

NURSING SISTERS' ASSOCIATION OF CANADA – OTTAWA UNIT ANNUAL REPORT (JANUARY - DECEMBER 2024)

This past year has seen a return to normalcy post pandemic with the ability to visit our Nursing Sisters more often and the pleasure of seeing more military nurses attending our luncheons. Here is an overview of the events and changes that occurred in 2024, adding to our rich history and traditions. *To note; herein a member's military rank is only mentioned once.*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Outgoing President: LCol (Ret'd) Shelley Gosselin
Incoming President: Col (Ret'd) Gisèle Fontaine
Vice-President: Open
Secretary: Capt (Ret'd) Sheila Newland
Treasurer: Capt (Ret'd) Laura St-Pierre
Outgoing Social Convenor: Capt (Ret'd) Diane Saxberg
Incoming Social Convenor: Maj (Ret'd) Linda Jackson
Friendship: Capt (Ret'd) Nicole Lachance
Capt (Ret'd) Jeanne Jutras



MEMBERSHIP

The Unit benefits from the large number of retired and currently serving Nursing Officers in the Ottawa/Gatineau area, that said, some members are from other areas. Recruitment is through word of mouth and Social Media, including via the Canadian Forces Nursing Officer Facebook Page.

The Unit has 59 members. The Association welcomed the following members this past year: BGen (Ret'd) Roger Scott, Col Carolyn Blanchard, Cdr Krista McKenna, LCol (Ret'd) Yvonne Brierly, Maj (Ret'd) Peggy Fry, LCol Julie Levesque, Capt (Ret'd) Jeanne Jutras, and Capt (Ret'd) Nicole Lachance.

IN REMEMBRANCE

We sadly mourn the passing of the following members:

LCol (Ret'd) Jessie Chenevert, 1 Feb 1922 – 28 Nov 2023, at the age of 101.
Capt (Ret'd) Mary Hawthorne, 23 May 1942 – 28 Mar 2024, at the age of 81.

The passing of other military nurses across the country:

LCol (Ret'd) Christine Ludorf on 9 Jun 24, Capt (Ret'd) Sharon Urbanowsky on 21 Oct 24.

Our sincere thoughts and sympathy remains with their respective family and friends.
They will be greatly missed.

ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Executive Meetings. These were held on 4 Apr and 17 Sep 24 to organize the luncheons, discuss the agenda items for the May AGM, and coordinate attendance to upcoming events.

CAF Chief Nursing Services – Return to a Colonel Position.

This was cause for celebration across the military nursing community as the Colonel nurse position was re-established after it was abolished in 1997 with Col Marielle Gagné's occupational transfer to Health Services Operations (HSO). LCol Carolyn Blanchard was promoted into the position on 15 May 2024. Congrats to Carolyn and the Nursing team who successfully restored it to the appropriate rank.



Significant Report - Invisible No More: The Experiences of

Canadian Women Veterans. We are grateful to RAdm (Ret'd) the Hon. Rebecca Patterson, Senator, and HLCol (Ret'd) Lee-Anne Quinn who testified before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to speak of their experiences and the challenges of being a women in the CAF. Their testimonies can be viewed on ParLVu. The historical report, which includes 42 recommendations to improve the quality of life and services for women Veterans, was tabled in Parliament on 12 June 2024, and can easily be found on the web.

May AGM and Nursing Week Luncheon. Members gathered on 22 May 24 at the Algonquin College Restaurant International for their AGM and to celebrate Nursing Week. There were 25 persons in attendance. During the meeting, the President announced she would be stepping down at the end of the Remembrance luncheon, after her 10-year term.



Ceremonies/Wreath Laying

- D-Day 80th Commemoration (no NSAC wreath) at Cartier Drill Hall, attendance by Gisèle Fontaine, her husband Capt (Ret'd) Jeff Hartley, Laura St-Pierre. and LCol (Ret'd) Marc St-Pierre;
- Gisèle also attended the Commemoration HMHS Llandovery Castle on 28 Jun at RCN Monument, and laid a wreath at the National Remembrance Day Ceremony, at National War Memorial
- Shelley and Gisèle laid a wreath at the Merchant Navy Veterans Day on 8 Sep at National War Memorial.



Legion Article on Nursing Sisters. The Legion magazine highlighted as their Cover Story “Canada’s Great War Nurses” in their Sep/Oct 24 Edition. It describes how Canadian nurses brought comfort and caring to patients while enduring their own turmoil.

Veterans Consultation Assembly.

Held at the Royal Canadian Legion HQ in Kanata on 26 Oct, our Vice-President represented the NSAC, along with Nicole Lachance and Jeanne Jutras who had received a special invitation.

Poppy Campaign Rideau Hall. Nicole and Jeanne attended this year’s ceremony on 16 Oct.



2024 City of Ottawa Street Naming Veteran Recipient.

The Late LCol (Ret’d) Jessie Chenevert was recognized by the City of Ottawa during a special ceremony at City Hall. Her street, or rather her “Walk” will be located in Riverside South. Family, friends, and dignitaries were in attendance, including NSAC representatives LCol (Ret’d) Glenys Elliott, Nicole and Gisèle.



Remembrance Day Luncheon/Farewell to our Outgoing President. Held on 7 Nov 24 at the Restaurant International once again, we had 30 persons in attendance. Guest speaker Capt (N) (Ret’d) Richard Liss presented on Estate Planning. The President provided her last update on the NSAC Ottawa Unit. She thanked the outgoing Social Convenor Dianne Saxberg who volunteered in the position for an impressive 8 years, and welcomed Linda Jackson into the role. A large part of the luncheon was dedicated to our farewell and thank you to Shelley for her exceptional leadership and dedication during her 10 years as President.





New President. We welcomed on 7 Nov the new President Gisèle Fontaine who served in the CAF 1981-2018, retiring after almost 37 years of service. She has been a long-standing member of the association, served on the Exec since 2019 as Head of the Friendship & Comfort program, and Vice-President as of 2022.

The **Lines of Effort** she has identified going forward:

- **Advocacy.** Champion the interest of our members and raise the profile and awareness of the Association.
- **Comfort and Friendship.** Bring comfort, care and friendship to those going through hardship, health problems or isolation.
- **Connection.** Foster connections by increasing our membership and luncheon attendance, allowing more nurses to reconnect, rekindle friendships and support each other.
- **Communication.** Inform members of our activities and of Veteran-related events, policies, resources, and services available to them, as well as explore various communication tools to improve our reach.
- **Partnership.** Explore opportunities for partnerships with other Veteran organizations and other agencies that would benefit the NSAC and our members.
- **Remembrance.** Champion our military nursing history and remember those before us, recognizing sacrifices and celebrating the extraordinary.

Military Nurses Association Award. In-Memoriam donations to the Canadian Nurses Foundation for each of our departed members have continued in support of the granting of this award (established by Col (Ret'd) Agnes Neill). However, due to a lack of comms from the CFN about this award in recent years, the new President will be contacting them in 2025 to follow-up.

Friendship & Comfort. Ongoing visits were made throughout the year to our Nursing Sisters. This included sending or bringing either flowers, a plant or other gifts for members that are 90 yo and over on their birthdays, those experiencing serious health challenges, those turning 80, and sending cards for milestone birthdays (age 50, 60, 70) or for those who have suffered the loss of a close family member. We also delivered poinsettias to those 90 and over or were isolated during the Holiday period.

PHOTO GALLERY. Here are additional pictures taken throughout the year.



// Signed //

LCol (Ret'd) Shelley Gosselin
President Oct 2014 - Nov 2024

// Signed //

Col (Ret'd) Gisèle Fontaine
President Nov 2024 - Present

Date: 13 Dec 2024