



2024 UPEI Distinguished Alumni Award

Bernadine Chapman (BA 1986)

When Bernadine Chapman obtained a Bachelor of Arts from UPEI with a major in psychology in 1986, a career in policing was not initially on her radar. While she was considering the possibility of law school, a friend recommended the RCMP as an option. She understood that working with Canada's national police force would fit well with her passion for helping others and bringing positive change to communities. She has never looked back!

One of the most memorable moments in her career happened while she was a constable in New Brunswick in 2004. A man with a history of mental health issues was in distress and had climbed to the top of the 56-meter-high Burton Bridge, intending to take his life. Bernadine was dispatched to the scene along with a firefighter, and together they climbed the bridge and brought him down to safety.

As a result of that courageous act of duty, Bernadine received two commendations from the commanding officer of the New Brunswick RCMP. She has also received the Valour Award from the Atlantic Women in Policing and the International Women in Policing organizations. Other awards and recognition include receiving the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

Bernadine's RCMP career took her across Canada, beginning with a posting in New Brunswick, followed by postings in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta. In Alberta, she was in charge of 37 detachments and more than 600 employees in the Southern Alberta district.

Working her way across the country and up through the ranks to Assistant Commissioner, Bernadine served in general duty policing, anti-corruption drugs and organized crime, and employee management relations before she was eventually named Commanding Officer of the RCMP National Division—the first woman to ever hold that position. National Division, which is based in the National Capital Region, is responsible for matters relating to national security, protective services, and national and international corruption. In 2020 she was awarded the Governor General's Order of Merit of the Police Forces for her outstanding career efforts.

When she retired in 2021, after 33 years on the job, it is safe to say that Bernadine lived up to her goal of helping others. But wanting to do more, she pursued a master's degree in counselling psychology, became a registered psychotherapist, and obtained certifications in basic eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy. Her goal for her second career is the same as her goal for her first—helping others. She now works as a counsellor and uses her lived experience to help fellow first responders and others to deal with the severe effects of trauma.

In recognition of her many achievements with the RCMP and for devoting two careers to helping others, the UPEI Alumni Association is proud to present Bernadine Chapman, BA 1986, with a 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award.