

Women encouraged to consider a career with the RCMP

by Heidi Riley



Constable Meredith Darrah (left), Chief Superintendent Ruby Burns, Constable Nancy Wagner, Constable Annick Thériault, and Corporal Michelle Mercer talked to women about their careers with the RCMP.

In order to get the word out about opportunities for women, female RCMP members were on hand at UPEI in March to talk to women considering policing as a career.

Constable Meredith Darrah led the discussion, and a full slate of women officers talked about their careers. They stressed the fact that they are treated equally, have the same responsibilities, and are expected to do everything required of their male counterparts.

There are about 17,000 uniformed members of the RCMP across Canada. About 22 percent of the workforce is female. Last year, about 1,030 new officers were recruited from across Canada, and about 20 were from PEI.

One officer's story

Constable Meredith Darrah is from Nova Scotia. She began her career with the RCMP at 23 and has had four postings in 10 years. She worked as a Constable in a small town in Saskatchewan, and then went on to the RCMP Musical Ride. She now works in Halifax.

"I love moving. I got to know the prairies and the mountains, and I never would have had that experience otherwise. As a young rookie, it was sometimes difficult to arrest someone I would rather have had coffee with. But it got easier when they realized I meant business, which means being assertive, not aggressive.

"I have a lot of passion for this career and I can't imagine doing anything else. RCMP members have never treated me with anything but the utmost respect.

"What's the worst part of the job? Shift work, wearing wool pants, and never looking like a girl while on the job."

What makes a good officer?

- Be highly motivated.
- Work well as part of a team.
- Be healthy and physically fit.
- Age is not a limitation.
- Have uncompromising integrity.
- Be willing to work anywhere in Canada.

Recruitment process

- **Attend** an information session.
- **Register on-line** to write a 2.5 hour multiple choice test. If unsuccessful, applicants can rewrite the test after one year.
- **Pass the Physical Ability Requirement Evaluation (PARE)**. This test simulates an incident where an officer chases and apprehends a suspect. "For females, this is the hardest part of the testing process," says Constable Darrah. "85 percent of women are unsuccessful the first time. But 98 percent pass the second time."
- **Regular Member Selection Interview** will test your competency through behavioural and situational questions. "Remember to talk about how your life experience would benefit your work for the RCMP."
- **Pre-employment polygraph** will identify your standards of honesty and integrity and if you have done anything that would reflect poorly on the RCMP.
- **Background investigation** - Friends, family, neighbours, and co-workers are interviewed to determine your work habits and suitability. This step could take six months.
- **Physical and psychological evaluation** to determine that you have no medical conditions that could prevent you from working anywhere in Canada.
- **RCMP Training Academy** in Regina is the next step. "You must be willing to leave your family for six months. Women with young children may find that difficult, but it is not a long time when you consider it as part of a 25-year career."
- **New graduates may be posted anywhere in Canada.** They work for six months under a field coach.

How to prepare for the career

"The hiring process can take 12 to 18 months," says Constable Darrah. "In the mean time, get on with your life. And keep up with physical training. While waiting to be accepted, I ran 14 km per day and did weight training. Also, go on with your education. Pick a degree you can use even if you are not accepted into the RCMP. Learn to survive on your own. Get managerial experience at your job. Volunteer in the community. These life experiences will help your RCMP career."

Advancement opportunities

Officers can choose to work general duty for their entire careers. Or they could work three to five years in general duty policing before choosing one of 150 career specializations such as drug enforcement, border integrity, or police dog services.

Pay and benefits

Cadets in the training program are paid \$500 per week to a maximum of \$12,000 for the entire training period. Training and room and board are provided at no charge. Constables start at \$47,393 and earn \$76,792 after three years. A generous benefit package is provided.

For more information about RCMP and the next information session, visit www.rcmpcareers.com

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