



**PROMINENT
LUNENBURGERS**

Remembering the People that Make Us Special



BGen Sheila Hellstrom

b. 15 January 1935 in Lunenburg, d. 7 December 2020

Brigadier-General Sheila Hellstrom was a pioneering leader whose career helped expand opportunities for women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Born in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, on January 15, 1935, she was the only child of Albinus and Dorothy Hellstrom (née Zinck). Growing up across from Camp Norway during the Second World War, she was inspired by the Norwegian sailors who frequently visited her family's home, an experience that sparked her lifelong interest in military service.

A gifted student at Lunenburg Academy, Sheila excelled academically while participating in drama, basketball, choir, and student leadership. After graduating in 1953, she enrolled in the Royal Canadian Air Force University Reserve Training Program at Mount Allison University, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in 1956 and a promotion to Flying Officer.

Over a military career spanning more than three decades, she served at postings across Canada and overseas, including France. She became the first woman to graduate from the Canadian Forces College in Kingston and was among the first women to graduate from the Command and Staff College in Toronto.

In 1987, Sheila Hellstrom became the first woman in the Royal Canadian Air Force to achieve the rank of Brigadier-General. Throughout her career, she championed the advancement of women in the military, supporting initiatives that expanded opportunities for servicewomen and promoting gender integration within the Canadian Armed Forces and NATO.

Following her retirement, she continued her advocacy through advisory roles with the Department of National Defence and the Ottawa Police Service. Widely respected as a mentor and leader, she inspired others through her dedication, integrity, and commitment to progress.

Her achievements have been recognized nationally and locally. The Lunenburg Branch 23 of the Royal Canadian Legion was renamed in her honour, and a monument commemorating her accomplishments stands at the Legion entrance. Brigadier-General Sheila Hellstrom's legacy endures as a trailblazer who helped shape a more inclusive Canadian military.

