



Backgrounder

Naval Reserve Celebrates Their Centennial in 2023

March 01, 2023 – Ottawa – National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces

The Naval Reserve is celebrating a key milestone throughout 2023, marking 100 years of service to Canada. The Naval Reserve intends to celebrate its centennial with the Canadian population they serve through multiple activities. The program includes some national events, but most of the commemoration will be conducted locally or regionally by the 24 Naval Reserve Divisions (NRDs) across Canada.

Celebration Activities Planned

Twelve NRDs will celebrate their own centennials with local celebrations. The Navy Bike Ride and the Nova Scotia International Tattoo will both have a Naval Reserve Centennial theme this year. The Canadian Tulip Festival in Ottawa will commemorate the Naval Reserve Centennial by highlighting the sacrifice of Citizen Sailors from the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) in the Second World War as a primary theme of the Festival in 2023. There will be a restoration and rededication of the Naval Reserve 50th Anniversary Monument in Ottawa.

The main event will be the Freedom of the City parades, where 4,000 sailors will proudly parade through the streets of 24 cities across Canada on September 23rd.

31 Jan 2023	Centennial Event on Parliament Hill
11 Feb 2023	Toronto Garrison Ball (OPI HMCS <i>York</i> , NAVRES Centennial Theme)
14 Mar 2023	HMCS <i>Donnacona</i> Centennial
15 Mar 2023	HMCS <i>Star</i> Centennial
19 Mar 2023	HMCS <i>Chippawa</i> Centennial
21 Mar 2023	HMCS <i>Carleton</i> Centennial
27 Mar 2023	HMCS <i>Nonsuch</i> Centennial
1 Apr 2023	HMCS <i>Tecumseh</i> Centennial
10 Apr 2023	HMCS <i>York</i> Centennial
21 Apr 2023	HMCS <i>Montcalm</i> Centennial
27 Apr 2023	HMCS <i>Unicorn</i> Centennial
3 May 2023	Naval Association BOA Dinner (RCNVR Centennial Theme)
9–12 May 2023	UNTDA Conference
13–14 May 2023	11 th RCN Academic Conference (Naval Reserve Centennial Theme)
13 May 2023	Canadian Tulip Festival kick-off

20 Jun 2023	HMCS <i>Brunswicker</i> Centennial
26 Jun 2023	HMCS <i>Queen</i> Centennial
1–8 Jul 2023	Nova Scotia International Tattoo
14 Sept 2023	HMCS <i>Queen Charlotte</i> Centennial
23 Sept 2023	Recommissioning of NRDs, Freedom of the City Parades
Oct 2023 (TBC)	Rededication of the National Naval Reserve Monument

Beginnings of the Naval Reserve

The beginning of a Naval Reserve Force in Canada was due largely to the efforts of one man: Rear-Admiral Walter Hose. He was a Royal Navy Officer who transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) in 1912. He had served with Royal Navy Reservists from Newfoundland in the early years of the 20th century, and he was very impressed with their seamanship skills. After his transfer to the RCN, he recommended the establishment of a Naval Reserve Force to augment the RCN but met resistance at all levels.

Finally, years of hard work and lobbying spearheaded by Rear-Admiral Hose paid off, as the Government of Canada authorized the creation of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) on January 31st, 1923.

Bringing The Navy To Canadians

The standing up of a Naval Reserve Force was initially seen as a great way for the promising RCN to build support from coast to coast. It envisioned the establishment of NRDs in every major Canadian city, effectively bringing the Navy to Canadians who live kilometres away from our coastlines.

Expansion During Second World War

The RCNVR became the backbone of the Royal Canadian Navy, recruiting officers and sailors from across the country. During the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Navy needed to expand rapidly. From its modest beginnings of six sea-going vessels and 3 500 sailors of all ranks at the outbreak of the war, it grew into a large and capable fighting force.

By the end of the Second World War, Canada had the third largest navy in the world, with 95,000 men and women in uniform, and 434 commissioned vessels including cruisers, destroyers, frigates, corvettes and auxiliaries.

Approximately 77,000 of these men and women were members of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve.

Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service

The Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS) was established on July 31st, 1942, to augment the naval forces during the Second World War. It was the Naval counterpart to the Canadian Women's Army Corps and the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division, which had been formed earlier, in 1941. The WRCNS was established as a separate service from the RCN.

The women who enlisted filled some 39 different occupations. Members of the WRCNS in Canada served primarily in administrative positions at the Naval bases in Halifax and Esquimalt, associated Naval training establishments, and the Naval Service Headquarters in Ottawa. They are remembered for staffing the operational map plots in command headquarters and for taking on the bulk of duties at the various Naval signals intelligence sites on both coasts.

More than 500 WRCNS members were stationed at the Canadian Naval Base HMCS *Avalon* in St. John's, Newfoundland (then a separate Dominion). Another 500 were stationed at the shore establishment HMCS *Niobe* in Great Britain (mostly in London, Plymouth, and Londonderry), and some 50 others at Naval offices in Washington D.C. and New York City.

A total of 6 783 women served in the WRCNS, with 11 dying during active service (from sickness or accidents). The WRCNS was disbanded on August 31st, 1946.

Naval Reserve Today

In addition to commemorating the past 100 years, the Centennial will recognize the contributions of our current sailors with a focus on our promising future. Today, the Naval Reserve has a strength of over 4 100 sailors across 24 NRDs from Victoria, British Columbia, to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.



Naval Reserve Mission

Embedded in Canadian communities for over 100 years, the Naval Reserve mission is to recruit, train and deploy “citizen-sailors” in modern professions, and to provide the RCN and the CAF with critical and integrated operational capabilities at sea and ashore, at home and abroad.

Who Are Naval Reservists?

Naval Reservists are members of the Royal Canadian Navy who typically serve on a part-time basis. They are employees, co-workers, and students from your community who embody the courage, loyalty, and commitment to service to keep one foot firmly planted in a civilian career and the other training and preparing to protect Canadians at home and abroad.

Naval Reservists have deployed with the Canadian Armed Forces at sea and ashore around the world, on operations ranging from counter-narcotics missions in the Caribbean and Pacific to sovereignty patrols in the Arctic.

They have also responded when called upon to support provincial and local authorities in domestic operations including support to flooding in Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, forest fires in British Columbia, hurricanes in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, as well as supporting the care of seniors in Ontario and Quebec during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importance of the Naval Reserve to Canada

For 100 years, the Naval Reserve has played a critical role in Canada's safety and security as a vital element of the Royal Canadian Navy and Canadian Armed Forces.

During 2023, please join us in recognizing the Naval Reserve Centennial and our important contribution to our nation's military history and heritage.

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