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News

Apply to join new committee on anti-Black racism



In February 2026, the Department of National Defence will create a new public committee called the External Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism. The committee will have 10 to 12 members who will share ideas and give advice to senior military and defence leaders, including the Minister of National Defence, to help fight anti-Black racism within the Defence Team.

Veterans are encouraged to participate. If you want to support this important work, [you can apply now](#). **The deadline is January 5, 2026.**

To learn more about the committee and how to apply, visit the [External Advisory Committee on Anti-Black Racism](#).

The Government of Canada recognizes Gulf War Illness

There is now a streamlined Disability Benefit process for Veterans of the Persian Gulf who are dealing with Gulf War Illness.

Minister Jill McKnight met recently with representatives of the Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada to discuss the importance of Gulf War Illness being formally accepted as a diagnosis for Disability Benefit applications received by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC). As announced during the Minister's appearance at the Standing Committee of Veterans Affairs on December 2, this update became effective immediately. [Read the news release](#).

Disability Benefit applications will be reviewed and processed by nurse adjudicators who may make decisions without further consultations with medical advisors. This updated process removes an additional level of review and allows for a more efficient client experience for eligible Veterans.

Persian Gulf Veterans with this diagnosis, or those who may have experienced symptoms not previously accepted as Gulf War Illness, are encouraged to reach out to Veterans Affairs Canada through their MyVAC account, by email or by phone to have their case file assessed.

For more information on how to apply for benefits related to Gulf War Illness, [visit our Disability benefits page](#) and consult the [Gulf War Illness disability application checklist](#).

Programs and services

Managing loneliness during the holidays: Tips from LifeSpeak



The holidays are a time to connect with family and friends, but for some it can feel especially lonely.

LifeSpeak has a video series with practical tips that can help you manage loneliness.

LifeSpeak's "thriving during times of loneliness" video series includes:

- [Practical tips for managing loneliness](#)
- [Supporting loved ones through periods of loneliness](#)
- [Loneliness and social media](#)

[Log in to LifeSpeak](#) from any computer or mobile device using Access ID: canada (lowercase). Once there, you can anonymously access videos, podcasts, blog posts and more. You do not need to have an account. [Visit our website to learn more about LifeSpeak.](#)

Loneliness can be a symptom of more serious mental health conditions. **If you need immediate psychological support, call the [VAC Assistance Service](#) at 1-800-268-7708 to speak with a mental health professional. Hearing impaired persons can call TTY: 1-800-567-5803. This free, confidential service is available 24/7 to Veterans, former RCMP members, their family members, and caregivers.**

Get free assistance with your application



We are here to help you.

Call us toll-free at 1-866-522-2122 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time).

Send us a My VAC Account secure message. Need a My VAC Account? [Register today.](#)

[Request an in-person appointment using our online booking form](#) or by calling 1-866-522-2122.

Please note that our service locations offer in-person services by appointment only. Our staff at any Transition Centre can also assist you.

Brain fog and Veterans: What we're learning

Have you ever felt like your mind was in a haze? Many Veterans living with chronic pain have this feeling, known as brain fog. It can make thinking harder and daily life more challenging.

Researcher Ronessa Dass, funded by the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence, spoke with Canadian Veterans to learn more. They described brain fog as a cloudy, shifting mental state. It can be triggered by pain or PTSD, and can make these problems worse, creating a challenging cycle.

More research is needed to understand brain fog. How does it overlap with other health issues? Does it affect men and women differently? How can we measure it? More research and more awareness among health professionals are key to improving care for Veterans.

If you experience brain fog, [share this info sheet](#) with your healthcare provider. It can prompt discussion and understanding. [Read the full study](#) in the Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health.

Celebrating Excellence: VAC research staff win national award

Research is vital to improving the health and well-being of Veterans. By understanding long-term health trends and identifying risks, we can ensure that benefits and services are informed by evidence and tailored to the needs of those who've served.



Dr. Andrea Jones

An example of this impact, two researchers, Drs. Amy Hall and Andrea Jones, Senior Epidemiologists at VAC, recently received a Public Service Award of Excellence for their work on the Canadian Forces Cancer and Mortality Study (CFCAMS), alongside colleagues from DND.



Dr. Amy Hall

CFCAMS is produced by linking data held by DND with national health databases at Statistics Canada. This work provides a full picture of deaths and cancer diagnoses in both serving personnel and Veterans over more than 40 years.

"It's a privilege to work on CFCAMS. Its size and scope allow us to examine health outcomes for men and women separately - an important contribution to military health research," said Dr. Hall, VAC's project lead.

CFCAMS findings can be used at VAC to support decision making for Veteran benefits, and at DND to inform health promotion activities and medical screening for serving personnel.

[Read the Initial findings here.](#) More analyses focused on women, trends in cancer over time and specific groups at risk will be carried out.

Engagement

Ranger Ella Archie: A kinship with the land

With 23 years of service in the Canadian Rangers, one could be forgiven for thinking Master Corporal Ella Archie might want to hang up her rifle soon. But the thought hasn't crossed her mind. And really, why would it, when it was that very rifle that drew her into the Rangers in the first place.

Born in Aklavik, Northwest Territories, Ella Archie is a proud Inuvialuit, the Inuit of the Western Canadian Arctic.

She grew up on the land, learning traditional skills and knowledge from her grandmothers and other family members who taught her how to move with the seasons, harvest respectfully, and take care of what the land provides. These are lessons that continue to guide Ella every time she drapes the red Ranger sweater over her shoulders.

It was while talking with her then-husband in 2002 that Ella first considered becoming a Canadian Ranger. At that point, he had been in the program for six months. "Just the way he described how he was out on the land, having fun, doing shooting competitions.

He said, 'you'll just do 10 shots in the tightest grouping possible with your .303, and then you'll have bragging rights for a year.' That sold me right there."

[Read Ella's full story.](#)

2025 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans Forum

Veterans and still-serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP came together last month for Veterans Affairs Canada's 2025 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans Forum.

Designed with [Rainbow Veterans of Canada \(RVC\)](#) and the [LGBT Purge Fund](#), the in-person and virtual forum offered a space for Veterans to share experiences and ideas that will help shape a more inclusive path forward.

Day One included one-on-one appointments with VAC employees; a sharing circle led by Indigenous Elder, Monique Manatch; a session on peer support; and a discussion on storytelling for reflection and connection. The Minister of Veterans



Master Corporal Ella Archie

Affairs, Jill McKnight, also hosted an evening reception, followed by a crest-painting activity organized by Rainbow Veterans of Canada.

Day Two featured progress updates from Rainbow Veterans of Canada, the LGBT Purge Fund, Egale Canada, VAC, the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP, as well as sessions on physical health and the rise of hate incidents affecting 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Thank you to everyone who took part as we work toward a future where all Veterans feel seen and valued. A report from the forum will be available on our website in the coming months.

Veterans' stories

Lynn Doucette: Air weapons controller



Major Lynn Doucette

During her 35-year career in the Royal Canadian Air Force, Major Lynn Doucette (Retired) was a woman of many firsts.

She excelled in her role as an Air Weapons Controller, and while serving in the Persian Gulf, she was a Mission Crew Commander onboard AWACS aircraft, monitoring the enemy below and in the air.

Growing up in Ingonish Beach, Nova Scotia, Lynn Doucette always knew she wanted to join the RCMP. When the time finally came, she was devastated to learn that a height requirement would keep her from realizing her dream.

Undeterred, she set her sights on the military. Inspired by her brother in the Navy, she thought “maybe the Air Force might be okay” and ultimately found her lifelong career.

Lynn enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in July 1979 and completed her basic training at CFB Cornwallis. Being older than most of her fellow trainees, her seniority and drive helped her graduate as the top female recruit in her class, earning Lynn the coveted Commandant’s Shield in the process.

Her superiors quickly recognized her talent and focus and selected her for officer training.

"I feel that the ethics and code of discipline instilled by my parents, and just being a good Cape Bretoner, led to my successes. You're hard working and you're there to do a job the best that you can."

[Read Lynn's full story.](#)

Commemoration

Funding available to honour No. 2 Construction Battalion



Unveiling of the No. 2 Construction Battalion Monument in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

(Photo courtesy of Town of Yarmouth)

Dedicated funding is now available through the Community Partnership Program to help honour the legacy of No. 2 Construction Battalion. This funding supports Community Engagement and Community War Memorial projects, including:

- Educational activities
- Public events
- Restoring or building monuments

No. 2 Construction Battalion was the largest Black military unit in Canadian history. Despite facing discrimination, its members served with courage and determination during the First World War. Their service and sacrifices are an important part of Canada's history and this funding helps to honour them.

Applications are open until **31 January 2026**, for projects that begin on or after 1 April 2026. For more information or to apply, [visit Commemorative funding programs](#).

This funding is provided by the Department of National Defence and based on a recommendation from the [National Apology Advisory Committee](#).

Recognizing dedication to Veterans: Nominations open for the MVA Commendation

Every year, people of all ages give their time and effort to Veterans. They help organize Veterans' Week and Remembrance Day events, volunteer with Veterans groups, offer peer support, and more. Their work makes a real difference in the lives of Canadian Veterans.

You can help recognize volunteers like [Donna Lynn Murakami](#) (pictured) by nominating them for the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation.

Many former service members continue to serve their communities when they retire. After a distinguished career in the Royal Canadian Navy, Donna now supports the Veteran community through her work with several Veterans organizations. Last year, she was recognized with the Minister's Commendation.

[Learn more and submit a nomination](#) by 31 January 2026.



Donna Lynn Murakami, who received the Minister's Commendation in 2024.

Upcoming Gulf War commemorations

2026 marks the 35th anniversary of Operation Friction and the end of the Gulf War. More than 4,000 Canadians served in the Persian Gulf region in 1990-91 as part of an international coalition that aimed to remove the invading forces of Iraq from Kuwait.

To mark this important chapter in Canadian military history, we are hosting events in Halifax and Ottawa. Join us as we pay tribute to those who answered the call during the Gulf War.

Mark your calendars and visit our webpage to learn more about the anniversary.

Commemoration calendar

January 2026

January 8: Operation Recuperation, 15,000 CAF members were deployed in response to the Eastern Canada ice storm to help provide shelter, administer medical care, restore power grids and contribute to recovery efforts (1998)

January 11: HMCS Magnificent arrived in Port Said with the main body of the Canadian contribution in troops and materiel to the United Nations Emergency Force controlling the Israeli-Egyptian border (1957)

January 12: 7.3 Earthquake in Haiti, Canada responded with Operation Hestia to provide relief and emergency medical services (2010)

January 16-17: Operation Desert Storm began as Coalition forces launch first air attacks (1991)

January 26: Cabinet approved the entry of female members of the Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve) into the RCN Regular Force. This was the first time that women were integrated into the permanent force of a Commonwealth navy (1955)

January 26-31: The First Canadian Army attempted to clear a strong German position on the Maas River in the Netherlands with Operation Elephant and fought the Battle of Kapelsche Veer (1945)

January 30: Battle of Bubiyan, two CF-18s strafed and heavily damaged an Iraqi fast patrol boat during the Gulf War, making the first aerial attack by Canadian pilots since the Korean War (1991)

For a complete list of activities, please visit our calendar of commemorative events.

Do you know other Veterans, family members or others who would benefit from the information in this newsletter? Feel free to share it with them.

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