friendship force OTTAWA

Capital Connections

Newsletter of the Friendship Force of Ottawa, Canada

June 2026. www.friendshipforceottawa.ca

GM HIGHLIGHTS, MAY 26TH 2026

- We can anticipate receiving revised Bylaws in advance of the next GM, the date for which has yet to be determined.
- Mary Jane Kelleher has volunteered to be the June 2027 incoming journey coordinator for the **Ghana** club. A volunteer coordinator is still needed for the fall 2027 inbound journey from **Winnipeg.** FFO has been offered a double journey to **Turkey and Baku, Azerbaijan,** and our VP of Journeys, Barbara Davignon is working on getting a double journey to **Sri Lanka** also for 2027.
- In 2026-2027 each FULL member's contribution to Friendship Force International's annual fees will be increased from $42 to $70 CDN. Our local club's annual membership fees will be determined based on the projected club's expenses for 2026-2027.
- The next North American Conference will be held in Chiapas, Mexico in 2027.

GM SPEAKER SGT. MAJ. WILLIAM (BILL) STEWART

Bill spoke about his legendary career which spanned almost 40 years, most of those on horseback as part of the RCMP Musical Ride.

In addition to representing Canada around the world, he developed a close relationship with Queen Elizabeth ll. Not only did he train riders to perform for the Queen, but on three separate occasions he spent six weeks at Windsor Castle settling in each of the RCMP horses he helped select as gifts to the Queen from Canada. After ceremoniously handing over the horses to the Queen (on one occasion with a full arm cast under his red serge after a riding accident) he also accompanied Her Majesty on rides around her Windsor estate numerous times. Additionally, he was the carriage escort for the Queen and other Royals on their visits to Canada, a responsibility that also fell to his father many years previously.

To celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee the Canadian Mint created a silver coin depicting Sgt. Maj. Bill Stewart and the Queen marking Her Majesty's special relationship with "her" RCMP. See photo right.



In 2012 Bill's special relationship with the Queen led to his being invested with the Insignia of a Member of the Royal Victorian Order, "the greatest honor of his career". The order, established by Queen Victoria, recognizes the valuable personal service of an individual to the Sovereign or the Royal Family. The Queen also sent him an autographed photograph of her 25th anniversary as queen, a gift typically presented to heads of state.

The fascinating stories shared with us attest to the rich history the Queen shared with Canada and Sgt. Maj. Bill Stewart's deep commitment to public service.

FFO BOARD 2026-2027

President Joan Kinnie	VP Journeys Barb Davignon
Secretary Michael Curran	VP Membership Lynne Deachman
Treasurer Liz Ford	Past President Anna Rochon
Director-at-Large Gail Sherman	Director-at-Large Lorraine Chartrand

CALENDAR OF FFO EVENTS

2026

Jun 07-14	Inbound FF Western North Carolina, USA
Sep 10	FW Philippines - Joanne & Michael Curran
Sep 21-28	Inbound FF Western Colorado, USA
Oct 20	FW Cycling through Italy - Julie Breeze
Nov 09-16	FFO Outbound to Perth, Australia

VP JOURNEYS BARB DAVIGNON

UPDATE: FFO OUTBOUND JOURNEYS 2026

a) **Perth, Australia Journey (November 9-16, 2026)**
FFO Journey Coordinator: Leonard Bonnet
The FF Perth Coordinator has assured the FFO travellers that they will see the Perth Mint, Bell Tower and King's Park. **Caversham Wildlife Park** features kangaroos, koala, wombats and kookaburra and the birds in the photo below - *looks like Fred and Ethel (I Love Lucy!)*



UPDATE: FFO INBOUND JOURNEYS 2026

a) FF Western N Carolina, USA (June 7-14, 2026)
FFO Journey Coordinator: Petra Friedrichson
Something new! The FF Carolina ambassadors have asked for an opportunity to "volunteer" while they are in Ottawa. Their project will be building metal outdoor benches at the **Ottawa Community Housing** on Donald Street.

b) FF Western Colorado, USA (Sept 21-28, 2026)
FFO Journey Coordinator: Pierrette Benoit
FF Western Colorado has confirmed that 12 ambassadors will be coming to our club. We are currently working on matching ambassadors with hosts - thank you to our wonderful FFO volunteers! The journey features a day visit to Wakefield and another to Almonte, a guided tour of the Chateau Laurier, a cruise on the Rideau Canal and so much more.

FFO FRIENDLY WANDERERS - WHAT'S NEXT?

Join Michael and Joanne Curran on Thursday, Sept.10, 2026 at 11:30am (location TBD) to find out how spam and basketball feature prominently in Filipino cuisine and sports.



The 2026-2027 Friendly Wanderers' season will open with a presentation on the Philippines, a country that boasts one of the most friendly and hospitable people in the world! Were you aware that after being colonized by the Spanish, the Philippines was purchased by the U.S.?

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FRIENDLY WANDERERS - RESERVE THE DATE! Tues. Oct 20, 2026

Join Julie Breeze as she talks about cycling with Derrick from Venice to Mantua in Northern Italy.



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Thanks to **Vic Hudon** and **Donna Nicholson** for taking new photos of FFO members at the last 2 GMs.

Look for the revised FFO Directory soon.

FFO DINNER / LUNCH CLUB - CLAIRE FORTIN

DINNER CLUB 2026 - 2027 ROUND 21

Round 21. Yes! That's how long this dinner group has been going. Let's continue enjoying the good food, friends, and great conversations that each and every one of us has benefited from.

This year there are 44 members in 7 groups (3 couples in each group and 1 group of 4 couples. Couples can be a 'couple', or 2 singles. From past experiences, it works best if only 6 (or 8) share a meal. At the discretion of all the group, this meal can be anytime decided by the group. Most preferred a mid-day slot but the day, time, and place is decided upon by all that group.

No team is with the same folk as last year (or two years if possible). I try to have 2 males in each team - if possible.



For newcomers, it's fairly easy: ask a friend to be your partner or if single, send me your name and I can send the names of other singles, so you can make contact. Within the group someone initiates the first dinner. Each "team" hosts 1 dinner so, total of 3 dinners (or 4). The host prepares the main dish, the others contribute the vegetables/salad/dessert or whatever is decided upon. Inevitably, there is wine or - and that can be discussed within the group. Be mindful of those with dietary needs.

Should you be away for an extended period of time, you could invite another new member or guest as your replacement. Please refer to the membership list for email and telephone numbers.

You can email me directly if you haven't already signed up. Trusting we will have an excellent response to this upcoming dinner club season. Any concerns, please contact me: clairefortinhk@yahoo.ca Tel 613-742-6622

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE?

Smiles are often sparked by a combination of **simple pleasures, meaningful connections, nature, playful experiences, and mindful awareness**. Paying attention to these moments and embracing them can help cultivate more joy in everyday life.

We asked the FFO Board members to share with you what makes them happy. See 2 responses below.

Wild Turkeys may be slow movers (unless they think they're being threatened), but they're majestic in their own stately, slow way. Although they're wrinkly headed, their coloration and shape make them beautiful to me. There are a lot of lessons they can teach us. Once extinct here, they were re-introduced and with perseverance, have thrived once more. They can fly and roost in trees, but spend most of their time grounded. They are social and family-oriented, and while they're slow to anger (most of the time) they will defend themselves and those in their flock when the situation warrants it. Seeing even one of them makes my day.



Liz Ford, FFO Treasurer

I admit it, I like to watch funny animal videos, especially cats. It's hard not to smile while watching cats surprise themselves.

But getting away from technology is even better. A hike in the woods followed by coffee or lunch on a sunny patio is always a good reason to smile. It feels good to push myself, get lots of fresh air and feel like I have accomplished something - and then have a relaxing treat afterwards. And taking my grandchildren out in the woods - watching them choose the "perfect" stick and then explore every hole on the trail. It's slow going but a reminder to appreciate the little things.



Barb Davignon VP Journeys

THE BELGIAN REPORT: APRIL 21-28, 2026 OUTBOUND JOURNEY TO LEUVEN, BELGIUM BY JOANNE CURRAN

FFO's journey to FF Leuven was memorable on so many fronts. For starters, despite having an average of 200 rain-filled days each year, Belgium shone for us every day that we were there! Each of our 12 FFO ambassadors were exemplary citizen diplomats, proudly representing our club, as did our two honorary FFO members from the U.S.!

We were impressed with the stunning array of historical buildings that showcased the immense wealth and artistry across Belgium cities.



Also, despite its size Belgium, we learned how this country currently punches well above its weight globally by housing the headquarters for the E.U. and NATO.

One memory that made a huge impression on me was the Last Post ceremony at Ypres Menin Gates that nightly honors over 54,000 Commonwealth soldiers with no known graves, who died during WW1's Ypres Salient.



Three of our ambassadors who have a connection to the Canadian Armed Forces (Colin Leech, Sam Ludmer and Derrick Guilmette) laid a wreath at this ceremony on behalf of FFO.

The best way to capture what the week meant for both our ambassadors and hosts is to share with you the speech made by Dany Vandenbroek, FF Leuven's president:

Dear Canadian friends,
A week ago, you may have arrived here as visitors… but today you leave as friends. And perhaps even a little bit as Belgians — if only because you now know that "just one more beer" is rarely ever the last one beer.

We've shared a truly special week together. From the silence and reflection of Flanders Fields, to the lively streets of Leuven, the international spirit of Brussels, and the outstanding Cistercian Abbey heritage site at Villers-la-Ville. You've seen Belgium as we know it - and hopefully also as we feel it.

But above all, we take with us something that can't be captured in photos: the bond we've built together. Friendship that grows through shared moments, conversations, and yes….perhaps also through trying to pronounce a few Dutch words like "***Dank u wel", "Gezondheid" en "potverdomme".***

At the same time, we want to pause and reflect on something that goes beyond this past week. **In the fields of Flanders lies a part of the Canadian soul.** We are deeply grateful for the young Canadian men who came here during the First World War, so far from home, and made the ultimate sacrifice. What they did will never be forgotten. And perhaps the most meaningful tribute we can offer today… is that we stand here together as friends.



Your journey here was long - and thankfully a bit more comfortable than that of your fellow countrymen over a hundred years ago. But the fact that you made that journey to spend time with us truly means a lot.

We hope you take home not only wonderful memories, but also a reason to return someday. And if not… you now have a very good excuse: there are still quite a few Belgian beers left for you to try.

Saying goodbye is never easy, but this is not a farewell. It's simply a "see you again."



The Grand-Place is the central square of the city of Brussels, Belgium.