



# **Veterans Affairs Canada**

# **National Stakeholder Summit**

## **Discussion and Actions**

March 5-6, 2024  
Le Westin, Montreal, QC

# Table of Contents

Report Introduction.....	4
Summit Objectives .....	6
Summit Participants .....	7
Discussion Topics .....	8
Minister’s Welcome .....	9
Keynote Panel: Invictus Games Athletes .....	10
Breakout Sessions .....	11
Recognition Breakout Session .....	12
Panelists .....	13
Group Discussion .....	13
Veteran Homelessness Breakout Session .....	16
Panelists .....	17
Group Discussion .....	17
Transition Breakout Session .....	19
Panelists .....	20
Group Discussion .....	20
Research Breakout Session.....	23
Panelists .....	24
Group Discussion .....	24
Families Breakout Session.....	27
Panelists .....	28
Group Discussion .....	28
Peer Connection Breakout Session .....	31
Panelists .....	31
Group Discussion .....	32
The Voices of Equity-Deserving Veterans.....	34
The Voices of Indigenous Veterans .....	34
The Voices of 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans.....	37
The Voices of Women Veterans .....	38
Presentation: National Veterans’ Employment Strategy (NVES).....	39
Action Items for Change.....	42

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Recognition.....	42
Veteran Homelessness.....	43
Transition.....	43
Research .....	44
Families .....	45
Indigenous Veteran Support.....	45
Improve Access to Benefits and Services.....	46
Education and Awareness .....	46
National Veterans' Employment Strategy .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Appendix A: Summit Feedback .....	47
Appendix B: Summit Agenda .....	49

## Report Introduction

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) would like to start by acknowledging and thanking all Veterans and their families, across Canada, for their service to this country.

From coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people that call this land home. We acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past. We all have a responsibility to consider how we can, in our own way, move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration. We do this to reaffirm our commitment to improving relationships between nations, and to improving our own understanding of Indigenous peoples and their cultures.



The 2024 VAC National Stakeholder Summit (Summit) was a forum for presentation, open discussion, and networking. The Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence announced the Summit will be held biennially, every two years, to maintain open dialogue.

Quotes featured throughout this report highlight anonymous and open discussion that occurred throughout the event, not to be attributed to individuals in the photos included. Digital artwork was created by an artist/analyst in real time during the event and refined for presentation through further analysis of event transcripts.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Summit 2024



VAC's Ministerial Advisory Groups  
work year-round to make  
recommendations that improve  
programs, benefits, + services  
for Veterans

Summit is a time to  
share about this work +

 **GAIN PERSPECTIVE**  
from the wider community

Feedback will be used to  
improve future events,  
practices, and supports

**THEMES OF DISCUSSION**  
impacting Veteran well-being

- Recognition
- Homelessness
- Transition
- Research
- Employment
- Families
- Peer Connection
- Access to Supports
- Inequities
- Education/Awareness



Graphic visualization providing an executive summary of the  
VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024

## Summit Objectives



### Objective 1

Listen to stakeholders about how to better support the Veteran community on core issues



### Objective 2

Exchange ideas and create stronger connections among stakeholders and community partners



### Objective 3

Understand how the larger stakeholder community's insights relate to those of the Advisory Groups

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## Summit Participants

In total, there were 171 in-person participants and an additional 117 virtual participants.

When the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence presented the National Veterans' Employment Strategy, there were a further 195 virtual participants.



Participants' backgrounds spanned many disciplines, but all were either Veteran stakeholders, Veterans themselves, and / or representatives from community-based organizations (including non-profit and advocacy organizations).

Throughout this report there are tables that highlight the stakeholder groups to which the Summit's presenters and panelists belong.

All text that is underlined is associated with an affiliated link. You are encouraged to visit the original link for more information.

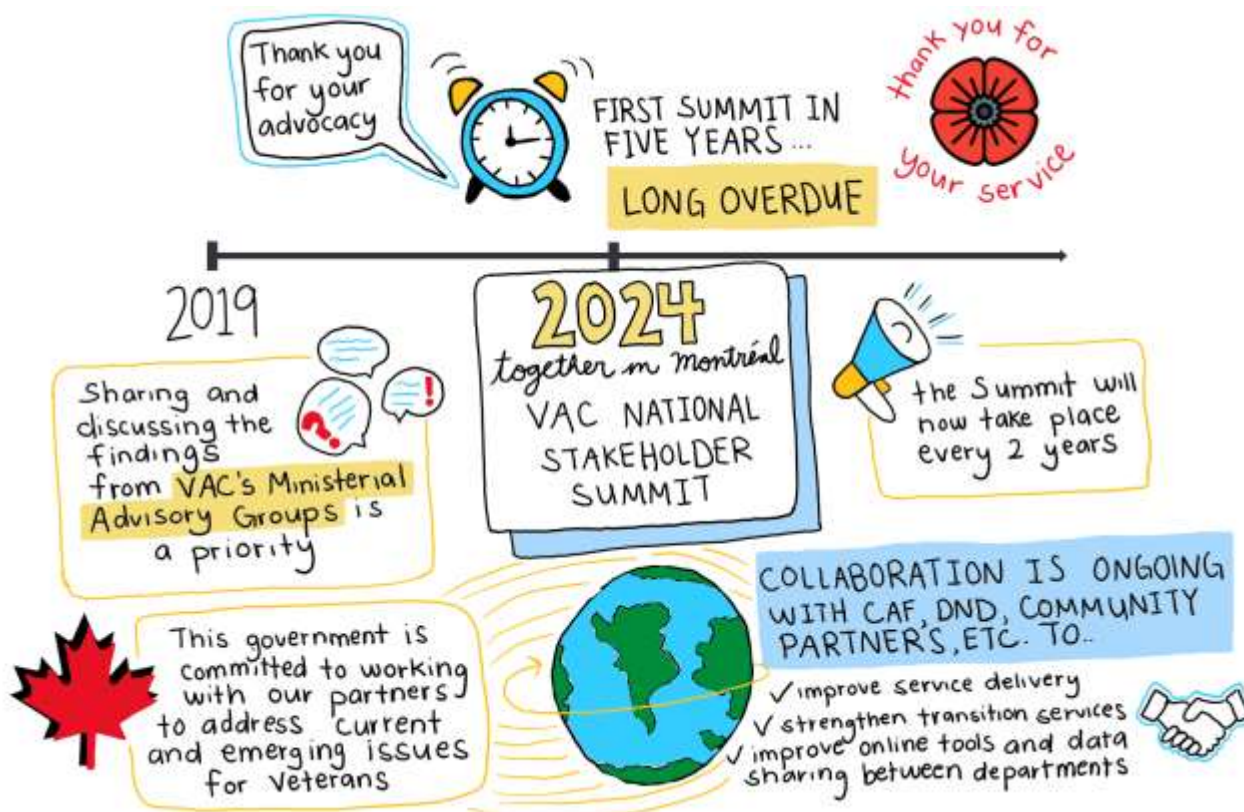
## Discussion Topics

- Exploring commemorative programming with a focus on the service and sacrifice of modern Veterans;
- Outlining what supports are in place to establish trust and support for Veterans who are experiencing or are at risk for homelessness;
- Listening to community partners share the opportunities that exist to better support Veterans and their families through transition;
- Generating awareness of work and new research on addressing chronic pain and improving the health of Veterans and their families;
- Sharing supports available to military families in communities across the country;
- Hearing from community partners on their lived experience in the power of connecting with peers;
- Receiving an overview and update on the National Veterans' Employment Strategy.



## Minister's Welcome

In her opening remarks, Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor shared her commitment to listening and meeting with Veterans and applying what she learns from those conversations to make services and benefits work better for Veterans and their families. In her address she expressed thanks to her six Ministerial Advisory Groups and asked participants to prioritize several things throughout the Summit: listening to one another, learning from one another, improving connections between Veterans, and exploring the resources that are out there to support Veterans and their families.



Graphic visualization of the opening remarks at the VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024

## Keynote Panel: Invictus Games Athletes

For the Summit's keynote panel, former Invictus Games athletes and family members shared how the games provided them with a sense of belonging and a safe space to express themselves after service. Panelists highlighted the recognition they received from competitors and supporters in other countries. Being thanked for their service on the international stage through the games was highlighted as a key positive influence on their overall wellness.



Graphic visualization from the Invictus Games Keynote Panel  
(VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

## Breakout Sessions



Sections on pages 12-33 of this report highlight discussions from breakout sessions that took place during the Summit. Topics for these sessions are indicated in the section headings and were aligned with the mandate items that any associated Advisory Groups were working on for the preceding two years.

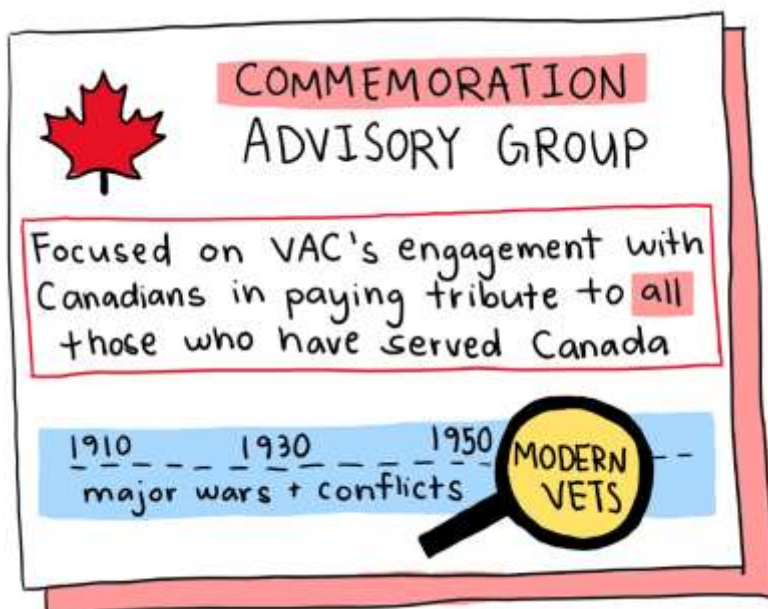
These sessions had facilitators who posed questions and moderated discussion between expert panelists and the audience. Each panelist shared a brief introduction about their organization at the beginning of the session before responding to specific prompts and questions, generating discussion.

## Recognition Breakout Session



The Commemoration Advisory Group worked on initiatives related to recognition and commemoration. They focused on identifying success stories, potential gaps, and potential challenges related to recognition of “modern Veterans” – those who have served after the Korean War (post-1953).

This Advisory Group was committed to identifying innovative ways of recognizing service, going beyond the culturally embedded practices of commemoration for major wars and conflicts.



*Graphic visualization from the Commemorating Modern Veterans Breakout Panel (VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)*

## Panelists

Organization	Panelist Background
<a href="#"><u>Directorate of History &amp; Heritage (DND / CAF)</u></a>	Sarah Lockyer is a forensic anthropologist who works to identify remains of those who served in historical conflicts and educate communities about their stories.
<a href="#"><u>Canadian War Museum</u></a>	Tim Cook is a historian who hosts a program for sharing Veterans' stories at one of the world's most respected museums for the study and understanding of armed conflict.
<a href="#"><u>Théâtre des Petites Lanternes</u></a>	Angèle Séguin is a playwright, bold artist, and committed humanist who promotes the arts in individual and societal healing. She launched a milestone theatre production that reflects Canadian service members on stage.
<a href="#"><u>Rainbow Veterans of Canada</u></a>	Diane Pitre is a Veteran and advocate for the rights, benefits, and recognition of all 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans and purge survivors.
<a href="#"><u>Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia</u></a>	Russell Grosse is a historian and native of the historic Nova Scotia multi-generational Black community of Cheryl Brook, who hosts programs and events focused on art and education about Black Veterans.
<a href="#"><u>Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada</u></a>	Mike McGlennon is a Veteran and advocate for Canada's contributions in the Persian Gulf and for special duty area Veterans who are not officially considered "wartime Veterans".



### Group Discussion

Discussion emphasized the importance of recognizing all Veterans and ensuring that commemorative focus is maintained on the varying experiences that Veterans have, from war time to modern day missions.

"There are so many people who have yet to be recognized because we're all familiar with our commemoration practice... [it] has been so very much focused in a certain way for a century. It's culturally embedded in the way, in the fabric of how we understand the nation. And as a result, there's some people we've forgotten"

“The theme or thread that runs through [commemoration] is education because so few Canadians are familiar with the nature of service... [Particularly on] a range of missions that often went under the political radar, under the media radar... And it's all about capturing every mission and every type of service”

Participants expressed the need to “modernize” commemorative efforts in order to fully acknowledge diversity in Veteran service (and commemorative experience). Participants asked VAC to do more than just talk about the past.

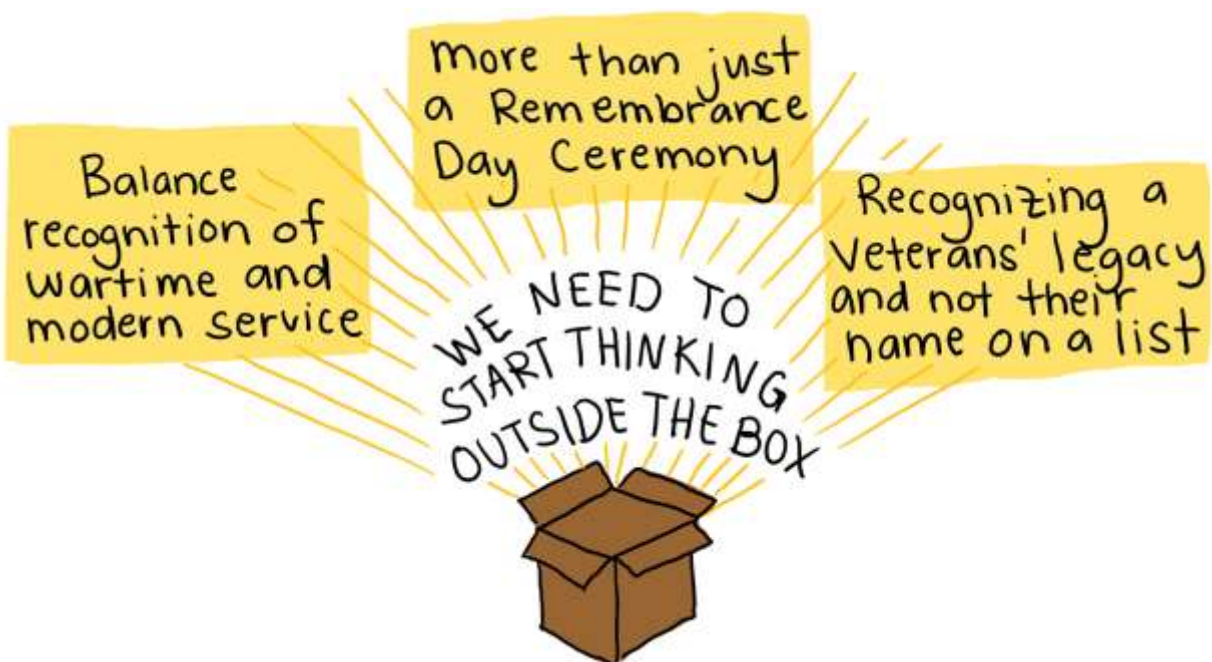
Reformation of public education about Canadian military history, serving member, and Veteran experiences was identified as central to achieving equity in recognition and commemoration.

“Really focusing on the individual, on the human connection, on the emotional connection, really sort of brings that sort of commemorative aspect forward for a lot of people”

Several Veterans spoke about groups they felt still have not been equitably recognized and commemorated, including:

- Women
- 2SLGBTQI+
- Indigenous
- Black and races other than white
- Those who have served in modern combat (Gulf War, Afghanistan, Rwanda)
- Those lost to suicide
- Those who served in domestic deployments
- Reservists

“I think it gives Veterans’ identity. When you think of marginalized communities like the Black community, Indigenous communities, I think that families and the Veterans... never saw themselves as Veterans... I think that the work that's being done now, in commemoration [of] individuals rather than groups... I think creates an opportunity... where we then can get that personal connection and get a greater understanding”



*Graphic visualization from the Commemorating Modern Veterans Breakout Panel  
(VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)*

## Veteran Homelessness Breakout Session

The Care and Support Advisory Group worked on initiatives related to Veteran homelessness. They focused on identifying concrete actions and strategies that can be used to re-establish trust amongst the Veteran community at risk of or experiencing homelessness. VAC is working on a comprehensive strategy to address homelessness among all of Canada's Veterans, including equity-deserving communities such as Indigenous and women Veterans.



*Graphic visualization from the Veteran Homelessness Breakout Panel (VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)*



## Panelists

Organization	Panelist Background
<u><a href="#">Veteran Emergency Transition Services (VETS) Canada</a></u>	Debbie Lowther is a military spouse and the co-founder of VETS, a charity that assists homeless Veterans and provides support to those facing difficulties of any kind.
<u><a href="#">Old Brewery Mission</a></u>	Morgane Huguet is a counsellor and program coordinator who works directly with Veterans experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.
<u><a href="#">Good Shepherd Ministries</a></u>	Marla Newman is a social worker who provides a broad range of compassionate programs and services to enhance quality of life for the homeless.
<u><a href="#">Veterans' House Canada</a></u>	Brigadier-General (Retired) Alan Mulawyshyn operates Veterans' House Canada – the only federally registered non-profit organization that provides permanent and supportive housing to homeless Veterans.



## Group Discussion

Participants clearly expressed the significant need for improved care and support for Veterans experiencing housing instability and / or homelessness, including but not limited to:

- Brick-and-mortar infrastructure
- Wraparound services that consider all facets of health and well-being
- A “no one size fits all approach”
- Re-building trust with the Veteran community

“A Veteran’s journey is personal... Each Veteran is an individual and if we are going to be working together to end homelessness for Veterans, that needs to be first and foremost... a personal journey, and we need a relationship first model that is founded on trust.”

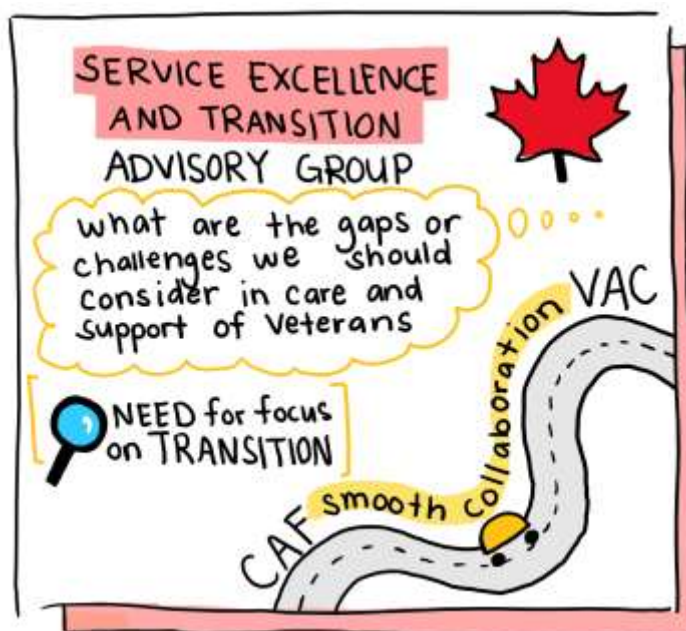
“We have to demonstrate that we can be an anchor for these people and that we are trustworthy in the way that we offer our services, and that we can really be with them all along the path... [If we] have a complement of services and supports... that will allow us to build trust with Veterans”



Graphic visualization from the Veteran Homelessness Breakout Panel  
(VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

## Transition Breakout Session

The Service Excellence and Transition Advisory Group worked on initiatives related to Veterans' transition experience from military service to post-military life. They focused on studying the supports and services available for Canada's Veterans, as well as concrete actions that can be taken to improve the transition process for CAF Veterans, RCMP members, and their families.



Graphic visualization from the Transition Breakout Panel  
(VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

## Panelists

Organization	Panelist Background
<u>Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Transition Group</u>	Colonel Lisa Noonan offers personalized, professional, and standardized casualty support and transition services to all CAF members and their families.
<u>Shaping Purpose</u>	Lorne Brett is a Veteran and advocate who offers online courses made for Veterans in transition. For <u>eligible Veterans</u> , this is covered by VAC.
<u>Quatre-Chemins</u>	Captain (Retired) H�el�ene LeScelleur offers bilingual online and in-person community events and workshops for those going through transition.
<u>True Patriot Love Foundation</u>	Namita Joshi is a leader at True Patriot Love Foundation, which funds research and community-based programs focused on supporting military members, Veterans, and their families.
<u>Agilec</u>	Tara Jones is a leader at Agilec who provides services for Veterans including: interview preparation, career assessments and coaching, resume, cover letter and document development, and more.



## Group Discussion

“The way we kind of socialize people [in the CAF] in order to get the level of commitment and dedication we want out of them... that made them more vulnerable as they started to transition to civilian life”

Discussion started with a shared understanding that transition is a profound period of identity adjustment, when Veterans need to find a new sense of purpose. It was cited as a journey that is unique to individual Veterans and that always requires support long before release.

The challenge of finding a family doctor was frequently mentioned and referenced as central for successful access to VAC benefits and services.

VAC is exploring the accessibility of telemedicine for Veterans, to fill the healthcare gap experienced during transition. This was discussed and supported by participants.

“There's stigma for taking on Veterans, especially if they have had mental health injuries, mental health conditions... [It is important] to kind of break down those barriers and encourage [providers] to take [Veterans] on as patients”

Participants also advocated for more education of providers about taking on Veteran clients to improve access and military cultural competence for Veterans in the civilian health system.

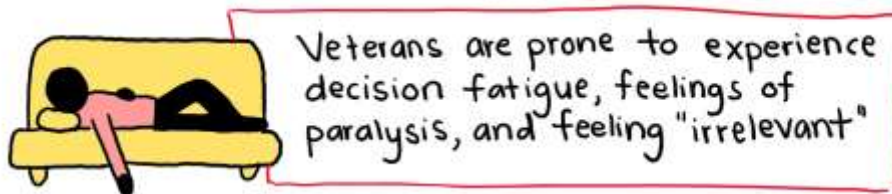
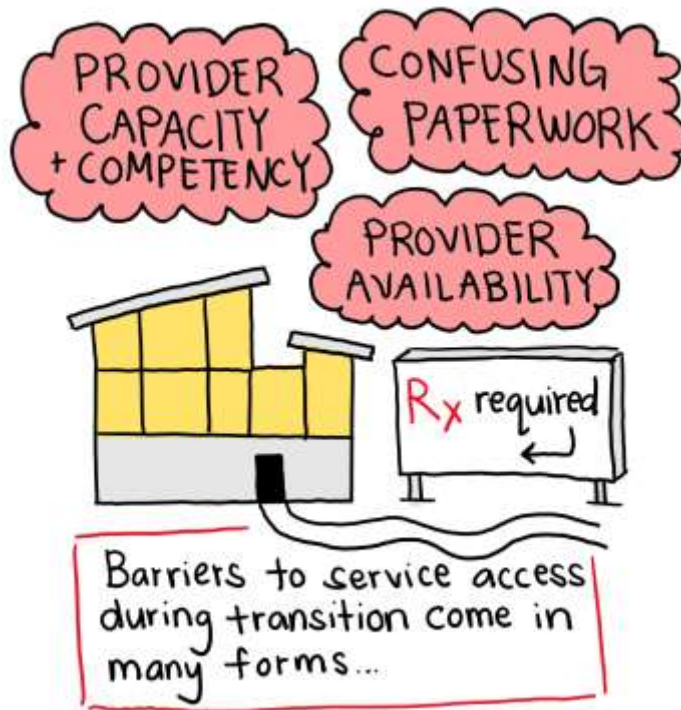
It was discussed that coordination of between VAC and the CAF is paramount for seamless transition of care before and after release. Veterans shared that while these governmental departments should lead these efforts, other federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal governmental departments, community-based organizations, and educational institutions were also identified as having a role to play. Stakeholders and Veterans acknowledged significant progress, but voiced that the pace of release, burdensome paperwork, access to providers, and training or lived experience in military culture remain as barriers.



Participants highlighted the importance of streamlining the administrative process of release, specifically medical paperwork that is required, so that the burden is shifted off of Veterans.

“While some people may have had similar journeys, know where they'd like to go, how they'd like to get there... what support [is needed] is different for everyone. Early engagement [with transition services] prior to release has been proven to be very valuable to help develop comprehensive transition plans”

“My benefits for my medical didn't go through because somebody didn't fill out the paperwork when I released. Like there's no accountability, but I'm always held accountable”



Graphic visualization from the Transition Breakout Panel (VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

## Research Breakout Session

The Mental Health Advisory Group worked on examining research evidence and taking action to improve Veteran mental health. This session welcomed panelists from the Canadian Institute for Military Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR), the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans, and the Atlas



Institute for Veterans and Families to share the progress they are making in health and well-being research on behalf of the Veteran community.



Graphic visualization from the Veteran Health Research Panel (VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

## Panelists

Organization	Panelist Background
<a href="#"><u>Canadian Institute for Military Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR)</u></a>	Dr. Nicholas Held is a senior scientist involved in CIMVHR's leading work in military and Veteran health research, and strong international collaboration to better understand the health and well-being of those who've served Canada.
<a href="#"><u>Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans</u></a>	Dr. Ramesh Zacharias is a physician who is committed to research and knowledge translation around evidence-based treatments for Veterans experiencing chronic pain.
<a href="#"><u>Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families</u></a>	Fardous Hosseiny is a leader for Atlas Institute's work focused on the mental health of Veterans and their families, including research, education, and sharing information.



## Group Discussion

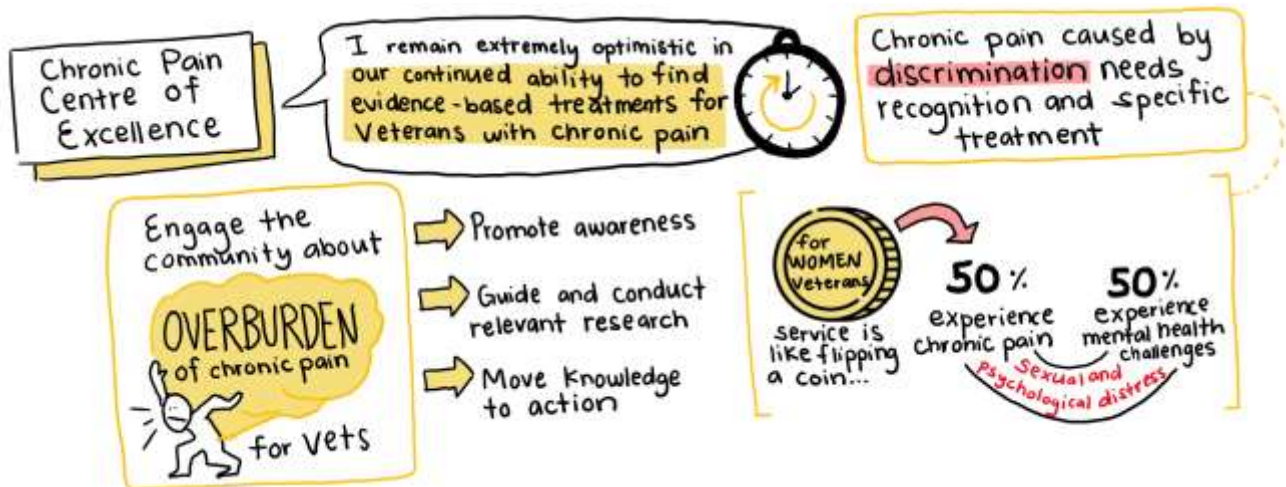
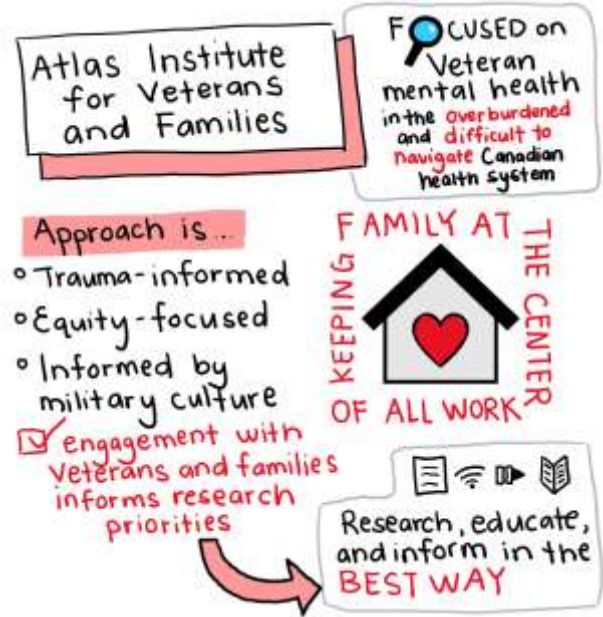
Participants expressed concern that research knowledge is not being operationalized in their communities. Some voiced concern that researchers are not collaborating effectively to enrich findings and avoid duplication of work. Veterans asked for prioritization of research knowledge to action, including understanding how to implement new knowledge in the policy framework.

"My concern that I would like to raise today is the apparent overlap between each of your centre's work. I'm concerned that there's a lack of communication and collaboration between your organizations"

Veterans also highlighted that the support landscape is difficult to navigate – specifically, knowing who to go to for addressing their different concerns. Veterans asked that researchers and service providers be accountable as they build their skills in trauma-informed care, deepen their understanding of military culture, and learn about culturally appropriate care.



“You can't tell a six-month-old what terrorism means... Those violent words aren't spoken to a child... I'm having those hard conversations now when she's 15 years old, 'Why was my dad in Afghanistan and what does the Taliban mean?' And I need some support, right, to, to have these conversations. And when I reach out to psychotherapists and to counselors, they do not possess military cultural competence”



Graphic visualization from the Veteran Health Research Panel (VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

Veterans spotlighted several areas that require further research, including moral injury, institutional betrayal, the impacts of military recruitment, and the impact of service-related exposures on their health.

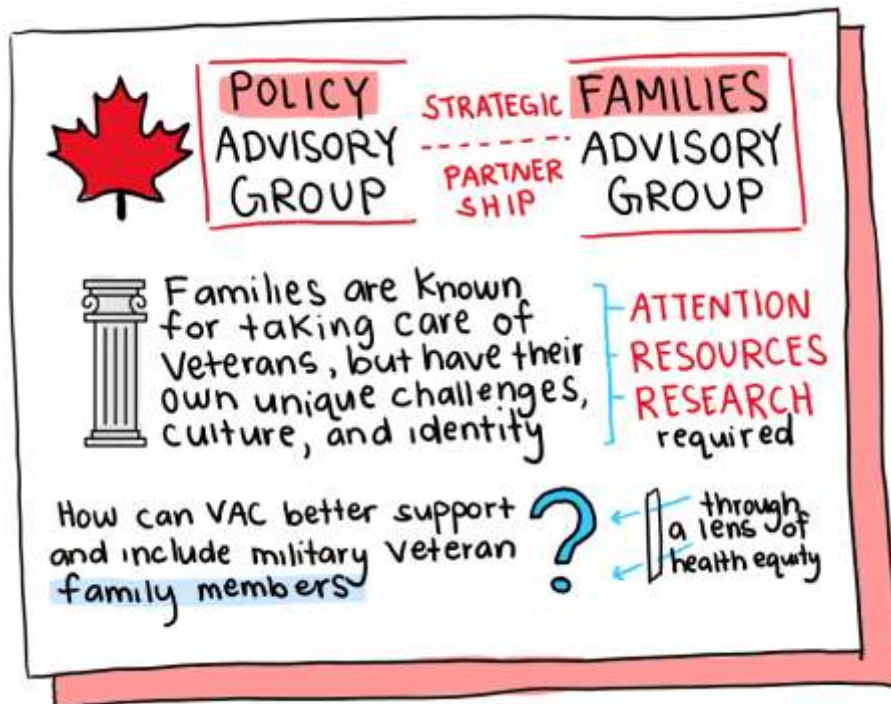
“We know we're damaged... I can attest to numerous others in this audience that I know firsthand who have also been impacted young with cancer post-Afghanistan”



*Graphic visualization from the Veteran Health Research Panel  
(VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)*

## Families Breakout Session

The Advisory Groups on Families and Policy worked on initiatives related to family, and joined efforts to explore how VAC can better support and include military Veteran family members.



*Graphic visualization from the Families Breakout Panel  
(VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)*

## Panelists

Organization	Panelist Background
<a href="#"><u>Strongest Families Institute</u></a>	Dr. Patricia Lingley-Pottie is a nurse, researcher, and leader who offers a virtual system of evidence-based mental health and well-being care for children, youth, adults, and families in Canada that takes a family-centric lens.
<a href="#"><u>Wounded Warriors</u></a>	Captain (Retired) Phillip Ralph specializes in group-based Operational Stress Injury (OSI) programs for Canada's Veterans, first responders, and their families.
<a href="#"><u>Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families</u></a>	Polliann Mahar is a military spouse and advocate who focuses on research for families of those who've served, and mobilization of this knowledge into action.
<a href="#"><u>Can Praxis</u></a>	Steve Critchley is a Veteran who offers specially designed equine-assisted therapy for Veterans and first responders living with OSIs (and their spouses).



## Group Discussion

“When you're deployed, the people you're shoulder to shoulder with are your family... Then we send you home, and now you're supposed to take the people that are at home as your primary family. This does have an effect on kids and [the family].”

During the discussion, it was made clear that family members are impacted by the health of serving members and Veterans not just during their service, but throughout their lifetime. Furthermore, service impacts family dynamics in nuanced ways.

Social connections and networking were cited as critically important in reaching most Veterans and families.

Veterans also asked that they be allowed to identify and define who their individual family members are, beyond the traditionally defined “nuclear family”.

The need for research and programming for military children and youth was highlighted in the discussion. Programming that the panelists spoke

about considered neurodivergence among military children and youth and examined evidence of intergenerational transmission of trauma from parents to children (for a range of physical and mental health conditions, including chronic pain).

“Children’s ability to communicate to their family members about difficult emotions in validating ways and bolstering social support and understanding of PTSD is protective... and minimizing the risk that trauma can have in families.”

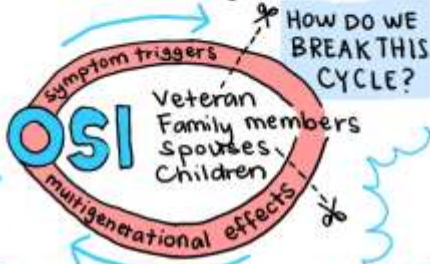
“When I think about the lived experiences of RCMP officers and our families, they’re so similar to CAF... So, I just really hope that these services do become available for RCMP. And that word gets out that we are Veterans as well.”

Veterans voiced the need for consideration to be given to the experiences of RCMP members, service spouses, caregivers, and any others that support Veterans.



# Families

Operational Stress Injuries are experienced on multiple levels by all individuals in a family network



Support needs to come from the **WHOLE COMMUNITY** making someone aware of the resources available to them can **SAVE THEIR LIFE**

Veteran parent or caregiver conditions can impact children uniquely  
Self-blame, isolation, domestic violence, stress + walking on eggshells

More educational and skill-building courses for families are needed that focus on **COMMUNICATION**



While there are clear impacts on children and family member health as a result of service, there is also **RESILIENCY** - with skills, family members can support Veterans and protect themselves

MANY children of Veterans are neuro-divergent and learn, think, and perceive differently

Families don't need **ROSES** things to be dressed in or performative commemoration

Graphic visualization from the Families Breakout Panel (VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

## Peer Connection Breakout Session

The final breakout session explored peer connection in detail. Stakeholders spoke about the importance of peers in the healing journey for “equity-deserving Veterans”.

Please note that the term “equity-deserving Veteran” throughout this report is defined as any Veteran, or group of Veterans, that is experiencing inequity.



### Panelists

Organization	Panelist Background
<a href="#"><u>The Pepper Pod</u></a>	Cathy Priestman is a Veteran and leader at the Pepper Pod, who builds a safe community for women Veterans through in-person retreats and other peer connection programming.
<a href="#"><u>The Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre (SMSRC)</u></a>	Shoba Ranganathan is a leader at the SMSRC, and supports programming that connects serving members, Veterans, families, and caregivers - who have experienced or are experiencing sexual misconduct - with available supports.
MAMAWI Facebook Group	Jamie Lefevre is a servicemember who works with other Indigenous servicemembers and Veterans to connect through Facebook, share their experiences, and support one another in their healing from occupational stress injuries.
<a href="#"><u>Rainbow Veterans of Canada</u></a>	Kareth Huber is a Veteran and advocate who uses storytelling to connect 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans and purge survivors so that they realize they are not alone in their journey.



## Group Discussion

Participants emphasized that equity-deserving Veterans need to be prioritized and included in new programs, policies, and research, with consideration given to their historical under- representation in these areas.

For many Veterans, but especially for those who were equity-deserving, access to benefits and services was a key issue and was described as “difficult to navigate”.

Veterans voiced the need for a central and easy to navigate resource directory that would connect them with all needed programs, benefits, and services.

Participants shared the need for government and community-based peer support programming for all Veterans, but particularly for equity-deserving Veterans healing from trauma, discrimination, and / or service-related injury.

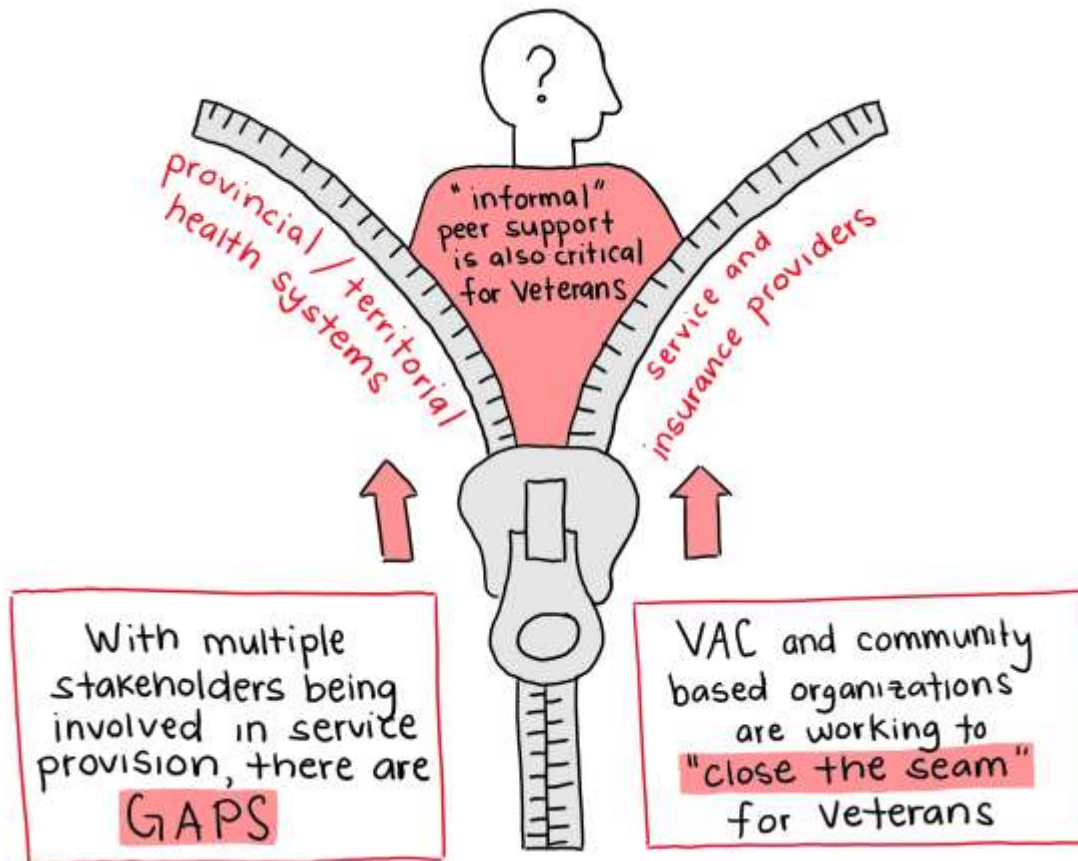
“You guys are putting so much emphasis and focus on structured supports, when there is so much more that’s available out there in informal peer support... [it can be] more effective and it’s more lifesaving with members... having the informal supports”

Some limitations identified, included but not limited to:

- Lack of national programs
- Need for sustained funding to community programs
- Increased need for informal (versus formal) peer support programming







Graphic visualization from the Peer Connections Breakout Panel  
(VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

# The Voices of Equity-Deserving Veterans

The Summit participation included diverse representation from equity-deserving Veteran communities including those who identify as Indigenous, women, and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. The following subsections highlight their voices and input into discussions.



## The Voices of Indigenous Veterans



“We’re not a homogenous group... My experience is not the same as any First Nations people, of which there are hundreds of nations, with very different lived experiences”

Indigenous Veterans and those who support them spoke to their heterogeneity as a group and expressed the need for better inclusion and reflection in policies through further engagement and research.

They also shared the need for a safe space to connect with VAC to obtain support and services that honour their Indigeneity.

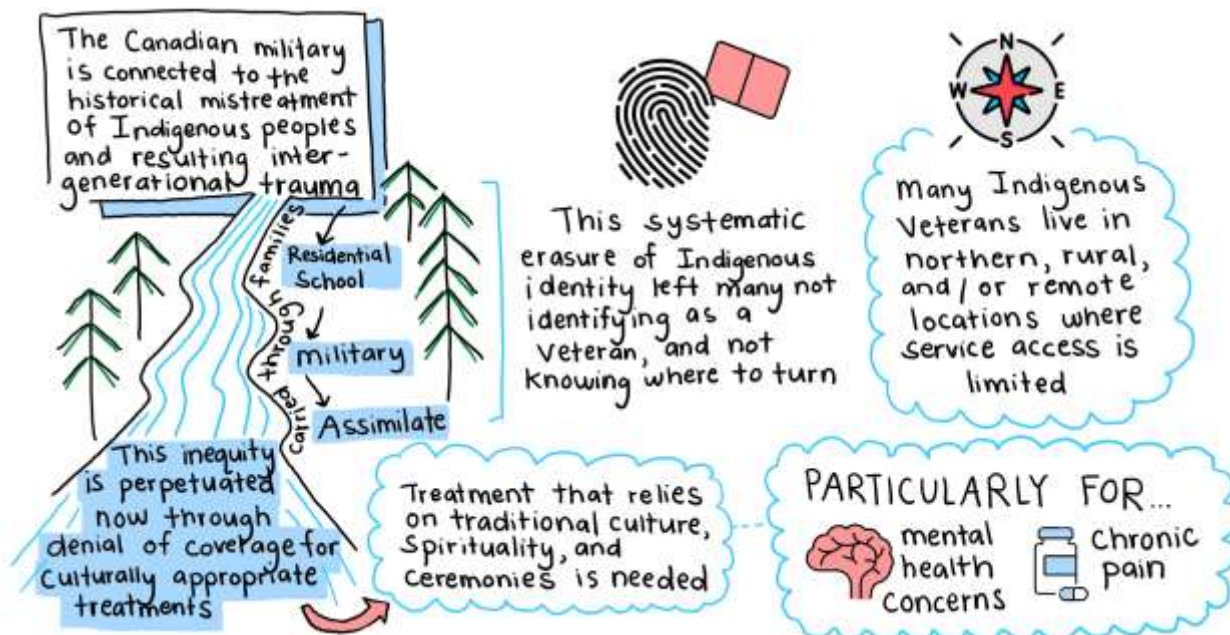
Specifically highlighted was the desperate need for more culturally appropriate programs, benefits, and services.

“Finding a space where I'm actually not going to be harmed again in the same ways that I'm currently trying to heal from is very challenging”

“The transition with Indigenous people that were in residential schools and then put in the army and then the trauma that they experienced when they came out... They have to experience both traumas, from the residential school and plus the army, and nobody really looks at it because they don't really want to tell their story”

During the Summit, there was a Sharing Circle for Indigenous Veterans where senior leaders at VAC were able to hear, reflect, and receive action items for change.

The steps VAC has made towards reconciliation in the preceding year were discussed, including the work of the recently established VAC Indigenous Veterans Engagement Team. This team was created to connect directly with Indigenous communities around the country to build trust and increase awareness of VAC programs, benefits, and services for Indigenous service members, Rangers and Veterans.



Graphic visualization from the Peer Connections Breakout Panel (VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)



## The Voices of 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans



“When the apology happened and we won our class action suit, suddenly we were allowed to be Veterans. Suddenly we were allowed to have benefits. Suddenly the world changed. But we also still didn’t know about each other... Bringing a bunch of [purge] survivors together for the first time and seeing the look of shock on their faces, they realize that they’re not alone anymore and they don’t have to be silent anymore”

During the Summit 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans shared their experiences of discrimination, physical, and mental abuse based solely on gender and/or sexual orientation. For most, these experiences during service profoundly affected their health and well-being.

Survivors of the LGBT Purge spoke up about the need for increased organizational awareness and education about the impact that this period of systemic discrimination still has on members of this community.

Overall, stakeholders expressed that there is still much education needed for those providing supports to ensure that re-traumatization and barriers to access do not occur for gender and / or sexually diverse Veterans, and purge survivors.

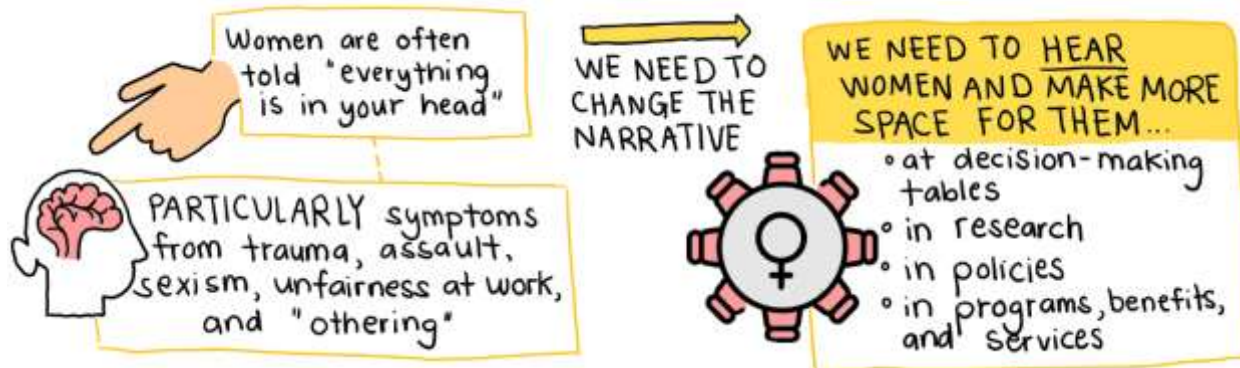


## The Voices of Women Veterans



This Summit brought together more women Veterans than any previous Summit. Women courageously shared their lived experiences and highlighted the need for meaningful application of sex and gender-based analysis. The discussions highlighted that women Veterans feel there are “limited seats at the table” for them – the impact of this was a cited competitive culture and decreased connection between service women and women Veterans.

“I still find it taxing to re-enter a system where I believe there's a lot left to do to better support women, gender diverse individuals, and those who experience military sexual trauma”



*Graphic visualization from the Peer Connections Breakout Panel  
(VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)*

## Presentation: National Veterans' Employment Strategy (NVES)

The Summit's final presentation focused on the launch of the National Veterans' Employment Strategy. Minister Pettipas Taylor provided participants an overview of the strategy that was created based on extensive consultation with the Veteran community, Canadians, Veteran-friendly employers, unions, and industry leaders.

It was built on a shared vision: that Veterans experience a smooth transition to the civilian labour market, where they find opportunities for meaningful employment in the career of their choice.

The strategy's four objectives...

1. Improving and expanding supports and services for Veterans, including recognition of Veteran skills and experiences
2. Supporting employers by promoting Veteran hiring/retention, increasing employer engagement and military cultural competence, and establishing a network of Veteran-friendly employers
3. Establishing the Public Service as a leader for Veteran employment, improving the hiring process, and creating shared prioritization for Veteran employment across all levels of government
4. Building strategic partnerships, focusing on those that are community-based



Many incredible organizations that support Veterans were profiled and highlighted in the presentation, as was the clear need to strengthen their collaboration. Emphasis was placed on the importance of the strategy being “evergreen” and adaptable, prioritizing consideration for the unique experiences and needs of equity-deserving Veterans.

The Strategy built upon an existing foundation of supports already in place at VAC that include:

- The Veterans Employment Unit
- Career Transition Services
- Education and Training Benefit
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program



The idea that transition and post-service employment looks different for each and every Veteran underscored the discussion. It was also acknowledged that for some Veterans, employment may be mainly about finding purpose after service. The discussion highlighted the need for the strategy to consider employment equity and consider opportunities for Veterans that meet their individual needs.

Veterans shared that employment opportunities differ for commissioned and non-commissioned officers. While Veterans of different ranks have access to the same VAC programs, participants voiced that career prospects for commissioned officers were more plentiful and generally less physically challenging. Veterans offered specific ideas for change including innovation of hiring practices and ensuring the translation of military trade certifications to equivalent civilian credentials.

RCMP Veterans and their family members spoke up about the fact that VAC considers retired RCMP members as Veterans and provides them certain benefits and services, yet their unique needs do not appear to be emphasized in the strategy. They asked for strengthened collaboration between VAC and Public Safety Canada in the provision of programs, benefits, and services for RCMP Veterans.





Graphic visualization of the plenary presentation on VAC's NVES (VAC National Stakeholder Summit 2024)

## Action Items for Change

While some questions and concerns were rectified at the Summit, VAC also committed to taking action for long term impact. Organized by theme, the following commitments are being worked on in the specified timeline. This list was not meant to be exhaustive, and changes are ongoing; its purpose is to set goals and promote transparency and accountability.



*\* Some of the following action items were requested both at the National Stakeholder Summit and again at the Women Veterans Forum, those items are identified by an asterisk*

## Recognition

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Educate the community about the importance of recognition for service, regardless of type or duration	☆		
Create educational materials that tell a more inclusive story of service		☆	
Create educational materials that highlight the role and sacrifice of military families		☆	
Create commemorative programming that is dedicated to individuals' service and stories		☆	

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
* Develop educational programs bridging the military-civilian gap, by sharing diverse narratives of women Veterans' experiences to foster public understanding and appreciation of their contributions		☆	
Build recognition of the impacts of service (e.g., illness, injury, trauma) into commemorative practices		☆	

## Veteran Homelessness

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Promote support available to at-risk and homeless Veterans in northern and rural areas	☆		
* Identify risk factors for homelessness while members are in service so that a safety net of support can be established/identified prior to Release			☆

## Transition

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Provide more training to transition staff on Reservists needs and challenges		☆	
Place Indigenous Transition Advisors in Transition Centres across Canada			☆

## Research

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
* Follow through and translate research knowledge to Veterans, especially where military, Veterans, and families participated in research studies	☆		
Share collaborative research about military, Veteran, and family health done within Five Eyes countries	☆		
Share CanPraxis evidence surrounding intergenerational trauma	☆		
Prioritize research on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Impacts on military children</li> <li>➤ Consequential conditions to certain service-related injuries/illnesses</li> </ul>		☆	
Sustained commitment of funding to community partners who support Veterans and their families			☆
* Create a central repository for all military and Veteran health research within VAC's website			☆



## Families

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Support the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families in delivering training to health professionals on military culture	☆		
Enrich peer support programming for families		☆	
Provide specific mental health supports for RCMP families			☆
Tailor supports and services to accommodate family dynamics			☆
Create a new Veteran-based definition of “family”			☆

## Indigenous Veteran Support

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Share results from relevant McMaster University studies	☆		
Conduct a roundtable discussion with the community on healing from Indigenous Trauma	☆		
Develop alternative Indigenous healing services		☆	
Create a directory of Elders in communities across the country for transitioning members to be connected with		☆	
Increase availability of health professionals (doctors) in rural and northern areas to complete VAC paperwork			☆

## Improve Access to Benefits and Services

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Launch a de-bunking campaign to dispel common myths about accessing VAC benefits	☆		
Simplify processes for Veterans in accessing benefits and understanding their entitlements	☆		
Review the \$20,000 earning limit for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program			☆
Direct federal funding to provinces and territories to improve Veteran access to mental health services			☆

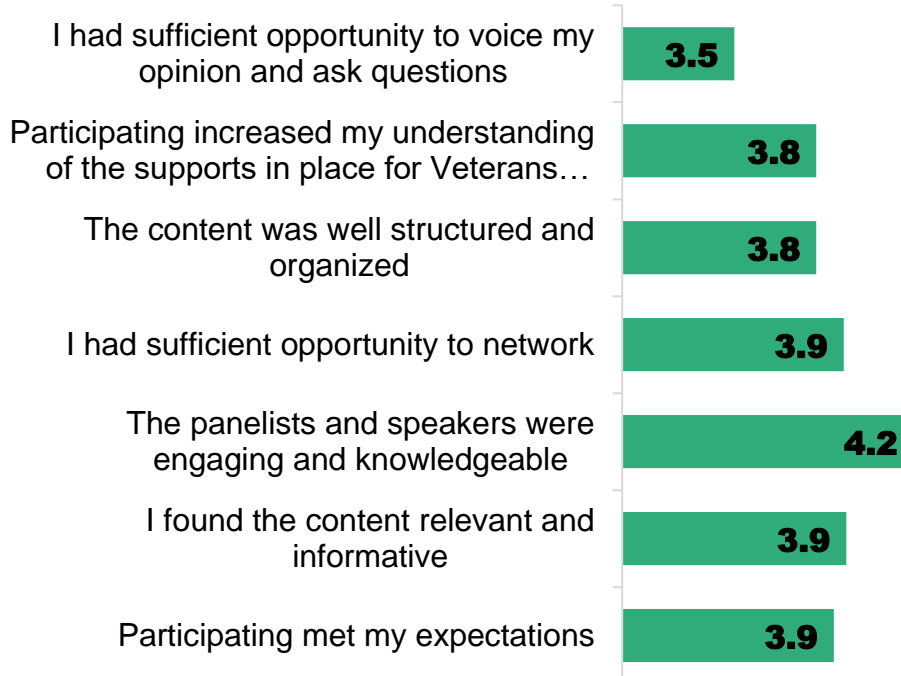
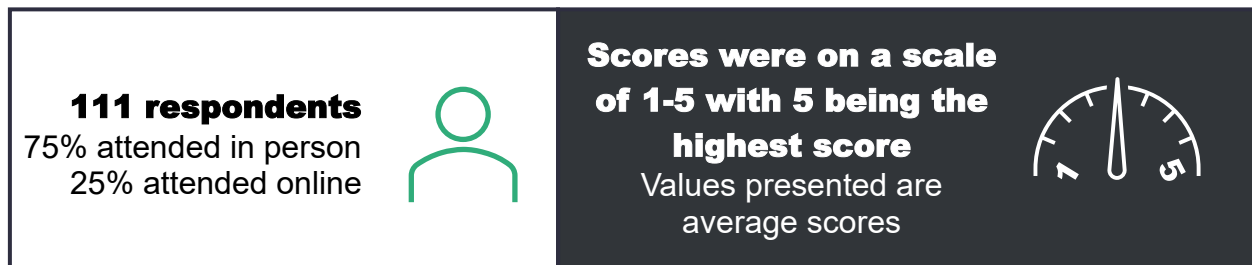
## Education and Awareness

ACTION ITEMS	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Develop a repository of Veteran community partners on VAC's website		☆	
* Expand the number of community partner exhibitors at future events			☆

## Appendix A: Summit Feedback

As is standard procedure after an event, VAC sent attendees an electronic evaluation to provide feedback about the event. Key results are reviewed in this section, and all responses have been retained.

Based on the feedback, participating met the expectations of many Veterans. Survey respondents on average gave high scores to the relevance and informativeness of the Summit's content, the opportunity it provided to network, and particularly the engagement and knowledge of the panelists and speakers.



The following are key highlights from participant's written responses to the survey:



Many referred to the desire for more collaborative group work where stakeholders could work together and present their ideas on behalf of the group.



Some voiced the need to make it clear to all stakeholders that the intent of the Summit is to discuss work in the Veteran community, and not to solicit funding and/or business.



Respondents appreciated the virtually accessible and user-friendly platform.



Some suggestions included having fewer sessions concurrently and having less panelists, so more can be presented and discussed thoroughly.

This detailed feedback provided by respondents will be incorporated in the planning of the next Summit in 2026, including the valuable recommendations for future events that were outlined.



## Appendix B: Summit Agenda

Master of Ceremony – Sophie Roussin, Area Director, Montreal

DAY 1			
Time	Description	Intent	Lead
9:00 – 9:30	<b>Coffee</b>	Coffee is served with time for members to arrive and informally meet.	All
9:30 – 10:00	<b>Indigenous Tribute</b>	Mohawk nation Dancers, Drummers and Blessing (Mohawk RCL).	
10:00 – 10:15	<b>Introduction</b>	Set the table for the Summit, share objectives and introduce the Minister.	Paul Ledwell, Deputy Minister
10:15 – 10:45	<b>Welcome</b>	Welcome remarks by the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence.	Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence
10:45 – 11:00	<b>Break</b>		
11:00 – 11:45	<b>Panel - Invictus Games Competitors</b>	<p>Paul Ledwell, Deputy Minister, will introduce the panel.</p> <p>Objective: to hear the journeys of Invictus Games competitors through transition and overcoming adversity. Competitors:</p> <p><b>Competitors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master Corporal James Gendron (Invictus 2023)</li> <li>• Sergeant Amanda Landry</li> <li>• Master Corporal (Retired) Natalie Pye-Keenan (Invictus 2022)</li> </ul>	<b>Facilitator:</b> Amanda Brazeau

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second Lieutenant (Retired) Natalie Chafe-Yuan, Invictus Games 2023</li> </ul>	
11:45 – 13:15	<b>Lunch</b>		
13:15 – 14:30	<b>Concurrent breakout sessions</b>	<p>Presentations from partner organizations that support Veterans and their families on key themes tied to the Minister’s mandate and the work of the Minister’s Advisory groups.</p> <p><b>Participants can choose which presentation to attend.</b></p>	Facilitators are the co-chairs of ministerial advisory groups.
	<p><b>Session 1 – Commemorating modern Veterans</b></p> <p>Room- Montreal (11<sup>th</sup> floor)</p>	<p><b>Commemorating Modern Veterans:</b></p> <p>This session will explore commemorative programming to with a focus on the service and sacrifice of modern-day Veterans.</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Sarah Lockyer, Directorate of History and Heritage –Department of National Defense</li> <li>• Tim Cook, Canadian War Museum</li> <li>• Angèle Séguin, Théâtre des Petites Lanernes</li> <li>• Diane Pitre, Rainbow Veterans</li> <li>• Russell Grosse, Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia</li> <li>• Mike McGlennon, Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada</li> </ul>	<p><b>Facilitators:</b></p> <p>Lee Windsor &amp; Paul Thomson (Commemoration Advisory group co-chairs)</p>

	<p><b>Session 2 – Veteran Homelessness</b></p> <p>Room- Viger (8<sup>th</sup> floor)</p>	<p><b>Veteran Homelessness:</b></p> <p>This session will hear from community-partners on what supports are in place to establish trust and support for those Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debbie Lowther, VETS Canada</li> <li>• Morgane Huguet, Old Brewery Mission</li> <li>• Marla Newman, Good Shepherds Ministries</li> <li>• Brigadier General (retired) Alan Mulawyshyn, Veterans House Canada</li> </ul>	<p><b>Facilitators:</b></p> <p>Mary Boutette &amp; Jane Hicks (Care and Support Advisory group co-chairs)</p>
	<p><b>Session 3 – Veteran Transition</b></p> <p>Room- Palais (8<sup>th</sup> floor)</p>	<p><b>Veteran Transition:</b></p> <p>This session will hear from community partners on the opportunities that exist to better support Veterans and their families through transition.</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colonel Lisa Noonan, Director Transition Services and Policies, Canadian Armed Forces Transition Group, Canadian Armed Forces.</li> <li>• Namita Joshi, True Patriot Love</li> <li>• Tara Jones, Agilec</li> <li>• Captain (Retired) Hélène LeScelleur, Quatre-Chemins</li> <li>• Lorne Brett, Shaping Purpose</li> </ul>	<p><b>Facilitators:</b></p> <p>Jessica Hewett &amp; Trudie Mackinnon (Service Excellence and Transition Advisory group co-chairs)</p>
14:30 – 15:00	<b>Break</b>		

15:00 – 16:00	<b>Plenary discussion</b>	Participants share the highlights from breakout sessions with all participants.	All
16:00 – 16:15	<b>Wrap up</b>	Reflection on Day 1 and overview of Day 2.	Paul Ledwell, Deputy Minister

<b>DAY 2</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Intent</b>	<b>Lead</b>
9:00 – 9:15	<b>Welcome</b>	Welcome by the Minister – Minister’s perspectives on previous day.	Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence
9:15 – 10:30	<b>Presentation on Veterans Health Research</b>	<p>Overview of work and new research regarding the health of Veterans and their families and chronic pain in Veterans.</p> <p><b>Participants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fardous Hosseiny, Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families</li> <li>• Dr. Ramesh Zacharias, Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans</li> <li>• Dr. Nicholas Held, Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research</li> </ul>	<b>Facilitators:</b> Dennis MacKenzie, Alannah Gilmore and Cyd Courchesne (Mental Health Advisory group co-chairs)
10:30 – 11:00	<b>Break</b>		
11:00 – 12:15	<b>Concurrent Breakout sessions</b>	Presentations from partner organizations that support Veterans and their families on key themes tied to the Minister’s mandate and the work of the Minister’s Advisory groups.	

		<b>Participants can choose which presentation to attend.</b>	
	<b>Session 1 – Families</b>  Room- Montreal (11 <sup>th</sup> floor)	<b>Families:</b>  This session will hear from community partners on supports available to military families.  <b>Panelists:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Patricia Lingley-Pottie, Strongest Families Institute</li> <li>• Polliann Maher, Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families</li> <li>• Phillip Ralph, Wounded Warriors</li> <li>• Steve Critchley, Can Praxis</li> </ul>	<b>Facilitators:</b> Laryssa Lamrock, Brian Forbes & Mitch Freeman
	<b>Session 2 – Peer connections</b>  Room- Palais (8 <sup>th</sup> floor)	<b>Peer Connections:</b>  This session will have community partners share their lived experience in the power of connecting with peers.  Parliamentary Secretary Randeep Sarai to introduce panel.  <b>Panelists:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cathy Priestman, the Pepper Pod</li> <li>• Jamie Lefebvre, MAMAWI</li> <li>• Kareth Huber, Rainbow Veterans</li> <li>• Julie Drury, Veterans Affairs Canada</li> <li>• Shoba Ranganathan, Sexual Misconduct Support &amp; Resource Centre</li> </ul>	<b>Facilitator:</b> Pamela Harrison - Director General, Community Engagement Division
12:15 – 13:45	<b>Lunch</b>		
13:45 – 14:30	<b>Plenary discussion</b>	Participants share the highlights from breakout sessions.	All
14:30 – 15:30	<b>Presentation – Overview</b>	<b>National Veterans Employment Strategy:</b>	Minister of Veterans

	of key components and goals of VAC's National Veterans Employment Strategy	The Honourable Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence will share the core elements and overview of the National Veterans Employment Strategy followed by a Question and Answer period.	Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence  <b>Facilitator:</b> Steven Harris – Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery
15:30 – 16:00	<b>Wrap up fireside chat</b>	<b>Fireside Chat:</b> Minister Petitpas Taylor to host a fireside chat with facilitators on key takeaways from past two days.  Dennis MacKenzie, Lee Windsor, Laryssa Lamrock, Alannah Gilmore, Jessica Hewett and Mary Boutette, Brian Forbes.	<b>Facilitator:</b> Amy Meunier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Commemoration and Public Affairs