

RCDC Domestic Operations:

HELPING GOVERNMENT AND CANADIANS AT HOME

In the lead-up to the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Dental Corps (RCDC) in 2015, this article is the sixth in a series commemorating the history and accomplishments of the RCDC over the last century. In addition to looking after the oral health needs of Canada's troops during combat, peacemaking and peacekeeping operations overseas, and serving on humanitarian and forensic missions, the RCDC supports our troops by providing assistance at home during natural disasters and other crises. RCDC also played a key role in Health Canada's Canadian Health Measures Survey.



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



The Oka Crisis (Op SALON), 1990

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) deployed 4,500 personnel during the crisis in Oka, Quebec, in 1990. In August, the 5 Brigade Field Ambulance Dental Platoon, commanded by Major James Taylor, was deployed to the Montreal area to provide dental treatment services to the brigade troops involved in Operation SALON. Four treatment sections were deployed in support of CAF field units. The original focus was to provide emergency dental care in the field. However, as the operational timeframe expanded, annual examinations and routine treatments were also provided.

Red River Flood (Op ASSISTANCE), 1997

In the spring of 1997, a major flood occurred along the Red River of the North in North Dakota, Minnesota, and Southern Manitoba. It was the river's most severe flood since 1826 and caused over \$500 million in damages in Manitoba alone.

The province of Manitoba called in the CAF, the RCMP and the provincial department of natural resources for assistance in supporting approximately 17,000 civilians. Within 2 weeks, the initial request for 100 soldiers to fill sandbags quickly escalated to a joint force operation encompassing approximately 8,500 CAF personnel. The RCDC deployed the dental team of Captain Dan Stuart and Corporal Annie Martin to provide emergency care to the military personnel deployed on Operation ASSISTANCE.

Ice Storm (Op RECUPERATION), 1998

The ice storm of January 1998 caused a massive power failure that affected more than 1 million households in east-central Canada. Emergency efforts were hampered by fallen trees, broken power lines and rivers of ice blocking the roads. New Brunswick, Ontario, and Quebec requested aid from the CAF and Operation RECUPERATION began on January 8.

The operation involved over 15,000 Army, Navy and Air Force personnel—the largest deployment of troops to serve in response to a Canadian natural disaster and the largest operational deployment of Canadian military personnel since the Korean War. All three field dental platoons were deployed to provide oral health care to the numerous military personnel working to restore services. In all, 13 RCDC personnel were deployed.



Okanagan Forest Fires (Op PEREGRINE), 2003

At the request of the B.C. government in August 2003, the military responded to forest fires in the Okanagan Valley. At the height of the crisis, about 800 fires were burning and tens of thousands of people had been ordered out of their homes. Operation PEREGRINE involved more than 2,200 Canadian Forces personnel, who fought 5 of the worst fires over a 45-day period.

A section from 1 Field Ambulance Dental Platoon from Edmonton—Major Costa Batsos, Sergeant Sylvie Marcoux, Master Corporal Andrea Plante, and Corporal Nathalie Sauvageau—provided emergency dental services to deployed CAF personnel. To facilitate access to treatment, the mobile dental clinic was centrally located to many of the fires. When not providing emergency dental care, the dental team transported medical patients to the Field Ambulance location.

Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007-09

In 2007, Health Canada's Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) included clinical indicators of oral health in a national survey for the first time in over 30 years. 1 Dental Unit provided 14 dental officers to serve as calibrated examiners, carrying out oral examinations for the CHMS' oral health component. In total, dental

officers gathered valuable clinical data on over 6,000 Canadians at 15 sites. In 2009, the RCDC received CDA's Oral Health Promotion Award in recognition of their contribution.

Op NANOOK, DVI Resolute Bay, 2011

The dental section of Operation NANOOK was tasked with a double mandate: provide dental support to the over 500 personnel on exercise and provide dental treatment to eligible Resolute Bay residents. It marked the first time an RCDC dental team was deployed to provide dental care to CF members in the High Arctic, and the first dental outreach initiative between Health Canada and the Government of Nunavut that involved RCDC personnel. The dental team of Corporal Kelly Zseder from dental detachment Edmonton and Major Rachel Jetté from 1 Field Ambulance Edmonton deployed to Resolute Bay in July 2011.

Operation NANOOK also involved training exercises based on a scenario of a major air disaster. These activities were suddenly suspended in August when the inbound First Air Flight 6560 crashed just 2 km from camp. During the rescue efforts, the dental section helped care for 3 injured passengers and contributed to the victim identification process. ♦

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.



1 Corporal Kelly Zseder providing oral hygiene care to a CF Ranger as part of Operation NANOOK in Resolute Bay.

2 Operation SALON dental personnel in Oka, Quebec, in 1990.

Front row (L. to r.): Cpl JA Montgomery, Cpl JF Bélanger, Pte MM Binette, Cpl JLB Aubin, Cpl BP Hanlon, Back row (L. to r.): Capt JRD Gagnon, Capt JM Maltais, Maj JC Taylor, Capt JAA Rioux, Capt TW Hogan.