



MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL CHAIR

This May will see the end of my four year term as President of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary – National and this note will serve as both a goodbye and thank you to all the great volunteers in this country who I have had the pleasure to serve during this time. The role has been difficult at times and certainly stretches you thin competing with work, family, and other volunteer commitments but I can say with certainty that it has been worth it for me. I have had the great pleasure to meet volunteers from Coast, to Coast, to Coast in this vast country and while there exists many differences amongst us, one thing was always common: the desire to help those in need. As well, a pattern emerges as you talk to SAR volunteers. They deflect recognition, downplay their contributions, and generally assume they are doing what anybody else would do. However, I can assure you that the service, energy, time and compassion you provide is not common at all and deserves much more recognition than you will ever accept. The greatest pleasure of this job is simply getting to associate with people like yourselves. You are the backbone of the Marine SAR system in this country ensuring coverage and response to a much greater extent than would ever be possible otherwise. You give your time and risk more than most would consider normal with no expectation of reward or even a thank you. The attributes that drive people to serve in this organization align with the greatest of human values: Helping those in need regardless of who they are, where they came from, and why they need assistance. In my humble opinion, you are amongst the best this country has to offer and I my only hope is that I have represented you well during my time in this role.



RANDY STRANDT, NATIONAL CHAIR

There are too many great memories to share but if I could highlight a few that are meaningful to me but also hopefully have a message for all.

Worldwide Team – When I joined this organization, I thought I was joining a small rescue team of a few guys in my home town. Little did I know that over the next 20 years I would have the opportunity to meet not only like-minded people from around the country but also from around the world. I now count among my friends SAR volunteers from across the globe who have shared without restraint everything they have learned over decades of experience. I have learned about best practices in training standards, fundraising, equipment, safety, and perhaps most importantly I learned we are members of a much larger international family.

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SAR Volunteer Tax Credit – When I joined the National Board I didn't have a lot of goals but I am immensely grateful to be associated with our efforts to obtain the 'SAR Volunteers Tax Credit' for our members. While it doesn't necessarily benefit all of us nor does it come close to ever covering the service you provide, the real benefit to me is that each and every year, millions of Canadians will annually see that question on their tax return, "Are you a SAR Volunteer?". Many who were previously unaware of our existence even will now perhaps recognize the great contribution that is provided by this relatively small group of Canadians.

Experiencing Canada – I will confess to all and apologize to most in the country that I am a true west coaster who enjoys my precipitation in the form of rain, our boat being in the water all winter, and more than occasionally thinking the west is best (remember, I did say apologies). However, I can also say with all honesty that I have gained a true and deep appreciation for different cultures (yes, I mean you Newfoundland) and seeing alternate ways of achieving the same goal. Each region has unique and challenging circumstances and I am amazed at how each adapts and delivers service in spite of those challenges. This role has taken me truly across the country including 9 of the 10 provinces (sorry Saskatchewan). I have seen massive snow drifts in Moncton, had drivers stop to let me cross the street in St. John's (don't try this in Vancouver), experienced lobster dining in Charlottetown, marvelled at historic Quebec City architecture, enjoyed the culture of Montreal, nearly froze to death in four block walk in Ottawa winter, saw Pearson International more than I can recall, marvelled at Niagara Falls lit up in red to honour SAR crews, and nearly froze to death again in Winnipeg and Edmonton, (Yes, I should get a winter jacket).

Despite the cold, it was always heart-warming and most memorable to simply meet volunteers in all of these places and that part I will miss the most.

I have heard so many great stories of why people joined this organization but I don't think I could narrow it down to one thing for myself. From as young as I can remember, I appreciated the stories of my grandfather who served with and retired from the Canadian Coast Guard and through retirement continued to wear his very worn out blue CCG shirts to work in the Garden (I am sure against policy). Both my older brother and father before him were volunteer firefighters in our small town. Likewise, my mother was a stalwart in serving the community through a local service club supporting those who were less fortunate. But what stuck with me the most wasn't their examples so much as the joy they seemed to get from helping others. While they would occasionally grumble, criticize, and complain, it was always clear that there was nothing else in life that brought them as much personal satisfaction as helping others. Likewise, I could attest that I have got as much or more out of this organization as I have ever contributed and I know the same is true for many of you.

If I could call out a special thanks to the men and women in the Canadian Coast Guard for their great support, passion, and desire to strengthen our organization. As you can imagine, we don't always see things the same way and debates occasionally ensued but never have I doubted that the people who sit around the table with us or serve on the water have any other motive or desire than to ensure we as a team are best able to 'save lives at sea'.

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I have even gained an appreciation for bureaucracy and even greater appreciation for those who have to manage amongst it every day. They are in large part overworked and underpaid for the work they provide and deserve kudos for all they do each day.

This could certainly be an Academy Award like long message if I tried to properly thank and acknowledge all the people I have had the pleasure of serving and interacting with but please note my great appreciation to you all of you who have supported, influenced, pushed, debated with, and helped me along the way. While you can be certain my wife and family will never read this, I thank them here anyways to recognize the great support they provide which makes this service possible but to also acknowledge that each of us has someone in our life who may not directly volunteer in this organization but without their support, we would not be able to serve as we do.

I said this would be a goodbye but I don't actually believe in goodbyes but prefer 'until we meet again' and on that note I extend a true invite to visit to any and all who might find themselves visiting my home town. You can find me at RCM-SAR Station 2 – North Vancouver via email at randystrandt@gmail.com. And to give a shout out, please seriously consider visiting in the summer of 2019 as this region and City becomes the first location in North America to organize and host the World Maritime Rescue Congress (held once every four years) with the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) and your colleagues from around the world.

Cheers,

Randy Strandt



2016: A Year of Renewal and Positive Change

2016 was a big year for Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue. Several new initiatives are underway as we set a path for a bright future. We completed 2016 with the publication of our first three-year strategic plan that defines our new vision: Excellence in Community-Based Marine Safety. The intent of this new vision is to explore opportunities for expanding our support to community based marine safety initiatives while maintaining search and rescue as our core function. As such, our mission remains saving lives on the water.

This new vision emerged from the will of our members and leadership as we sought input for our future path. Our comprehensive planning process revealed a deeply-committed membership, strong leadership at all levels, supportive partners and a firm foundation based on a decades-long record of success. In this process, we refined our core values as: safety, volunteerism, professionalism, community, and trust. It was also clear that our mandate is very much as a supporting agency achieved through partnership and collaboration with the communities of British Columbia, Indigenous authorities, federal and provincial governments, industry, and other non-governmental agencies. While RCMSAR is not legislated in this responsibility, we are a force for unity and effectiveness across the community of marine responders.

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Our focus for 2017 is on renewing partnerships and establishing new relationships. Our development areas this year will include: provision of our core marine SAR function, training and education, remote community support, environmental response operations and support to humanitarian operations (i.e. non-SAR specific taskings that support other marine safety agencies). We will also progress our continuous improvement review cycle for governance, operational effectiveness assessment, fleet management, safety and training standards, and support to station administration. These activities will allow us to transition our focus in 2018 to initiating new program development and new operating capabilities, and in 2019 to establishing these new program areas as core operations. In 2019, we will also review and extend the horizon of our strategic plan out to 2025.

SAR Operations



Currently RCMSAR has 35 active rescue stations, predominantly in communities along our coastal waters. We also have an inland SAR rescue station on Shuswap Lake in the Okanagan region. All our stations provide an excellent service to our communities and in support of federal and provincial SAR mandates.

In 2016, the Joint Rescue Coordination Center in Victoria tasked us to respond to over 800 rescue missions. Approximately 22% were immediate distress calls resulting in dozens of lives saved; 60% of our calls were urgent with potential for deterioration into more grave consequences and the remainder were of a non-urgent nature.

We are extremely fortunate to have dedicated and well-trained crews with excellent vessels and equipment that enable these operations to be effective. To that end, we now have 8 of our Type II jet-boat dedicated fast rescue craft and another 7 Type 1 vessels in service. With a total of over 50 fast rescue craft up and down the coast. These vessels are only possible due to the support we receive from the Government of British Columbia and the donations of individuals and corporations.

SAR Prevention

Many of our RCMSAR Stations took part in Pleasure Craft Safety Checks. Our members performed hundreds of these checks throughout BC, supporting our SAR prevention function. Our Kids Don't Float Program is also in full force with over 55 personal flotation loaner boards in place across marinas in BC. We've placed many station booths manned by our members providing SAR Prevention materials and information at various boating events and yacht races as well as stations attending public school presentations to teach youngsters about boating safety. We are particularly grateful for our three dedicated SAR Prevention stations in Campbell River, Vancouver and Vernon.

Safety and Training Board

In 2016, RCMSAR has established a Safety and Training Board (STB) comprised of experienced RCMSAR members and a Canadian Coast Guard advisor.

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The mandate of this new entity is to support our collective approval and validation of safety and training practices across the organization.

To date, the STB has been involved with successfully launching our Green-Amber-Red (GAR) Risk Assessment tool that all stations are required to use before on-water activities begin. This risk assessment tool is the same one utilized by the USCG and KNRM in the Netherlands. It will help support our consistent and safe decision making for all crews.

We are nearing completion of our crew fitness requirement study which is being developed by a team at the University of Victoria. Once implemented, all new members will be required to take part of this assessment before being brought on as crew and existing members will be required to test annually.

The STB has also created an in-station PDF competency test which will see members test their personal protective equipment annually and will be required to perform certain in-water checks to ensure confidence and proficiency in using this equipment.

Training

Over the course of 2016, we marked several significant achievements in the realm of training. From a facility stand point, our greatest achievement occurred in June when, we unveiled our newly built training centre complete with our revamped fast rescue craft simulator including five new digital projectors, hardware and TRANSAS software upgrades as well as a 270-degree seamless screen is now in full use.



The training center also incorporates built-in accommodations for students attending courses and a modern classroom area including advanced training tools for instruction.

Since the new training centre doors opened we have taught over 10 SAR Navigation courses which have resulted in 60 members progressing through our program and receiving either a Transport Canada Small Vessel Operator Proficiency or Simulated Electronic Navigation certificate.

All 35 of our RCMSAR stations regularly train in classroom and on-water. In 2016 we had a combined total of 1516 classroom sessions which resulted in 2424 hours of instruction. On-water training the numbers were even higher with 2749 training session which resulted in 6525 hours of on-water instruction.

All RCMSAR crewmembers are required to have, at the minimum, their Pleasure Craft Operators Card (PCOC), Radio Operators Certificate – Maritime (ROC-M) and Standard First Aid with CPR Level “C” and AED. This year we evaluated our first aid requirements and adopted the Red Cross First Responder (FR) course as our standard for advanced qualification.

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This decision aligns us with what other first responders use, such as fire rescue and police and will enable us to better integrate with them when we work together on the water. Each year we have 96 members take this 40 hour first aid course and are working on a plan to have First Responder as a minimum for all crewmembers in the future. Our aspiration is to have at least one crewmember on each active vessel with the First Responder certification.

We've had 36 members go through an in-house taught Transport Canada Marine Emergency Duties A3 (MED A3) course and the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) will be further instructing 60 members in a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM 100) awareness course.

RCMSAR is working closely with the CCG and are involved in joint local exercises called "pod" exercises. These on-water training events are done in collaboration with CCG and RCMSAR Stations. 8 events took place last year between Prince Rupert and the south shores of Vancouver Island. These mini SAREx events help strengthen the working relationship between our SAR partners and our crews.

Last year over 150 RCMSAR members and a team from CCGA-CA came to Gibsons area to partake in a multi-day SAREx training event. Classroom sessions and on-water scenarios took place each day. A CCG hovercraft team and an RCAF Cormorant Helicopter with SAR Technicians also supported the training. This coming May we see another Regional SAREx with one of the key objects of the exercise being to prepare our crews for mass rescue operations and participation in a multi-agency mass rescue operation exercise in October 2017 called Exercise Salish Sea. We look forward to learning and improving our readiness for such an event alongside our marine safety partners.

Public Engagement

One of the main thrusts of our activity in 2016 was public engagement. While stations and headquarters undertook several effective activities in this vein, one of the most exciting was our engagement with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. RCMSAR had the honour of presenting a gift of two child-sized PFDs to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge during their Royal Tour in British Columbia in September. The Royal couple attended a discussion about the mental health of first responders and the potential harm associated with critical incident stress. Later they toured a showcase of first responders including RCMSAR, Canadian Coast Guard and local police, fire and ambulance. The Duchess of Cambridge visited the RCMSAR display and was delighted with the gift of lifejackets for Prince George and Princess Charlotte. The lifejackets attracted considerable media attention.



Conclusion

While RCMSAR focuses on our mission on the West Coast, we remain grateful for our association with the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and our common mission of saving lives on the water. We look forward to sharing and learning with our colleagues across Canada throughout 2017!

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CCGA Central & Arctic Region

The past year saw a lot of changes and major accomplishments in the areas of administration and training for the Region.

OPERATIONS

The 871 members of the Region logged 637 mission vessel hours during 302 incidents in which 249 POB were either saved or assisted. Central and Arctic had 5 Units retire from service and 2 new Units were brought on-line in District 3, where we have experienced some SAR gaps.

ADMINISTRATION

In the past year, the office in Toronto for Central and Arctic re-located, moving to much more spacious and efficient office facilities which include more storage space plus a boardroom available in the office complex allowing for meetings without having to rent meeting room space.

In addition, CCGA Central and Arctic hired a new Admin Assistant to help Executive Manager – Shannon Laird and provide admin support to the Executive, Board, Members and Units in Districts 1 thru 8.

As part of the Arctic expansion plan, another Admin Assistant was added to focus on new initiatives in the Arctic. We all welcomed Jennifer Stone and Darlene Langdon to our family. On September 18, 2016 the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary – Central and Arctic named Peggy Griffin as President, the first female to achieve this office in any of the 5 Regional organizations.



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COMMUNITY

Each year the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary – Central & Arctic has a booth at the Toronto International Boat Show. This is the largest indoor boat show in North America and regularly draws more than 70,000 boating enthusiasts. Our SAR partners also have a presence at the show in the same proximity to the CCGA – C&A booth, JRCC Trenton, RCMP Marine Unit and the Metro Marine Unit. This year 22 members volunteered their time to promote the CCGA, recruiting new members, answer many boater questions and provide on-water awareness.



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ARCTIC EXPANSION

Following a couple of announcements from the federal government, including the most recent Oceans Protection Plan, our organization has been working on expanding SAR services in the Arctic. New Units have been signed up in Churchill, MB and Gjoa Haven, NU. We are currently dealing with applications from Ulukhaktok, NWT and we are in the process of bringing in Paulatuk, NWT, Clyde River, NU, Pond Inlet, NU and Arviat, NU.

TRAINING

Our 871 volunteers were very active training in the past year. 566 training exercises were logged on SMS and 116 classroom sessions.



In late May 2016, a major SAREX took place on western Lake Ontario and eastern Lake Erie. Six CCGA – C&A units took part; POCOMAR I & II, Sandman III from Port Colborne, Hamilton Beach Rescue, Grimsby Rescue and Oakville Marine Rescue.

SAR partners included CARES Niagara (CASARA) 424 Squadron from 8 Wing CFB Trenton and 4 assets from the Canadian Coast Guard – CCGS Cape Rescue, CCGS Private Robertson V.C., CCGS Cape Storm and CCGS Corporal Tether. These exercises tested the shared response and communication between partners for effective and efficient response to distress incidents in the Great Lakes.

The Phase Training program has been a tremendous success in elevating the training standards for our new members and now is being rolled out to existing members. This program was developed by a team from each District, CCG, JRCC and Executive. The Phase Training program continues to be rolled out to the Quebec and Maritimes regions. The Training Manuals have been revised and are being re-printed and ready for translation.

– A very dedicated and hardworking team. The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary – Central & Arctic Phase 1 and Phase 2 training program has received certification Transport Canada. Those members that pass the two phases will receive the SVOP and Med A-3 certification from Transport Canada.

CCGA Quebec

CCGA Quebec has many reasons to celebrate and wish to share, with this edition of The Auxiliarist, the many highlights that occurred in 2016.

Our success and growth doesn't happen overnight. CCGA-Q can rely on a wide range of expertise, enthusiasm and skills from its members and staff and it is because of them that we achieve success.

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We wish to offer our congratulations to all volunteers and staff who have worked tirelessly to further the CCGA mission and vision. Because of you all, the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary is recognized as one of the best volunteer organizations for rescue at sea in the world.

The CCGA has even demonstrated excellent leadership nationally thanks to the contribution of its talented volunteers and staff members. Our efforts to improve the next contribution agreement with the CCG, our work with Transport Canada to replenish the budget for prevention, our efforts to improve training, our efforts to develop the new SMS and finally those to deploy Zone 6 (Nunavik) were welcomed by our peers.

We are making progress to improve training of our members with the SVOP certification which will be available next season. The year 2016 was a record year for CCGA-Q with 583 taskings carried out between Montreal and Harrington Harbour using 666 members, 20 community vessels and 75 private vessels.

I want to sincerely thank all the volunteers, members of the Board of Directors and staff members who have worked to support our mission and save lives.

Every year, weather conditions, recklessness, negligence, technical problems, require our attention to assist mariners. But what a joy it is to bring back a boat whose occupants are unharmed.

Our members do not necessarily come from a traditional marine background, but they are all seasoned rescuers. They are all fully trained for the job and ready when the sea gets rough. Our members are motivated by pride in their work and thanks from the victims and their families. A person who becomes a member of the CCGA is also part of a large family whose history is full of many challenges, successful missions and lives saved.

I feel very proud to be the President of these women and men who sometimes risk their own lives.

I take this opportunity to address you again a big thank you and to let you know that you have my full confidence. I also hope that our collaboration between marine rescuers lasts for many years.

Michel Denis
President, CCGA-Q