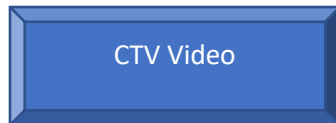


Calgary's naval reserve celebrating 100 years at HMCS Tecumseh



- Kevin Fleming
- CTV News Calgary Video Journalist



It was March of 1923 that the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve was established to support the country's navy. In Calgary, it consisted of a half-company but in 1940 - with a world war raging - became its own division.

Commander Andy Pashke heads the Calgary operation and is a year and a half into his three-year term.

"The legacy of 100 years through a world war, the Battle of the Atlantic, all those things, it's a commemoration of not only lives lost, but our history in general," said Pashke. "We're so thrilled to be able to showcase that this year with Calgarians."

The Canadian naval reserves have operations in provinces all across the country. In Calgary the headquarters are at His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Tecumseh known as the stone frigate because it's landlocked.

"We always say that the prairies produce the best sailors," said Pashke. "Because they don't mind the wide open spaces so (being) at sea is very similar to being in the middle of the prairie."

Commander Paschke says the stone frigate gets its name from an Indigenous man.

"The Shawnee warrior, Tecumseh who fought with the British during the War of 1812 was instrumental to the British victory," he said. "Our HMCS Tecumseh as it stands now is actually named after HMS Tecumseh, a British

Royal Navy ship that was named subsequently after the great warrior Tecumseh."

UNITED BY MOTIVATION

Paschke says as commanding officer he's responsible for overseeing training, discipline and the welfare of the sailors. He says right now there are more than 200 naval reservists in Calgary and he'd like to see that number grow to 300 by 2025.

"The single thread that I think unites us all is motivation," he said. "People here generally are motivated, they want to succeed. I was looking for a sense of adventure to be fulfilled, that I wasn't otherwise getting and I've had a great opportunity to see a lot of the world through the navy."

SOME 'PRETTY EPIC FEMALE STORIES'

Sailor first class Nora Shahab joined at the start of the pandemic. The 36-year-old heads the training of new recruits that range in age from 16 to 57 years old.

"I feel like I'm the perfect age for this," she said. "I bring my experiences as a civilian into the job and my leadership skills have come in quite handy especially during basic training."

Shahab is proud to be part of the reserves and its 100 year history. She's inspired by many of the women who served before her.

"The biggest thing is in the Navy there are some pretty epic female stories here at HMCS Tecumseh," she said. "Commodore (Laraine) Orthlieb was the first flag officer in the entire navy and she was the CEO of this ship, when the new building was erected after the (1981) fire. Commander Nancy Whitehead is also quite inspiring and pushed forward really hard for women's equality with jobs in the Navy and standing on the shoulders of that history makes me quite proud."

AT SEA AND ON LAND

Naval reservists have deployed on operations at sea and on land around the world, from counter-narcotics missions in the Caribbean and Pacific Oceans to sovereignty patrols in the Arctic. They have also responded when called upon to support provincial and local authorities in domestic operations helping flood response in Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. They've helped with forest fires in British Columbia and hurricanes in Nova Scotia and

Newfoundland as well as helping to care for seniors in Ontario and Quebec during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shahab would like to be involved one day in the navy's counter narcotics operations.

"I studied Marine security at university and learning about the battles and conflicts that happened on the ocean that are international problems," she said. "I feel like it'd be so satisfying to work with international coalition with militaries all over the world to stop the main funds that go towards terrorism so I think that's what my biggest goal is here."

As of this year the Naval Reserve has a strength of 4,100 sailors across 24 divisions from Victoria to St. John's, N.L. HMCS Tecumseh is hosting an open house March 11th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., to celebrate 100 years and honor its fallen reservists.

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