

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Canadian Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle

SECOND ANNUAL MEETING, OTTAWA, ONTARIO - JANUARY 29, 2016

Opening Remarks delivered by

LGen Christine Whitecross, Commander of Military Personnel Command
Victor Duret, Vanier Institute of the Family Board Chair

WHITECROSS *[delivered in English]*

Welcome

Good morning and welcome!

I am here in my capacity as Commander of Military Personnel Command and co-host of the *Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle* with Victor Duret, Chair of the Vanier Institute Board.

It is our pleasure to welcome you all to the second annual *Canadian Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle*.

DURET *[delivered in English]*

Building Momentum from Last Year

At last year's inaugural meeting of the *Leadership Circle*, there were 32 leaders from business and community; Department of Defence and Veterans Affairs; as well as Military Family Services, Military Family Resource Centres, and military and Veteran families.

We gathered to explore the interest in forming a partner-based *Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle* to share information, mobilize knowledge, foster relationships and facilitate collaborations.

Of the 21 organizations in attendance last year, 18 signed on as members of the *Leadership Circle*.

Today, we have more than 40 individuals from 37 organizations, including all of the original members.

I would like to acknowledge and convey our appreciation to our predecessors, the co-founding partners of the *Leadership Circle*: LGen David Millar, former Chief of Military Personnel; and David Northcott, past Chair of the Vanier Institute Board. Their leadership and commitment form part of the foundation for the *Leadership Circle*.

Purpose of This Meeting

We are here today:

- To foster and strengthen relationships
- To facilitate partnerships and collaborations, and
- To spark innovation and creativity, so we can ensure that those who serve – and have served – our country, and their families, have access to community services and supports that understand the unique experiences, realities and perspectives of military and Veteran family life.

Canada's military and Veteran families are proud of their contributions, and they are a source of pride for our country. They have earned our respect and deserve our recognition and full support.

We can accomplish more working together than we can individually!

We can make more progress in less time by working together!

We can realize more gains with less energy, and fewer resources, by working together!

WHITECROSS *[delivered in English]*

Modern Military and Veteran Families

Today, there are nearly one-half million military and Veteran families from coast to coast to coast.

There are over 1,000 military families who are posted to the United States and Europe.

And, across the country, nearly one-half million children are growing up in military and Veteran homes.

The portrait of today's military and Veteran families doesn't look much like the families of the past:

- Twenty years ago, 80% of Regular Force families in the Canadian Armed Forces lived ON a base – today, 85% of these families live OFF base.
- Another 40,000 reservists live in neighbourhoods across the country – away from a base or a wing, and often not even in close proximity to one.
- Almost 600,000 Veterans also live in civilian communities.
- Of Regular Force members with children, 20% are single parents; and 16% of Veterans with children are single parents.
- Like civilian families across Canada, in the majority of military and Veteran couples, both adults contribute to household income.
- Today, on average, CAF personnel report spending more than one-quarter of their time away from home on military-related duties.

Military and Veteran families, like civilian families, are diverse, complex and dynamic, and each one is unique!

Military and Veteran families are strong, resilient, adaptable, courageous and resourceful.

Like all families, military and Veteran families access a variety of programs and services in their communities, including:

- Child care and eldercare
- Health and mental health
- Community recreation and leisure
- Education and employment

These programs and services are often delivered by professionals and practitioners who have little or no knowledge, understanding or experience working with military or Veteran families.

DURET *[delivered in English]*

Military Literacy

As the military and Veteran family community grows, there is a need for Military Literacy in Canada – a need that is greater now than ever before.

Individuals who are military literate have the competency and confidence to consistently deliver high-quality services that are respectful and responsive to the unique experiences, circumstances and perspectives of military and Veteran families.

Organizations that incorporate Military Literacy create environments that are welcoming and inclusive of our military and Veteran families.

WHITECROSS [delivered in French]

The Leadership Circle

Military Family Resource Centres are but one example of these organizations, which, as you know, now provide access to services to medically released Veterans and their families for up to two years as part of a pilot project launched in 2014.

So we are here as the *Canadian Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle* (members, guests and supporters) to:

- Build awareness among individuals
- Build competence among professionals
- Build capacity within organizations
- Build community through partnerships and collaborations

We have seen progress over the past few years, with examples such as Calian Health partnering with Military Family Services to provide access to family health care through their clinics in Toronto, Winnipeg and Halifax as part of the recently announced Military Family Doctor Network.

The Canadian Child Care Federation has partnered with the Vanier Institute to develop resources for early childhood educators as a prototype for a comprehensive awareness-building campaign.

We have seen Accenture work with Military Family Services and Military Family Resource Centres to deliver employment-related training for spouses, both in person and virtually.

And this is just the beginning!

It is our pleasure to co-host the *Leadership Circle*.

DURET [delivered in English]

The Institute

The inception of the Vanier Institute *itself* was a collaboration that included members of the military.

Our founders were part of a military family. His Excellency Major-General the Right Honourable Georges P. Vanier, a Veteran of two world wars, arrived home from the battlefield having lost part of his leg in combat.

In 1964, in his role as Governor General, His Excellency and his wife the Honourable Pauline Vanier – along with a leadership team that included Military Social Workers – convened the *Canadian Conference on the Family* at Rideau Hall.

That conference resulted in the establishment of the Vanier Institute of the Family.

It is also our pleasure to be one of the co-hosts for the *Leadership Circle*.

WHITECROSS [delivered in English]

Call to Action

We're excited to have you all here.

We look forward to 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 Canadians.

One of the publications being planned coming out of this meeting will be a Compendium of Partnerships and Collaborations that exist around this table and across Canada. The release of the publication will encourage others to join us. It will convey a strong message to military and Veteran families that the country is standing beside them while they stand behind their loved ones.

Going forward, there will be many opportunities for sharing, strengthening and expanding this circle.

By leveraging our respective strengths and coming together with military and Veteran families, we can, through our actions, clearly demonstrate that together, anything is possible.

The first gathering of family leaders was in Cornwall in August 2012.

That round table led to the creation of the Military and Veteran Families Initiative, of which this *Leadership Circle* is a part.

One of the things participants did at that first meeting in Cornwall, and at all of the other meetings since, was to imagine the future by completing the phrase “Wouldn’t it be great if...”

One of those responses was:

“Wouldn’t it be great if we expanded the round table to include more organizations?”

We did that at the *Military Families Matter* conference in 2013.

One of the responses at the *Military Families Matter* conference was:

“Wouldn’t it be great if we engaged with business, government and community leaders?”

And here we are today for the *second annual Leadership Circle!*

It is my pleasure to co-host the *Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle* today.

I’m pleased to introduce your co-chairs for today’s meeting: Nora Spinks from the Vanier Institute and Col. Dan Harris from Military Family Services.

Nora, over to you...