

Her story:

Canadian women in uniform

Transcript



(Intro)

Today, we fly fighter jets. Command warships. Lead missions across the world. But for decades, we were told, "This is no place for a lady."

Across time and conflicts, we fought to open every door. And wherever duty called, we answered.

This is our story. And it's yours too. We are the brave service women of Canada.

(Act 1 – South African War and First World War)

I remember the white of our uniforms and the weight of stretchers rushed into canvas tents. At the turn of the last century, nursing was one of the only ways a woman could serve her country. And we rose to the challenge.

When the First World War swept across Europe, we rushed to military hospitals in England, France, Belgium and beyond. To see the world outside our small towns. To prove ourselves where it mattered most.

Sometimes working under fire, steadying trembling hands, we stood shoulder to shoulder, bound by duty. And some of us never returned.

Through service, we had earned a voice in our country's future. And our courage could not be ignored.

(Act 2 – Second World War)

When war returned, new doors opened – though not the ones we expected. It was important work, but war doesn't run on typewriters alone. Before long, our hands were black with grease, tightening bolts on engines that roared to life.

Alongside, women from every walk of life – settlers, newcomers, Indigenous peoples. We packed parachutes, broke enemy codes and listened to the hiss and crackle of wireless radios. Tens of thousands of us in uniform, helping hold the line. Carrying the weight of the world, even when the world often said our work was worth less.

(Act 3 – post-SWW/Korea/1970s)

When peace finally came, our momentum slipped away. But we still served.

In Korea, hearing the thunder of shellfire in the distance, caring for soldiers abroad and seeing places we'd only read about.

But back home, opportunities stalled. To be a woman on the front lines was still forbidden. Yet we were advancing a front of our own.

When the 70s arrived, change was in the air – on the streets, in Parliament and inside the military. A Royal Commission demanded equality. And in 1980, we walked proudly through the doors of Canada's military colleges. For the first time, we trained with a wider horizon before us, claiming a fuller place in the Canadian military.

(Act 4 – breaking barriers 1980s-90s)

The first time we lifted CF-18s off the runway, the ground fell away and the sky opened wide. This was where we belonged.

By the 1990s, Canada had been sending peacekeepers across the world for years – to the Sinai, Cyprus, the Golan Heights and the Balkans. Our country was defending itself and our allies, at home and around the world. And as the barriers fell, we wanted to be part of everything.

We lifted helicopters into the air, soared in fighter jets and patrol aircraft. While others carved paths at sea, standing watch on the open Atlantic, or serving in the dangerous waters of the Persian Gulf.

We came from every province and territory. Different voices, different languages, but the same determination to prove ourselves.

On land, we trained as artillery gunners, infantry, military engineers. In time, we'd serve in every trade. Every role. Even combat. At last, nothing was off limits, and the road ahead stretched wide before us.

(Act 5 – combat and command 1990s to present)

That road carried us into new battles on distant soil. Convoys rattling across dry roads. The air thick with heat. The crack of sudden gunfire breaking the night.

We were there. Driving armoured vehicles, leading patrols through dangerous villages. Some of us came home with medals pressed against our chests. Some of us never came home at all.

But over time, our place only grew larger. We flew with squadrons in distant skies. Stood on the bridge of Canadian warships. We commanded troops here at home and on distant soil. It took more than a century of service, sacrifice and struggle. Finally, one of us stood at the very top. The voice of command was a woman's. And she spoke for us all.

(Ending)

From nurses in muddy field tents, to leaders at the very top, Canada's servicewomen have defied expectations. Broken barriers. Changed history. Today, we stand in every role, in every branch. On every mission. Our service is Canada's story, and our legacy continues.