

PEPPER POD

# SitRep



## Welcome to Our New Lifeshop™ Tribes!

It has been a season of love, gratitude, learning, healing, and joy.

We've had a busy fall and the Pepper Pod hosted several Lifeshops™ in a period of five weeks. Our new Lifeshop™ Grads came together and formed three new tribes in the Ottawa area.

In the coming months, we'll be building tribes in Kingston/Trenton, Halifax, Edmonton, Petawawa/North Bay, Montreal/Quebec, and more. We're working hard to share this program with the many women on our wait list and we thank you for your patience.



## IN THIS ISSUE

1. Welcome New Lifeshop™ Tribes!
2. Welcome Martine!
3. Projet Monarques – The Play
4. The Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Executive Council Briefing
5. Visit to the Senate
6. Upcoming Beyond Trauma Dates
7. The Memory Project
8. Keynote Presentation at Sledgehammer Games
9. Strategic Planning... En route!
10. Visiting the Pepper Pod
11. Supporting the Poppy Campaign
12. Holiday Open House
13. Lumber Jill Work Party
14. A Touching Gift
15. Pepper Pod Holiday Leave
16. Highlighting our Partners





## Welcome Martine!

**We are thrilled to welcome the newest member of the Pepper Pod Team!**

Martine is a Lifeshop™ Grad and a military spouse. We are so pleased to have her onboard and given her recent contribution to the team, we're all wondering how we survived before she joined us?!?!

If you were at the recent Open House or the Work Party, you have her to thank for the delicious food and drinks and that doesn't even begin to touch on her talents.

Also, as you can see from her photo, she has previous forest experience! 😊

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## Projet Monarques – The Play

Cathy and Sandra attended the Projet Monarques, a play from Le Théâtres des Petites Lanternes, about the lives of hundreds of veterans, military men and women and their loved ones, (hosted by Le Régiment de Hull). Five actors share the combined stories of daily life of these people, affected in different ways by operational stress injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. It was very powerful.







## The Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Executive Council Briefing

What an honour it was to be invited to present to the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Executive Council. The room was full of the Legion leaders from every province in Canada and Dominion Command – one of the leading structures for veteran support in Canada.

The room was full of passionate people united in the service of veterans and the welcome was warm and sincere. Cathy Priestman, Executive Director of the Pepper Pod, spoke about the origin of the Pepper Pod, ongoing programming, events, and upcoming projects for the new year. The group discussed how women communicate differently than men and how we can better reach women veterans.

It was a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon and honestly, if they hadn't had more Legion business to attend to, Cathy might still be there sharing stories about the Pepper Pod Dragon Boat Team or National Pepper Pod Picnic Day!

## Visit to the Senate

Thank you to Rear Admiral (Ret'd) Rebecca Patterson, Senator for Ontario for hosting a visit to the Senate. Sandra, Cathy, and members of Le Régiment de Hull were invited to tour the Senate and sit in the gallery.

In her first Remembrance Day following her retirement from the Canadian Armed Forces, Senator Patterson shared a statement on the Senate floor in recognition of Veterans' Week. She spoke about the sacrifices of military members and their families and encouraged all Canadians to take a moment to remember.

It was an honour to have been invited to the Senate and we are grateful to Senator Patterson for her ongoing support and the tight bond she shares with the Pepper Pod.



**Whatcha  
been up to?**

**Any neat  
get-togethers  
with your tribe?**

**I'd love to hear about  
your adventures!**

**Email: [gunther@pepperpod.ca](mailto:gunther@pepperpod.ca)**

*Yep, that's right, I have  
an email address! Isn't  
that pawsome?*



## Upcoming Beyond Trauma Dates

Beyond Trauma is a transformational one-day retreat for women who have experienced sexual trauma and is offered in a private, safe, and confidential manner. This program was personally designed by Sandra Perron, founder of the Pepper Pod and it is specifically for women currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces and women veterans.

There are still a few spaces remaining for the Pepper Pod's next Beyond Trauma session being offered at the Pepper Pod on 6 Dec 2023.

### Upcoming Dates:

- 6 Dec 2023
- 17 Jan 2024
- 31 Jan 2024

If you think Beyond Trauma may be helpful for you, we welcome you to register.

**Register here:** <https://pepperpod.ca/programs/beyond-trauma/beyond-trauma-registration/>

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us at [info@pepperpod.ca](mailto:info@pepperpod.ca).

The Pepper Pod is grateful to our valued partners. *This program is funded by the Department of National Defence's Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre.*

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Department of National Defence's  
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## The Memory Project

Every year, despite her busy schedule, Sandra commits to talk with school children about what it means to be a veteran, through the Memory Project. Even in 2023, the kids are surprised to see a woman in a military uniform, which is why Sandra continues to present to schools around Remembrance Day. Her favourite question so far was from a fourth grader: "Were you in WW1 or WW2?" (Sandra says she can't decide whether she's well-preserved or needs new face cream!)



## Keynote Presentation at Sledgehammer Games

It's not every day that you get an email from Sledgehammer Games! To be honest, at first, we weren't sure the email was real but after calling their office we confirmed that yes, the developers of the Call of Duty series of video games we're actually interested in the Pepper Pod and Sandra Perron.

One of their employees had read Sandra's book, *Out Standing in the Field*, and recommended she join the team for a Veterans' Week presentation. Sandra was invited to give a keynote presentation to the Toronto office of Sledgehammer Games, and she also signed several copies of her book for the team.

Together they discussed leadership, inherent biases, being change agents and more. It was an enlightening visit for everyone involved and we thank Sledgehammer Games for reaching out and extending the invitation.





## Strategic Planning... En route!

**Trip to Toronto – you bet – and we made the most of the train ride too.**

Sandra, Cathy, and Linda (Pepper Pod Board Member) took a quick trip to Toronto for a presentation.

The train trip was the perfect time to focus on strategic matters and plan for the new year. It's amazing how much can get accomplished in 5 hours... and that was just on the way there!



## Visiting the Pepper Pod

The Pepper Pod is a welcoming space for all women veterans and sometimes the sessions we offer are quite personal. Our participants require a safe environment that provides a sense of security and trust.

For this reason, although we love to welcome visitors, we ask that you always schedule ahead and make an appointment. It helps us ensure visitors don't accidentally pop-in during confidential sessions and provides an added level of confidence that time at the Pepper Pod is private and secure.

Thanks!



## Supporting the Poppy Campaign

Cathy and LCol (Ret'd) Brook Bangsboll, a friend and supporter of the Pepper Pod teamed up to lend a hand to the Orléans Legion (Branch 632) for this year's Poppy Fund Campaign.

They had a great time sharing the importance of Remembrance Day with children, explaining Remembrance Day to newcomers to Canada and selling poppies.





# Holiday Open House

What a memorable day!

The Pepper Pod came to life with over a hundred people attending the Holiday Open House.

Laughter, hugs, s'mores, giggles, shopping, hot apple cider and of course Sandra's mom's sucre à la crème.

We can't wait to welcome you back!





# Lumber Jill Work Party

**Wow! Wow! Wow! We put out a call for volunteers and the response was incredible!**

Fifty-eight people arrived at the Pepper Pod on the morning of November 19<sup>th</sup> to help us put the Pepper Pod to bed for the winter. This crew of talented, driven, enthusiastic Lumber Jills (and Jacks) took on every task we had listed.

- ✓ Take down dead trees
- ✓ Split wood
- ✓ Restock the wood shed
- ✓ Build a forest trail
- ✓ Tidy the kitchen pantry
- ✓ Move bales of hay
- ✓ Sort out linens
- ✓ Plaster cracks in the wall
- ✓ Tighten a wonky toilet
- ✓ Build a garbage can shed
- ✓ Clean the gutters
- ✓ Replace lightbulbs
- ✓ Set-up for the Open House
- ✓ And much, much more!

We had a powerful crew of women veterans, The Chainsaw Sawyers, who arrived with their chainsaws, and they tackled the fallen and dead trees in the forest. The Veteran Society Motorcycle Club – Section YGGDRASIL also arrived in full force and they tackled the wood shed, trail building and more.

Without dedicated and skilled volunteers, we could not operate the Pepper Pod and we are eternally grateful for the support you offer our team. We are still glowing from the aftermath of all your hard work, your generosity, and your energy! The entire Pepper Pod team feels like we are the luckiest women in the world to be surrounded by such big-hearted people. Our community is growing and that makes us do cartwheels of joy!





## Pepper Pod Holiday Leave



It has been an incredible fall season full of exciting programming, new friendships, and significant growth.

We've had a wonderful time with members of the Pepper Pod forest and in order to recharge and get ready for an exciting 2024, the Pepper Pod team will be taking a break over the holidays. Our plan is to step away from our desks from 20 December 2023 to 7 January 2024.

*(Note from Cathy... I'm not sure we'll have the discipline to take the full 2 weeks of vacation. Besides, every time one of us gets a few days off, we end up bursting with exciting new ideas.)*

*(Note from Sandra... Hey let's do something really incredible for International Women's Day 2024. I have a few ideas...!)*

*(Note from Gunther... Two weeks without any cuddles from all those women? Are you nuts?)*



## A Touching Gift

On Remembrance Day, The Pepper Pod received a very touching gift. It is a painting of a field of poppies that is seen from the ground up. It is spectacular - painted from the viewpoint of a fallen soldier.

Thank you to Marie-Pierre Belisle-Kennedy for giving us this beautiful piece of art created by her mother, Nicole Bernatchez. It will hold a place of honour in our centre.

**ARE YOU A  
LIFESHOP™ GRAD?**

We'd love to share your thoughts with our readers.  
Send us a little blurb on what the retreat meant to you.

[Cathy@PepperPod.ca](mailto:Cathy@PepperPod.ca)





## HIGHLIGHTING OUR PARTNERS

This month, we'd like to highlight the partners who joined us for the Holiday Open House. Thank you for helping make the event a success!



WRITERS COLLECTIVE  
OF CANADA

**Writers Collective of Canada** – WCC shared info about their workshop series: “Healing Unseen Wounds: Her Story”. WCC invites women who have served in the Canadian military to

discover this special opportunity. It is a set of exploratory writing workshops funded by True Patriot Love - Military Creative Arts Fund and the Captain Nichola Goddard Fund. Each session is co-facilitated by a trained WCC facilitator with military experience — offering a brave space to write, listen and share. You can check out their website ([www.wcc-cec.org](http://www.wcc-cec.org))



**Herbal Maker** – Nancy is a military spouse and Lifeshop™ Grad. Her delicious dried culinary herbs were a hit! If you would like to learn more about Herbal Maker, check out their website [www.HerbalMaker.ca](http://www.HerbalMaker.ca) or visit her Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/herbalmaker>



**Ottawa Art Therapy** – Ottawa Art Therapy offers a variety of interesting art, music, and group art therapy services AND... they work with VAC to offer services for veterans ... often at no charge. Check out their website to learn more! <https://www.ottawaarttherapy.ca/>



**Bay Sweet Bay** – Sawsan, the owner of Bay Sweet Bay, is a military spouse and she shared her beautiful and delicious baking with everyone who attended the Holiday Open House. You can contact Bay Sweet Bay at [baysweetbay@gmail.com](mailto:baysweetbay@gmail.com) or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/baysweet>.

**Bev Thibault** – Bev Thibault is a Lifeshop™ Grad and a military spouse. She's also a talented artist who captures the joy, glee, and whimsy of aging women. You can see her spectacular collection on her website: <https://www.bevtbopaints.com/>



**River Bend Bees** – Rhonda is a Lifeshop Grad and a military spouse who loves being a pollinator ambassador! With her own organic honeybee apiary along the Oromocto River in New Brunswick she's crafted some pretty spectacular honeybee gifts for our Shed Shed. See what else she offers at [www.riverbendbees.ca](http://www.riverbendbees.ca)

### NOTE THESE DATES!

1-3 December

Lifeshop I @The Pepper Pod

6 December

Beyond Trauma  
@The Pepper Pod

20 December to 5 January  
Pepper Pod Holiday Break

12-14 Jan 2024

Lifeshop (Montréal/Québec  
- French) @ the Pepper Pod

17 Jan 2024

Beyond Trauma  
@ the Pepper Pod

26-28 Jan 2024

Lifeshop (Ottawa - English)  
@ the Pepper Pod

31 Jan 2024

Beyond Trauma  
@ the Pepper Pod

9-11 Feb 2024

Lifeshop (Kingston/Trenton  
- English) @ the Pepper Pod

23-25 Feb 2024

Lifeshop (Ottawa - French)  
@ the Pepper Pod

### Can't join us?

Why not donate to  
support our mission?

[DONATE HERE](#)

We need your help to maintain this centre and to keep developing our programs. We want to grow intelligently, diversify our services, and keep the retreat centre beautiful.

LE/ THE  
**PEPPER POD**  
Centre de ressourcement des vétérans  
Retreat Centre for Women Veterans