

# WHITEHORSE LEGION

British Columbia/Yukon Command | **Royal Canadian Legion** | Whitehorse Branch 254



*Proudly Serving the Yukon and Veterans since 1927*

# A Message from the President

On behalf of the Branch Executive, I am presenting our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, a document that sets out the future direction of the Royal Canadian Legion, Whitehorse Branch 254 (the Branch) as we continue to build on our decades-long legacy of service to our community, and to serving or retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP.



Founded in 1927 (the Branch was officially registered in 1957), our mission continues to be one of service to Whitehorse and Yukon, and honouring those who have served and sacrificed for this country – whether they be long-term veterans or the new generation of those serve. This year, we are pleased to recognize First Responders – firefighters, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel, by-law and corrections officers, and others who serve our community – as official members of our family.

We understand the importance of honouring past sacrifices and acknowledging the courage of those who served and still serve today. Through Remembrance Day ceremonies, the Poppy campaign and related commemorative activities, youth education programs and more, the Branch helps Yukoners to honour those who have served our country or community. Whether helping local Veterans, raising funds for community-based organizations, volunteering to help those in need, or simply offering a safe place to socialize, Branch 254 is steeped in a long-held tradition of supporting our community, particularly seniors, youth and those who are less advantaged. In the past, Branch-raised funds have helped organizations such as the Yukon Hospital Foundation, Honour House, Mary House, the Whitehorse Food Bank, Kaushee's Place and many more. Through this strategic plan, we intend to become even more involved with projects that benefit and support our community. We intend to achieve this by continuing to raise funds and sponsor initiatives and programs that are dedicated to improving our community by developing working partnerships with community-based organizations and by expanding our membership and volunteer base.



The Poppy is a symbol of supreme sacrifice, a visual pledge that Canadians will never forget the sacrifice of those who have fallen ...

As we move forward, we are committed to implementing our strategic plan. This means increasing awareness of how the Branch supports our community, increasing our revenues to ensure that we are sustainable, and expanding our membership and volunteer levels.

Joining is all about membership and volunteering, where you can make a real difference with your time, talent and experience. We look forward to seeing you at the Whitehorse Legion over the coming year - **everyone is always welcome!**

Sincerely,

Joseph Mewett, CD  
President, Whitehorse Branch 254

# Our Mission and Values

## Our MISSION

To serve Veterans, which includes serving military and RCMP members and their families, to promote Remembrance and to serve our country and community.

## Our VALUES

**INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING** – The Branch welcomes **everyone** to become a Legion member, regardless of having a connection to the Armed Forces or RCMP. The Branch’s Lounge is well-known as a fun and friendly place to partake in card games and shuffleboard or to enjoy the many events and functions that the Branch hosts over the course of the year.

**COMMUNITY-MINDED** – Since its inception, the Branch has a tradition of service to our community through volunteerism and raising funds for Veterans and community-minded organizations, particularly those that support youth, seniors and those less fortunate.

**COMRADESHIP AND CONNECTION** – The Branch is a place to socialize, share stories and connect with colleagues and friends.

**CARING AND COMPASSIONATE** – The Branch is a safe haven where one can enjoy time spent with colleagues and friends, where there is always someone to listen and a shoulder to lean on.

**RESPECT FOR TRADITIONS** – The Branch honours the sacrifices of past and current generations of military and RCMP veterans by following time-honoured traditions and protocols, and by exemplifying a spirit of service to our community.



# What We Do

The Whitehorse Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion has been serving Yukon veterans and our community since 1927. While we are mostly known for Remembrance Day, poppies and our welcoming lounge, we are so much more! **This is what we do:**

## Enhancing Public Awareness of Veterans

Each year the Branch helps Yukoners to honour the past sacrifices of our military and RCMP veterans, as well as acknowledging the courage of those who still serve today, through Remembrance Day ceremonies, the Poppy campaign, commemorative activities, the *No Stone Left Alone Memorial Foundation*, youth education programs and more.

## Co-ordinate supports to Veterans & families

The Branch assists military and RCMP Veterans, serving members of the Armed Forces and their families to access services and support available through Veterans Affairs and BC/Yukon Command. These supports – from financial aid and professional counselling to outreach and physical therapy – are available to Veterans regardless of whether they are Legion members.

“We are the keepers of the Veterans' legacy in Yukon, and proud to honour those who sacrificed for Canada and our community”.

## Ladies Auxiliary

The Ladies Auxiliary is a key contributor to the Branch's mission of Remembrance and community support. Each year the Auxiliary provides financial support for annual children's parties and local, non-profit organizations, purchases needed Lounge equipment, and helps coordinate and support Remembrance Day and other Branch activities. Their dedicated service enriches the Branch's programs and events.

## Community and Youth Support

A key Branch objective is to encourage, support, promote and participate in service to our community. Throughout the year, Branch members are in the community volunteering, while a portion of Branch-raised funds go to support community and youth-based organizations. The Branch and Ladies Auxiliary also support youth with bursaries for post-secondary education, and by providing leadership and support through various education and sponsorship activities.

## The Lounge

The Legion Lounge is a fixture in most Branches across Canada, and serves to provide a safe haven for Veterans, families, friends and members to enjoy gatherings and events, hear a live band, reminisce or to participate in any number of social games and tournaments offered throughout the year.

# Strategic Priorities and Action

The Branch is working hard on behalf of membership to create and maintain a welcoming and inclusive place for members, their families and the community. It is also important that the Branch continues to be financially sustainable so that we can give back to the community and to those in need through volunteerism and financial support. Through this Strategic Plan, we are setting a new direction that is focused on achieving the following three key strategic priorities:

- ***Ensuring Veterans and their families can access the care, programs and supports they need and that Yukoners 'never forget' through Remembrance and other commemorative events.***

Veterans of all ages deserve every program and support available to them. This may include help finding employment, addressing mental health concerns such as PTSD or simply having someone help them navigate the system and access available supports. This priority is also about the Branch's role in helping Yukoners remember and honour the sacrifices made by those who served our country by hosting Remembrance Day ceremonies, managing the Poppy Fund and educating youth about the history of Veterans in Yukon and Canada.

- ***Enhancing our support of youth and our communities through volunteerism, funding and education.***

Collectively, Royal Canadian Legion Branches represent one of the largest volunteer bases in the country. In Yukon, the Branch routinely supports community-based organizations and causes. Our goal is to build stronger communities by supporting seniors, youth and those less advantaged by raising funds, volunteering and providing a venue for meetings.

- ***Building a responsive, effective and sustainable organization.***

The Branch continues to seek ways to ensure a bright and sustainable future. This priority is about finding ways to increase membership, diversifying the Branch's revenue streams and ensuring that volunteers – the life blood of the Branch – are engaged, motivated and acknowledged for their important contributions that make a difference for Veterans and the communities we serve and support.



## A. Veterans Support and Remembrance

### *Strategic Considerations*

There are many supports and programs available to Veterans, either through BC/Yukon Command, Veterans Affairs or local government. These supports help Veterans address a range of mental and physical health challenges, and help them to transition back to civilian life once they retire from active service. A key priority continues to be outreach: helping Veterans access programs and supports by promoting awareness of what is available, how to access these programs, and communicating that assistance is available regardless of whether they are Legion members. This priority is also about creating a safe space for all Veterans to socialize, share stories and to reflect on their experiences with colleagues.

Other strategic considerations include:

- How best to encourage First Responders to become part of the Branch family.
- How to ensure that youth are more aware of the sacrifices made by Veterans and what they fought for on behalf of our country.
- How to increase the membership and engagement of Veterans, serving military, RCMP and First Responders.
- The need to create a museum-type experience that can inform and educate about the storied history of Veterans in Yukon and Canada.

“The Legion is here so that people never forget why we have the freedoms we enjoy.”

### *Impact-Based Objectives*

- A1. **No Veterans left behind:** Military and RCMP Veterans and their families are aware of and can access the programs, services, benefits and other supports they need.
- A2. **A place to call 'home':** Veterans, and others who serve and sacrifice for our country or serve our communities can socialize in an inclusive and inviting environment.
- A3. **Yukoners 'never forget':** Yukoners can learn about, connect with, grieve and pay tribute to the history, traditions, stories and accomplishments of those who served or continue to serve Canada and our communities.
- A4. **Keepers of the Yukon legacy:** The stories and memorabilia of military and RCMP veterans are showcased for the public.

## Supporting Strategies

1. Connect with and provide outreach to all Yukon Veterans, serving military and their families to ensure that they are aware of and can access the care, programs and supports they need, regardless of Legion membership.
2. Establish an informal partnership with service-related government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whereby the Branch is contacted if there is a military or RCMP Veteran in need of assistance or support.
3. Welcome and publicly acknowledge serving RCMP and First Responders – and their families – as members of the Branch family.
4. Continue to catalogue all Branch memorabilia and valued keepsakes to preserve the Veteran legacy, and publicize the Branch as a community archive of military, RCMP and First Responder history.
5. Work with the Yukon government to incorporate the national “Canada Remembers Commemorative School Project” into school curriculums so that students can learn about the sacrifices made on behalf of those who have served their country or community. Other student involvement opportunities include participation in the "No Stone Left Alone" program, and 'show and tells' with military and RCMP veterans in the schools.
6. Develop and implement periodical "open houses", where members, their families and the community can attend 'fireside chats' hosted by the Branch.
7. In partnership with local radio, news and magazine publishers, obtain the services of local writers to work with local Veterans to develop monthly stories that showcase the history of Veterans and First Responders.



## B. Supporting Youth and our Communities

### *Strategic Considerations*

A lesser-known aspect of the Branch is its contribution to our community for non-veteran related causes and initiatives. For example, the Branch supports community organizations through volunteering, mentoring and raising funds by Branch members that support essential services in our communities for those in need such as seniors and youth. With a potential volunteer base of almost 400 members, the Branch is also well-positioned to assist with local emergencies and crises, and to support those adversely affected. Other strategic considerations include:

- How to ensure Yukoners are more aware of what the Branch does for the community, beyond Remembrance and Canada Day.
- How to partner with community-minded organizations in order to learn about and better serve youth, seniors and those less advantaged in our community.
- How to enhance the Branch's ability to raise funds through charitable donations that can contribute to important causes and organizations in our community.

### *Impact-Based Objectives*

B1. *Giving back to the community*: Youth and community-based organizations are effectively supported by Branch 254.

### *Supporting Strategies*

1. Develop regularly scheduled social events, where community organizations that the Branch does not currently have a relationship with are invited to explore opportunities for mutually beneficial collaborations.
2. Establish a partnership with youth-based organizations such as the *Shakat Media Group* and the *Boys and Girls Club of Yukon* to understand and support the needs of youth.
3. Explore partnerships with social justice-related organizations such as the *Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition* whereby the Branch can support, through funding, mentoring and volunteering, community-based projects that may also benefit Veterans in need.
4. Establish a relationship with Yukon government's *Emergency Measures Organization* and other related organizations to ensure that the community can access Branch volunteers, leadership and skills in times of emergency.
5. Explore the possibility of sponsoring youth and community sports teams, programs or events to generate greater exposure of the Branch's commitment to our community.



## C. Organizational Effectiveness and Sustainability

### *Strategic Considerations*

A key strategic priority is the Branch's ability to position itself internally to ensure that the first two strategic priorities are effectively met. Given that membership is the Branch's most important asset, a key consideration is retaining and increasing Branch membership (including those who have allowed their membership to lapse), which increases membership revenue and broadens the pool of available volunteers that can support Branch operations and community events. It is also critical to find ways to engage new and existing members to contribute their time, energy and ideas to the Branch. Other strategic considerations include:

- How best to balance the Legion's tradition of 'members only' and guests being signed in with the need for flexibility to better encourage non-members to attend Branch social events.
- How to make better use of the facility during the day.
- How best to market and promote Branch social events to the community to attract more attendees and potential new members.
- How best to increase and diversify the Branch's revenue streams – and continuing to effectively manage expenditures – to ensure long-term sustainability.
- How best to attract new members by communicating that membership is open to everyone.
- Recognizing that the Branch is almost exclusively run by volunteers, including the Branch Executive, which is not sustainable in the long run, how best to ensure the effective, consistent and professional management of the facility in order to be less reliant on volunteers for Branch operations.
- How best to attract new members and guests to the Lounge through events of interest to them.

### *Supporting Strategies*

1. Develop and implement a diversified revenue strategy that expands the use of sponsorships and legal gaming opportunities, and explores the feasibility of online donations.

### *Impact-Based Objectives*

- C1. The Branch is a fiscally responsible, transparent and sustainable organization.
- C2. The Branch has an active, growing and engaged membership, Executive and Ladies Auxiliary.
- C3. Volunteers are effectively supported, engaged and recognized.

2. In order to increase awareness of how the Branch supports local communities, as well as to increase membership and event participation, develop and implement a strategy that rebrands the Branch as a *community organization with ties to the military and RCMP*. Strategy to include Branch signage at key locations around Whitehorse and surrounding communities, and radio and print advertisements.
3. Develop and implement a Branch volunteer recognition and appreciation program to increase our volunteer base.
4. Conduct a functional review of current and future Branch operations to determine the need for a paid Branch manager and other staff positions (such as a volunteer coordinator) necessary to alleviate the Branch's reliance on volunteers to operate the facility.



5. Develop a strategy to make better daytime use of the facility (for example, better marketing of the room/meeting rentals and, once kitchen renovations have been completed, the possibility of having weekend brunch offerings as well as in-house and for-hire event catering).
6. Recognizing that a club license approach may be hampering the Lounge's ability to engage with non-members, particularly for music and gaming events (unless a special permit is obtained), explore the possibility of applying for a 'permanent special liquor license' to replace the current club license approach which requires non-members to be signed in (which creates a perception that the Branch is not open to the general public).

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For more information, to enquire about upcoming events, membership or volunteer opportunities, please contact us:

## Whitehorse Legion Branch 254

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