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VOLUME 71 NUMBER 3 | FEBRUARY 9, 2026

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

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EXERCISE ROUGISH BUOY 2026



Members of 1 Canadian Engineer Regiment Dive Team at Whirl Bay, Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Albert Head train during Exercise (Ex) ROUGISH BUOY 2026 on Jan 21. Read more on pages 8 and 9.

Photo: Aviator (Avr) Rebecca Mainardi, MARPAC Imaging Services

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Archana Cini
Lookout Newspaper

The annual Wounded Warrior Run BC has officially returned for 2026, marking the start of another powerful journey in support of veterans, first responders, and their families across British Columbia (BC).

The annual non-profit campaign launched at the end of January with a kickoff Gala Dinner on Jan 31, followed by a Sooke to Sidney run held on Feb 1. The one-day run saw 2025 alumni racers moving alongside 2026 runners. The team ran past community hubs along the way, where supporters gathered to cheer and show solidarity for those impacted by service-related trauma.

While the one-day run has already taken place, the heart of the campaign lies ahead: from Feb 22 to March 1, eight runners will complete an extraordinary 800-kilometre, eight-day journey from Port Hardy to Victoria. Returning runners and support team members from CFB Esquimalt include: Simon Brown, Jacqueline Zweng, Kevin Whiteside, Dan Bodden and Matt Carlson.

Along the journey, supporters can cheer at one of 26 stops and donate towards the run's 2026 goal: an incredible \$250,000 in funds. Donations will stay on Vancouver Island and directly support delivery for Trauma-Exposed Organizations (TExO), Trauma-Exposed Professionals (TExP), and their Trauma Exposed Families (TExF).

As the runners prepare to take the road once more, the message remains as it always has over the years: no one walks the path to healing alone.

Annual Wounded Warrior Run Returns



8 RUNNERS 800 KM 8 DAYS 26 STOPS \$250K



Runners from past and present Wounded Warrior Run BC teams participate in a warm-up run from Sooke to Sidney on Feb 1. Photos: John Penner, John's Photography

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CFB ESQUIMALT, VICTORIA, B.C.
A Division of Personnel Support Programs

The Lookout Newspaper and Publishing provides morale and welfare news to CFB Esquimalt, Maritime Forces Pacific, and is nationally distributed bi-weekly in print and online at lookoutnewspaper.com with social media updates on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Reach out to us, we'd love to hear your feedback and story ideas!

Published every other Monday, under the authority of Capt(Navy) K. Whiteside, Base Commander, CFB Esquimalt.

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Circulation bi-weekly print: 2,100
Social media reach: 10,000+ Defence community members

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In Memorium:
Gunner Sebastian Halmagean

Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) &
Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC)

Gunner Sebastian Halmagean, a Canadian Armed Forces member deployed on Operation REASSURANCE in Latvia and who was employed by the Canadian-led NATO Multinational Brigade Latvia, died at Camp Labrie on Ceri Military base on January 29, 2026.

The circumstances surrounding Gunner Halmagean's death are currently under investigation by the Canadian Forces Military Police with support from Latvian State Police, and no further information will be provided. At this time, there is no indication this incident poses an increased threat to the safety and security of our deployed members.

Gunner Halmagean was originally from Hamilton, Ontario, and was posted to the 4th Artillery Regiment (General Support), Royal Canadian Artillery, part of 6 Canadian Combat Support Brigade, which is based at 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown in Oromocto, New Brunswick.

Gunner Halmagean was deployed on Operation REASSURANCE as part of the Air Defence Battery within the Multinational Artillery Battalion Group at NATO Multinational Brigade Latvia. He had served in the Canadian Armed Forces for nearly three years. This was his first overseas deployment.



A formal portrait of the late Gunner Sebastian Halmagean. Photo supplied.

Rest in peace, Gunner Halmagean.
You are and will continue to be remembered.

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Archana Cini
Lookout Newspaper

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Bell Let's Talk Day Yoga Supports Mental Wellness at CFB Esquimalt



Archana Cini
Lookout Newspaper

On Jan 21, Defence Team members at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Esquimalt were invited to pause, breathe, and reconnect during a free guided yoga practice held in recognition of Bell's annual Let's Talk Day.

Hosted by MARPAC's Mental and Social Wellness Working Group, the midday session took place at Work Point's Nixon Gym and welcomed both civilian and uniformed Department of National Defence (DND) staff to 'take a moment for mental health,' the theme of Bell Let's Talk Day 2026. Participants stepped away from their workday and into a calm, supportive space focused on movement and mindfulness.

With yoga equipment provided on site, attendees enjoyed a welcoming guided practice led by Personnel Support Program's (PSP) Allison Jones. The practice emphasized gentle stretches, mind-body-muscle connection, and breathwork designed to help support overall wellbeing.

"Mindfulness and yoga can support the mental health and wellness of Defence team members by helping them stay present and focused, even in busy or demanding environments. Through movement and breath, yoga encourages mindfulness — paying attention to purpose in the moment," said Jones. "It also helps build a sense of community and gives people tools to reset, manage stress, and feel more grounded, both individually and as a team."

Bell Let's Talk Day is dedicated to opening conversations about mental health and reducing stigma across Canada. This year's message — that even a small pause can make a meaningful difference — resonated strongly throughout the practice. The session served as a reminder that caring for mental health does not always require large commitments; it can also begin with a single moment of self-reflection or a check-in with a trusted individual.

When asked what Defence Team members can do to support mental well-being daily, Jones said: "One small practice to carry forward after Bell Let's Talk Day can be to connect with breath. Breathing is incredibly powerful. Slow, deep, and controlled breathing acts as a reset button for our nervous system. Even taking a few intentional breaths can help calm the body, reduce stress, and restore a sense of control."

Outside the gym space, attendees were also able to access mental health resources and other materials, reinforcing the broader goal of awareness, education, and support for mental health within the Defence community.

On Bell Let's Talk Day and every day henceforth, check in with yourself and those you love. Talking changes lives.

24/7 Member Assistance Program: 1-800-268-7708

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FMF Bell Let's Talk: Members of Fleet Maintenance Facility (FMF) pose for a group photo with matching official Bell Let's Talk Day 2026 hats on Jan 21. Photo supplied..

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Rear-Admiral David Patchell at the 2025 Remembrance Day at Victoria Cenotaph. Photo: Sailor 3rd Class (S3) Jacob Saunders, MARPAC Imaging Services



In Conversation with Rear-Admiral David Patchell: On Leadership, the Courage to Trust, and The Will To Fight

Lindsay Groves
Lookout Newspaper

Today, leadership carries many definitions and, at times, misunderstandings. It can appear to be a lot of certainty, command, and action — necessary qualities for any leader. Yet there are foundational elements of leadership that are often less noted, such as calmness, serenity, integrity, and courage.

Those are words used to describe Major (Maj) Dick Winters in the book *Conversations With Major Dick Winters: Life Lessons From The Commander Of The Band Of Brothers* by Cole C. Kingseed. Winters' story was brought to life by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks in the HBO series *Band of Brothers*, which shared his experience in the Second World War and the hard-earned respect he earned as a leader. Winters, that book, and my work with the CFB Esquimalt community inspired this article — and I hope a series — because leadership is only a word until you witness it in action.

When I sat down with Rear-Admiral (RAdm) David Patchell, Commander of Maritime Forces Pacific (MARFAC) and Joint Task Force Pacific (JTTFP), to learn more about

his thoughts on leadership, morale, and service, he was quick to redirect the spotlight.

"It's difficult to talk about one's own leadership," said RAdm Patchell. "It's much easier to talk about the amazing leadership I see around this formation." On the bridge, across the base, at sea and at home, leadership is all around us.

"I was on board [His Majesty's Canadian Ship] HMCS *Regina* this week," he continued. "The way that the command team leads — absolutely impressive. The Commanding Officer (CO) Darren Sleen inspires his team by talking about the importance of things as simple as drills and writing them out. Everyone can go and read the CO's philosophy and understand, in detail, why what they're doing is important."

RAdm Patchell also spoke to humility as a defining quality of leadership. "Humility gives one the openness to listen — to actually listen and to change course. If you are not humble, you will not listen. If you will not listen, people will not trust you."

Trust, he emphasized, has never

been more important as Canadians awaken to the reality that the world is a dangerous place. "We're in competition," he said. "We're not in peacetime and we're not in war time — we're somewhere in between."

This space in between demands more from all of us.

"Ego can be important," said RAdm Patchell. "We need to be competitive. We're the military, we need to win. There is no second place. We encourage competitiveness. How do you pair that with humility and understand where to apply either one? We never want to defer to an enemy, but I absolutely need to be humble enough to listen to my boss, to my peers, to every team member."

When asked about the importance of morale, RAdm Patchell stated that morale is the will to fight. "What that means in MARFAC is the will to train every single day. It's the will to recruit, and the will to be better than we were yesterday. The will to do more."

He explained that morale is

not the same as happiness. "We're not seeking happiness. Though for the record, I want people to be happy. I want them to be content. I want them to have good lives. But happiness is not morale."

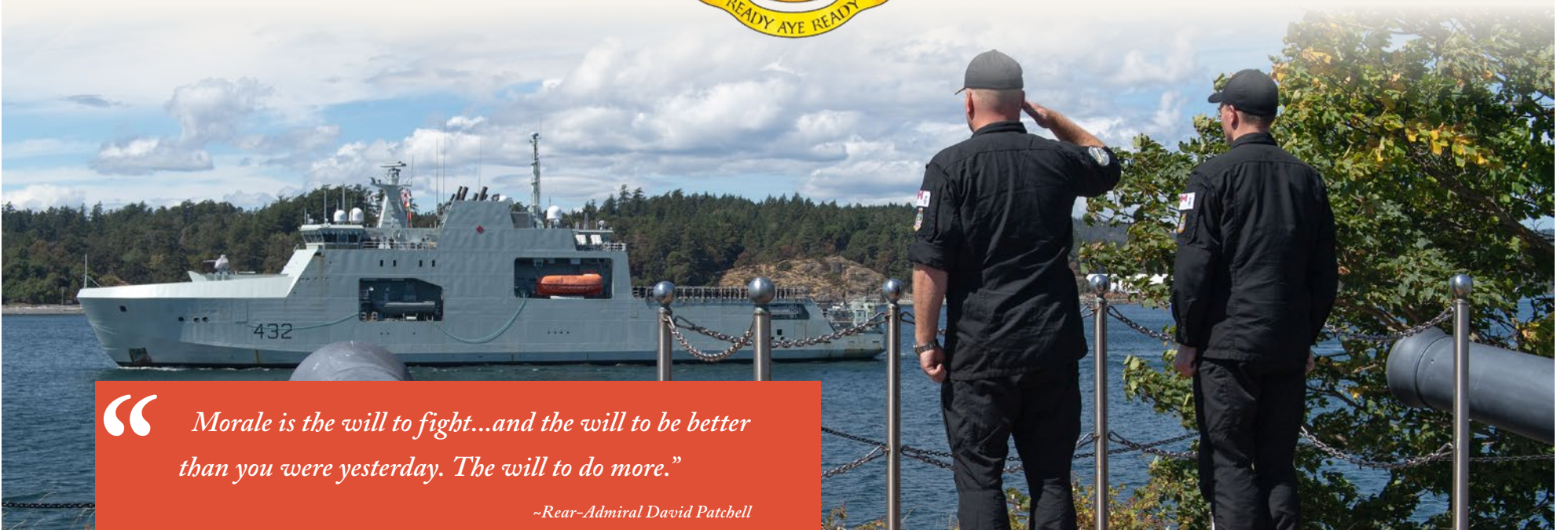
There exists a powerful relationship between morale and trust, particularly in the training and preparation of warfighters. This trust is not abstract or rhetorical — it is forged through rigorous training and shared hardship and ultimately tested under the most demanding conditions.

"We need to continue to train properly, inspire, and trust. That trust is very difficult to build and very quick to lose."

These are words to carry into the days ahead with a responsibility to trust one another; to act with courage and integrity and to lead with the will to fight.

"From the brand-new Sailor 1st Class to the Captain," said RAdm Patchell, "we are all leaders."

And there is work to do.



“Morale is the will to fight...and the will to be better than you were yesterday. The will to do more.”

~Rear-Admiral David Patchell



EXERCISE ROUGISH BUOY 2026

Demanding International Diving Exercise Returns to Vancouver Island for Third Consecutive Year

Archana Cini
with contributions by Capt Surbhi Matta,
Combat Training Centre
Lookout Newspaper

An uncommon sight greeted the Vancouver Island shoreline near Albert Head and Whirl Bay Underwater Demolition Range this January: that of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) combat divers, suited, and submerged as they practised demanding underwater skills in the Pacific Ocean.

Meet Exercise (Ex) ROUGISH BUOY 2026, Canada's only dedicated collective training exercise that annually unites Canadian and international combat divers for diving practice, skill development, international cooperation, and dive recertification.

The history of Ex ROUGISH BUOY stretches back decades in Canadian history, with its first iteration held in 1979. The exercise was initially created to ensure that combat dive teams could annually maintain operational readiness and proficiency for tasks that might be required while deployed, including underwater demolition, reconnaissance, and obstacle clearance. Over the years, the exercise has rotated locations and grown to include participating nations. This shift began to foster cooperative learning and technical exchange in addition to holding Canadian combat divers to high operational standards.

This year's installment saw divers return to Vancouver Island for the third consecutive year and the exercise's 47th iteration.

Once at Whirl Bay, the training was challenging. Divers worked through underwater demolition scenarios, placing charges to clear obstructions prior to detonation. The exercise also covered underwater navigation; insertion and extraction techniques; and water to land transitions from swimming and diving to kayaking.

"During Exercise ROUGISH BUOY 2026, helocasting took place on January 29. The divers started with helicopter safety training alongside 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron, just to make sure everyone was dialed in before moving to live inserts. The next day, divers were out at Albert Head conducting the casts just off the coast," said Captain (Capt) Willis Ripley, Exercise Lead Planner and Lead Coordinator.

"The training was progressive. They begin with the basics, just wetsuits and fins, working their way up to full diving ensembles. It all built toward the final step, which was inserting a boat and crew, followed by fully kitted divers jumping in from the helicopter. That progression helps build confidence and makes sure everyone understands the sequence before we add complexity," said Capt Ripley.

With the sounds of demolition and flashing lights

visible from nearby regions, leadership from Ex ROUGISH BUOY set shoreline restrictions near Whirl Bay and Bentinck Island through the duration of the exercise, which will conclude Feb 12. The exercise also utilized underwater bubble curtains to constrain marine shockwaves and protect wildlife in the nearby area.

"This training really matters because it gives our divers the chance to work directly with our allies, and sharpen the skills we rely on in real operations," added Capt Ripley. "Every exercise is an opportunity to compare techniques, learn new approaches, and build the kind of trust you only get from working side by side."

The multinational nature of this year's exercise added an important layer of complexity — and opportunity — for divers. For Ex ROUGISH BUOY's 47th iteration, CAF combat divers were joined by those from the United Kingdom, Latvia, Germany, and the Netherlands.

"My team was partnered with the Latvian dive team, who serve as the primary diving school for the Baltic countries. Their diving proficiency is exceptional, and there was a great deal we were able to learn from them; ranging from fundamental skills like buoyancy control to more advanced tasks such as complex underwater navigation," said Warrant Officer (WO) Eric Laprade, Dive Team 2IC.

"In turn, anything related to battle procedure, operating in a tactical environment, and conducting reconnaissance remains a Canadian strength," noted WO Laprade. "We were able to demonstrate these capabilities throughout the exercise. From delivering warning orders and developing plans to conducting briefs and executing tasks, these are areas where our teams excelled and were able to share valuable expertise."

When asked what moments from ROUGISH BUOY 2026 stood out to him, Petty Officer 1st Class (PO1) Kimball Bishop, Port Inspection Diver, responded with "From an international perspective, getting the chance to exchange ideas with divers from allied nations was huge for us. Every country brings its own equipment, techniques, and ways of approaching the same mission sets, so those conversations really broaden our understanding and help us improve how we operate. You pick up little things—different methods, different problem-solving styles—that end up making you more capable in the long run."

As these highly trained combat divers will continue to refine their underwater skills and expertise until Feb 12, annual and international exercises like ROUGISH BUOY ensure our Canadian force remains ready to approach the challenges of real-world operations.

Photos: Aviator (AV) Rebecca Mainardi, MARPAC Imaging Services



Members of 1 Canadian Engineer Regiment Dive Team and Dutch Dive Team prepare and conduct underwater demolition.



Members of 443 Squadron assist EX ROUGISH BUOY with helicopter support during helocasting procedures.



Members of 443 Squadron assist EX ROUGISH BUOY with helicopter support during helocasting procedures.



Members of 1 Canadian Engineer Regiment Dive Team and Dutch Dive Team prepare and conduct underwater demolition.

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A Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) sailor captured while at work aboard His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) William Hall during Exercise (Ex) VIPERFISH MERCY. Photo: Corporal (Cpl) Brian Levesque

A New Year, A New Focus on Security: Welcome to Security Awareness Week

L2 Stephen Vallis,
L2 MARPAC /JTF(P) Physical and Personnel Security Officer

This year, Security Awareness Week is observed from Feb 9 to 13, with the 2026 theme being ‘Security starts with you.’

For those of us in the Defence Team, many of these changes impact our daily business: we clearly have many global rivals whose goals conflict with our own. These entities may include foreign nations and their intelligence services; foreign and transnational terrorist networks; and criminal elements. No matter your role in the Defence Team, you have access to information, materials, and facilities that will be of interest to all those entities. Collectively and individually, we have a responsibility to protect these things.

Effective security requires everyone to develop a security mindset: a proactive, vigilant way of thinking that involves constantly looking for vulnerabilities and potential failures, often described as ‘thinking like an attacker’ to anticipate how systems, data, or physical assets could be misused, broken, or compromised, and then taking steps to prevent that. Similarly, we need everyone to support a culture of security awareness, which is achieved when security considerations are included in all planning and day to day operations, and all Defence Team members adopt shared values in the way we think about and approach security.

So how can one adopt a security mindset? To start, know who your Unit Security Supervisor and Information Systems Security Officer are. These two roles are very different, but complimentary, and together cover almost

every aspect of security within a unit (except for policing and force protection). These roles are also your immediate source of security information in the unit. You should know any related security policies or where to find this information. You should know the type of zone that you work in: defence establishments have Reception Zones, Operations Zones, Security Zones and sometimes High Security Zones, each of which have very specific access requirements. Additionally, understand what types of information and materials are classified, and how to protect these resources appropriately.

You should also know the status of your security clearance. All CAF members and DND employees are required to hold a valid security status or clearance as a condition of employment or service. These credentials have expiry dates, and you are responsible for maintaining them in the same way as a physical fitness test or annual dental appointment.

Something new to note in 2026 is the Personnel Security Processing System (PSPS). This software is used to process security statuses and clearances, replacing the prior WebSCPS system from Nov 2025. All new requests and updates must be processed in PSPS.

Maintaining effective security is everyone’s duty, and it takes effort and discipline. My challenge to you is to do three things: verify your security clearance; learn and understand the physical security requirements of your workplace and the information and materials within it; and include security considerations as a subject line in every event or activity that you plan.

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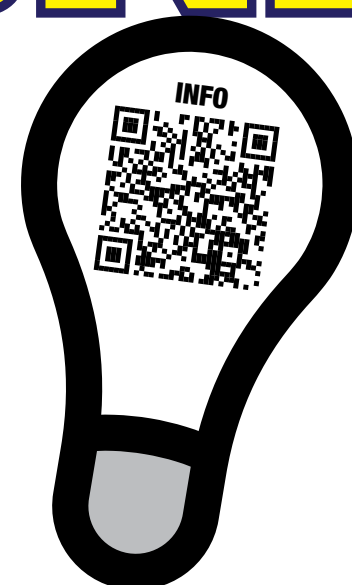
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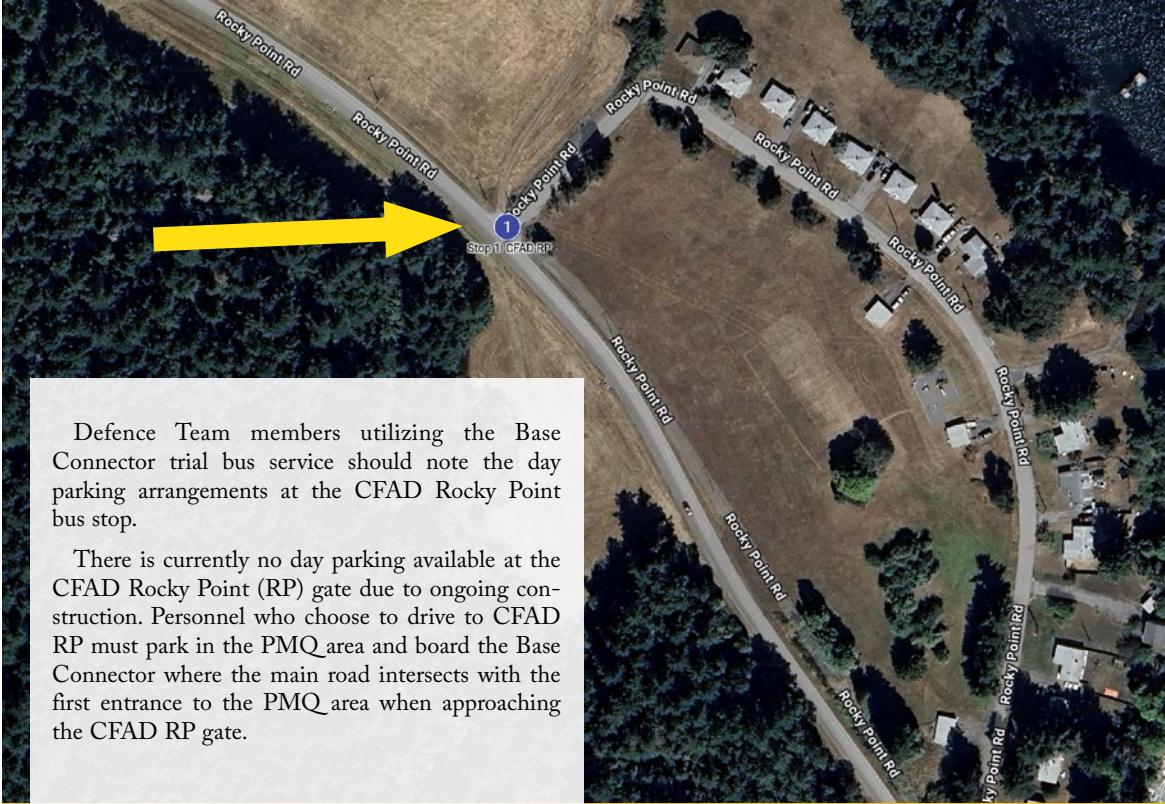
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Base Connector Day Parking at CFAD Rocky Point



Defence Team members utilizing the Base Connector trial bus service should note the day parking arrangements at the CFAD Rocky Point bus stop.

There is currently no day parking available at the CFAD Rocky Point (RP) gate due to ongoing construction. Personnel who choose to drive to CFAD RP must park in the PMQ area and board the Base Connector where the main road intersects with the first entrance to the PMQ area when approaching the CFAD RP gate.

For more information and to reference Google Maps, visit:
lookoutnewspaper.com/base-connector-and-base-rounder



The Base Connector. Photo: Lindsay Groves, Lookout Newspaper

DEFENCE TEAM We're Connecting the Footprint of CFB Esquimalt

February
2-20



Base Connector
Route Map



- ▶ ROUTE: 10 stops to CFB Esquimalt every morning returning every afternoon
- ▶ START TIME : departs 600 daily from CFAD Rocky Point, arriving at WorkPoint 1365 TEME at 0720
- ▶ RETURN TIME: departs 1600 daily from WorkPoint (1365 TEME)



February
2-20

Roulers
Route Map



- ▶ ROUTE: 12 schedule stops around Esquimalt
- ▶ START TIME: 0730 daily
- ▶ END TIME: 1625 daily

This is a trial initiative.

Treatment IS WITHIN REACH

Addiction, Mental Health & Trauma Treatment just a Ferry Ride Away

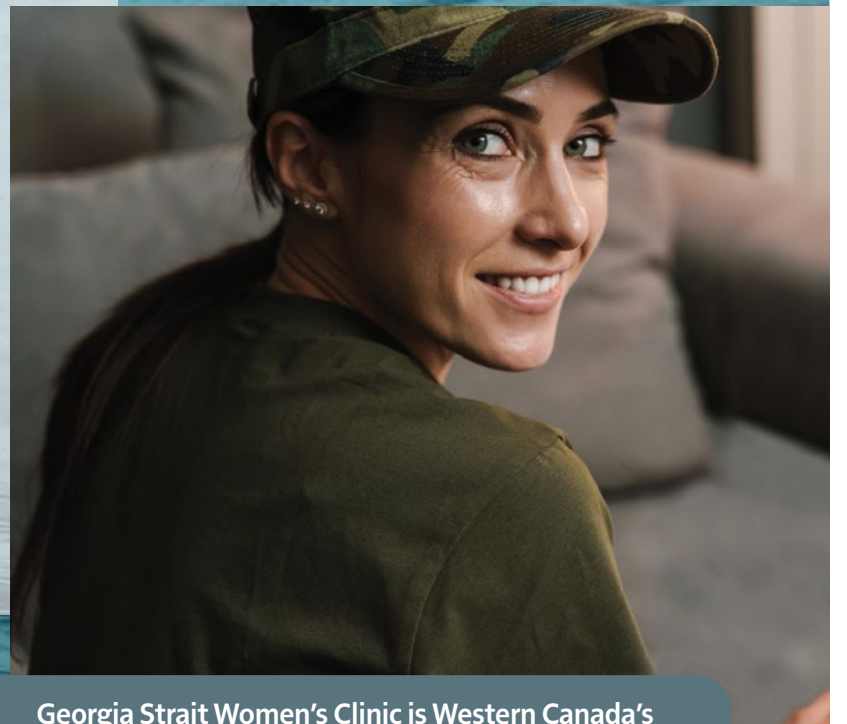
Help is at hand: Powell River-based Sunshine Coast Health Centre and Georgia Strait Women's Clinic—Western Canada's only trauma program exclusively serving women—provide highly personalized addiction, mental health and trauma treatment for male and female clients respectively. We'll pick you up from the ferry for our daily inpatient treatment tailored to your unique needs.

Services include 24-hour medical service, psychiatric assessment, EMDR, rTMS, psychotherapy, a dedicated group for military clients and much more.

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Georgia Strait Women's Clinic is Western Canada's only trauma program exclusively serving women

Georgia Strait
WOMENS CLINIC

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**Sunshine Coast
Health Centre**
A Non-12 Step Mental Health Program

Admissions Toll Free **1.866.487.9010** | **SCHC.CA**

WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH MONTH

Your heart matters. Take action today.

Defence Stories

Did you know that heart disease is one of the leading causes of death for females in Canada? In fact, every twenty minutes one Canadian female has a heart attack. Even with these concerning numbers, female heart disease remains understudied, misunderstood, delayed in diagnosis, and inadequately treated. Getting informed about how heart disease affects females differently is key to early detection and prevention.

GENDER IMBALANCE IN CARDIOVASCULAR RESEARCH: CLOSING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

For many years, heart research has focused primarily on males, meaning that diagnosis and treatments were based on the way males usually experience heart attacks. Many people know that a common sign of a heart attack is strong, crushing chest pain. This often happens in males when a large artery to the heart is blocked. However, females are more likely to have problems in the smaller blood vessels of the heart, or to have a tear in a heart artery.

- These kinds of heart problems can cause different symptoms that make heart attacks harder to recognize and diagnose, such as:
- Chest discomfort or pressure
 - Nausea
 - Extreme tiredness
 - Pain in the upper back or shoulders
 - Dizziness
 - Sweating
 - Shortness of breath

Sometimes these symptoms are mistaken for stress, anxiety, or menopause, which delays care. It's important that if you think you might be having a heart attack, call 911 or seek emergency care right away.

RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE IN FEMALES

- Some female life stages, health conditions, and family factors can increase their heart disease risk:
- Having their first period before age 12 or after age 15;
 - Having irregular periods or polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS);
 - Experiencing menopause before age 45;

- Having pregnancy complications such as high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, or preterm birth;
 - Having close relatives who have had heart disease or stroke.
- Hormones, especially estrogen, help protect the heart by keeping blood vessels flexible and lowering inflammation. Some people use hormone therapy during menopause. Starting hormone therapy earlier may help protect the heart, while starting it later in life may increase risk. It is important to talk to a health care provider about what is right for you.

PREVENTION IS KEY

The good news is that many heart disease risks can be reduced. Being physically active, eating a variety of healthy foods, managing stress, not using tobacco, limiting alcohol, and visiting a health care provider regularly will all help protect your heart. For more information about women's heart health, visit the Canadian Women's Heart Health Alliance's Wear Red Canada page or talk to your health care provider.



Photo: Getty Images / iStock Photo



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