



# ELIZABETH LAWRIE SMELLIE

1884-1968, Nurse

## **First woman appointed as a colonel in the Canadian Army**

An outstanding nurse, Elizabeth Lawrie Smellie was committed to the health and well-being of Canadian servicemen. Her great skill and proficiency as a nurse earned her the appointment as a Nursing Sister with the Royal Canadian Medical Corps in 1915. During the First World War, Elizabeth was honoured for her efforts, receiving the Royal Red Cross, First Class Award in 1917.

Returning to Canada, Elizabeth took on the role of Assistant to the Matron-in-Chief of the Canadian Army Nursing Service in 1920. In 1924, she joined the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) and was appointed Chief Superintendent.

In 1940, Elizabeth left the VON and rejoined the Canadian Army. As a result, she was able to direct her talent and skills to helping soldiers in the Second World War, and to expanding women's participation in the army. She helped organize the Canadian Women's Army Corps and carried out many important duties during the War. Elizabeth was commended for her dedication, and promoted to the rank of colonel, thus becoming the first woman to attain that level in the Canadian Army.

*Elizabeth was born in Port Arthur, now Thunder Bay, Ontario. She died in Toronto. She is buried in Thunder Bay.*

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WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

WOMEN IN CANADIAN MILITARY FORCES:  
A PROUD LEGACY



Status of Women  
Canada

Condition féminine  
Canada

