

Canadian Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle

INAUGURAL MEETING: JANUARY 14, 2015, OTTAWA, ONTARIO

Opening Remarks by Vanier Institute of the Family Board Chair David Northcott

There is an old saying that notes “You can’t put your foot in the same river twice!” The water continues to rush along the banks. However, for the past 50 years, the Vanier Institute of the Family has set foot in the real river of Canadian life in the real world, working to enhance the national understanding of the diversity and complexity of families and the reality of family life in Canada.

This is no small task – and this mission would have been short-lived had the Institute not reached out *from day one* to individuals and organizations with shared goals and values.

Partnerships Collaborations Networks

Partnerships, networks and collaborations that are based on trust and mutual respect are vital to the success of any group of people seeking to make an impact on society.

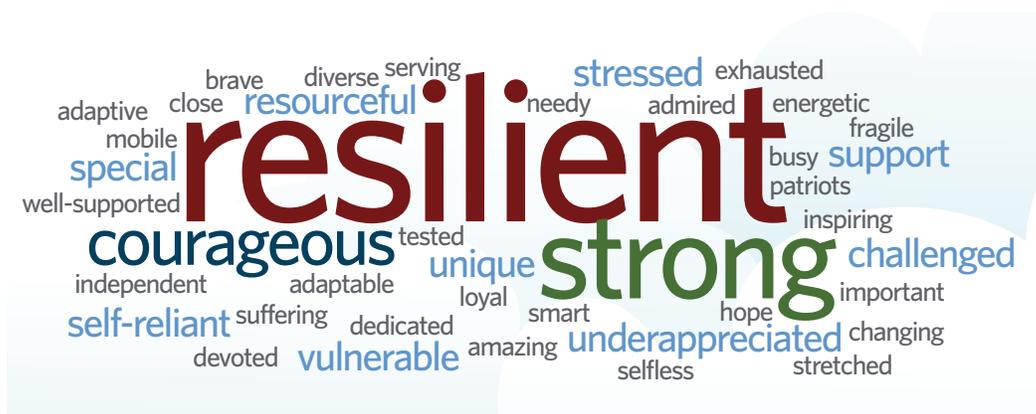
We are here today to build and strengthen relationships for the well-being of those who serve – and have served – our country and their families.

As you are aware, the Military and Veteran Families in Canada Initiative is a partnership between Military Family Services and the Institute.

Military Families

The Initiative’s purpose is to ensure **that military families have equitable access to community supports and services that respect, honour and appreciate the unique experiences of military and veteran families.**

Military family life often involves *frequent moves and periods of separation*, which no doubt add to the daily challenges that families in Canada face – but **military families are resilient and strong, forever adapting what they do to provide care and support to loved ones.**



Vanier Institute of the Family

Insights and understanding into families, family life, family experiences, and family aspirations and expectations is what the Institute is all about. And that is *precisely* what this Leadership Circle is all about.

Currently, the Vanier Institute is exploring the complexities of caregiving and work, employment-related geographical mobility and work-family quality. Even though they are distinct initiatives, they overlap and intersect with each other and with the Military and Veteran Families in Canada Initiative.

The common themes and intersecting issues provide us with an opportunity to transfer knowledge from one project to another.

We mobilize the knowledge gained by the researchers at CIMVHR to the oilfields in northern Alberta and villages in the coves of Newfoundland.

We take the research on emotional development of infants and effective parenting to military family resource centres.

We take the learning from the military mental health and OSI clinics to community health centres and inner-city hospitals across the country.

We connect members of academia, government, community services and business, as we have done since 1965.

Vanier's History with the Military

This inception of the Institute *itself* was a collaboration that involved members of the military.

In 1964, His Excellency Major-General the Right Honourable Georges P. Vanier and the Honourable Pauline Vanier – along with a leadership team that included Military Social Workers – convened the Canadian Conference on the Family at Rideau Hall, bringing together academics, social workers, students and medical professionals to mobilize existing knowledge and identify gaps in our collective understanding of families in Canada.

This gathering ultimately led to the creation of the Vanier Institute, which was to act as a “Standing Royal Commission that should never be discharged.” Their Excellencies believed that, as a cornerstone of society, families deserved focused attention into the future.

The Institute is currently working in collaboration with more than 50 universities to ensure that families in Canada benefit from their findings as quickly as possible.

During the past two years, more than 78,000 unique visitors downloaded over 485,000 documents from our website.

We are building on a foundation of collaboration, partnership and communication within the military community.

This June, we will be hosting another national conference on the family that will engage in the same mission of learning and understanding in a society that has grown to become even more complex and diverse than in 1964.

As with the original conference, we will bring together researchers, family service professionals, government officials, labour and faith leaders as well as members of the military to focus on enhancing our collective understanding of *all* families in Canada.

Strength of Relationships

At the Institute, partnerships and collaborations are a means *and* an end.

What we share with our partners and collaborators, today and in the past, is a commitment to understanding families and family life in Canada.

We share a desire to create and nurture a Canada in which families engage and thrive in a caring and compassionate society, within a robust and prosperous economy, in an inclusive and vibrant culture, and in a safe and sustainable environment.

We build on our history of working in collaboration with universities, NGOs, government departments, community groups and research organizations.

We establish and strengthen knowledge networks, because individuals, families and neighbourhoods build empathy and are strengthened when they learn from one another, and we want to facilitate the application of knowledge from coast to coast to coast, across all sectors.

The Leadership Circle

As the current chair of the Board, it is my honour to officially open this inaugural meeting of the Canadian Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle with my co-founding partner, Lieutenant-General David Millar. I met David on one of his first days as Chief of Military Personnel, when he came to the *Military Families Matter* conference in Cornwall two short years ago.

It is my pleasure to welcome each and every one of you to this historic event, where we will focus on **partnership, collaboration and communication**.

We will explore ways to leverage our collective resources, to mobilize knowledge and to enhance our respective efforts and activities by pooling our intellectual capital and working together toward a common goal.

Each organization in this room, as well as many others in this country, studies, supports and/or serves military and veteran families.

We're excited to have you all here.

We look forward to some wonderful, thoughtful conversation today, with the expectation that we will have, by the end of the day, an action plan for moving ahead together, as we cooperate, partner and communicate with military and veteran families.

We anticipate future opportunities for sharing, strengthening and expanding this network.

Going forward, we will each exercise our respective strengths and come together, where the whole **will be** greater than the sum of its parts.

Welcome!