



CH12417 in the hover in Shearwater, June 2018.
DND Photo: Cpl Chaisson

Going out with Style

By LCol Travis Chapman, CO 443 (MH) Squadron

Designed in the late 1950s and procured by Canada through a dynamic acquisition programme in the early 1960s¹, the CH124 Sea King helicopter has served Canadians with distinction since 24 May 1963². Such longevity, combined with avionics & mission



4030 and HMCS *Annapolis*, late 1960s.
DND Photo: Shearwater Aviation Museum

system upgrades and the utility of a medium-lift helicopter, has created a legacy that ignites passion spanning multiple generations unlike any other Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) asset.

The CH124 pre-dates Bill C-243, The Canadian Forces Reorganization Act, and as such, the Sikorsky HSS-2 was actually acquired as a Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) anti-submarine warfare (ASW) weapon system and designated CHSS-2 upon entering Canadian service³. A maritime helicopter from the outset, it has operated aboard the HMCS *Bonaventure* (CVL 22) aircraft carrier, *St. Laurent*-class destroyer escorts and *Iroquois*-class destroyers, Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment ships, and *Halifax*-class frigates.

¹Lt(N) Jason Delaney, "Sea Sprite to Sea King: The Royal Canadian Navy's Ship-borne Antisubmarine Helicopter Capability," *The Royal Canadian Air Force Journal* 2, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 22-29, accessed June 25, 2018, http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/assets/AIRFORCE_Internet/docs/en/cf-aerospace-warfare-centre/elibrary/journal/2013-vol2-iss4-05-seasprites-to-sea-king.pdf.

² John Orr, "Sea King," *WARRIOR Magazine*, Winter (2014): 8.

³ Delaney, 29.

In many ways, Canada's efforts to embark a large aircraft on a small flight deck revolutionized the concept of organic air support to naval operations by demonstrating



First flight, Sea King CHSS-2 4005, April 1964.
Photo: UACL and Don MacNeil Collection

the theoretical to be possible⁴. By leveraging the inherent capabilities of a larger helicopter, crews could carry more armament, more fuel, and a suite of avionics with capacity for growth. Considering the rapid advancement of submarine capabilities in the 1950s⁵, the CHSS-2 became a potent counter-punch to non-friendly submarines, and over time, it also proved capable of acting as an autonomous, multi-role ASW weapon system through several permanent and temporary modifications, including radar, sonobuoy processing, GPS, Automatic Identification System, Tactical Common Datalink, and various iterations of tactical navigation computers, as well as

the development of aircraft-specific tactics for crews to wield.

In an effort to pay tribute to the history of Canada's esteemed maritime helicopter, Maj Trevor Cadeau, 443 (MH) Squadron Aircraft Maintenance Engineering Officer (SAMEO), initiated a project with technical and operational staff at Director Aerospace Equipment Program Management (Maritime) and 1 Canadian Air Division (1 CAD), respectively, in December 2017. He sought the necessary approvals to change CH12417's modern livery to one that recalled a bygone era. The requested paint scheme was inspired by the original RCN livery from 1963 (as pictured on aircraft 4005), and previously applied in 2010 to commemorate the Canadian Naval Centennial.

The success of the latest livery project can be traced to a large team of personnel within Patricia Bay, Shearwater, Ottawa, and Winnipeg. Crucial to project approval were Maj Cadeau, Maj James Wilson (CH124



4025 south of Shearwater, May 1966.
Photo: Mr. David Wall

⁴ Stewart E. Soward, *Hands to Flying Stations: A Recollective History of Canadian Naval Aviation Volume II* (Victoria: Neptune Developments (1984), 1995), 326.

⁵ Captain (USN) Brayton Harris, "World Submarine History Timeline, Part Four: 1941-2000," NOVA, February 6, 2010, <http://www.submarine-history.com/NOVAfour.htm>.

Aircraft Engineering Officer), LCdr(RN) Simon Peck (12 Air Maintenance Squadron (AMS) Senior Support Engineer), Maj Ryan Snider (Staff Officer MH, 1 CAD), Capt Michael Aubry (Staff Officer, A4 Maintenance 1 CAD), Sgt Hank Pilgrim (12 AMS), and MCpl Hans Brasche (443 (MH) Sqn).

Essential to its impressive execution were technicians from 12 AMS, 423 (MH) Sqn, and 443 (MH) Sqn; namely, Sgt Hank Pilgrim, Sgt Jason Miller, MCpl Matthew Fournier, Cpl David Anderson, Cpl Terri Brown, Cpl Kevin Coakley, Cpl Jean-Philippe Caron-Vadeboncoeur, Cpl Jeffery Cheeseman, Cpl Scott Delaney, Cpl Carl Hillier, Cpl Megan McKeigan, Cpl Troy Mckinney, Cpl Eric Parker, Avr Mark Belliveau, and Avr James Proulx from 12 AMS and 423 (MH) Sqn; and, MCpl Ryan Harpell, Cpl Francois Morin, and Cpl Draven Cowan from 443 (MH) Sqn.

Of course, once painted, it had to be re-assembled! WO Michael Griffin, Sgt Tom Legg, MCpl Luc Godin, MCpl Derrick Curry, MCpl Luc Garneau, MCpl Aaron Pottelberg, MCpl Kevin Ferguson, Cpl Michael Milton, Cpl Doug Luffman, Cpl Craig Cox, and Cpl

Logan Randall from 12 AMS and 423 (MH) Sqn; and, WO Jean-Francois Bordeleau, Sgt Paul Van Bommel, MCpl Erick Gagnon, MCpl Eric Duchesne, MCpl Hans Brasche, MCpl Jonathan Audet, Cpl Brendan Wales, Cpl Robert Bracey, and Cpl Andrew Hamilton from 443 (MH) Sqn all worked hard to put it back together and prep the aircraft for its cross-country ferry.

Not only does the special paint herald the Sea King's history and exceptional contributions to RCN and RCAF operations over the last 55 years, but the project presented an uncommon professional development opportunity for many Aircraft Structures (ACS) technicians. Those involved were able to exercise their own painting skillsets, as well as utilize the new paint booth in the 12 AMS hangar in Shearwater, NS. In addition to CH12417, team members repainted aircraft CH12401 in preparation for its induction into the Shearwater Aviation Museum (SAM).

Although 423 (MH) Squadron ceased Sea King flight operations on the east coast in January, 2018 and has already transitioned to the CH148 Cyclone, 443 (MH) Squadron has been busy flying the CH124 throughout 2018



CH12417 in commemorative livery with CH148817 in Shearwater, June 2018.
DND Photo: LS Clarke

in support of deployed operations on HMCS *St. John's*, and domestic taskings and advanced force generation at Arundel Castle in Patricia Bay, BC. On June 13, 2018, a crew from 443 (MH) Squadron left Shearwater to commence a cross-country ferry flight bringing CH12417 from the home of maritime aviation in Shearwater to 12 Wing's west coast forward operating base in Pat Bay, BC. 443 (MH) Squadron is proud of our history and success with the Sea King, and will enthusiastically fly CH12417 during the fleet's last 6 months of RCAF service. Over the summer, civilians and service personnel can expect to see CH12417 in its new clothes at various airshows, and in the skies over Victoria and Pat Bay, BC. Adding an extra dose of excitement, Cyclones will operate alongside Sea Kings at 443 (MH) Squadron from August until the end of December, 2018. Post-retirement, it is expected that CH12417 will remain at 443 (MH) Squadron as a "gate guardian".

CH12417 will also be present at the Sea King Retirement 2018 festivities planned in Victoria from 30 November to 01 December, 2018. The organizing committee is planning an impassioned salute to this workhorse's 55 years of service to Canada, and CH12417 should feature prominently in both the flying and ground events. Additional information and ticket details can be found at www.skr18.ca.

An outstanding example of pride in our aircraft and our community's history, many thanks and congratulations to those who made the CH12417 *throwback* livery possible. It is a fitting compliment to a weapon system that has served generations of Canadians at home, and Canada's foreign policy abroad for over 55 years.