

# FTCN Replay: New Effort Aims to Uplift, Empower Women in EW

In a recent episode of *From the Crows' Nest*, host Ken Miller was joined by special guest Christelle Ward and guest co-host Hollann Schwartz to discuss a groundbreaking initiative within the Association of Old Crows (AOC): *Empowering Women in EW* (EW in EW). Ward, a former Navy Cryptologic Technician Technical (CTT) and currently an EW subject matter expert at E&M Technologies, brings extensive experience across military and industry roles. Schwartz, AOC's Director of Marketing and Communications, co-hosted the discussion, offering insights into the initiative's impact and the importance of fostering a more inclusive environment in EW. Together, they explored the challenges and opportunities facing women in the field and how this new committee aims to provide mentorship, guidance and career development resources.

## A Journey Through Service and Industry

Christelle Ward, a former Navy CTT and now an EW subject matter expert at E&M Technologies, brings a wealth of experience from both military and industry perspectives. Her unique journey – from military spouse to active-duty service member, to instructor and now industry leader – has given her a deep understanding of the challenges women face in EW.

*“What has been something I had to understand was the difference in the culture and the way that different branches functioned,” Ward explained. Having served across multiple services, she learned firsthand the nuances that shape the military experience, as well as the often-overlooked role of military spouses.*

Her diverse background has enabled her to become a mentor and

guide for those navigating the complexities of EW. *“Instead of just saying the tagline that spouses are the backbone, I actually understood – because I lived it.”*

### **The Significance of Women’s History Month**

With March being Women’s History Month, Ward took time to reflect on the remarkable contributions of women in EW history. She emphasized the pioneering efforts of women like Joan Curran, who developed chaff – an essential countermeasure used in modern warfare – and whose strategic deception plan played a critical role on D-Day.

*“It is mind-blowing to me that a woman was the one behind that,” Ward noted. “Yet, she wasn’t awarded her diploma for 50 years after completing her education.”*

These stories underscore the need for greater recognition of women’s contributions, not just in history but in shaping the future of EW.

### **Addressing the Challenges Women Face in EW**

Ward’s own career has been marked by moments where she was the only woman in the room – a recurring theme for women in EW. Whether as the first female instructor at the Army’s 17 Echo schoolhouse or the only female EW specialist at Fort Belvoir’s Cyber Red Team, she has consistently found herself paving the way.

*“I’ve been told things like, ‘You were only hired to meet a quota,’ or ‘This is a boys’ club, and we don’t want you to mess with that,’” Ward shared. Despite these obstacles, she remains committed to proving her capabilities through action, not just words. “I have to just be confident in who I am. My merit is what matters.”*

### **The Birth of EW in EW**

Hollann Schwartz echoed Ward’s sentiments on the need for

greater representation and support for women in EW. *“At some point, it has to be exhausting always being the first,”* she remarked. *“Let’s create an environment where being ‘the first’ isn’t the norm, where women can find a comrade and a support system instead of feeling isolated.”*

The idea for Empowering Women in EW came about at the 2023 AOC Symposium, where Ward connected with other women in the field who shared similar experiences. A conversation about the lack of a formal network for women in EW quickly transformed into action. With the support of AOC leadership, Ward was appointed chair of the new initiative.

*“The goal is not to create a space where women just come together to vent. It’s about support, upliftment and advocacy,”* she emphasized.

EW-EW aims to provide mentorship, career development resources, and networking opportunities for women in EW across all career levels, from military to industry and academia.

### **Mentorship, Career Development, and Inclusion**

One of the key initiatives of EW-EW is the launch of a structured mentorship program. Tentatively named *Big Sister, Little Sister*, the program will pair experienced professionals with newcomers to help guide career growth, offer advice and build professional confidence.

*“It’s hard to find a mentor when you don’t know where to start,”* Ward said. *“We want to make it easier for women to connect and grow together.”*

Additionally, the initiative will host online discussions and webinars on topics such as career road mapping, salary negotiation and navigating male-dominated spaces.

### **A Call to Action**

Women in EW, whether in active duty, industry, academia or

government, are encouraged to join this initiative. Those interested can sign up at [crows.org/EWinEW](https://crows.org/EWinEW) to get involved. Ward and the EW-EW team hope to create a lasting impact by fostering an environment where women in EW can thrive, support each other, and drive the field forward.

*“Even in 2025, women are still the minority in this field,” Ward said. “It’s time we change that narrative and ensure every woman in EW has the support she needs to succeed.”*

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