

PEPPER POD

# SitRep

## Happy Holidays from Sandra & Gunther

I approach the holiday season with gratitude and as much grace as I can muster. I love the busyness that is my life all year long, but I also look forward to winding down in mid-December to catch my breath before the New Year begins.

In that breath comes appreciation for the love that surrounds me, my family, my friends, my Pepper Pod tribes. Next year, we will make magic again. Not perfect things, but beautiful things. Brave things. Heartwarming things.

For now, I inhale, exhale, and surrender to the present moment. In this moment, I wish you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season, filled with countless precious moments. Remember to hold space for yourself.



## Thank You to Leonardo

Leonardo has been a member of the Pepper Pod Forest for over a year. Their CEO, Francesco Norante, and his team have been so welcoming, and they genuinely support our mission. We've been invited as their guests to the Italian National Day celebrations, to CANSEC and we've also shared the Pepper Pod with them.

The latest incredible offer of kindness came in the form of a \$10,000 donation to enhance and support ongoing programming at the Pepper Pod. We are so grateful to Leonardo for the relationship we have formed between the two organizations, and we promise to put these generous funds to good use as we continue to serve women veterans across the country.



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## Veteran Ombuds Commendation

Chantal Charon, Sheila Ouellet, and René Robichaud nominated the Pepper Pod for a Veteran Ombuds Commendation... and they were successful!

You cannot imagine our surprise when we received word from the Veterans Ombuds Office that the Pepper Pod was to receive a 2023 National Organization Commendation. The other National Organization recipient was the impressive Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association (CPVA) and they've been in operation for over 30 years.

Not only are we delighted to receive this commendation on behalf of the Pepper Pod community, but we are equally touched that members of our community took the time to research, think of the Pepper Pod and complete the nomination process.

We are so grateful for each member of the Pepper Pod Forest. Thank you all for contributing to the centre and for sharing this commendation with the team.

[Link to the commendation video on Facebook](#)

2022 **2023** 2024

## What a Year!

Thanks to our incredible community, The Pepper Pod had a year of joy, learning, fun, growth, and community. Here's a list of just some of the exciting programs and events that took place in 2023:

- Lifeshop™ I
- Lifeshop™ II
- Tribe follow-ups
- Beyond Trauma Workshops
- Work Parties
- Wonder Woman Wednesdays
- Dragon Boat Team
- SUP Ladies? Stand Up Paddle Boarding
- Woman Wellness Day
- SnowSHEing Under the Stars
- Dinner in Our Forest
- ELLE-vation Awards
- National Pepper Pod Picnic Day
- Army Run Team
- Holiday Open House
- She Shed Sales
- Multiple Strategic Planning Sessions
- New Website!
- Remembrance Day
- Barry F. Lorenzetti Foundation Gala
- WiDS Breakfast
- The Memory Project
- CDS and Leadership Team Conversation
- Italian National Day
- Invictus Games Team Launch
- CANSEC
- Esprit de Corps Breaking Down the Barricades
- Air Force Ball
- Visit to the Senate
- Lockheed Martin International Women's Day
- Beachwood Cemetery 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Battle of the Atlantic Ball
- Testified at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs
- CFMWS Swimming Club Visit
- Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families Virtual Summit
- VAC Conference on Women and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans
- Visit to Legion House
- Servicewomen's Salute Event
- Israeli Defence Force Lionesses Visit
- Regiment de Hull Strategic Planning Event
- Welcomed many visitors to the Pepper Pod
- Many, briefings about the Pepper Pod
- Limitless connections made, bonds formed, steps taken, hugs shared, lives altered...

***We are so excited for all that is to come in 2024!  
Thank you for being part of our forest!***



## Visiting the MND

Earlier this month, the Pepper Pod was invited to an introductory meeting with the Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of National Defence. Sandra was pleased to have attended with colleagues and other strong women in the defence industry, including Julia Scouten, Lisa Dickson, Erika Coghill, and Charlotte Duval Lantoine.

*"We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored."*

— Sheryl Sandberg



## Upcoming Beyond Trauma Dates

Beyond Trauma is a transformational one-day retreat for women who have experienced military 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.

Beyond Trauma provides tools to help participants in healing trauma, building connections, and growing relationships. Your group of 6-7 women will have the opportunity to continue their journey together following the day. You'll celebrate successes, have each other's back, reduce feelings of isolation, and build a community of well-being and support.

This 1-day session runs from 0900 hrs – 1600 hrs. There is no cost to attend, and all meals and snacks are provided.

### Upcoming Dates:

- 17 Jan 2024
- 31 Jan 2024
- 15 Feb 2024
- 28 Feb 2024

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

[Register here](#)

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  
Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre

**Canada**

### Message from a Lifeshop™ Grad:

"I have added to my tribe. I am able to see more possibilities. My cup is full of love as I leave here. This weekend granted me the gift of simply being present, being me. Filled with gratitude...thank you." – S





## Sneak Peak – Outdoor Classroom

As the Pepper Pod Forest continues to grow, so does our need for a larger gathering space.

We've been working on a super-cool project to create an outdoor classroom built for women veterans BY WOMEN VETERANS and we're pleased to say that the project is taking root. (Get it? ... The Pepper Pod Forest... taking "root". So witty!)

Here is a sneak peak of a design concept we're considering – lots of covered space, a beautiful outdoor fireplace, and we'll add in some storage too.

Stay tuned for further developments regarding this project and if you are a woman veteran who would like to swing a hammer, or learn to swing a hammer, please pay special attention to our newsletters and social media. We'll be sharing more info on how you can apply to become part of the construction crew.

***Let's raise the roof together!***



***Even on a day off, Cathy's thinking about the Pepper Pod. She ran into Capt Lisa Evong, a Lifeshop™ graduate, at the Art of Leadership Women's Conference.***

**Message from a Lifeshop™ Grad:**  
"I have learned so much about myself doing this retreat. My past will no longer be holding me back from being successful in the next chapter of my life." – K



**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?



## Breaking Down the Barricades

Do you know an incredible woman in the defence world? Nominate her for the Esprit de Corps 2024 Breaking Down the Barricades!

The Pepper Pod has connections to many of the past recipients including Minister Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board & Pepper Pod Wonder Woman Wednesday guest), Sandra Perron (Founder & CEO of the Pepper Pod), Julia Scouten (Lifeshop Grad & President of Women in Defence and Security.)

Take a moment to celebrate women in the defence industry – current or retired. There are so many fabulous contributions to be recognized!

Deadline for nominations is 10 January 2024. Email your nomination to: [nominations@EspritdeCorps.ca](mailto:nominations@EspritdeCorps.ca)



**2024 THE BREAKING DOWN THE BARRICADES:**  
**Women in the Defence World**



### Esprit de Corps Magazine is looking for a few good women...

Following up on our nine previous special editions, *Esprit de Corps* helps to break down the barricades by introducing readers to the high calibre talent which women bring to the defence community. These women deserve to be recognized not only for what they've done professionally, but for who they are personally. If you know someone who deserves to be profiled, whether they are serving soldiers, politicians, journalists, advocates, academics or industry executives, please email us.

[nominations@espritdecorps.ca](mailto:nominations@espritdecorps.ca)

**Nomination deadline: January 10, 2024**  
**More info: [espritdecorps.ca/women-in-defence/](http://espritdecorps.ca/women-in-defence/)**



## 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 to recharge and get ready for an exciting 2024, the Pepper Pod team will be taking a break over the holidays. We plan 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?)*

### Message from a Lifeshop™ Grad:

"This experience has been the most incredible enlightenment of my life. It came at a time when I needed it the most. I can't be more thankful for the experience." – L

# HIGHLIGHTING OUR PARTNERS

## LEACROSS FOUNDATION

Two years ago, Sandra connected with Roslyn Bern, the Executive Director of the Leacross Foundation and there were fireworks (the good kind)! Roslyn is a beautiful soul, with a strong woman vibe. She supports organizations that specifically champion women's organizations in STEM fields, construction, and research. She has since become a precious advisor, mentor, supporter and friend of the Pepper Pod and we feel blessed to have such an inspirational partner in our "forest". We truly appreciate you Roslyn!



## Update on the Lifeshop™ Wait List

We're please to announce that we are making progress on the Lifeshop™ wait list. At one point we had almost 350 women on the list, patiently waiting for an opening. After a big push and multiple Lifeshops™ per month, we're now under 245 on the list.

We understand that there may still be a long wait, but we'll get there. With 6 more sessions scheduled for January, February & March 2024, we're hoping to be able to re-open registration again in early to mid-2024.

Thank you so much for your patience and understanding. We're working hard to serve the women veteran community across the country, and we couldn't do it without your support.

Be one of the first to know as soon as we open registration again by following us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. We'll also announce it in the SitRep, our monthly newsletter.

## Join our online tribe!

Follow us on social media, talk to your friends and help spread the word!

- **Instagram** - [https://www.instagram.com/le\\_thepepperpod/](https://www.instagram.com/le_thepepperpod/)
- **Facebook** - <https://www.facebook.com/pepperpod.ca>
- **LinkedIn** - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/pepper-pod/>

If you know of someone who may be interested in the Pepper Pod, please tag them in a post... but not that annoying way where they have no idea what you are talking about and they get bombarded with messages that drive them nuts. We're thinking more like a "hey, you might be interested in this" tag.

## UPCOMING 2024 DATES

**12-14 Jan**

Lifeshop™ I (Montreal/  
Quebec) in French  
@The Pepper Pod

**17 Jan**

Beyond Trauma  
@The Pepper Pod

**26-27 Jan**

Atlas Institute for Veterans  
and Families Virtual Summit

**26-28 Jan**

Lifeshop™ I (Ottawa) in  
English @The Pepper Pod

**31 Jan**

Beyond Trauma  
@The Pepper Pod

**9-11 Feb**

Lifeshop™ I (Kingston/  
Belleville) in English  
@The Pepper Pod

**15 Feb**

Beyond Trauma  
@The Pepper Pod

**23-25 Feb**

Lifeshop™ I (Ottawa) in  
French @The Pepper Pod

**28 Feb**

Beyond Trauma  
@The Pepper Pod

**1 Mar**

Women in Defence and  
Security (WiDS) Breakfast

**8 Mar**

International Women's Day

**15-17 Mar**

Lifeshop™ I (Halifax)  
in English in Halifax

**15-17 Mar**

No Agenda Weekend  
@The Pepper Pod (tentative)

**22-23 Mar**

Lifeshop™ I (Petawawa/  
North Bay) in English  
@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