

## *The Royal Canadian Dental Corps:*

# HUMANITARIAN AID & DISASTER RELIEF

Canada's military dental services have looked after the oral health needs of Canada's troops in both World Wars, Korea, Afghanistan, and served on many other peacemaking, peacekeeping, humanitarian and forensic operations. In the lead-up to the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Dental Corps (RCDC) in May 2015, this article is the eighth in a series that will bring to light the history of the RCDC over the last century, celebrating the heritage, accomplishments and dedication of the dental services personnel of the Canadian Armed Forces.



**CDAessentials** is honoured to publish a regular series of articles, leading up to the celebration of RCDC's 100th anniversary.



Over the years, Canadian military dental personnel have fulfilled their duties during times of peace and war, at home and abroad. Beyond providing oral health care to ensure the operational readiness and rehabilitation of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) soldiers, sailors and aviators, RCDC personnel have also played a role in providing international humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

Canadian expeditionary missions often occur in countries ravaged by years of war, accompanied by the destruction of infrastructure and basic services like health care. As a result, RCDC members attached to CAF task forces deployed on peacekeeping, peacemaking or combat missions have been called upon to provide care to the local civilian population. This responsibility, secondary to the duty of caring for CAF soldiers, can sometimes put RCDC personnel at increased personal risk.

In the former Yugoslavia, RCDC dental teams visited remote villages, orphanages and hospitals, where oral health care providers had not been for years. There, they treated survivors of the conflict, the often forgotten victims.

In Somalia, Captain Glen Joyce, while serving aboard the HMCS PRESERVER,

received the Chief of the Defence Staff Commendation for travelling regularly into Mogadishu to provide care to the local population and train local hospital staff. In Afghanistan, Major Mike Kaiser received the Meritorious Service Medal for his implementation of numerous partnership and capacity-building projects, which were seen to have enhanced local oral health care in Kandahar.

Canada has deployed military forces to assist Haiti on numerous occasions. Following the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, a dental team deployed to Haiti with members of 1 Canadian Field Hospital as part of Operation HESTIA. The dental team provided urgent care to local civilian victims of the earthquake and routine care to deployed CAF members who were providing health and infrastructure support to the local population.

Since 2006, RCDC personnel have collaborated with the U.S. Navy on humanitarian and civil assistance missions. These missions provide medical and dental services to underserved populations in the Caribbean-South American basin and Indo-Pacific region, as part of Exercise Continuing Promise and Exercise Pacific Partnership respectively.

While deployed aboard the USS PEARL HARBOR on Exercise Pacific Partnership 2013, Major Sophie Toupin was appointed as the lead for the multinational dental team, comprising 45 military and civilian dental personnel from around the world. Her team undertook dental operations at seventeen different sites in Samoa, Tonga and the Republic of Marshall Islands.

Beyond providing direct oral health care, they supported capacity building by conducting Subject Matter Expert exchanges with host nation dental care providers and by engaging their health profession leaders, with the ultimate goal of improving the local delivery of oral health care.

As health care providers, RCDC personnel have deployed around the world in support of the humanitarian agenda of the Government of Canada and as a projection of the Canadian ethos of being a caring nation willing to help others in need. ➔

CDA is playing a central role in commemorating the 100th anniversary of the RCDC in May 2015, reflecting CDA's role in establishing a military dental service in Canada and the close partnership between CDA and RCDC since that time.



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- 1 Capt Domenico Belcastro in Nias Island, Indonesia
- 2 Capt Carolyn Boyd in Bosnia
- 3 Capt Louis-Simon Roy in Haiti
- 4 Capt Peter Walker & MCpl Caroline Winters in Vanuatu
- 5 Maj Sophie Toupin in Tonga
- 6 Capt Steffan Thomas & Cpl Wendy Krause in Micronesia
- 7 Sgt Jody Lamers in Kabul, Afghanistan
- 8 Major Luc Langevin and MCpl Nathalie Robitaille in Haiti