

Fearing Kate MacEachern: The Latest Canadian Military Blunder

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, July 15, 2013

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Kate MacEachern and helping others: not on the DND agenda, yet.

Canada's continued neglect and abuse of our military personnel and veterans continues to enrage me. An epidemic of untreated PTSD has become a new normal. And until citizens compel the government to take responsibility for this neglect--and fix it--they will continue trying to get away with it.

Here's the latest outrage:

OTTAWA — Less than a year after being lavishly and publicly praised by Defence Minister Peter MacKay for an arduous fundraising walk in aid of injured soldiers, a corporal says she has decided to leave the military after being ordered not to repeat the fundraiser again this summer.

Tank driver Cpl. Kate MacEachern, a member of the Armour School at CFB Gagetown in New Brunswick, walked 562 kilometres in full uniform and pack from Gagetown to Antigonish last summer in what she called her 'Long Way Home Walk.'

She raised \$20,000 for the military charity Soldier On.

[DND says no to soldier's walk to raise money for injured veterans.](#)

This government seems to fear truth-tellers like Kate MacEachern, even and perhaps especially when they work selflessly and constructively to improve problems and the lives of others.

From the article, it sounds like the military establishment, and the militarism-loving Conservative government in Canada, supported MacEachern's walk last year. But perhaps after the walk, there may have been a feeling that the military allowing a soldier to shine a spotlight on their neglect of people in need was enough to oppose the event this year, which is despicable, especially considering MacEachern's motivations. See below.

If all this bothers you as much as it bothers me, here are some things you can do:

1. Support Kate MacEachern's walk halfway across Canada [at the Military Minds site](#).
2. [Like the Facebook page](#) and follow the walk.
3. Don Nicholson was just shuffled into the position of Minister of Defence. Email him this article at rob.nicholson@parl.gc.ca, letting him know that as a new minister/politician, he has an opportunity to put a fresh stamp of integrity on our nation by reversing the decision against Kate MacEachern's walk AND begin the healing process of all the neglect and abuse of members and veterans from the Canadian Forces.
4. [Support Honour House, One in a Million fund and Hire Canadian Military initiatives](#).

Here's some profound inspiration:

“One of the main values I learned from the army is that you never leave anyone behind,” she says. “But the more I opened my eyes the more I realized that a lot of people are being left behind. I signed a 25 year contract to serve my country, Queen and regiment. Until a month ago, I didn’t want to leave. It was honestly a devastating blow for me to have to make a decision between what I believe in and the uniform I wear because I thought they were the same thing. Finding out they aren’t the same thing is extremely hard so I had to walk away.”

MacEachern says she was moved to raise public awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental injuries after suffering a serious injury of her own at CFB Edmonton where she was thrown from a horse during a training exercise — a fact MacKay noted in his speech.

After a year’s physical recovery she was diagnosed with, and treated for, ‘non-combat PTSD’ — a condition she didn’t believe was overly serious until she suffered herself.

“I had pretty much bought into the stigma so many people have about PTSD,” she said. “You can shake it off, suck it up and soldier on. But it’s the complete opposite of the truth. And compared to people coming back from overseas, mine was mild.”

After recovering from her own injuries, MacEachern asked to be transferred to Gagetown to be closer to her family in Antigonish, Nova Scotia — a decision she now regrets.

“I started opening my eyes to what other people are going through and how much pain and struggle there is,” she said. “There comes a point where you have to make a conscious decision. Do you allow everything to keep happening and live with the consequences or do you try to make a difference?”

MacEachern echoes the view of many critics who say that stigma against mental injury in the military is rampant and treatment facilities at some bases wholly inadequate.

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“One thing I’ve learned over the past year,” she says, “is that having a fancy house or the latest model car and the biggest TV on the block means nothing if you can’t sleep at night knowing that you could have helped and didn’t.”

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