

MILITARY NURSES ASSOCIATION OF CANADA – OTTAWA UNIT

ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY 2025 - APRIL 2026

INTRODUCTION

2025 was a landmark year for the Unit and for our Association, marked by several important milestones and achievements. We proudly celebrated the 105th anniversary of our Association and embraced a new chapter with the change of our name from the Nursing Sisters Association of Canada to the Military Nurses Association of Canada. The Halifax and Toronto Units also adopted the new name, reflecting our commitment to speaking with one voice, strengthening our ties, and moving forward together under a unified identity. This year also saw the adoption of our first Constitution and By-Laws, an important step in strengthening our foundation and guiding our future.

These accomplishments were made possible through the outstanding support, dedication, and willingness of our members to move the Association forward during this exciting period of growth and renewal.

More recently, 2025 also marked the 35th Anniversary of the Gulf War, a significant chapter in the history of military nursing and an important reminder of the service and contributions of military nurses in times of conflict and peace.

To note: The date of the MNAC-OU Annual Report release is being realigned to coincide with our financial year and the AGM, hence by exception, this report covers an additional four months. Herein, a member's military rank is usually mentioned once.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: Col (Ret'd) Gisèle Fontaine
Vice-President: Vacant
Secretary: Capt (Ret'd) Sheila Newland
Treasurer: Capt (Ret'd) Laura St-Pierre
Social Convenor: Maj (Ret'd) Linda Jackson
Friendship: Capt (Ret'd) Nicole Lachance
Capt (Ret'd) Jeanne Jutras



MEMBERSHIP

The Association benefits from the large number of retired and currently serving Nursing Officers in the Ottawa–Gatineau area. While most members are local, some travel from within a three- to four-hour radius, including Chambly Quebec, Peterborough, and Belleville, to attend Unit events. Others are located much farther away, including in British Columbia and Newfoundland.

The Unit currently has 84 members, compared to 59 last year. We welcomed the following members from Jan 25 to Apr 26: Capt Karen Burley, Capt (Ret'd) Renée Fearrey, Capt (Ret'd) Val Fiset, Capt Marie-Josée Frigon, Capt Suellen Healy, Capt (Ret'd) Jane Lye, Capt Blair McIntyre, Cdr (Ret'd) Kirsta MacIsaac, Capt (Ret'd) Colette Messier, Maj Damien Miller, Maj (Ret'd) Jean-Louis Pitre, Cdr Marie-Eve Pouliot, Capt Heather Yaki, Capt (Ret'd) Brenda Kluge, Capt (Ret'd) Susan Smith, Capt (Ret'd) Anne Richards, Maj Kendra Jessome, Maggie Lorimer,

retired, Maj (Ret'd) Cynthia Martineau, LCol (Ret'd) Leslie Newell, Major Rebecca Parent, Maj Will Colas, Maj Joelle Beaudoin, Capt Stephanie Ouellet, Capt (à la ret) Alice Piotrowski, Capt (Ret'd) Suzanne McLean, and Capt (Ret'd) Fraser Mahar.

IN REMEMBRANCE

We sadly mourn the passing of the following military nurses. Our sincere thoughts and sympathy are with their respective family and friends. They will be greatly missed.

- LCol (Ret'd) Dorothy (Dottie) MacLelland, on 26 Feb 25 at age 87 in Winchester. 32 years of service.
- Maj (à la ret) Madeleine Falardeau, on 4 Apr 25 at age 87 in Québec.
- Capt (Ret'd) Carrol Nicholson, on 3 Oct 25 at age 60, in North Sydney. 32 years of service.
- Capt (Ret'd) Regina Richard, on 26 Nov 25 in Middleton NS. 22 years of service.
- Maj (à la ret) Andrée Miousse, le 7 mai 2026 à Québec, age 76 ans. 20 ans of service.

ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Friendship & Comfort. Ongoing visits were made throughout the year to our Nursing Sisters and other members in need of support and comfort. 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, sending cards for milestone birthdays (age 50, 60, 70), for retirement from the CAF or military promotions, and for those who have suffered the loss of a close family member. We also delivered or sent poinsettias to those 90 yo and over or who were isolated during the Holiday period, including to Ida Crocker, Beth Davis, Jill Ellwood, and former CNS, Col (Ret'd) Marielle Gagné, who lives in Montreal.



Executive Meetings. Held on 2 Apr and 29 Sep 25, and 19 Mar 26 to organize the luncheons, discuss the agenda items for the AGMs, and coordinate upcoming events.

Ceremonies/Wreath Laying

- Nicole Lachance and Jeanne Jutras attended the Battle of Morieulwood Commemoration at the National War Memorial on 28 March 25.
- BGen (Ret'd) Roger Scott and Col Carolyn Blanchard attended the Commemoration HMHS Llandovery Castle on 28 Jun 25 at the Royal Canadian Navy Monument.
- The President had the honour of laying a wreath at the National War Memorial during:
 - Merchant Navy Veterans Day on 14 Sep 25;
 - National Remembrance Day Ceremony on 11 Nov 25 (with new MNAC ribbon).
- For the 35th Anniversary of Op FRICTION and the End of the Gulf War, the President attended wreath laying ceremonies at Beechwood National Cemetery on 3 Mar, and at the National War Memorial the next day on 4 Mar 26.



2025 Nursing Officer Sentry. The Remembrance Day Nursing Officer Sentry at the National Remembrance Day Ceremony was Capt Mariel Justice, from 1 Canadian Field Hospital, High Readiness Detachment in Ottawa. She represented Nursing Officers with great pride and professionalism.



A New Name for a New Era

Annual General Meeting/105th Anniversary Luncheon. Members gathered on 29 May 25 at the Algonquin College Restaurant International for their AGM and the 105th Anniversary of the NSAC, an impressive milestone. There were 40 persons in attendance. Members voted to adopt a new name “Military Nurses Association of Canada – Ottawa Unit”, along with a new Constitution & By Laws, both taking effect 1 Jul 25. A truly historical day!

Ida Crocker’s 105th Birthday.

The Executive Committee had the pleasure of hosting a birthday celebration in Ida’s honour at Perley Health, as she turned 105 years old on 29 June. Both of her daughters, Barbara and Margaret, the Surgeon General, MGen Scott Malcolm, the President RCMSA, Dave Borthwick, along with other friends joined us for a fabulous time together. She also received later that summer a special birthday visit from her favourite Senator, the Hon. RAdm (Ret’d) Rebecca Patterson.



Veterans Consultation Assembly (VCA).

Held at the Royal Canadian Legion HQ in Kanata on 14 Oct, our President was in attendance to represent MNAC. There were three presentations in the morning, followed by a lunch, and then discussions in the afternoon about the principal issues facing Veterans and on which VCA priorities (listed below) will be addressed with Minister VAC and her staff:

- Implementation of the recommendations of ACVA Dec 24 report on the Persian Gulf War related to the Gulf War being recognized as a “War” instead of “Special Duty Area”.
- A national monument in Ottawa to recognize women who have served in CAF/RCMP.
- Recognition of RCMP members as Veterans for commemoration purposes - they are not part of that definition despite their extraordinary service to our country.



The Movie “Out Standing”. Many Nursing Officers attended the premiere gala of *Out Standing* on 25 September 2025 at the National Art Centre, as well as screenings in theatres across the country. The film tells the inspiring story of Sandra Perron, Canada’s first female infantry officer, highlighting her extraordinary resilience, determination, and perseverance in the face of institutional sexism within the CAF. Most women Veterans deeply connected with the film, as it authentically portrays the silent burdens, unrecognized struggles, and misogyny that women in the Forces experienced at the time, and the challenges many endured throughout their service.

First Poppy Ceremony at Rideau Hall. Lt (Ret’d) Jill Ellwood and Linda Jackson attended the wonderful 2025 ceremony on 16 Oct 25, where they had the honour of speaking with Her Excellency the Governor General Mary Simons.



Parliamentary Reception to Honour Women Veterans.

Maj (Ret’d) Glenys Elliott, Capts (Ret’d) Jane Lye and Nicole Lachance, and Gisèle Fontaine attended this reception on 3 Nov 25. It was graciously hosted by MPs Marie-France Lalonde, Alana Hirtle, and Tatiana August. It was an evening of recognition and advocacy.

Remembrance Day Luncheon.

Held on 6 Nov 25 at the Algonquin College Restaurant International, 40 persons were in attendance. Our guest speaker Mr Chris McGarvey, CEO Canadian Nurses Foundation (CNF) presented on the long-standing relationship between our two organizations, the Endowment Fund, and the Military Nurses of Canada Award which they manage on our behalf. He was accompanied by Claire Lewis, his Director of Philanthropy & Engagement. Other highlights included Linda Jackson presenting on the late Colonel (Ret’d) Agnes Campbell Neill, who founded the fund in 1952, the Table of Missing Comrades, honouring those who are no longer with us, and an update from the President. *Let We Forget.*



35th anniversary of the End of the Gulf War.

During the 35th anniversary of the End of the Gulf War (28 Feb 26), we reflected on this significant chapter in the history of military nursing. During Operation FRICTION, Nursing Officers deployed with 1 Canadian Field Hospital to Al-Qaysumah, Saudi Arabia, near the Kuwait border. They served under the constant threat of chemical warfare and in harsh desert conditions. It was the first major Canadian wartime field hospital deployment in roughly 40 years, since the Korean War. Several of our members (and other nursing colleagues) were

among those who deployed on Op FRICTION, we proudly honour their service. Op FRICTION marked a major shift in operational readiness for NOs and the Canadian Forces Health Services, and remains a defining moment in their evolution. We also pay tribute to the late LCol (Ret'd) Shirley Robinson for the transformative impact she on military women during the Gulf War.



Memorandum of Understanding with the Canadian Nurses Foundation (CNF).

The new MOU between MNAC and the CNF regarding the Military Nurses of Canada Endowment Fund and the Award was ratified in April 2026. A Special Committee to work on a new MOU was stood up, which included the CEO CNF and his Director, myself, the Co-Presidents of the Halifax Unit Cpts (Ret'd) Cathy Campbell and Melissa Devine, the President of the Toronto Unit, LCol Evelyn Kelly, as well as our Treasurer and Social Convenor.

We updated our instructions to CNF. Main changes include:

- Granting of the award on a yearly basis (rather than every 2 years);
- The award is for former and currently serving Military Nurses, or a family member;
- We specified the scholarship is for Masters or Doctorate nursing related studies;
- Any interest earned annually from the Fund will first support a \$3,000 scholarship; and
- Any additional interest earned above will support annual CNA Certification funding.

A Special Birthday Celebration for Beth.

Beth Davis faced an especially difficult year, marked by declining health and the loss of her husband just a month before her birthday. Wanting to bring her comfort and joy, Jeanne and Nicole thoughtfully organized a special birthday celebration on 23 Mar 26 at her residence. Family and friends gathered to honor Beth and share their love and support. The celebration meant a great deal to her, providing comfort, companionship, and a sense of togetherness during a challenging time.



HONOURS AND AWARDS

Members receiving the King Charles III Coronation Medal: The Hon RAdm (Ret'd) Rebecca Patterson, Senator, BGen (Ret'd) Roger Scott, Col (Ret'd) Gisèle Fontaine, LCol (Ret'd) Shelley Gosselin – the later 3 presented by the Senator, and HLCol (Ret'd) Lee Anne Quinn. Congratulations on this prestigious honour!



* Shelley was awarded this medal for outstanding leadership and dedication as President NSAC - Ottawa Unit over 10 years (2014-2024), including keeping the Association active during the COVID-19 Pandemic and carrying National level duties.



Our heartfelt congratulations to Capts (Ret'd) Mary Anne Barber, Anne Richards, and France Bergeron whose service and sacrifice were honoured with beautiful Quilts of Valour in the months of Jan, Apr and May 2026 respectively.

A SALUTE TO OUR COMRADES IN TORONTO AND IN HALIFAX

We are pleased to see other MNAC Units getting together to continue the tradition and celebrate Remembrance Day and other events.



PRESIDENT'S CONCLUDING REMARKS

I am beyond proud of all that our Ottawa Unit has accomplished this year. I am particularly grateful to our Executive Committee members who contributed tremendous effort and dedication to advancing the Association toward modernization while continuing to support our members, honour our traditions, and preserve the legacy of those who came before us.

The Lines of Effort established in 2024 continue to guide and strengthen our Association: Advocacy, Comfort and Friendship, Connection, Communication, Partnership, and Remembrance. These principles remain at the heart of all that we do and provide a strong foundation for our continued growth and impact.

It is also encouraging to see the revival of a National Executive. While not yet a formal structure, the regular collaboration and communication among the Presidents of the three MNAC Units is an important and positive step forward. Looking ahead, I remain confident that, together, we will continue to build an Association that honours its past while embracing the opportunities of the future.

Yours sincerely,

// Signed //

Col (Ret'd) Gisèle Fontaine MStJ, MSC, CD, CHE
President

Date: 29 May 2026