

Transcript: Women Veterans Community Update on the Invisible No More (INM) Project, April 28, 2026

 ***Speaker: Dr. Maya Eichler, INM Project Co-Lead***

0:05

Bienvenue and welcome to a community update for the Invisible No More Project on April 28, 2026.

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Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to learn more about the project.

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My name is Dr. Maya Eichler. I'm the director of the Centre for Social Innovation and Community Engagement in Military Affairs, also known as SICEMA.

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The Centre is located at Mount Saint Vincent University, or MSVU, which is in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and which is where I work as a professor.

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I'm grateful to be working and living in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq.

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This update today is intended for women Veterans, community partners, researchers, policy makers, and really anyone interested in the implementation of the Invisible No More report.

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A bit of background on me.

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For over two decades I've been doing research on militaries, Veterans, and International Security, with a particular focus on women and gender.

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For the last decade, I have worked directly with members of the women Veteran community to advance research and advocacy, especially around women's experiences of military life, the transition to civilian life, and women's health and well-being, including issues related to military sexual trauma or MST.

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Since 2019, I have also been working on women Veteran issues together with the National Association of Federal Retirees, and from 2022 to 2025, I co-led the Transforming Military Cultures or TMC Network, which some of you might be familiar with.

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That network was funded by DND, the Department of National Defence.

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If you would like to learn more about any of my past academic work, it's probably easiest to just Google my last name, Eichler and MSVU.

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If you want to learn more about the TMC Network specifically, please Google TMC and MSVU.

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Today I want to share with you more information about the Invisible Normal Project or INM Project for short.

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This project I am co-leading with women Veterans.

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At the center of the INM Project lies the parliamentary report *Invisible No More. The Experiences of Canadian Women Veterans*.

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This report was tabled in Parliament on June 12, 2024, following a study supported across political party lines.

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The report includes 42 recommendations on how to further improve the research, policies, benefits, services, care and recognition of military, RCMP and women Veterans.

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When the report came out, the questions so many of us had based on experience with other parliamentary reports was: Is this report going to collect dust on a shelf like so many before or is this report going to be the one that makes the difference?

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Is this the report that is going to tip the scale towards accountability, justice, transparency, and healing for women Veterans whose experiences have too often been overlooked?

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Now, rather than wait and see, my Veteran Project Co-Lead Dr. Karen Breeck and I decided to ensure that this report would be different.

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But this report, which is based on one year of women Veteran's testimony, would not gather dust.

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And that it would make a difference for women Veterans.

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So we created a project that connects research with lived experience and advocacy voices and helps to define best practices.

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The Invisible No More Project, or again INM Project for short, includes research but also includes a number of other activities that go beyond research, and I'll share more details about those shortly.

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The main purpose of the INM Project is to build momentum for implementation of the 42 recommendations in the parliamentary report.

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Our goal is not only to support implementation of the recommendations, but to help ensure that they're implemented in ways that make sense to those with lived experience.

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This project is built on a simple principle.

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Work affecting women Veterans should be done with them, not only by others speaking for them.

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As project partners, women Veterans are helping to shape the INM Project from beginning to end.

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The project is grounded in lived experience, action, and trauma- and violence-aware best practices.

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Ultimately, our project aims to support implementation of report recommendations in a way that is coordinated, accountable, and useful to the community the recommendations are meant to serve.

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We therefore have designed all parts of this project together with women Veterans through what is called a Participatory Action Research or PAR methodology.

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This means all the work done on this project is done collaboratively with women Veterans and with the aim of translating research into positive change.

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There are presently seven women Veterans on our project team.

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In alphabetical order, they are Karen Breeck, Karen Davis, Crystal Harris, H  l  ne LeScelleur, Nancy Taber, Caleigh Wong and Darlene Worth (RCMP).

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We also have other amazing team members who are not Veterans but allies, including Julianne Acker-Verney, Tammy George, Ruth Stanley-Aikens, Chris Edwards, who leads our Emerging Researchers group.

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And finally, we have members of the National Association of Federal Retirees Advocacy Branch, Jessica Searson and Gabrielle Lavoie.

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We also have an amazing project manager who coordinates everything and keeps us all on track, which is Kimberley Smith-Evans.

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You can read more about all our project team members on our website, which is www.msvu.ca/InvisibleNoMore, and you can go to "Meet the Teams" tab.

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You can also find our project's main homepage very easily by just Googling MSVU Invisible No More.

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So what actually is the Invisible No More Project?

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It can be a bit confusing because our project actually has many different strands, as I want to explain next.

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The first thing to note is that our project includes research activities as well as activities that are not directly related to research and that are more about building capacity and community for women Veterans.

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But let me first talk about some of the research activities.

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There are two main research activities.

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First of all, the interviews.

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We are currently conducting interviews with women Veterans who testified or submitted a written brief in the study by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, or ACVA for short, on the Experience of Canadian Women Veterans.

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And so that is the study that resulted in the Invisible No More report.

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We have three main interviewers, Karen Davis, Ruth Stanley-Aikens and myself. And in the interviews, we're asking women about their experiences of participating in the AVCA study, their lessons learnt about being part of parliamentary processes, and their hopes for the implementation of the recommendations and the future of women Veterans in Canada.

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We're also interested in interviewing women Veterans who wanted to testify or submit a brief to the study but we're not able to, or who were invited to testify or submit a brief but for whatever reason ended up not being able to.

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We believe that they also have important insights into women Veteran advocacy vis-à-vis Parliament.

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If you have already participated in this aspect of our research, thank you very much.

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If you haven't and would still like to, please reach out to us.

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We would love to add your voice into our work.

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The second aspect of research that I want to tell you a little bit about has to do with our report card that we are developing.

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It is a community informed report card to assess government progress on the implementation of the 42 report recommendations.

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Our first step has been to develop our evaluation strategy as well as to go through all of the testimony from women Veterans to identify each instance when they speak to any of the recommendations.

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Our team member Caleigh Wong has coded all the testimony and is creating a summary document of how women Veterans who were part of the ACVA study understand meaningful implementation of each recommendation in terms of specific outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

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As this work progresses, we will also draw on our qualitative interviews with women Veterans to inform what meaningful implementation of each recommendation looks like, and we will also bring this work to the broader women Veteran community for further engagement and feedback.

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This report card is participatory, putting women Veterans voices at the centre of evaluation.

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It is also collaborative in the sense that we are engaging with DND-CAF and VAC as this work develops.

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In addition to this research focused work, I want to highlight a few other aspects of our project for you.

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We have held one workshop for women Veterans who were not previously engaged in the parliamentary study.

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This workshop was titled the Women Veteran Engage Workshop and took place in Ottawa on October 30, 2025. And you can find a resource with highlights from the workshop on our Invisible No More Project website.

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This workshop was a collaboration with the National Association of Federal Retirees.

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We're hoping to do another engagement workshop, this time a bilingual one, with the Federal Retirees in 2027.

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I also want to say thank you specifically to the National Association of Federal Retirees for supporting a fantastic evening event that followed our workshop that was in support of women Veterans.

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And we had speakers at this evening event including the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Senators Patterson and Busson, and Sharon Squire as well, who is a Federal Retiree Board member and previous member of the VAC Ombuds Office.

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We were also very lucky that evening to have former Governor General Michaëlle Jean in attendance.

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Her Excellency the Right Honorable Mary Simon also offered to meet with several team members after this event.

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Next, I want to tell you about our writing workshops.

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We're also doing a series of writing workshops that are being led by our Veteran Project Partner, Dr. Nancy Taber, who is also a fiction writer and a professor at Brock University in Saint Catherine's, Ontario.

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The first writing workshop series launched April 25, 2026.

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If you're interested in being part of our next writing workshop, please let us know.

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Next, I want to highlight June 12th.

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We hope to continue to mark the annual anniversary of the tabling of the report on or around June 12th every year.

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Last year for June 12th, we published a briefing note and we engaged the media to tell them about the importance of this report.

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A number of ACVA study participants also met with politicians at Parliament that day.

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This year, to mark the 2nd anniversary of the tabling of the report, many Invisible No More project members will go to Parliament in person to show support for the ongoing work to ensure the meaningful implementation of the report's recommendations.

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Please consider joining us on Parliament Hill this year on June 12th.

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Before closing, I'd like to share just two more project activities with you.

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The first has to do with a roundtable we're organizing in October 2026, which is when we will be hosting a National Research Roundtable on ACVA report recommendation #1, which concerns funding and implementing a national cross-departmental research program related to women Veterans.

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We're working with government representatives and the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research to organize this event just ahead of their annual forum taking place this year in Halifax.

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Last but not least, we're also working to develop a series of tailored outputs for policy makers, service providers, Veteran communities and researchers.

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These include, for example, a sex- and gender-based analytical tool that is military and Veteran specific and also best practice guidelines for Veterans participating in parliamentary committees.

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You can already check out some of the resources and tools that we have been developing that are already posted on our Invisible No More Project website under the tab "Outputs".

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These include, for example, a written compilation of all of the opening statements and briefs from the women Veterans who participated in the ACVA parliamentary study.

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As you can see, there are many different but intersecting activities that are part of our INM Project.

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Together, they aim to create momentum for the meaningful implementation of the report's recommendations and for supporting a thriving women Veterans advocacy community in Canada.

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We hope that you are as excited as we are about all of these activities, which really aim to amplify women Veterans voices.

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Identify any unmet needs unique to women Veterans and help reduce the risk that any women Veterans are left behind.

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We gratefully acknowledge our funders, Veterans Affairs Canada, through the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, through an Insight grant, as well as supplementary funding from the Department of National Defence.

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Thank you for your interest and for taking the time to watch this informational video on the INM Project.

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Je suis désolée, la présentation était surtout en anglais. J'espère faire mieux la prochaine fois.

16:27

I will leave you with a heartfelt thank you once again, especially to all the women Veterans who participated in the ACVA study and who are now contributing to the INM Project.

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We hope to meet some of you on June 12th in Ottawa.

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For more information, please visit our website which again is www.msvu.ca/InvisibleNoMore or also feel free to contact the project team through the website.

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Thank you and see you next time.