

The Tribute

Spring 2023

Chairman's update

By John Argue, Chair AFMSA

Welcome to the spring edition of *The Tribute*, the Air Force Museum Society of Alberta's (AFMSA) quarterly magazine. As I sit here in late March 2023 crafting this introduction, I am admittedly full of hope and optimism for the near future. Naturally, as I peer outside, the days are longer, the sun is shining, the temperature is cracking zero degrees Celsius in a positive way, the snow is melting and families with their children are out walking with pets in tow while moving about with much more ease. COVID seems like a distant memory now. Thoughts of family and friends holding backyard BBQ's and summer road trips are just around the corner.

Likewise, there is much to hope and be optimistic for the RCAF. The DComd Major General Colin Kiever, and the RCAF 2024 (Team Lead) Colonel Margret Jacula, recently visited Calgary and our AFMA Museums at TMM. We learned that nearly 60 per cent of Canada's defence budget will be apportioned in support of significant RCAF initiatives in the coming years. The acquisition of the new fifth generation F-35 Lightning II fighter jet, and the corresponding support facilities, will be operational by 2025 or 2026 and are the cornerstone of those budget funding packets. Additionally, as of 01 April, 2023, the RCAF enters its 99th year of a very proud storied history and heritage. 365 days later the RCAF turns 100 years old and festivities to honour this period of RCAF existence will take place from coast to coast to coast. Through centenary outreach engagement projects with Canada's public and its youth, the RCAF begins a promising journey into its next 100 years with new aircraft and a supporting citizenry. The shape and scope of our air force, even in ten years, will most likely see massive change. The integration of our fifth generation fighters with unmanned (armed) combat aerial vehicles (UCAV's), while also stretching our capabilities more robustly into the domain of space during a period of heightening tensions between east and west once again, are just a few of the many challenges a modern air force will need to deal with. To know that we are setting off into the next 100 years on the right foot is very encouraging.

We, volunteers and members of the AFMSA, have much to be proud of and also to be optimistic for in the future. The amazing work that our people have put into building our current organization and facilities, operating them for the public benefit, exemplify our team's dedication and skill in presenting the RCAF mission. We are also blessed to have several new volunteers and members entering our fold, with more joining each and every week. The opportunity for people to share their passion for the RCAF, and aviation in general, while also having the ability to socialize with new and old friends is an attractive option for many of us.

In January 2023, our AFMSA board of directors approved four

focus areas (FA's) for the next calendar year and beyond.

1. Cold War Exhibit expansion project.
2. RCAF 2024 centenary projects.
3. Review the board of directors' organizational structure.
4. Develop a unique AFMSA directed educational program for youth.

In the coming months you will read and hear much more about these FA's and also, within this *Tribute* edition, some added detailed info will be shared. To encapsulate, Bob Wade and his expansion team are starting to receive solid traction at the local RP Ops, the CAF and DND Strategic level. The DComd is championing our efforts, along with numerous other outside supporters/agencies, and putting shovels in the ground as early as 2024 is promising. The acquisition of major exhibit assets is also ongoing and a very realistic achievement of contract agreements is much closer today than one year ago. A CF-101 Voodoo arriving at TMM this summer 2023 . . . I will let others share that news when the time is right, but we can dare to dream.

Kenn Nixon and his RCAF 2024 team are off and running with the planning of local initiatives in support of the RCAF's national 100 year programs. All our AFMSA volunteers and members need to stay tuned to the *Tribute* magazine going forward as we will be publishing all the events our AFMSA team are scheduling for the RCAF celebrations. Again, I will not steal anyone's thunder here.

Hopefully all of you can share in my optimism for the future and until our next issue I wish you all a great spring season.

Sincerely, John



Kenn Nixon, 783 (Calgary) Wing RCAF presents the first installment cheque in the amount of \$15,000 (\$22,500 total, rest will be donated in July) to fund the construction of the interactive Great Escape tunnel display. From l to r: Alison Mercer, Kenn Nixon, John Argue, Don Mathews. Photo by Dave Lowery

The Directors & Staff (<https://www.rcaf.museum/>)

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Exhibits

By Bob Wade

Cold War Expansion Project

Work continues to obtain approval for the Cold War Expansion Project and it's good to report that we now have an engineer from RPOps (W) assigned to ensure that all the required documentation is forwarded up to the decision-making authorities at DND.

RCAF centennial 2024

The RCAF will be celebrating its centennial in 2024 and the AFMSA has been requested to become a big part of those celebrations. Col Maggie Jacula and her staff are coordinating those celebrations for the RCAF and have had a very successful meeting with Kenn Nixon and his committee to determine various activities to bring recognition to this significant milestone in RCAF history.

Hangar Museum annual mess dinner and Flight Jacket Beer Call

The annual RCAF mess dinner held at the Hangar Museum was preceded this year by a Flight Jacket Beer Call at the Cold War Exhibit. Many RCAF veterans, current serving members and guests participated and enjoyed a great evening of comradery and reliving old times. The evening was such a success and appreciated by all that we are hoping to make this an annual event. RCAF Deputy Commander MGen Colin Keiver and Col Maggie Jacula participated in a tour of the Air Force Museum prior to the mess dinner and were very supportive and encouraging towards our future growth objectives. The following are pictures from their tour and the Flight Jacket Beer Call.



MGen Colin Keiver, deputy commander of the RCAF with Bob Wade.



Billie Flynn and Keith Hunt catching up on old times.



Michelle Gerwing with old fighter pilots!



Bob Wade with Jim Donihee in the cockpit of the Starfighter.



Col Jacula with WW2 veteran Bryce Chase.



Col Jacula sitting in the cockpit of our CF104 Starfighter.

*Photos by Stuart Salisbury
Craig and Dave Lowery*

Curator update

By Alison Mercer

With RCAF 2024 on the horizon, planning and research for our centennial initiatives are well under way. Our capstone exhibit will be hosted in The Military Museums' Founders' Gallery. For those who haven't visited TMM, this is a large temporary display space towards the rear of the main building and we are privileged to have access to it for this exhibit. Rather than approach one hundred years of Air Force history chronologically (since we already share this history in our galleries), I decided to take a different approach. In the field of military studies, analyses of military culture are slowly gaining a foothold. Without a doubt, the military does have a distinct culture and the Air Force is no exception here. So this centennial exhibit in The Founders' space will be an overview of Canada's Air Force culture and its genesis since 1924.

Instead of generic exhibits of objects grouped around specific individuals or events, I really wanted this exhibit to have an obvious take-away message for the visiting public so I decided to approach its development the same way a history essay is written. To do that, you need a thesis and a selection of evidence or topics that support your thesis. The thesis I developed here is that Canada's Air Force has a distinct culture that is the product of the working environment, technology and lifestyle experienced by its serving members. (Lifestyle was originally termed 'party culture' but that raised a few eyebrows).

The topics, then, that will form the backbone of this exhibit are working environment, technology and lifestyle. All artefacts and imagery chosen will support one or more of these topics and contribute collectively to the concept of Air Force culture. It sounds a little dry on paper but human experience will be the underpinnings here since culture is ultimately the product of human experience. Our current artefact listing for the exhibit reflects this: a tiny Spitfire shaped out of a two pence coin by a RCAF metalworker on 428 Squadron (here, we can talk about the skills of maintenance technicians), Don Matthews' Desert Cat Tilley hat with 'Fang' written carefully inside (here, we can talk about call signs and their significance to operations and to those who used them), a collection of twelve tiny photographs of twelve different ladies — all from the collection of one individual flying in North Africa with the RAF (here we can examine the 'mystique' of pilots). There are many more items on that list that reflect broader themes behind Air Force culture and identity and we are looking forward to showing them off in this centennial exhibit.



Facility manager update

By Marty Doyle

The Nene 10 engine stand was in need of a repainting so we got a crew together for this undertaking. Dave Lowery, Phil Conroy, George St Dennis, Don Mathews, Stuart Salisbury Craig and myself undertook this necessary improvement.

The museum bought a two ton hoist and a winch and we were able to lift the engine from the stand. We rented a trailer and took the stand to an industrial sandblasting yard and within a half hour the stand was completely down to bare metal. We were able to repaint the stand in my garage using about five cans of spray paint with a colour as close to original as possible.

Getting the stand off the trailer and into the museum then reinstalling the engine onto the stand was a real challenge but with the exceptional crew we had it accomplished within an hour or so with only a minimum of expletives.

It now looks more worthy of displaying such a unique engine as the Nene 10.



Marty Doyle with the new lift, the Nene 10 engine and the Nene engine stand.

Left: Before



Left: After!