



Vitality



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TO CFB HALIFAX

*Military life meets
city living p.9*

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ABOUT PSP HALIFAX

At Personnel Support Programs (PSP) Halifax, we take pride in supporting the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) community with programs and services that promote fitness, well-being, and morale. From tailored training and reconditioning programs to leisure activities, sports, and health promotion, we help CAF members stay mission ready. You'll find us in the gym, on the ice, at the golf course, and even aboard ships – wherever we're needed most.

PSP Halifax also helps bring people together. We organize major base events, including CAF sporting competitions and our Signature DND Family Days, and work with community partners and corporate sponsors to ensure these initiatives

thrive. We proudly manage local messes, community recreation programs, and unique facilities such as the Falls Lake Campground, CFB Halifax Curling Club, Shearwater Yacht Club, and Hartlen Point Golf Club. The PSP team also provides deployment support, catering services, facility rentals, and more – all designed to enhance life for CAF members at CFB Halifax.

Many of our staff have supported the Defence Community for years, building relationships and an understanding of the unique needs of military life. Whether you're newly posted, training and competing, or simply striving to live your best life, PSP Halifax is here for you.



Vitality is produced in part by the Trident team. The newspaper of Maritime Forces Atlantic since 1966, Trident is now produced by Personnel Support Programs (PSP) Halifax under Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services (CFMWS). As a member of the Canadian Forces Newspapers Association, Trident covers operations, exercises, sports, community events, and more from CFB

Halifax, the Atlantic Fleet, and 12 Wing Shearwater. The paper features original stories from its staff and contributions from the Defence Team. Since 2020, Trident has been exclusively digital. Find the latest stories and bi-weekly e-editions at <https://Tridentnewspaper.com>.

Have a story to share or an event to highlight?

Contact Ryan.Melanson2@forces.gc.ca for more information.

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11

2025 IN THIS ISSUE

- 6 WELCOME TO VITALITY
- 7 BASE COMMANDER'S MESSAGE
- 9 WELCOME TO CFB HALIFAX
- 11 HOCKEY FOR HEROES
- 15 TWO TEAMS, ONE VISION
- 18 DND FAMILY DAYS
- 22 MAKING HISTORY COME ALIVE FOR ALL AGES
- 24 PNP3 EMPOWERING CAF PARENTS
- 27 SMART STARTS AND LONG-TERM GOALS
- 29 MAKING FOOD WORK FOR YOU
- 31 CFB HALIFAX CURLING CLUB



29



24



22

Welcome to

Vitality

On behalf of Personnel Support Programs (PSP) Halifax, I'd like to thank you for picking up this revitalized edition of *Vitality*. We're excited to have you flipping through the pages of a publication that celebrates our people, our programs, and our unique Defence community here at Canadian Forces Base Halifax.

This magazine was once a regular fixture on the Base, and we're proud to bring it back with a fresh look and plenty of new stories to share. A lot has happened recently, and we think it's time to shine a light on the incredible work being done across our PSP teams — work that supports the health, morale, and overall well-being of our Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members and their families.

From the opening of our brand new Stadacona Fitness and Sports Centre to the return of national and regional tournaments for hockey, basketball, volleyball, slo-pitch, and more, it's been a busy few years. Our teams have also delivered high-level development camps for emerging CAF athletes, including new programs in grappling, flag football, and women's basketball.

Beyond fitness and sports, our team has been involved in a number of special events that help bring the community together. We've proudly supported milestone celebrations including the 75th anniversary of Canada's Naval Reserve and the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force. More recently, we've hosted our popular Travel Party events — lively evenings that have drawn hundreds in support of the National Defence Workplace Charitable Campaign. And as Halifax gets set to host its second International Fleet Week this June, we'll once again be working behind the scenes to coordinate activities and help make the week a success.

Of course, no PSP year would be complete without our signature events, DND Family Days and the winter Snow Festival, where our full team comes together to offer memorable, family-focused activities for our entire Defence community.

Inside this issue, you'll find highlights of some exciting PSP initiatives, including the launch of our Essential Nutrition Course and new Prenatal and Postpartum programs. You'll also hear directly from members of our PSP team, who share their insights and experiences. We're spotlighting local military athletes, offering tips for newly posted members, and more, while showcasing the programs and facilities that help our community thrive.

We hope you enjoy *Vitality* — and more importantly, we hope it encourages you to connect with us. PSP Halifax is here to help CAF members and families make the most of every opportunity on Base and beyond. Whether you have questions about using the gyms, messes, accessing support, booking a facility, or getting a tee time at Hartlen Point, don't hesitate to reach out.

Mike Almond,
Senior Manager, PSP Halifax



Bienvenue à

Vitality

Au nom de Programmes de soutien du personnel (PSP) Halifax, j'aimerais vous remercier d'avoir sélectionné cette édition revitalisée de *Vitality*. Nous sommes ravis de vous voir feuilleter une publication qui célèbre nos gens, nos programmes et notre communauté de la Défense unique, ici à la Base des Forces canadiennes Halifax.

Ce magazine a déjà été présent régulièrement sur la base, et nous sommes fiers de le ramener avec une nouvelle apparence et plein de nouvelles histoires à raconter. Beaucoup de choses se sont produites récemment, et nous pensons qu'il est temps de mettre en lumière le travail incroyable accompli par nos équipes des

PSP — un travail qui contribue à la santé, au moral et au bien-être général des membres des Forces armées canadiennes (FAC) et de leurs familles.

De l'ouverture de notre tout nouveau Centre de conditionnement physique et de sports de Stadacona au retour des tournois nationaux et régionaux de hockey, de basketball, de volleyball, de balle lente et autres, ce fut quelques années bien remplies. Nos équipes ont également organisé des camps de perfectionnement de haut niveau pour les athlètes des FAC émergents, y compris de nouveaux programmes de lutte (grappling), de flag-football et de basketball féminin.

Au-delà du conditionnement physique et des sports, notre équipe a participé à un certain nombre d'activités spéciales qui ont contribué à rassembler les membres de la communauté. Nous avons fièrement soutenu les célébrations d'étapes importantes, notamment le 75e anniversaire de la Réserve navale du Canada et le 100e anniversaire de l'Aviation royale canadienne. Plus récemment, nous avons organisé nos populaires « fêtes-voyages », des soirées animées qui ont attiré des centaines de personnes pour appuyer la Campagne de charité en milieu de travail de la Défense nationale. Alors qu'Halifax s'apprête à accueillir sa deuxième Semaine internationale de la Flotte en juin, nous travaillerons de nouveau en coulisses pour coordonner les activités et contribuer au succès de la semaine.

Bien entendu, aucune année des PSP ne serait complète sans nos activités phares, les Journées de la famille du MDN et le Festival des neiges en hiver, où toute notre équipe se réunit pour offrir des activités mémorables et axées sur la famille à l'ensemble de la communauté de la Défense.

Dans ce numéro, vous trouverez les grandes lignes de certaines initiatives passionnantes des PSP, notamment le lancement de notre cours sur la nutrition essentielle et de nouveaux programmes prénataux et postnataux. Aussi, des membres de l'équipe des PSP font part de leurs observations et de leurs expériences. Nous mettons en lumière les athlètes militaires locaux, offrons des conseils aux militaires nouvellement affectés, et plus encore, tout en présentant les programmes et les installations qui aident notre communauté à s'épanouir.

Nous espérons que vous apprécierez *Vitality* — et plus important encore, nous espérons qu'elle vous encouragera à communiquer avec nous. PSP Halifax est là pour aider les membres des FAC et leurs familles à profiter au maximum de toutes les possibilités qui s'offrent à eux sur la base et ailleurs. Si vous avez des questions sur l'utilisation des gymnases, l'accès au soutien, la réservation d'une installation ou l'obtention d'une heure de départ à Hartlen Point, n'hésitez pas à communiquer avec nous.

Mike Almond
Gestionnaire principal, PSP Halifax

Base Commander's *Message*

If you're reading this, you likely have some connection to Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Halifax or its incredible Personnel Support Programs (PSP) team. If not, welcome! I hope anyone who picks up this magazine enjoys a glimpse into an important aspect of our Defence community and culture – sports, recreation, fitness, and overall wellbeing – and the vital role PSP Halifax plays in this domain.

CFB Halifax is the home of Canada's naval forces on the East Coast and is one of the country's largest military bases by population, with over 10,000 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members, civilian Department of National Defence (DND) employees, and Non-Public Funds staff working in support of CAF operations at home and abroad. These members, from sailors working on Royal Canadian Navy ships alongside His Majesty's Canadian Dockyard to cooks in our accommodations facilities at Stadacona and Shearwater, represent a large and energetic presence in the local region.

Our dedicated PSP Halifax team provides a wide range of morale and welfare programming to this workforce – especially our CAF community – year round. You don't have to travel far to meet a fitness and sports instructor at one of our gyms or the smiling face of a health promotion specialist leading a course to understand how passionate they are in supporting the wellness needs of our members. I would therefore like to congratulate and commend PSP for bringing back *Vitality* for the first time since 2020 in a new, article-based format that showcases how PSP Halifax programs and initiatives – and the people behind them – positively impact our members and the local community.

Sports, fitness, and recreation have always been essential to the CAF culture, instilling discipline and leadership while improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, promoting teamwork, and fostering esprit de corps. Being physically and mentally fit also enables CAF members and the greater Defence community to support CAF missions at home and abroad. For these reasons, and so many more, local Defence Team members are encouraged to engage in PSP Halifax's recreational programming, sports, and events across the Base and in the community throughout the year. There are many opportunities for members to get involved such as joining a club or sports team, attending a special event, or cheering on the CFB Halifax Mariners when we host regional championships. Being part of a community that promotes health and wellbeing – no matter how you participate or support – is good for individual and collective morale.

Please enjoy this issue of *Vitality*, with hopes that it inspires you to become more aware of and involved in PSP programming throughout the Base and in the local community.

Captain(N) Annick Fortin
Commander, Canadian Forces Base Halifax



Message de la commandante de la base

Si vous lisez ces lignes, c'est que vous avez probablement un lien avec la Base des Forces canadiennes (BFC) Halifax ou son incroyable équipe des programmes de soutien du personnel (PSP). Si ce n'est pas le cas, bienvenue ! J'espère que tous ceux qui liront ce magazine pourront découvrir un aspect important de notre communauté et de notre culture de la Défense (les sports, les loisirs, la forme physique et le bien-être général) et le rôle essentiel que jouent les PSP Halifax dans ce domaine.

La BFC Halifax est le port d'attache des forces navales du Canada sur la côte Est et est également l'une des plus grandes bases militaires du pays en termes de démographie, avec plus de 10 000 membres des Forces

armées canadiennes (FAC), employés civils du ministère de la Défense nationale (MDN) et membres du personnel des fonds non publics travaillant au soutien des opérations des FAC au pays et à l'étranger. Ces membres, qu'il s'agisse des marins travaillant sur les navires de la Marine royale canadienne aux côtés de l'arsenal canadien de Sa Majesté ou des cuisiniers de nos installations d'hébergement à Stadacona et à Shearwater, représentent une présence importante et dynamique dans la région.

Notre équipe dévouée des PSP Halifax offre toute l'année un large éventail de programmes de bien-être et de maintien du moral à cette main-d'œuvre, en particulier à notre communauté des FAC. Il suffit de rencontrer un instructeur de conditionnement physique et de sport dans l'un de nos gymnases ou le visage souriant d'un spécialiste de la promotion de la santé animant un cours pour comprendre à quel point ceux-ci sont passionnés par le soutien des besoins de nos membres en matière de bien-être. Je tiens donc à féliciter et à saluer les PSP pour avoir relancé *Vitalité* pour la première fois depuis 2020, en adoptant un nouveau format de publication d'articles qui mettent en valeur l'impact positif des programmes et des initiatives des PSP Halifax, ainsi que des personnes qui les soutiennent, sur nos membres et sur la communauté locale.

Le sport, la forme physique et les loisirs ont toujours été essentiels à la culture des FAC, inculquant la discipline et le leadership tout en améliorant la forme physique et le bien-être mental, en favorisant le travail d'équipe et en encourageant l'esprit de corps. Être en bonne forme physique et mentale permet également aux membres des FAC et à la communauté de la Défense dans son ensemble de soutenir les missions des FAC au pays et à l'étranger. Pour toutes ces raisons et pour bien d'autres encore, les membres de l'équipe locale de la Défense sont encouragés à participer aux programmes de loisirs, aux activités sportives et aux événements des PSP d'Halifax sur la base et dans la communauté tout au long de l'année. Les membres auront de nombreuses occasions de s'impliquer, par exemple en rejoignant un club ou une équipe sportive, en assistant à un événement spécial ou en encourageant les Mariners de la BFC Halifax lorsque nous accueillons des championnats régionaux. Faire partie d'une communauté qui fait la promotion de la santé et du bien-être, quelle que soit la manière dont vous y participez ou dont vous la soutenez, est bénéfique pour le moral individuel et collectif.

Nous espérons que ce numéro de *Vitalité* vous inspirera à prendre conscience des programmes des PSP et à y participer, tant sur la base que sur la scène locale.

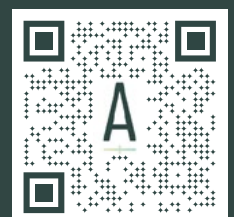
Capitaine de vaisseau Annick Fortin
Commandante, Base des Forces canadiennes Halifax

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Welcome to CFB HALIFAX



A place to work, grow, connect — and call home

By Ryan Melanson

Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Halifax is one of Canada's largest military bases, supporting a diverse Defence Team across all branches of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), alongside a strong civilian workforce.

One great way to get involved at CFB Halifax is through recreation and wellness programs offered by Personnel Support Programs (PSP). PSP operates fitness and sports centres across the Base, with two locations in Halifax and another at 12 Wing Shearwater. These modern facilities feature high-quality equipment, group fitness classes, and gymnasium floors for organized sports and recreational leagues — everything you'd expect from a top-tier fitness centre. Seasonal challenges, incentive-based programs, and drop-in classes offer even more ways to stay active.

The PSP Community Recreation department also runs a variety of events and activities throughout the year. One standout initiative is the CAF Social League, launched in 2023 with a focus on building community and connections across the Formation. While younger CAF members are a primary focus, the Social League is open to all personnel, and members are even welcome to invite friends or family to join in.

"We've had a lot of fun; we try to keep things fresh with different

activities," says Emily Green, a PSP Recreation Coordinator and lead on the program. Events have ranged from axe throwing, ski trips and ghost tours to beginner surf days and laser tag competitions at 12 Wing Shearwater. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. "CAF Social League events have had a great impact on my social, physical, and mental wellbeing," says Sailor 1st Class Steve Ouellet, who says he appreciated the chance to bond with his students during an outing at Ski Martock.

"I would recommend it to anyone looking to make new friends and have new experiences."

There are also additional sea-

sonal events and family-friendly gatherings throughout the year, as well as unique PSP-run facilities in the area — some of which you'll read about later in this very magazine.

Outside of recreation, many military members also find community and camaraderie through their messes. Whether you're visiting the Fleet Club Halifax, the Officers' Mess, the Chiefs and Petty Officers' Mess, or the Shearwater All Ranks Mess (Sea King Club), each mess offers bar service, social events, and welcoming spaces to relax with colleagues. The Fleet Club Atlantic Junior Ranks Mess, located in Tribute Tower, has seen

renewed energy and engagement in recent months, driven in part by the efforts of its dedicated committee.

"We're having a bit of a Fleet Club revival right now, and it's been going very well," says Master Sailor Morgan Hewitt, who serves as the Formation Master Sailor and President of the Mess Committee. Recent additions include karaoke on Friday nights, expanded food offerings, and free lunch on Wednesdays for members. "We're trying new things and making it a space where junior members feel welcome and involved."

While recreation and social connection opportunities offered by PSP are key parts of life on Base, there are also a number of essential support services and initiatives at CFB Halifax aimed at enhancing quality of life and well-being for all Defence Team members.

Organizations like the Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) provide vital support, including relocation assistance and programming for children and youth. For those navigating the challenges of military life, which can include the stress of relocation, family separation, or operational tempo, a wide network of support is available. Chaplains, CF Health Services, the Employee Assistance Program, and other professionals across the Formation offer confidential assistance with mental health,



The CAF Social League initiative, organized by PSP Community Recreation, began in 2023. Outings have included surfing trips, hiking, ghost walks, and more.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



The Halifax area also offers plenty of opportunities to get involved with the community off Base. Members are seen here at the 2024 Halifax Pride Parade.

S1 BRYAN UNDERWOOD

spiritual well-being, crisis support, and more.

The Base has also placed a strong emphasis in recent years on diversity and inclusion through its advisory groups, which work to foster an equitable work environment for women, visible minori-

ties, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ2+ members. Participation in these groups is open to all Defence Team members, including those who identify with a specific group as well as members who simply want to support positive change.



Messes are a great place for CAF members to connect with peers, during both normal hours and special events.

CPL MORGAN LEBLANC

And of course, life at CFB Halifax extends beyond the Base itself. Halifax is a vibrant and welcoming city, offering the best of East Coast hospitality. You might find yourself exploring the waterfront, checking out the downtown restaurant and music scene, or heading out on a

weekend hike — there's no shortage of ways to enjoy your leave time. The city's unique coastal charm makes it a great place to live, work, and play.

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The crowd on DND Appreciation Night is typically one of the biggest of the season at Halifax's Scotiabank Arena, says Mooseheads President Brian Urquhart.



HOCKEY *for* HEROES

Mooseheads and CFB Halifax Mark 20 years of Supporting Camp Hill Veterans

By Ryan Melanson

When the puck drops at the annual Halifax Mooseheads DND Appreciation Night, the team is playing for more than points on the scoreboard.

The special Canadian Armed Forces-themed hockey event represents two decades of partnership between the Halifax Mooseheads organization and Personnel Support Programs (PSP) Halifax in support of the Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Building. Home to more than 100 veterans, including those who served during the Second World War and Korean War, Camp Hill exists as part of Halifax's Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre (QEII). Since the inaugural DND Appreciation Night in 2004, nearly \$300,000 has been raised for Camp Hill through raffles and auctions of game-

worn jerseys, with those funds supporting initiatives that enhance the quality of life for the facility's residents.

Heather White, Director of Veteran's Services and Geriatrics at Camp Hill, emphasizes the transformative impact of the financial support. The funds have mainly been used toward the development and upkeep of the Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Garden, a private outdoor space described as a "sanctuary" for residents.

"At one time, this garden was a parking lot," she says. It now serves as a peaceful getaway right in the facility's backyard, offering veterans and their families a space to connect with nature and one another.

The garden features a Walk of Honour and cenotaph for quiet reflection, as well as versatile spaces that allow it

to serve as an outdoor hub for games, social events, music, and other activities. The most recent addition to the Veterans Memorial Garden, completed in 2023 thanks to funds raised through the DND Appreciation Night raffles and auctions, is a multi-purpose activity pad for residents. The wheelchair-accessible, astro-turfed space quickly became a popular spot for outdoor bocce ball and has also served as a concert stage for the Stadacona Band and other performers.

"The proceeds from DND Appreciation Night have made many projects possible, and this wonderful new addition to our garden space simply wouldn't be possible without that support," White said.

Halifax Mooseheads President Brian Urquhart said the team's relationship with the Canadian Armed Forces, and



The Mooseheads' latest custom DND jersey used a tri-service design featuring the CAF Service Badge, marking 20 years of the partnership. The jerseys were worn during the Mooseheads' DND Appreciation Night on November 9, 2024.

CPL BRIAN LEVESQUE

by extension Camp Hill, is truly valued in "Moose Country". Beyond fundraising, the annual game is a standout moment of the season for fans and players alike.

"The energy of the night is often unmatched when it comes to regular season Mooseheads games," he said.

"The crowd is always one of our biggest of the season and the atmosphere follows suit. It's always a fun night."

The team's bond with Camp Hill also extends beyond the rink.

Both staff and players have visited multiple times to meet with residents and see firsthand the impact of their support. Urquhart fondly recalls bringing the Canadian Hockey League's top prize, the Memorial Cup, during special visits in 2013, when the Mooseheads won the cup, and in 2019, when Halifax hosted the Memorial Cup tournament.

Though some Camp Hill veterans have attended DND Appreciation Night games in person, many cannot, making it all the more

meaningful to bring the team, and the cup, to them.

"Those visits are highlights of the DND-Mooseheads partnership with Camp Hill that I will never forget," he said.

The longevity of the initiative is a testament to the dedication of numerous individuals, including PSP and CFB Halifax teams, Camp Hill and QEII staff, and the many volunteers who help by selling jersey raffle tickets each year.

Credit also goes to Mooseheads fans, including many from the defence community, who buy tickets to attend the games.

During DND Appreciation Night, the stands are typically dotted with CAF uniforms and specially designed jerseys from previous years, proudly worn by past raffle and auction winners.

The custom Mooseheads jerseys have featured unique designs inspired by all three CAF elements and have often paid tribute to significant events or anniversaries. These include the Navy Centennial in 2010, the 50th anniversary of the HMCS Kootenay explosion

in 2019, and most recently, the Royal Canadian Air Force's 100th anniversary in 2024.

"These jerseys have really become a tradition for people, and it's so special to attend the game each year and see those DND jerseys in the audience, worn by people who support this project," says Missy Sonier, PSP Halifax Corporate Services Manager.

Sonier has been involved since day one and is credited as a driv-

ing force behind the event's long-term success. The most recent edition, on November 9, 2024, marked 20 years of DND Appreciation

Night, offering a chance to reflect.

"I'm in the position where I get to see this all come together and I've been so proud to see it continue to grow over the years," Sonier said, though she was quick to pass on the accolades.


From former team owner Bobby Smith, who originally championed the idea, to the front office and the new ownership team at Simon Sports, who have continued the support, Sonier highlights the Hali-

"Those visits are highlights of the DND-Mooseheads partnership with Camp Hill that I will never forget,"
-Brian Urquhart



Representatives from CFB Halifax, Personnel Support Programs (PSP), and the Halifax Mooseheads organization were all on hand alongside Camp Hill staff and residents for the unveiling of the building's new Activity Pad on September 20, 2023.

NEIL CLARKSON

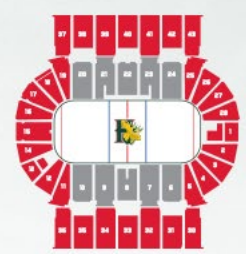


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fax Mooseheads as the initiative's cornerstone, enabling others to play their own key roles.

"This means so much for the Canadian Armed Forces community in Halifax, and none of this could have been possible without the support of the Mooseheads; it all trickles down from there."

Planning for the 2025 edition of DND Appreciation Night is already underway. What began as a single fundraising event has evolved into a cherished tradition and a strong bond between the Halifax Mooseheads, the Canadian Armed Forces, and Camp Hill veterans.



CAF members are typically featured during the event as part of the opening ceremonies and colour party, as well as in fun on-ice activities between periods.

CPL DAVID VELDMAN



Volunteer ticket sellers play a key role during Mooseheads DND Appreciation Night, with raffle ticket sales making up a portion of the funds raised toward the Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Garden.

CPL BRIAN LEVESQUE



The Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Garden is described as a "safe, tranquil space" that allows the facility's resident veterans to spend quality time outdoors.

QEII FOUNDATION



A HALL OF FAME

WORTHY INITIATIVE

A piece of Halifax Mooseheads and Royal Canadian Air Force history is on display among some of hockey's most treasured artifacts.

The Mooseheads' 2024 DND Appreciation Night jersey, designed to commemorate the Royal Canadian Air Force's (RCAF) 100th anniversary, was recently added to the temporary collection at Toronto's iconic Hockey Hall of Fame (HHOF).

Philip Pritchard, Vice President, Resource Centre & Curator at the HHOF, spearheaded the effort to secure the special jersey, which features the official RCAF 100 logo that was in use throughout 2024.

"I was excited when the Mooseheads wore that jersey," he said, adding he reached out immediately. Known as the "Keeper of the Stanley Cup," Pritchard often collaborates with teams and other institutions across Canada to preserve unique moments in hockey history.

In this case, he worked closely with Mooseheads Merchandise Manager Kevin Sanford and one of our lucky raffle winners, who generously

loaned the game-worn jersey, originally worn by Mooseheads' forward Jake Todd. While the jersey's current placement in the Hall may be part of a rotating exhibit, Pritchard hinted at broader plans to feature it in a military-themed collection. The HHOF also recently received an RCAF 100 tribute jersey from the Winnipeg Jets of the National Hockey League.

"For me, this is the personal side of what I do professionally," Pritchard said.

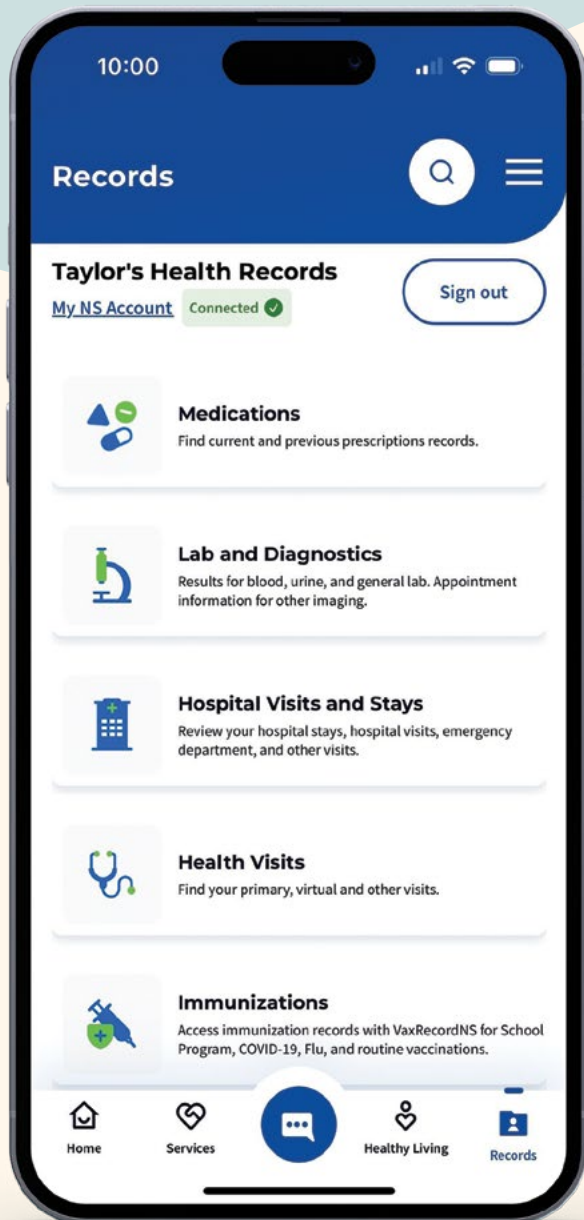
"As a proud Canadian, it's always exciting to honour the Canadian Armed Forces through hockey."

He noted the Hall's extensive collection also includes other military-related jerseys dating as far back as 1948. Annual events and exhibits, such as those held for Remembrance Day, help showcase those items and highlight the connections between Canada's military and Canada's most popular sport.

Pritchard said his philosophy is "Let's preserve hockey history together."

"So, we were thrilled to add this RCAF Centennial jersey from the Mooseheads."

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Both teams participate in the civilian-run Nova Scotia Women's Hockey League (NSWHL), though the focus shifts to CAF Regional and National tournaments early in the new year.

CPL ROBERT KINGERSKI

TWO TEAMS ONE VISION

Women's hockey at CFB Halifax

By Nathan Stone

A longtime member of the Halifax Mariners women's hockey team, Acting Sub-Lieutenant (A/SLt) Robyn Nicholson, is bullish on the future of the sport she loves. "Women's hockey has grown so much."

Halifax is now home to a pair of CAF women's hockey teams. Composed of players from Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Halifax and 12 Wing Shearwater, both the Halifax Mariners and the Kraken offer players of all skill levels a chance to play, socialize and develop their skills on the ice.

A/SLt Nicholson has been playing hockey for 11 years, competing against civilian and military players from across the country. Her most recent triumphs came last spring when the Mariners won the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Atlantic Region Championship tournament followed by a silver medal and the Most Valuable Player award from CAF nationals.

She describes being on the ice with the Mariners as her "home away from home," as well as an ideal way to help stay physically fit in a profession that demands it.

Travelling with the team has given her the opportunity to meet

female CAF members from across the country. She says CAF hockey is a powerful tool, "for networking, friendship and connections."

Due to the unique demands of military life, both of Halifax's teams keep a loose roster. Halifax Mariners head coach, Warrant Officer (Retired) Charlene Arsenault, says that deployments, courses and family commitments make it impossible to create a static squad of players. Instead, the Mariners have more than twenty players on the team and normally dress around fifteen for a game.

"Everyone does what they can do."

As a mother of two young children, A/SLt Nicholson understands the balancing act between family commitments and a busy hockey schedule. Outside of tournaments, the Mariners can find themselves playing two games a week, sometimes travelling across the province to do so.

Hockey season at CFB Halifax runs from October to April. Both teams participate in the civilian-run Nova Scotia Women's Hockey League (NSWHL). The Mariners play in the Intermediate A division, while the Kraken are in the less competitive Intermediate C division.

The Mariners also participate in CAF tournaments throughout the year, culminating in the CAF Regionals and Nationals championships in the spring. For these season-defining tournaments, the Mariners can call up the best players on the Kraken to join the team as they fight for the coveted trophies and gold medals.

Players rotate in and out of the lineup as their schedules allow, but despite the churn, Coach Arsenault describes the team as being a close-knit group. She says that they'll often socialize together in the off seasons.

January is when things "get serious" according to A/SLt Nicholson. This is when the team starts getting ready for the annual CAF regional and national tournaments. Their floating roster gets whittled down to the strongest players and the competition ramps up.

The 2024 CAF season brought a lot of success for the Mariners, as they faced the Warriors from 5th Canadian Division Support Base Galetown in a best-of-five series for the Atlantic Region championship early in the year. Halifax won the series, and with it the right to represent the Atlantic region, for the second year in

a row, during the CAF National Championship at CFB Borden in Ontario.

At Nationals, the Mariners battled teams from Edmonton, Trenton and Valcartier in a whirlwind tournament. Their schedule was packed with games, but the team also found time to bond further – including by throwing dressing room parties and birthday celebrations for team members during the competition.

Halifax defeated all three of its opponents in the tournament's preliminary round to secure a place



The CFB Halifax Mariners are the competition-level women's hockey team on base, while the Kraken team focuses on player development.

CPL ROBERT KINGERSKI

in the finals, where they faced off against perennial rivals from CFB Valcartier for the championship. Unfortunately, their efforts fell just short – the team came home with silver medals after a 3-1 loss.

Coach Arsenault says the Mariners' impressive play at regionals and nationals was due to strong chemistry between the players. She knows what a strong team looks like, having led the Mariners to national gold six times through an on-ice career that landed her a spot on the CAF Sports Honour Roll.

"Everyone just melded together," she said of the 2024 Mariners team.

She also credits A/SLt Nicholson, adding that support from her captain was crucial to her own success behind the bench and her ability to get the most out of her team.

"We're always on the same page and that's what makes her a great captain."

That 2024 national tournament was the first for Sailor 1st Class (S1) Alexis Andrews. Her journey in CAF hockey has had its ups and downs, leading her to help create Halifax's second women's hockey team, the Kraken, in 2023.

After ten years away from hockey due to concussions, S1 Andrews joined the Mariners in 2021. She was looking to reconnect with a sport that she loved growing up and took a chance lacing up her skates to play in a season that was abridged due to COVID-19.

There were no CAF regional and

national tournaments that season, leading to some established players sitting out for the year. For S1 Andrews, it was the perfect opportunity to reacquire herself with hockey in lower-pressure scenarios.

For her, the highlight of the season was a tournament in Cape Breton. Though the Mariners lost every game, she describes it as "the most fun I've ever had playing hockey."

As pandemic restrictions eased heading into the 2022 season, the reinstatement of CAF hockey tournaments brought a surge of players and a sharper competitive edge to the Mariners. With more women joining the team, the focus naturally shifted toward preparing for high-stakes play and striving for success at the national level.

For S1 Andrews, the increased competitiveness presented challenges. After being cut from the roster during a regional tournament as the Mariners recruited additional players to bolster their lineup, she took time to reflect on how she could continue contributing to CAF hockey.

Rather than stepping away, she turned the experience into an opportunity to create something new. Recognizing an opportunity, S1 Andrews proposed the formation of a second CFB Halifax team to Personnel Support

Programs (PSP) Halifax. With PSP's support and resources, along with big contributions from teammates, the idea was quickly brought to life. The Kraken team was established as a developmental squad with a goal of offering a welcoming environment for players at all skill levels.

Initially, there was some uncertainty about how the two teams would coexist, but S1 Andrews said she ensured the Kraken would complement the Mariners, rather than compete with or replace them, by developing new players and helping out with substitutes when needed. The teams now work closely together, sharing practice ice time and providing opportunities for players

to grow and contribute at different levels. The Kraken have since graduated

some players up to the Mariners roster.

S1 Andrews said the Kraken has become the team she originally envisioned, with a pressure-free environment for CAF women hockey players to develop skills, form bonds, and come out to play for the love of the game. Beginner and novice players looking to take the next step are highly encouraged to join up.

"There was a girl who went from being barely able to stand on her skates at the beginning of the year, to actually being part of the on-ice



Potential players of all backgrounds and skill levels are encouraged to reach out for an opportunity to hit the ice next season.

CPL ROBERT KINGERSKI

play by the end of the year."

S1 Andrews has also been developing her own skills since the Kraken team's founding. So much so that she rejoined the Mariners for the 2024 regional and national tournaments. She noted that she went from a fringe third-line player at her first regional tournament to a regular on the second line throughout the Mariners' latest contests.

S1 Andrews, A/SLt Nicholson and Coach Arsenault all describe a strong moment for women's hockey at CFB Halifax, with hope for continued growth and success through the coming seasons.

And with both the Mariners and Kraken as options, the program is ready to welcome all players with an opportunity to enjoy the game and build lasting relationships.

"I've played a lot of hockey in my time, and I've never seen a team so together," said A/SLt Nicholson.

"the most fun I've ever had playing hockey."

-Sailor 1st Class (S1) Alexis Andrews

The 2024 Mariners wear their silver medals with pride following the 2024 CAF National Hockey Championship at CFB Borden.

CPL ROBERT KINGERSKI





Formed in 2023, the Kraken team aims to provide a supportive environment for female hockey players of all skill levels.

CPL ROBERT KINGERSKI

PSP SERVICES » spotlight



BREAKING BARRIERS AND BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

The CAF Women in Sports Program can help empower female athletes, coaches, and officials to thrive and provide access to the resources they need to excel, both on and off the field. Offering up to \$3,000 per base or wing, grants can support initiatives like coaching services, facility or equipment rentals, and sports clinics.

The program aims to address long-standing challenges to women's participation in sports, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment, here in Halifax and across the

CAF. Applications should be submitted through local Fitness, Sports & Recreation Managers or Sports Coordinators to ensure proper routing and approval.

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DND Family Days



"This day is about celebrating our military families, who keep the home front safe while their loved ones are called to sea on operations and exercises. The Royal Canadian Navy is proud to open up our Dockyard for DND Family Days."

— Rear-Admiral Josée Kurtz, Commander Maritime Forces Atlantic and Joint Task Force Atlantic

Join Us for a Spring Carnival

By Ryan Melanson

Since the very first edition in 1996, DND Family Days has been a highlight of the calendar for CFB Halifax and members of our Defence Community. This two-day celebration is PSP Halifax's signature event, hosted annually as a thank-you to the Canadian Armed Forces members who serve their country, as well as the loved ones who support them every step of the way.

The PSP team is currently prepping for the 2025 edition of Family Days — the festivities are back with a fresh new theme and a slight shift in schedule. This year's festivities will take place on May 30 and 31, a few weeks earlier than usual, and will bring His Majesty's Canadian Dockyard to life with the sights and sounds of a "Spring Carnival", this year's event theme. If you've made Family Days part of your annual routine or you're planning to join for the first time, we can't wait to see you there!

Activities and entertainment for all ages

Whether you're six or sixty,

you'll find something to smile about at DND Family Days. The event grounds are filled with family-friendly attractions designed to keep kids active and engaged — think bouncy castles, inflatable obstacle courses, rides, face painting, appearances from local mascots, and more.

Our generous sponsors make Family Days possible each year, and they also contribute to the fun, setting up interactive booths where families can play games, win additional prizes, and learn about local services and community offerings. There's always something new to discover.

Live music has also become a staple of Family Days over the years. From casual sets by local performers to full-scale evening concerts, musicians always add to the festive atmosphere. Most recently, the Royal Canadian Navy's own Boarding Party, the pop/rock outfit of the Stadacona Band, got the crowd dancing as they helped mark the event's 25th anniversary in 2024.

Great food

You can't have a carnival without snacks — and Family Days never disappoints on that front. Barbecue staples like hot dogs and burgers are served off the grill, while carnival classics like popcorn, cotton candy, and snow cones are also available to purchase. Recent editions of Family Days have included special booths from partners like Sobeys (with their always-popular cookie-decorating tent), Tim Hortons, and Dairy Farmers of Canada. With plenty of kid-friendly options and other treats to enjoy



Our community partners and special guests also help liven up the Dockyard. Last year, attendees played soccer with members of the Halifax Wanderers FC.

RYAN MELANSON

between activities, no one goes home hungry.

A unique military environment

Part of what makes DND Family Days so special is the location. The event offers a rare chance to welcome Defence Team families into a secure and historic military space that's typically off-limits to the general public. From Royal Canadian Navy ship tours and RHIB rides in Halifax Harbour to hands-on equipment displays from the Canadian Army and Royal Canadian Air Force, military families can connect with the tools and trades of CFB Halifax.

The CFB Halifax Fire Department and Military Police are also frequent guests, often bringing emergency response vehicles and gear for kids to check out — sirens and all. These displays aren't just entertaining; they help foster a deeper connection between Canadian Armed Forces families and the work being done behind the scenes every day.

Prizes and giveaways

From the moment you arrive at the Dockyard, you're in the running

for something special. Every year, Family Days offers a generous selection of giveaways and prize draws — just for showing up. Upon arrival, guests receive a draw ticket that enters them into the day's prize pool. Previous winners have walked away with everything from gift cards, home goods, and bicycles, to hotel stays, concert tickets and even base parking passes. Grand prize packages have included

dream vacations and travel vouchers worth thousands of dollars. And even if your ticket number doesn't get called, you're sure to leave with a few freebies and plenty of great memories.

Mark your calendars — the 2025 edition of DND Family Days is right around the corner. Watch for full event details and start counting down to the fun!



Don't miss out on inflatable rides, games, face painting, and other great activities!

MEGHAN SHELLNUTT



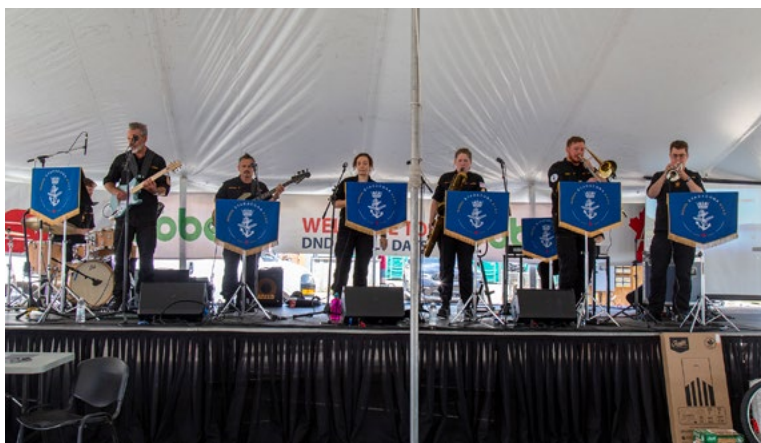
The cookie-decorating station is always a hit at DND Family Days.

MEGHAN SHELLNUTT



While all military elements are typically represented at Family Days, HMC Dockyard is home to Canada's Atlantic Fleet, meaning visitors can take advantage of ship tours and boat rides.

ALLISON SMITH / DANDELION DIGITAL



Boarding Party is seen performing at the 25th edition of DND Family Days in 2024.

ALLISON SMITH / DANDELION DIGITAL

PSP EVENT » spotlight



PO2 CRAIG BLAKE MEMORIAL FITNESS CHALLENGE

The PO2 Craig Blake Memorial Fitness Challenge is a sprint triathlon for military, DND and CFMWS personnel, featuring a 300m swim, a 6.5K mountain bike ride, and a 2K run. Participants can choose to complete all three legs or join as part of a team. This event is held annually in conjunction with the Fleet Diving Unit (Atlantic) in memory of Petty Officer 2nd Class Craig Blake, an avid cyclist and triathlete and the first Canadian Navy sailor to fall in Afghanistan.

The challenge aims to bring together individuals of all fitness levels to strive for their best through friendly competition.

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NAVIGATING VETERANS' BENEFITS WITH 270 WEST CONSULTING

For many veterans, accessing the benefits and services they're entitled to can be a difficult or overwhelming process. That's why 270 West Consulting was started. Since 2021, their team has helped veterans navigate the complexities of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and other service providers to ensure they receive the support they need. We sat down with Andrew Richards, a Lead Benefits Navigator from 270 West, to discuss their holistic approach and the impact of their work.

HOW HAVE YOUR EXPERIENCES WORKING CLOSELY WITH VETERANS SHAPED YOUR APPROACH TO NAVIGATING BENEFITS?

Andrew says he's seen firsthand the transformative impact of veterans gaining access to the services they need and gaining confidence in dealing with available programs.

"It's the most rewarding part of the job. That experience gives us an edge — we know what's possible and how to get there," he added.

He explains that whether a veteran is new to navigating benefits or has been doing so for decades, the team at 270 West can help provide clarity and suggest the best approach.

WHAT PRACTICAL SUPPORT DO YOU OFFER, SUCH AS TRANSPORTATION TO APPOINTMENTS, THAT CAN IMPROVE A VETERAN'S OVERALL EXPERIENCE?

"We love to travel and assist our veterans in person in any way we can," Andrew said.

"If transportation becomes a barrier for a veteran in accessing medical appointments or treatments, we can easily remove that barrier by sending one of our trained team members to go help that veteran."

There are a number of reasons this might happen, he adds.

"If someone is stepping out of their comfort zone to access a benefit or a service that they're already nervous about, they might not want to jump in a taxi with someone they don't know, for example."

"Our goal is to provide a comfortable experience."

CAN YOU SHARE AN INSTANCE WHERE YOU UNCOVERED ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR A VETERAN? HOW DID THAT IMPACT THEIR LIFE?

Reflecting on a case, Andrew recalls, "One

instance that comes to mind was regarding a benefit and paperwork related to a specific condition for one of our veterans. At that time, there wasn't anything further they could access with that specific condition, but there were actually other quality of life benefits available."

In this situation, the veteran had been managing on their own at home despite there being untapped benefits — such as ambulatory care and home support — that could improve their daily living. Recognizing the gap, 270 West stepped in to complete the application.

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF WHEN YOUR TEAM RESOLVED AN ISSUE THAT WASN'T INITIALLY ON A VETERAN'S RADAR, BUT ENDED UP BEING CRUCIAL FOR THEIR WELL-BEING?

"It was actually the wife of a veteran who reached out to us regarding a living situation that needed to be improved. Their original idea was to get full-time help to maintain their home until they could transition to an assisted living situation."

The couple was under the impression that wait times to access long-term care were extremely high, making them believe their only option was to remain at home.

"Veterans have a streamlined process for transitioning to assisted living. We helped them understand that, and to realize that instead of the steps A, B, and C they had planned, they could jump right to step C. We were able to bring them right to the services they really needed."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO VETERANS WHO ARE JUST STARTING TO NAVIGATE THE BENEFITS SYSTEM AND MIGHT FEEL OVERWHELMED?

"My advice would be to lead with patience. These are programs available for veterans for the rest of their lives. You want to do things your way, when you're ready, and at the level you want to jump in at," Andrew advises.

He acknowledges that many veterans juggle busy lives and might be exploring several new challenges simultaneously. Andrew stresses that the process should be taken at a comfortable pace, and having someone to rely on — whether it's 270 West or another trusted source — can make the journey smoother.

"We don't take an all-at-once approach. These are processes that can take some time and there

are steps to it, because there is a lot available for veterans. It's worth going through the process — Veterans Affairs' goal is for you to be covered and to be healthy."

HOW DOES MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FIT INTO THE SERVICES YOUR COMPANY OFFERS, AND HOW DO YOU ENSURE VETERANS RECEIVE THE EMOTIONAL CARE THEY NEED?

"It's a very important piece. Mental health becomes more important every day in what we do, and hopefully better understood in the Forces every day as well."

While a wide range of mental health support is available to veterans, accessing it can sometimes be daunting.

"We work with a network of mental health professionals specializing in military care, ensuring veterans receive tailored support," Andrew said.

"We also always want to stay connected. We connect locally, in person, or however the veteran prefers that connection. We play to their field and whatever they're comfortable with, and we work quickly to make sure they get any assistance they require."

HOW CAN VETERANS OR THEIR FAMILIES CONTACT YOU FOR ASSISTANCE, AND WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP IN THE PROCESS?

"They can contact us at our central number (1-833-270-9378 (WEST)) or through our website if they're not comfortable with a phone call — we respond to all website inquiries within 24 hours," Andrew says.

He stressed there are no fees, commitments or obligations associated with an initial meeting.

"They can expect to meet with somebody in person, if they're comfortable with that, to review what's available to them as a veteran. We'll go over different options and give an expectation of timelines and what we can do for them."

For veterans and their families, the first step can often be the hardest. With guidance from 270 West Consulting and team members like Andrew, the path forward becomes clear.

FINDING THE RIGHT SUPPORT: ONE VETERAN'S STORY

Wayne LePage is proud of his connection to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). From his early days as a Cadet RSM to his time as an Army Reservist with the 1st Field Artillery Regiment, his experiences left a lasting impact. His service to Canada, the friendships he built, and the sense of camaraderie he developed remain important to him to this day.

That military background, however, doesn't always make for an expert in navigating paperwork and phone calls. Wayne says his early efforts to explore the complex world of benefits and support programs available to him as a veteran left him feeling confused and discouraged. He recalls moments when frustration nearly led him to give up.

"There were points where I just didn't want to deal with it anymore; I was done," he said.

For the last two years, he's

been getting help from 270 West Consulting to make that process easier.

"Sometimes as service members, we think we know how it all works, but there's a different language that's used on the civilian side. Working with 270 West has been like having a translator with me," Wayne explains. "They've helped take the frustration away and keep me from feeling like I'm left in the dark."

One specific example of how 270 West Consulting made a difference in Wayne's life was by helping him find an audiologist and access services related to his hearing loss. "They also helped me identify and access other resources that I didn't even realize existed for veterans, and they've helped make me

comfortable in doing so," Wayne shares.

The mental and emotional benefits of working with 270 West have been just as impactful as the practical ones. Having someone to guide him through the process has relieved much of the stress that

once weighed on him and his family.

"It's given me a lot of solace. I know I always have someone I can contact with

questions, and they're very good at getting right back to me. What has stood out to me most has been the compassion, the professionalism, and the knowledge they have in working with veterans."

Having experienced the benefits of 270 West's services, Wayne now encourages other veterans to reach

out. "I was skeptical at first," he admits. "But my confidence in them is at a level where I've spoken to other veterans and brought them over after explaining how much this has helped my family."

He wants fellow veterans to know that help is available — and that they don't have to act alone when navigating the intricate systems of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and other support networks.

"I wouldn't hesitate to recommend 270 West," he says. "The comparison is night and day compared to trying to do it alone."

Wayne's experience with 270 West Consulting highlights the value of having expert guidance. With their help, he's been able to navigate the benefits system more easily and find the resources he needs to improve his quality of life.



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The Rear-Admiral Hugh Francis Pullen Children's Programming Room at the Naval Museum of Halifax opened in the fall of 2024.

RYAN MELANSON

MAKING HISTORY COME ALIVE *for all ages*

Base museums are welcoming young visitors with playful, age-appropriate ways to connect with history

By Ryan Melanson

At CFB Halifax and 12 Wing Shearwater, two museums with deep roots in Canadian military history are turning their attention to the next generation of visitors. While these institutions have long preserved and showcased the stories of naval and aviation service, both have recently worked to make their spaces engaging and inviting for some of our youngest history buffs.



Children explored naval artifacts during a recent visit to the Naval Museum of Halifax organized in partnership with the CNIB.

CPL MITCHELL PAQUETTE

Inside the Naval Museum of Halifax, little ones are invited to take a break from the traditional exhibits and explore a cozy, imaginative space on the museum's ground floor. This newly created children's programming room offers a chance for kids to try on naval uniforms, ring a ship's bell, touch ship crests and other memorabilia, and engage with Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) history through activities and displays tailored to their age and curiosity.

The initiative began when staff realized something was missing from the visitor experience.

"We realized we were getting a lot of children and youth-focused groups visiting the museum, but we didn't have a lot that was meant specifically for them. So that's where the conversation started," says Naval Museum of Halifax Director Jennifer Denty.

"As a parent to a two-year-old and a four-year-old, I understand what it's like when you bring kids into an interesting space like this

and then have to tell them 'don't touch anything.'"

They started small, developing youth-focused programs and activities that could be employed when needed, during visits from groups like Cadets or Girl Guides, for example. As the subject matter covered at a military museum can be complex, the goal was to approach the history in a way that is understandable to a young audience. Later, thanks to a co-op collaboration with a student from the Child and Youth Studies Program at Mount Saint Vincent University, the museum got some help designing the full children's room.

Building off an ongoing partnership with the local CNIB, the room's information panels, covering fun topics like naval mascots and shipboard pets, or the dazzle paint schemes used on RCN ships during the World Wars, have also been translated into braille.

Visitors now have the option of

booking a program for structured learning focused on kids, or enjoying unstructured play and exploration in the new space.

"They can touch the uniforms in the dress-up area, they can touch all the crests, they can ring the bell – everything in there is touchable and unbreakable, which allows for some fun," Jennifer said.

"You can absolutely make these spaces welcoming for kids – it just needs to be done the right way."

That same philosophy is guiding efforts at the Shearwater Aviation Museum, where a children's room was also created to enhance the museum's offering for younger guests, who Curator Christine Hines referred to as an "underserved" demographic.

The room features a reading corner and other age-appropriate material, and was designed to be colourful and inviting. While kids can certainly appreciate the museum's impressive collection of aircraft covering many decades of Royal Canadian Air Force history,

the historical significance isn't always appreciated. Some of the material in the children's space, pulled from the extensive in-house library, can help rectify that, or kids can simply have some fun and engage with the museum on their own terms. Like the project at the Naval Museum, this initiative was supported through student hiring programs.

"It's a great addition for us and has been very well used," Christine added.

Along with the dedicated space, Shearwater staff regularly welcome school groups and youth visitors for tours and visits, offering



Staff and volunteers have been getting things back in order at the Shearwater Aviation Museum after an extended closure for renovations and maintenance.

SHEARWATER AVIATION
MUSEUM FOUNDATION

age-friendly programming that makes use of the museum's unique collection and naval aviation artifacts, sometimes even aligning with school curricula. As the museum gradually reopens following its recent closure to the public, staff are excited to bring children and families back into the fold.

Looking ahead

While both museums are finding new ways to reach young visitors, their broader mission of education, preservation, and public engagement continues at full steam.

Staff and volunteers at the Shearwater Aviation Museum have been working diligently to put things back together and refresh the space after being closed since late 2023.

Originally a planned renovation project, the discovery of further structural issues led to a lengthier hiatus. The work is now largely complete, and the museum has begun opening the doors back up for visitors, even as final renovations and cleanup continues in the background. The team is looking forward to celebrating an official reopening

and ribbon cutting in the coming months.

The enormous undertaking saw volunteers and colleagues from across 12 Wing Shearwater step up to lend the museum a hand, including with the difficult process of squeezing the museum's aircraft collection, normally housed in two hangars, into one while the necessary work could be completed.

"A lot of friends came together to help us out and were so good to us during this period. It really means a lot and is a good reminder that we're part of a great community in Shearwater," Christine said.

"My volunteers have also been extraordinary and we couldn't have done this without them."

On the Halifax side at the Naval Museum, staff are preparing for a busy summer and plan to trial some new types of programming in an effort to bring new visitors to the building.

An upcoming book tour will bring author Nate Hendley to the museum to present his latest work "Atrocity on the Atlantic," covering the events and aftermath of the sinking of the Canadian hospital ship **Llandovery Castle** in 1918. A new exhibit is also planned to focus on the museum's nationally

significant collection of naval art, with historic and contemporary pieces set to be on display, including some new additions.

There's also an event being planned for August to mark the 35th anniversary of the beginning of the Gulf War – veterans will be invited to share stories and take part in a celebration of their service and the Canadian contribution to the campaign.

"We'll be trying some different things and looking to see what resonates with people and brings people through the gates into our space," Jennifer said.

Reminder: Both the Naval Museum of Halifax and the Shearwater Aviation Museum are open to members of the public.

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SCAN ME

PNP3 EMPOWERING CAF PARENTS

Through Fitness and Community

By Nathan Stone

Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members who are pregnant or caring for a newborn have access to a new program to help them stay active and socialize as they navigate the first phases of parenthood.

The Prenatal and Postpartum Program, also known as PNP3, delivers personalized fitness and wellness services for CAF members during pregnancy and parental leave. PNP3 is led by Personnel Support Programs (PSP) Reconditioning staff, with a goal of helping members stay active and

active, the Women and Gender-Diverse Physical Fitness and Wellness Program, that aims to provide additional specialized fitness and wellness programs for women and gender-diverse CAF members.

After enrolling in PNP3, members meet individually with PSP staff to identify safe and beneficial physical activities before joining a larger group that meets twice a week to exercise and socialize together.

To keep the program from becoming a point of stress for participants, there is no requirement to attend every session. Enrollees are

free to take part when they are able to, with or without a baby in tow, and it's acceptable to arrive late, as the challenges that new parents often face traveling with their infants are understood.

Led by PSP staff, each session involves a group exercise program with each person free to work out to their own ability.

"The goal is to do moderate intensity, to keep them moving for up to an hour with movements that are safe and helpful to maintain health," says Kerianne Willigar, PSP Reconditioning Manager at CFB Halifax and the lead for the local PNP3 program.

She says that the focus is on core strength, breathwork, and prevention of common

medical conditions associated with pregnancy and the postpartum period.

Participants are encouraged to get to know each other through the sessions, and facilitators have built in time before and after the

workouts to give further opportunities for the members to come together.

Willigar says she's seeing participants who are finding themselves in very similar situations, becoming close and actively supporting each other through the sessions.

"They're women, they're all CAF members, and they're all moms... everybody has so much in common because of those three things... it's

been really interesting that way — for these women to be able to relate to each other on so many levels and support each other."

The social and emotional connections from PNP3 can also help support strong mental health, says Willigar. Building those peer connections can be just as important as the physical side of the program.

"The emotional, the social, the mental health and well-being is half the class," she added.

The program also helps members on parental leave stay connected to their CAF community by giving them a reason to come back to the base.

"They're in a military environment, and then they see co-workers casually when they're coming to and from the program. I think it's beneficial in terms of not being so distant from the camp for so long and easing them back into it."

Nationally, more than 200 CAF members joined the PNP3 program in 2024, according to Anna Smyth, PSP's Wellness & Reconditioning Manager in Ottawa.

PNP3 originated from a

request by the Defence Women's Advisory Organization dealing with the need for prenatal and postnatal fitness support. The program's implementation and successful delivery has since become a priority for PSP across the country.

"PNP3 has really been the focus of our Women's Wellness team at HQ, with big support from the Reconditioning team nationally, ensuring this program is

available at all bases and wings," says Smyth.

PSP is also taking steps to make their facilities more welcoming to PNP3 participants. Childcare equipment like jogging strollers and playpens are becoming available for use during the programs; designated parking spaces allow for easy access to the facilities; and

"They're women, they're all CAF Members, and they're all moms... everybody has so much in common because of those three things." - Kerianne Willigar



PNP3 aims to be as accessible as possible for participants, meaning both moms and babies are welcome at group sessions.

BRADY MCCLOSKEY

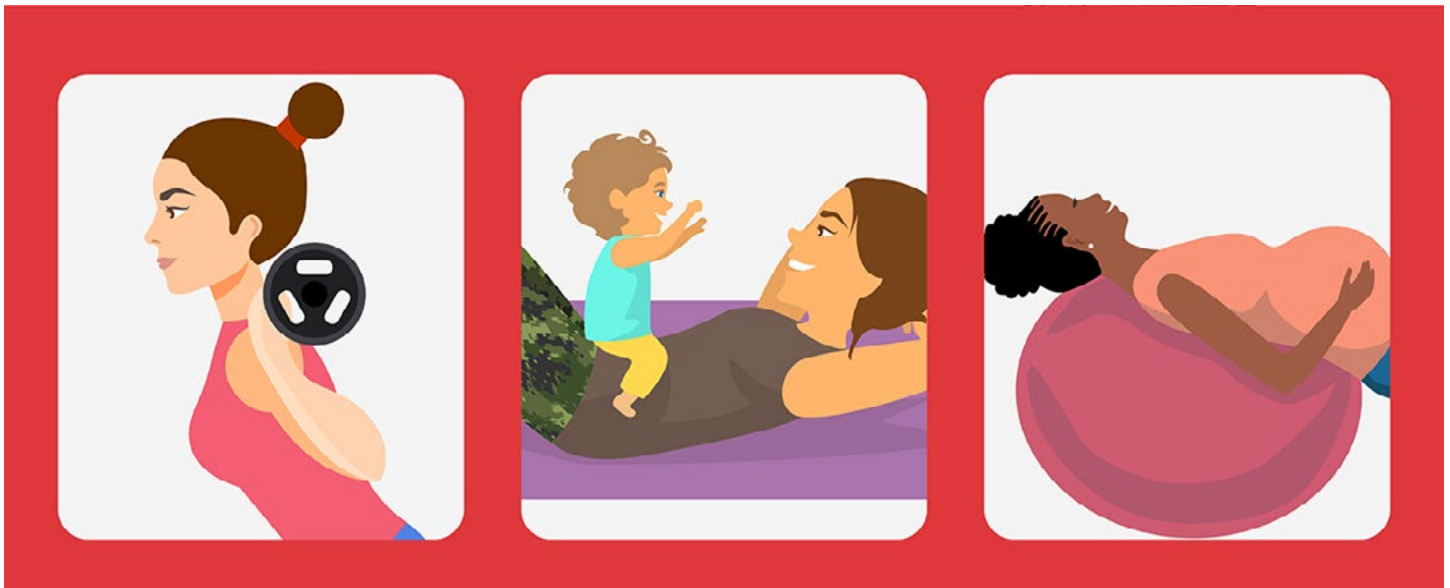
healthy while allowing them the chance to socialize with other new or expectant parents.

The program launched in April 2024 and is now available at every Canadian Forces Base and Wing. It's part of a larger national initia-



PSP Halifax Reconditioning Manager Kerianne Willigar (right) said the program's workouts focus on moderate intensity exercises that are safe and beneficial for new and expectant mothers.

NATHAN STONE



bases and wings have also implemented private lactation spaces that are available to support members who are nursing or pumping. As the program is still in its infancy, PSP hopes to receive feedback from both PNP3 participants and those who are eligible but not

enrolled. "There is a national survey going out to all pregnant and postpartum members, up to a year, for participants and non-participants, because we want to know what the demographics look like, and what the barriers are for those

not accessing the program," says Smyth. "These results can help determine what the program shapes into over the next few years." CAF members looking to join PNP3 are encouraged to speak with their doctor, as a referral is

necessary to take part. Members can enroll while pregnant or after childbirth and can continue in the program for the duration of their parental leave, up to 18 months.

PSP SERVICES » *spotlight*

RECONDITIONING FOR RECOVERY

The PSP Reconditioning Program supports injured and ill CAF members in their rehabilitation journey, aiming for a return to active duty and an improved quality of life. With individualized fitness training, certified clinical exercise physiologists, and a holistic approach, the program ensures seamless integration with other rehabilitation services. Whether through fitness training, sports, or wellness activities, the program is tailored to each member's needs, promoting functional independence and operational readiness. The PSP Reconditioning Program is a key piece of the CAF Transition Group's Return to Duty Program.



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SMART STARTS *and long-term goals*

By Ryan Melanson

Financial literacy can feel like a moving target, especially when you're balancing deployments, relocations, or early-career decisions. For members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), those challenges can be compounded by unique circumstances like high mobility, government benefits, and early retirement timelines. But the good news is that help is close at hand, and there are more resources available than members might realize.

To shed light on common knowledge gaps and offer practical tips, we spoke with local financial experts who work closely with our Defence community.

Building a Plan That Works for You

When it comes to personal finance, there's no one-size-fits-all approach, especially when dealing with CAF clientele from different backgrounds and at different stages of life. Investment Funds Advisor Jessica Walters and Financial Planner/Security Advisor Mike Bailey, who both advise clients through SISIP Financial, say their work begins by understanding each person's background, goals, and comfort level.

"We have clients who are as young as 20 and clients in their 60s, and everybody comes with their own level of financial knowledge and background," Walters said. "We try to really get to know them, collect all the data we need, and start mapping out a plan."

One of the most important starting points? Budgeting. The team at SISIP sometimes works with members who are still learning to navigate pay cycles, benefits, and long-term savings goals. That might include choosing the right investment account — like a Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA),

Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP), and the newly introduced First Home Savings Account (FHSA) — or talking through life insurance needs.

"Your life insurance and your investments really do go hand in hand as far as overall planning goes and considering the full picture, including your loved ones in the event of the unexpected," she added.

For members who are just getting started or facing financial strain, SISIP also offers financial counselling services to help map a way forward.

"One thing we always stress at our briefings is to not wait until it's too late to come and see the financial counselors if you're in a tough spot financially," Bailey said. "Come seek help when things are just starting to get tight, so you can get back on the right path."

Both Bailey and Walters emphasized that financial success doesn't always mean huge investments or early retirement. Sometimes, it's simply about creating an honest and achievable plan and building trust in the process.

"A success story for us can be something very simple," Bailey said. "Someone trusting you and opening up their life and allowing you to view their family's full financial picture. Having that trust is big, because it means you're getting through to people and making a difference."

Preparing for Your First Home

While SISIP helps with everything from insurance to investments, their clients are often referred to BMO when it comes time to purchase a home. The referral relationship between the two organizations is designed to ensure CAF members get trusted advice and competitive rates — without being pressured into services they don't need.

Amy O'Brien, a BMO mortgage specialist who regularly works with the SISIP office in Halifax, said the collaboration is a natural fit. "It's a great partnership and I love working with a SISIP-referred client, because I know they already have their overall financial situation being looked at by professionals."

Though her role is focused on mortgages, O'Brien is also quick to recommend the broader suite of benefits BMO offers to CAF members through their Defence Community Banking program. From free everyday banking to access to employee mortgage rates, she said the goal is to make financial life easier for military members and their families.

When it comes to buying a home, especially for the first time, O'Brien stressed the importance of preparation and clear-eyed budgeting. Many people, she said, underestimate the true cost of purchasing a home.

"What is actually involved in purchasing your home aside from just the down payment? This needs to be factored in; it's an issue we run into often," she said, pointing to closing costs, legal fees, and default insurance premiums that

are often added to a mortgage when a down payment is below 20 percent.

And with new options like the 30-year amortization now available to some first-time buyers as of August 2024, O'Brien encouraged careful consideration of both the pros and cons of longer payment periods.

She also noted the value of flexibility for existing homeowners, such as using a homeowner line of credit for renovations or debt consolidation, and the option of lump sum payments that can help shorten a mortgage's lifespan.

Helping CAF members navigate these choices is a big part of her role.

Getting started and staying Informed

Whether you're just starting to build your financial foundation or looking to adjust your long-term plan, support is always available. Members of the CAF often have access to financial tools and programs that aren't available to the general public. Knowing where to look, and taking the first step, can make all the difference.



Military life comes with unique financial challenges, from deployments to frequent relocations, which is why tailored advice can make all the difference.

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A New Approach to Nutrition in the CAF

By Ryan Melanson

For Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members with demanding schedules and high-pressure duties, maintaining a healthy diet can be difficult. Proper nutrition is essential — not only for maintaining peak physical condition and mental clarity, but also for long-term resilience and overall well-being. Recognizing the challenges that come with balancing military life and good nutrition, Strengthening the Forces and PSP Health Promotion have recently launched the new *Essential Nutrition* Course, an interactive program designed to simplify the science of healthy eating and offer a modern approach to nutrition.

Designed with flexibility in mind, the course covers everything from efficient meal planning and smart grocery budgeting to deciphering food labels and embracing mindful eating practices. Whether members are making big lifestyle changes or just looking for a refresher, the *Essential Nutrition* Course aims to provide actionable tips that can be applied to daily routines at work and at home.

The material reflects the latest evidence in nutritional science and moves away from a traditional focus on weight loss, instead emphasizing sustainable, healthy eating habits that support overall wellness.

"The previous course was called

Weight Wellness, which was dated. The way we talk about nutrition has changed, and this program needed a revamp," said Laurie Barker Jackman with Health Promotion Halifax. A registered dietitian with more than 20 years of experience, Laurie was a key contributor to the development of the new course, working for 14 months alongside colleagues in Ottawa — including fellow dietitian and Nutrition Wellness Educator Pamela Hatton and Section Head Dr. Veronic Clair. Together, they set out to reimagine a program with more relevance for today's CAF members.

"There was also a lot of engagement with the team across Canada to make sure we got the content right for our members," Laurie added.

The *Essential Nutrition* Course is broken down into five core modules, each addressing a different aspect of nutrition:

Nutrition Fundamentals – Delving into healthy eating patterns and learning how to build balanced meals. Participants explore the principles of a healthy plate, based on guidelines from the Canada Food Guide.

Understanding Food Labels – Teaching members how to interpret nutrition information on food packaging. This module empowers participants to make informed

decisions about the foods they purchase.

Meal Planning – Providing practical strategies for planning and preparing meals that are both nutritious and time-efficient. Topics include meal prep tips and grocery planning to reduce daily stress.

Stretching Your Dollar – Focusing on how to manage food costs without sacrificing nutritional value. This module offers strategies for saving money at the grocery store, reducing food waste, and getting the most nutritional bang for your buck.

Mindful Eating – Encouraging a positive relationship with food by focusing on how you eat, rather than what you eat. This module helps shift the mindset away from diet culture, emphasizing healthy routines and an increased awareness around eating habits.

Pam Hatton highlighted the practical impact of the Stretching Your Dollar module during a time when many Canadians have struggled with rising food costs. "It's meeting a need that people have. Whether you're just starting off out of the Recruiting Centre or you're a retiring General, you still have a food budget," she said.

"It's something people already have on their minds, so that's a good opportunity for us to reach them."



Future additions to the *Essential Nutrition* Course could include strategies for healthy eating in specific contexts, like during a deployment at sea.

CPL NOÉ MARCHON

Laurie notes that the modular approach to the course was intended to provide flexibility.

"Our goal was for facilitators to be able to customize this for the members at their base or wing. It makes things more versatile and flexible," she added. Some locations may deliver the entire course in a day, while others might focus on one module at a time over several weeks.

Along with developing the curriculum and a comprehensive participant workbook, the team also led facilitator training. Last

February, Health Promotion specialists from across the organization underwent a certification exam to ensure they could effectively deliver the course content.

A background in creating and facilitating this type of programming from scratch



The "Understanding Food Labels" module aims to help participants make informed choices when grocery shopping.

HEALTH CANADA

is part of why Laurie became involved in developing the *Essential Nutrition Course* — she emphasized the importance of presenting the material in a way that's tailored to the specific audience.

"It's not enough to simply present information; you have to engage people and

make the content relatable."

Early pilot sessions were run by Laurie and Pam in Halifax, and expanded across the country following the facilitator training.

"We've had some amazing feedback," Laurie noted.

"What tugs at my heart-strings is when somebody says, 'I'm not afraid of food anymore.' There's no moral value behind food. It's just food. What we teach in this course is — how can you eat to make it work for you?"

While the *Essential Nutrition Course* covers a broad range of topics, there will be room for updates as new nutritional science emerges and as the unique needs of CAF members evolve. Future modules could also address the nutritional challenges of specific contexts—be it during deployments, at sea, or for military tactical athletes.

"What happens when you're deployed? What happens when you're training really hard or involved in high-level sports? That's certainly something we want to

explore," Pam says.

"We have a fundamentals program now that covers a lot of great information, but there's always an opportunity to add more," Laurie added.

Members of the Defence Community interested in the *Essential Nutrition Course* can find details — including schedules, registration information, and additional resources — by visiting Health Promotion Halifax online through CFMWS.ca or reaching out to the local team directly at hfxhealth-promotion@forces.gc.ca or 902-722-4956. Members are also encouraged to speak with their unit Health Promotion Representatives to learn more about the broader suite of programs and offerings available. Health Promotion Halifax is located at Windsor Park inside the Piers Community Centre, and the team frequently visits units across CFB Halifax and 12 Wing Shearwater for briefings and other initiatives.

PSP SERVICES » spotlight

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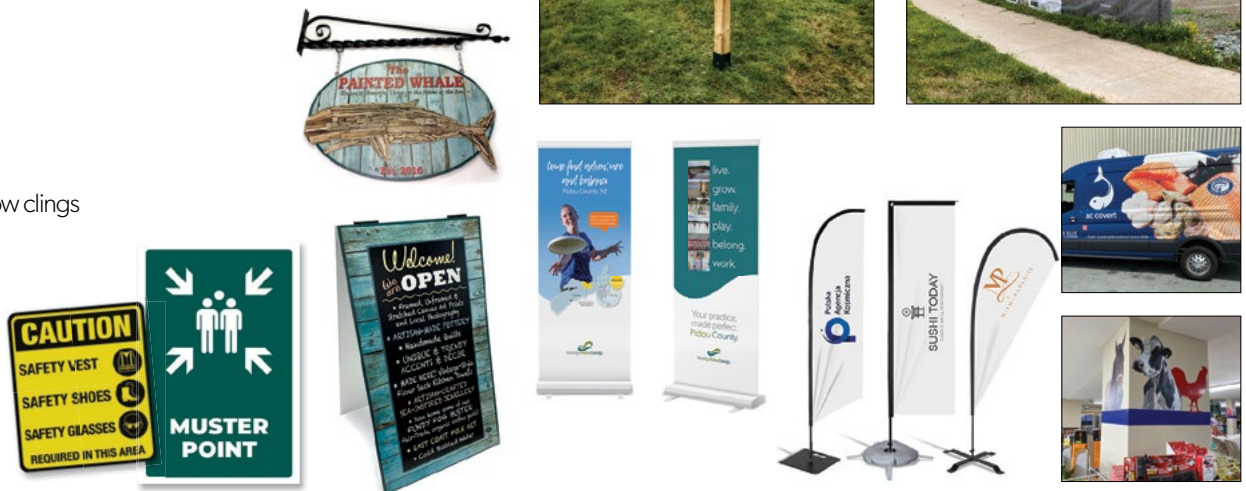
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The CFB Halifax Curling Club aims to be a welcoming space for all curlers, from newcomers to seasoned competitors.

CPL ANTONIO GARCIA ALVAREZ

CFB HALIFAX CURLING CLUB

works to grow the sport for all ages, skill levels

By Nathan Stone

For both avid curlers and those who've never thrown a rock, the CFB Halifax Curling Club offers a warm welcome. With a large and friendly membership, the club is open to all skill levels and works actively to promote the sport within the Defence Community.

Located in Windsor Park, the club draws its 400-plus members from across Halifax and beyond, with both military and civilian curlers making up the mix. Open from October through April each year, it offers leagues, tournaments, lessons, unit bonspiels and more.

Club manager Floyd Otto of PSP Halifax says the focus is on growing the game, especially through Learn to Curl programs for both adults and youth.

Learn the game, then hit the ice

For those new to curling, the club runs a six-week adult Learn to Curl program twice per season — once in the fall and again in the winter. All gear is provided, and participants get a solid introduction to the fundamentals of the sport.

Another great entry point is the Friday Night Recreational League. This weekly drop-in offers a casual and welcoming experience with no long-term commitment. Otto says it's become effective for bringing

CAF members, who can join in for just \$5 per night, onto the ice.

"It's become really popular, which is awesome, and I've seen quite a few active military members coming for it and enjoying it."



Club Manager Floyd Otto highlights the connections and camaraderie formed through curling as one of the most rewarding aspects of his role.

CPL ANTONIO GARCIA ALVAREZ

To make things even easier for new players, the club offers **free curling lessons** before the first three Friday drop-ins each October and January.

For experienced players, the club has a wide range of leagues to choose from. Open Leagues run on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, with mixed-gender teams grouped by skill level.

More serious curlers can join the **Tuesday Competitive League**, where the top talent in the club —

capped at 13 teams — compete each week. Tuesdays also feature the Intersectional League, where CAF members are free to build teams across different units.

For those who prefer a slower pace, the **Sunday Social League** offers a relaxed, no-pressure environment.

Daytime leagues are available for the retiree crowd on Mondays through Wednesdays, while **Saturday mornings** are all about youth, starting with the Light Rocks program for kids aged 7 to 11, followed by an Under-21 league for teens and young adults.

Otto says one goal is to see more CAF families getting involved in the sport through the club, adding there's plenty of opportunity for parents to curl alongside their kids as well.

In addition to these regular programs and leagues, the club hosts a number of tournaments throughout the season. Military members can take part in **inter-unit competitions** or vie for a spot in the annual CAF Atlantic Region Curling Championship.

Bonspiels — large, often themed tournaments — are open to all

members and are a popular part of the curling calendar.

To encourage participation, the club offers **discounted rates** on leagues, rentals, and tournaments for all CAF members.

Lights, camera, curling

Rental of both the ice sheets and lounge space are available to outside groups during the curling season, and the club also stays in use when the ice is out. In the off-season, the facility is rented to TV and film production companies. For eight years, the CBC sitcom *Mr. D* filmed on site, and more recently, two independent films — *Permanent Damage* and *Place of Ghosts* — used the curling rink as a set in summer 2024.

Otto says these productions can last for months and often involve large, detailed set builds that take over the space entirely.

As fall rolls around each year, members are always eager to return to the club, reconnect with teammates, and get back on the ice. For Otto, that sense of connection is part of what makes the club special.

"If you're going to talk about curling, it's really about the community and the environment. This club has always been a welcoming environment and a lot of fun for everyone."



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