their local community, or more widely contributed to Canada.

Of the five RCN members selected to receive this commendation, two were sailors serving with Maritime Forces Pacific – HMCS *Regina's* Sub-Lieutenant (SLt) Jonathan Robinson, and Master Sailor (MS) Jeffrey Harding, serving with the Canadian Submarine Force onboard HMCS *Windsor*.

SLt Jonathan Robinson's name was sub-

mitted for the Exceptional Sailors initiative after his commendable performance as the Designated Assistant for the family of a fallen shipmate aboard HMCS *Calgary*. This recognition stemmed from his compassion and dedication in supporting the affected family during an incredibly difficult time. When asked about this experience, SLt Robinson stated that it was "an honour to be chosen for this award, and a memorable experience to have it presented in the Senate Chamber."

MS Harding displayed remarkable dedication and expertise as the Junior Sonar Maintainer aboard HMCS *Windsor* during the submarine's 2022 torpedo firing trials. In addition to his outstanding execution of his ordinary responsibilities, MS Harding was essential in the repair of a catastrophic fault in the Fire Control System. His exceptional professionalism and understanding of the system directly contributed to the trials' success, maintaining *Windsor's* operational readiness. Reflecting on the award, MS Harding said: "I wasn't expecting anything like this for myself, but it was an awesome and such a pleasant surprise."

This commendation not only honours the hard work and contributions of individuals like SLt Jonathan Robinson and MS Jeffrey Harding, but also highlights the values that define the RCN—commitment, professionalism, and leadership. Through their actions, these exemplary sailors strove well above their professional expectations, reflecting the high standards of excellence encouraged by the RCN.



The award recipients, senior officers, and attending politicians pose for a group picture in the Senate Chamber, in Ottawa, Ontario.

Showcasing local talents at first Holiday Shop & Sip



Lookout Staff

The first annual Holiday Shop & Sip event hosted by the Chief & POs' Mess and Lookout Newspaper debuted on Sunday, Dec. 1. Bringing together the extended Defence community and local artisans, the holiday market was a dashingly success. Showcasing talents including woodworking, baking, preserving, crafting, leatherwork, art, photography, soap-making, stained glass, printing, jewellery-making, thrifting, and so much more, the 66 vendor booths offered holiday gift ideas to more than 300 attendees that afternoon.

Entrance to the event was by donation

of a non-perishable food item or cash donation to support Rainbow Kitchen, a community kitchen and hub for food security programming in Esquimalt. A big thank you goes out to all attendees, vendors and organizers as \$800 and a large car full of donations was raised at the event.

As attendees sipped on beverages provided by the onsite bar, others indulged in the free popcorn and hot chocolate courtesy of CANEX.

Attendees were also entered into a draw to win over 30 door prizes, donated generously by the event vendors.

The holiday spirit is in full swing at CFB Esquimalt, and planning is already in the works for the next Shop & Sip event.



Top: The reason for the season. Food donations for Rainbow Kitchen fill the trunk at the event. CFB Esquimalt's first Holiday Shop & Sip hosted at the Chief & POs' mess on Dec. 1.

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Military Couple's Novel Brings Humour, Heart, and Humanity to the Page

Paul Dagonese
Staff Writer

When Master Sailor (Retired) (MS (Ret'd)) Elysia Stevens sat down to write *Smelling Daisies*, she never imagined it would grow into a creative partnership with her husband, Chief Petty Officer 1st Class (CPO1) Mark Stevens.

What began as a fun project evolved into a novel that's as much about love, humour, and resilience as it is about the military experience.

Drawing from their shared backgrounds in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and their 18-year marriage, the couple combined Elysia's knack for storytelling with Mark's classical literary sensibilities to create a novel that defies genre labels.

"It can't be

put into a cookie cutter," Mark said. "You couldn't say it's a rom-com, or an adventure, or a drama, or a historical novel. It's a little of everything because Elysia has the rom-com background, and mine is classic literature. So, when you smash the two together, this is what you get."

Smelling Daisies tells the story of Daisy, a modern-day female soldier and veteran of the CAF, who finds herself thrust into medieval Scotland after a mysterious time-travel twist. Daisy's training and survival instincts are tested in a world far removed from her own, where gender roles and medieval dangers collide with her modern identity.

The couple's collaborative writing process mirrored the playful banter between Daisy and her romantic interests in the book.

"We were ping-pong off each other," Mark said. "She'd write an idea and then pass it to me, and I'd write an idea and pass it to her, getting a male and female perspective." He explained how this process of exchange between them really comes out in the characters.

Elysia added, "You see, I'm always funny, but my husband is hilarious. Where I was like—'Ooh, I think he'll like this', he's then like, 'Okay, I see where you're going with this, but let's just twist it around a little bit more'."

UNIVERSAL THEMES WITH A MILITARY LENS

What makes *Smelling Daisies* particularly compelling to a CAF audience is its exploration of themes deeply rooted in military life. From the camaraderie of troops to the challenges of mental health, the book touches on the sacrifices service members make.

"Not only is Daisy funny, but she's raw too," Elysia said. "She has imperfections and she's also dealing with a lot of growth throughout the story."

Mark further explained. "The family relationships and bonds with her troops are all a universal theme across the CAF," he said. "And I think that comes out in the book as well."

Elysia, who served 15 years in the CAF, and Mark who is still serving, drew on their experiences and extensive

research to balance humour with heavier themes like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

They explained it was challenging finding the right points they wanted to touch on without it becoming too overwhelming for the reader. They say humour was key to balancing out the novel for an enjoyable yet realistic portrayal.

TRYING OUT A NEW NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

One of the novel's stand-out features is its interactive ending, a rare 'choose-your-own-adventure' twist. Readers can vote on the book's website, elysiamarkstevensbooks.ca, to determine the characters' fates, with the cut-off date set for April 22, 2025—the couple's wedding anniversary.

"We leave the ending with a 'choose-your-own-adventure'

so readers get to choose the character's path at the end," Elysia said. "This is something not done often in storytelling." The couple plans to use the results to shape a sequel that is already in the works.

TEAMWORK COMING TOGETHER

For Elysia and Mark, *Smelling Daisies* is more than just a book—it's a testament to their 18-year marriage and the power of teamwork.

"Our styles inspire each other is the best way to describe it," Mark said.

Available online and in select local bookstores, *Smelling Daisies* offers humour, heart, and a glimpse into the quirks of the human condition—making it a must-read for military members, families, and anyone who loves a good story.



Authors Elysia and Mark. Photo provided.



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