

Canada's Snowbirds Aerobatics Team to get First Female Commander

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The Snowbirds Aerobatic Team

The glass ceiling has been broken in Canada's Top Gun category. Canada's Aerobatic Team - The Snowbirds Aerobatic Team will get its first female commander on Thursday.

Lieutenant-Colonel Maryse Carmichael officially takes command of the team on Thursday, becoming the first woman to command the famed team in its 40 years history.

"It took a little bit of time for women to become pilots (because) it's one of the non-traditional roles, Carmichael told [The Canadian Press](#) in an interview at the base in Moose Jaw, Sask.

"Then to gain the experience required to be in command of a squadron takes ... many years."

Lt. Col. Carmichael is a native of Quebec City in her late 30s. She joined the military at age 19. Carmichael has been a flying instructor, flew with 434 Support Squadron in Greenwood, N.S. and flew VIPs in Ottawa.

Her military career took her to Bagotville in Quebec as the Deputy Wing Commander and the Assistant Operations Officer at 8 Wing Trenton in 2007.

She was selected to be a member of the Snowbird aerobatic team in 2000 between her time in Ottawa and Bagotville. She flew Snowbird number 3 and later number 2 as the team's executive officer.

Carmichael is married to a fighter pilot and has two young daughters.

Lieutenant-Colonel Carmichael is the only woman to have flown with the Snowbirds.

Carmichael believes that will change one day. She said there's a lot of pride in being a member of the squadron and gender is irrelevant.

"When you're flying and you have a helmet on your head, it doesn't matter whether you're a man or woman. As long as you can stay in formation, the public from the ground doesn't see it so that's the way I see it, too.

"I just do what I love to do and I love flying and I'm fortunate enough that it has worked out. But if I can influence not only young girls but boys to follow their passion, then that's great."

Regardless of the fact that Lt Col Carmichael tries to downplay the fact of breaking this glass ceiling, this is quite an accomplishment. Congratulations to Lieutenant-Colonel Carmichael and good luck and God Speed on her journey as the Commander of the Famed Snowbirds.