

# THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES' EYES, EARS, AND VOICE IN REMOTE REGIONS



SELECTED WRITINGS  
ON THE CANADIAN RANGERS

P. WHITNEY LACKENBAUER

# **The Canadian Armed Forces' Eyes, Ears, and Voice in Remote Regions**

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**P. Whitney Lackenbauer**

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## **Selected Writings on the Canadian Rangers**

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer**



Dedicated to Sergeant Jeff Lindsay  
(1972-2019)

Soldier, mentor, and dear friend



# Table of Contents

Introduction	iii
1. “The Canadian Rangers: Supporting Canadian Sovereignty, Security, and Stewardship Since 1947” (2012)	1
2. “Guerrillas in Our Midst: The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942-45” (2007)	9
3. “Canada’s Northern Defenders: Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Rangers, 1947-2005” (2007)	49
4. “The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia That Works” (2006)	89
5. “Teaching Canada’s Indigenous Sovereignty Soldiers ... and Vice Versa: ‘Lessons Learned’ from Ranger Instructors” (2007)	113
6. “If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers” (2013)	133
7. “The North’s Canadian Rangers” (2019)	171
8. “‘Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada’s North’: Media Misperceptions of the Canadian Rangers, Indigenous Service, and Arctic Security” (2018)	191
9. “The Canadian Rangers: Strengthening Community Disaster Resilience in Canada’s Remote and Isolated Communities” (2021), with Peter Kikkert	221
10. “Diversity Statistics, Self-Identification Data, and the Canadian Rangers: Underestimating Indigenous Peoples’ Participation Rates in the Canadian Army” (2021)	257
11. “Military Metrics of Ranger Success” (2020)	271
12. “The Canadian Rangers and Individual Resilience” (2020), with Peter Kikkert	308
Further Reading	343



## Introduction

When I introduce myself to Canadian Ranger audiences, I often refer to myself as the Rangers' "biggest fan." I have arrived at this status over twenty-five years of observing, researching, and participating in the activities of this unique military organization.

The writings reproduced in this book offer a glimpse into my engagement with the Canadian Rangers over the last two decades. As I have come to know the Rangers, I have also come to discover the diversity and resilience of Canada through the richness of its remote communities and the strength of the people who live in them. Collectively, the Rangers make up one of the most interesting and unorthodox military forces in the developed world. Individually, they are a microcosm of how and why mobilizing Canada's diverse population provides the broad and deep expertise needed to operate effectively in challenging environments that cannot be covered conveniently or economically by other military elements.

My writings celebrate the Rangers' skills, resilience, adaptability, and resourcefulness. I also see the Ranger organization as an example of one way that Canada has struck a proportionate balance between defence requirements and community-level security and resilience needs in sparsely settled areas of Canada. The Rangers are strong examples of how Canadians from different backgrounds and walks of life come together to serve the greater good of their peoples, their communities, and their country. Rooted in intimate ties to the land and deep local knowledge, Ranger service ensures that Canadians living in isolated coastal and northern communities are key players in the defence and security of their homelands, and that military activities align with community and national interests. These are attributes that embed a Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) presence in the region firmly within the spirit of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework's essential principle of "nothing about us, without us" – a philosophy that "weaves federal, territorial, provincial and Indigenous ... interests together for mutual success."<sup>1</sup> The Rangers serve such a weaving function between military and civilian cultures and practices, interlacing them without one inherently dominating the other. The sustained commitment of the Rangers to their communities and the military's encouragement and development of local control represent a prime example of how the CAF contributes to nation building and promotes reconciliation in a substantive manner whilst maintaining its military mission.

I have written an academic, full-length history of the Canadian Rangers, rooted in extensive interviews and systematic documentary research. I have dedicated countless hours to pouring over dusty archival files, microfilm, parliamentary transcripts, newspaper and magazine stories, and official reports. I have also been fortunate to have observed and participated in many Ranger training and operational activities since 1999. As the following short reflections attest, these experiences have profoundly shaped my understanding of and appreciation for the Rangers and what I typically refer to as their “living history.”

### **First Encounters**

My first exposure to the Canadian Rangers came while I was an undergraduate co-op student working for the Director General Aboriginal Affairs in 1996. One of my first jobs was to help organize the Aboriginal Awareness Day display in the main corridor at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa. I assisted researcher George Kaminski<sup>2</sup> in setting up a display consisting of historical photographs documenting the history of Aboriginal service in the Canadian military. This was coupled with a “living history” display featuring Canadian Rangers from the Arctic who built an igloo out of Styrofoam and set up “camp” in the main corridor linking the buildings at 101 Colonel By Drive. I had never heard of the Rangers but was captivated. Although quiet and reserved, the Rangers explained to serving officers and civil servants what they did in their role. They shared stories with me about their travels on the land and explained how they saw themselves fitting within the military and their sense of service to Canada and to their communities. As they packed up at the end of the week, one of them gave me a red hoodie. My girlfriend (now wife) Jennifer, who grew up on a farm, said that it smelled like a sick cow. I told her that it was the scent of the muskox or caribou fur in which the sweatshirt had been packed. Suffice to say, I was hooked. I wanted to learn more.

What I had heard from the Rangers was in sharp contrast to what I was reading elsewhere about the state of Indigenous-military relations in Canada. In the previous year, the national news media had been dominated by stories of the Gustafsen Lake standoff, when Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Canadian Army personnel faced a group who self-identified as the Ts’peten Defenders in the interior of British Columbia, and Ipperwash, a former military camp that had been occupied by a group of First Nations people and adjacent to which protester Dudley George was killed in an altercation with the Ontario Provincial Police.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, national media frames typically cast the military and Indigenous peoples as adversaries. Yet here were Canadian

Rangers, self-identifying as proud Canadians and serving in the Canadian Forces Reserves – in a very unorthodox unit. I had to learn more.

So began a long odyssey of seeking to understand the Canadian Rangers as an organization. I was quickly corrected when I wrongly referred to the Rangers as an Aboriginal program. Its members included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, and it was a sub-component of the Canadian Forces Reserves. The Rangers were a part of the military – not a program, as even official Department of National Defence (DND) documents sometimes incorrectly refer to them.

Because my three terms as a co-op student at National Defence involved working on files related to Crown-Indigenous relations, my initial work on the Rangers focused on this dynamic – and on situating Ranger service within the longer history of Indigenous peoples serving alongside and in the CAF. I studied the high rates of enlistment of First Nations men and women in the Canadian Army during the First and Second World Wars, as well as the Korean War, and the poor treatment of Indigenous veterans after those conflicts ended.<sup>4</sup> I was fortunate to sit in on Defence Aboriginal Advisory Group meetings and to join the National Aboriginal Veterans Association Odawa Circle at the invitation of my mentor Major Bob Crane.

Canadian Ranger service followed a different narrative arc. This was not a story of mobilizing Indigenous peoples in Canada to serve in theatres overseas. It was a distinct form of service designed for Canadians to serve in their homelands and their home communities. Members of Ranger patrols used their own equipment and even elected their own local leadership. It suggested a form of military support to community-level capacity building that I had never considered. Jennifer was searching for a paper topic for her Aboriginal development course as part of her Master's degree program in rural planning and development. I suggested the Junior Canadian Rangers (JCRs), which was still in the "pilot" phase but sought to build a youth program around the trust and respect that the Rangers enjoyed in their communities. She wrote a fascinating paper on the importance of community leaders setting local priorities and teaching practical skills and culture, with the military providing resources and support.

My studies took me in other directions for the next couple of years. I continued to research Indigenous veterans of the World Wars in a social history course at the University of Waterloo, then went on to the University of Calgary to examine the local politics around military bases for graduate work. I continued to explore Indigenous-military relations, but in the context of often fractious relations over land use.<sup>5</sup>

Soon after I started my doctoral studies in the fall of 1999, I undertook a reading course with Professor Rob Huebert on security and sovereignty in the Canadian North. He was the leading expert on the subject in Canada, and I proposed writing a paper on the Canadian Rangers. He was enthusiastic. No one had written a dedicated paper on the topic, and I had gathered enough background information during various research trips to Ottawa to draft a proposal. The topic seemed particularly relevant as Huebert and Colonel Pierre Leblanc, the commander of Canadian Forces Northern Area in Yellowknife, began to flesh out the need for a major reinvestment in Arctic military capabilities at a small workshop that I attended at the University of Calgary. Colonel Leblanc invited me to come up to Yellowknife to meet with his headquarters staff and with 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, which had been established in 1998. He also noted that he would try to arrange to have me visit a remote community. The SSHRC Queen's Fellowship that I held covered airfare for research that year, and I jumped at the opportunity.

I left with all of the bravado and confidence of a young Ph.D. student. I had read as much as I could about the Rangers, had spoken with a couple of experts, and had developed a nuanced theoretical framework to assimilate any information that I might acquire. I knew what I wanted to find out: What did being a Ranger actually entail – and what did it mean? How did this fit with Canadian sovereignty? How did Indigenous Northerners balance identities as Indigenous peoples and as Canadians? The questions seemed clear to me, and I expected that they would generate straightforward, concise answers. I did not yet have the awareness that my narrow approach, tidy categories, preconceived notions, and cultural ignorance all but guaranteed that I was going into this all wrong. After all, I had read books, but I had never experienced the North. How could I possibly know what questions were relevant – and how to go about asking them?

In March 2000, I flew to Yellowknife where I received briefings from the commander and his staff. They described Canadian Forces Northern Area's (CFNA's) mission to defend the Canadian Territorial North: the 3.8 million square kilometres represent forty percent of our country's land mass and comprise one of the largest areas of military responsibility in the world. Northern Area encompasses five topographical regions – from the desolate peaks of the High Arctic and the desert-like terrain of the Arctic lowlands, to the forested mountains of the Western Cordillera – and is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse population totalling less than 100,000 people. And with that, they put me on one of 440 (Transport) Squadron's yellow Twin Otter aircraft bound for Rankin Inlet.



I arrived in Rankin with no clear plan and absolutely bewildered. The depths of my ignorance (and frugality as a graduate student) included my suggestion to the aircrew that I walk from the airport to town. No, they instructed me, that would not be advisable. In this part of the world there were big white creatures with sharp claws and big teeth that would make a short meal of some ignorant southerner like myself. Take the taxi, they insisted. I paid heed. Polar bears had not crossed my mind. Once I was settled, I picked up the telephone and called the local Ranger sergeant, asking if I could meet with the Ranger patrol. Many arrived at the hotel in their red hoodies and ball caps. Unprepared and flustered, I hastily arranged access to the hotel meeting room. One Ranger asked if they could have some tea and cookies. I arranged for tea and coffee service, and then sat down at the table and introduced myself, seeking to convey the image of someone who knew what he was talking about. In retrospect, I must have sounded like a disorganized, self-important young “thinker” perpetuating a long tradition of southern-educated researchers arriving with lots of predetermined ideas.

At Rankin I made all the “rookie” mistakes. I tried to *act* like a “serious” scholar and impress the Rangers with my academic credentials (as they were at the time). It had the opposite effect, of course. Rather than looking at me as a wise Ph.D. student, they saw a kid who had no idea what he was doing and laughed amongst themselves while speaking in Inuktitut. Because I do not know the language, I was clearly an outsider. I asked pre-determined questions, to which a few Rangers gave appropriately stock answers. I had enough self-awareness to recognize, after about ten minutes, that I could not redeem myself in this scenario. Eating a large slice of humble pie, I kept the rest of my questions very general and light. But I learned essential lessons – ones that Ranger instructors told me that they had also had to learn, often through missteps, on their first trips to communities.

The return flight to Yellowknife proved more beneficial from a short-term research standpoint. The plane landed at Chesterfield Inlet where we picked up Sergeant Dave McLean, a Ranger instructor who had just finished a training exercise in that community. Amidst the loud drone of the airplane engines, he generously shared his observations about the Rangers and about the North more generally. He emphasized how cultural differences between instructors and the Rangers require mutual learning and flexibility – a theme reiterated by every instructor that I met after that point. Culture could impede communication, but a policy of “firm, friendly, and fair” worked well. Thus, although Rangers possessed individual skills suited to their local areas, instructors provided patrol members with training on how to work as a group.

All told, my first trip to meet with Rangers was a dismal failure from a fieldwork standpoint – or so I thought at the time. I had made some valuable contacts at CFNA Headquarters and the recently created 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1CRPG) headquarters, and had learned a lot from my conversation with Sergeant McLean. He imprinted in my mind how successful Ranger instructors learned to leave their southern preconceptions and approaches down south. Relationships in the North required flexibility, an open mind, empathy, and respect. This applied to me as much as to instructors, I realized. To really understand the Rangers would take time in the field. I had neither the money nor the time to do so in earnest at that point in my career, but I was convinced that the Rangers' story needed to be told. In the meantime, I would stick to a methodological approach that was more familiar to me. I would immerse myself in the archives, gathering what official records I could about the Rangers and Arctic sovereignty more generally. I presented a few papers to academic audiences to test some preliminary ideas,<sup>6</sup> but I obviously had a lot to learn.

While conducting my dissertation research in Ottawa over the next couple of years, I gathered whatever material I could glean from the military archives at the Library and Archives Canada and the Department of National Defence's Directorate of History and Heritage. It revealed a much more complex story than the one I had anticipated. The role and mission of the Rangers had remained remarkably persistent since 1947: "to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces." The tasks that the Rangers were called upon to perform to support this mission, however, had evolved over time. The early Cold War focus was on classic national security – helping the army prepare to defend isolated regions from enemy attack in the early Cold War. After this role waned in the 1960s, their responsibilities became directly linked to the armed forces' role in support of Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic beginning in the 1970s. The Rangers were an inexpensive form of military presence and fit with emerging sensibilities around Northern self-government. By the 1990s, the Rangers played a more visible nation-building and stewardship role in remote regions across Canada. As a flexible and culturally inclusive means of having "boots on the ground" exercising Canadian sovereignty and conducting or supporting domestic operations, I understood why the Rangers held political appeal. As a bridge between cultures and between the civilian and military realms, I hypothesized, the Rangers seemed to represent a successful integration of national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based activities and local stewardship. Then, in early 2002, I received an invitation to fly north

and meet Canadian Rangers who were undertaking an enhanced sovereignty patrol – a new concept to show the Canadian flag in the remotest stretches of the Arctic – to the Magnetic North Pole.

Before I ventured to the territories this time, Dr. Bob Williamson, a retired University of Saskatchewan anthropology professor with decades of Arctic experience (who Ranger staff officers had consulted when deciding how best to revitalize the force in the early 1970s), gave me valuable advice. Use a pencil, he explained – pens freeze in the intense cold. Start with fewer layers rather than too many – once you sweat underneath your clothing you are in trouble. Wear loose clothing over your underwear so that your body heats up the air and keeps you warmer. Do not wear elastic socks because they cut off circulation. Keep your cameras and batteries inside your coat and close to your body to keep them warm. Always bring two pairs of sunglasses in case one gets broken. And wear “idiot” straps above your down-filled parka to hold your gloves up off the ground in case you need to remove them, so they don’t fall on the ground – where they get wet or where hungry dogs are apt to grab them! Most of all, he emphasized the importance of being respectful, humble, and open minded. Northerners were generally trustful people, but if you broke that trust it was difficult – and even impossible – to regain.

I went to meet with the Rangers participating in the “enhanced sovereignty patrol” Operation Kigliqavik Ranger in April 2002. In Yellowknife, Captain Conrad Schubert (the 1CRPG Public Affairs officer) arranged for me to get “kitted out” at the CFNA storage facility at the Forward Operating Location in Yellowknife, where I received a Canada Goose parka and other cold weather gear. I found the storage locker filled with Mark 4 Lee Enfield .303 rifles to be most interesting. The “new” rifles being issued to Rangers in 2002, still with their original grease, had been manufactured from 1942-45 or in 1950! I would not need one, of course, because I would be in the Rangers’ capable hands. Now dressed the part, on 17 April I embarked a Twin Otter airplane with the CFNA Command Team and two reporters. By the time we passed from the treeline to the tundra, all that was visible was snow and ice, with contours discernible underneath the blanket of white. It was chilling imagining what it would be like being stranded down there and trying to survive. After refuelling at Cambridge Bay (Ikalukutiak), we took off for Resolute Bay (Qausuittuq). As we approached Cornwallis Island, the sea ice extended as far as the eye could see, traced with fractures and leads that made it look like a spider web rolled up in places. Resolute from the air was the tiniest, most isolated community I had ever seen.

Once we settled in at the hotel, I met Ranger Sergeant Peter Moon, a retired journalist who had spent twenty-three years with the *Globe and Mail*

before he was recruited to join 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (3CRPG) in Ontario to serve as their “Public Affairs Ranger” – a position created for him. It was readily apparent that he was the driving force behind much of the recent media publicity generated on the Rangers. At the Rangers’ “Operational Control Centre” at South Camp, Moon traced out the progress of the patrol on maps. He drove me around the High Arctic settlement of about 250 people, and I was forced to shed my southern preconceptions about village life. Polar bear skins were stretched out to dry against small houses, and carved up polar bear legs and seals sat on the side of the road – the outside was a giant freezer in wintertime. Taking my hands out of my gloves to snap a few pictures earned a mild case of frostbite on my “trigger” finger. Next time, I vowed, I would remember to bring gloves for underneath my mittens.

We flew to Cape Isachsen, with its abandoned weather station offering the closest austere airstrip to Magnetic North, to meet the Rangers on 18 April. Passing over the rough topography of Ellef Ringnes Island (which I thought resembled the Alberta badlands covered in snow), we circled overhead while the Rangers formed a quarter guard, standing in two rows beside their snowmachines. The temperature was biting cold but the wind mercifully light when we stepped off the plane. The Rangers held attention as Colonel Kevin Macleod inspected them, led a moment of silence for four soldiers killed in a friendly-fire incident the day before in Afghanistan, gave a short speech celebrating their achievement, and then issued a Special Service Medal (Ranger Bar) to Ranger Levi Quanaq from Igloodik. A few Rangers received congratulations directly from Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Minister of National Defence David Collenette by satellite phone, and then the formal activities ended and the Rangers hosted our small group of visitors in their tents.

I was enamoured with the diversity of the Rangers, who hailed from all across Canada’s three northern territories. Many of their weathered faces were burnt by frost and exposure. They came in all shapes and sizes. Some were Inuit, some Dene, some Métis, some non-Indigenous. Taken together, this group of people seemed to represent a microcosm of Northern Canada. Ranger Paul Guyot from Fort Simpson said that the Rangers shared one common characteristic: “they are all tough.” This group represented some of the best Rangers from across 1 CRPG, specially chosen to undertake this mission, so I recognized that there was inherent selection bias when it came to using them to characterize all Rangers. Nevertheless, they were a most impressive team.

Guyot took me back to the tent he was sharing with three Inuit Rangers. One of the Rangers was making bannock on the Coleman stove, and they had boiled up water for cups of tea and “cowboy coffee.” A regular stream of

Rangers came by the tent in which I sat comfortably on a polar bear skin, introducing themselves, sharing stories about themselves and their home communities, swapping stories about their historic polar bear encounters, and describing the arduous journey that they had just undertaken. I had never heard anything like it, and the spirit of comradeship was obvious. They also probed me for information on the outside world – and most importantly whether the Montreal Canadiens or Vancouver Canucks had made the National Hockey League (NHL) playoffs.

At the end of the visit, I mentioned to Major Yves Laroche, the Commanding Officer of 1CRPG, that the Rangers' story needed to be told more fully. Laroche explained that he had been thinking recently about the need for a book on the Rangers, and he hoped that Pierre Berton might write it. He was probably disappointed, but offered his support, when I said that I would like to take a first cut at it myself.

Now I had been to the Far North. I had dropped down on a plane, spent an afternoon speaking with Rangers in tents on the ice, jotted down notes, and then promptly returned to the comfortable hotel in Resolute. I had even been interviewed by a reporter about what I saw and knew about the Rangers. Did this make me an expert? Hardly. It affirmed how little I actually knew. I saw the Rangers as an important community-based solution to Northern sovereignty and security issues that were attracting a growing tide of media attention.<sup>7</sup> Before I could feel comfortable sharing the story of the Rangers with a wider audience, however, I would have to seek out a lot more information. I would also have to broaden my aperture and look beyond the Northern territories to “remote Northern and coastal communities” across the country, from coast to coast to coast.

### **Eyes, Ears, and Voice from Coast to Coast to Coast**

The ensuing year left precious little time for research on the Rangers as I wrote my dissertation in a farmhouse in southern Ontario. From November 2003-August 2004, however, Professor Jim Miller, the Canada Research Chair in Native-Newcomer Relations at the University of Saskatchewan, provided a postdoctoral fellowship that allowed me to re-engage my Ranger research. The cornerstone of my plan was to observe Ranger training with a patrol in 1 CRPG. Ross River did not sound as exotic as the Magnetic North Pole, but I had never been to the Yukon before. I was fortunate to accompany Sergeant Denis Lalonde, an experienced Ranger instructor. He described himself as a “city boy” (I could relate) who did not fish or hunt and had no skidoo experience prior to coming North, so he embraced this as part of the challenge.



He assured me, however, that “the Rangers take good care of us.” Observe, let the Rangers be mentors, do your best, show an effort, and show appreciation, and the Rangers would steer us on the right course. “They respect the military in the North,” he explained, and were willing to teach people who were willing to learn. What I saw in the Yukon suggested that this was indeed the case.

Providing details about this trip and those that followed would require a book unto itself. The Rangers whom I met in Ross River and at a mass exercise at Quiet Lake offered a glimpse into the diverse backgrounds, skills, and motivations of the Rangers in the Yukon. With national media coverage in the early 2000s beginning to link climate change with Arctic security concerns, I saw where and how the Rangers in the Territorial North fit into this burgeoning discussion. I also noted their grassroots connections and intensely local and regional identities. My academic attention had been drawn North. But there are five Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups, and to understand and document the Canadian Rangers as a national organization, I needed to visit Rangers across the country.

The five Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups all welcomed my curiosity and proved highly supportive as I sought to learn more about their Rangers through first-hand fieldwork. In July 2005, 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (4CRPG) arranged for me to join the Gold River and Tahsis patrols for a training exercise on Nootka Island, off the coast of Vancouver Island. In late February and March of the next year, I headed to the opposite coast to participate in a sovereignty operation (which we soon dubbed “Operation Stuck”) with 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (5 CRPG) in Labrador. The environmental conditions entailed skills on a snowmobile far beyond my very limited experience, but the Rangers were patient and encouraging. Based on this experience and the Rangers’ explanations of how their homeland was changing, I internalized how climate change was not a future issue, but was already very real for Canadians living in isolated Northern regions. That summer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (2CRPG) arranged for me to participate in annual training with the Inukjuak patrol, along the eastern shore of Hudson Bay in Nunavik. The following year, I joined 2CRPG’s commanding officer on a helicopter trip along the Lower North Shore to visit the patrols in their isolated communities along that stretch of coastline. I came away from these experiences with a whole new appreciation of the diversity of the Rangers, the uniqueness of each community as reflected in its patrol, and the myriad ways that Rangers work together to care for their communities and serve their country.

These experiences also informed my first articles and book chapters on the Rangers. I produced a short history of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers



(**chapter 2**) that documented the Second World War force that preceded the Canadian Rangers, showcasing how this grassroots form of service on the home front was proportionate to wartime threats and did not consume military resources needed for the fight overseas. I also began to frame up my understanding of the Rangers' historical development, initially focusing on Indigenous peoples in the North serving in the Rangers from 1947-2005 (**chapter 3**). To help explain the Rangers' contemporary relevance and success, I used theoretical insights about postmodern militaries to describe the Rangers as "a postmodern militia that works" (**chapter 4**). I also sought to document the insights that I had gleaned from Ranger Instructors – the Regular and Primary Reserve Force soldiers who serve as a bridge between the Rangers and the military establishment – who I had interviewed about best practices of connecting and working with Indigenous communities (**chapter 5**).

These reflections also informed how I thought about defence and security issues in remote regions of Canada more generally, and how these intersected with concerns about Canadian sovereignty. I noted in a presentation at the University of Manitoba in 2009:

The recent media, political, and academic literature is dominated by discussions of fear, about an impending sovereignty crisis, about the need for dramatic government action. Canadians, it seems, have failed to take sufficient action and interest in our north, and our military presence is paltry. This assertion is inherently southern-centric; Northern Canadians have, of course, taken great interest in their homeland, have been taking action, and serve in the military in a far greater proportion than southern Canadians. Yet commentators still talk of the north as a distant frontier, foreboding and hitherto isolated, a potential storehouse of riches that might offer the key to our nation's future. As Thomas Berger explained in the 1970s, this sets up the classic discursive clash between competing visions of the North as frontier and homeland. Current rhetoric is filled with images of both. Since the mid-1980s, Northerners have been central to our sovereignty claims in the arctic. But southern Canadians still talk about needing to look North as if it is outside – despite all the militant rhetoric, it remains a *there*, not a *here*.

To Canadian Rangers living in the region, however, the North certainly is a "here." I sought to situate their history in the context of Canada's evolving sovereignty and security interests, emphasizing the oscillating cycles of interest and the uneven commitment that Canada has made to Northern communities.



Scholars and journalists tend to emphasize the negative stories – of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line and environmental degradation, of coercive High Arctic relocations, of low-level flying controversies, and of governments that failed to deliver on promises to expand Canada's presence and capabilities in the north. By contrast, I saw the Rangers as a Northern success story, asserting Canadian sovereignty and offering security from the "inside out."<sup>8</sup> In my view, pointing out positive relationships does not diminish or downplay the hardships associated with histories of colonial violence, trauma, and persistent inequalities within Canada. In seeking to explain how, in the case of the Rangers, the Canadian government had got things right, I hoped to promote the idea that relationships between the state and diverse peoples can yield positive results if these connections are animated by a respectful spirit and allowed to take unconventional forms.

I had subsequent opportunities to return to various patrol groups over the next five years to meet with Rangers, Ranger Instructors, and headquarters staff who further shaped and refined my understandings of the Ranger organization across Canada. In July 2008, I drove to Geraldton in northern Ontario to observe 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group's (3CRPG) Camp Loon, its annual collective training session for Junior Canadian Rangers (JCRs) from that province. That October, I spent a memorable weekend with the Cape Freels patrol in Newfoundland (5CRPG) as the Rangers practiced search and rescue (SAR). The following year, I observed the annual patrol training exercise in Tuktoyaktuk (1CRPG), travelling to Ranger Master Corporal Emmanuel Adams's cabin in the Husky Lakes area, where I slept in a snowhouse (iglu) for the first time. (I still find it hard to imagine that the Inuvik-Tuk highway now runs close to his cabin, thus reminding me how "remoteness" is relative). That summer, Sergeant Tim Stanistreet and I met with Ranger patrols in the Yukon and Atlin, BC, to "ground truth" my preliminary interpretations of the history of the Rangers in that region. Then, in 2012, I observed 5CRPG patrol training in Nain, the northernmost community in Nunatsiavut, and up the Labrador coast. I also met with individual Rangers during other Northern research trips. These experiences reinforced how and why I came to embrace the idea that the Canadian Rangers are first and foremost a community-based organization.

During this time period, I also observed an operational pivot as the Rangers became drawn into increasingly frequent CAF activities in the North. The Ranger-led Kigliqavik Ranger exercises (such as the one that had taken me to Isachsen in 2002) had morphed into Operation Nunaliut, organized by Joint Task Force North, and I had the opportunity to visit Rangers participating in these activities at Eureka in April 2008 and Alert in April 2010. I also had the



chance to observe the Rangers from 1CRPG during the annual Operation Nanook summer exercises. In August 2008, I joined the Rangers and Primary Reservists from Ontario for seal hunting in Frobisher Bay, and the following year met with Rangers in Iqaluit. Soldiers often described these visits as “dog and pony shows,” but they afford opportunities to meet new Rangers, rekindle relationships with people I already knew, and situate their service in broader military and “whole of government” contexts.

I preferred sustained engagement in which I was more deeply embedded in the Ranger experience. In February 2009, I had the privilege of joining 4CRPG’s Exercise Western Spirit, a 34-day, 3400-km exercise that involved thirty Rangers and headquarters personnel traversing Western Canada on snowmobiles. From the British Columbia coast, the group travelled to Points North Landing in northern Saskatchewan, where I joined the trek alongside fifteen Rangers from Manitoba who replaced the same number from Alberta and Saskatchewan. Travelling through the “Land of the Little Sticks,” as the Dene describe northern Manitoba, in extremely cold winter conditions proved gruelling and the machines (and our bodies) took a beating, but the Rangers charted a safe course to Churchill, Manitoba. It was a different Ranger exercise from any that I had previously experienced, with more rigid deadlines and Rangers wearing military clothing and riding military Light Over Snow Vehicles (LOSVs) rather than their own. I learned a lot, and again marvelled at





the Rangers, who showed leadership, resiliency, and resolve in the face of adversity.

The following summer, I was invited to observe Operation Nanook in Resolute Bay – this time embedded in one of the new Arctic Response Company Groups (ARCGs) that the Canadian Army had created out of Reserve units across Canada “for sovereignty operations across Canada’s North.”<sup>9</sup> I joined soldiers of 32 Canadian Brigade Group from the Greater Toronto Area and the Canadian Rangers assigned to mentor them in the High Arctic community for a week in August. I noted from the onset how excited and proud the southern Canadian soldiers were to participate in the exercise and their eagerness to learn about the North and its people. The Rangers were vital to this process, particularly as they got to know the soldiers. A draft op ed that I wrote at the time on “Operation Nanook: High Arctic Theatre for Everyone” was a bit cheeky but captured my sense of where the Rangers fit in the evolving political and security picture:

The Arctic is cast in many roles by many people these days. The beauty of Operation Nanook, currently playing out in Canada’s High Arctic, is that all Canadians can and should applaud it.

Some “purveyors of polar peril” see the Arctic as a region on the precipice of international conflict. Unsettled boundary disputes, dreams of newly accessible resources, legal uncertainties, sovereignty concerns, and an alleged Arctic “arms race” point to the “use it or lose it” scenario repeatedly raised by Stephen Harper and his government. A display of Canadian Forces capabilities certainly fits this script. Soldiers from 32 Canadian Brigade Group in Ontario, deployed north as an Arctic Response Company Group, are joined by Canadian Rangers to provide “boots on the ground” in Resolute, Pond Inlet and other Qikiqtani communities. Three naval ships, a dive team, transport and patrol aircraft, and helicopters round out this visible demonstration of Canada’s military capabilities in this “sovereignty and presence patrolling exercise.”

On the other hand, commentators who emphasize that the circumpolar world is more representative of cooperation than competition can hold up Operation Nanook as an appropriate exercise of Canada’s capabilities. We are exercising our sovereignty by inviting our closest neighbours, the Danes and the Americans, to participate. We are putting aside the well-managed disputes over tiny Hans Island, the oil-rich Beaufort Sea, and the Northwest Passage and instead working with the US Navy, the US Coast

Guard, and the Royal Danish Navy to enhance our ability to operate together. After all, why would Canada think that it needs to stand alone in the face of common security and safety concerns such as oil spills or search and rescue? Senior officials in Foreign Affairs and the government's Northern Strategy released last summer insist that our sovereignty is not in question. This confidence affords us the space to work with our allies. A military presence in the Arctic is not essential to our sovereignty, but operations like this one allow the Canadian Forces to develop the capabilities necessary to fulfill its domestic mission and operate in all parts of the country. Building awareness of the region also helps to generate the domestic support that the federal government needs to implement its Northern Strategy.

Canadians must remember that the Arctic is a homeland. The Inuit of the Qikiqtani region, who have frequently reminded the government that sovereignty begins at home, play an active role in Operation Nanook. They are well-represented in the Canadian Rangers: the men and women from remote and isolated communities who volunteer as Canadian Forces Reservists in an unorthodox but important unit. In Resolute and Pond Inlet, Rangers are guiding and teaching southern soldiers how to operate in their Arctic homeland. This is a story of grassroots patriotism and of cross-cultural relationship building.

Operation Nanook does not have the drama of Russian bombers allegedly violating Canadian airspace, or generate paranoia like the prospect of rogue ships or submarines undermining our control over our internal waters. It is a demonstration of Canada's well-established sovereignty, and a stage for the Canadian Forces to work with its allies – both internal and international – to ensure the security and safety of Canadians.

Before the Resolute leg of the operation wrapped up on 17 August, I asked if I could continue on through the field exercise portion in Pond Inlet. The Canadian Army approved my request, and I flew to Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik) with the ARCG and the Rangers and then sailed through Eclipse Sound and Navy Board Inlet to a campsite on Bylot Island with the soldiers and their Ranger mentors. I observed how what had started as a "we-they" relationship between the Rangers and the southern Reservists had evolved into "we" by the end of the exercise. The Rangers generously shared their stories and reflections on a changing North. One particularly memorable conversation was with Ranger Pauloosie (Paul) Atagoota, who lived in Resolute Bay at that time, and



with whom I had become fast friends. On the first night, after camp was established, he invited me for a walk. The conversation was relaxed as we walked over the tundra and down lush valleys. I asked him questions about the land and he told me stories and shared his thoughts on living in the North. I recorded at the time:

After walking for about half an hour, Paul sat down on one of the downward slopes, just about a small stream, and lit a cigarette. When he was finished, he quietly laid back. After a couple of minutes of silence, he said the simple words: "I'm home." It was at that moment, perhaps more than any other that I'd experienced in the North, that I felt it: the connection to the land, his homeland, his identity. He had spent much of his childhood in camps on the land along this stretch of coastline. It was as familiar to him as it was exotic and remote to me. One on occasion as a teenager, Paul told me, he and a cousin had taken a snowmachine out hunting to this part of Bylot Island. It had broken down, and they did not know how to fix it, so they walked fourteen hours back to Pond Inlet. He knew the land well.

As we sat on the soft ground, we talked about community life in the North. He worried about the young generation, who spent their time plugged into iPods and playing video games. Even some of the younger Rangers spent little time on the land, he observed, and did not really have survival skills to pass along to soldiers from the south. Just because they were Inuit, everyone from the outside assumed that they had an innate expertise living on the land in the Arctic. This was a fallacy. Many did not learn a lot of land skills from their elders and were more preoccupied with trying to imitate the southern way of life than in seeking guidance from experienced members of their communities. Children were the future, Paul reminded me as a father and a grandfather, and Inuit were changing. The expression on his face, which always carried a smile, was more serious than I had seen before.

The Inuktitut language was also changing, Paul explained. Some young people no longer spoke the language and could not learn directly from the elders. In these cases, a critical connection to traditional ways was broken. We talked about traditional concepts like sharing, and how they fit – and did not fit – with a wage economy. He looked to the sky and explained that tomorrow would be windy. The clouds meant that weather was coming in.



Paul's message was one of patience. He embodied it as he sat on the tundra, quietly puffing on his cigarette. His voice was quiet, his words carefully chosen. He was not yet an elder, but he was wise.

Just after returning home to Ontario, I heard my friend Rob Huebert (a political science professor at the University of Calgary) on CBC Radio articulating his views about Arctic sovereignty and security threats. The broadcast reflected usual media frames around these issues, with Rob emphasizing uncertainty over boundaries, competition over resources, and the need for a stronger military presence.<sup>10</sup> I noted at the time how "I was struck by the irony of it all. The disconnect was so stark. Having just walked the ground with the army, having breathed the air with the Rangers, and having interacted with the local communities, I could not help but feel that the southern commentators were missing the most salient point. It was all about relationships, rooted in Northerners who identified as Canadians. And each step on the mushy tundra by Ranger Paul Atagoota was a practical exercise of Canadian sovereignty, and a clear demonstration of national presence."

After this trip, my wife, Jennifer, insisted that the time had come for me to sit down and digest what I had learned about the Rangers over the preceding decade. I always thought that I needed to take another trip to meet with Rangers and more fully understand the diversity of the organization. She knew

that I would never actually write the history that I had been promising for nearly a decade if I continued with the pace of participatory field research to which I had grown accustomed in recent years. I followed her sage advice and set to work writing the book in earnest, refining my ideas as I prepared briefings on the history of Ranger policy in Ottawa and presented historical overviews to Ranger leadership meetings in Yellowknife, Saint-Jean, and Gander, and incorporating feedback from Rangers and other CAF members.

In the fall of 2012, I was honoured to participate in the Rangers' sixty-fifth anniversary celebrations in Dawson City, Yukon, where the first Ranger company had been stood up in 1947. Having recently completed my book manuscript on the history of the Rangers, I had prepared a briefing and a PowerPoint presentation on the Rangers' history. Then renowned Elder Alex van Bibber, who had joined the Rangers in 1948, was invited to share his reflections on the Rangers' history just prior to cutting the Ranger "birthday" cake. In five minutes, he elegantly, succinctly, comprehensively, and entertainingly offered his appraisal. By this point, I had the good sense to know when someone could tell a story better than me – and to recognize that whatever I might add would be superfluous.



With the Rangers now part of the Canadian Army and attracting sustained political and national media attention, questions abounded. How could DND/CAF maximize the output and impact of the Canadian Rangers? How should the military enhance Ranger training, expand the force, and update their roles? How could the military make the Rangers more effective in a defence role or, on the other hand, in addressing the needs of local communities? With more outside commentators weighing in, I suggested that the answers to these questions should be guided by the logic of "If It Ain't Broke, Don't Break It" – the title of a 2013 paper published as part of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and ArcticNet Arctic Security Project (**chapter 6**). In particular, I cautioned against excessively standardizing Ranger training and roles across

Canada if this would undermine local and regional flexibility, as well as promises to “expand” the number of Rangers without a clear operational rationale or assessment of capacity in remote communities. Furthermore, I encouraged decision-makers not to recast the Rangers into either a more conventional military mold or to convert it into an organization that lost its military rationale.

I hoped that both the history of the Rangers and more sober appraisals of the Arctic security environment<sup>11</sup> would explain both why the organization had taken the form that it had and why it remained relevant in the 2010s. *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History*, published by the University of British Columbia Press in 2013, offered a comprehensive reflection on the evolution of the Rangers and how the organization represented a flexible, inexpensive, and culturally inclusive way for Canada to “show the flag” while also serving as a “force multiplier” for the CAF. The Rangers offer living proof that military activities designed to assert sovereignty need not cause insecurity for residents of remote regions, I observed. In the case of the Rangers, Indigenous and local knowledge, stewardship, and national security are compatible and mutually reinforcing.<sup>12</sup> That year, I also compiled a collection of historical and contemporary newspaper stories that offered vignettes highlighting the Canadian Rangers’ contributions to defence, security, and resilience, as well as the rich diversity of the organization across Canada.<sup>13</sup>

### **Academic and Advocate: Honorary Lieutenant Colonel of 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group**

After I delivered a lecture on the history of the Canadian Rangers to the 1CRPG leadership session in Yellowknife in September 2014, Major Craig Volstad (the commanding officer) came to the podium, asked if I would serve as the honorary lieutenant colonel of the unit, and presented me with a red Ranger hoodie and ball cap. I accepted with great enthusiasm, embracing this new role where I would serve as “the guardian of Regimental traditions and history, [promote] the unit’s identity and ethos[,] and [be] an advisor to the Commanding Officer on virtually all issues *excluding* operations.”<sup>14</sup> This meant that I would now be dedicating my time and energies to the Rangers serving in the Territorial North, which aligned with my intensifying academic focus on Arctic security and sovereignty issues. I felt like it was a natural fit, as I had been working on a commemorative volume for the unit, designed specifically for a Ranger audience, which appeared the next year as *Vigilans: The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group*.<sup>15</sup> This new role also meant expanded opportunities to meet with and learn from Rangers across the patrol group, taking me to the northernmost (Grise Fiord) and southernmost (Sanikiluaq)

communities in Nunavut, and from Champagne in southwestern Yukon to Pangnirtung Fiord on the eastern coast of Baffin Island.

It also meant more frequent interaction with the remarkable youth involved in the Junior Canadian Rangers program, as well as their Ranger mentors. I attended JCR activities wherever and whenever possible, including annual visits to the JCR Enhanced Training Session (ETS) at Cadet Camp Whitehorse from 2014-17, then Clyde River in August 2018, and then Whitehorse in 2019. I



got to know many JCRs at these gatherings, at air rifle competitions, during visits to their communities, and on Students on Ice Arctic expeditions,<sup>16</sup> which always included several JCRs from across Canada. I have watched with admiration and respect as many of these young Canadians have assumed leadership roles in their communities – including, in several cases, as Canadian Rangers looking after their local JCR patrol. These interactions have produced friendships that I cherish and that make me optimistic about the future.

Regular opportunities to participate in Ranger training activities and patrols also broadened and deepened my awareness of the myriad strengths of – and challenges facing – Northerners. Participating in Type 1 (community-based) annual Ranger training activities and JCR training in Gjoa Haven (May 2015), Resolute Bay (April 2016), Sanikiluaq (February 2018), Łutsel K'e (June 2018), Gjoa Haven (April 2019), Kugluktuk (January 2020), and Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay (February 2020) introduced me to new communities, new people, and new experiences. The potlatch honouring Ranger elder Alex van Bibber, held in Champagne in November 2014, brought together many old friends to pay tribute to an esteemed elder aptly described by Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod as a symbol of “what the North once was and what we hope it will continue to be.”<sup>17</sup> Meetings with the Rangers from the Dawson, Haines Junction, Whitehorse, Carcross, and Atlin patrols also rekindled longstanding relationships and forged new ones.

The opportunity to join in Type 3 patrols, involving Rangers from multiple communities meeting up for a joint activity, also enhanced my appreciation of inter-community relationships, the Rangers' pride in the unit, and the myriad skills and profound knowledge that Rangers possess. Participating in Exercise Ka Tit Tut with the Pangnirtung patrol in April 2017 reaffirmed how much I depended upon the Rangers to keep me safe on the land. Falling through the ice at one point meant that my name “Whitney” was replaced with “Wet-knee.” (Thankfully, Jaco Ishulutaq had a spare pair of boots to lend me!) The Rangers navigated challenging environmental conditions with remarkable acumen, patience, and humour. The members of the Qikiqtarjuaq patrol with whom we camped and trained at a lake between the two communities were similarly generous, enthusiastic, and dedicated.

Exercise Dene Ranger, which brought together more than 130 Rangers from ten Dene communities in the Northwest Territories in February 2016, offered my first opportunity to interact with Rangers from “around the lake” (Great Slave Lake) outside of leadership sessions. I travelled with Rangers from









Wekweètì and Behchokò to Weledeh Park, a traditional Dene site along the Yellowknife River just outside of the territorial capital, where the Rangers set up camp, showcased their skills, and swapped stories. It struck me like a big family reunion. “I see the Canadian Rangers as such a wonderful success story of partnerships,” I told a Yellowknife journalist at the time. “I’m drawn to it because you hear a lot of stories about friction and this to me is one of the great success stories that we have as a country. I’ve been pleased that in the last decade-and-a-half there’s been a lot more interest in what the Rangers do, but I still think there’s an opportunity to better understand the roles in the communities.” The Rangers are “not the thin red line with their .303 Enfields (rifles), fighting off the Russians or anything like that,” I explained. “They’re the guides, the knowledge keepers who can make sure when forces come up (from further south), they operate safely. And I think one of the stories known well in the North but not known broadly is the role the Rangers play in the North as first-responders.”<sup>18</sup>

In light of these experiences, it seemed natural to celebrate the diversity of the Rangers in 1CRPG and across the country. “The North’s Canadian Rangers” (**chapter 7**) highlighted the practical benefits of diversity and inclusion in the organization, and how successfully mobilizing Canadians living in remote regions and situating them appropriately within the defence team has entailed moving beyond conventional military structures and practices. In 2021, I produced a short policy brief on “Diversity Statistics, Self-Identification Data, and the Canadian Rangers: Underestimating Indigenous Peoples’ Participation Rates in the Canadian Army” (2021) demonstrating that the self-identification survey data and the methodologies used by the Army to present the findings dramatically underestimate Indigenous participation in the Rangers and, by extension, in the CAF as a whole (**chapter 10**). Rather than promoting a deficit approach that suggests the underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the CAF, I built the case that the CAF should be analyzing what has made it an “employer of choice” for Indigenous members – particularly in the Rangers.

In the news media, not everyone shares my enthusiasm for the Rangers. In a December 2018 article in the *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, I sought to address what I considered to be various media misperceptions of the Canadian Rangers, Northern Indigenous service, and Arctic security (**chapter 8**). I argued that the Rangers are an appropriate and operationally valued component of a Canadian military posture designed to address Northern risks across the defence-security-safety mission spectrum. Rather than seeing the Rangers as a sideline to the “serious” military show (as two ardent media critics allege), their proven ability to operate in difficult and austere environmental

conditions and to maintain interoperability with mission partners in addressing practical security challenges is highly valuable. By serving as the “eyes, ears, and voice” of the CAF in their communities, the Rangers embody federal approaches to collaboration and partnership predicated on the idea that Northerners are best placed to make decisions in areas that impact them.

This logic applies to the Rangers as “first responders” across Canada. In a 2021 article with public policy scholar Peter Kikkert, we observe how the Rangers’ presence, capabilities, and relationships with(in) their communities lead them to regularly support other government agencies in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a broad spectrum of local emergency and disaster scenarios. Using a wide range of case studies from across Canada, “The Canadian Rangers: Strengthening Community Disaster Resilience in Canada’s Remote and Isolated Communities” (**chapter 9**) explains and assesses how the Rangers strengthen the disaster resilience of their communities. Our findings also suggest ways to enhance the Rangers’ functional capabilities in light of climate and environmental changes that portend more frequent and severe emergencies and disasters. It also argues that the organization can serve as a model for how targeted government investment in a local volunteer force can build resilience in similar remote and isolated jurisdictions, particularly in Greenland and Alaska.<sup>19</sup>

Conversations with Rangers and headquarters staff at 1CRPG also encouraged me to discern what metrics of success might be used to assess the effectiveness and strength of the Ranger organization. Working closely with Dr. Kikkert on this question over the past four years, we have analyzed publicly available reports, media coverage, and academic commentary on the Canadian Rangers and Government of Canada and CAF Arctic priorities, as well as organizing many focus group conversations and interviews with Rangers, to evaluate the contributions, successes, and shortcomings of the Rangers as a Reserve component in a Northern Canadian context. In general, our research confirms that metrics of Ranger success must measure not only the organization’s contributions to DND/CAF priorities, but also contributions to collective and individual *resilience* that benefit communities, help to meet broader government objectives (at federal, territorial, hamlet, and Indigenous government levels), and promote reconciliation. We also emphasize that measures must account for the Rangers’ distinct forms and terms of CAF service, and not simply apply those developed for other CAF elements or for the military as a whole.

Based on what we heard from Rangers, we decided to frame our study around various concepts of resilience. Given the breadth and depth of their involvement at the community level, we suggest that the Canadian Rangers are

tied to four categories or components of resilience: community-based disaster resilience, community resilience, Indigenous resilience, and individual resilience. The Rangers' familiarity with local cultures and vested interest in the welfare of their fellow community members make them valuable, trusted assets. We also highlight how Ranger activities allow members of Indigenous communities to practice and share traditional skills, such as living off the land, not only with people from outside their cultures but also across generations within.

The key Arctic defence documents produced by the Canadian military over the last decade all emphasize the need for an integrated defence team and whole-of-government approaches to meet defence, security, and safety challenges.<sup>20</sup> Within these concepts, the Rangers are described as facilitators or enablers for other military components providing combined response capabilities. In consolidating what I see as key "military metrics" of Ranger success (**chapter 11**), I build upon the military's expectation that the "Rangers will remain a critical and enduring presence on the ground, valuable in many roles, including amongst others, the CAF's eyes and ears for routine surveillance purposes, its guides, local cultural advisors, interpreters, and the core of our liaison capacity in many locations, while remaining immediately available to support local government or other agencies."<sup>21</sup> The proposed metrics explain why the Canadian Army considers the Rangers "a mature capability" and "the foundation of the [Canadian Armed Forces'] operational capability across the North for a range of domestic missions."<sup>22</sup>

The Ranger concept is inherently rooted in the idea that the unique knowledge of Canadians living in isolated Northern and coastal communities can make an important contribution to effective military operations. In **chapter 12**, Kikkert and I offer a framework for understanding how participation in the Rangers reinforces and builds individual resilience. Using Arctic Social Indicators as a basis, we propose metrics around health, material well-being, contact with nature, cultural well-being and vitality, and fate control. We also emphasize opportunities for Rangers to exercise their on-the-land skills and share them with younger generations through the JCR program. In this sense, the Rangers bridge the past, present, and future of their communities, their peoples, and our country.

### **The Canadian Rangers at Seventy-Five**

As the Canadian Ranger organization celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2022, I hope that this collection helps to advance understanding of the Rangers' roles, relationships, and contributions to the military and to local

communities. In my work, I have endeavoured to be inclusive, reflecting the voices, interests, and priorities of all people and groups represented in the Canadian Rangers organization. I have also tried to draw attention to the spirit of partnership – rooted in mutual learning, sharing, and a common love for the land – that has made the Rangers a long-term success on local, regional, and national levels.

In directing the Canadian Army to discern how best to enhance the Canadian Rangers in the 2020s, Lieutenant-General Wayne Eyre (now the Chief of the Defence Staff) noted in January 2021 that any changes would have to “ensure flexibility to incorporate the diversity of [Canadian Ranger] communities” and the environments in which Rangers operate. Furthermore, he emphasized that plans “must not change the nature of the [Rangers] as a unique sub-component of the Reserve Force.”<sup>23</sup> These are important considerations. The Rangers are a vital bridge between the CAF and the Canadians who live in remote coastal and northern areas, providing a grassroots, persistent military presence in these regions. They continue to offer vital “routine surveillance” during their daily activities, guidance to other CAF personnel, local cultural advice, and local liaison capacity. The Rangers also use their training and organization to perform essential functions in support of their local governments or other agencies in times of need. They are a remarkable example of how unconventional forms of military service can effectively cover and contribute to a broad spectrum of domestic operations. With climate change and evolving continental defence requirements reshaping the North American defence and security environment, these considerations are more important than ever.

Over the last two decades, I have come to appreciate and internalize the difference between travelling *to* remote northern and coastal communities and living *in* those places. While southern commentators like myself often refer to sovereignty in the abstract, the Rangers’ service embodies for me what tangible “sovereignty operations” look like in practice. I am grateful to the fine mentors and friends who have taught me, firsthand, what it means for Rangers to serve as the eyes, ears, and voice of the Canadian Armed Forces in remote regions – and as the face and voice of their communities and peoples in the CAF.

*P. Whitney Lackenbauer  
Otterville, Ontario  
January 2022*

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), "Arctic and Northern Policy Framework" (2019), <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587>.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Mr. Kaminski died in March 1998 at the age of 31. See "Native military contribution on display," *Windspeaker*, 1 June 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Yale Belanger and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, eds., *Blockades or Breakthroughs? Aboriginal Peoples Confront the Canadian State* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Over time, products of this research included P. Whitney Lackenbauer with John Moses, Scott Sheffield, and Maxime Gohier, *A Commemorative History of Aboriginal People in the Canadian Military* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2010), <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/pub/boo-bro/abo-aut/index-eng.asp>; Lackenbauer, Craig Mantle, and Scott Sheffield, eds., *Aboriginal Peoples and Military Participation: Canadian and International Perspectives* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007); and Lackenbauer and Mantle, eds., *Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Combined Operation: The Appropriation of Stoney Point Reserve and the Creation of Camp Ipperwash," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 2/1 (Fall 1999): 1-29, <http://www.synergiescanada.org/journals/synpra/jmss/42/273>; P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Battle Grounds: The Canadian Military and Aboriginal Lands* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); and Belanger and Lackenbauer, *Blockades or Breakthroughs?*

<sup>6</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Sovereignty, Security and Community Development in the Canadian North," paper delivered at the Armed Forces and Society Conference, Baltimore, Maryland, October 2001; and Lackenbauer, "The Rangers – A Canadian Success Story," Canadian Arctic Research Council (CARC) Conference "On Thinning Ice: Climate Change and New Ideas about Sovereignty and Security in the Arctic," Ottawa, January 2002.

<sup>7</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "'The Eyes and Ears of the Canadian Forces': The Canadian Rangers as a Human Solution to Northern Sovereignty and Security," paper delivered at the Ocean Management Research Network (OMRN) Conference, Ottawa, November 2003.

<sup>8</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship from the Inside Out," in *Thawing Ice – Cold War: Canada's Security, Sovereignty, and Environmental Concerns in the Arctic*, ed. Rob Huebert (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Centre for Defence and Security Studies Bison Paper 12, 2009), 61-79.

<sup>9</sup> DND, “Canadian Sovereignty Operations” (last modified 14 March 2018), <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/types/canadian-sovereignty.html>.

<sup>10</sup> On my ongoing debates with Rob Huebert about the nature of Arctic security, see Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), and Rob Huebert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, eds., *Debating Arctic Security: Selected Writings by Rob Huebert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, 2010-2021* (Peterborough: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, 2021), <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DebatingArcticSecurity-RH-PWL-nov2021.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Ken Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Bill Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2008); P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World* (Toronto: Canadian International Council, Foreign Policy for Canada’s Tomorrow No. 3, 2009); and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, ed., *Canada and Arctic Sovereignty and Security: Historical Perspectives* (Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies/University of Calgary Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, ed., *Canada’s Rangers: Selected Stories, 1942-2012* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2013). I also sought to stitch the Canadian Rangers into the broader story of the “military as nation-builder” in the Canadian North in the 2013 Ross Ellis Memorial Lecture in Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary. “The Military as Nation-Builders: The Case of the Canadian North -- The 2013 Ross Ellis Memorial Lecture in Military and Strategic Studies,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15/1 (Summer 2013): 1-32, <http://jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/download/522/509>.

<sup>14</sup> Canadian Army, “Aide-Memoire: Honoraries” (October 2014).

<sup>15</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Vigilans: The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group* (Yellowknife: 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Students on Ice, <https://studentsonice.com>.

<sup>17</sup> Tristin Hopper, “Alex van Bibber, an incredible Yukon trapper, just may have been the toughest man in Canada,” *National Post*, 28 November 2014, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/alex-van-bibber-an-incredible-yukon-trapper-just-may-have-been-the-toughest-man-in-canada>.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Evan Kiyoshi French, “‘They’re the knowledge keepers’: Honorary lieutenant colonel dives into untold history as Exercise Dene Ranger takes over Yk Bay,” *Yellowknifer*, 2 March 2016.

<sup>19</sup> On these themes, see also Peter Kikkert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Search and Rescue, Climate Change, and the Expansion of the Coast Guard Auxiliary in Inuit Nunangat / the Canadian Arctic,” *Canadian Journal of Emergency Management* 2/1 (June 2021): 26-63; and Kikkert and Lackenbauer, “‘A Great Investment in Our Communities’: Strengthening Nunavut’s Whole-of-Society Search and Rescue Capabilities,” *Arctic* 74/3 (September 2021): 258-75.

<sup>20</sup> See P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, “The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16/4 (March 2016): 7-66, <https://jmss.org/article/download/58175/pdf/>; and Lackenbauer and Lajeunesse, “The Emerging Arctic Security Environment: Putting the Military in its (Whole of Government) Place,” in *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens*, eds. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Heather Nicol (Antigonish: Mulroney Institute of Government, 2017), 1-36.

<sup>21</sup> DND, *Northern Approaches: The Army Arctic Concept 2021* (Kingston: Canadian Army Land Warfare Centre, 2013), 23. The Rangers’ national task list encompasses three broad aspects: conducting and supporting surveillance and presence patrols; conducting and assisting with domestic military operations; and maintaining a Canadian Armed Forces presence in local communities. This includes reporting unusual activities or sightings; collecting local data for the CAF; land-based and maritime patrolling – in winter by snow machine and in summer by boats; training and guiding Regular and Primary Reserve Force units operating in remote regions; assisting in search and rescue efforts and in local emergencies; and assisting with natural disasters such as forest fires and floods. See Defence Administration Order and Directive (DAOD) 2020-2, Canadian Rangers, 21 May 2015, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-defence-admin-orders-directives-2000/2020-2.page>.

<sup>22</sup> LGen A.B. Leslie, draft, “CLS Planning Guidance – Arctic Response” (July 2009), DND file 3000-1 (A/DLFD).

<sup>23</sup> LGen W.D. Eyre, “Commander Canadian Army Planning Guidance – Canadian Ranger Enhancement,” 13 January 2021, DND file 1901-1 (DCR).



## List of Acronyms

2Lt	Second Lieutenant	CDS	Chief of the Defence Staff
AHDR	<i>Arctic Human Development Report</i>	CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
AOR	area of responsibility	CF	Canadian Forces
ARCG	Arctic Response Company Group	CFB	Canadian Forces Base
ASI	Arctic Social Indicators	CFD	Chief of Force Development
ATC	Arctic Training Centre	CFJP	Canadian Forces Joint Plan
ATIP	Access to Information and Privacy	CFNA	Canadian Forces Northern Area
ATV	all-terrain vehicle	<i>CFNESP</i>	<i>Canadian Forces Northern Employment and Support Plan</i>
BC	British Columbia	CGS	Chief of the General Staff
BCA	British Columbia Archives	CHARS	Canadian High Arctic Research Station
BGen	Brigadier-General	CIRNAC	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
CA	Canadian Army	CJOC	Canadian Joint Operations Command
CADPAT	Canadian Disruptive Pattern	CO	Commanding Officer
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces	Col	Colonel
CAO	Canadian Army Order	Comd.	Commander
Capt	Captain	COS A Res	Chief of Staff Army Reserve
CASARA	Civil Air Search and Rescue Association	COVID	Coronavirus disease
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation		
CBO	community-based organization		
CDR	community disaster resilience		

CPR	cardiopulmonary resuscitation	DCO	Deputy Commanding Officer
CR	Canadian Rangers	DEW	Distant Early Warning
CRNA	Canadian Ranger National Authority	DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada)
CROW	Canadian Rangers Ocean Watch	DFO	Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canada)
CRPG	Canadian Ranger Patrol Group	DGRC	Director General of Reserves and Cadets
CRS	Chief of Review Services	DHH	Directorate of History and Heritage
crse	course	DIAND	Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Canada)
CSA	Canadian Standards Association	DM	Deputy Minister
CTR	Compact Tactical Rifle	DND	Department of National Defence (Canada)
D Strat HR	Directorate Strategic Human Resources	DRDC	Defence Research and Development Canada
DAEPM	Directorate of Aerospace Equipment Program Management	DWD	Depart with Dignity
DAEPM (RCS)	Directorate of Aerospace Equipment Program Management (Radar and Communications Systems)	EE	employment equity
DAOD	Defence Administration Order and Directive	EMO	emergency management organization
DCASS	Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security	ESOVPAT	Enhanced Sovereignty Patrol
DCDS	Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff	ETS	Enhanced Training Session
		EUR	equipment usage rate
		FE	force employment
		FG	force generation

FOL	Forward Operating Location	IMMP	Inuit Marine Monitoring Program
FRS	Fishermen's Reserve Service	INAC	Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
FY	fiscal year	ITC	Inuit Tapirisat of Canada
GBA+	Gender-based Analysis Plus	JCR	Junior Canadian Rangers
GDP	gross domestic product	JDA	John G. Diefenbaker Archives
Gen	General	JTFC	Joint Task Force Central
GOBC	Ground Observer Corps	JTFN	Joint Task Force North
GOC-in-C	General Officer Commanding-in-Chief	km(s)	kilometre(s)
GPS	Global Positioning System	KRSAR	Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue
GSAR	ground search and rescue	KSAR	Kitikmeot Search and Rescue
HADCS	High Arctic Data Communications System	LAC	Library and Archives Canada
HF	high frequency	LARR	Local Area Resource Reports
HMCS	Her Majesty's Canadian Ship	LCol	Lieutenant-Colonel
Hon.	Honourable	LETS	Leadership Enhanced Training Session
HQ	Headquarters	LFC	Land Force Command
hrs	hours	LGBTQ2	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit
ICBM	intercontinental ballistic missile	LGen	Lieutenant-General
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council	LOCREP	location report
ID	identification		

Lt	Lieutenant	NLETS	National Leadership Enhanced Training Session
Maj	Major		
MC	Military Cross	NNEP	Northern Native Entry Program
MGen	Major-General		
MID	Master Implementation Directive	NORAD	North American Aerospace Defence Command
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly	NOREX	Northern Exercise
mm	millimetre	NRHQ	Northern Region Headquarters
MOU	memorandum of understanding	NTI	Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
MP	Member of Parliament	NWS	North Warning System
MSG	Municipal Support Group	NWT	Northwest Territories
MWO	Master Warrant Officer	OGD	other government department
NAADSN	North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network	Op	Operation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	P Res	Primary Reserve
NCO	non-commissioned officer	PCMR	Pacific Coast Militia Rangers
n.d.	no date	PHASE	Promoting Healthy and Safe Experiences
NDHQ	National Defence Headquarters	POL	petroleum, oil, and lubricants
NDP	New Democratic Party	PReVAiL	Preventing Violence Across the Lifespan Research Network
NGO	non-governmental organization	PtIs	Patrols
NHS	National Household Survey	RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
		RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police	SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
RDSNAA	Réseau sur la défense et la sécurité nord-américaines et arctiques	svc	service
Reg	Regular	TD	Temporary Duty
REP	Rangers Enhancement Program	TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
RG	Record Group	UBC	University of British Columbia
RI	Ranger Instructor	UNHDI	United Nations Human Development Index
RLO	Ranger Liaison Officer	US	United States
Rt. Hon.	Right Honourable	USA	United States of America
SAR	search and rescue	USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
SCEAND	Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (House of Commons)	UTP	University of Toronto Press
SCND	Standing Committee on National Defence (House of Commons)	VC	Victoria Cross
Sgt	Sergeant	VCDS	Vice Chief of the Defence Staff
SITREP	situation report	VHF	very high frequency
SmartICE	Sea-ice Monitoring and Real-Time Information for Coastal Environments	VSWG	Voluntary Sector Working Group
SOVOP	sovereignty operation	WG	Working Group
SOVPAT	surveillance and/or sovereignty patrol	WO	Warrant Officer
SSE	<i>Strong, Secure, Engaged</i>	WoG	whole of government

## 1

## The Canadian Rangers: Supporting Canadian Sovereignty, Security, and Stewardship Since 1947

First published in *Above and Beyond: Canada's Arctic Journal* (September/October 2012): 31-36.

*Sixty-five years ago, Minister of National Defence Brooke Claxton quietly announced the creation of an unorthodox military force: the Canadian Rangers. Through this unique organization, people living in remote regions would serve as the military's "eyes and ears" in their local areas. Since that time, their official mission has remained "to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces." But the tasks that they perform to support this mission have become more complex.*

*The military's original vision had the Rangers defending national security – protecting their communities from enemy attack in the early Cold War. By the 1970s, their role became directly linked to the armed forces' role in support of Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic. Since the 1990s, the Rangers have assumed a prominent nation-building and stewardship role. As a bridge between diverse cultures and between the civilian and military worlds, the Rangers have evolved to successfully integrate national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based interests. This practical partnership, rooted in traditional knowledge and skills, promotes cooperation, communal and individual empowerment, and cross-cultural understanding.*

*All too often, Canadians associate sovereignty with lines on a map. Sovereignty is really about everything that goes on within those lines. In the early twenty-first century, popular commentators have dramatically overblown the alleged foreign threats to our North, preying upon popular ignorance about the Arctic states' sovereign rights and the fine points of international law. Dire forecasts predicting an Arctic war over newly accessible resources, new transit routes, and uncertain Arctic boundaries should not be trusted.*

### Background

When the Ranger concept was introduced in the dark days of the Second World War, the winds of war were very real. By early 1942, Canadians realized

that they no longer lived in a “fireproof house” (as Senator Raoul Dandurand described Canada in the interwar years). The Nazi war machine had overrun continental Europe, Pearl Harbor lay in ruins, and the Japanese had occupied Singapore. In a total war, isolation no longer suggested security but vulnerability. Terrified British Columbians, facing the Japanese threat in the Pacific, pushed the federal government to improve its defences along the west coast. The army responded by forming the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR), a Reserve corps modelled after the British Home Guard, in 1942. This unconventional military force allowed British Columbian men who were too old or too young for overseas service, or engaged in essential industries such as fishing and mining, to contribute to home defence. Rangers were not given any vehicles or regimental equipment – they were expected to use their own. Apart from a sporting rifle, some ammunition, an armband, and eventually a canvas “Dry-bak” uniform suited to the coastal climate, the army expected the Rangers to be self-sufficient. Basically, they would use their local knowledge and act as the military’s “eyes and ears,” report any suspicious vessels or activities, and do what they could to help professional forces repel an enemy invasion. By 1943 there were 15,000 Rangers representing all walks of BC life, from fish packers to cowboys. They trained with other military units, conducted search and rescue, and reported Japanese balloon bombs that landed along the west coast. When the war ended, however, so did the PCMR. The organization was stood down in the fall of 1945.

As the wartime alliance between the democratic West and the communist East unravelled and the Cold War set in, simple geography made Canada a potential battlefield in any future superpower conflict. Canada did not have the military resources to station large numbers of regular soldiers in Northern and remote regions of the country, but it still needed “eyes and ears” in those areas. Consequently, officials resurrected the Ranger concept in 1947. This time they created a nation-wide Canadian Ranger force that contributed to a low-cost Cold War sovereignty and security strategy. By design, the Rangers would remain in their home communities in both war and peace. Largely untrained, their existing local knowledge would allow them to serve as guides and scouts, report suspicious activities, and (if the unthinkable came to pass) delay an enemy advance using guerrilla tactics – at least until professional forces arrived. The army only equipped Rangers with an obsolescent .303 Lee Enfield rifle, 200 rounds of ammunition each year, and an armband. To keep up their marksmanship skills, they were expected to hit the rifle range – or, better yet, hunt seal or caribou and feed their families.

The strength of the early organization peaked in December 1956, when 2,725 Rangers served in forty-two companies from coast to coast to coast.

Rangers provided intelligence reports on strange ships and aircraft, participated in training exercises with Canada's Mobile Striking Force and other army units, and conducted search and rescue. In one case, Rangers even helped the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) intercept bandits trying to flee Yukon along the Alaska Highway. "Some of [the Rangers] can't read their own names but they are the real scholars of this country when it comes to reading signs on the trails of the north," reporter Robert Taylor observed that year. This diverse mix of Inuit, First Nations, Métis, and Whites united in one task: "guarding a country that doesn't even know of their existence."

During this era, annual re-supply and training visits by Regular Force Ranger Liaison Officers (RLOs) brought cross-cultural contact. Captain Ambrose Shea's experiences on Baffin Island were representative. After overcoming his initial culture shock, Shea clearly enjoyed visiting Inuit Rangers in their remote camps, ate and fished with them, and developed a strong respect for their knowledge and skills. He also respected their modest but important military contribution. "The idea of arming a local population and asking them to take a hand in defending their own locality is an ancient one and eminently sensible," he wrote. "It does not become out-dated, even in this atomic age." Rangers reported submarine and ship sightings, suspicious individuals, and even unexplained bombing activity on northern Baffin Island (producing bits of bombs as evidence). In one case, a Baffin Island Ranger had even tried single-handedly to capture the US Coast Guard cutter *Staten Island*, mistakenly concluding that it was a Russian ship and "it was his duty as a soldier to take some action." The Inuit were earnest, Shea noted, and their value as "friends on the ground" was priceless – despite their negligible cost to the army.

By the 1960s, however, the Rangers factored little in Ottawa's defence plans. Northern residents with armbands and rifles could hardly fend off hostile Soviet bombers carrying nuclear weapons. Defence officials turned to technological marvels like the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line to protect the continent. Because the Rangers cost next to nothing, the organization survived – thanks only to local initiative. "We just knew that if an aircraft went down we should look for it," recalled the late Reverend John R. Sperry, the Anglican missionary at Coppermine (Kugluktuk) and Ranger lieutenant from 1950 to 1969. If someone was lost, the RCMP also passed along the information and Rangers went out to look for them. "All the men were going out anyway," Sperry explained. The "Shadow Army of the North" received little to no direction from military officials, and for many, their annual ammunition supplies stopped arriving by the late 1960s. Apart from Newfoundland and Labrador and a sprinkling of Northern communities, the Ranger organization was largely inactive by 1970.



The American icebreaker *Manhattan*'s voyages in 1969-70, which Canadians believed threatened their control over the Northwest Passage, renewed the federal government's interest in Arctic sovereignty. Although this new "crisis" had nothing to do with the Soviet military threat, Pierre Trudeau turned to the Canadian Forces to assert symbolic control. His government promised increased surveillance and more Arctic training for southern troops. Only people who actually lived in remote regions had the expertise to guide them and teach survival skills. Because the Rangers still existed (on paper at least) and cost next to nothing, they fit the government's bill. Staff from the new Northern headquarters in Yellowknife provided basic training to Inuit and Dene Rangers in the 1970s, and these activities proved highly popular in communities. By the early 1980s, the Rangers were again active in Canada's Northern territories, northern Quebec, and along the eastern seaboard.

When the US Coast Guard icebreaker *Polar Sea* pushed through the Northwest Passage in 1985, Canadians once again worried about sovereignty and demanded a bolder military presence in the Arctic. Brian Mulroney's Conservative government promised a host of big-ticket investments to improve Canada's control over the Arctic, from acquiring nuclear submarines to building a Polar Class icebreaker. At the same time, and on a much lower key, the Canadian Rangers drew attention as an important grassroots way to keep Canada's "true North strong and free."

Until that time, defence assessments had focused on the Rangers' military utility. In a changing political climate, however, other aspects of the organization made it even more attractive. Although Aboriginal leaders called for the demilitarization of the Arctic on social and environmental grounds, they always applauded the Rangers as a positive example of Northerners contributing directly to sovereignty and security. Media coverage began to emphasize the social and political benefits of the Rangers in Aboriginal (particularly Inuit) communities. Now the Rangers enjoyed tremendous appeal as an inexpensive, culturally inclusive, and visible means of demonstrating Canada's sovereignty.

Most of the government's promised investments in Arctic defence evaporated with the end of the Cold War. Conservative and Liberal politicians, however, did follow through and increase the number and geographical scope of the Canadian Rangers in the 1990s – despite downsizing in the Canadian Forces more generally. The Rangers' footprint expanded "North of 60" and across the provincial Norths, with most new growth directed to Aboriginal communities. This reflected the importance of building and reinforcing Aboriginal-military partnerships. Furthermore, journalists applauded the Rangers' role in teaching the military and in encouraging Elders to share their



traditional knowledge with younger people *within* Aboriginal communities. This was clear in the creation of a formal youth program, the Junior Canadian Rangers, in 1998.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Canadian Ranger patrols were found in nearly every community in the territorial North. Their national task list had evolved to encompass the three broad aspects of their service: conducting and supporting sovereignty operations; conducting and assisting with domestic military operations; and maintaining a Canadian Forces presence in local communities.

The Rangers have attracted their highest media and political profile over the last decade as icons of Canadian sovereignty patrolling the remotest reaches of the Arctic. Historically, the Rangers' role was to know their local area. The epic nature of enhanced sovereignty patrols has pushed the Rangers' responsibilities in the Arctic far beyond their home communities. These began with a landmark trek to the magnetic north pole off Cape Isachsen, Nunavut, in 2002, and they have grown in scale and frequency. Since 2007, Rangers participate in three major annual exercises: Nunavut in the High Arctic, Nunakput in the Western Arctic, and Nanook in the Eastern Arctic. During these operations, Rangers have a chance to work with other members of the Canadian Forces and foreign militaries, operate in unfamiliar environments, share skills, and build confidence. They also show the flag in some of the most austere and challenging conditions imaginable.

The Rangers also regularly support other government agencies in responding to the broad spectrum of security and safety issues facing Northern communities. Canada's search and rescue capabilities in remote regions are limited, and Rangers frequently head out as the best trained, equipped, and knowledgeable group available. Their leadership and training makes them the *de facto* lead during states of emergency in their communities – from avalanches, flooding, extreme snowstorms, and power plant shutdowns, to forest fires and water crises in the provincial Norths.

This is why the Rangers' final task – to maintain a military presence in local communities – remains fundamental. After all, these volunteers represent more than 90% of the Canadian Forces' representation north of the 55<sup>th</sup> parallel. The special bond that the Rangers have with their communities leads to many local roles: providing honour guards for politicians and royalty visiting their communities, protecting trick-or-treaters from polar bears in Churchill on Halloween, or blazing trails for the Yukon Quest and Hudson Bay Quest dog sled races. During Nunavut's two-week mass vaccination program against "swine flu" in late 2009, Rangers played a pivotal role in guiding Nunavummiut through the process and helping them fill out paperwork. On the scientific front, Rangers have supported southern researchers working on ice shelves on Ellesmere Island, have set up huts for polar bear researchers along M'Clintock Channel, and have worked with Fisheries and Oceans to install navigation buoys. Major Jeff Allen, the commanding officer of 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group in Yellowknife, explains that these activities serve broader national interests and give Rangers opportunities to "patrol with a purpose."

The Rangers inherently blur the artificial lines between national and local service. Prime Minister Harper explained in 2007 that "the Rangers are an expression of Canada's ability to defend its northern lands" – an image that fits with his message that sovereignty is a simple matter of "use it or lose it." Ranger service also dovetails with Inuit leaders' appeals to the Canadian government to "use the Inuit" to demonstrate sovereignty rather than turning to outsiders. The Rangers are an appropriate form of military presence, proving that Canada's national strategy can engage Northerners in direct and practical ways. And the Rangers recognize that they have power; it is the military that depends upon them. During annual patrol training in 2007, Sergeant Simeonie Nalagartuk, the patrol commander in Inukjuak along the eastern shores of Hudson Bay, described the Rangers to me as "the eyeglasses, hearing aids, and walking stick for the [Canadian Forces] in the North." Without access to local knowledge of the land, sea, and skies, southern visitors are helplessly lost. Thanks to the Canadian Rangers, the Canadian Forces have found their way in the North for sixty-five years.



The Canadian Rangers are a success story from coast to coast to coast, promoting sovereignty, security, safety, and stewardship from the inside out. Soldiers and community members alike admire and respect their skills, commitment, and strong patriotism. “The Rangers are our eyes and ears, and there’s no substitute for boots on the ground and people living in the communities,” Brigadier-General David Millar, the former commander of Joint Task Force North in Yellowknife, explained during a 2009 tour of Arctic communities. “Technology doesn’t always work in the extreme conditions of the High Arctic. That’s why nothing can replace the Rangers, and why I reassured them they are the vital link in the North for maintaining sovereignty, representing the forces and providing security for their communities.” According to Millar, the Rangers’ red sweatshirts and ball caps have become “as symbolic to Canadians as the Snowbirds or RCMP.”

The Canadian Rangers have emerged from the shadows to play a central role in Canada’s unfolding Arctic drama. They are Canadian sovereignty incarnate. They contribute to Northern security in its many dimensions. They make important contributions to their communities and are stewards of our northland. Most importantly, their commitment does not fluctuate with the southern political winds. Facing an uncertain future, Canadians can rest assured that the men and women in the red sweatshirts will remain vigilant: stalwart sentinels watching over their communities and the farthest reaches of our country.



## 2

**Guerrillas in Our Midst:****The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942-45**

First published in *BC Studies* 155 (December 2007): 95-131.

*He's so gaunt and old that he walks like a wishbone. His suit bags.  
His white mustaches are the "Alf and 'Arry" kind.*

*But he topped the rocky ledge ahead of me like a goat. Below us lay  
the wildest country on this continent: British Columbia. Deep canyons,  
tangled forests, no roads. We'd come up an old Indian trail.*

*"You see, Ma'm," he said, "the ruddy little Japs could never make it.  
You'd pick off a hundred yourself from this ledge, - and you could stop for  
tea, at that ... Let 'em come. Hit'd be the second time I was servin' 'Er  
Majesty." That's Victoria to you. He likes to pretend she's still around be-  
cause he was in her Royal Horse Artillery, Boer War. He's 75. But a  
recent Sunday at the Rifle Club he popped the bull's eye 92 out of 100.  
He's never dimmed his eyes with a lot of needless reading.*

*Now he's one of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers - the oddest  
"army" on the Continent.*

-- "BC Has 6,000 Rangers Ready to Welcome Japs,"  
*Vancouver Daily Province*, 22 May 1942

When the Japanese overran Pearl Harbor, Singapore, and Hong Kong in December 1941, the Pacific world no longer seemed pacific at all. British Columbians felt besieged – suddenly the comfortable notion that “it couldn’t happen here” no longer applied. There had been war scares in the past (Americans and Russians in the nineteenth century and Germans during the Great War), but technology and the disconcerting state of the Allied war effort made the threat seem particularly acute in early 1942. Senior military authorities advised the federal government that the province’s defences were adequate to meet any probable scale of attack, but popular hysteria demanded

more visible military measures. "Cabinet listened to the frightened voters of British Columbia instead of to its military advisers," C.P. Stacey observed, "with the result that great numbers of men, great quantities of material and many millions of dollars were wasted in accumulating on the West Coast which were not needed there and whose presence there would have no possible useful effect upon the course of the war."<sup>1</sup> Events would prove that the military's assessment was better grounded than popular fears, but political considerations often outweigh military opinion when it comes to formulating and implementing defence policy.

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR), although a product of this same wartime pressure, should not be included in Stacey's dismal assessment. This unpaid force was designed to recruit men outside of the main cities who would not, for reasons of age, disability, or occupation, be able or eligible to serve overseas. By March 1943, nearly 15,000 BC trappers, loggers, and fishers had organized in 126 companies along the coast and well into the interior.<sup>2</sup> Their duties were to patrol the local area, to report any findings of a suspicious nature, and to fight, if required, as guerrilla bands against any enemy invader. Although no Japanese invasion took place, the Rangers served various military and social functions in wartime British Columbia. The PCMR assuaged the public demand for grassroots defences more than it did any overriding military requirement for such a force. Nevertheless, the limited equipment and low costs associated with the Rangers helped to ensure that the defence of the province did not consume more military resources (financial and personnel) than it did. In these respects, they played a significant, if largely unheralded, role in wartime British Columbia.<sup>3</sup>

This brief history of the PCMR illuminates a part-time, decentralized militia that served in unorthodox but useful ways and that provided men who could not serve overseas with a domestic military space in which to operate and inscribe their identities. Given their special relationship with a particular environment, the Rangers were never meant to be deployed outside their home areas. Yet popular depictions of the force stressed how its members lived up to wartime masculine ideals. The popular press cast British Columbia's "guerrilla army" as the most rugged and "tough" that the province had to offer. Men too old or too young to serve overseas were constructively occupied in a suitably heroic role defending their homes and performing patriotic duties on the home front. The Rangers bolstered morale and helped to build social consensus for the war effort. Men of all socio-economic backgrounds were represented in the Rangers' ranks, and its organizational structure stressed social equality over rigid military hierarchy. It also transcended racial lines: Chinese Canadians and coastal Aboriginal peoples, for example, participated in the force and received



favourable media attention.<sup>4</sup> While most scholarship on the domestic war effort focuses on national decision-making and metropolitan centres, the Rangers represented a popular, democratic military response that helped to build social consensus for the war effort outside of British Columbia's main cities.

\* \* \*

If war came in the Pacific, William Strange explained in his 1937 book *Canada, the Pacific and War*, Canada would be involved by virtue of its ties to the United States and Britain. Geography and history determined Canada's fate. "The best defence of the Canadian Pacific Coast, beyond doubt, is the nature of the coast itself," he consoled readers. "It is extremely rugged. It possesses an intricate system of islands and channels, and the tide-rips are treacherous. To shoreward the country is difficult to the point of seemed impregnability."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, British Columbians – like most Canadians in the interwar years – viewed their country, to borrow Senator Raoul Dandurand's famous phrase, as a "fireproof house far from inflammable materials." Distance, isolation, and geography were natural ramparts against the incendiary passions of the Old World. Technology threatened this long-standing complacency as air power theorists predicted that long-range strategic bombers would be the face of modern warfare. Through the 1930s, however, most Canadians preferred to follow their prime minister and British leaders in appeasing dictators. The best defence was to simply avoid war, and Canadians celebrated their successful co-existence with the United States over the preceding century as a model for the world.

But the winds of war were too strong, and they blew through Canada in early September 1939. The initial "Phoney War" in Europe precluded any immediate threat to North America, but Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's limited liability war effort died with the Nazi conquest of Western Europe in mid-1940. As Britain braced for invasion, concerned citizens across Canada began to form local volunteer units in their communities to defend against sabotage or invasion. These paramilitary organizations did not have official military status or support, but their establishment highlights that Canadians wanted to take active, practical steps to protect their homeland.<sup>6</sup> After all, citizens taking personal action when faced with the prospect of invasion had a long history in the British imagination, and irregular forces like the "frontier rangers" were entrenched in North American military lore.<sup>7</sup> British Columbians had also organized paramilitary groups to defend against potential invasion in the past, and thousands had served as part-time "citizen-soldiers" in Reserve units before the war. As Peter Guy Silverman observed, however, the "temperament" of the population outside of urban areas precluded militia participation. Most men worked in staple industries such as forestry, fishing,



and mining, “so that the very nature of their occupation prevented them from being able to come together” for summer training. “To the people of British Columbia particularly, discipline was offensive, [and] seemed out of place in a frontier civilization,” Silverman asserted. “Even to the militia’s supporters, soldiering was a pastime, much like fox-hunting or quadrilles.”<sup>8</sup> Although the ideal of the “citizenry at arms” may have appeared anachronistic given modern military technologies and tactics, it still appealed to a society haunted by the spectre of spies, saboteurs, and Asian hordes waiting to flood into their homeland.<sup>9</sup>

As the war evolved, British Columbia attracted the particular attention of military planners. Axis Power advances in Europe and in the Far East highlighted the need for additional defences, and, by October 1941, the Canadian military established a single Pacific Command to oversee operations in British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon, and the District of Mackenzie. Journalists began to speculate freely about the prospects of a Japanese offensive in the southwest Pacific and even the possibility of aggression in the North. The chief of the General Staff in Ottawa advised the Minister of National Defence that, if war broke out with Japan, the forces on the Pacific Coast would be “adequate for the purpose of meeting the anticipated forms and scales of attack.”<sup>10</sup> Infantry battalions were stationed in Prince Rupert, New Westminster-Vancouver, and Victoria-Esquamalt; a general reserve was established at Nanaimo; and Veterans Guard platoons were established at Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) bases on the coast.<sup>11</sup> When Japan began offensive operations in December 1941, citizens in British Columbia felt less than assured that these forces met their security needs.

If the threat that Japanese forces might establish themselves in North America was “far-fetched militarily,” historian Desmond Morton has astutely noted, “it was politically all too real.”<sup>12</sup> Coastal air raid precautions suddenly seemed inadequate. Fearful expectations for the west coast were fuelled by daily headlines that proclaimed Japanese forces overwhelming Allied possessions in Southeast Asia. The Royal Canadian Navy expanded the Fishermen’s Reserve Service (or FRS, popularly known as the “Gumboot Navy”), a reserve unit of volunteer fishers who conducted patrols along the coast using their experience and vessels.<sup>13</sup> Citizens covered up their windows and shut off their lights, businesses shut their doors early, and radio stations went off the air to hinder navigation on the part of a would-be invasion force. The Victoria mayor reported that the Japanese were off the Aleutian coast (long before the Japanese actually captured Attu and Kiska in June 1942) and warned of imminent invasion.<sup>14</sup> British Columbia had never been a major battlefield, but it represented a lot of ground to cover with limited military resources.

Mounting West Coast concerns led to ever-increasing popular demands for some form of local protection. In the anxiety-ridden context of early 1942, the “unthinkable” had already occurred: Britain’s Asian colonies had fallen. Parliamentarians like Howard Green (Vancouver South) observed that Japan had gained control of the Pacific in seven weeks; he predicted bombings and an invasion of British Columbia. Reservists without rifles offered little security, and the generals would be forced to surrender the coast and its people unless the federal government bolstered its defences and organized “home guards.” While the chiefs of staff were convinced that the Japanese could not mount anything more than hit-and-run raids, the prime minister was besieged by editorials, letters from citizens, and citizens’ defence committee resolutions that demanded action.<sup>15</sup> British Columbians flocked to enlist in the “Active” and Reserve Army units and demanded home defence formations. Residents in outlying areas, anxious to “protect themselves and their loved ones,” polished their sporting rifles, pooled their arms, and envisioned mobilizing grassroots defences. Without official approval or support, voluntary organizations across the province began to train and drill.<sup>16</sup> “There are thousands of men in civil life – war veterans, loggers, miners, fishermen, shipyard workers etc., who are hunters and capable marksmen, who could form the nucleus of such an organization,” one observer noted in the *Victoria Daily Colonist*. Men between sixteen and sixty-five could volunteer in various districts and act as a “guerrilla force.” The *Vancouver Sun* interviewed “informed civilians and former military officers” and proposed “Civil Defence Corps in every town, city and village in BC.”<sup>17</sup> The public outcry demanded reassuring steps to bolster confidence in the Canadian armed forces’ ability to defend communities along the West Coast, particularly the towns and villages in exposed coastal areas. Ottawa had to demonstrate its commitment to British Columbia more generally.

In a total war setting, the federal government needed to carefully manage its human and material resources. Local volunteers could serve as useful auxiliaries, and their local knowledge would be vital in the case of an invasion, but their efforts would have to be harnessed so as to not detract from the general war effort. Government and military officials recognized that a careful balance had to be struck. “The essence of the problem,” historian C.P. Stacey explained, “was to provide adequate defence against probable scales of attack without at the same time lessening the effort in the decisive theatre of war.”<sup>18</sup> The Allies would be fighting a war on several fronts, and Canada could ill afford to redirect expeditionary forces to defend against a potential attack on the West Coast when its “effort must be directed to the ultimate object – the defeat of Germany.”<sup>19</sup> Even if the number of Canadian Army Active Force troops was increased substantially, military authorities recognized that they could not cover

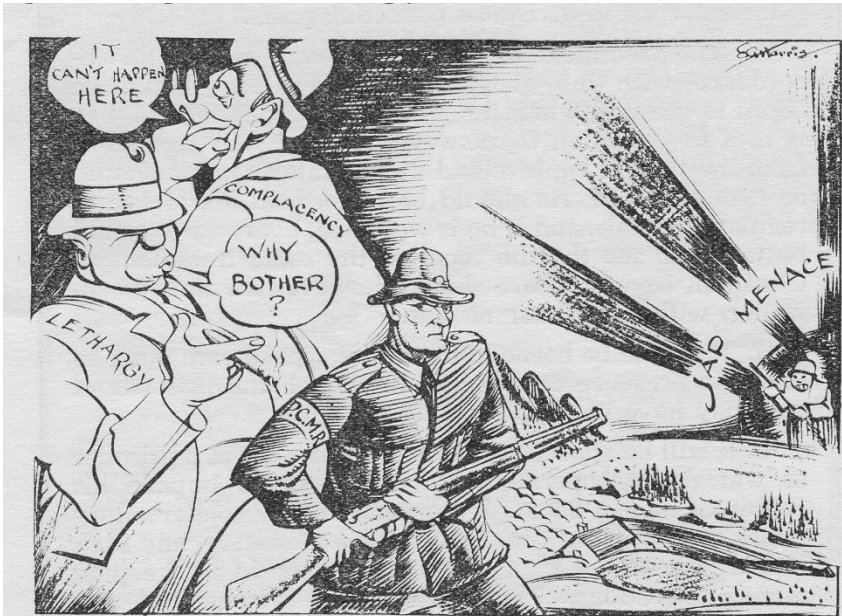
all vital points. Furthermore, journalists noted that soldiers hurried to British Columbia from the east could not possess enough knowledge about the region to defend it adequately.<sup>20</sup>

The Reserve units in the province were confined to settled areas and did not have the organization, knowledge, or operational experience to function outside of their immediate areas. By comparison, BC politicians and journalists suggested that Japanese fishers along the coast knew the area intimately and would serve the enemy. This logic, which equated Japanese Canadian sympathies with those of the Japanese enemy and treated this population as a monolithic block, was problematic.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the rhetorical justifications reveal the alarmism of the time and the profound fear that gripped the province. "In the present situation it is considered most important that everything possible be done on the West Coast to satisfy public opinion in respect to military security, provided it can be done without prejudice to our major war effort," the chief of the general staff (CGS) in Ottawa explained to Pacific Command in January 1942. The latter point could not be stressed enough. The solution could not drain the human and financial resources needed to wage war overseas. At a number of coastal points on Vancouver Island and the mainland, national headquarters envisioned Home Guard platoons issued with uniforms and rifles to offer local protection. Time was of the essence, and the CGS knew that action along these lines "would be very popular on the West Coast and would not interfere with our major effort."<sup>22</sup>

The British Home Guard was the obvious model. When the Low Countries and France fell to the Germans in mid-1940, a Nazi invasion of the British Isles became a real possibility. Winston Churchill took to the airwaves asking for local defence volunteers, and, by the end of June, the Home Guard units exceeded one million men. Initially composed of individual volunteers either too young or too old to serve in the Active Forces, or serving in vital wartime occupations, members were armed with whatever was available. If saboteurs and spies threatened domestic security, or if German airborne units tried to land, these "people in arms" were expected to delay their advance until outside army units arrived. These local defence units were given little training, and their defined role was unclear, but the British Home Guard provided citizens with an opportunity to serve their nation directly and satisfied public demands for action.<sup>23</sup>

Pacific Command initially proposed the establishment of "Coast Defence Guards" to serve where it was impossible to establish Reserve Army units. The Guards' value would be threefold. First, they would help to calm the populace and would provide a visible response to public demands for action. Second, they would be able to pass on information about suspicious individuals, vessels, and

activities in their area. Third, if a small raiding party attacked their local area, they would be able "to take action against them in defence of their own homes and community." The premier agreed wholeheartedly with this proposal, as did the provincial police commissioner. The regional army commander, Major-General R.O. Alexander, met with all of the members of the Legislative Assembly who represented coastal ridings and received their unanimous support and cooperation. They suggested that the Guards not be given military uniforms but only armbands; that they not be paid but be characterized as "the defenders of their own homes"; and that any training be carried out "in accordance with the local situation as regards place, type of country and type of men forming the unit." Major-General Alexander agreed that uniforms would be inappropriate and that an overly formal military structure, medical



*Why bother learning guerilla tactics? Can it happen here?*

*These are questions we can well ask ourselves often.*

*In what way could Rangers fight should Japanese forces obtain footholds in Canada?*

*The art of ambushing, harassing and annoying an enemy, if worth learning at all, is worth learning well.*

*Diagrams on the black-board and lectures will not teach everything. "Get out and rehearse" is good advice. Experience teaches. Few guerrillas ever learnt their trade from books!*

*Have you surveyed every road and trail in your area? and selected various ambush points? Have you rehearsed an ambush or two at any point?*

examinations, and qualifications would be more a hindrance than a help to the new organization. Ideally, the men would serve as a sort of auxiliary police armed with sporting weapons issued to them as members of civilian rifle associations in about fifteen coastal communities.<sup>24</sup>

This proposed organization would have violated the 1907 Hague Convention and thus required revision. Under international law, local civilians or police could not defend their homes and communities against a military attack without making themselves liable to punishment as unlawful combatants. Consequently, the "Guards" would need to have formal military status: if the Canadian Army gave them steel helmets, distinctive armbands, and some training, they would constitute legitimate units. The general officer commanding-in-chief (GOC-in-C) Pacific Command was instructed to proceed with the creation of coastal guard units, and, although the final structure was uncertain, the plans were sufficiently developed to allow a public statement. On 23 February, British Columbia's daily papers announced that every coastal town and strategic point in the interior would be guarded by subunits of the Canadian Army Reserve, which would vary in strength depending on the strategic importance of the place they were defending.<sup>25</sup> The existing Reserve structure was not designed to cover extensive areas with a low population density, so a new model was required to utilize the experience of prospectors, trappers, loggers, and fishers who knew local conditions best.

The task of turning vague concepts into organized reality fell to Lieutenant-Colonel T.A.H. "Tommy" Taylor, a staff officer at Pacific Command Headquarters. His past employment in British Columbia included land surveying, timber cruising, and railway construction, and he recognized that the home defence organization had to be designed to reflect the diverse geography and people of the province. "Only experienced rugged men accustomed to rugged, timbered country could adequately undertake much of the work" required if the Japanese gained a foothold. His force required the hardy "woodsmen" with strength of character who populated the coast and the interior. "Strangely enough," Taylor explained, "the initiative and energy possessed by many of these men would not fit them for the life of an ordinary soldier where unified action is imperative."<sup>26</sup> Their ability to work independently and creatively would be essential to the proper functioning of the new irregular force.

Given the geography and demographic composition of the Pacific region, Taylor realized that the first step was to build networks of support at the provincial and local levels. He immediately forged relationships with representatives from key sectors to assist with organization and the imminent recruiting drive. Reassurances from the BC Police, the Attorney General, the

Minister of Lands, the Game Department, the Forestry Department, and the Surveyor General gave Taylor the resources of a cadre of civil servants. He also recognized that the private sector, particularly the resource sector, would be a vital ally. When approached, key BC lumber and fishing associations pledged their full support.<sup>27</sup>

The name of the force was important and helped to correct some of the distortions propagated in the media. Early military and newspaper sources referred to BC "guerrilla" units formed to wage unorthodox local defence.<sup>28</sup> This latter designation, while colourful for journalists, was particularly problematic in legal terms. "Guerrillas" – members of independent, irregular armed forces that adopt harassment and sabotage tactics to resist against a stronger foe – had no status under military law. Similar to early discussions about uniforms and weapons, the name of the new corps had to reflect its official military status within the Canadian Army. The name "(Civilian) Auxiliary Defence Corps," used by Taylor in early proposals, was vague and uninspiring. When a Pacific Command staff officer met with senior officials in Ottawa in mid-March, the name was changed from "Guards" to "Rangers." During a visit to Victoria in early April, Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston chatted with Taylor and became convinced that the "Rangers" designation was fitting. After all, they would "range" over the coastline and interior rather than simply "guard" fixed points. The word "Militia" ensured that the corps could not be construed as a civilian organization. As a result, military authorities settled on the official name "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers" or "PCMR." The members would colloquially refer to themselves simply as "the Rangers."<sup>29</sup>

In mid-March 1942, Taylor distributed a memorandum of organization that defined the organization in detail. The ideal Ranger recruitment scheme would not compete with the Active or Reserve Forces. Furthermore, Ranger duties would



THE WORD "RANGER," as shown above, is the key to six characteristics closely associated with men of the P.C.M.R.

“not conflict with their normal civil employment” unless a state of emergency arose and they were called out on active service. Their operational role was threefold. First, the Rangers were expected to “possess up-to-date, complete and detailed knowledge of their own area,” which could be provided to Pacific Command Headquarters and to local military commanders if required. Second, as the “eyes and ears” in their areas, they were to report suspicious vessels and any unusual occurrences that might be subversive or “fifth column” activities. Third, in case of emergency, they would repel an enemy invasion or attack from the sea or air, by themselves and in conjunction with Active Army units.<sup>30</sup> If necessary, they could take anti-sabotage measures and employ guerrilla tactics to delay enemy advances. In the interior, PCMR units would also protect vital lines of communication like major railways and the “Trans-Canada Highway” from Chilliwack to Golden.<sup>31</sup>

To make this vision a reality, the organization had to take shape across British Columbia. The initial focus was on coastal communities, where the threat of invasion seemed most acute.<sup>32</sup> Interest was immediate and intense. Art Boyd of Jordan River revealed his sense of the local situation just before the Rangers were created:

There are several, probably about 20 to 30 men, in this immediate area who are preparing themselves for an attack by the Japs. They are experienced woodsmen and hunters. Some are veterans or guides ... They have acted individually in this matter – for their own self interest as much as for any reason – there is no organization – some have guns and ammunition, maps and other equipment but others are lacking in rifles and none of them have any authority or even recognition from the military or public.

In his opinion, the situation was grave. Port Renfrew represented a potential landing spot, but the Active Forces would be “helpless” without local assistance. “It is almost beyond belief, that the troops out here can be so green,” Boyd wrote. “They are Ontario boys and can’t even make a beach fire. If they went [fifty feet] from the highway they would be lost and their effectiveness is strictly limited to settled areas.” He wanted to secure military status for local residents as a “unit of guerrillas,” as well as rifles and ammunition, but did not know where to turn. After all, he understood that Army Headquarters at “Work Point [Barracks in Victoria] is a maze of red tape and buck passing.”<sup>33</sup> His concern about an overly bureaucratic process was understandable. Armies are complex organizations laden with administration and hierarchical control, and this seemed anathema to a citizen-soldier force rooted in communities.



Once notice of the Rangers hit newspapers, applications from across the province quickly flooded in requesting a local unit. Taylor called upon community leaders to organize meetings of local citizens, and within two weeks about forty companies with a paper strength of more than 4,000 Rangers had been formed. When Lieutenant-General K.C.



Stuart arrived to take acting command of Pacific Command, the tempo of expansion was so intense that he referred to the groundswell of popular support as the “Ranger Movement.”<sup>34</sup> In light of his obvious zeal and competence, Major Taylor (who had been slated for another appointment) was appointed Special Officer in Charge of the PCMR and was given a promotion. He would continue to strengthen his Ranger empire for the duration of the war.

Brendan Kennelly, a former guerrilla warfare specialist with the Irish Republican Army and the PCMR’s training officer for its first sixteen months, later criticized Taylor’s haphazard method of organizing units and selecting leaders. Taylor’s aim was to encourage the spread of the Rangers throughout British Columbia, Kennelly recalled after the war, “regardless of the tactical importance of each area and in direct contradiction to the policy laid down by General Alexander.” Taylor sent out officers to canvas interest in various areas, briefing community members “to create interest and publicity.” These “organizers” then interviewed the most influential or, at least, the most vocal individuals until one consented to act as a local Ranger captain. “Many of these selectees proved excellent officers,” Kennelly observed, “but many, too, were misfits.” When poor leaders secured control, a unit failed – regardless of the quality of the personnel – and diverted scarce resources and attention from other units “in more exposed areas.”<sup>35</sup>

Giving local command to local officers was prudent; the men who would fill the ranks would already know their officers, at least by reputation, and only residents would know their region intimately enough to hold off an enemy attack. As a result, the Rangers were rooted in their home communities and operated autonomously for most of the year. While the wartime media uniformly applauded this self-guidance, it was not always beneficial. Kennelly reminisced after the war:



lesson plans were often “sabotaged by Commanders,” resulting in “flagrant absurdities.” In his view, too many Ranger officers laid claim to more territory than they could handle, “lest he might lose the prestige he claimed to have from the unwarranted numbers he nominally commanded.”<sup>37</sup>

Kennelly’s sour assessment reflected his strict military standards and expectations more than the abilities of most Ranger companies to carry out their modest wartime roles. It is clear, however, that local Ranger leaders exercised tremendous power over their units. The organization was deliberately elastic to allow for local variance and to capture the “personality” of a community.<sup>38</sup> The basic Ranger unit was the “company,” commanded by a Ranger captain; this designation was deliberately based upon the infantry model to reinforce the PCMR’s military nature. In turn, each company was broken down into “detachments” led by a lieutenant. These were further subdivided into “groups,” roughly equivalent to infantry sections and led by a corporal. Although the original plans provided for companies with a maximum of five detachments and seven officers, this establishment did not always meet requirements, and the staff at Pacific Command adapted the regulations creatively in the interests of “keeping the number of companies to a minimum and making a more compact organization.”<sup>39</sup>

If military resources were stretched in response to domestic cries for Pacific defences, it was not because the Rangers were overpaid or over-equipped: they were unpaid and received a limited scale of issue. The government did not provide them with horses or saddles, vehicles, clothing, or regimental equipment; for the most part, these volunteers were expected to use their private assets for transportation and subsistence. So that they would be distinguishable from ordinary civilians, the original directive recommended that members be given armbands and steel helmets but not military uniforms. Furthermore, they were to receive limited supplies of arms and ammunitions to carry out their tasks.<sup>40</sup> Service rifles were in short supply in 1942, and the Rangers, a lower priority than Active or Reserve units, had to wait.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of May 1942, the organization of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers was well under way. Non-existent at the beginning of the year, almost 10,000 members – equivalent to a division of soldiers – enlisted in a few months. This meteoric growth attested to the tremendous enthusiasm for voluntary cooperation in defending the Pacific Coast, and few units remained idle until they got their weapons. “Throughout the whole province, Rangers set to [work] with a will and made the best of what was at hand,” a triumphant article in *The Ranger* magazine celebrated. “For sheer ingenuity in overcoming equipment shortages and for their ability to ‘scrounge’ necessary material, PCMR men gained enviable prestige in the eyes of military authorities.”<sup>42</sup>

Despite the obvious bias of this magazine, which was created for and circulated to the Rangers as a training guide, it provides insight into the self-perception and ethos of the Rangers, which stressed ideas of self-sufficiency and ingenuity.

Journalists, caught up in the Ranger “hype,” published a flurry of publicity stories throughout the province and the country – often complemented by photographs of Rangers bearing their rifles. They were cast as “BC’s Rugged Defenders,” as BC’s “Guerrilla Sharpshooters,” or “Cariboo Commandos.”<sup>43</sup> The language used to describe them included phrases such as “colourful,” “ingenious,” and “experienced,” while the anecdotes fixated on the most unlikely military personnel in their ranks: the loggers, trappers, hunters, and ancient veterans – men whose skills in bushcraft were described as “legendary.” Their local lore made them “tough” defenders who could repel any enemy attack through cunning and creativity.<sup>44</sup> “The organization is one that places a premium on individual drive and resourcefulness,” Staff Officer Taylor explained to one reporter. The Rangers had to, “above all else, be self-sufficient, ready to act on the dictates of their own common sense, and prepared to operate for indeterminate periods without the assistance of supporting services.”<sup>45</sup> The archetypal Ranger was undaunted by inclement weather or swarms of mosquitoes, could stealthily manoeuvre in some of the “roughest, wildcat terrain in the world,” and had a “horse-sense” finely attuned to his local environment.<sup>46</sup> This was not a sportsman’s “modern wilderness” engineered for middle-class urbanites to selectively encounter the natural world:<sup>47</sup> it was a military theatre in which all but the most knowledgeable would perish in the face of Japanese invasion. If British Columbia’s self-identity embraced stereotypes of frontier masculinity,<sup>48</sup> the Rangers were a striking example of this identity in practice.

The imagery of the rugged and individualistic Rangers was thoroughly masculine, and it reveals how identities are constructed and reinforced through interaction with and response to particular environments. “Gender identities,” geographer Rachel Woodward observes, “are not neutral to space, but shape the ways in which different social spaces are perceived and the ways in which they are discursively constructed and politically controlled.” By extension, military masculinities are geographically constituted, and the idea of the “inhospitable outdoors is used not just as the location and device for developing physical fitness but also as the location for the inculcation of particular mental attitudes and attributes deemed central to some aspect of soldiering.”<sup>49</sup> During wartime, masculine stereotypes were evoked to cajole, and at times coerce, men to volunteer for overseas service. If the litmus test of patriotism was military service, then men ineligible to serve in the military for reasons of age or employment faced an identity crisis for which the Rangers provided some relief.

General Order 320 (which created the Rangers) provided that “membership will not be limited as to age or physique, but will be open to any who are considered suitable or can be of use.”<sup>50</sup> Recruits did not need to take a medical examination: if they could carry out Ranger duties, they were acceptable. Marion Angus discovered that the list of Rangers included former Canadian Expeditionary Force officers Colonel “Cy” Peck, VC (Victoria Cross), and Brigadier E.J. Ross, MC (Military Cross); “a fur trader with fifteen years bush training, familiar with Indian (BC and prairie) dialects and northern transportation methods, whose hobby is amateur radio”; an eighteen-year veteran of the Royal Navy whose familiarity with small sea craft and gunnery were well suited to his community; and an “aggressive and reliable” thirty-five-year-old coastal First Nations man who had been a councillor in his village for a decade and who was “captain of a fish-packer and [knew] the coast waters like a book.” In describing this “democratic army,” one could also cite bakers, heavy equipment operators, game wardens, fishery inspectors, cowboys, loggers, and farmers.<sup>51</sup> The actual ranks reflected open criteria: the youngest member of the PCMR was thirteen and the oldest eighty-six, and the median age of the Rangers in 1943 was nearly fifty.<sup>52</sup>



Veteran soldiers and sportsmen instructed the younger members of their units. Musketry, map reading, fieldcraft and signalling were considered most important. Training was left up to the local leaders.

No one in wartime Canada wanted to be seen as a slacker or coward, and eager youth “saw war as a heroic, thrilling experience.” Historian Jeff Keshen has observed that underage boys were envious as their older friends signed up, and commentators at the time worried that, without an outlet for their energies, adolescent males were growing “‘restless’ and in order to prove their readiness for action sometimes struck out in a ‘spectacular’ manner.”<sup>53</sup> The Rangers provided such an outlet. “Young lads” in outlying areas proved “extremely valuable,” an official summary recognized. “Boys’ of 15 years and up proved to be good shots, could handle an axe, and were valuable as guides to city-bred men.”<sup>54</sup> Several Ranger companies used “boys platoons” as runners (or bicyclers), signallers, and messengers.<sup>55</sup> Former Ranger David Whittaker explained that, as young men, he and his friends were being “socialized into the role of men ... and into the role of soldiering, and the adventure and the excitement ... We felt part of the world of men, and it gave us a lot of self-confidence in terms of adolescents wanting to belong.”<sup>56</sup> This exposure to military life and training motivated many to join the Active Forces as soon as they reached a sufficient age. “Quite a large number of Rangers are graduating into the Armed Forces and their younger Brothers, in many cases, are joining the [PCMR] as soon as they are old enough so that they can follow the example ... and get into the Armed Forces,” Major-General J.P. Mackenzie, the army inspector for Western Canada, noted during a visit to Chilliwack in December 1943.<sup>57</sup> In the end, more than 1,200 Rangers volunteered for general service overseas.<sup>58</sup>

On the other side of the demographic spectrum, older men beyond service age who would never be eligible for overseas service still had skills that would allow them to outpace and outsmart those unfamiliar with their surroundings. The knowledge they had amassed during imperial campaigns in Asia and Africa, or during the Great War, was integral to the Rangers. Indeed, South African War veterans had been among the most strident lobbyists for BC commando units in the months after Pearl Harbor, and the PCMR gave them their chance to serve.<sup>59</sup> “I think that we were lucky ... that we had the old vets of the First World War,” Ranger Lloyd Cornett later recalled. “They were too old to serve in the Second War but they had many years in the trenches, a lot of them, and many of them had decorations for bravery ... They were very fine guys who knew the hard end of soldiering and they passed those skills and attitudes along to us [younger Rangers] and we benefited greatly.” The Rangers gave these veterans “a chance to feel involved again ... to return to that spirit of comradeship that every military organization has.”<sup>60</sup> As the opening anecdote to this article suggests, the aged veteran with wisdom and experience became the quintessential stereotype of the Rangers. “On autumn Sundays, dignified

businessmen can be seen crawling on their stomachs in a manner reminiscent of long ago boyhood days when they played Indian scouts,” one reporter described. “They shinny over waterfalls or ford streams with the elasticity of youth.”<sup>61</sup> Their bodies were considered too old for the battlefields of Europe, but experience made them more than suitable home guards.

Although the Rangers were “naturally” familiar with their “home turf,” they needed some training to make their world legible to military planners and vice versa. To provide the army with vital intelligence, for example, they needed to speak the same language.<sup>62</sup> The earliest training activities, held in community halls, Legion halls, and church basements, were very informal. The local Ranger captain would get “the boys” together and identify individual members who had particular expertise in a given subject area. Nearly every company counted veterans of the Boer War and the Great War, for example, who possessed specialized (if antiquated) knowledge about military subjects. They could offer guidance to those without service experience. Former navy signallers taught in private homes, revealing to their Ranger comrades the secrets of Morse and



Semaphore, while engineers and “ham” radio operators shared their expertise.<sup>63</sup> Although, because of several tragic accidents, British Home Guard units were ordered not to produce homemade weapons, Rangers in British Columbia were actively encouraged to do so.<sup>64</sup> Machinists furnished weapons in their spare time, using the scrap metal and facilities offered by machine shop owners. Men interested in electronics improvised signalling equipment, bird enthusiasts trained their own homing pigeon messengers, while chemists concocted “Molotov cocktails” using empty beer bottles, homemade hand grenades, and tracer bullets. Inventive members of 29th Company in Chilliwack built a “Sten electric ray gun” out of scrap metal (which used photo-electric cells to fire light instead of bullets) to facilitate indoor practice and to avoid “wasting” precious ammunition.<sup>65</sup> They also set to work building local training facilities – on their own initiative and generally out of their own pockets. Before the war, there were five military-owned rifle ranges in British Columbia. By the war’s end, the Rangers had constructed another 163.<sup>66</sup>

While this expertise and home-grown inventiveness was important, modern combat demanded more professional training than local initiative alone could provide. In June 1942, Pacific Command authorized “travelling Instructors” to visit the companies and detachments to conduct field training.<sup>67</sup> Owing to the wide dispersal of the units, the small number of Instructors (eventually eight) found it difficult to reach every Ranger, but there were other ways to encourage preparedness. Members of the three regular services and the Canadian Legion supplemented Ranger training, as did special lecturers like Bert “Yank” Levy, a forty-five-year-old Canadian-born soldier of fortune who had fought as a Loyalist guerrilla leader in Spain and had become a Home Guard Instructor in Britain and the United States.<sup>68</sup> Beginning in September 1942, Headquarters also distributed a copy of *The Ranger* magazine to every member. Featuring regular columns on irregular warfare and bushcraft, its pages taught reconnaissance, map reading, field sketching, first aid, and aircraft recognition. It stressed that the foremost weapons in the Rangers’ arsenal were “common, garden horse-sense; a sense of values in relationship with an everyday knowledge of the world and its people and resources; determination to apply themselves to their task; and the ability to combine these three consistently without faltering or fumbling.”<sup>69</sup> Even in the winter months, when the prospect of outdoor training was less attractive, Rangers were encouraged to train indoors in local schools, community halls, and private residences.<sup>70</sup>

Because the Rangers were considered to be “men of action,” their officers emphasized “realistic,” outdoor training.<sup>71</sup> They prepared for war in the bush, recognizing that their familiarity with British Columbia’s dense forests would provide cover and concealment and allow them to neutralize even large enemy



forces. Coastal platoons practised with naval and combined operations units. Others pondered urban warfare. "House-to-house street fighting is the finest sport on earth," Rangers read in their magazine. "It is just the sort of close-quarter scrapping Canadians should enjoy."<sup>72</sup> One Ranger from the Kootenays reflected that this military training was "the most valuable part" of most members' association with the Rangers: "Many men took part in activities with which they had never had any previous experience." Training in signals, map reading, and direction finding all provided practical skills that Rangers felt they could use in their civilian lives. Furthermore, "many a young fellow of high school age became acquainted with the proper method of handling a rifle under competent supervision."<sup>73</sup>

Concurrently, the Rangers replicated forms of recreation enjoyed by many BC men. Even those whose work kept them behind desks were "without exception ... outdoor men by practice and inclination."<sup>74</sup> If there was a close connection between hunting and middle-class masculinity in British Columbia, as one scholar suggests, it was not confined to urban "bourgeois" tourists venturing into a controlled "wilderness" to impose civilization's "conveniences and conventions."<sup>75</sup> Working men who lived outside of the cities, "from fishing banks, from logging camps and from tiny coastal stump farms," had "owned fire-arms since childhood."<sup>76</sup> Venturing into the bush was not a bourgeois distraction from their daily lives but, rather, the essence of it. "Many British Columbians had made 'guns' their hobby for years," a *Ranger* magazine article noted in 1944, while others had been bitten by the "signalling 'bug'" or were interested in explosives, engineering, or map reading. The "hobby-appeal" of Ranger training added incentive and interest for the men, and this, combined with patriotic responsibilities, helps explain their keen interest and applied creativity.<sup>77</sup>

Was patriotism the primary motivation to join? "Rubbish," the staff officer-in-charge of the PCMR told a reporter in April 1945. "These men are banded into a close-knit body with a single purpose – actual defense of their own homes."<sup>78</sup> Reporter Marion Angus observed this sentiment among the Coquitlam Rangers in July 1943:

After [the company exercise] was over, I asked one of the men, "Why have you joined the Rangers?" "To defend my home," he said simply. "My home and my family." A minute later three small tots came running up and a childish treble piped, "Did you get the Japs, Daddy? Did you kill them?"<sup>79</sup>

For many a Ranger, the desire to play one's part and defend one's home against Japanese "savagery" was sufficient motivation to volunteer. To disaggregate this motive from patriotism or from community service, however, is erroneous. The

Rangers became a key part of wartime social life in small cities, towns, and work camps. Rangers organized Victory Loan drives, supported road-breaking treks, joined in church parades, searched for lost children, and even hunted wolf dogs terrorizing the community of Haney.<sup>80</sup> The Ranger detachment at Moosehide, near Dawson City, Yukon, hosted a "War Dance" that featured "Native war dances, old-time square dances, red river jig," and other dances as well as local First Nations children singing "God Save the King" in their "Native tongue," all to raise money for the Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire book fund.<sup>81</sup> As a grassroots force, they were inextricably bound to the social fabric of their communities and built social consensus.

Women were notably absent from the ranks of the PCMR: the rugged landscape and individualism that imbued the force with its sense of purpose was male terrain. The logic of the day held that guerrilla warfare would be no place for a woman: men's wartime role extended the "male breadwinner norm," which promised "uninterrupted domesticity" for women and young children,<sup>82</sup> to include defence of hearth and home. Women nevertheless "played no small part in the Ranger scheme of things," trumpeted official Ranger publications. In pivotal supporting roles, women looked after "farm, ranch or office when their men were away training or out on some Ranger activity."<sup>83</sup> Cartoons may have depicted the angry housewife armed with a rolling pin (see figure below), but the more general impression was one of cooperation. "On many occasions," one writer reminisced, "the Ranger, returning cold and damp from creeping through rain-wet bracken, has been cheered by a welcome cup of coffee."<sup>84</sup> Women volunteered to work with the Red Cross in mobile canteens, helped organize dances, and even participated in Ranger shooting competitions.<sup>85</sup> It was a communal effort.

If there was room for wartime cooperation in British Columbia's mixed population, historians have amply documented how people of Japanese descent – regardless of place of origin or citizenship – were cast as the enemy "other" after

*The RANGER* — November 1, 1943



"... And I'll give you some lessons you won't forget if you come around here again with your blankety-blank street fighting!"

Pearl Harbor. In this, the Rangers shared the biases, prejudices, and concerns of other British Columbians. Patricia Roy suggests that much prewar angst towards Asians can be understood as fears of Asian superiority,<sup>86</sup> and wartime descriptions of Japanese forces fed such insecurities. According to one *Ranger* article, "Physically, he [the Japanese soldier] is hard and well trained and has remarkably good powers of endurance."<sup>87</sup> The Rangers were expected to apply lessons that the Allies had learned in other theatres of war and to study up on how to discern the "Jap Fighting Man" from the Chinese.<sup>88</sup> The enemy was not to be taken lightly, and given the "secrecy" and "treachery" of Pearl Harbor, Rangers were reminded that no one of Japanese descent was to be trusted. Japanese Canadians, therefore, were excluded from the Rangers, as they were from the Canadian military more generally. Of course, few resided on the coast after the spring of 1942, and Ranger units in the BC interior had the additional task of monitoring the Japanese Canadian internment camps in their regions.<sup>89</sup>

Peter Ward has observed that British Columbia's ethnic boundaries formed rigid social categories: "race was a fundamental criterion for inclusion, as only very infrequently did non-whites join the organizations of the white majority."<sup>90</sup> This statement describes Japanese Canadians' exclusion from the PCMR but not the experiences of Chinese Canadians, Indigenous peoples, and other "allied" ethnic groups who were welcomed into the Rangers and whose contributions were celebrated. Rangers learned that when Chinese storekeeper Wong Toy and his sons went out on Ranger exercises "with the rest of his friends," he hung a sign in his window that read: STORE CLOSED FOR MANOEUVRE PRACTICE. In the small BC town where he lived, Toy was seen as another loyal community member committed to protecting his family. "The threat of Japanese aggression probably bulks very large to a Chinese, may be more so than [to] the average white Canadian," *The Ranger* magazine offered. "Perhaps the Chinese Ranger has known the grim details of Japanese brutality across the Pacific, and rape, murder and torture mean more to him than it might to the rather complacent people who live behind the barrier of the Rockies."<sup>91</sup> Chinese Canadians, acutely aware of the implications of invasion, shared a common threat and could therefore participate in domestic defence.

In newspaper accounts, coastal Indigenous people were considered "natural" Rangers and their patriotism was held up as a model for all Canadians to emulate. Journalists mobilized popular stereotypes to trumpet their loyalty, as they did with regard to First Nations' contributions across the country.<sup>92</sup> "Up and down the length of British Columbia's Coast, both on the main reservations and at many an isolated inlet and forest hamlet besides, the Indians have taken a very keen interest in the war," a *Victoria Colonist* editorial proclaimed on 3 April 1943. "Where they could serve, they have joined the

colors. Where they could not, they have left no stone unturned to assist those who are engaged in the war effort.” Their dedication seemed unmistakable. “Indicative of the way the Indians are backing the war effort,” one reporter described, “was the 102-year-old Dog Creek Indian who offered his services as a guide or marksman and pointed back to a long, successful career as suitable qualifications.” He was made an honorary Ranger for his sincere offer.<sup>93</sup>

It would be as inaccurate to generalize about Indigenous participation as it would be to do so about the participation of other BC residents, but a case study provides insight into coastal peoples’ active interest and participation. The Nisga’a had lived on the Northwest Coast since time immemorial, and they wanted to defend their villages in the Nass Valley – “the closest part of the Canadian mainland to Japan and a long way from the cities to the south” – from Japanese invasion. Nisga’a representatives approached the Indian agent at Prince Rupert in mid-1942 and told him that they wanted to be organized into a PCMR company. The agent confirmed their enthusiastic interest in volunteering.<sup>94</sup> When Ranger Instructor Brendan Kennelly arrived by boat at Kincolith Bay in February 1943, he was greeted by eighty “Kitkatla” Rangers flying the Union Jack as well as a twenty-five-piece brass band and forty members of the Indian Women’s Red Cross society. The officer commanding the “all-Indian” Ranger company, fisher Arthur Nelson, marched the procession through “the village to the sounds of martial music & the beating of drums.” The Nisga’a community was patriotic and engaged, with “Indian chiefs of their respective districts” serving as Ranger officers. Although these leaders were strongly against the conscription of their young men for overseas service, fearing that this would deplete their communities of young males and violate Crown assurances against compulsory service,<sup>95</sup> the Nisga’a freely supported defending their homeland. “All the Indians of these parts are strongly and enthusiastically (almost too much) for the Ranger organization,” Kennelly reported. “They see in it their opportunity to do their bit & to be prepared to help in home defence in country (and this was emphasised) and in terrain & surroundings with which they were



familiar and in which they would be most useful.” Over thirty more Rangers joined up during his visit, bringing the strength of the Kincolith unit to more than 200.<sup>96</sup>

The following month, the *Globe and Mail* reported that two coastal First Nations companies “meet regularly to drill and study the tactics of modern war ... fully aware of the role they will play if the Japanese attack the west coast and imbued with the spirit of their warrior forefathers, they take their training seriously.”<sup>97</sup> In due course, the Rangers in the Nass River communities elected their own officers and non-commissioned officers by secret ballot, and these appointments were approved by the respective band councils and the Indian agent.<sup>98</sup> Although Indigenous peoples were disempowered by the Canadian political system, they had a measure of self-government in running their Ranger units during the war.

Aboriginal communities’ support for the Rangers must be understood within the context of their entire wartime experience. While the existing historiography stresses that Canadian First Nations peoples served in greater numbers per capita than did any other group,<sup>99</sup> high rates of voluntary enlistment among BC bands were confined to southern areas. In terms of conscription, authorities encountered problems finding individuals living in isolated Northern and coastal areas, never mind registering them under the *National Resources Mobilization Act*. The seasons when many were out hunting, fishing, or working in canneries did not match timelines set by the bureaucrats in Ottawa. Given the strident opposition to conscription by First Nations across the country, BC Indian agents unsuccessfully sought a blanket exemption for their “wards.”<sup>100</sup> Fears that the PCMR could be an “underhanded way” to enlist personnel for the Active Forces plagued some early Ranger recruitment efforts,<sup>101</sup> but once Indigenous peoples learned that such rumours were false, their inhibitions seemed to disappear. Queen Victoria’s representatives had told the people at Port Simpson, Kitkatla, and Metlakatla that “they would never have to fight unless they wanted to.” Assured that this would remain the case, they were “very proud of their Ranger association.”<sup>102</sup> For practical reasons, the government eventually gave up trying to conscript Indigenous men, and the PCMR allowed members of coastal First Nations to serve in defence of their homeland without going overseas.

On the whole, Indigenous people represented a minority of the PCMR’s total membership, but their per capita participation was disproportionate to the rest of the population, and they made vital contributions along the vulnerable Pacific coastline. When six Nisga’a Rangers attended the training school at Sardis, reports of their exceptional performance so impressed the commander of the Canadian Army’s Mountain and Jungle Warfare School that he requested

they serve as Instructors for soldiers who came through to train.<sup>103</sup> In the Rangers, Indigenous skills were valued, and First Nations' dispersed reserves, dotting the province's periphery, placed them at key strategic points. In wartime, their intimate, ancestral ties to the land invested them with a shared desire to defend their homeland.

Articles published during the war proclaimed that the teamwork embodied in the Rangers also transcended class lines. Historian Kerry Steeves used local data to analyze Ranger membership, concluding that it was representative of the entire population. In No. 73 Company (Yale), for example, the Rangers included members from all social strata and a variety of occupations. Similarly, he found no anomalies regarding marital status, religion, or labour union membership.<sup>104</sup> Anecdotal evidence provides similar insight into a broad social consensus. Major-General F.F. Worthington, the chief commanding officer in the Pacific at war's end, proclaimed that "the PCMR was of necessity a great 'leveller' – the labourer and the banker worked together. The logging boss found himself in a group or detachment commanded by one of his truck drivers. All had just the one idea. They were 'Rangers' – all working together toward the one common end ... A fellowship of man was created in the Rangers and it will carry on."<sup>105</sup> While such celebratory rhetoric could be dismissed as self-serving, reporters frequently highlighted similar themes regarding men from all backgrounds unified for a single purpose. Hyperbolic excess aside, the Ranger ideal was one of unity and camaraderie.

Tying military masculinity to this sense of communal identity that transcended socio-economic and cultural lines encouraged a strong sense of unit cohesion. Colonel Taylor considered this synergy – to borrow current military parlance – to be the most important ingredient in the PCMR's success. "The fact that each unit was made up of men who lived in the same district, and therefore understood each other, made it all the more easy for '*esprit de corps*' to develop," *The Ranger* magazine exulted in early 1944: "The common bond established through the Ranger organization even brought together people who had had personal grievances for years. Those who had got along well with others in their community now had even more reason for long-lasting friendships."<sup>106</sup> While this image is surely exaggerated, it spoke to intense communal and personal connections. Indeed, corps morale and satisfaction could translate into a greater sense of individual self-worth. Ranger "Andy" Rigors, who wrote a regular column in the *Kamloops Sentinel*, observed that the Rangers bolstered confidence among members of his community:

There seems to be no doubt about it: members are looking and walking better than ever before as a result of the self-imposed training. Sparkling eyes, shoulders thrown back, clear complexions,

and talking with an enthusiastic vigor they did not possess previously, are sure signs of ... a new lease on life, which by the way, is the most valuable thing on the face of the earth: a possession that can easily be wasted, especially in the evenings, by "collapsing" in an easy chair.<sup>107</sup>

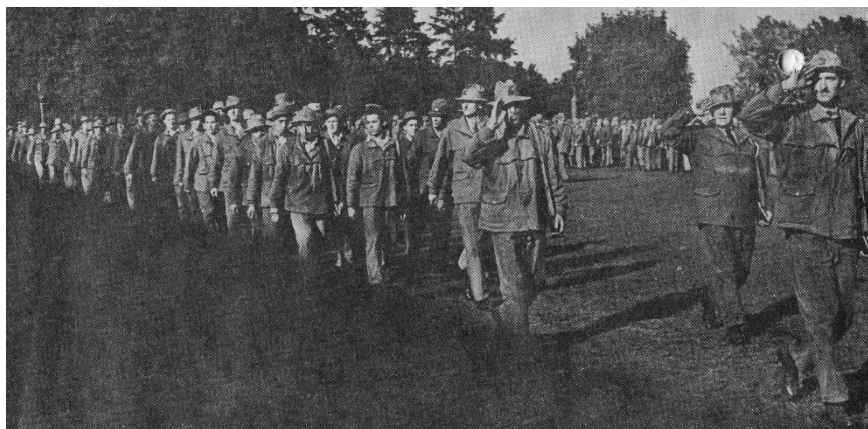
A year after their creation, the Rangers had become an integral part of Pacific Command's defence focus. When the Japanese threat waned, however, the Rangers felt the reverberations. The corps peaked in August 1943 at a strength of 529 officers and 14,320 other ranks. That fall, Pacific Command reduced its number of troops in light of the lessening threat to coastal North America. As a result, the PCMR was capped at 10,000 members in 123 active companies. In theory, this was done to increase efficiency by "raising the standards" and forcing units to drop individuals who were too busy to attend training or who had proven unsuited to the job.<sup>108</sup> When rumours circulated that it was done for reasons of economy, however, journalists recalled Colonel Taylor's exhortation that "not since the days when settlers organized to protect themselves from Indians has there existed such an economical form of defence."<sup>109</sup> At scant cost to the public purse, the Rangers continued to play valuable roles in keeping isolated parts of British Columbia and the coast under



constant surveillance, searching for lost planes and people in the mountains, and even tracking down escaped prisoners of war or army deserters.<sup>110</sup> In December 1944, however, as Allied offensives in the European and Pacific theatres pushed the Axis Powers back on their heels, the Minister of National Defence approved a proposal to disband all but twenty-nine Ranger companies located on Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlotte Islands, the northern mainland coast, and Yukon.<sup>111</sup> A circular was distributed to the Ranger units to this effect, but, because of a new Japanese threat, no action was taken.

As the Allied war machine began to overwhelm its enemies, the Japanese tried to bolster their national morale by launching bomb-bearing balloons designed to fall on North America. The first operational balloons were recovered in the United States, and in mid-January 1945, one of these delivery systems released several bombs near Minton, Saskatchewan. There were no casualties in Canada, but these incidents reminded people that the war was not over. This saved the Rangers from being abolished. In cooperation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), provincial police, forest rangers, trappers, and bomb disposal squads, the PCMR visually detected and reported balloons, and ensured that they were safely disarmed or destroyed. The fear that balloons could carry biological agents made this a serious assignment, as did press and media censorship designed to deprive the enemy of intelligence.<sup>112</sup> Given the Rangers' dispersal throughout the province, their careful control and reporting of information through formal military channels was their crowning operational achievement.<sup>113</sup>

In August, the Allies had defeated the Nazis in Europe, and the diversion of more forces to the Pacific promised to bring imminent victory over Japan. The threat to North America now seemed remote, and the newly appointed Chief of the General Staff recommended that the Rangers be reduced to nil strength. The Minister of National Defence agreed. Japan formally surrendered on 2





September, and at the end of that month, the official Ranger “stand down” ceremony was held in Vancouver. Additional parades were held to stand down Ranger companies across the province, and by 15 October, all had disbanded.<sup>114</sup> General Worthington’s biographer noted that the Pacific Commander “hated to see them disperse. To him, such a force was of value in peace as well as in war, patrolling Canada’s sparsely settled regions. He advocated retaining a nucleus on which to rebuild if the need were ever recognized, but his recommendation was turned down.”<sup>115</sup> Instead, in recognition of their voluntary and unpaid services, Rangers who had served for more than ninety days were allowed to keep their uniforms and could purchase their rifles for the nominal sum of five dollars.<sup>116</sup> British Columbia settled into the peace that the Canadian soldiers overseas had helped to earn.

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Painter Emily Carr reflected in her journal how “war halts everything, suspends all ordinary activities.”<sup>117</sup> In reality, of course, the Second World War effort could not stop everything. Miners still needed to mine, fishers to fish, and loggers to log. Essential industries remained essential, and the more than 800 officers and 15,000 other ranks who served with the PCMR from 1942 to 1945 were not plucked from their communities or their everyday jobs.<sup>118</sup> British Columbians living outside of the main cities feared that “it could happen here,” and they proved willing to play a voluntary role to defend their homes. Pervasive concerns about enemy sabotage and infiltration of the West Coast translated into few tangible threats (balloons notwithstanding), and the Rangers were never called out on active service. Nevertheless, the PCMR played an important – if modest and peculiar – part in British Columbia’s home defence and surveillance network during the war, allowing young and old men, and those in vital economic sectors, to make a contribution that freed other personnel for overseas service. “What each unit accomplished depended almost entirely on the initiative of its members,” *The Ranger* magazine boasted in January 1944: “Success was measured by willingness.”<sup>119</sup>

If the primary objective of the PCMR was to meet the public demand for action, it served this purpose admirably. General Staff statements in early 1942 stressed that it was “most important that everything possible be done on the West Coast to satisfy public opinion in respect to military security,” but authorities recognized that Active Force troops could not adequately cover all the ground. Reserve Army elements in Pacific Command were concentrated in metropolitan areas. As a staff summary succinctly noted, the military needed “an organization of men with a knowledge of British Columbia born of experience from living in the rocky country along the rugged coast line, and the thick, barely penetrable bush” of the interior timberlands.<sup>120</sup> The Rangers provided

this experience and the impression of security. During the Second World War, the threat of enemy operations on Canadian soil changed the outlook of British Columbians. No longer was the military an abstract expeditionary force. The PCMR brought it home to citizens in outlying areas, and by its very nature provided a “contact between ‘Mr. Citizen’ and the military that did not exist before and which no amount of ordinary propaganda ... can produce.”<sup>121</sup>

The PCMR provides regional support to Michael Stevenson’s conclusions that the wartime mobilization of Canadian resources was partial, decentralized, and conciliatory.<sup>122</sup> Rather than confirming his assessment that this represents an inherent shortcoming, however, the opposite conclusion might be drawn. Partial commitment did not force the military to squander additional scarce resources on local defence that, in the end, prepared for an enemy attack that never came. A decentralized structure that drew upon grassroots leadership and organization was imperfect, but it accommodated a zealous voluntary effort by citizens who remained in their communities. While the PCMR might not have been up to the fighting standards of Canada’s soldiers in the European theatre, it was adequate and proportionate to the threat at hand. In the end, it was a unifying force, provided reassurance to a jittery BC populace, and made tangible contributions to Canada’s war effort.

“While the Rangers are now being disbanded, the Ranger idea will not die,” the final issue of *The Ranger* magazine stated in 1945: “If this land of ours is ever again threatened, to make it solid again in total defence, it will be the Rangers who will fill the gaps and supply the link to fit the regular soldier to this rough, rugged country which we love.”<sup>123</sup> As contexts changed, Major Taylor again pushed for the re-establishment of his beloved Rangers at the end of the war, organizing a civilian PCMR association to perpetuate its “ideals and activities” in peacetime.<sup>124</sup> Although he was rebuffed in his early attempts to secure military status for the association, a new organization – the Canadian Rangers – was established in 1947 to serve as the military’s “eyes and ears” from sea to sea to sea. Taylor grew disillusioned when the military refused to allow him to recreate his Ranger empire in peacetime, insisting on much smaller units confined to isolated coastal and Northern areas. By the 1960s, the Rangers in British Columbia had become moribund, and the units were disbanded in 1976. Re-established in 1991, the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group [as of 2006] oversaw twenty-two patrols in BC communities. The Canadian Rangers thus continue to serve the country in coastal and Northern parts of the province, but their role, mission, and identity remain inextricably linked to the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers of the Second World War.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 133.

<sup>2</sup> A PCMR company was also formed in Dawson City, Yukon, in early 1943.

<sup>3</sup> If, traditionally, academic military historians have focused on high politics and overseas operations at the expense of domestic experiences, a recent proliferation of studies on the Canadian home front suggests that this balance is shifting. The Second World War has benefited from books like Jeffrey Keshen's *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), which critically examines broad social trends and re-evaluates accepted wisdom on a national level. Much work remains to be done to reveal experiences at the regional and local levels.

<sup>4</sup> This observation reinforces the conclusions in R.S. Sheffield, *The Red Man's on the Warpath: The Image of the "Indian" and the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> William Strange, *Canada, the Pacific and War* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1937), 212-13. On British Columbia's defences on the eve of war, see T. Murray Hunter, "Coast Defence in British Columbia, 1939-1941: Attitudes and Realities," *BC Studies* 28 (Winter 1975-76), 3-28; Roger Sarty, *The Maritime Defence of Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996); and Peter Moogk with R.V. Stevenson, *Vancouver Defended: A History of the Men and Guns of the Lower Mainland Defences, 1859-1949* (Surrey: Antonson, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> For BC examples, see "Retired Men Want to Do Their Bit," *Victoria Times*, 30 January 1940, 8; "Demand for Civilian Defence Corps Sweeps across Canada," *Vancouver Sun*, 17 May 1940, 21; "Defence Corps in Fraser Valley," *Victoria Times*, 18 May 1940, 8; and "Band Sharpshooting Hunters into Units in Skeena Valley," *Vancouver Province*, 17 June 1940, 22. On civil defence in British Columbia more generally, see Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) 322.019 (D1) and British Columbia Legislative Assembly Sessional Clipping Books, Newspaper Accounts of the Debates, microfilm reel 15. A good example is the Victoria Fish and Game Protective Association, formed in 1939 to secretly patrol watershed areas around Victoria. See "Hunters Enlist in Civilian Corps," *Victoria Times*, 4 April 1942, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Anglo-American Rangers, "whether serving formally on the colonies' and states' defence establishments or in ad hoc companies that frontiersmen formed to fight Indians, were ubiquitous in the military affairs" of early North America, historian John Grenier explains. They first emerged on the colonial scene in late seventeenth-century New England in response to changes in Indigenous tactics that rendered ineffective European models of war: "Early Americans came to understand war as the purview of rangers who burned Indian villages and fields and killed Indian combatants and non-combatants alike." Members of "backcountry" communities

fully supported these unconventional practices, “on the fluid frontier with ‘Indian Country,’ where raids against Indian villages provided the easiest military offensive option, rangers entered a pantheon of military heroes.” Ranger service did not facilitate advancement or acceptance within the British Army, but rangers did emerge as archetypal figures of the Indian-fighting frontiersman protecting hearth and home and, later, as frontier “pathfinders” lionized by James Fenimore Cooper. See John E. Grenier, “‘Of Great Utility’: The Public Identity of Early American Rangers and Its Impact on American Society,” *War & Society* 21/1 (2003): 2-5, 11. Newspapers and PCMR literature made frequent reference to the Rangers’ predecessors, labelling them “Roger’s Rangers Mark 1942” or likening them to “the Western Scouts for Custer.” See, for example, A.G. MacDonald, “Men of the PCMR Reviving Frontier Tactics,” *British Columbia Lumberman* 26/11, November 1942, 53-54, and Hal Straight, “Pacific Coast Rangers Planning ‘Hornet’s Nest’ For Any Invader,” *Vancouver Sun*, 22 April 1942, 25. On the British amateur tradition, see Ian Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> On these units, see, for example, R.H. Roy, “The Early Militia and Defence of British Columbia, 1871-1885,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 18/1-2 (1954): 1-28; P.G. Silverman, “A History of the Militia and Defences of British Columbia, 1871-1914” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1956); Roy, *The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, 1919-1965* (Vancouver: History Committee, Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, 1969); and Moogk with Stevenson, *Vancouver Defended*.

<sup>9</sup> On fears of Asians in British Columbia, see Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> “Defences at Pacific Command Well Prepared by Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, 4 December 1941; C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1957), 166-67; Terry Copp, “The Defence of Hong Kong: December 1941,” *Canadian Military History* 10/4 (2001): 6. On earlier military assessments of the Japanese threat, see Gregory Johnson, “North Pacific Triangle? The Impact of the Far East on Canada and its Relations with the United States and Great Britain, 1937-1948” (PhD dissertation, York University, 1989), and Timothy Wilford, “Canada and the Far East Crisis in 1941: Intelligence, Strategy and the Coming of the Pacific War” (PhD dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> See DHH, AHQ Report no. 3, “The Employment of Infantry in the Pacific Coast Defences (Aug 39 to Dec 43),” 12. On coast defence artillery, see Hunter, “Coast Defence in British Columbia, 1939-1941.”

<sup>12</sup> Desmond Morton, *Canada and War: A Military and Political History* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1981), 110.

<sup>13</sup> On the FRS, see Donald Peck, "The Gumboot Navy," *Raincoast Chronicles*, no. 7, 12-19; Carol Popp, *The Gumboot Navy* (Lantzville, BC: Oolichan Books, 1988); and W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, and Michael Whitby, *No Higher Purpose: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-1943, vol. 2, part 1* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2002), 338. The Royal Canadian Navy outfitted its boats with guns and equipment.

<sup>14</sup> Patricia E. Roy, J.L. Granatstein, Masako Lino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 75.

<sup>15</sup> Roy et al., *Mutual Hostages*, 87-88; *Hansard*, 20 January 1942, 152. BC Reservists were issued American rifles and Ross rifles by February 1942. On intelligence assessments, see Wilford, "Canada and the Far East Crisis in 1941."

<sup>16</sup> "Birth of the PCMR," *The Ranger*, January 1944, 5; "History – Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," DHH 322.009 (D298). Copies of *The Ranger* can be seen at DHH in Ottawa as well as the CFB Esquimalt Military and Naval Museum. There is lots of anecdotal evidence on citizens' committees or individuals taking unilateral action to establish local defences. For example, Grand Forks, Stewart, Courtenay, and Victoria organized unofficial home guard units before Pearl Harbor. See "History – Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," DHH 322.009 (D298); Kerry Ragnar Steeves, "The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942-1945" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1990), 24; *Victoria Times*, 5 July 1978; and Donald G. Sword, unpublished draft of Gordon Sword's biography (copy provided by Kerry Steeves).

<sup>17</sup> Both newspapers cited in Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 15-19.

<sup>18</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 131.

<sup>19</sup> Parliamentary Secret Session, Notes on Canadian Defence Policy, 19 February 1942, DHH 112.3M2 (D495).

<sup>20</sup> "History – Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," DHH 322.009 (D298). The government considered the most damning indictment to be "The Derelict Defence," a series of *Vancouver Sun* editorials that complained of outmoded defences, equipment shortages, a lack of cooperation, and the military's "failure to adopt an aggressive spirit." The newspaper was fined \$300 for its critique. See "Defence of Canada Forces," 16 May 1950, DHH 112.3M2 (D363).

<sup>21</sup> Recent studies on the subject include Roy, *The Oriental Question*, and Stephanie Bangarth, "The Politics of Rights: Canadian and American Advocacy Groups and North America's Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942-1949" (PhD dissertation, University of Waterloo, 2003), which provides a balanced overview of the historiography.

<sup>22</sup> CGS to ACGS and VCGS, 31 January 1942, DHH 112.1 (D35); Brigadier for CDS to General Officer Command-in-Chief, Pacific Command, 31 January 1942, DHH 322.009 (D298).

<sup>23</sup> S.P. Mackenzie, *The Home Guard: A Military and Political History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1995), 32, *passim*; David K. Yelton, "British Public Opinion, the Home Guard, and the Defense of Great Britain, 1940-1944," *Journal of Military History* 58/3 (1994): 461-80. The British Home Guard was stood down in December 1944 and disbanded on 31 December 1945. BC journalists also made reference to guerrilla units around the world. See, for example, "The Guerrillas," *Vancouver Sun*, 9 April 1942, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander to Secy, DND, 7 February 1942, DHH 159 (D1).

<sup>25</sup> ACGS to CGS, 10 February 1942; CGS, "note for file," 23 February 1942, DHH 112.1 (D35). On Canada and military law, see Chris Madsen, *Another Kind of Justice: Canadian Military Law from Confederation to Somalia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> "Taylor, Thomas Alexander Hatch," Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), RG 150, accession 1992-93/166, box 9549; Marion J. Angus, "The Rangers," *National Home Monthly*, July 1943, 28.

<sup>27</sup> "A Brief on the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 3, DHH 159 (D1).

<sup>28</sup> The popular enthusiasm for the proposed force was immediate, as journalists revealed in supportive articles. "Army of Woodsmen and Miners Could Make BC Impregnable," a *Vancouver Sun* headline proclaimed on 6 March. The description of this "guerrilla corps" stressed that it would tap into the Indigenous strengths and knowledge of the province. "Indians, with knowledge of trails that are charted imperfectly, could thus be given a chance to do heroic work in defense of a province ... against the yellow menace through intelligent, understanding manning of its contours and natural barriers." Wild horses in the Cariboo, long slated for destruction, could be harnessed for use by "cavalry Commandos." It was the strong-willed, independent man that could use mobility and rapid communications in familiar territory to defeat enemy aggression and outsmart the Axis "grand strategy."

<sup>29</sup> MacDonald, "Men of the PCMR Reviving Frontier Tactics," 54; Taylor, "Memorandum: Auxiliary Defence Corps – Organization," 18 March 1942, and "History – Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 2, DHH 322.009 (D298). In Britain, a debate over whether the Home Guard was expected to wage "guerrilla" warfare or static defence was never completely settled during the war: the War Office advocated a static defence role in which units would "fight to the last" to defend their community, while many Guards and their political supporters favoured greater mobility, which would allow them to "take to the woods" to conduct partisan warfare after an invasion. See Mackenzie, *Home Guard*, 112-29. No such controversy erupted in British Columbia, where the Rangers were often referred to in the press as the province's "guerrilla army" and were encouraged to adopt whatever tactics were necessary to repulse an invasion.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum V-2-27-1, 18 March 1942, DHH 159 (D1).

<sup>31</sup> "A Brief on the PCMR," 5-6, DHH 159 (D1). Although the phrase "Trans-Canada Highway" seems anachronistic, it was used in this 1945 report as well as others generated during the war. See, for example, "Highways to be Designated as Military Routes," 26 May 1942, DHH 112.21009 (D204).

<sup>32</sup> The 5 March 1942 press release stated that initial organization proceeded in Port Renfrew, Port Alberni, Tofino, Port Alice, Zeballos, Kelsey Bay, Alert Bay, Queen Charlotte City, Massett, Bella Coola, Ocean Falls, Mill Bay, Kitimat, Port Essington, Port Simpson, Stewart, and Saanich North. DHH f.112.1 (D35).

<sup>33</sup> Boyd to William, 20 March 1942, DHH 159 (D1).

<sup>34</sup> "Historically Speaking," *The Ranger*, October 1945, 6; "A Brief on the PCMR," 4, DHH 159 (D1). On local organizing efforts, see, for example, James Edward Kingsley, *Did I Ever Tell You About ... The Memoirs of James Edward Kingsley of Parksville, British Columbia* (Parksville: J.E. Kingsley, n.d.), 55-56, and his diary at the British Columbia Archives (BCA), MSS-2516.

<sup>35</sup> Kennelly to Minister of National Defence, 21 April 47, DHH 112.1 (D161), 1-2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, DHH 112.1 (D161), 2.

<sup>38</sup> *The Ranger* 4/1, 1944, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Taylor to Col R.S. Carey, 31 May 1944, DHH f. 322.009 (D24).

<sup>40</sup> Taylor, 18 March 1942, DHH f.322.009 (D298).

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, "Rangers Appeal Directly to Ralston to Send Guns," *Victoria Daily Times*, 2 July 1942, 2, and "Island Rangers Keen to Train for Emergency," *Victoria Daily Times*, 11 August 1942, 8. In due course, the Rangers were issued Sten submachine guns, .303 and .30-06 service rifles, and .30-30 US sporting rifles on a general scale as well as khaki denim "Drybak" uniforms and distinctive armbands.

<sup>42</sup> *The Ranger* 4/1, 1944, 6, 11.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, "BC's Rugged Defenders," *Vancouver Sun*, 15 September 1942; "Canada's Newest Western Army Shaping Up Rapidly," *Hamilton Spectator*, 14 April 1942; "BC Guerilla Sharpshooters Guard Coast," *Hamilton Spectator*, 27 March 1943; and Gordon Magee, "Cariboo Commandos," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 June 1942.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, "Guerrilla Army to Guard BC Urged by Stevens," *Vancouver News-Herald*, 20 February 1942; "Army of Woodsmen and Miners Could Make BC Impregnable," *Vancouver Sun*, 6 March 1942; Hal Straight, "Prowess in the Woods Their Chief Weapon: Coast Rangers in a Class by Themselves," *Vancouver Sun*, 21 April 1942; "A Lease-Lend Army: Rangers Goats; Crack Shots," *Vancouver Daily Province*, 22 May 1942; and "BC Has 6,000 Rangers Ready to Welcome Japs," *Globe and Mail*, 22 May 1942.

<sup>45</sup> Macdonald, "Men of the PCMR Reviving Frontier Tactics," 54-55.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Angus, "The Rangers," 30-31, and Jack Strickland, "Vigilance Is Their Motto," *Vancouver Daily Province Saturday Magazine*, 7 April 1945, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Tina Loo, "Making a Modern Wilderness: Conserving Wildlife in Twentieth-Century Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 82/1 (2001): 92. See also Loo, "Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880-1939," *Western Historical Quarterly* 32/3 (2001): 296-319.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), and Christopher Dummitt, "Risk on the Rocks: Modernity, Manhood, and Mountaineering in Postwar British Columbia," *BC Studies* 141 (Spring 2004): 3-29.

<sup>49</sup> Rachel Woodward, "Locating Military Masculinities," in *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*, ed. Paul Higate (London: Praeger, 2003), 46.

<sup>50</sup> Para. 3(1), GSO 320, 12 August 1942.

<sup>51</sup> Angus, "The Rangers," 28. Further evidence of its "democratic" nature included the ability of company members to dismiss and elect their own commanding officers. See, for example, "Defence Force Elects Heads," *Victoria Colonist*, 21 April 1942, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Larry Worthington, "Worthy": *A Biography of Major-General F.F. Worthington* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1961), 205; Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 37-41.

<sup>53</sup> Keshen, *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers*, 22, 206, 214.

<sup>54</sup> "A Brief on the PCMR," 15, DHH 159 (D1).

<sup>55</sup> Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 48.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 78.

<sup>57</sup> MGen J.P. Mackenzie, Report on Chilliwack Rangers, 8 December 1943, LAC, RG 24, reel C-4992, file 8328-1178.

<sup>58</sup> "A Brief on the PCMR," 16, DHH 159 (D1).

<sup>59</sup> "Veterans Keen on Plan for Civilian Corps," *Vancouver Sun*, 24 December 1941, 2; "South African Vets Want Commando Units for Defense of Canada," *Vancouver Daily Province*, 28 February 1942, 3; "Recruiting to Start 'At Once' for Guerrilla Forces to Protect BC Coastal Areas," *Province*, 28 February 1942, 23; "Paardeburg Veterans Ready to Take Up Arms in Commando Groups throughout the Province," *Vancouver News-Herald*, 28 February 1942, 4; Editorial, *Comox District Free Press*, 2 April 1942.

<sup>60</sup> Kerry Steeves interview with Lloyd Cornett, former member of No. 89 Company PCMR, Burnaby, 29 November 1988.

<sup>61</sup> Angus, "The Rangers," 30. See also Sid Godber, "Disbanding Ranger Unit Acclaimed," *Vancouver Sun*, 1 October 1945, 13.

<sup>62</sup> *The Ranger* 4/1, 1944, 7. Rangers had to learn army terminology to work with the regular forces and had to convey information in an efficient manner. Good communications and reconnaissance also required reliable maps. Much of the



isolated country over which they roamed remained unmapped, however, and Ranger companies responded by making their own maps, which proved vital to planning, training with other military units, and organizing searches for lost aircraft. See "Historically Speaking," 6.

<sup>63</sup> *The Ranger* 4,1, 1944, 7-8.

<sup>64</sup> Members of Home Guard units who did not feel that the War Office supplied them with sufficient weaponry ignored the order and manufactured "everything from armoured cars to soup-tin grenades." See Mackenzie, *Home Guard*, 66.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, "Rangers Snipe with Futuristic Ray Gun," Casey Wells' PCMR Scrapbook; T.A.H. Taylor, Pacific Coast Militia Rangers – Circular Letter No. 30, 20 October 1942, CFB Esquimalt Naval and Military Museum, box 33; and *The Ranger* magazine throughout the war.

<sup>66</sup> "Historically Speaking," 6.

<sup>67</sup> The Ranger organization that Taylor envisioned exceeded original plans, but he was given approval to form a small staff to help with administrative responsibilities at Pacific Command Headquarters. Major W.S. Bartson, a Great War veteran, was appointed his assistant in late March 1942, and Lieutenant Brendan Kennelly, who had served in the Irish Army and trapped in the Peace River district, assumed the role of training officer. They were later joined at headquarters by a quartermaster. In due course, Taylor also selected six "field supervisors" to oversee the organization throughout the province, based on criteria that matched his vision for the force itself. All had familiarity with and experience working in the province, and all had served overseas during the First World War. Captain George Baldwin, MC, was a forest ranger; Captain B.T. O'Grady, MC, was a civil and mining engineer; Captain S.M. Gillespie was a timber cruiser and surveyor; Captain B. Harvey was a game warden; and Captain J.B. Acland was a former brigade staff officer and member of the tank corps.

<sup>68</sup> "Guerilla: 'Yank' Levy preaches the art he has practiced," clipping in Casey Wells' PCMR Scrapbook.

<sup>69</sup> *The Ranger*, 15 November 1942, 6. See also "Rangers Publish Corps Magazine," *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 October 1942, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Ivan E. Phillips, "Salute to the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," Okanagan Historical Society 29th Annual Report (1965), 149-50. To facilitate teaching at the community level, the army also trained Instructors within the PCMR's own ranks. Company commanders selected individual Rangers to attend a two-week "Ranger Training School" at the Royal Canadian Engineer training centre at Sardis (Vedder Crossing), near Chilliwack. Members of the Active and Reserve armies gave lectures and demonstrations on a range of subjects, from the use of weapons and demolition explosives, to field defence and bridge building, to bush tactics. Equally important, the training camp encouraged mutual awareness and understanding between the Rangers and other military branches, allowing them to forge a community of

interests and lay the groundwork for effective cooperation. A steady stream of recruits proved willing to sacrifice their vacation time to learn lessons and gain experiences that they could relay to their home units. Ibid., 149; G.W.L. Nicholson, "Interview with Major W.N. Barton, PCMR, HQ Staff, 25 January 1944, DHH 322.009 (D298); Macdonald, "Men of the PCMR Reviving Frontier Tactics," 54-55.

<sup>71</sup> G.W.L. Nicholson, "Interview with Lt. Col. T.A.H. Taylor SO i/c PCMR," 26 January 1944, DHH 322.009 (D298). See also Peter Madison, "British Columbia's Guerilla Army," *Vancouver Sun*, 23 January 1943.

<sup>72</sup> "Tanks are Vulnerable at Close Quarters," *The Ranger*, 1 December 1942, 8. Given British Columbia's terrain, journalists suggested, armoured vehicles would not be much use elsewhere. See "BC Has 6,000 Rangers Ready to Welcome Japs."

<sup>73</sup> "The Average Ranger Says...", *The Ranger*, October 1945, 8.

<sup>74</sup> MacDonald, "Men of the PCMR Reviving Frontier Tactics," 54-55.

<sup>75</sup> Loo, "Of Moose and Men." Viewed online through [www.historycooperative.org](http://www.historycooperative.org).

<sup>76</sup> "Formidable Units of Coast Rangers Being Organized on Island," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 14 April 1942, 3.

<sup>77</sup> *The Ranger* 4/1, 1944, 9. According to geographer Rachel Woodward, the idea of the "inhospitable outdoors is used not just as the location and device for developing physical fitness but also as the location for the inculcation of particular mental attitudes and attributes deemed central to some aspect of soldiering." See Woodward, "Locating Military Masculinities," 46.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Strickland, "Vigilance Is Their Motto," 1.

<sup>79</sup> Angus, "The Rangers," 31.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, O.V. Maude Roxby, "The Caravan of Hope," *Okanagan Historical Society* 37 (November 1973): 62-63, and "Haney Wolf-Dog Hunt a Wow," *Vancouver Daily Province*, 22 February 1943, 20.

<sup>81</sup> "War Dance," *Dawson News*, 23 January 1945; "Moosehide Benefit Affair Successful," *Dawson News*, 27 January 1945. See also "Militia Rangers Sponsor Successful Dance at Chase," *Kamloops Sentinel*, 27 October 1943, 2.

<sup>82</sup> Adele Perry, "Bachelors in the Backwoods," in *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia*, ed. R. Sandwell (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 181.

<sup>83</sup> "Historically Speaking," 7.

<sup>84</sup> "These Are Our Friends," *The Ranger* (Stand Down Number), October 1945, 16. See also James Edward Kingsley, *Pacific Coast Militia Rangers Diary, 1942-1946*, BCA, MSS 2516, vol. 2.

<sup>85</sup> In Dawson City, Yukon, J.J. Vanbibber's wife went out shooting with the Rangers and won all the shooting prizes. "There was no Ranger who could touch her," her husband explained. Author interview with J.J. Vanbibber, Dawson City, 11 August 2007.

<sup>86</sup> Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians, 1900-1950," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 13/25 (1980): 161-72; Roy, *Oriental Question*.

<sup>87</sup> *The Ranger*, 15 December 1942, 1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 September 1942, 1.

<sup>89</sup> See "The Japanese Menace," in Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 79-99.

<sup>90</sup> Peter Ward, "Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia, 1870-1939," *BC Studies* 49 (Spring 1981): 31.

<sup>91</sup> "And Their Work," *The Ranger*, April 1945, 9. For another example of a Chinese shopkeeper in Yale, see Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 58-59. For discussions on the acceptability of Hindus with previous British army service in the PCMR, see DHH 112.21009 (D204).

<sup>92</sup> On this subject, see Sheffield, *Red Man's on the Warpath*.

<sup>93</sup> Angus, "The Rangers," 30. Contrast these depictions of Aboriginal Rangers with Loo's characterization of Indigenous imagery in "Of Moose and Men."

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Boston, *From Time before Memory* (New Aiyansh, BC: School District No. 92 [Nisga'a], 1996), 240; O'Grady to SO PCMR, 19 July 1942, and Gillett to Taylor, 8 April 1943, DHH 169.009 (D77). On the reserve system in British Columbia more generally, see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, P.J.C. Ball, Indian Agent, Report on Vancouver Indian Agency, December 1942, and Percy B. Ross to H.W. McGill, 10 February 1944, LAC, RG 10, vol. 6769, file 452-20-3.

<sup>96</sup> On Brendan Kennelly's visit to Kinconlith, see his memorandum to SO Rangers, 28 February 1943, DHH f.169.009 (D94). On brass bands as cultural performance along the Northwest Coast, see Susan Neylan, "'Here Comes the Band!': Cultural Collaboration, Connective Traditions, and Aboriginal Brass Bands on British Columbia's North Coast, 1875-1964," *BC Studies* 152 (Winter 2006/07): 35-68.

<sup>97</sup> Kennelly to SO Rangers, 28 February 1943; and *Globe and Mail*, 26 March 1943. Captain Kennelly reported that on one occasion, "several of the Indians travelled 52 miles on foot over the frozen surface of the Naas River to tidewater, then rowed eight miles to meet him." The leaders of the Aiyansh, Greenville (Laxgalts'ap), and Canyon City (Gitwinksihlkw) Rangers were anxious to discuss guerrilla tactics with the Instructor, who "pleased them by saying we advocated the Rangers train to fight like 'Indians' and not like soldiers & they began to recall their forefathers' days of fighting with the Alaskan and outer island tribes."

<sup>98</sup> O'Grady to SO Rangers, 1 November 1942, DHH f.169.009 (D94); D'Arcy to S.O.i/c, PCMR, 30 June 1943, DHH f.169.009 (D77).

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, "Veterans," in Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), *Final Report*, vol. 1: *Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1996); Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (Penticton: Theytus

Books, 1985); and Janice Summerby, *Native Soldiers, Foreign Battlefields* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1993).

<sup>100</sup> See Michael D. Stevenson, "The Mobilisation of Native Canadians during the Second World War," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7 (1996): 205-26. On BC responses, see LAC, RG 10, vol. 11289, file 214-4. Even when BC Indians registered, low mobilization rates reflected that most were exempted on medical grounds.

<sup>101</sup> See LCol T.A.H. Taylor to Indian Commissioner for BC, 26 February 1943, LAC, RG 10, vol. 11289, file 214-4.

<sup>102</sup> Kennelly to Taylor, 28 February 4(?), DHH f.169.009 (D94).

<sup>103</sup> Hendrie to HQ 6 Canadian Division, 30 October 1944, DHH f.169.009 (D94), also quoted in Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 57.

<sup>104</sup> Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 34-50, 81-82, 120. Although he speculated that class may have been an issue, given that representatives from two companies indicated that they did not want to be considered for any postwar strike-breaking role, this is not convincing evidence of a persistent cleavage in the Rangers. No other contemporary evidence suggests that the PCMR was divided between working-class and "bourgeois" members, and Steeves concedes that "in virtually all industries both management and the union fully supported the PCMR." See Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 33. On the general debate over the salience of class in BC history, see Ward, "Class and Race," 17-35, and Rennie Warburton, "Race and Class in British Columbia: A Comment," *BC Studies* 49 (Spring 1981): 79-85.

<sup>105</sup> "Historically Speaking," 7.

<sup>106</sup> *The Ranger* 4/1, 1944, 8.

<sup>107</sup> *Kamloops Sentinel*, 23 June 1943, 3.

<sup>108</sup> PCMR strength returns from DHH 322.009 (D99); DMO&P to GOC-in-C Pacific Command, 13 November 1943, DHH 322.009 (D592). On reductions in Pacific Command more generally, see Army Headquarters Report No. 3, "The Employment of Infantry in the Coast Defences (August 39 to December 1943), 94-109.

<sup>109</sup> Arthur Mayse, "Ranger Units to Be Cut," *Vancouver Sun*, 18 October 1943, 1-2. On the "changed psychology that has come over Canada's west coast theatre of operations" in the fall of 1943, see Norman MacLeod, "Coast Rangers Disband," *Victoria Times*, 30 October 1943, 2.

<sup>110</sup> "BC Rangers Trap 28 Paratroopers," *Vancouver Sun*, 14 October 1944; Steeves, "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," 85; "Canadian Ranger Organization" (c. August/September 1947), DHH 324.009 (D542).

<sup>111</sup> Taylor to Brigadier, General Staff, Pacific Command, 12 October 1944, DHH 322.009 (D24).

<sup>112</sup> "The Japanese Balloon Enterprise against North America," Army HQ Historical Section Report No. 28 (15 October 49), 1-10. Although there were no deaths in British Columbia, six people were killed when a child triggered a balloon bomb hanging from a tree in Oregon. See Bert Webber, *Retaliation: Japanese Attacks and Allied Countermeasures on the Pacific Coast in World War II* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1975).

<sup>113</sup> The "log" of balloon incidents in Pacific Command disclosed that "the activities of the PCMR perhaps exceeded the combined activities of all other organizations used for counter-measures against balloons." See "A Brief on the PCMR," 13, DHH 159 (D1). Major-General F.F. Worthington later recorded that "the Japanese [had] hoped to start a holocaust of forest fires but, except in a few cases, the effects were negligible." The press and the public remained largely silent about the bombs, despite widespread knowledge of their existence. See Worthington, *Worthy*, 206. Thus deprived of intelligence on their initiative, the Japanese launched their last balloons in April 1945.

<sup>114</sup> "Interior Rangers 'Stand Down' in Colourful Pr. George Rites," *Vancouver Daily Province*, 15 October 1945, 22.

<sup>115</sup> Worthington, *Worthy*, 207. See also Godber, "Disbanding Ranger Unit Acclaimed."

<sup>116</sup> PCMR Circular Letter No. 103, 5 October 1945, DHH 112.3S2009 (D232); GOC-in-C Pacific Command to Secretary, DND, 11 September 1945, DHH 322.009 (D24).

<sup>117</sup> Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands*, quoted in Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 261.

<sup>118</sup> "Notes on the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," DHH 145.2P (D1).

<sup>119</sup> *The Ranger* 4/1, 1944, 10.

<sup>120</sup> "Pacific Coast Militia Rangers," n.d., DHH 322.009 (D24).

<sup>121</sup> LCol T.A.H. Taylor to Col A. Duguid, 4 April 1945, DHH 322.009 (D24).

<sup>122</sup> M.D. Stevenson, *Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 3-4, 173-76.

<sup>123</sup> "Historically Speaking," 7.

<sup>124</sup> "Societies Act": Pacific Coast Militia Association – Declaration, 5 April 1946; Pacific Coast Militia Rangers Association Bulletin No. 1, 1 May 1946; LAC, RG 24, accession 83-84/215, vol. 321, file 2001-1999/0, vol. 1; "Ranger Set-Up Protest 'Surprise' to Ottawa, *Victoria Colonist*, 28 June 1947, 2.

<sup>125</sup> The author is completing a book-length history of the Canadian Rangers that will cover the postwar era. A skeleton overview of the BC experience may be found in "The Future of the Canadian Rangers," 20 April 1989, 1201-260/4 (D Res 3-2), Esquimalt Military Museum, file: Canadian Rangers.



## 3

**Canada's Northern Defenders: Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Rangers, 1947-2005**

First published in *Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives*, eds. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Craig Mantle (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 171-208.

"The Centre of Gravity for [Canadian Forces Northern Area (CFNA)] is our positive relationship with the aboriginal peoples of the North," CFNA commander Kevin McLeod highlighted in 2003. "Deploying out on the land, conducting patrols, training and supporting the youth ... and being involved in the local communities, are why we are here, and this must not be forgotten."<sup>1</sup> It is a daunting task, given that the CFNA's mission is to defend the Canadian Territorial North: the 3.8 million square kilometres represent 40% of Canada's land mass and comprise one of the largest areas of military responsibility in the world. Northern Area encompasses five topographical regions – from the desolate peaks of the High Arctic and the desert-like terrain of the Arctic lowlands, to the forested mountains of the Western Cordillera – and is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse population totalling less than 100,000 people. For decades, this geographical breadth and demographic diversity has perplexed defence policy-makers who have in turn often chosen to simply ignore the region, which is now an irresponsible and dangerous choice given the increasing interest in the northernmost reaches of the country. To be Arctic-capable and Arctic-tough, the Canadian Forces (CF) must be "credible, professional and capable of conducting operations in the North."<sup>2</sup> Given that the vast majority of Canadians live south of the treeline and are unfamiliar with their country's Northern inheritance, these capabilities are dependent upon relationships with Northern residents and, in particular, Indigenous peoples.

Part of CFNA's mandate to reinforce Canadian sovereignty is fulfilled through the Canadian Rangers. This unique force is designed to serve as the "eyes and ears" of the armed forces in isolated, Northern, and coastal regions of the country that cannot be practically or economically covered by other elements of the CF. Created in 1947, the Rangers survived a course of waxing

and waning interest over the ensuing four decades. During the last twenty years, however, the Rangers have become an entrenched component of the military's Northern strategy and have elicited significant media attention. There are currently 4,000 Rangers in 168 patrols across the country, and 1,500 Rangers in fifty-eight patrols fall under the administrative control of 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CRPG) headquartered in Yellowknife. Their unorthodox military approach in Northern communities represents the military's accommodation and acceptance of cultural diversity in a practical form. Through the Canadian Rangers, the CF encourages Indigenous practices, while promoting the participation and leadership of Aboriginal community members in defence activities. Military training and operations allow the Rangers to exercise their unique skills and increase the collective capabilities of their patrols.

Based on extensive archival research and a series of interviews conducted with 1 CRPG personnel from 2000 to 2004, this chapter assesses military-Indigenous relationships in the Canadian Arctic since the late 1940s. Recognizing that the standard approach used to train and exercise Regular and Reserve Force units would not work in Northern communities, the military has developed a flexible, culturally aware approach that intertwines differentiation, accommodation, and acceptance. Ranger Instructors who are willing to acclimatize and adapt to the ways and needs of diverse Northern communities learn to teach and build trust relationships with patrols in an adaptive manner that transcends cultural, linguistic, and generational lines. In turn, the Rangers serve to strengthen Northern Indigenous communities by encouraging traditional land- and sea-based activities and local capacity building. By extension, the Rangers' positive role in Northern life means that military training supports the health and sustainability of their communities and cultures.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations**

There are few images more captivating to the southern Canadian imagination than the lone Inuk hunter, crossing the sea ice by snowmachine, heading to an historic hunting ground. As Franklyn Griffiths reminds us, the "Arctic sublime" continues to haunt the national psyche.<sup>3</sup> Vilhjalmur Stefansson painted a portrait of the "friendly Arctic" filled with untapped riches, but most southerners saw their distant inheritance of ice and snow (they always thought of it in winter) as forbidden and dangerous. As a result, benign indifference marked the federal government's approach to Northern policy (including sovereignty and security issues) throughout most of the twentieth century. Furthermore, until recently, Northern Indigenous peoples were treated



as foreign “objects” rather than potential actors. Nevertheless, the extension of military development into their homelands had profound effects on their cultures and their lives. In recognition of these impacts, federal policies over the last three decades have emphasized the importance of accommodating Northern Indigenous perspectives and interests and allowing these people to play a meaningful role in the national project. The conclusion of land claims and self-government agreements, the establishment of the Arctic Council, and the appointment of a Canadian ambassador for circumpolar affairs (filled to date by prominent Inuit leaders) indicate an acceptance that Northern Indigenous peoples are now partners in shaping the government agenda.

While the existing literature on Aboriginal-military relations has paid little attention to the Canadian Rangers, scholars have provided useful frameworks to understand the shifting contexts in which this unique force has operated. For example, Kenneth Eyre has outlined three “surges” of military interest in the Canadian Arctic during the Cold War. He revealed that the federal government’s varying appreciation of security and sovereignty threats had a direct correlation with military priorities for and activities in the region.<sup>4</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, however, Arctic security issues have undergone a significant transformation. The leading scholar of these changes, political scientist Rob Huebert, has explained that the effects of military operations on Northern peoples and the changing physical environment have become central considerations. Sovereignty, rather than traditional forms of military security, is now the primary focus of Canadian defence activities in the Arctic.<sup>5</sup> As the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs observed in 1997, “the security of individuals and the environment in the Arctic is now placed above traditional state sovereignty and defence issues that dominated throughout the Cold War.”<sup>6</sup> This has a clear effect on the way the military can accomplish its mission in the North in the twenty-first century.

Scholarly literature on civil-military relations also intersects with the Northern security agenda. One school of interpretation sees the CF as a positive contributor to Canadian development, both domestically and internationally. In the context of the Arctic, the extension of military communications systems, transportation, and activities into the North has served to open and connect it to the rest of the world.<sup>7</sup> The second school sees the military as a coercive and dominant threat to Canadian values and to the environment. Using examples like low-level flying, environmental contamination from CF operations, and direct confrontations between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian Army, such as at Goose Bay, Oka, Gustafsen Lake and Ipperwash, the military is characterized as a coercive hegemon.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, policy scholar Frances Abele has argued that “sovereignty and security policy decisions, in their immediate

impact, have been and continue to be disproportionately costly to northern indigenous peoples.” Inuit spokesperson Mary Simon has added, “Too often, military projects are centralized undertakings that are unilaterally imposed on indigenous peoples and their territories. Such actions are inconsistent with the basic principles of aboriginal self-government.”<sup>9</sup> In short, military activities and Northern Indigenous worldviews and life-paths are incompatible.

The institutional emphasis of most civil-military relations theory and scholarship tends to neglect issues of culture. This chapter recognizes that values, attitudes, and symbols inform not only the nation’s view of its military role, but also the military’s own view of that role. Concordance theory, Rebecca Schiff explains, highlights dialogue, accommodation, and shared values amongst the military, political elites, and society. Rather than assuming a sharp separation between civil and military institutions, she encourages research drawing upon additional elements of society that affect the role and function of the armed forces. How do citizens interact with the military? Is there agreement over the role of the military in society?<sup>10</sup> The paucity of research on the social integration of the military in Canada *writ large* demands more attention, as do specific relationships like those shared with Aboriginal groups.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter focuses on Aboriginal peoples’ service in what is now 1 CRPG (which spans the Territorial North). It explores evolving military perceptions about contributions that Northern Aboriginal peoples can make to national defence. The documentary record suggests that the Canadian military historically possessed conflicting ideas about the role and utility of Aboriginal peoples in the Rangers – and the CF more generally. By the late 1970s, however, new sovereignty and security discourses encouraged the military to integrate Aboriginal peoples into the CF in culturally appropriate ways. Officials saw operational value in traditional skills, and the military has grown in its awareness that diversity can serve as a “force multiplier” rather than a liability. Over the last two decades, this understanding has allowed the Rangers to flourish in the North, attract significant positive media attention for the military, and support self-governing and sustainable Northern communities.

Several qualifications are necessary to note at the onset. First, this chapter does not purport to speak from an Indigenous viewpoint. Although I have interviewed many Rangers of Indigenous descent over the last five years, most direct quotations are taken from archival documents and published primary sources. Second, I have relied heavily on interviews with Ranger Instructors who have worked with Rangers in the North. Although these testimonies reveal as much about the Instructor as they do about the people they are describing, these professional soldiers bring a unique perspective given their experience with numerous Ranger patrols and their knowledge of military culture.



Furthermore, my conclusions are somewhat essentialist. Indigenous voices and experiences are, of course, plural. As Alan Cairns explains, “‘Aboriginal’ covers not only the obvious diversity of Indian, Inuit and Métis but multiple internal distinctions – men’s voice and women’s voice, modernizers and traditionalists, urban Aboriginals in Toronto and their relatives on isolated northern reserves.”<sup>12</sup> Future studies will determine whether the general comments that I offer are applicable to Rangers across the North and across the country more generally.

### **Historical Overview: The Search for a Role, 1947-69**

Although I have charted the growth of Aboriginal participation in the Canadian Rangers elsewhere,<sup>13</sup> the historical evolution of the force warrants reiteration given that it remains the least-known formation in the CF. The Rangers were officially established as a component of the Reserves in 1947, based on the template of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR) created in British Columbia during the Second World War.<sup>14</sup> Rather than requiring the government to station Regular Force troops in Northern and isolated areas, the Rangers represented a cost-effective solution to Cold War sovereignty and security concerns that drew upon existing human resources in local areas. Civilians, pursuing their everyday work as loggers, trappers, or fishermen, could thus serve as the military’s “eyes and ears” in areas where demographics and

geography precluded a more traditional military presence. The plan was to recruit individuals who would not appeal to other units for age, health, or employment reasons and thus would remain in their local areas in both war and peace. With little training and equipment, the Rangers could act as guides and scouts, report suspicious activities, and – if the unthinkable came to pass – delay enemies using guerrilla tactics. The only equipment issued to Rangers was an obsolescent .303 Lee Enfield, 200 rounds of ammunition annually, and an armband. (This has since grown to include a sweatshirt, ball cap, t-shirt, and a trigger lock.) From the onset, the force structure was decentralized and variations in roles, location, and terrain made it impossible to create a “standard establishment.” Each Ranger platoon was operated and administered on a localized basis.<sup>15</sup>

The question of Indigenous Canadian participation in the Rangers generated conflicting opinions in the early postwar period. Members of coastal First Nations communities in British Columbia had played a significant role in the wartime PCMR and received heroic tributes in newspaper reports. They also embraced this form of wartime service that did not obligate them to serve overseas. “All the Indians of these parts are strongly and enthusiastically ... for the Ranger organization,” PCMR Instructor Brendan Kennelly reported of the Kincolith unit in 1943. “They see in it their opportunity to do their bit & to be prepared to help in home defence in country ... and in terrain & surroundings with which they were familiar and in which they would be most useful.”<sup>16</sup> While it seemed obvious to some military officials that Indigenous peoples would make similar contributions to the Canadian Rangers, not everyone was caught up in the hype. In late 1946, Brigadier S.F. Clark, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, cautioned that:

folk-lore attribute many qualities to outdoor people and especially to natives (such as Indians and Eskimos) which, in fact, they do not possess. It is common belief that Indians and Eskimos, and to a lesser degree trappers, in our Canadian hinterlands possess special qualities of sense of direction and as such would be extremely valuable as guides to Military parties during operations. One of the most experienced Arctic travellers, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, states that invariably he found that Indians and Eskimos were reasonably good guides in country with which they were familiar but that as soon as they were taken into unfamiliar country, they displayed no “sixth sense of direction” but were, in fact, less able to find their way about than an experienced Anglo Saxon.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, the Rangers were intended to serve in their local areas. Given this fact, the question remained whether Indigenous peoples could have a role to play in the new force.

Major-General Chris Vokes, who oversaw Central Command, did not think so. He discouraged the formation of Ranger units in northern Ontario because the population was largely Cree. First, he felt that there really was no need for such organizations: "Nothing goes on in the James Bay area which is not quickly known through the natural curiosity of the natives. The Hudson Bay factor and the missionaries plus the RCMP pretty well know everything which goes on ... through the mocassin [*sic*] telegraph and their private wireless." Furthermore, Vokes explicitly dismissed the Indigenous population as worthwhile contributors to Canadian defence:

The population is for the most part Cree Indian, some with Scottish names and blue eyes who exist by trapping and guiding for goose and duck hunters in the Autumn. They are most indolent and unreliable and born lazy. Hunger is the only motivating force, plus the propagation of their race, at which they are very adept ... I doubt the value of these Indians in a para military organization.<sup>18</sup>

If Ottawa insisted on a presence in the region, he would turn to White locals to establish small units at Moosonee, Moose Factory, and Frasersville. He clearly did not believe that Indigenous residents would have anything to contribute, despite impressive Indigenous participation rates from the region during the world wars. In Vokes' opinion, Indigenous traits precluded effective military contributions. Exclusion, not accommodation, was his preferred option.

Quebec Command also foresaw limited prospects for the integration of Northern Indigenous peoples into military activities. During the summer of 1948, an intelligence officer surveyed the areas around Northern trading posts and recommended that recently established Ranger company headquarters should remain dormant until an emergency. Officers had been appointed and platoon recruiting was well under way, but there were no strength returns because communications were limited. The General Officer Commanding, Major-General R.O.G. Morton, surmised that "it would never be easy to keep in touch with the other ranks, many of whom were Indians and Eskimos of migratory habits." In contrast to Vokes, however, Morton saw Indigenous traits and lifestyles as appropriate to the force. After all, "the Eskimos and Indians living in isolated communities were excellent marksmen and probably would use the annual 100-round allotment of ammunition (the only remuneration they received) for hunting seal and reindeer."<sup>19</sup> Rather than fixating on negative stereotypes like his Ontario counterpart, Morton perceived the potential,

mutual benefits of integrating Indigenous peoples with an intimate knowledge of the land and Northern survival skills into the Rangers.

As the Rangers took shape in the late 1940s and early 1950s, their expansion into the Far North reflected evolving geo-strategic appreciations. The Arctic, now sandwiched between rival superpowers, would be the front line in any future world war. In 1947, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) developed an intercontinental bomber, bilateral weather station agreements were sealed with the US, and American forces returned to the Canadian North. Two years later, the Soviets exploded their first nuclear bomb and the threat of a continental attack became more ominous than ever before. Yet “neither the United States nor Canada looked on the North as a *place* to be protected because of some intrinsic value,” Kenneth Eyre astutely observed. “It was seen as a *direction*, an exposed flank.”<sup>20</sup> This posed a series of important questions for defence and foreign policy-makers:

Did Canada have the resources to guard that front line to the satisfaction of its powerful ally, the United States? It was obvious, almost from the start, that it did not. But could Canada allow the United States to mount that “long polar watch” alone, from Canadian territory? Would this not be an admission that whatever sovereignty Canada claimed in the polar regions was weak at best and nonexistent at worst?<sup>21</sup>

Options were limited. Canadians had to “defend against help.” If Canada were neither able nor willing to defend the northern approaches to the continent, the Americans would be compelled to take unilateral measures to defend themselves and could thus become a security threat. The dilemma remained: how could Canada help protect the continent against the Soviet Union while, at the same time, protecting the Canadian North against the United States?<sup>22</sup>

Demographic, political, and financial realities dictated that the Canadian military could not feasibly station large numbers of Regular Force soldiers in the North. Mobilizing Northern residents could bolster Canadian sovereignty and security in the region. Staff officers began to note the importance of “Eskimos” to national defence by 1950. Ironically, the Soviet Union provided the precedent: for decades, the Russians had devoted considerable attention to developing their Arctic areas and assimilating Indigenous peoples into their future plans. The Soviet Institute of the Peoples of the North trained members of Soviet Indigenous groups so that they could return to the Arctic with skills as doctors, teachers, meteorologists, and aircraft technicians – “and also thoroughly indoctrinated with the Red virus of future world domination.” In contrast, a Canadian briefing paper observed, “both Canada and USA have

been almost standing still where the Eskimo is concerned." It noted the "most regrettable condition" in which a few were engaged in the armed forces "to do jobs of a menial nature." The paper continued:

Anyone who has knowledge of the Eskimos knows them to be most ingenious, of outstanding integrity, loyalty, patience and industrious far beyond the average whiteman in the arctic. Given half a chance the Eskimos would prove beyond any doubt the ideal race for staffing Armed Service Units, meteorological stations, hospitals, schools, and scientific bases in the far North.<sup>23</sup>

This would be a long-term project, with pitfalls. Government and mission schools proved "of little value to the Eskimo at the moment as it forces them ... to forsake their trapping grounds ... and [to forget] most of his native ways and [he] must learn these all over again when he returns home," Flight Lieutenant S.E. Alexander assessed. A much better solution would be to encourage Inuit of "promising ability" to work "in a useful capacity in their own country after graduation."<sup>24</sup> Alexander noted that there was no reason why Inuit could not be trained to assume most military duties in the Arctic. The expense would be minor compared to paying for "unclimatized personnel, who for the most part, are bitter and unhappy with their postings and consequently not too concerned in carrying out their duties." It was cost effective and would contribute to their acculturation. "This matter of utilizing the Eskimos to the fullest extent both for their own advancement and the good of their native land has been discussed many times with those who know the Arctic. There has never been a dissenting voice."<sup>25</sup>



Defence officials embraced this logic. Ranger units, their ranks filled with Northern Indigenous peoples, began to spread across the Arctic.<sup>26</sup> An intelligence officer with the Canadian Army's Western Command established Ranger platoons in the Western Arctic at Coppermine, Bathurst Inlet, Cambridge Bay, King William Land, Read Island, Holman Island, and Aklavik in 1949.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the military authorized the formation of companies on Baffin Island in 1951. Senior officials in Ottawa responsible for Eskimo affairs stressed that Ranger service would be good for the Inuit. One policy-maker noted that the Inuit were "reliable, honest and intelligent and would make good Rangers," but he wanted to make sure that rifles issued to them were not "free handouts." After all, a rifle was "a major asset to an Eskimo and something he had to earn by hard work," and bullets for hunting cost significant money.<sup>28</sup> His underlying message: the federal government had to inculcate the Inuit with proper values to succeed in a capitalist world. To most government officials, however, the weapon and ammunition provided to the Rangers was a *quid pro quo* – they served their country and this was the remuneration that they received. They used them to great effect in their subsistence economy. "Nobody has ever attempted to calculate, or could if one wanted to, the number of caribou, moose, and seal that fell to Ranger marksmen," Kenneth Eyre noted in hindsight.<sup>29</sup> The .303 Lee Enfield was a reliable weapon, even in Arctic conditions, and the number was undoubtedly substantial.

Annual re-supply and training visits by Regular Force Ranger Liaison Officers (RLOs) provided opportunities for cross-cultural contact. The experiences of Ambrose Shea, the RLO for Eastern Command, are representative. His first forays into the Baffin region were a culture shock. Over time, however, he developed a familiarity with the Rangers in the northeastern Arctic. He visited them in their remote camps, ate and fished with them, and developed a strong respect for their knowledge and skills.<sup>30</sup> Distance and weather inhibited regular contact, so the RLOs relied upon training bulletins to keep the Rangers up to date. Amongst Northern Indigenous Rangers, however, it would appear that few training activities actually took place. The Rangers were simply given their annual allotments of ammunition and "practiced" on the land by hunting. There was little sustained contact. Reverend John R. Sperry, the Anglican missionary at Coppermine (Kugluktuk), was a Ranger lieutenant from 1950 to 1969. The administration of his platoon was very informal. Sperry held no meetings, provided no specific instructions or training to the Rangers, and received no visits from a liaison officer. "We just knew that if an aircraft went down we should look for it," Sperry later reflected. If someone was lost, the RCMP also passed along the information and



community members went out to look for them. "All the men were going out anyway," he explained, so search and rescue activities were not viewed as "Ranger" activities.<sup>31</sup>

By 1960, Shea became disillusioned with the military's disregard for the 550 Rangers in Newfoundland, Labrador, and Baffin Island. After expanding into Indigenous communities, he lamented:

the Army seemed to stand aghast at its own temerity and from then on, and in an increasing degree, the attitude of Higher Command towards the Rangers can be best summed up in the words of the old ballad:-

"Mother, may I go out to swim?"

"Yes, my darling daughter,

Hang your clothes on a hickory limb

But don't go near the water."

The message Shea had repeatedly received: "the Rangers may exist but under no circumstances must they do anything." This logic reflected a broader devaluation of part-time soldiering more than it did racism against Aboriginal peoples, highlighting the establishment's predisposition towards fully assimilated, professional forces. For his part, Shea was responsible for organizing and maintaining eleven Ranger companies scattered over 8,000 miles of coastline. Liaising with the Baffin Island Rangers alone consumed three months of his year, and while he enjoyed positive relationships with the Rangers themselves, his impact was limited. "It is doubtful if some of the Rangers really understand what the whole business is about," Shea explained,

and for various reasons it is difficult to explain it to them. The Eskimos [*sic*], in particular, have no real word for "soldier" ("Unataktik," that is, "one who fights," is as near as they get) and look upon warfare as a species of insanity peculiar to the white man. "I hear that the white men are fighting like dogs again," was one man's comment on the Suez affair. Furthermore, it is the RLOs belief that some of the Eskimos think that he is the entire Canadian Army and that, as such, he is an eccentric but benevolent dispenser of free rifles and ammunition. The name given the RLO in certain localities "Kokiutit angayak'ok", "Rifle Chief" or "Boss of the Rifles", is sufficient indication of this.<sup>32</sup>

The cultural divide could not be bridged without more sustained contact and without greater clarification of what the Rangers were supposed to actually do.

Despite these various shortcomings, Shea still saw a place for the Rangers – and Inuit Rangers in particular. "The idea of arming a local population and asking them to take a hand in defending their own locality is an ancient one

and eminently sensible," he wrote. "It does not become out-dated, even in this atomic age." The Rangers had amassed considerable military intelligence over the previous decade, including topographical detail, submarine and ship sightings, and reports of suspicious individuals. They had reported unexplained bomb drops on northern Baffin Island, producing bits of the bombs to verify the veracity of their report, and had provided evidence of guided missile activity. In an emergency, it would be useful to have an organized body like the Rangers in communities, and they were different from the "highly-organized and extensively staffed" Ground Observer Corps (GOBC), a purely civilian group. If intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) made the GOBC obsolete, the Rangers would always be useful as "'friends on the ground' so long as the Canadian Army continues to exist."<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, the Rangers were obviously and keenly interested in the organization. Baffin Island's Inuit Rangers had a "distorted" idea of their role, but they took it seriously:

An extreme example of this occurred three years ago when a Ranger in North Baffin Island began, but fortunately did not complete, a single-handed attempt to capture the US Coast Guard Cutter "Staten Island". He realized that she was not a Canadian ship, jumped to the conclusion that she was a Russian, and felt that it was his duty as a soldier to take some action.

Although the Northern Baffin Inuit were "cut off from the world in many respects," Shea found that they were "vividly aware of the Russian threat; so much so that the RLO has sometimes wondered whether they may not have had some personal contact with the Russians with which they are afraid to reveal." He found them "intelligent, adaptable and intensely practical" – like the Gurkhas – and perceived that they naturally took to military training given their hunting lifestyles. "If trained in arms," the officer added, they could prove "extremely effective guerrillas. It is a pity that there are not more of them." Indeed, few white men could navigate the Arctic without their assistance, making them "good people to have on our side."<sup>34</sup>

In Shea's final assessment, it made sense to retain the Rangers, but to reduce their present organization to a more "workable size." Their organization into "companies" and "platoons" fed distorted notions that they could exist and function in a conventional military manner. "Nothing could be further from the truth," Shea explained. "A 'Company' of Rangers is a collection of rugged individualists who may be scattered over a hundred miles of coastline and in twenty different settlements." They were untrained and only existed as a "unit" on paper. His final flourish reminded his superiors that they had formed a trust relationship with Northern peoples that had to be maintained:

A small quantity of obsolescent equipment is issued to them in the same spirit that an engagement ring is issued to a prospective bride: as a token of engagement. Their main virtues are that they are willing to serve the Army voluntarily in the capacity of 'friends on the ground' to the best of their ability, which is often considerable, and to the best of their local knowledge which is likewise. Their cost is negligible. These are virtues which are becoming increasingly rare and which deserve encouragement.<sup>35</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, the Rangers factored little into Ottawa's defence plans for the North. The Soviet threat was decidedly airborne, and Northern residents with armbands and rifles could scarcely fend off hostile bombers with nuclear payloads. Defence officials turned to technological marvels like the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line to protect the continent. Officials seemed to conclude that even if their value was negligible, so too was the Rangers' cost. It was their "cheapness," not their Indigenous knowledge and contributions, that ensured the force's survival through the 1960s. They were left to "wither on the vine," with little direction, sporadic re-supply, and no training.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the few popular articles that did appear on the Rangers were laudatory. Larry Dignum told readers of *The Beaver* that the "Shadow Army of the North," functioning as civilians and carrying out their duties in conjunction with their "regular jobs," quietly performed valuable duties to defend Canada and maintain law and order in isolated areas. The Rangers' mystique shone clear:

When on duty they wear a scarlet armband with the three maple leaves of the Canadian Army superimposed on a crossed rifle and axe. They have no uniforms, receive no pay, seek no glory, but these men of known loyalty, Indian, Eskimo and white, take pride in standing on guard in the empty and remote parts of Canada with vigilance and integrity, and in silence.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast to Vokes' pessimistic appraisal of potential Indigenous people's contributions to the Rangers, the *Beaver* article and another in the *Star Weekly Magazine* highlighted the vital importance of First Nations and Inuit cooperation. "Some of [the Rangers] can't read their own names but they are the real scholars of this country when it comes to reading signs on the trails of the north," the latter article stated. It continued, "Eskimos, Indians, whites and all the mixtures of these races, they are united in one task: Guarding a country that doesn't even know of their existence." They were not only "the least expensive military force any nation has today," but a useful source of reports on suspicious activities.<sup>38</sup>

Were they actually useful? Perhaps, but in the late 1960s, a military struggling to discern its role in a changing world, and reeling from the cultural implications of the Unification of the Canadian Armed Forces, had largely forgotten about the Rangers' existence. John Diefenbaker, former prime minister and longstanding proponent of a "northern vision," lobbied in 1969 for an "Arctic Force," revealing that he had no knowledge of the Rangers. He wanted units of twenty to thirty men in sensitive areas to "preserve for Canada the greatest undeveloped frontier," "provide new vistas of opportunity for the Eskimo," and "provide for youth a new challenge to a worthwhile life." At first the force would have to be officered by the Regular Force, but with training, it would reach "100% Eskimo membership."<sup>39</sup> He was oblivious to this proposal's striking resemblance to the existing Rangers. Journalist Scott Young made the connection, noting that Canada had had "a force precisely of this nature for nearly 22 years." When Young spoke with defence officials, they were reserved in their revelations about the force. "They don't get any training – but then they're born with most of the training they need," one colonel explained. "I think we give them a few rounds of ammunition, but that is about all I know about them."<sup>40</sup>

Defence officials again questioned their utility as the decade drew to a close. Major W.K. Stirling visited seventeen communities with Ranger platoons in the summer of 1970 to assess levels of activity and interest, but found that nearly all were moribund. Stirling concluded that Northern Canadian society was no longer a place where the Ranger organization would find solid ground:

Perhaps the most important piece of general advice I received was that southern Canadians should rid themselves of their romantic concept of the North. The Arctic has become a rather sophisticated social environment. Hunting and trapping, although still carried on are not the main pursuits of the indigenous people. Eskimos are being collected into permanent settlements such as Frobisher, Cambridge Bay and Tuktoyaktuk where they are provided with houses and to a large extent live on welfare. The young Indian and Eskimo is being well educated in modern schools at Inuvik, Yellowknife and Frobisher. When they complete their education they will be trained to take their place in modern society and not on the Arctic ice or the trap line.

In short, modern communications, transportation, and economics had overtaken the Northern Indigenous lifestyle that had made them useful Rangers. "Certainly there are still people in the North who hunt, trap, fish and prospect and one hopes there always will be," Stirling continued, but they were now the exception, not the rule. "The people who know the North best are the RCMP, bush pilots, certain members of the Territorial Government, some

prospectors and the missionaries.” Unfortunately, these were not categories of people upon which to base the organization. “The type of people envisaged by the DND [(Department of National Defence)] planners in 1946 on which to develop the Canadian Ranger concept simply no longer exist in sufficient numbers.” He thus recommended that the Rangers be disbanded and regular military forces take over their roles in the Canadian Arctic.<sup>41</sup>

### **Indigenizing the Northern Security Discourse, 1970-94**

The year 1969 rekindled concerns about Canadian sovereignty in the North. Although the Trudeau government was less favourably disposed to military commitments than its predecessors, the surveillance of Canada's territory and coastlines and the protection of sovereignty now assumed primary political importance. In 1970, the government established Northern Region Headquarters (NRHQ) in Yellowknife, but placed no operational units under its direct command. The Rangers were the exception, numbering – on paper – 700 members in thirty-six Northern communities. Despite Cabinet and parliamentary recommendations to upgrade the organization, the numbers did not rise.<sup>42</sup> Like the Trudeau administration's whole approach to sovereignty protection, the promised commitment to expand the force was more symbolic than tangible.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact that the Rangers already existed as an “officially constituted” element of the CF, and asserted sovereignty at a minimum cost, remained important considerations at a time when the government was unwilling to commit men and money to military matters. Ranger patrols spanned the breadth of the Arctic, from the most easterly patrol at Broughton Island, to the most westerly at Aklavik, and represented every Aboriginal group in the North (although the majority of members were Inuit). A Northern Region briefing book trumpeted the Rangers' involvement:

It is significant also that the Ranger concept capitalizes on those attributes of native northerners that they themselves espouse as their traditional way of life – their knowledge of their environment, their ability to live and survive on the land, their hunting instinct. In sharing an important defence commitment, the Canadian Rangers fulfil a role no less important than any other component of the Canadian Armed Forces, and have a justifiable pride in doing so.<sup>44</sup>

The new language was telling. The focus was on Northerners making a contribution to their country. Their inherent knowledge of the land and their natural instincts – in short, differentiation – made them useful participants in the armed forces.



After 1970, there were no further recommendations for disbandment, but a number of very detailed proposals for the reorganization or revitalization of the Rangers were not implemented. The main problem seemed to be “the lack of a clearly defined role and tasks not adapted to the realities of Canada in [the] 1970’s.” Nearly everyone said they could perform a useful military function, but few suggested what precisely their tasks should be. In the 1970s, Northern Region conducted training for groups of up to twenty-five Inuit and Dene Rangers. This training proved “highly popular in small Arctic communities, provides us a nucleus ... of Rangers in these communities, gives us a permanent contact group in many locations and provides a source of guides and advisors” for army units exercising in the North. Questions remained, Major R.S. McConnell explained in 1978:

During these training sessions, a constantly recurring question is “what are we to do? what is our purpose?” The book roles do not go far in convincing the native northerner that he is indeed a valuable member of the Canadian Forces. Though he is dedicated, and immensely loyal to the Crown, he is somewhat suspicious that we come and give him two weeks training, for which he is paid, and then walk away and leave him with a rifle and 300 rounds of ammunition, which we promise to replenish annually. To the Ranger, this is the entire incentive to join and his sole motivation to remain a Ranger.<sup>45</sup>

Why not use them for search and rescue, McConnell asked, and give them a practical role? "The point is constantly made that if a light aircraft is missing, even if only one person is aboard, no expense is spared in trying to locate it," he explained, "whereas a party of hunters who are overdue from a trip get no attention at all. This, to the natives, is inexplicable and to some degree tied to their perception of 'the white man looks after his own and to hell with the natives.'" Given the Rangers' training, they seemed ideal candidates to conduct ground search and rescue in the region. They would also ensure that Indigenous peoples played a role in Northern operations.<sup>46</sup>

A new federal Northern development focus, based on a multifaceted concept of security and sovereignty, accompanied these trends during the 1970s and 1980s. Broad political, legal, and social forces prescribed that the federal government's relationship with Northern peoples assume a higher profile. In 1972, Jean Chrétien, the Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), announced an integrated federal policy in *Northern Canada in the 70's*. Among its seven goals were the maintenance of Canadian sovereignty and security in the North, as well as the maintenance and enhancement of "the northern environment with due consideration to economic and social development." This overarching framework meant that individual departments, including DND, could no longer pursue specific objectives without due respect for the government's broader strategic vision. The notion of a fiduciary duty of trust and respect, with which the federal government must conduct all dealings with Aboriginal peoples, was established in law in 1980 and further guided federal policy. Therefore, legal and moral issues propelled the idea that the CF needed to be more inclusive and that exclusion and differentiation predicated upon perceived Indigenous "inferiority" no longer fit with an emerging political discourse celebrating multiculturalism. Nonetheless, differentiation factored heavily in the discourse on the Rangers, who were clearly "others-at-arms." This needed to be spun in a positive way.

Because Northern participation in the Canadian Rangers was not considered a "real" military contribution, the growing presence and tempo of operations in the Arctic also led to "embarrassing difficulties" for the CF. The military had not made any efforts to recruit Northerners into the Regular Force before the 1970s, Ken Eyre has explained, and very few Northerners displayed any interest. Given the military's resurgent involvement in the region, Defence Minister Léo Cadieux promised a major effort to "increase (Eskimo) participation in the armed services." The ensuing recruiting programs revealed that the military failed to appreciate Northern realities. The few young Northerners who enlisted in a special military trades program in 1971

“experienced extreme stress in coping with the often conflicting demands of military and traditional culture,” and the rare individuals who remained were transferred to southern bases rather than being posted in the North. One senior officer proclaimed that Inuit would make good soldiers because the Inuk “has his own culture but is the sort of man who could become Western very easily, become one of us.” There was little consideration that very few would actually want to join mainstream, southern society. Another officer’s perspective highlighted the contributions that Inuit could make to Northern defences if posted at Arctic bases. “The ones we’re looking for are mobile and have a self-navigating capability and roam a lot,” Major-General R.A.B. Ellis told the *Globe and Mail*. “They have an ability to find themselves and get to a pre-determined location. They can take a trip of 800 or 1,000 miles and know exactly where they are ... with no gear, maps or charts.”<sup>47</sup> The Inuit were now being constructed as superhuman, a tendency on the part of non-Aboriginal commentators who mythologized the “other-at-arms.” Not only were the military’s expectations ridiculous, but they failed to question whether traditional forms of professional service would appeal to Northerners.

Eyre has pointed out that the military’s expectations displayed a profound naïveté. An individual cannot “know” the breadth of the North akin to a southern city and certainly could not be expected to know the area around Alert around which no Inuit had lived. More fundamentally, if any eighteen- to twenty-three-year-old Northerner had the basic education qualifications to join the CF, they could not have pursued “the traditional nomadic life wherein these much-vaunted skills would have been learned.” Older Inuit who possessed these skills would not have sufficient formal education and were unlikely to speak English. With poignant insight, Eyre suggested that had the military actually met its goals and recruited sixty research communicators from a total Inuit population of less than 25,000, the results could have been disastrous:

One could honestly ask if Eskimo communities could afford to lose their best educated young people to serve in the Forces. The matter would have been particularly acute when one considers the developing set of Inuit priorities of that period. There was a perception that Eskimos should produce their own lawyers to argue their land claims, their own administrators and politicians to run their communities, their own businessmen to run their cooperatives, their own teachers to instruct their children. Surely, in terms of the federal government’s northern goal of meeting native peoples’ aspirations these latter professions should have taken precedence over military service that would have taken Eskimo soldiers out of the mainstream of Inuit life. In this sense it is fortunate for the North as



a whole that few Eskimos have come forward asking for a military career.<sup>48</sup>

This serving officer's sober assessment demonstrated that not all military officers were blinded by southern Canadian preconceptions. Initiatives like the Northern Native Entry Program (NNEP) failed to attract many volunteers and most who did enlist could not overcome the cultural shock and dropped out.<sup>49</sup>

By contrast, the Rangers enjoyed strong Indigenous support in Northern communities. But this posed issues for command and control. Traditionally, non-Indigenous officers were appointed in communities to act as cross-cultural interlocutors. Indeed, official policy in the 1950s and 1960s dictated that Inuit would not be allowed to serve as Ranger officers. Differentiation meant that Northern Indigenous peoples could contribute to the military, but they were unsuited to lead it, even on a local level.<sup>50</sup> As a 1986 study report noted, this idea was challenged by the 1970s:

Early research in Northern Region indicated a lack of trust of the Canadian Forces by the indigenous people. In addition, it was pointed out that the old practice of automatically appointing the "white" token resident in the community as the Ranger leader had failed and that the military idea of leadership is not easily translated into a concept native peoples can comprehend, let alone work with.<sup>51</sup>

As a result, Northern Region units were re-organized as individual "patrols" of ten to twenty Rangers, each commanded by a Ranger sergeant and his second-in-command, a master corporal. These positions were elected by the communities. Furthermore, the renewed focus on the Rangers in Northern Region also meant more sustained contact. Most Rangers received, at the very least, basic military training, and many had also attended a refresher course. Training exercises provided an opportunity to re-supply each patrol with ammunition and to ensure that their rifles were still serviceable. "This annual contact has led to an excellent rapport between the Rangers and the Regular Force staff," an optimistic appraisal noted.<sup>52</sup> The road to mutual respect was indeed taking shape.

Other contextual considerations increased the attractiveness of the Rangers. The military had a role in national development, from Northern environmental protection to community relations, and NRHQ's mandate to "serve as a link between [the CF] and the northern settlements in which they operate and exercise"<sup>53</sup> obliged military authorities to balance traditional, military-based security needs with socially and environmentally responsible programs. Even commentators who saw little military value in the Rangers acknowledged the connection they offered with Northern communities. The editor of *Canadian Defence Quarterly* proclaimed that the "native hunters and trappers" could

“hardly [be called] ... a military organization,” but noted the socio-political relevance of their presence:

Even if it were not for the regrettable gradual urbanization of the Eskimo (in the sense that they are becoming increasingly dependent on the services provided in industrial society), the military value of the Canadian Rangers would be minimal. The main benefit lies in the ties that membership in the organization forges between the native population and the apparatus of the state, still somewhat foreign to them.<sup>54</sup>

At most, this viewpoint revealed a begrudging acceptance that accommodation had a civic utility; it was hardly a tribute to the Rangers’ practical contributions to defence.

The transit of the Northwest Passage in 1985 by the American icebreaker *Polar Sea* precipitated another flurry of interest in the Arctic. Again, it was an American challenge to Canadian sovereignty, not a traditional military threat, that elicited cries for a bolder Canadian presence in “our North.” External Affairs Minister Joe Clark’s statement on sovereignty to the House of Commons encapsulated the growing concern and linked it directly to the Northern peoples:

Canada is an Arctic nation. ... Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic is indivisible. It embraces land, sea and ice.... From time immemorial Canada’s Inuit people have used and occupied the ice as they have used and occupied the land.... Full sovereignty is vital to Canada’s security. It is vital to the Inuit people. And it is vital to Canada’s national identity.<sup>55</sup>

By mobilizing Indigenous peoples’ historic occupancy and use to bolster Canada’s claims to the region, the federal government’s position also raised a



legal, moral, and practical reason to encourage direct Indigenous input into defence activities. Indeed, security and sovereignty discussions became intertwined with broader themes of militarization and Indigenous survival. Low-level flying controversies, persistent environmental concerns, and public appeals by Aboriginal leaders to demilitarize the region transcended traditional, realist understandings of state-centred security and sovereignty. George Erasmus, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, saw “no *military* threat in the Canadian North,” only a threat to the cultural survival of Indigenous peoples posed by a military build-up. Inuit Circumpolar Conference President Mary Simon also stressed that military activities “justified by the government on the basis of defence and military considerations ... often serve to promote our *insecurity*.” Inuit ties to the environment and a collective social order meant that, for them, “Arctic security includes environmental, economic and cultural, as well as defence, aspects.”<sup>56</sup> In short, a holistic strategy was needed to accommodate and accept Indigenous peoples’ physical welfare, their homeland, and their cultural survival.

Mention of the Canadian Rangers was notably absent from Indigenous leaders’ arguments for demilitarizing the Arctic. Obviously, and significantly, this force was not perceived as a threat to the environment or cultural survival. In fact, it appeared to represent just the opposite – an opportunity for cooperation. The broadened security debates bolstered rather than detracted from their attractiveness in an era when military and Aboriginal interests seemed to diverge. The Rangers received praise from Inuit leaders across a wide spectrum of issues. Mark Gordon, representing the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), felt that Inuit had “a valuable contribution to give” to Northern security and praised the Canadian Rangers for acting as “the eyes for the Armed Forces.” He highlighted that the Rangers provided “valuable services to our communities, such as search and rescue,” as well as “help[ing] our communities a great deal in providing us with food.” Aboriginal autonomy and self-government was now part of the political discourse, and the Rangers seemed the most viable answer to Inuit communities’ security paradox: that while the military was needed to protect Inuit interests, the communities could not withstand massive influxes of outsiders and had to be able to “feed [them]selves.” In essence, what Gordon suggested was an Inuit version of “defence against help”: a military presence in the North was required to protect Inuit interests, but they did “not want the guy who comes in to protect us to run us over either.”<sup>57</sup> The Rangers, “who in most instances are the most experienced and the best hunters of the communities and the most knowledgeable of the area surrounding their communities,” already represented

a “vehicle” for constructive dialogue between the military and the local populations.<sup>58</sup>

Rhoda Innuksuk of the ITC envisioned security as a concept that transcended both military and non-military realms, and she advocated a more inclusive policy-making process that allowed for Inuit participation “to minimize the disadvantages and negative impacts of this activity and to maximize the benefits and opportunities it may present.” She saw Inuit and the military as partners who could work together for mutual advantage:

Inuit understand Arctic conditions. National Defence has demonstrated the importance of this fact to Arctic operations too by training Canadian troops in Inuit survival techniques and through the Canadian Ranger program, a program we would like to see expanded. We feel Inuit have more to contribute.... Northern [*sic*] are different, and different from an operations perspective. This is itself an opportunity for innovation.<sup>59</sup>

As active participants, and not just observers, Inuit could assist the military in protecting sovereignty and security, “as well as non-military interests.” The reception by the parliamentary committee was very favourable. Not only were the Rangers cost effective, but they also ensured a military presence and offered a direct role in defence for permanent Northern residents. A member of parliament grasped the essence of the message that would be integrated into the future expansion of the Ranger program: “it is not a matter of the people accommodating the old way of life to the military necessity; ... it is a matter of accommodating the military necessity, not to the old way of life but to the people who are here now with some old knowledge and some new knowledge.”<sup>60</sup>

### **Accommodating and Embracing Diversity: The Rangers in 1 CRPG, 1987-2007**

In 1987, with backing by such strong advocates within the local Indigenous populations, a new National Defence White Paper, in addition to senior political and military officials, indicated that the Northern Ranger program would be both continued and enhanced. The Minister of National Defence promised to improve the level of equipment and training for the Rangers, highlighting their “important expression of sovereignty” and anticipating an increased role as military activities expanded in the North.<sup>61</sup> The Standing Committee on National Defence reported the following year:

The Rangers are now given a limited amount of training and are expected to receive some new equipment, including a new rifle to replace their Lee Enfields, and communications equipment. By 1995,

total Ranger strength in the Northern Region is expected to rise to about 1,000 with the formation of new patrols in several communities.<sup>62</sup>

In fact, the expansion was more rapid and numerous than expected. By 1992, there were 1,362 Rangers in Northern Region. Although the end of the Cold War and growing federal deficits prompted the Conservative government to cancel or scale back most other Arctic initiatives that it had promised in the White Paper (such as nuclear submarines and the number of Forward Operating Locations), the Ranger program fared remarkably well. In this particular case, accommodation and acceptance fit with government austerity. The Rangers were cheap and inclusive – a winning recipe in the political environment of the 1990s.

Enhancement seemed appropriate in this context. After all, articles in the media continued to treat the Rangers as remnants of a bygone era, using obsolete weapons to counter late twentieth-century threats. “Certainly no one in this kinder, gentler age is about to attack an international good guy like Canada,” Mary Williams Walsh wrote in a 1993 article, first published in the *Los Angeles Times* and reprinted in the *Toronto Star*. “So what is Johnny Pokiak doing, standing guard here by the frozen waters of the Beaufort Sea, armed with a World War I-vintage Lee Enfield rifle, 200 rounds of ammunition and orders to make tracks for the nearest phone and ring up army headquarters, collect, should he spy something funny – say, the coning tower of a nuclear submarine poking up through the ice?” Pokiak explained that he was “protecting the Canadian sovereignty” – there was no invasion force waiting to



invade, but Canada still needed to show the flag to remind our neighbours that this was our land.<sup>63</sup>

Although the 1994 federal budget gave a clear indication of the declining commitment to Canadian defence, a parliamentary committee recommended that the capabilities of the Rangers be augmented, especially “North of 60.” The subsequent defence white paper announced that the program would be “expanded and enhanced.” Defence officials, especially Colonel Pierre Leblanc (the Director General Reserves and Cadets and soon-to-be Commander of CFNA, the new name for NRHQ), recognized that this new focus allowed “some current deficiencies to be addressed with an opportunity for expansion into some communities where the Rangers can make a significant contribution to the social fabric.”<sup>64</sup> The Rangers Enhancement Program (REP) followed with an overwhelmingly Northern focus. Nine more patrols were created in CFNA (and two more on the shores of Hudson Bay in northern Quebec – Nunavik), and the Rangers received distinctive red Ranger sweatshirts and t-shirts in 1997.<sup>65</sup> The Special Commission on the Restructuring of the Reserves recommended these initiatives and “heard evidence that supports the value of the Canadian Rangers program from an operational aspect and for its importance to isolated communities.” Its 1996 report highlighted the cost-effectiveness of the program and the “significant” contribution it made “in enriching the social fabric in remote areas.” Several recommendations were made, generally in the areas of command and control, improvements in equipment and funding, and the official adoption of community-based Ranger “patrols” as the primary unit rather than a company-platoon structure. The Commission enthusiastically recommended continued support for the Rangers’ growth in the years ahead.<sup>66</sup>

By the end of the twentieth century, every community that could demographically sustain a patrol in the Territorial North had one. As of 31 December 2004, 1 CRPG had fifty-eight Ranger patrols, with a strength of 1,575 Rangers (1,310 male and 263 female). Although no official statistics on the Rangers’ ethnicity are available, the 1 CRPG patrols are representative of the diverse ethnic composition of the North. The majority of Rangers in Yukon are “White,” while the patrols in the Northwest Territories reflect the geographic and linguistic dispersion of Northern peoples. Most of the Ranger patrols south of the treeline are comprised of members of Gwich’in, Dene, Métis, and “White” communities. North of the treeline, most of the patrols are Inuvialuit. In Nunavut, the Rangers are almost entirely Inuit, and many if not most operations are conducted in Inuktitut. As a result, in communities like Taloyoak or Pangnirtung where a high proportion of Rangers do not speak English, Ranger Instructors must work through interpreters. This slows down

training, military officials explained, but is a practical reality that must be accepted.<sup>67</sup>

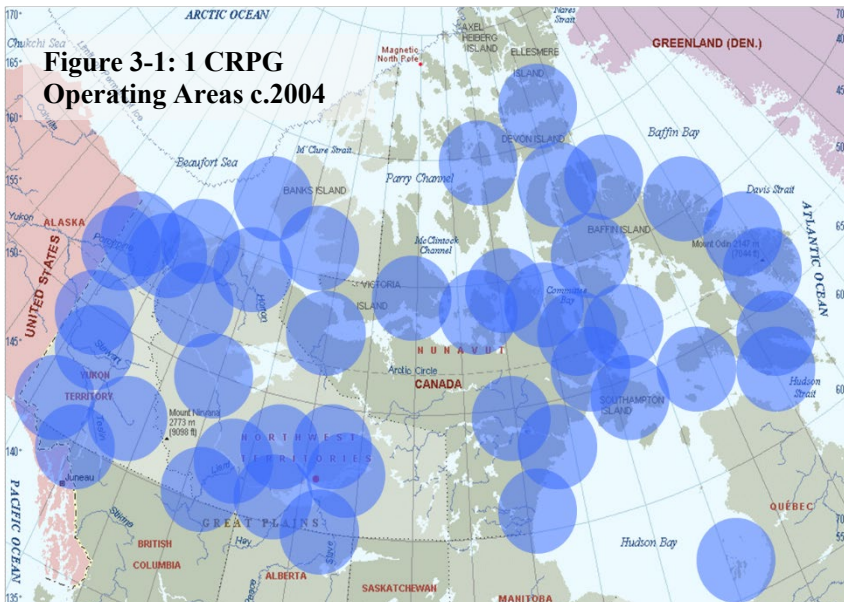
"Canadian Rangers have a tremendous impact on the lives of people in their local communities," boasts the official DND website. "Many Rangers hold leadership positions in their communities, such as mayors, chiefs or Ranger sergeant. They are active community members who have a positive influence on their peers and are often held up as role models for their youth." This statement is telling: the military trumpets not only the Rangers' military contributions, but also their contributions to local communities. The days of the Ranger as a peacetime "guerrilla" soldier standing ready to engage and contain a small-scale enemy invasion are gone. The recent disavowing of this former role reflects a more sober assessment of the practical realities of the Rangers' potential contributions.<sup>68</sup> After all, Canadian Rangers are an atypical volunteer militia. To join the force, the only formal requirements are that an individual be at least eighteen years of age, be in sufficient physical health to undertake activities on the land, have a good knowledge of the local area around his or her community (or be willing to learn), and have no criminal record. They are distinct from other military units in salient respects. The average entry age is thirty (and is frequently over forty) in the North because potential recruits must await the departure of their Elders for an open position. Furthermore, there is no upper age limit, and as long as an individual can still perform their duties, they can remain a Ranger. Some anecdotes are truly amazing: seventy-four-year-old Ranger Peter Kuniliusie of Clyde River, Nunavut, retired in November 2004 after *fifty-two years* of continuous service.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it is the accommodation and acceptance of social diversity and experience that makes the Ranger concept unique.





The Ranger's operational tasks remain centred on the basic premise that low-cost, localized "citizen-soldiers" help to assert sovereignty and security in remote and isolated areas. Official tasks in support of sovereignty include reporting unusual activities, such as unusual aircraft and unusual ships or submarines, and unusual persons in the community; collecting local data in support of Regular Force military operations; and conducting surveillance and/or sovereignty patrols (SOVPATs) in accordance with CFNA's surveillance plan.<sup>70</sup> Most of the time, therefore, the Rangers are accomplishing their mission while they are out on the land in their "civilian" lives. Each patrol's sector of operations comprises an area with a radius of 300 kilometres, centred on the patrol's home village (see Figure 3-1: map of 1 CRPG Coverage). Furthermore, SOVPATs allow the CF to put "footprints in the snow where they are not normally put," former CFNA Commander Colonel Norris Pettis explained.<sup>71</sup> For example, thirty Rangers from all three territories participated in Operation Kigliqavik Ranger I in April 2002, which ventured 1,000 kilometres across the frozen tundra and sea ice from Resolute to the magnetic north pole off Ellef Ringnes Island. Two years later, Rangers on Operation Kigliqavik Ranger III (the northernmost patrol ever conducted by the CF) covered 1,800 kilometres from Resolute to Eureka to Alert. These patrols allow the Rangers to operate in unfamiliar environments, share skills, and develop relationships with other members from across the North, and serve as confidence-building measures for participants.<sup>72</sup>

**Figure 3-1: 1 CRPG  
Operating Areas c.2004**





Within their capabilities, the Rangers directly assist CF activities in a number of ways: providing local expertise and guidance; advising and instructing other CF personnel on survival techniques, particularly during sovereignty operations (SOVOPs); providing a locally-based and inexpensive means of inspecting and monitoring the North Warning System (NWS); supporting the Junior Canadian Rangers program (discussed below); and providing local assistance to both ground search and rescue (GSAR) and disaster relief activities. SOVOPs allow southern-based units to receive practical Arctic warfare training, while the Rangers are afforded the opportunity to teach them traditional survival skills. For example, Rangers teach Regular Force personnel how to hunt and skin animals in the Arctic and how to erect snow houses. These interactions encourage cross-cultural awareness and understanding, and Regular and Reserve Force soldiers' laudatory assessments of Aboriginal people in the Rangers solidify military bonds and reaffirm their important contributions to defence.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps the most visible, high-profile activities conducted by the Rangers on a consistent basis are GSAR operations. In 1999, the Chief of the Defence Staff awarded a Canadian Forces Unit Commendation to the members of 2 CRPG for their efforts in response to the avalanche at Kangiqsualujuaq in northern Quebec.<sup>74</sup> That same year, Rangers from 1 CRPG took part in 164 volunteer search and rescue operations, one medical evacuation, and one emergency rescue.<sup>75</sup> Although the media tends to refer to all GSARs involving members of Ranger patrols as "Ranger" operations, units are usually not formally tasked by the RCMP or the CF and therefore these operations are not "official" activities. This line has little bearing on Ranger participation – most volunteer first and foremost as members of their Northern communities.

The final Ranger task is the most general and basic – to maintain a CF presence in the local community. This is fundamental, given the reductions in Northern military operations over the last several decades and DND's commitment to having a "footprint" in communities across the country. The Rangers represent more than 90% of the CF's representation north of the 55<sup>th</sup> parallel and provide a special bond with their host populations. They are far more than the military's "eyes and ears;" they are an organized group that communities can turn to for numerous activities. Unorthodox roles, such as breaking the Yukon Trail for dog mushers, ensuring that polar bears do not attack unsuspecting trick-or-treaters in Churchill, and welcoming dignitaries to their communities, bring favourable media attention. Their participation in Remembrance Day parades reinforces the intimate, continuing, positive military presence in Canadian life. They are simultaneously citizen-soldiers and citizen-servers, intimately integrated into local community activities, ensuring

that the CF is not socially isolated or structurally separated from Northern Indigenous societies.<sup>76</sup>

In a 1992 article on militarization and Aboriginal peoples, Mary Simon explained that military activities cannot be allowed to erode or curtail the Inuit right to self-government. "If the future of our Arctic homeland is to be safeguarded," she asserted, Inuit had to have a direct role in decision-making.<sup>77</sup> The Rangers are designed to acknowledge that leadership should not be externally imposed. The structure of an individual patrol is rooted in the community and operates on a group basis. Each Ranger patrol is led by a sergeant, who is seconded by a master corporal, both of whom are elected by the other members of the patrol and one of whom (at least) must be able to speak English.<sup>78</sup> Patrol leaders are the only members of the CF who are *elected* to their positions by the patrol. As a result, Ranger non-commissioned officers (NCOs) are directly accountable to the other members of their military unit in a unique way. Rank is not achieved but held on a democratic basis. Patrol elections, held in the community on an annual basis, exemplify the self-administering characteristics of the Ranger force. Furthermore, Ranger activities are reported annually to the various land claim administrations in the North to fulfill legal requirements under these agreements.

The Rangers' mission focuses less on warfighting and more on low-intensity humanitarian missions, which are planned in partnership with local peoples. Furthermore, the Ranger force is "inter-national" and accommodates different cultural groups.<sup>79</sup> The Rangers are valued for what they bring as "differentiated" individuals, rather than what they could offer if assimilated and conditioned through the regularized training regimes. In the case of the Rangers, differentiation no longer assumes that Northern Aboriginal peoples inherently "possess" the innate navigation, shooting, or survival skills that lay at the heart of the Ranger concept; "biological" assumptions have been discredited. Instead, over the last quarter century, military officials have raised concerns that changes in the North may erode cultural skills amongst the Rangers that are vital to successful military operations. "An emerging development that could impact on future Ranger operations is a noticeable decline in the transfer of skills necessary to live on the land," the 2000 Arctic Capabilities Study reported:

It is becoming gradually apparent that younger members of the Canadian Rangers are less skilled than older members in some aspects of survival in the Arctic wilderness. The reason for this can perhaps be found in cultural changes in the aboriginal communities but the impact for CFNA today, and into the future, is an increasing training requirement for the Rangers if they are to remain effective.<sup>80</sup>



This issue is significant. The problem is not that Indigenous members of the Rangers are difficult to acculturate into military culture. It is the opposite: that an erosion of Aboriginal skills may jeopardize their contribution. If traditional survival skills are allowed to atrophy, Rangers' skills will weaken and the CF's ability to operate in the North will suffer. "Given the minimal activity by southern-based units in the arctic," the CFNA commander noted in 2003, "this trend has disturbing implications for the CF if it hopes to fulfill its mandate to operate effectively in all parts of the country."<sup>81</sup>

The creation and rapid expansion of the Junior Canadian Rangers (JCR) over the last decade is the boldest example of the military's commitment to support traditional Indigenous practices. Like the Canadian Rangers, the JCR program is a unique initiative in its flexibility and decentralized focus. Officially established in 1996 to provide "community-based, structured, and supervised youth activity free of charge in remote and isolated communities," the JCR is open to all twelve- to eighteen-year-olds in participating communities. It is an inclusive rather than an "elitist" capacity-building program. Drawing upon the resources of local Ranger patrols, it is designed to help "preserve the culture, traditions, and activities that are unique to each community." JCR training is much less standardized and more local in orientation than the southern cadet program, and the community is heavily involved in curriculum development. An adult committee, composed of eight volunteers who have been approved by the community authorities, as well as two community Elders, work in partnership with the local Ranger patrol to set curriculum. 60% is at the community's discretion (including subjects such as local language, making

shelters and bannock, singing, and dancing), and the CF directs the remaining 40%. Rangers instruct and supervise the “Ranger Skills component,” which includes leadership and field exercises, first aid, map reading, and navigation and weapons safety and use – critical skills in a hunting society. This structure supports community involvement in decision-making to build human capacity amongst youth.

The program seems to work. “The participants of this youth program have shown greater self-esteem, increased responsibility, and a better understanding of, and connection with, their communities,” a DND backgrounder boasts. This claim seems to be borne out by anecdotal testimonials about the JCR, as well as its meteoric growth and popularity in Northern Canada.<sup>82</sup> These considerations are very important given social trends in the region. The Northern Canadian birth rate is much higher than the national average, and consequently, the population is much younger. This demographic reality compounds many social problems amongst Northern youth (including disturbingly high suicide rates) that are exacerbated by feelings of hopelessness and isolation.<sup>83</sup> DND saw that it had a constructive role to play, and that the JCR represents the only program for youth in many Northern communities. Additionally, the shared uniform, Ranger name, and summertime camps that gather JCRs from various communities provide teenagers with a “feeling of belonging to the rest of the country.” Although only a decade old, the strength in the Territorial North has risen to 1,050 Junior Canadian Rangers (573 males and 477 females) in thirty-three patrols (as of 31 December 2004).<sup>84</sup>

The Canadian Rangers serve a vital function in the North that transcends military, socio-political, economic, and cultural realms. The existing organization, managed on a community level, embraces the Indigenous knowledge of its members, rather than “militarizing” and conditioning them through the regularized training regimes and structures of other CF components. This flexible, cost-effective, and culturally inclusive part of the Reserve Force represents a significant example of one military activity in the North that actually seems to contribute to sustainable human development amongst Northern peoples. In military terms, it represents a democratic approach to supporting Aboriginal peoples as direct actors in asserting Canadian sovereignty and security. Positive relationships and mutual respect have produced high levels of trust, cohesion, and morale between the Rangers and other components of the Canadian Forces.

## **Conclusions**

In *Who Killed the Canadian Military?*, historian Jack Granatstein lamented policies introduced by the Canadian military to make it an inclusive force at the

expense of combat effectiveness. Advisory boards set “ridiculous standards” for the levels of immigrants and Indigenous Canadians in the ranks, founded on a racially based quota system, and this “race-based” logic “would do Hitler proud.” In the end, Granatstein concluded that “the policy of quotas makes clear that the Canadian government does not view its military as a fighting force that must be efficient, effective and well-trained ... but more as a social acculturation agency designed to replicate the Canadian population and make everyone welcome in shared tolerance and equality.”<sup>85</sup>

The Canadian Rangers, however, demonstrate that the acceptance of cultural differences can serve as a force multiplier. The Rangers in 1 CRPG represent a “success story” in military accommodation and acceptance on several levels. First and foremost, Ranger patrols provide a cost-effective sovereignty presence. Contrary to the common conception that decentralized, community-based partnerships with Northern Indigenous peoples are prohibitively costly, the Rangers are very inexpensive compared to other conceivable military programs in the North. They embody an investment in local skills with few capital requirements. For communities, they bring money and resources that support and encourage traditional and subsistence activities. Furthermore, the Rangers do not threaten the environment or Northern ways of life – they depend upon them. Ranger and JCR patrols actually facilitate the



trans-generational transfer of traditional knowledge and skills, rather than seeking to assimilate Indigenous peoples into orthodox military culture.<sup>86</sup>

"Canadian Forces Northern Area is committed to earn the respect of the people of Nunavut, the Northwest and Yukon Territories," the 2003 Commander's Direction explains, "demonstrating the attributes of a highly professional formation of the Canadian Forces that can be trusted to safeguard their sovereignty and security interests through the projection of a credible military presence."<sup>87</sup> The tempo of military operations in the North has been increasing in recent years, and the federal government's 2005 defence policy statement affirms that such increases will continue in the future. Climate change raises the potential for increased shipping activity in the region; resource development initiatives, foreign tourism, and commercial overflights are expanding; and the potential for terrorists, organized crime, illegal migrants, and contraband smugglers to operate in the region all highlight the need for a greater military focus on the North. The CF must maintain a positive working relationship with the people of the North in order to conduct sustained operations, and trust and credibility are essential.

Thanks to the Rangers, there is no impermeable wall between the military and civilian sectors in the Canadian North. Instead, their presence ensures that the CF is already well integrated into Northern society and that Indigenous peoples have – and will continue to have – an opportunity to participate in the armed forces without sacrificing their cultural identities. They are representative of a cross-section of the civilian population in the North and therefore are not estranged from civil society. Instead, a decentralized structure rooted in local communities links the civilian and military sectors through the Rangers' individual social networks. As identities are being recognized and created through political changes and self-government in the North, it is imperative that the CF and Northern communities are constructively engaged and maintain a spirit of mutual cultural awareness. After all, Canada's sovereignty claims in the North rely partially – if not most credibly – on Indigenous peoples' historic and contemporary use of the land and sea. As Franklyn Griffiths points out in a recent article, it is hypocritical to do this without giving these people a say and a meaningful role in exercising control and enforcement in the Arctic. They reside there, have an immediate and superior knowledge of the environment, are on the front lines of changes that affect the North, and have practical daily attachments to the land and sea. As a result, Northern Indigenous peoples need to be partners directly engaged in practical stewardship.<sup>88</sup> They already are in the Canadian Rangers.

In his important book *Citizens Plus*, political scientist Alan Cairns argues that future Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations lay in forging a meaningful

"middle ground," recognizing "that those who share space together must share more than space." A sense of communal belonging and commitment is integral to the core principle of cross-cultural acceptance. Cairns believes that the notion of "citizens plus," stressing the virtues of full, common citizenship while reinforcing salient differences, is the most mutually beneficial and responsible way to further Indigenous-Settler relations in Canada.<sup>89</sup> Indigenous peoples' participation in the Canadian Rangers serves as an example of how difference can be accommodated and accepted within the armed forces. Rangers are "citizens plus" in their communities. They are also "citizens plus" in the military.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Forces Northern Area (CFNA), Operations and Training Directive 2002/03, June 2002, file NA 4500-1 (Comd).

<sup>2</sup> Commander's Assessment, CFNA FY 2004/05 Level 1 Business Plan, 27 October 2003, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Franklyn Griffiths, "The shipping news: Canada's Arctic sovereignty not on thinning ice," *International Journal* 58/2 (Spring 2003): 257-82; Griffiths, "Pathetic Fallacy: That Canada's Arctic sovereignty is on thinning ice," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 11/3 (Spring 2004): 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Eyre, "Forty Years of Defence Activity in the Canadian North, 1947-87," *Arctic* 40/4 (December 1987): 292-99.

<sup>5</sup> Rob Huebert, "Canadian Arctic Security Issues: Transformation in the post-cold war era," *International Journal* 54/2 (Spring 1999): 203-29; P.W. Lackenbauer, "Indigeneity and Redefinition of the Arctic Security Discourse: The Case of Canada, 1950-2005," paper delivered at the Centre for International Governance Innovation/Norman Patterson School of International Affairs Conference "Canadian Foreign Policy Under Review," Waterloo, Ontario, November 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Canada and the Circumpolar World: Meeting the Challenges of Cooperation into the Twenty-First Century* (April 1997), 100. This reflected the

recommendation made by parliamentarians from Arctic states to “broaden Arctic security issues from a predominantly military focus to the development of collective environmental security that includes the values, life styles, and cultural identity of indigenous northern societies.”

<sup>7</sup> These themes are well introduced in Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada: 1914-1967* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988); Eyre, “Forty Years”; and Eyre, “Custos Borealis: The Military in the Canadian North” (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London King’s College, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, P. Armitage and J.C. Kennedy, “Redbaiting and Racism on Our Frontier,” *Canadian Review of Anthropology and Sociology* 26/5 (1989): 798-817; D. Ashini, “David Confronts Goliath: The Innu of Ungava versus the NATO Alliance,” in *Drumbeat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country*, ed. B. Richardson (Toronto: Summerhill, 1990), 45-70; Marie Wadden, *Nitassinan: The Innu Struggle to Reclaim Their Homeland* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991); C.H. Scott, ed., *Aboriginal Autonomy and Development in Northern Quebec and Labrador* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001); Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Vol. 1, *Looking Forward, Looking Back*, in *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* [CD-ROM] (Ottawa, 1997); Donna Goldleaf, *Entering the Warzone* (Penticton: Theytus, 1995); Peter Edwards, *One Dead Indian* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2001); and Sandra Lambertus, *Wartime Images, Peacetime Wounds* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press [UTP], 2004).

<sup>9</sup> F. Abele, “Confronting ‘harsh and inescapable facts,’” in *Sovereignty and Security in the Arctic*, ed. E. Dosman (London: Routledge, 1989), 189; Mary Simon, “Militarization and the Aboriginal Peoples,” in *Arctic Alternatives: Civility or Militarism in the Circumpolar North*, ed. F. Griffiths (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1992), 60.

<sup>10</sup> Rebecca L. Schiff, “Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance,” *Armed Forces & Society* 22/1 (Fall 1995): 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> The rare exception is Terry Willett, *A Heritage At Risk: The Canadian Militia as a Social Institution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Alan Cairns, *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>13</sup> P.W. Lackenbauer, “Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Rangers: Canada’s ‘Eyes and Ears’ in Northern and Isolated Communities,” in *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture*, Vol. 2, eds. Cora Voyageur, David Newhouse, and Dan Beavon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 306-28.

<sup>14</sup> On the PCMR, see “History – Pacific Coast Militia Rangers,” Department of National Defence (DND), Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), file



322.009 (D298), and Kerry Ragnar Steeves, "The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942-1945" (Unpublished MA thesis, UBC, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> J. Mackay Hitsman, "The Canadian Rangers," DND, Army Headquarters, Historical Section, Report no. 92 (1 December 1960).

<sup>16</sup> Kennelly to SO Rangers, 28 February [1943], DHH, file 169.009 (D94). I have explored Indigenous peoples' involvement in the PCMR in "Guerillas in Our Midst: The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942-45," paper delivered at the Canadian Historical Association, London, Ontario, May 2005 (and expanded and reprinted as chapter 2 in this book). In 1942, some coastal peoples did not volunteer for the PCMR because they feared it was a mechanism to draw them into the army and send them overseas against their will. This exclusion was self-imposed rather than external.

<sup>17</sup> DCGS(B) to DMO&P, 1 November 1946, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Record Group (RG) 24, vol. 321, file 2001-1999/0, vol. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Vokes to Foulkes, 9 December 1948, DHH, file HQC 604-18, vol. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Morton to CGS, 17 December 1948, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Eyre, "Forty Years," 294.

<sup>21</sup> David Bercuson, "Continental Defense and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-50," in *The Cold War and Defense*, eds. K. Neilson and R.G. Haycock (New York: Praeger, 1990), 154.

<sup>22</sup> See P.W. Lackenbauer, "Right and Honourable: Mackenzie King, Canadian-American Bilateral Relations, and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest, 1943-1948," in *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community*, eds. John English, Kenneth McLaughlin, and P.W. Lackenbauer (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2002), 151-68. On military activities during this era, see also Eyre, "Forty Years," and Bernd Horn, "Gateway to Invasion or the Curse of Geography? The Canadian Arctic and the Question of Security, 1939-1999," in *Forging a Nation: Perspectives on the Canadian Military Experience*, ed. Bernd Horn (St. Catharines: Vanwell, 2002), 307-32.

<sup>23</sup> F/L SE Alexander to AMOT, 7 January 1950, LAC, RG 24, vol. 5205, file S-15-24-60.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Ranger units along the west and east coasts, which were formed in this same era, tended to be non-Aboriginal in their composition, and therefore will not be described in this chapter. My forthcoming book on the history of the Rangers will provide a fuller picture of the Canadian Rangers' development in these regions.

<sup>27</sup> Maj C.R.R. Douthwaite, "Survey of Western Arctic by SGO II (Int), Western Command, 14 April-1 May 1949," 25 October 1950, LAC, RG 24, accession 83-84/215, box 399, file 9105-25/0.

<sup>28</sup> Maj F.B. Perrott to DMO&P, 11 July 1951, LAC, RG 24, accession 83-84/215, box 321, file 2001-1999/0, vol. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Eyre, "Custos Borealis," 178.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Capt A.J. Shea, "The Two Camps: Extract from the Journal of a Ranger Liaison Officer," *Canadian Army Journal* 10/2 (April 1956).

<sup>31</sup> John R. Sperry, *Igloo Dwellers Were My Church* (Calgary: Bayeux Arts, 2001), 21-32; personal interviews, 17 December 2003 (telephone) and Yellowknife, March 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Capt A.J. Shea, "An Appreciation of the Situation of the Canadian Rangers in Eastern Command," 23 February 1960, DHH, file 323.009 (D 261).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> On this period, see Eyre, "Forty Years," 292-99.

<sup>37</sup> Larry Dignum, "Shadow Army of the North," *Beaver* (Autumn 1959), 22-24.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Taylor, "Eyes and Ears of the North," *Star Weekly Magazine*, 22 December 1956, 2-3.

<sup>39</sup> "Northern Armed Force" and "n.g.g." memoranda for Rt. Hon. J.G. Diefenbaker, re: proposed Arctic force, 3 April 1969, John G. Diefenbaker Archives (JDA), XI/B/221, file Arctic-The North [1967-74].

<sup>40</sup> Scott Young, "The shadowy force on guard in the Arctic," clipping, JDA, XI/B/22-2. Young reported that an interdepartmental study group was reviewing the military presence in the North and would look at "the role and organization of the 1,683 man Canadian Rangers, volunteer Eskimos, Indians, Metis and Whites."

<sup>41</sup> Maj W.K. Stirling, "The Canadian Rangers: An In Depth Study," 5 August 1970, 1 CRPG HQ, NR 5323-2 (SSO(L)).

<sup>42</sup> John Kirton and Don Munton, "Manhattan Voyages," in *Politics of the Northwest Passage*, ed. F. Griffiths (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 73-75; R.J. Orange, House of Commons, *Debates*, 21 May 1971, 6065.

<sup>43</sup> Cloutier and Admiral John A. Charles, House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (SCEAND), *Proceedings and Evidence*, 29 May 1973, 16:15-16.

<sup>44</sup> Canadian Forces Northern Region, *Northern Region Information* (n.d.), 16-18, CFNA file NA 1325-1 (PAffO).

<sup>45</sup> Maj R.S. McConnell, SSO Rangers & Cadets to Commander, Canadian Forces Northern Region, 7 November 78, CFNA file (copy in possession of author).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. See also Northern Region Headquarters, Untitled Historical Booklet, entries 31 July 1971, 18 November 1971, and 13 January 1972, CFNA file NA 1325-1 (PAffO).

<sup>47</sup> Eyre, "Custos Borealis," 287-88; House of Commons, *Debates*, 17 April 1970, 5991; *Globe and Mail*, 23 September 1971.

<sup>48</sup> Eyre, "Custos Borealis," 288-89.

<sup>49</sup> LCol J.M.M. Savard, Acting Director of Recruitment and Selection, Recruitment Directive 10/90: Northern Native Entry Program [NNEP], 30 January 1990, DND file 5675-4 (DRS).

<sup>50</sup> Newfoundland Area: Operational Plan – Canadian Rangers, *circa* Fall 1964, DHH, file 323.009 (D 261).

<sup>51</sup> Maj S.J. Joudry, "Study Report - Northern Region Canadian Rangers," 27 May 1986, 8. Acquired under Access to Information.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> MGen David Huddleston in *The Arctic: Choice for Peace and Security: Proceedings of a Public Inquiry*, ed. Thomas Berger (Vancouver: Gordon Soules, 1989), 179. See also G.G. Bell, "The Armed Forces and the Civil Authority: 2 Aiding National Development," *Behind the Headlines* 31/7-8 (December 1972).

<sup>54</sup> J. Gellner, "The Military Task," in *The Arctic in Question*, ed. E.J. Dosman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 93.

<sup>55</sup> House of Commons, *Debates*, 10 September 1985, 6462-64.

<sup>56</sup> G. Erasmus, "Militarization of the North: Cultural Survival Threatened," *Information North* (Fall 1986), 1; M. Simon, "Security, Peace and the Native Peoples of the Arctic," in *The Arctic: Choice for Peace and Security: Proceedings of a Public Inquiry*, ed. Thomas Berger (Vancouver: Gordon Soules, 1989), 36, 67.

<sup>57</sup> SCEAND, 17 September 1985, 48-49.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 28:56-57.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 28:50-51.

<sup>60</sup> Dan Heap to SCEAND, 17 September 1985, 28:55.

<sup>61</sup> House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence (SCND), *Proceedings and Evidence*, 26 November 1987, 17:29-30.

<sup>62</sup> House of Commons, *The Reserves*, Report of the SCND (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, June 1988).

<sup>63</sup> Mary Williams Walsh, "Keeping Alert to poachers on Arctic turf," *Toronto Star*, 16 January 1993, C5.

<sup>64</sup> Memorandum, "Project P9175: Canadian Ranger Enhancement Project," DGPC to PCB, 1 July 1995, DND file 3136-5-P9175 (DDAS 9); P. Leblanc, DGRC for CDS, "Canadian Rangers Enhancement Project," 30 May 1995, 1, DND file 1901/260/4 (DGRC).

<sup>65</sup> *CFNA Historical Report* 1995, 3; Fax, "Rangers Enhancement Program," C Res & Cdts to DGAA, 30 November 1995, 14-15; DND Backgrounder BG-96.043, "Update on Restructuring of the Reserves," 21 November 1996, available at <http://www.dnd.ca/eng/archive/nov96/BG-96043EN.HTM>.

<sup>66</sup> DND, Special Commission on the Restructuring of the Reserves Report, available at <http://www.vcds.dnd.ca/vcds/cres&cdt/scrr/report/e-p3-c09.html>.

<sup>67</sup> *CFNA Annual Historical Report* 2004; interviews, Pierre Leblanc, Don Finnamore, and Sgt D. McLean, 22 March 2000; MWO G.R. Westcott, 26 February 2004; Backgrounder, "Canadian Rangers in Nunavut." See also, linguistic profiles at Reserves & Cadets, VCDS, DND, "Canadian Rangers: Statistics," available at [http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/rangers/stats\\_e.asp](http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/rangers/stats_e.asp).

<sup>68</sup> Col T. Tarrant, Briefing Note for DGRC, "Future Role, Mission and Tasks for Canadian Rangers," 15 October 2003.

<sup>69</sup> Capt J. Campbell, "Saying Goodbye to a Canadian Ranger," *Maple Leaf*, 1 December 2004, 3.

<sup>70</sup> See Rangers website at [www.rangers.dnd.ca](http://www.rangers.dnd.ca).

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Adrian Humphreys, "Canada's Troops to Reclaim Arctic," *National Post*, 25 March 2004.

<sup>72</sup> CFNA FY 2004/05 Level 1 Business Plan, 27 October 2003, 21; Nathan VanderKlippe, "Trek enforces sovereignty on 'the edge,'" *Edmonton Journal*, 17 April 2004. The author had the opportunity to meet with the Rangers on Operation Kigliqavik Ranger I at Cape Isachsen on 18 April 2002.

<sup>73</sup> On these themes, see Director General of Reserves and Cadets (DGRC), "CAN RAN 2000: A Review of the Canadian Rangers and of the Junior Canadian Rangers," 27 January 2000 [CAN RAN 2000]; *CFNA Annual Historical Report* 2002, 3-4; and Maj G.L. Couch, "Northern exposure for southern soldiers," *The Maple Leaf* 3/13 (March 2000): 6.

<sup>74</sup> On 1 January 1999, members from eleven of the fourteen Nunavik Canadian Ranger patrols in 2 CRPG arrived in Kangiqsualujjuaq in response to the massive avalanche. Additionally, food and emergency material was also provided from as far as the Coral Harbour Patrol (Northwest Territories), whose members harvested and shipped fresh caribou to the disaster site. This extraordinary cooperation by the Rangers resulted in the awarding of the commendation. DND Backgrounder, BG-00.005, "The Canadian Rangers," 8 February 2000.

<sup>75</sup> CAN RAN 2000, 11. See also P.W. Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: A Survey of English-Canadian Media Coverage, 1995-2004" (2004), 102-53. Copy available from the author.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, "Patrol protects trick-or-treaters from polar bears," *K-W Record*, 26 October 2004; Dan Davidson, "Nourish respect for veterans, mayor advisers," *Whitehorse Star*, 13 November 2001, 4; and Lackenbauer, "English-Canadian Media Coverage."

<sup>77</sup> Simon, "Militarization and the Aboriginal Peoples," 60, 63.

<sup>78</sup> In 1999, the rank of Ranger Corporal was added for two reasons. It allowed for the creation of patrols with representation in several communities or "detachments." It was also created out of Junior Canadian Ranger program requirements; at a minimum, the corporal looks after this program in a community.

<sup>79</sup> P.W. Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia That Works," *Canadian Military Journal* 6/4 (Winter 2005-06): 49-60. Whereas Ranger Instructors in the other patrol groups are Reservists, in 1 CRPG they are Regular Force sergeants in the combat arms who volunteer to work in the North and have identified the region as a posting preference with their career managers.

<sup>80</sup> Commander's Assessment, CFNA FY 2004/05 Level 1 Business Plan, 27 October 2003, 1-2.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Backgrounder, "The Junior Canadian Rangers Programme," 17 March 1999. The JCR have grown from 1,620 in fifty-four patrols in fiscal year (FY) 1999/2000 to 2,893 in 102 patrols in FY 2003/04, representing an increase of 79% in four years. DRes, CAN RAN 2000 Annual Report #4, FY 03/04, 11.

<sup>83</sup> A Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) discussion report on the Arctic offered the following on the "Alleviation of Community Social Problems" in the North: "Most northern communities in Canada suffer from crippling social problems: poverty, high youth suicide rates, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and substance abuse, crime and domestic violence. These are a persistent legacy of the period when colonial governments imposed their ways on Canada's Aboriginal peoples. Through the Statement of Reconciliation in Gathering Strength, the Government has indicated its commitment to working with territorial governments, Aboriginal peoples and northern organizations in support of social change contributing to strong communities." See "Toward A Northern Foreign Policy For Canada: A Consultation Paper" (September 1998). Governments have recognized the need to promote understanding and problem solving at the community level, using government and local resources. See RCAP Special Report, "Choosing Life: Special report on suicide among Aboriginal people," on Libraxus, "For Seven Generations."

<sup>84</sup> *CFNA Annual Historical Report* 2004, 2; Maj R.G. Bell, "Proposal to Trial a Junior Canadian Ranger Program," Briefing to the Chief of Reserves and Cadets, 23 March 1994, CFNA 1085-0-1, 16 April 1996, 1.

<sup>85</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed the Canadian Military?* (Toronto: Harper Perennial Canada, 2004), 145, 196.

<sup>86</sup> These conclusions are derived from P.W. Lackenbauer, "The Eyes and Ears of the Canadian Forces: The Canadian Rangers as a Human Solution to Northern Sovereignty and Security," presentation to Ocean Management Research Network Conference, Ottawa, November 2003.

<sup>87</sup> Commander's Direction, CFNA FY 2004/05 Level 1 Business Plan, 27 October 2003, 25.

<sup>88</sup> Griffiths, "The shipping news."

<sup>89</sup> Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, 6-9.



## 4

**The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia that Works**

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*The Centre of Gravity for CFNA [Canadian Forces Northern Area] is our positive relationship with the aboriginal peoples of the North, all levels of government in the three territories, and all other government agencies and non-governmental organizations operating North of 60. Without the support, confidence, and strong working relationships with these peoples and agencies, CFNA would be unable to carry out many of its assigned tasks.*

Colonel Kevin McLeod, former Commander Canadian Forces Northern Area<sup>1</sup>

Canada's vast northern expanse and extensive coastlines have represented a significant security and sovereignty dilemma since the Second World War. With one of the lowest population densities in the world, and one of the most difficult climatic and physical environments in which to conduct operations, a traditional military presence is prohibitively costly. As a result, the Canadian Rangers, a little-known component of the Reserves, have played an important but unorthodox role in domestic defence over the last sixty years. This component of the Canadian Forces (CF) Reserves, managed on a community level, draws on the Indigenous knowledge of its members, rather than "militarizing" and conditioning them through typical military training regimes and structures. Embodied in its communities and peoples in isolated areas, the Canadian Forces continue to benefit from the quiet existence of the Rangers.

While commentators typically cast the Canadian Rangers as an Arctic force – a stereotype perpetuated in this article – they are more accurately situated around the fringes of the country. Their official role since 1947 has been "to provide a military presence in those sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada which cannot conveniently or economically be provided by other components of the Canadian Forces." They are often described as the military's "eyes and ears" in remote regions. The Rangers also represent an important success story for the Canadian Forces as a flexible,

inexpensive, and culturally inclusive means of “showing the flag” and asserting Canadian sovereignty while fulfilling vital operational requirements. They often represent the only CF presence in some of the least populated parts of the country, and serve as a bridge between cultures and between the civilian and military realms. The Rangers represent an example of the military successfully integrating national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based activities and local management. This force represents a practical partnership, rooted in community-based monitoring using traditional knowledge and skills, which promotes cooperation, communal and individual empowerment, and improved cross-cultural understanding.

The current roles and structure of the Canadian Rangers retain a strong connection with their original, early Cold War conception. Nevertheless, the Rangers embody several “postmodern” characteristics described by military sociologists – although in potentially unexpected forms. Military socialization has historically been designed to eradicate individual differences and to instill a paramount commitment to unit and nation-state. By contrast, postmodernity celebrates diversity, and multiculturalism lies at the core of Canada’s official identity. In this light, Defence Strategy 2020 and other strategic documents have stressed that the CF must be a “visible national institution” reflecting the country’s geographic and cultural diversity.<sup>2</sup> Sociologists Charles Moskos and James Burk have postulated that postmodern forces would increasingly feature sub-national social organizations, and would reflect dramatic changes in military cultures and opinions.<sup>3</sup> In the Canadian case, a political emphasis on the non-assimilation of Aboriginal peoples conflicts with the typical assimilationist goals of mainstream military culture. This article will argue that observers would be hard pressed to contemplate a more inclusive and flexible force than the Rangers.

The following analysis, using theoretical traits associated with “postmodern” military formations, helps to explain the vitality and success of the Canadian Rangers in recent years. It highlights the permeability between civil and military structures, the “erosion of martial values,” and the increasing democratization driven by internal rather than external considerations.<sup>4</sup> Rather than wading into the tumultuous debate on the precise meaning of postmodernism, this article accepts the functional definitions put forward by sociologists Bradford Booth, Meyer Kestnbaum, and David R. Segal. At its core, “postmodernism is not a developmental construct, but is essentially a *mode of discourse*” designed to deconstruct basic assumptions rather than to uncover cause and effect relationships through positivist, social scientific methods.<sup>5</sup> In this light, even though the Rangers were designed during the





“Last Modern” or Cold War age, this analytical model can be useful to understand their form and contributions.

This article draws mainly upon examples from the territorial North, on which most media and official attention to the Rangers has focused.<sup>6</sup> The author has met with headquarters staff, Instructors, and Rangers with 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group on several occasions since 2000, and participated in an annual training exercise with the Ross River, Yukon, patrol in winter 2004. This article is also informed by theoretical discussions about Arctic sovereignty and security that link Northern development issues with military, economic, and political security considerations, as well as Aboriginal values and traditions. Political scientists have observed that post-Cold War Arctic strategies are less state-centric and military focused, and that debates about the proposed demilitarization of the Arctic region have illuminated the legacies of military activities on Northern peoples and the physical environment. Policy-makers can no longer ignore the human impacts of their decisions on communities and individuals, especially in an era of Aboriginal self-awareness and self-government.<sup>7</sup> Given that postmodern military theory stresses changes to perceived threats, mission definitions, and conventional civil-military relations,<sup>8</sup> the North seems an appropriate area of operations and responsibility to assess the Rangers’ “postmodern” attributes.

### **The Canadian Rangers: An Overview**

The Canadian Rangers were first conceived amidst the modern realities of the Second World War and the Cold War. The force was originally modelled

after the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR), a home guard established along the West Coast in 1942 to meet potential Japanese incursions. The PCMR were predicated on the idea that unpaid volunteers, often too old or too young to serve overseas, could perform useful military functions while carrying out their everyday civilian lives on the land and sea. Given their intimate knowledge of local areas, they could provide intelligence, act as guides, and delay an enemy advance using guerrilla tactics. All told, more than 15,000 British Columbians served in the PCMR before it was stood down in late 1945.<sup>9</sup>

By 1947, chilly superpower relations and a new focus on Northern security, coupled with renewed sovereignty concerns related to a US military presence in the North, led the government to establish the Canadian Rangers as a Corps of the Reserve Militia. This force would be unpaid and provided with armbands, a .303 rifle, and 200 rounds of ammunition a year. In war, they would serve as coast watchers and guides to regular troops, assist authorities in reporting and apprehending enemy agents and saboteurs, provide local defence against small enemy detachments, and undertake ground search and rescue (GSAR) operations. Their peacetime roles were similar, focusing on guiding troops on exercises, collecting detailed information about their local areas and reporting any unusual activities, and providing GSAR parties when tasked. They were recruited from local areas, commanded by civilian leaders from their communities, and carried on their daily lives.<sup>10</sup>

The Rangers survived the oscillating cycles of military concern about the North through the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Military and political interest in the Rangers had diminished by the late 1950s, when technological solutions like the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line were conceived to secure the continent. Although the Rangers were left to “wither on the vine,” they did survive – largely because of the extremely small price tag attached to them.<sup>12</sup> During the 1970s, the “Northern” Rangers enjoyed some growth as a sovereignty-bolstering measure, but it was not until the mid-1980s, when the voyage of the US Coast Guard vessel *Polar Sea* renewed sovereignty concerns related to the Northwest Passage, that the Rangers underwent dramatic growth.<sup>13</sup> By 1992, the national strength of the force rose to 3,200 (and doubled in the territorial North).

The Rangers grew “North of 60” after 1970 because the basic structure already existed and was very inexpensive, but also because a “new security discourse” emerged. Military activities in the Arctic could no longer be divorced from domestic socio-economic, cultural, and environmental health issues. Indigenous leaders repeatedly called for the demilitarization of the Arctic on social and environmental grounds, and construed the military presence as a

threat to their peoples' security. These pressures encouraged program assessment using both state-centred security and broad social criteria. Military officers noted that the public and Indigenous leaders took great interest in the Rangers, and that "while their motivation and enthusiasm may not be entirely military oriented, it is genuine and perhaps it is an excellent opportunity to seriously consider realistic and practical improvements in the Ranger force."<sup>14</sup> Beginning in the late 1980s, explicit government statements increasingly stressed the socio-political benefits of the Rangers in Aboriginal communities, and the force underwent remarkable growth during a general era of fiscal and personnel downsizing in the Canadian Forces. The Rangers were politically and publicly marketable as a military success story.

There are currently 4,000 Rangers in 165 patrols across Canada. Overall command is centralized at National Defence Headquarters, administered by the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (DCDS), while operational and administrative control of Canadian Rangers in the field is delegated to the Commander of Canadian Forces Northern Area (CFNA) and to the Commander of Land Force Command (LFC).<sup>15</sup> In 1998, five Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups (CRPGs) were formed to coordinate the activities of Ranger patrols in their respective areas of responsibility (see map below). Until 1998, the Rangers existed as a subcomponent of the Reserves. Reorganization into



CRPGs made them a total force unit, with each Patrol Group commanded by a major (Commanding Officer/CO) and a captain (Deputy Commanding Officer/DCO).<sup>16</sup>

### **The Rangers as a “Postmodern” Military Formation**

Traditional military institutions are quintessentially hierarchical and bureaucratic. Charles Moskos, J.A. Williams, and David Segal theorize that postmodern forces would be predisposed towards decentralization, and ascribe five fundamental organizational characteristics to postmodern militaries. First, they feature structural and cultural interpenetration of the civilian and military spheres. Second, less emphasis or differentiation is placed on service, rank, and specialization. Third, missions will focus less on warfighting and more on low-intensity humanitarian and constabulary missions. Fourth, theorists suggest that postmodern forces will carry out missions with multilateral rather than unilateral authorization. This idea extends to the fifth characteristic: that there will be an internationalization of military forces themselves.<sup>17</sup>

The following discussion interprets the Canadian Rangers using these general categories as guidelines for critical analysis. The Ranger organization, managed on a local/community level, relies heavily on the Indigenous knowledge of its members, rather than the assimilationist “militarization” and conditioning of members through the regularized training regimes akin to traditional, modern military formations. The recent focus on local humanitarian and surveillance needs clearly prioritizes sovereignty assertion over preparations to engage enemy insurgents. The force has also proven to be a sustainable way to accommodate First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in the military, providing a positive, practical connection between the CF and Northern communities.

#### ***1. Interpenetration of Civilian and Military Spheres***

The idea of the “citizen-soldier” lies at the heart of the Rangers. One officer wrote, during the discussions that led to the creation of the force in 1947:

We don’t want, and we don’t need, further organized military bodies supplementing Active and Reserve Forces but what we need is that small groups of specially adapted people take an interest in the defence of their country in order that we may derive the greatest benefits from their knowledge and particular facilities and it is necessary that they be organized to some extent; but I am afraid that if we try to make them too military we will certainly stand to lose by it.... If the ... interest [is] taken by the respective Commanders, ... and a great deal of benefit will accrue to the [Canadian] Forces and the country in general.<sup>18</sup>



The core concept is that citizens in isolated and coastal communities, far from the main southern belt of population, can serve as the military's "eyes and ears" during the course of their everyday lives. Rather than asking these individuals to leave their communities to join the Regular Forces or Primary Reserves,<sup>19</sup> they can make meaningful contributions to their country at home.

The perceived value of individual Rangers is directly linked to their civilian experiences and practices. First and foremost, a Ranger has usually lived in an area for a long time and is intimately familiar with the local people, terrain, and weather conditions. Second, he or she is (ideally, at least) working on or near the land or sea, and thus is in a position to observe unusual incidents. Third, a Ranger possesses certain skills and expert local knowledge that support the force's role in the CF.<sup>20</sup> Correspondingly, membership in the Canadian Rangers is distinct from the Regular Force and other Reserve Force units. The only formal entry criteria is that men and women who join are over eighteen years of age, Canadian citizens or landed immigrants, in good health, and willing to be members of the Canadian Forces. There is no upper age limit. So long as an individual can still perform their duties, they can remain a Ranger. Indeed, it is the accommodation and acceptance of social diversity and experience that makes the Ranger concept unique and feasible.

Apart from annual Ranger training exercises conducted by Regular or Reserve Force Instructors, ongoing Ranger activities are often indistinguishable from civilian practices. An excellent example is ground search and rescue (GSAR). Rangers often participate in ground searches for lost individuals or groups without the prior knowledge of their group headquarters. As the only

organized group in many isolated communities, the Rangers are singularly equipped to assist search and rescue (SAR) specialists, and their contributions generate significant media attention. In 1999-2000, for example, Rangers and personnel from 1 CRPG took part in 164 volunteer GSAR operations, one medevac, and one emergency rescue.<sup>21</sup> Without official authorization, however, the Rangers (even if they are wearing their uniforms) are not performing the task as Canadian Rangers *per se*; they are acting as private citizens and are not paid. Although this blurred line between their “civilian” and “military” identities remains vague, in emergencies individual Rangers act first and foremost as community members.<sup>22</sup> The Rangers also represent an important means of sharing knowledge within Northern communities. The potential loss of traditional skills, which are inextricably linked to Indigenous identities, is a persistent but growing worry amongst Northern peoples and policy-makers.<sup>23</sup> The quasi-urbanization of the territorial North since the mid-1950s means that younger people have not had the same level of exposure to traditional activities on the land as their Elders. In a constructive way, the Ranger program facilitates the transfer of Indigenous knowledge amongst members of a patrol, and thus supports the retention of traditional knowledge within communities.

The creation and expansion of the Junior Canadian Rangers (JCR) over the last decade fulfills a similar function. The JCR is a structured youth program designed “to promote traditional cultures and lifestyles by offering a variety of structured activities to young people living in remote and isolated communities.” The Rangers’ responsibilities with the JCR program support national goals and allow the Department of National Defence (DND) (in partnership with other government departments) to make meaningful contributions to the quality of life for young Canadians in isolated areas. “The greatest asset of the [JCR] Programme is its flexibility,” official DND statements explain. “It is a community-based and supervised programme that receives little direction from external sources. In this way, [it] helps preserve the culture, traditions, and activities that are unique to each community.” An adult committee works in partnership with a local Ranger patrol to set the curriculum: 60% is at the community’s discretion, and 40% (the Rangers Skills component) is directed by the CF. In short, local Rangers instruct and supervise Junior Rangers in close cooperation with community leaders. The meteoric growth of the JCR across the North demonstrates the appeal and success of this approach.<sup>24</sup>

## ***2. Multilateralism and the Inter-Nationalization of Military Forces***

“The norm for Western military deployments is now to participate with the armed forces of other nations in coalitions wherever possible,” Booth, Kestnbaum, and Segal explain, “in order to promote public support and display

the unity of the international community.”<sup>25</sup> If Canada is conceptualized as a multicultural society, then this logic can be applied to the Rangers, even though the force is not designed for deployment outside of their local areas of responsibility. After all, multiple “imagined communities” can occupy the same space simultaneously. In *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, Jens Bartelson explained that sovereignty has both external and internal dimensions – it can signify something *over* a territory and *within a given* territory. As the “parergonal divide” between the international and the domestic spheres becomes “increasingly blurred,” phenomena are increasingly difficult to classify as either inside or outside of the state.<sup>26</sup> In terms of “inter-nationalization,” M.J. Morgan explains, postmodernists do not view “difference or plurality ... as a state to be tolerated on the path to some unified ideal; on the contrary, postmodernism calls for a promotion of difference, and recognition that difference is an abiding (and desirable) existential quality.”<sup>27</sup> As the conceptualization of Canada has shifted to a multicultural mosaic enriched by gender, sexual, and other social identities, the political salience of distinctiveness has influenced military personnel policies.

The emergence of Aboriginal self-government, visibly embodied in the new territory of Nunavut, blurs the lines between governmental and “national” jurisdictions within the country. The Canadian Rangers overarch this reality. Mary Simon, speaking as a representative of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in 1994, emphasized that “the Inuit agenda for the exercise of our right to self-determination is not to secede or separate from Canada but rather that we wish to share a common citizenship with other Canadians while maintaining our identity as a people, which means maintaining our identity as Inuit.”<sup>28</sup> When Inuit members of the Rangers in Nunavut set out on exercises, for example, they are members of their local and regional communities as well as representatives of the Canadian Forces. Their self-administering, autonomous patrols, rich in traditional knowledge and culture, allow them to represent both their peoples and Canada simultaneously.

Given the rising profile of Aboriginal issues since the 1970s, the media tends to highlight the high proportion of Rangers of Indigenous descent, often referring to it as an Aboriginal force (usually comprised of Inuit). This article paints a similar picture. This characterization, which excludes or downplays non-Indigenous membership, is telling in itself.<sup>29</sup> After all, there are salient political reasons to trumpet Indigenous participation in the Rangers. First and foremost, Canada’s sovereignty claims in the North rely partially on the idea of Inuit historic and contemporary use of the land and sea. “Canada is an Arctic nation,” former Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark explained in 1985, and “Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic is indivisible. It embraces land,

sea and ice.... From time immemorial Canada's Inuit people have used and occupied the ice as they have used and occupied the land.... Full sovereignty is vital to Canada's security. It is vital to the Inuit people. And it is vital to Canada's national identity."<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, political scientist Franklyn Griffiths has pointed out that it is hypocritical to rely on Inuit without giving them both a say and a meaningful role in exercising control and enforcement in their homeland. They reside there, have an immediate and superior knowledge of the environment, are on the front lines of changes that affect the North, and have practical daily attachments to the land and sea. As a result, they need to be treated as partners directly engaged in practical stewardship.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, political scientist Andy Cooper has identified Indigenous peoples' rights as an area of state-societal tension in terms of territory and the "politics of identity and loyalty." He noted that the unofficial security discourse has shifted from the defence of the integrity of the nation-state to the protection of the essential rights of individuals and groups.<sup>32</sup> The federal government's application of the phrase "human security" to the North in key foreign policy statements<sup>33</sup> suggests that it has now become the official discourse, and supports his observations. So too does scholarship that stresses how "sovereignty and security policy decisions, in their immediate impact, have been and continue to be disproportionately costly to northern indigenous peoples."<sup>34</sup> Southern-directed megaprojects like the DEW Line disrupted socio-economic and cultural patterns and left toxic legacies. Furthermore, the





military's track record of activity was less than impressive, marked by reactive promises in the face of perceived national threats that were seldom matched by practical commitments. If this negative appraisal is correct, the Canadian Rangers appear to be an important exception in that cooperation and mutual goodwill continue to prevail.

Northern communities and peoples that strongly oppose other forms of military operations in the North readily accept land-based Ranger patrols. The federal government has elaborated reasons why it is not in the 'national interest' to push for the demilitarization of the Arctic region:

Demilitarization of the Arctic would make it more difficult, and perhaps even impossible, for our military personnel to provide defence services available to Canadians in other parts of the country. The Canadian Forces, for example, would be unable to conduct operations to protect our sovereign territory ... or to provide humanitarian assistance.... Additionally, the cultural inter-play of service people serving in our North has an intangible benefit in promoting a sense of national awareness among the military and those northern residents who come in contact with the military. A military presence in the North also provides Canada's Aboriginal peoples with an opportunity to serve their country and community through participation in the Canadian Rangers.<sup>35</sup>

Canadian Ranger patrols, by virtue of their locations and largely Aboriginal composition, are representative elements of the CF in this respect.<sup>36</sup>

All members of the Canadian Rangers are Canadian citizens. Nonetheless, their diversity embodies the country's multicultural identity. Although there are no official statistics generated, the 1 CRPG patrols are representative of the diverse ethnic composition of the North. The majority of Rangers in Yukon are "White" (as is the population itself). In the Northwest Territories, the patrols reflect the geographic and linguistic dispersion of Northern peoples. Most of the Ranger patrols south of the treeline are comprised of members of Gwich'in, Dene, Métis, and "White" communities. North of the treeline, most of the patrols are Inuit. In Nunavut, the Rangers are almost entirely Inuit and most operations are conducted in Inuktitut.<sup>37</sup>

The Rangers embody a partnership between peoples and ensure that Northern residents are represented on the front lines of Northern military operations. In a 2002 speech, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (Canada), stressed that "Inuit are proud Canadian citizens and our commitment to the country is enduring; and Inuit will hold up the Canadian flag." She used the Rangers as the prime example of how instrumental her people had been in exerting sovereignty in the Arctic. Inuit would not tolerate being seen or treated, and would certainly not act, "as

powerless victims of external forces over which we have no control.” They were engaged, from the local scale to the international.<sup>38</sup> The Rangers fittingly represent that the CF in the Arctic also has an Indigenous face, and that security and sovereignty are priorities for all Canadians.

### ***3. Less Emphasis on Service, Rank, and Specialization***

Militaries tend to represent the quintessential models for rigid, bureaucratic organization. Systems of rank and promotion, uniforms, and standardized training and operating procedures all serve to reinforce collective identities and hierarchies. “While the postmodern celebrates the diverse and the ephemeral,” Booth, Kestnbaum, and Segal observe, traditional military socialization “aims to eradicate individual difference, and to imbue a sense of tradition and the importance of commitment to the unit, to the nation, and to national symbols.”<sup>39</sup> In recognition that externally imposed norms are disruptive and generate resentment in the North, Ranger service is voluntary, flexible, and predicated on what someone can bring to the force more than what he or she can be taught. The military has come to recognize that the “normal” army way of doing things is not necessarily appropriate in the North, particularly amongst Indigenous peoples.

A Ranger patrol is rooted in its community, and operates on a group (rather than individual) basis. Each Ranger patrol is led by a sergeant, who is seconded by a master corporal, both of whom are *elected* by the other members of the patrol. So too are Ranger corporals, who command sections of a patrol at a 1:10 ratio. Elections are held in patrol communities on an annual basis and exemplify the self-administering characteristics of the Rangers. Patrol leaders are the only members of the CF who are elected to their positions, and therefore are directly accountable to their “subordinates” in a unique way. Furthermore, while “hierarchical” on paper, Ranger “command” can be less rigid in practice. Decision-making in Arctic communities is based upon consensus, and this is reflected in the patrols themselves. For example, Instructors explained that when they ask a Ranger sergeant a question in some Nunavut communities, he or she will turn to the Elders in the patrol for guidance prior to responding. In this sense, while the sergeant is theoretically in charge of a patrol, the practical “power base” may lay elsewhere. As a result, Instructors must be prepared to present their plans to the entire patrol: the best way to approach any challenge is to sit down and discuss it with a patrol, offering more explanation than would be typical in the south. Warrant Officer Kevin Mulhern suggested that the “mission-focus” mentality should be reversed when dealing with the Rangers: it was often better to explain what the military wanted to accomplish with the Rangers, and then figure out with them what should be done in terms of a mission. In practice, patrols are not tasked out of an expectation that each



individual can do everything, or that a leader possesses the strongest skill set, but that someone in the patrol has the skill set to conduct the patrol while it completes a given activity. As a result, individual testing is limited as an indicator of a patrol's competencies. These units tend to respond better to communal efforts.<sup>40</sup>

The military's acceptance of such practices, which seem rooted in Indigenous values and diverge from general depictions of a rigid, unbending military culture, shows a capacity for flexibility and accommodation within the CF that is seldom acknowledged by the media and by scholars. Regular and Reserve Force Instructors who undertake annual training with Northern patrols understand the uniqueness of the force. A flexible, culturally sensitive approach based on mutual learning, credibility, and trust is crucial to effective relationships. When stationed with southern Regular Force units, Canadian Army sergeants are trained to have their commands met without debate, when they demand it. There is an inherent rigidity in the philosophy of command and strict obedience. But this "hard army" approach does not work with the Rangers. Instructors cannot yell at patrols according to standard drill techniques, "dress down" and embarrass individuals who make mistakes, or demand unquestioning and immediate responses. There are cases where longstanding Rangers, and even Ranger sergeants, have quit on the spot when faced with an overzealous and insistent Instructor.<sup>41</sup>

In short, Ranger patrols cannot be compartmentalized into narrow categories of service, rank, and specialization, given the diversity of the North and the special skill set that each individual brings to the force. Ranger Sergeant Cory Bruneau explained that the Whitehorse patrol includes mushers, diving instructors, air search and rescue specialists, a master sniper, and a gunsmith – and nearly all of the Rangers worked more than one civilian job.<sup>42</sup> Although a vertical hierarchy exists for administration and training, practical activities are pursued in a more horizontal approach, exploiting individual strengths rather than formal networks arrayed by rank. Indeed, a Ranger's local status and competency cannot be defined narrowly by rank: respected Elders, chiefs, and mayors often serve in the Rangers, but generally not as sergeant, yet their influence is unmistakable. All members share a collective identity borne on the crest on their red sweatshirts, but this does not encourage them to suppress their individuality. Their diversity is a force multiplier, given their non-traditional role, mission, and tasks within the Canadian Forces.

#### ***4. Less Focus on Warfighting and More Non-Traditional Missions***

The 1995 report of the Special Commission on the Restructuring of the Reserves stressed that the fundamental role of the Reserves is to provide a mobilization base for war. This role does not apply to the Canadian Rangers, who are not expected to serve overseas: they are not even trained to be “deployable” outside of their communities or regions. Ranger roles are entirely oriented towards support for domestic operations. So how do they contribute to the Defence mission? The government's recent statement of international policy stresses that the defence of Canada is the CF's “first priority,” and that the Arctic is a region of particular concern:

The demands of sovereignty and security for the Government could become even more pressing as activity in the North continues to rise. The mining of diamonds, for example, is expanding the region's economy and spurring population growth. Air traffic over the high Arctic is increasing, and climate change could lead to more commercial vessel traffic in our northern waters. These developments will not result in the type of military threat to the North that we saw during the Cold War, but they could have long-term security implications. Although the primary responsibility for dealing with issues such as sovereignty and environmental protection, organized crime, and people and drug smuggling rests with other departments, the Canadian Forces will be affected in a number of ways. There will, for example, be a greater requirement for surveillance and control, as well as for search and rescue. Adversaries could be tempted to take

advantage of new opportunities unless we are prepared to deal with asymmetric threats that are staged through the North.

The absence of perceived conventional military threats is striking. The CF's "new approach" to domestic defence will include "familiar" (but non-traditional military) roles like SAR, disaster relief, and support to other government departments (OGDs); it will also fit into the government's strategy to protect against the terrorist threat. In this direction, the government committed to "increase their efforts to ensure the sovereignty and security of our territory, airspace and maritime approaches, including in the Arctic," improve intelligence gathering and analysis, and "dedicate specific resources – people, training and equipment – to enhance their ability to carry out domestic roles."<sup>43</sup>

The Rangers are seen as an integral component of the government's strategic vision. Their official task list includes the following:<sup>44</sup>

1. Conduct and Provide Support to Sovereignty Operations:
  - a. Conduct surveillance and sovereignty patrols (SOVPATs) as tasked (see Figure 2). In 2003-04, for example, the Rangers conducted over 162 patrols of various types in the Arctic, which contributes to CFNA's mandate to provide surface surveillance in its area of operation. SOVPATs also confirm that Ranger patrols can successfully plan and complete relatively complex tasks without direct supervision by a Ranger Instructor. Therefore, they help to build confidence for patrols.<sup>45</sup>
  - b. Participate in CF operations, exercises, and training. Rangers help other CF elements prepare for Arctic exercises or operations, provide local guidance, and teach traditional survival skills. Ranger participation in sovereignty operations contributes directly to re-establishing the diminishing Land Force operational capabilities in the North.<sup>46</sup>
  - c. Report suspicious and unusual activities that are out of character with the routine of an area. For example, Rangers have reported several submarine sightings since 1997 that have drawn significant media interest.<sup>47</sup>
  - d. Conduct North Warning System (NWS) Site patrols as tasked. Individual patrols inspect these radar sites periodically to ensure they have not been vandalized or damaged by wildlife. These patrols also expand CFNA's sovereignty presence because Rangers conduct surveillance as they transit the ground to more remote sites.<sup>48</sup>

- e. Collect local data of military significance, allowing military commanders to have a grasp of local assets available to conduct operations in a given area.

**Figure 2:** Types of Ranger Patrols<sup>49</sup>

Type 1	Ranger Training Patrol	Annual standard training for each patrol, consisting of classroom and field exercises.
Type 2	Ranger North Warning System (NWS) Patrol	Inspections of NWS installations by individual patrols.
Type 3	Ranger Mass Exercise	Collective training exercises conducted by two or more patrols (e.g., Operation Skookum Elan II, Quiet Lake, Yukon, March 2004).
Type 4	Ranger Sovereignty Patrol (SOVPAT)	Patrols tasked by CFNA HQ as part of the CFNA Surveillance Plan.
Type 5	Ranger Enhanced Sovereignty Patrol (ESOVPAT)	A long-range patrol tasked by CFNA HQ to a remote part of its area of responsibility. One ESOVPAT is conducted each year, involving 1 CRPG HQ personnel and representatives from various Ranger patrols (e.g., Operation Kigliqavik Ranger III to Eureka, April 2005).

2. Conduct and Provide Assistance to CF Domestic Operations:
  - a. Conduct territorial, coastal, and inland water surveillance as required/tasked.
  - b. Provide local knowledge and expertise. Rangers have recently acted as observers and guides during West Coast operations to counter illegal immigration, and served as advisers during Exercise Narwhal around Pangnirtung and Cumberland Peninsula in August 2004.
  - c. Provide assistance to other government departments.
  - d. Provide local assistance and advice to ground search and rescue operations.
  - e. Provide support in response to natural disasters and humanitarian operations. Although not intended as a “force

of first resort” like police, fire, and medical specialists, Rangers continue to support their communities in cases of domestic emergency. In 1999, members from eleven of the fourteen Canadian Ranger patrols in Nunavik (northern Quebec) arrived in Kangiqsualujjuaq in response to the massive avalanche. The extraordinary display of Ranger cooperation resulted in the Chief of the Defence Staff awarding a Canadian Forces Unit Commendation to 2 CRPG. Potential emergencies that Rangers prepare to encounter include a major air disaster or a cruise liner running aground.<sup>50</sup>

Several omissions are worth noting. Although the original 1947 list of Ranger tasks included tactical actions to delay an enemy advance, this expectation has been officially dropped. The CF no longer expects the Rangers to engage with an enemy force: indeed, they are explicitly told not to assist “in immediate local defence by containing or observing small enemy detachments pending arrival of other forces,” nor to assist police with the discovery or apprehension of enemy agents or saboteurs. Presumably, such tasks would put the Rangers at excessive risk given their limited training. Furthermore, the Rangers cannot be called out in an aid to the civil power capacity, given training limitations and the civil-military identities embodied in the force.<sup>51</sup> Given the positive working relationship that the Rangers embody between the CF and Indigenous communities, for example, a situation resembling the Oka Crisis could place the Rangers in a confrontation with militants and would have a severe, deleterious impact on their credibility.

The final Ranger task is the most general and basic – to maintain a CF presence in the local community. This is fundamental, given the reductions in Northern military operations over the last several decades and the DND’s commitment to having a “footprint” in communities across the country. The Rangers represent more than 90% of the CF’s representation north of the 55<sup>th</sup> parallel, and provide a special bond with their host populations. They are far more than the military’s “eyes and ears”; they are an organized group that communities can turn to for numerous activities. ... They are simultaneously citizen-soldiers and citizen-servers, intimately integrated into local community activities, ensuring that the CF is not socially isolated or structurally separated from Northern societies.<sup>52</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Criticisms about the lack of DND/CF presence and capabilities, foreign submarines prowling under the sea ice, and foreign claims to Canadian waters



dominate recent media coverage of the Canadian Arctic – and scholarly debate.<sup>53</sup> Seldom do we hear about CF “success stories,” particularly in the North. This brief article suggests that the Canadian Rangers represent an example of how the military has successfully integrated the promotion of national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based activities and local management. The Rangers represent practical partnership rather than shallow “consultation,” rooted in community-based monitoring using traditional knowledge and skills. They also promote cooperation, communal and individual empowerment, and improved cross-cultural understanding. To contribute to a safer and more secure world, the recent *International Policy Statement* noted that “military force is often required, but so too are negotiation, compromise, and an understanding of other peoples and cultures.” Indeed, the flexible and capable approach that the CF hopes to project abroad is also applicable at home.<sup>54</sup>

The Rangers’ “postmodern” characteristics seem particularly appropriate in light of concerns expressed by Northern Indigenous groups about the potential impacts of climate change and the concomitant sovereignty and security responses. The Canadian Rangers have garnered media accolades for more than a decade, and enjoy tremendous public and political support in Northern communities. If broader definitions of security can accommodate measures of military utility as well as community development and Aboriginal-military relationships, then the Rangers represent a success on several levels. By answering both military and societal security needs in a flexible, inexpensive, and culturally inclusive manner, the force represents a symbolic and



constructive working relationship with Canadians who would not otherwise be drawn into CF service. While allowing the military to maintain an inexpensive presence in remote regions, and serving as a highly visible expression of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, the Rangers fulfill operational requirements vital to the CF. These contributions, however, are only part of the greater picture. The organization also contributes to capacity building in the North by helping to create politically self-determining, sustainable communities. As identities are recognized and created through political changes in the “postmodern” North, it is imperative that the Canadian military and Northern communities are constructively engaged and foster the spirit of mutual cultural awareness.

As the Rangers evolve with their communities, there will be pressures to move along a continuum from a relatively informal, voluntary organization towards more formal and standardized structures. Their community roots mean that any transformations must be carefully monitored to ensure that institutionalization does not corrode the local foundations upon which the Rangers have been built. Intensified administration, if coupled with escalating expectations and sporadic resource commitments, could undermine the indigenous strengths of the force. The danger of overstretch is always a critical consideration. Trust is integral to the entire Ranger organization, as it is to all relationships in the North, and the military must deliver on promises, now and in the future.

Sociologists Booth, Kestnbaum, and Segal have cautioned that the transition to postmodern military forms should be as “modern” as possible: it should represent rational calculated adaptation. National military organizations should reflect continuity of the modern military with an openness to innovate and adapt to societal change.<sup>55</sup> In this light, the Rangers should be viewed as a stable, integral part of a comprehensive means of detection and control over Canadian lands and waters. They are not “combat capable” in a conventional sense, and therefore can only represent a piece in the larger puzzle of Northern defence. Nonetheless, the Rangers support the CF’s domestic operational tasks in a symbolic, cost-effective, and practical way. The Ranger concept is rooted in a partnership between the military and Northern communities – the CF’s “centre of gravity” in Northern Area – and the force’s “postmodern” characteristics highlight that military activities designed to assert sovereignty need not cause “insecurity” for Northern peoples. All of these variables are critical for the sustainable, integrated management of Canada’s sovereignty and security in an era of much speculation and uncertainty.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> CFNA, Operations and Training Directive 2002/03, June 2002, file NA 4500-1 (Comd).

<sup>2</sup> *Defence Strategy 2020*, quoted in Director General of Reserves and Cadets (DGRC), "CAN RAN 2000: A Review of the Canadian Rangers and of the Junior Canadian Rangers," 27 January 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Charles C. Moskos and James Burk, "The Postmodern Military," in *The Adaptive Military: Armed Forces in a Turbulent World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. James Burk (London: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 163-82.

<sup>4</sup> Charles C. Moskos, John A. Williams, and David R. Segal, "Armed Forces after the Cold War," in *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War*, eds. Moskos, Williams, and Segal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Bradford Booth, Meyer Kestnbaum, and David R. Segal, "Are Post-Cold War Militaries Postmodern?" *Armed Forces & Society* 27/3 (Spring 2001): 333. See their discussion distinguishing between postmodernity and postmodernism, 323-24.

<sup>6</sup> See P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: A Survey of English-Canadian Media Coverage, 1995-2004" (2004). Copy available from the author. The exception is in *The Maple Leaf*, where professional journalist Sergeant Peter Moon has drawn significant attention to the Rangers in northern Ontario.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Rob Huebert, "Canadian Arctic Security Issues: Transformation in the post-cold war era," *International Journal* (1999): 203-29; Huebert, "Climate Change and Canadian Sovereignty in the Northwest Passage," *Isuma* 2/4 (2001): 86-94; and Andrew Wylie, "Environmental Security and the Canadian Arctic" (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 2002). On Indigenous peoples and security, see also Marshall Beier, *International Relations in Uncommon Places* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> See Harry Bondy, "Postmodernism and the Source of Military Strength in the Anglo West," *Armed Forces & Society* 31/1 (2004): 31-61.

<sup>9</sup> See Kerry Steeves, "The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942-1945" (MA thesis, UBC, 1990); P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Guerillas in our Midst: The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942-45," paper to the Canadian Historical Association, University of Western Ontario, 31 May 2005, and expanded and reprinted as chapter 2 in this book.

<sup>10</sup> For a basic overview of the early years, see J. Mackay Hitsman, "The Canadian Rangers," DND, Army Headquarters, Historical Section, Report no. 92 (1 December 1960).

<sup>11</sup> See Kenneth Eyre, "Forty Years of Defence Activity in the Canadian North, 1947-87," *Arctic* 40/4 (1987): 292-99.

<sup>12</sup> On this period, see Robert Taylor, "Eyes and Ears of the North," *Star Weekly Magazine*, 22 December 1956, 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> R.J. Orange, House of Commons, *Debates*, 21 May 1971, 6065; Canadian Forces Northern Region (CFNA), *Northern Region* Information (n.d.), 16-18, CFNA Headquarters (HQ), Yellowknife, file NA 1325-1 (PAffO); Northern Region Headquarters (NRHQ), Untitled Historical Booklet, entries 31 July 1971, 18 November 1971, 13 January 1972, CFNA HQ, file NA 1325-1 (PAffO); *NRHQ Historical Reports* 1983, 5; 1984, 6; DGRC for CDS, "Canadian Rangers Enhancement Project," 30 May 1995, 1, NDHQ f.1901/260/4 (DGRC).

<sup>14</sup> Maj S.J. Joudry, NRHQ Study Report – Canadian Rangers, 27 May 1986, NR 5323-2 (SSO R&C), 12. Acquired through Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP).

<sup>15</sup> CDS to VCDS et al., "Role, Mission, Tasks of the Canadian Rangers," 20 April 2004; DND, "Canadian Rangers 2000," Draft 1, 15 November 1999 (hereafter "CAN RAN 2000"), 17; SCRR Report. The LFC commander, in turn, has delegated this authority to Land Force Area commands.

<sup>16</sup> Personal interview, Capt Don Finnamore, Deputy Commanding Officer, 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, Forward Operating Location (FOL) Yellowknife, 20 March 2000; Dwayne Lovegrove, Speech, Parade of 1 CRPG, Official Ceremony, 2 April 1998, transcript held at CFNA, no file listed.

<sup>17</sup> Moskos, Williams, and Segal, "Armed Forces after the Cold War," 3.

<sup>18</sup> Keale to Chesley, 9 July 1947, (H.S.) 112.3M2 (D49), quoted in Hitsman, "Canadian Rangers," 4.

<sup>19</sup> On the problems of recruiting Inuit youth away from Northern communities, see K. Eyre, "Custos Borealis: The Military in the Canadian North" (PhD thesis, King's College, 1981), 288-89.

<sup>20</sup> Maj D.I. Hay, "The Canadian Rangers," 8 February 1991, MARP 1901-2 (RGRS).

<sup>21</sup> CAN RAN 2000, 11. See also Lackenbauer, "Survey of English-Canadian Media Coverage," 102-53.

<sup>22</sup> CAN RAN 2000; CDS to VCDS et al., "Role, Mission, Tasks of the Canadian Rangers," 20 April 2004, released under Access to Information.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, CFNA FY 2004/2005 Level 1 Business Plan, 27 October 2003, 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Backgrounder, "The Junior Canadian Rangers Programme," 17 March 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Booth, Kestnbaum, and Segal, "Are Post-Cold War Militaries Postmodern?" 327.

<sup>26</sup> Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30, 247.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew J. Morgan, "The Reconstruction of Culture: Citizenship and Military Service," *Armed Forces & Society* 29/3 (2003): 381-82.

<sup>28</sup> Mary Simon, testimony before the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, 9 June 1994, 36:30.

<sup>29</sup> For a census of national and local media attention on the Rangers, see Lackenbauer, "Survey of English-Canadian Media Coverage." It reveals that media coverage of predominantly non-Aboriginal units in Newfoundland and British Columbia is sparse – they are obviously seen as less "special."

<sup>30</sup> House of Commons, *Debates*, 10 September 1985, 6462-64.

<sup>31</sup> Franklyn Griffiths, "The Shipping News: Canada's Arctic sovereignty not on thinning ice," *International Journal* 58/2 (2003): 278-82.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Cooper, *Canadian Foreign Policy: Old Habits and New Directions* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy* (June 2000); Remarks by Ambassador Shirley Wolff Serafini at the Human Security in the Arctic Seminar on 3 May 2004, Tromsø, Norway.

<sup>34</sup> Frances Abele, "Confronting 'harsh and inescapable facts,'" in *Sovereignty and Security in the Arctic*, ed. Edgar Dosman (London: Routledge, 1989), 189. This generalization rests on the idea that militarization inherently threatens Indigenous peoples' livelihoods and homelands – a prime example would be the controversy over low-level flying in Labrador and northern Quebec. Furthermore, much-publicized confrontations between the military and First Nations at Oka, Ipperwash, and Gustafsen Lake created the image of perpetual conflict during the 1990s.

<sup>35</sup> Government Response to Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade Report, "Canada and the Circumpolar World: Meeting the Challenges of Cooperation into the Twenty-First Century" (1999).

<sup>36</sup> Recent CF recruitment initiatives to increase the number of Aboriginal members attest to the importance of this representation.

<sup>37</sup> Interviews, Col Pierre Leblanc, Finnamore, and Sgt David McLean, Ranger Instructor, 22 March 2000; Backgrounder, "Canadian Rangers in Nunavut," n.d. (c.2002). See also linguistic profiles at Reserves & Cadets, VCDS, DND, "Canadian Rangers: Statistics," [http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/rangers/stats\\_e.asp](http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/rangers/stats_e.asp).

<sup>38</sup> Sheila Watt-Cloutier, "Inuit, Climate Change, Sovereignty, and Security in the Canadian Arctic," remarks to Canadian Arctic Resources Committee Conference, Ottawa, 25 January 2002, available online at <http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com>.

<sup>39</sup> Booth, Kestnbaum, and Segal, "Are Post-Cold War Militaries Postmodern?" 330-31.

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<sup>40</sup> Interviews, WO Kevin Mulhern, 1 CRPG, 26 February 2004; Capt Don Finnamore, DCO 1 CRPG, 20 March 2000; Fax, "Rangers Enhancement Program," 30 November 1995, 14.

<sup>41</sup> These conclusions are made based upon interviews with Rangers and Instructors in the North and BC in 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Interview, Ranger Sgt Cory Bruneau, 1 March 2004.

<sup>43</sup> *Canada's International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World – Defence* (Ottawa: 2005), 17, 20.

<sup>44</sup> This overview is based primarily on Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), "Role, Mission, Tasks of the Canadian Rangers," 20 April 2004.

<sup>45</sup> *Arctic Capability Study 2000*, 1 December 2000, NA 3000-1 (Comd), serial seven, 5; Maj A.D. MacIntosh, Briefing for MND: Canadian Forces Sovereignty Operations and Activities in the Canadian Arctic, 15 April 2005.

<sup>46</sup> CFNA Annual Report, 2002, NA 1630-2 (Comd), 4.

<sup>47</sup> David Pugliese, "The X-Files Come North," *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 August 2002, A1. For declassified DND reports, see ATIP A-2004-00327.

<sup>48</sup> CFNA Annual Report to CDS, 27 June 2002, NA 1630-2 (Comd).

<sup>49</sup> Commander's briefing, CFNA HQ, 27 February 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Annual Report #4 CAN RAN 2000, 12-13; DND Backgrounder, BG-00.005, "The Canadian Rangers," 8 February 2000; K. Davis, "CFNA CO sees North transform," *Maple Leaf*, 6 April 2005, 15.

<sup>51</sup> CDS to VCDS et al., "Role, Mission, Tasks of the Canadian Rangers," 20 April 2004, released under AIA.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, "Patrol protects trick-or-treaters from polar bears," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 26 October 2004; Dan Davidson, "Nourish respect for veterans, mayor advisers," *Whitehorse Star*, 13 November 2001, 4; and Lackenbauer, "Survey of English-Canadian Media Coverage."

<sup>53</sup> Huebert, "Canadian Arctic Security Issues" and "Climate Change and Canadian Sovereignty"; Griffiths, "Shipping News" and "Pathetic Fallacy: That Canada's Arctic Sovereignty is on Thinning Ice," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 11/3 (2004): 1-16.

<sup>54</sup> *International Policy Statement*, Summary – Defence, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Booth, Kestnbaum, and Segal, "Are Post-Cold War Militaries Postmodern?"



# 5

## Teaching Canada's Indigenous Sovereignty Soldiers ... and Vice Versa: "Lessons Learned" from Ranger Instructors

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For sixty years, the Canadian Rangers have served as the "eyes and ears" of the Canada's armed forces in remote areas, providing a military presence in isolated, Northern, and coastal regions of the country that cannot be practically or economically covered by other elements of the Canadian Forces. As non-commissioned members of the Canadian Forces Reserve, these lightly armed and equipped volunteers hold themselves in readiness for service but are not required to undergo annual training. Their unique military footprint in coastal and Northern Canada, managed on a community level, draws on the Indigenous knowledge of its members, rather than "militarizing" and conditioning them through typical military training regimes and structures. They represent a flexible, inexpensive, and culturally inclusive means of "showing the flag" and asserting Canadian sovereignty in remote regions.<sup>1</sup> There are currently 4,000 Rangers in 168 patrols across the country, from Newfoundland to Ellesmere Island to Vancouver Island, making them a truly national force. Of particular interest for this conference, Indigenous people make up more than 60% of the Rangers' overall strength, reflecting a strong and enduring Indigenous-military partnership rooted in cooperation and camaraderie.

Ranger Instructors are critical to this important group of Reservists. Based upon a series of interviews conducted with Canadian Ranger Patrol Group personnel from 2000-06, this paper provides a pioneering exploration of the roles and responsibilities of, as well as the "lessons learned" by, Ranger Instructors – the Regular and Reserve Force non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who train the Ranger patrols in their communities and areas of operations. Its primary purpose is to identify the personality traits and leadership skills that facilitate the successful instruction of Ranger patrols, with a particular emphasis on Indigenous communities. In simple terms, the standard approach to the training of Regular and Reserve Force units in the

south would not suffice, and a flexible, culturally aware approach is developed by Instructors who are willing to acclimatize and adapt to the ways and needs of diverse communities. Far from being an extended “hunting and fishing trip,” the professional soldiers who volunteer for postings as Ranger Instructors are tasked with tremendous responsibilities in a tough physical environment, and must learn to teach and build trust relationships with patrols in an adaptive manner that transcends cultural, linguistic, and generational lines. Their reflections on training Indigenous peoples in this unique element of the CF warrant serious attention.

### **Background on the Canadian Rangers**

... Although official statistics are not kept on the ethnic background of the Rangers, the membership tends to be generally representative of the host communities and regions. Five Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups (CRPGs) coordinate the activities of Rangers in their respective areas of responsibility. 1 CRPG is based in Yellowknife, and is responsible for patrols in Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and northern British Columbia. The membership in Nunavut is almost entirely Inuit, and most operations are conducted in Inuktitut. In communities like Taloyoak or Pangnirtung, where a high proportion of Rangers do not speak English, Instructors must work through interpreters. This slows down training, but is a practical reality that must be accepted.<sup>2</sup> The patrols in the Northwest Territories reflect the geographic and linguistic dispersion of Northern peoples: most patrols south of the treeline are comprised of Gwich'in, Dene, Métis, and non-Indigenous peoples; north of the treeline, most of the patrols are Inuvialuit. Although most Rangers in Yukon are non-Indigenous (as is the territorial population), Aboriginal people make up the majority of several patrols. 2 CRPG covers Quebec, with the vast majority of Rangers being of Inuit descent in Nunavik, Cree along James Bay, and Innu (Montagnais) near Schefferville. 3 CRPG spans northern Ontario, where most of the Rangers are Anishnawbe or Cree. 4 CRPG includes Aboriginal communities in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. 5 CRPG covers Newfoundland and Labrador, where Inuit and Métis make up a sizeable percentage of the Ranger force in Labrador. Working with these peoples requires an acceptance of diversity, adaptability to local cultures and geographical conditions, and awareness of local priorities and practices.

The Rangers' operational tasks remain centred on the basic premise that low-cost, localized “citizen-soldiers” help to assert sovereignty and security in remote and isolated areas. Official tasks in support of sovereignty include reporting unusual activities, such as unusual aircraft and unusual ships or



submarines, and unusual persons in the community; collecting local data in support of Regular Force military operations; and conducting surveillance and/or sovereignty patrols (SOVPATs) in accordance with Canadian Forces Northern Area's (CFNA's) surveillance plan.<sup>3</sup> Within their capabilities, the Rangers directly assist Canadian Forces (CF) activities in a number of ways: providing local expertise and guidance; advising and instructing other CF personnel on survival techniques, particularly during sovereignty operations (SOVOPs); providing a locally based and inexpensive means of inspecting and monitoring the North Warning System (NWS); supporting the Junior Canadian Rangers program; and providing local assistance to ground search and rescue (GSAR) and disaster relief activities. Most of the time, therefore, the Rangers are accomplishing their mission while they are out on the land in their "civilian" lives. Each patrol's sector of operations comprises an area with a radius of 300 kilometres, centred on the patrol's home community.

The operational focus now clearly prioritizes sovereignty assertion, disaster relief and emergency response, and community development. The days of the Ranger as a peacetime "guerrilla" soldier standing ready to engage and contain a small-scale enemy invasion in advance of Regular Forces is gone. The recent disavowing of this former role reflects a more sober assessment of the practical realities of the Rangers' potential contributions. After all, the Canadian Rangers are an atypical volunteer militia. To join the force, the only formal requirements are that an individual be at least eighteen years of age, be in sufficient physical health to undertake activities on the land, have a good knowledge of the local area around his or her community (or be willing to learn), and have no criminal record. They have no obligation to serve, and can quit the force at will. The Rangers are distinct from other Canadian Regular and Reserve Force units in other salient respects. The average entry age is over thirty, and in some communities, potential recruits must await the departure of their Elders for an open position. Furthermore, there is no upper age limit (except in 5 CRPG, which imposes mandatory Ranger retirement at sixty-five), and a few Rangers have served continuously for forty and even fifty years.

### **Ranger Instructors and Training**

The premise behind the Canadian Rangers is that they are well-equipped, experienced outdoorspeople, who need only minimal instruction in order to redirect their skills to benefit the community and the Canadian Forces. Consequently, Canadian Rangers receive only basic training, which seeks to augment their highly developed knowledge of how to survive on the land.... Canadian Ranger patrol leaders are responsible for the training and good



conduct of all the Canadian Rangers in the patrol, and are the point of contact for the Canadian Ranger Instructors from each of the CRPG (Canadian Ranger Patrol Group) headquarters.<sup>4</sup>

Ranger Instructors are members of the Regular Force (1 CRPG) and Primary Reserves (all other CRPGs) who train and administer the Rangers across the country. They do not receive any formal training to become Instructors, but the vast majority are combat arms specialists with extensive training and skills such as navigation and weaponry. Once in the field, Ranger Instructors bear tremendous responsibilities. There is extensive paperwork and liaison work with communities prior to Ranger training exercises; budgeting for cash, ammunition, weapons, equipment, and rations; and extensive preparations and planning for field training exercises. Plans and estimates are based upon the practical, learned experience of Instructors rather than formal trials. Once in the community, the Instructor's work is non-stop from arrival to departure, from purchasing fuel, to sorting out rations, to teaching up to thirty Rangers for ten days (in contrast to eight to ten personnel in a typical section in the south). The logistical and administrative responsibilities are much more onerous than for the typical combat arms sergeant stationed in southern Canada, and are designed to place the burden on the Instructor rather than the patrol itself. They are expected to be everything in one, from paymaster, to quartermaster, "to padre when a guy is not feeling so well."<sup>5</sup> Sergeant Joe Gonneau (2 CRPG) explained that Instructors need to be self-sufficient – there

is very little outside support on the ground, and he could not simply drive to stores if something failed to arrive. "When I am up there, it is just me."<sup>6</sup> At the end of annual patrol training or an exercise, the Instructor also must record all that has happened so that future Instructors can plan to reinforce strengths and correct weaknesses in the patrol. This is important, given the annual nature of training and the short timeline available to each Instructor to work with each community.

Because the structure of an individual Ranger patrol is rooted in the community, it operates on a group (rather than individual) basis. The local commander is a Ranger sergeant, seconded by a master corporal, both of whom are elected (in all but 5 CRPG) by the other patrol members.<sup>7</sup> Patrol NCOs are the only members of the CF who are *elected* to their positions. As a result, Ranger Instructors must be aware that the Ranger leaders are directly accountable to the other members of their unit in a unique way. Rank is not achieved but held on a conditional basis. Patrol elections, held in the community on an annual or periodical basis in most CRPGs, exemplify the self-administering characteristics of the Ranger force.

Although "hierarchical" on paper, the "command" in practice can be less rigid than would appear. Decision-making in most Aboriginal communities is based upon consensus, and this is reflected in the patrols themselves. For example, Instructors explained that when they ask a Ranger sergeant a question in some Nunavut communities, he (all are male in that region) will turn to the Elders in the patrol for guidance prior to responding. In this sense, while the sergeant is theoretically in charge of a patrol, the practical "power base" may lay elsewhere. In Igloodik (1 CRPG), one particularly respected Elder (described to me as "the" Elder in the community and "the king of the community") is "just" a Ranger. On paper, therefore, the Ranger sergeant has power and influence, but in practice this Ranger "leads" in most aspects. The distinction between formal and informal leadership structures is particularly salient.<sup>8</sup> Given these considerations, Instructors must be prepared to present their plans to the entire patrol, and the patrol may not be run in the traditional military sense.<sup>9</sup> In practice, Ranger patrols are not tasked out of an expectation that each individual can do everything, but that at least one member of each patrol can do anything that is required. Therefore, trying to evaluate individual Rangers as if they should be expected to know everything (as per standard individual assessments in the south) is less useful than assessing patrols as functional units. It is their collective ability to draw upon the myriad skills possessed by the group that makes them effective.

The military's acceptance of these unorthodox practices, which are rooted in Aboriginal values but diverge from general depictions of a rigid, hierarchical,



unbending military culture, indicates a capacity for flexibility and accommodation that is seldom recognized by scholars. I have argued elsewhere that the Rangers represent a form of a “postmodern” military organization predicated on inclusivity and acceptance.<sup>10</sup> This spirit of cooperation and accommodation ensures mutual intelligibility between the military and Aboriginal communities, and also facilitates reciprocal learning. “Just treat everyone with respect,” Warrant Officer (WO) Pete Malcolm (4 CRPG) explained, and recognize that everyone has something to contribute.<sup>11</sup> It is also noteworthy that Rangers in the Eastern Arctic have unilaterally added the word “voice” to the official motto: they consider themselves the “eyes, ears and voice” of the CF in their communities and in the North more generally.<sup>12</sup> The Rangers themselves have internalized their ownership of the force, which validates its status as a grassroots volunteer organization as well as a national military formation.

Due to the geographical, demographic, and operational realities in different regions, as well as the voluntary nature of the Rangers, the training regime is remarkably flexible. “Canadian Ranger training is not mandatory other than the initial ten-day orientation training for new members,” the Rangers website explains. “Specialist training may also be offered to assist Canadian Rangers [to] master and practice a new skill.” The explicit emphasis is on self-sufficiency and leadership, “as well as traditional skills – which are uniquely defined according to the cultural and historical practices in the local community.”<sup>13</sup> Given that Ranger NCOs have not taken courses like their counterparts in other CF units, and are not bound by the same education requirements, they also must be taught about how the military functions. This training allows the patrols to

perform their official tasks in support of sovereignty; to assist other CF units as guides, teachers, and sources of local intelligence; and to serve their local communities in search and rescue and disaster response.

At the same time, Ranger Instructors recognize that the training they offer not only serves the Canadian Forces' domestic mission, but also facilitates the trans-generational transfer of critical life skills within Northern communities. The importance of the time on the land to practice and reinforce traditional land skills has been highlighted in recent reports and media articles. "An emerging development that could impact on future Ranger operations is a noticeable decline in the transfer of skills necessary to live on the land," the 2000 Canadian Forces' *Arctic Capabilities Study* reported:

It is becoming gradually apparent that younger members of the Canadian Rangers are less skilled than older members in some aspects of survival in the Arctic wilderness. The reason for this can perhaps be found in cultural changes in the aboriginal communities but the impact for CFNA today, and into the future, is an increasing training requirement for the Rangers if they are to remain effective.<sup>14</sup>

If traditional Aboriginal survival skills are allowed to atrophy, not only will Rangers' skills weaken, but the CF's already limited ability to operate in the North will sunder. Ranger activities thus represent an important means of sharing knowledge of traditional survival skills within Indigenous communities. The potential loss of these skills, which are inextricably linked to Aboriginal identities, are a persistent but growing worry amongst Northern peoples. While most Rangers over the age of forty possess some knowledge of traditional practices, most younger Rangers did not have the same level of previous exposure. As a thirty-one-year-old Ranger sergeant in northern Baffin Island explained in the mid-1990s: "Often traditions are no longer passed on to the next generation in the North.... Until I joined the Rangers five years ago, I could barely build an igloo."<sup>15</sup> In this respect, the structure of the Rangers provides for the transfer of Indigenous knowledge amongst members of a patrol, and thus the retention of traditional knowledge within a community. By extension, the Ranger Instructor's role to encourage the trans-generational transfer of traditional survival skills is vital to the future operational integrity of the CF, which relies upon Northern residents for guidance and survival training.<sup>16</sup>

## **Ranger Training**

The course training package designed for the Canadian Rangers is really a framework that befits a flexible program. As a result, it is delivered differently in the various regions of the country. Various working groups have tried to devise

a standard training regime for the Rangers, but tremendous cultural, geographical, and regional variations make standardization difficult. For example, Ranger Instructors have found that Aboriginal communities in regions across the country demand different approaches to training. Yukon patrols with a largely non-Indigenous membership enjoy army hierarchy and direct command, meet on a regular basis even when the Instructors are not in town, and provide periodic reports to their CRPG Headquarters. By contrast, Nunavut patrols comprised almost entirely of Inuit will not respond favourably to authoritarian leadership and are less likely to get together without clear incentives.<sup>17</sup> Most Ranger Instructors stress that top-down command structures do not work in Aboriginal communities, where egalitarianism is a fundamental principle and communal approaches to decision-making are the cultural norm.

Studies on Indigenous cultural practices and cross-cultural relations help to explain the principles that Ranger Instructors associate with effective Ranger training and positive relationships in patrol communities. Rupert Ross, a lawyer who worked closely with Ojibwe and Cree Elders in northern Ontario, has explored “[Indigenous] reality” and Indigenous-Settler interpersonal relations. He outlines five “rules of traditional times” or “ethical commandments” in traditional Aboriginal culture. The “ethic of non-interference” suggests that to interfere with other people is rude and culturally inappropriate – it is a form of confrontation. In short, you are forbidden to advise or comment on another person’s behaviour unless asked to do so. Anger is not to be shown, and open conflict and displays of hostility should be avoided. Furthermore, Ross explains, “the traditionally proper way to show appreciation was to ask the other person to continue with his contribution rather than offer vocal expressions of gratitude” or individual praise. Communal praise was preferable, in that it did not embarrass someone by singling them out, nor could it be viewed as a threat to community harmony by raising one individual above the others.<sup>18</sup>

To understand how Indigenous people prepare for action in a dangerous or stressful situation, Ross identifies the “conservation-withdrawal tactic,” whereby a person intentionally slows down “to conserve both physical and psychic energy” and carefully reflect on the situation until committing to a particular course of action. While the Euro-Canadian cultural response is to take immediate actions, traditional Indigenous approaches eschew ill-considered or frenzied responses, which corresponds with traditional survival strategies. Finally, the notion that “the time must be right” for action reflects traditional subsistence and spiritual life-ways. In a hunter-gatherer society, Ross explains, “he who fails to anticipate, to adjust, and to strike when conditions are most promising will come home empty handed. That, in the survival context, could be extremely dangerous.” Traditional Indigenous values stress the need to take



time to contemplate various options, collect information, and weigh opinions before making a decision, which is ideally based upon consensus.<sup>19</sup>

Although Ross' reflections are based upon a particular region and cultural group, broad generalizations about Aboriginal culture suggest similar principles. Many of these insights are reflected in the observations made by Ranger Instructors, who have learned ways of working constructively with Aboriginal communities and individuals. Rather than forcing their "lessons learned" into a formal analytical framework, they are best reflected upon in a less formulaic manner which is more in tune with the spirit of the information that they provided in interviews and their experiences with the Rangers.

The tempo of Northern operations is much slower than in temperate climates, and time estimates and planning must accommodate this reality. Simply put, one cannot force the operational pace of the south onto the Arctic. Equipment failure rates are higher, and all activities require careful contingency planning. Cold casualty rates increase when troops stop after having been overworked to the point of sweating. Personnel carrying survival gear in cold temperatures burn off calories at an accelerated rate, and require time to eat compensatory meals that can take longer to prepare and consume. Of course, the stakes are uncharacteristically high in the Arctic:

The Canadian North in winter .... is not neutral: it is an enemy.  
Given the half chance it will cripple or kill a soldier as efficiently as  
an artillery burst.... The wise commander must minimize his own

“non battle casualties” if he is to remain operationally viable. Before soldiers can be expected to fight in such an environment, there are two important steps they must take. First they must learn to live there; secondly they must learn how to work there. Only when this learning curve is complete, is the soldier in a position to apply his trade and actually fight there.<sup>20</sup>

Soldiers’ survival skills are developed through experience and expert guidance. Unless one has spent time in the North, Ranger Instructors suggested, practical preparations are somewhat academic. Combat arms training provides a pivotal foundation, but soldiers must experience the North and be trained to live, move, and work in its unique climate and environment.

The basic rationale for the Rangers is that they are local experts because of their Indigenous knowledge of the environment and climate. Accordingly, Instructors must be careful not to press the patrol members to do things with which they are not comfortable. If an Instructor is too insistent on going out on the land or sea, even when conditions are unsafe, the Rangers will probably do so against their better judgment. Significant anecdotal evidence suggests that this can put the patrol members and the Instructor in serious danger. Success in Northern and remote operations more generally depends upon an awareness that uncertainty requires contingency planning, an acceptance of unanticipated delays, and attentiveness to local wisdom. It is critical for new Instructors to learn that, while they are professional soldiers with much to teach, they are likely the biggest burden – and often the weakest link – in terms of survival when they are out on the land for exercises or operations. “As a guest in their area,” WO Pete Malcolm (4 CRPG) reflected, “who am I to tell them how to survive and get around?”<sup>21</sup>

The key for Instructors is to learn how to become better listeners – to appreciate how Indigenous decision-making differs from non-Indigenous practices, and does not involve clear recommendations telling another person how to act. For example, First Nations Rangers are not forthright with suggestions, WO Malcolm noted: “you need to draw everything out of them.”<sup>22</sup> Decision-making often involves lengthy discussions that engage an issue from multiple perspectives and include the subtle emphasis of particular facts, but do not involve clear statements of points of view. Such discussions reach conclusions only after a prolonged “distillation” process.<sup>23</sup> As Sergeant Joe Gonneau (2 CRPG) explained to me, you cannot have a rigid schedule: “we run it at their pace.”<sup>24</sup>

New Instructors are challenged to be flexible and patient. When stationed with southern Regular Force units, Canadian Army sergeants are trained to have their commands met without debate, and on time. There is an inherent



rigidity in the philosophy of command and strict obedience. This “hard army” approach does not work with the Rangers. Instructors cannot yell at patrols according to standard drill techniques, “dress down” and embarrass individuals who make mistakes, or demand unquestioning and immediate responses. There are cases where longstanding Rangers, and even Ranger sergeants, have quit on the spot when faced with an overzealous and insistent Instructor. Some “infamous” Instructors are alleged to have demanded push-ups from Rangers who arrived late to training – something that commentators characterized as “stupid” given the requirement for equal treatment and the number of Elders in Ranger patrols. In short, WO Malcolm explained, an Instructor needs to display tact, particularly in Indigenous communities.<sup>25</sup>

While the Rangers have important skills, they also enjoy working with Ranger Instructors because they can learn a lot from the military. For example, in many communities, Rangers navigate through memory. They know the land through rock piles, snow drifts, and ice patterns, but do not possess the techniques to navigate outside of their traditional territories. Instructors teach them map and compass, GPS, and communication skills that expand the breadth of area in which they can comfortably operate. Furthermore, annual field exercises provide Rangers with an opportunity to go to parts of their area of operations that they otherwise might not visit, and they are involved in planning these activities to suit local interests. Sovereignty patrols, enhanced sovereignty patrols, mass exercises, leadership training, and shooting competitions also provide Indigenous Rangers with opportunities to meet other people from their patrol group, and also to visit new parts of the country. These experiences can be profound. Sergeant Bill Lapatourelle (1 CRPG) described how one of the Rangers from Resolute Bay had never seen trees before heading to Yukon with the Rangers. The Ranger went on to complain that there was “no scenery down south” because he could not see for miles around him: he had to get back to the tundra because he felt claustrophobic.<sup>26</sup>

Ranger Instructors need to have humility – an appreciation that they do not know everything. The first thing that WO Malcolm did when he met Kenny Johnson, a First Nations Ranger at Kitkatla, BC, was ask him to let him know if he was “doing something stupid” – breaching any cultural etiquette. When he first went into the community, he was the only “white guy” in the village. But after a while, he got to know people. He made a point of staying with the patrol commanders (particularly because there was no hotel in the community at the time), so he lived with them and got to know them. Soon he was invited to village ceremonies at the local school, filled with food and gifts, and he played bingo with the community at fundraising events. He was also struck by how many local Indigenous Elders had served in the world wars, reinforcing



that the community had a long history of service with the CF.<sup>27</sup> “You’re there to teach them, and they’re there to teach you,” 5 CRPG Training WO Dave Gill sagely noted.<sup>28</sup>

Instructors must also have an open mind and must be prepared for a tremendous learning curve. WO Dan Hryhoryshen (4 CRPG) described the “culture shock” he experienced when he set up the Kitkatla patrol. After a helicopter dropped him off in a ball diamond in the community and he offloaded his large load of equipment, he felt very isolated. “All of a sudden, the tables were turned on me,” he later reflected. “I am the White guy in town, in a combat uniform, representing the federal government.” He quickly learned to relax, be rather informal, and focus on building trust. “It is all about developing relationships with these people,” he explained. “You cannot behave like a bureaucrat.”<sup>29</sup> Sergeant Cyril Abbott (5 CRPG) offered similar advice to be flexible and accommodate their needs. “I find with these people, you’ve got to listen to them,” he stressed. “They know the weather, and they know the local conditions.” Rather than barking military orders at the Rangers, he advised that Instructors should “ask them to do something, you never tell them.”<sup>30</sup>

Sergeant Todd MacWitter, a Ranger Instructor with 5 CRPG, noted that Labrador Rangers do not follow fixed timings, so typical military schedules are problematic. On his first visit to Postville, for example, more than half of the patrol showed to training an hour late. When they heard the plane arrive soon thereafter, they promptly left to get their mail, returning at lunch as if nothing

had happened! "Forget everything that you learned in the military," he advised, "from punctuality to direct orders." If the Rangers want to take six lunches in a day, do not make this an issue if they still get the job done. They do not "rush" like southern military forces. It was also imperative to learn about patrol members, and vice versa. He explained that Inuit patrols took time to "warm up" to an Instructor, and that openness and a respect for their limitations went a long way. If there are older Rangers in a patrol, forced marches are not well advised. Furthermore, Instructors need to learn to adjust their approaches to teaching, recognizing that not all Rangers have the levels of education expected of Regular or Primary Reserve Force recruits. Instructors cannot rush through explanations, and should be prepared to take more time to explain themselves. "Just be yourself," MacWirtter explained, "be one of them, and try to explain it to them on their terms." Finally, he stressed that Instructors needed to be open to the Rangers' ways of doing things, given their expertise and local knowledge. Explain what you want to accomplish in terms of end results, and solicit their opinions. Instructors who proved unwilling to change and clung to an "old military background" approach to training did not last long.<sup>31</sup>

A sense of humour is also essential to work with the Rangers. Sergeant J-F Gauthier's (2 CRPG) first training exercise in January 1998 was most memorable for a joke played on him by the Inuit Rangers in Salluit, Nunavik. After leaving town for their field training, the group stopped for tea. Gauthier asked if he could go for a pee, and the Rangers said this was fine. He walked away from the group, and when he started to urinate, someone behind him yelled: "What are you doing, this is the land of our ancestors!" Gauthier apologized profusely, and was told to take a plastic bag and a knife to clean up after himself. "This land is very important to us," the Rangers insisted. When he kneeled down and started to clean up, everyone in the group fell down on the ground in hysterical laughter. When they returned to town five days later, everyone in Salluit seemed to know the story – the Rangers had reported it back in advance by radio. En route back home, when the plane stopped in Kuujjuaq, someone there teased him about the story. Gauthier could not believe it, but this confirmed in his mind that word gets around quickly in the North. Even when he visits Salluit today, someone still reminds him of this episode. He takes it in the fun spirit that it was intended.<sup>32</sup>

Good Instructors must also be careful never to embarrass Rangers. Teasing and cajoling are ways that Inuit and other Northern peoples teach their children and one another, but embarrassment is much more serious than in the south. Silence and "soft-spokenness," rather than casual "babble" and loud commands, resonate in these patrols. While they fully expect a new Instructor to "act like a White man" on his first patrol, the relationship must evolve on a

more personal level thereafter. Furthermore, Inuit teach by doing, and you “have to watch like a hawk” to learn. Although you can ask the Rangers questions (and they will answer), they will never ask an Instructor to do anything. As one Instructor explained, “if you don’t learn something it’s your fault, not their fault.”<sup>33</sup>

A flexible, culturally sensitive approach and a willingness to become acclimatized to the ways of diverse groups of people are similarly essential. Most Instructors stress that mutual learning, credibility, and trust are crucial to effective relationships with patrols. The best way to approach any challenge with the Rangers, WO Kevin Mulhern (1 CRPG) explained, was to sit down and discuss it with them. He suggested that the “mission-focus” mentality often should be reversed when dealing with the Rangers – it was often better to explain what the military wanted to accomplish and then figure out with them what should be done in terms of a mission.<sup>34</sup> In order to be effective, Ranger Instructors need to accept that compromise is a source of strength, not a display of weakness. This same spirit needs to be instilled in the Rangers: trying to mesh army culture with local culture requires mutual compromise.<sup>35</sup> No two patrols are alike, nor are the Rangers in a patrol a homogenous group. “The diversity is always there, no matter what the patrol,” WO Gill (5 CRPG) explained, and the Ranger Instructor “cannot be the one stiff person; they need to be adaptable and flexible.”<sup>36</sup>

Cultural differences between Instructors and the Rangers require mutual learning and flexibility. Former Ranger Instructor Dave McLean (1 CRPG) explained that culture could impede communication but that a policy of “firm, friendly and fair” worked well. He shared several examples of considerations that challenge conventional military norms in the south. In Inuit communities, there is a basic concept that “no man has the right to tell another man what to do.” While it is bewildering to see a group of Rangers stand around while another struggles with his sled, “teamwork” is not prescribed in their cultural practices in the southern sense.<sup>37</sup> Thus, although Rangers possess individual skills suited to their local areas, Instructors provide patrol members with training on how to work as a group.

This is important because the Rangers often represent one of the only organized groups available locally to help coordinate and participate in emergency response. “Canadian Rangers provide a range of specialized services to the peoples in their area,” the commander of the Northern Ontario Rangers explains, “including humanitarian assistance, local search and rescue, rapid response for disaster situations, such as aircraft crashes, and support for evacuation in natural emergencies, such as forest fires and floods.”<sup>38</sup> They act first and foremost as members of their communities, seldom waiting for an



official tasking before heading out to look for lost hunters, or helping villages cope with major disasters. On 1 January 1999, for example, members from eleven of the Ranger patrols in Nunavik responded immediately to news of a massive avalanche in Kangiqsualujuaq. For days they made vital contributions by supporting local authorities in rescue efforts, securing the area, and assisting with funeral preparations. Additional support was provided by patrols from as far away as Coral Harbour (nearly 1,000 kilometres to the west), where Rangers harvested and shipped fresh caribou to the disaster site. The Chief of the Defence Staff later noted that “without their dedication, the toll in human suffering would surely have been higher ... The leadership and moral support the Rangers provided in the face of this crisis was invaluable.”<sup>39</sup> For this extraordinary effort, 2 CRPG was awarded a Canadian Forces Unit Commendation.<sup>40</sup>

“If you are closed and don’t want to open your mind, you will fail,” Sergeant J-F Gauthier (2 CRPG) explained to me in a telephone interview in May 2006. “If your attitude is to learn and share, then you can succeed.” Instructors thrive when they do not prejudge the Rangers or their communities according to their own cultural assumptions. Northern communities are plagued by problems – from high suicide rates, to violent crime, to alcoholism and substance abuse – amply documented in scholarly and government reports, and often linked to colonialism and imposed cultural change. Ranger Instructors need to recognize that going into a community and insulting people about the source of these problems is not conducive to goodwill, and will not bring about meaningful change. Instructors need to take a longer-term view,

acknowledging that they can help to lay the groundwork for constructive social engagement by being open to different cultures, communities, and ways of life, and not coming in thinking they know all “the answers.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Final Reflections**

The Canadian Rangers serve a vital function in Indigenous communities that transcends the military, socio-political, economic, and cultural realms. They demonstrate that military activities designed to assert sovereignty need not cause “insecurity” for Indigenous peoples. Managed on a community level, a Ranger patrol draws upon the indigenous knowledge of its members, rather than “militarizing” and conditioning them through the regularized training regimes and structures of other CF components. This flexible, cost-effective, and culturally inclusive part of the Reserve Force represents a significant example of a military activity that actually seems to contribute to sustainable human development amongst Indigenous peoples. The Rangers are symbolic, practical, and rooted in partnership, all of which are important variables for sustainable, integrated management in an era of much speculation but continued uncertainty.

The threat of enemy invasion on Canadian territory remains remote, as it has been for more than a century. Nevertheless, the tempo of military operations in the Canadian North has begun to increase in recent years, and the new government’s election promises assert that it will continue to increase in the future. Climate change raises the potential for increased shipping activity; resource development initiatives, foreign tourism, and commercial overflights are expanding; and the potential for terrorists, organized crime, illegal migrants, and contraband smugglers to operate in the region have all highlighted the need for a greater military focus on remote areas. The Canadian Forces must maintain a positive working relationship with Indigenous peoples in order to conduct sustained operations, and credibility is essential. The Ranger Instructors who liaise with the Rangers in their communities serve as the most common interface between the CF and the local populations, and it is their professionalism that has secured the trust relationships that prevail with Northern communities. As the Rangers continue to mature, it is these CF representatives who will ensure that the organization evolves in a manner that is appropriate to the military and to these communities.

In the summer of 2002, historian Marc Milner wrote in the *Canadian Military Journal* that “few Canadians ever see a Canadian soldier, much less actually know one.”<sup>42</sup> This is not true of the many Indigenous communities that boast a Ranger patrol. Chances are that everyone in the community knows a Ranger, and communities are well aware of the Regular Force or Primary

Reserve Instructors who venture there on an annual basis. Training and exercises provide the Rangers with an opportunity to exercise their unique abilities and skills and to increase the collective capabilities of their patrols. By extension, the Rangers' positive role and presence means that their military training also supports the health and sustainability of their communities and cultures. Serving as a vital link between these Indigenous sovereignty soldiers and the military, Ranger Instructors deserve acknowledgement for their unique contributions to sovereignty and CF operational effectiveness in Northern, isolated, and coastal regions of Canada.

## Notes

This article could not have been written without the support of 1 CRPG, 4 CRPG, and 5 CRPG, as well as the Rangers staff and Instructors who shared their time and knowledge. Professor Jim Miller, the Canada Research Chair (Native-Newcomer Relations) at the University of Saskatchewan, and a St. Jerome's University Faculty Research Grant supported this research in 2003-04 and 2005-06 respectively. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Queen's Fellowship and the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies funded preliminary research in 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller elaboration of these themes, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia That Works," *Canadian Military Journal* 6/4 (Winter 2005-06): 49-60. For an introduction to the Rangers, see the official website at [www.rangers.dnd.ca](http://www.rangers.dnd.ca).

<sup>2</sup> DND Backgrounder BG-99.047, "The Canadian Rangers in Nunavut," 5 March 1999; interviews, Col Pierre Leblanc (CFNA) and Capt Don Finnermore (1 CRPG), 20 March 2000, Sgt Dave McLean (1 CRPG), 22 March 2000, and MWO G.R. Westcott (1 CRPG), 26 February 2004; telephone interview, Sgt J-F Gauthier (2 CRPG), 11 May 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The aims of sovereignty operations are to (a) demonstrate Canadian sovereignty by deploying forces to the territories; (b) exercise the Army's basic operations in any season; (c) exercise and evaluate the issued equipment in Arctic climates; (d) develop a cadre of soldiers experienced in Northern operations; and (e) provide challenging leadership situations. "Canadian Forces Activities in the NWT and Yukon 1997/98," 21 May 1997, Annex A, National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) f.4500-1 (G3). For more information on roles and responsibilities, see the Rangers' website at [www.rangers.dnd.ca](http://www.rangers.dnd.ca).

<sup>4</sup> "Canadian Rangers Training,"

[http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/pubs/rangers/training/rang-train\\_e.asp](http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/pubs/rangers/training/rang-train_e.asp), last accessed 13 June 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Interviews with MWO G.R. Westcott and WO Kevin Mulhern (1 CRPG), 26 February 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Telephone interview, Sgt Joe Gonneau (2 CRPG), 5 May 2006.

<sup>7</sup> In 1999, a fourth rank, that of Ranger Corporal, was created for two reasons. It allowed for the creation of patrols with representation in several communities or "detachments." It was also created out of Junior Canadian Ranger program requirements; at a minimum, it is the corporal who looks after this program in a community. Interview, Finnamore.

<sup>8</sup> Rob Marois, Ops O, 1 CRPG, Rangers Briefing, 26 February 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Mulhern.

<sup>10</sup> Lackenbauer, "Canadian Rangers."

<sup>11</sup> Interviews, Sgt Jeff Gottschalk (1 CRPG), 27 February 2004; Sgt Denis Lalonde (1 CRPG), 2 March 2004; Sgt Bill Lapatourelle (1 CRPG), 1 March 2004; WO Pete Malcolm (4 CRPG), 14 July 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Kuniliusee, quoted in an interview with Petty Officer Paul Smith (formerly 1 CRPG), 20 February 2006.

<sup>13</sup> "Intro – Canadian Rangers Training," [http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/pubs/rangers/training/intro\\_e.asp](http://www.rangers.dnd.ca/pubs/rangers/training/intro_e.asp), last accessed 13 June 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Commander's Assessment, CFNA FY 2004/2005 Level 1 Business Plan, 27 October 2003, 1-2. See also Bob Weber, "Rangers less at home on their range," *Globe and Mail*, 9 August 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Ranger Sgt Levi Barnabas, quoted in "Defenders of Canada's North," *Reader's Digest* (1997), quoted in *The Ranger Report* (30 October 1997), 13.

<sup>16</sup> For a scholarly example, see Richard G. Condon, Peter Collings, and George Wenzel, "The Best Part of Life: Subsistence Hunting, Ethnicity, and Economic Adaptation among Young Adult Inuit Males," *Arctic* 48/1 (March 1995): 31-46. The transfer of traditional knowledge is also a central tenet of the Junior Canadian Rangers program, which will not be discussed in this paper. For an introduction, see the official website at [www.rangers.dnd.ca](http://www.rangers.dnd.ca).

<sup>17</sup> Interviews with 1 CRPG staff and Instructors, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Rupert Ross, *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality* (Markham: Octopus Books, 1992), 12-35, 41.

<sup>19</sup> Ross, *Dancing with a Ghost*, 35-40. See also Rosalie Wax and Robert Thomas, "American Indians and White People," *Phylon* 22/4 (1961): 305-17. As Ross offers, "When Native people use the phrase 'consensus decision-making' I believe they are referring less to the fact that everyone agreed in the end than to the fact that the process of arriving at the decision was communal. It is akin to the process of 'joint thinking' as opposed to one where competing conclusions are argued until one prevails." *Dancing with a Ghost*, 23.



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<sup>20</sup> "Arctic Operations: Threats to Which the Canadian Forces Are Expected to Respond in Northern Canada," presentation to Canadian Land Forces Command and Staff College, Kingston, 22 October 1984, 8. Copy in possession of the author.

<sup>21</sup> Interviews, Gottschalk, Lalonde, Lapatourelle, Malcolm.

<sup>22</sup> Interview, Malcolm.

<sup>23</sup> This corresponds with Ross' observations in *Dancing with a Ghost*, 21-22.

<sup>24</sup> Telephone interview, Gonneau.

<sup>25</sup> Interviews, Gottschalk, Lalonde, Lapatourelle, Malcolm.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, Lapatourelle.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Malcolm.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with WO Dave Gill (5 CRPG), 21 February 2006. Ranger Master Corporal Keith Guy recalled during an interview on 6 March 2006 that "Dave Gill originally tried to make soldiers out of us, but we made him into a Ranger like ourselves."

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Sgt Dan Hryhoryshen (4 CRPG), 13 July 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Sgt Cyril Abbott (5 CRPG), 6 March 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Sgt Todd MacWitter (5 CRPG), 21 February 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Interview, Gauthier.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, McLean. In an interview, WO Pete Malcolm (4 CRPG) also specifically cautioned that Instructors should never berate Indigenous people in front of others.

<sup>34</sup> Interview, Mulhern.

<sup>35</sup> Marois, Rangers Briefing.

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Gill.

<sup>37</sup> Interview, McLean.

<sup>38</sup> CO 3 CRPG, "The Ranger Mission,"

[http://www.army.forces.gc.ca/3crpg/English/mission/mission\\_e.shtm](http://www.army.forces.gc.ca/3crpg/English/mission/mission_e.shtm), last accessed 7 July 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Jane George, "Nunavik Rangers Honoured in Montreal," *Nunatsiaq News* [Iqaluit], 30 November 1999.

<sup>40</sup> DND Backgrounder, "The Canadian Rangers," 8 February 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Telephone interview, Gauthier. For an introduction to Northern social issues, see *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, vol. 4: *Perspectives and Realities*, chapter 6: "The North," section 4: The Source of Current Problems, available online at [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sj28\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sj28_e.html), last accessed 13 June 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Marc Milner, "Whose Army is it Anyway?" *Canadian Military Journal* 3/2 (Summer 2002): 13.



# 6

## **If It Ain't Broken, Don't Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers**

First published as *Working Paper on Arctic Security No. 6* (Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and ArcticNet Arctic Security Projects, March 2013).

Sovereignty. Security. Stewardship. These terms lie at the heart of debates about Canada's contemporary Arctic policies.<sup>1</sup> They are also essential to understanding the Canadian Rangers and their contributions to their communities, the Canadian Forces, and their country – past and present.

Canada's extensive coastlines and vast Northern expanses have presented security and sovereignty problems since the Second World War. These regions have some of the lowest population densities in the world, combined with some of the most difficult climatic and physical environments in which to operate. Maintaining a conventional military presence is prohibitively expensive. As a result, the Canadian Rangers have played an important but unorthodox role in domestic defence for more than six decades. Often described as the military's "eyes and ears" in remote regions, the Rangers have come to represent an important success story for the Canadian Forces. As a bridge between cultures and between the civilian and military realms, the Rangers represent a successful integration of national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based activities and local stewardship. This practical partnership, rooted in traditional knowledge and skills, promotes cooperation, communal and individual empowerment, and cross-cultural understanding.

Since 1947, the Rangers' official mission has been "to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces." Over the last six decades, the tasks that they perform in support of this mission have become more complex. Their initial focus was national *security* – protecting their communities from enemy attack in the early Cold War. By the 1970s, their responsibilities became directly linked to the armed forces' role in support of Canada's *sovereignty* in the Arctic. Since the 1990s, the Rangers have also played a more visible nation-building and *stewardship* role in remote regions across Canada. They represent an important

success story for the Canadian Forces as a flexible, inexpensive, and culturally inclusive means of having “boots on the ground” to demonstrate sovereignty and to conduct or support domestic operations.

## **Background<sup>2</sup>**

... When Stephen Harper's Conservatives swept into office in 2006, they resolved to make the defence of Arctic sovereignty a priority. The Prime Minister's “use it or lose it” refrain tapped into primordial national anxieties about sovereignty and resonated with southern Canadians who believed that increased military capabilities could shield their country from the so-called “perfect storm” brewing in the Circumpolar North.<sup>3</sup> “We believe that Canadians are excited about the government asserting Canada's control and sovereignty in the Arctic,” Harper told a *Toronto Sun* reporter on 23 February 2007. His plan strategically aligned with his broader agenda to rebuild the Canadian Forces, and he hoped that strengthening Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic would be a major legacy of his government.<sup>4</sup> Many of the Conservatives' military commitments, announced as sovereignty initiatives, bore striking resemblance to unfulfilled promises made by the Mulroney government in the 1980s: a High Arctic base, an icebreaker, surveillance systems, and a promise to expand “the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers,” an unfortunate but revealing misnaming of the Canadian Rangers.<sup>5</sup>

The Rangers – habitually depicted as Canada's frontline sovereignty soldiers – have been highly visible in the recent spasm of attention paid to Arctic issues. Most commentators assert that Canada needs a continuous military presence to maintain Canadian sovereignty in the remote reaches of the Arctic Archipelago and over the Northwest Passage – a contortion of legal realities that nevertheless has significant political and popular traction. “The Rangers are our eyes and ears, and there's no substitute for boots on the ground and people living in the communities,” Brigadier-General David Millar explained during a tour of Arctic communities in March 2009. “Technology doesn't always work in the extreme conditions of the High Arctic. That's why nothing can replace the Rangers, and why I reassured them they are the vital link in the North for maintaining sovereignty, representing the forces and providing security for their communities.” According to Millar, the Rangers' red sweatshirts and ball caps have become “as symbolic to Canadians as the Snowbirds or RCMP.”<sup>6</sup>

Politicians, always keen to tap into symbolism, understood this. As political interest in Arctic sovereignty and security issues rose, pressure to expand the Rangers grew apace. “The Rangers are the sole military presence over large parts of the Canadian north,” the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence reported in 2006. “The Government has committed to a robust



presence in the North to maintain Canadian sovereignty in the region. Announcements of icebreakers, deepwater ports, [and] training facilities are welcome news, but the implementation of these initiatives is still a long way off. Until that time, Canadian security is in the hands of our Rangers.” The Committee recommended expanding “this valuable resource for national security” to 7,500 members by 2011.<sup>7</sup> The Committee offered no clear rationale for this number, nor an explanation of how an expanded force would provide Canada with greater security and sovereignty. The political calculus was simple: more Rangers would evoke an image of stronger security and sovereignty.

The need for action took on new urgency when a Russian expedition led by Artur Chilingarov, a bombastic Duma politician and explorer, planted a titanium flag at the North Pole in July 2007. Although Russia’s foreign minister later dismissed the act as a publicity stunt undertaken without Kremlin approval, the world took notice. Many Canadian politicians and journalists held up Chilingarov’s action as the quintessential example of Russian belligerence and an abject disregard for due process and international law.<sup>8</sup> Their response in turn spurred domestic and international fears of a “polar race” for frontier resources. Academics Rob Huebert, Michael Byers, and Suzanne Lalonde raised serious doubts about Canada’s ability to uphold its sovereignty in the face of external challenges. Reports that the Arctic contained up to one quarter of the world’s undiscovered oil and gas reserves amplified the alarm.<sup>9</sup>

Building on his earlier campaign promises and spurred by this external development, Prime Minister Harper announced measures to bolster Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic on 10 August 2007. He unveiled plans for a Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre in Resolute, a deepwater docking and refuelling facility at Nanisivik, and the expansion of the Canadian Rangers from 4,100 to 5,000 members. The Ranger expansion program had four objectives:

- to add new patrols and strengthen existing ones in the North and farther south where required;
- to put in place the command-and-control systems necessary to manage the expanded force;
- to formalize business plans for the Rangers' \$29-million-annual budget; and
- to support the Ranger Modernization Project, designed to address all aspects of the Rangers' uniforms and equipment.

The plan would cost \$12 million dollars more each year – a nearly quarter-billion-dollar investment over twenty years.<sup>10</sup> According to the Prime Minister's Office, the commitment would "significantly strengthen Canada's sovereignty ... [and] benefit communities throughout the region by creating jobs and opportunities and enhancing the safety and security of the people who live here."<sup>11</sup>

Media commentators uniformly applauded the prime minister's announcement.<sup>12</sup> "There's obvious potential to improve surveillance over a region claiming 75% of Canada's coastline using a force that's five times the size of our combat troop deployment in Kandahar yet costs less than the sticker price for three light-armoured vehicles," Don Martin wrote in the *National Post*.<sup>13</sup> The Rangers' cost-effectiveness had always been a key selling point, and so it remained.

Basic questions lingered. Why did Canada need more Rangers? Should the Rangers continue to expand along the East and West Coasts and in the Subarctic? What should grow: the number of patrols or the number of Rangers in existing patrols? Would new patrols be opened for socio-political or for operational reasons?<sup>14</sup> Canadians feared external threats to their sovereignty and security. Should the Rangers be trained for combat or interdiction roles? Did the Rangers need to be modernized to fit with the evolving security environment of the twenty-first century?

### **Stephen Harper's Inheritance**

The Canadian Rangers that Harper inherited were a clear success story, more numerous and well known than ever before. They had emerged from the shadows to occupy centre stage in the unfolding Arctic drama. After Operation Nunavut in 2008, reporter Bruce Valpy wrote that "just as sturdy stone inuksuit mark the territory of Inuit hunters, [Rangers] David Issigaitok, Douglas Nakoolak and Pitisulaq Ukuqtunnuaq are living symbols and not so secret weapons in Canada's Arctic sovereignty strategy."<sup>15</sup> The Rangers had become icons of Canadian sovereignty.

Large-scale military patrols, those that extended to the remotest reaches of the Arctic, received the most attention from the media and politicians. The Rangers' primary responsibility throughout the second half of the twentieth century had been to know their local areas. In the twenty-first century, however, their operational area extended far beyond their home communities. From 2007 onward, Rangers participated in three major exercises: Nunaliut in the High Arctic, Nunakput in the Western Arctic, and Nanook in the Eastern Arctic. The annual Nunaliut operations featured an "all-star" team of Rangers.<sup>16</sup> The Rangers exercised their skills, showcased their unique contributions, and worked with other elements of the Canadian Forces (and foreign military representatives on occasion).<sup>17</sup> Although other patrol groups mounted their own enhanced sovereignty patrols or expeditions to showcase their Rangers and raise their profiles, the absence of a perceived sovereignty threat meant that they drew comparatively little national and international media attention.

The sovereignty frame and Northern focus were typical of recent decades. The government's intermittent interest in Arctic sovereignty and security had generally dictated the military's attentiveness to the Rangers (in theory and in practice) since the Second World War. As Canada lurched from sovereignty crisis to sovereignty crisis, military interest rose and fell accordingly. The improbable threat of an enemy incursion on Canadian soil, strained defence budgets, alliance obligations, and simple geography precluded the Canadian Forces from maintaining a conventional presence over the entire length and breadth of the country. Having a lightly equipped, self-sufficient group of local experts to act as Canada's eyes and ears in remote regions had always made sense – and the idea fit the budget when it came to meeting sovereignty and security agendas.

The Rangers survived waning interest in their activities mainly because of their tiny cost, modest material demands, and grounding in local communities. The low priority given to the defence of Northern and isolated coastal regions meant, however, that the organization lacked a clear national policy and financial support for much of its history. By necessity, the Rangers developed a local and regional orientation. The unorthodox approach to recruiting and sustaining Rangers accommodated diversity. Commanders insisted that adopting national directives that failed to take into account their region's distinctive demographic, social, and cultural realities would undermine the positive relationships that grounded the Rangers.

This grassroots, regional approach had its own set of complications. For more than a decade, military studies suggested that the persistent confusion over command and control hindered the organization's growth. In operational

terms, the Rangers fell under the command of their patrol group headquarters after 1997. (The “areas” owned the patrol groups and directed operations.) Less clear was who controlled the Canadian Rangers as a “national program providing a channel for governmental presence in remote communities, a bridge between the Canadian Forces and aboriginal peoples, and participating in a vital and successful youth program.” The decentralized command structure worked on an operational level, but it lacked a central authority to coordinate and oversee enhancement and expansion on a national scale. The Chief of Review Services cautioned in 2003 that “different interpretations of directives, different levels of oversight and even different views of the program’s *raison d’être*, place what is generally accepted as a vital national program in some jeopardy, especially as the program becomes more complex as it inevitably will.”<sup>18</sup>

To solve the problem, the Chief of Review Services recommended the creation of the Canadian Ranger National Authority (CRNA), which would issue national directions on nonoperational elements but leave the command of the units to the Land Force areas and Canadian Forces Northern Area. The Armed Forces Council approved the idea, but before the idea could be implemented, the Canadian Forces announced that it would overhaul its entire command structure in June 2005. The new blueprint created Canada Command, which would be responsible for domestic and continental operations and oversee six regional joint task forces. This fundamentally changed how the military viewed Canada as an operational command – as well as the perceived operational value of the Rangers. Consequently, on 1 April 2007, the Canadian Rangers returned to the Canadian Army. The Chief of the Land Staff assumed responsibility for setting standards for Ranger readiness and employment (as the force generator) to meet Canada Command’s operational needs (as the force employer). This development brought some cohesiveness to the organization and paved the way for consistent recruitment, training, equipping, and administrative support. Although each patrol group remained under the command of its respective land force area or joint task force, the transfer to the Army gave them a clearer identity within the military hierarchy.<sup>19</sup>

The Rangers’ modest uniforms and equipment marked their unique place in the Canadian Forces. Their red sweatshirts are associated with honour and respect in their communities and across the country. Their .303 Lee Enfield rifles – issued since 1947 and respected for their reliability in some circles and ridiculed as relics of a bygone era in others – likewise distinguish them. When journalists characterized the Rangers as “ragtag forces,”<sup>20</sup> they were really using them as a means to deride the military’s weak Arctic capabilities. Some outside





commentators misread the modest uniforms and kit as evidence that the military valued the Rangers less than other Reservists, but they could also interpret their lack of uniformity as an acceptance of diversity. Journalists relished opportunities to depict Rangers in stereotypical costumes: sealskin mukluks, fur-trimmed hoods, wolverine mitts, or weather-beaten rainwear. The Rangers' self-sufficiency, borne of adaptation to unique environments, was, and remains, a key part of their mystique. They serve as a touchstone to a way of life unimaginable to most Canadians living in southern, urban centres.

Popular descriptions of the Rangers emphasized their Aboriginal composition and typically equated Rangers with Inuit defending their homeland.<sup>21</sup> In the spectacle of the media and in political discourse, the most appropriate boots on the ground were mukluks on the tundra, planted during regular hunting activities or sovereignty patrols. As Sheila Watt-Cloutier, the president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (Canada) in 2002, explained, "Inuit are proud Canadian citizens and our commitment to the country is enduring; and Inuit will hold up the Canadian flag." She in turn held up the Rangers as the primary example of how instrumental her people had been in Canada's attempts to assert sovereignty in the Arctic. Inuit would not tolerate being seen or treated, and would certainly not act, "as powerless victims of external forces over which we have no control."<sup>22</sup>

Readers of the Inuit publication *Naniiliqpita* learned in early 2006 that the Rangers gave Inuit a critical and direct role: "I get a little tickle in the back of my neck when I think about [the Canadian Forces] depending on us," Ranger Abraham Kudlu of Pond Inlet explained. "This is important to Inuit because we've never had much military presence here. It makes us feel more like

Canadians.” The Rangers themselves had no question that their role, mission, and tasks remained appropriate. “We hunt here so I want to keep this as ours,” explained Ranger Norm Simonie, also with the Pond Inlet patrol. “This is our hunting area for muskox, walrus, beluga, polar bear, [and] rabbits.” Nunavut Commissioner Ann Hanson described the Rangers’ vital importance and how their knowledge of land, sea, and skies had inspired Nunavummiut. “Every time I go into a community,” she observed, “I see the respect and admiration of their peers. They have the skills for survival.”<sup>23</sup>

The Canadian Rangers represent both Canada’s military presence in the North and a national strategy that engages Northerners directly, accommodating both Prime Minister Harper’s characterization of sovereignty as a simple matter of “use it or lose it” and Inuit leaders’ appeals to the Canadian government to “use the Inuit.”<sup>24</sup> Interest in their homelands is not transient, their commitment does not vacillate according to the whims of the South’s political agenda,<sup>25</sup> and their activities reflect the interests of both the military and their communities. The Rangers build capacity, embody the idea of sovereignty as stewardship, and are neither reactionary nor alarmist in their design or operations. Furthermore, the organization’s established record of operations, extending back over more than half a century, affirms the interconnectedness between Aboriginal knowledge, identities, and practices, on the one hand, and the nation’s interest in exercising its sovereignty on a continuous basis, on the other.

The Rangers’ practical contributions to their communities – not only in the Far North but from coast to coast to coast – reflect roles and responsibilities that transcend the national, regional, and local scales. The benefits of the community-military relationship flow both ways: the military receives local expertise, traditional knowledge about lands and waters, and practical support for activities in “extreme environments.” Local people benefit from modest pay, training and operational experience, leadership development, and public recognition of their contributions to sovereignty and security. “Both the Canadian Ranger and the Junior Canadian Ranger programs are strong and effective in the North and make a real contribution to local safety, national sovereignty and preservation of land skills,” Jackie Jacobson, the representative for Nunakput, told the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in 2008.<sup>26</sup> As a long-standing member of the Rangers and the patrol sergeant in Tuktoyaktuk, he was well situated to make this case.

How do you improve upon a success story without changing the essential characteristics that made the organization a success in the first place?<sup>27</sup> To preserve trust, expectations that grow during an upswing must be sustained during a downswing. How do you balance the needs of a community-based

organization with regional agendas and those of the nation? As political and popular interest in the Rangers grew – and as more resources flowed into expansion, operations, equipment, and training – decision-makers had to confront basic questions debated since the early postwar period: What should the Rangers be expected to do? Where should they be located? Who should participate? How should they be organized? And how does Ranger service fit with Canada's evolving military and civic identities?

## **Expansion**

The Harper government promised to expand the Canadian Rangers to an average paid strength of 5,000 members by fiscal year 2011-12.<sup>28</sup> There is no evidence that increasing the Rangers' size would have any effect on the Canadian Forces' ability to fulfill its mission. 5,000 Rangers would not provide more security or more sovereignty than 4,200 Rangers. By championing Ranger expansion, however, the new government could claim an existing success story as its own.

The genesis for Ranger growth did not come from the Department of National Defence, where staff officers had little advance notice of Prime Minister Harper's announcement. In fact, some patrol groups thought numbers would only increase in 1 CRPG, given that the media and political announcements had trumpeted Ranger expansion as part of the government's Arctic sovereignty agenda. Central authorities quickly clarified that the military would expand the organization nationwide.<sup>29</sup> Based upon its operational requirements, Canada Command prioritized new patrols in British Columbia, Ontario, the Territorial North, and the Prairie provinces.<sup>30</sup>



Despite the government's strong Arctic sovereignty focus, 1 CRPG would see the smallest percentage of overall growth. This weighting reflected the Rangers' general evolution since the 1970s. Arctic sovereignty and security crises usually prompted Ranger growth, but actual expansion extended beyond settlements along the Northwest Passage and in the Arctic Archipelago, where some commentators suggested that Canadian sovereignty remained precarious. The Rangers already had a permanent footprint in all of the High Arctic communities by the early 1990s. This footprint, coupled with simple demographics, limited expansion possibilities north of the treeline. Captain Conrad Schubert, the deputy commanding officer of 1 CRPG, reported in October 2007 that "military membership in the North ... is already more than five times the national Canadian average with 1.44% of northerners serving as Canadian Rangers against 0.27% of Canadians serving in the Regular Force and all other reserve components."<sup>31</sup> Every community in Nunavut had a patrol except Bathurst Inlet – an Inuit outpost in the Kitikmeot region with no population, according to the 2006 census.<sup>32</sup> Five communities south of the treeline in the Northwest Territories and Yukon could, potentially, accommodate new patrols.<sup>33</sup> These patrols could hardly be justified on the grounds that they would bolster Canada's sovereignty against threats to its maritime domain in the Far North.

The Rangers could expand in the Arctic by recruiting more people into existing patrols. This approach would ensure (in theory at least) that each patrol would "make a credible presence if called on in an emergency or for training." Once again, local demographics constrained that possibility. The average strength of patrols in 1 CRPG was twenty-seven Rangers in late 2007. This meant that, in many communities, most able-bodied adult members already participated. In patrols with a waiting list, raising the authorized limit from thirty to forty Rangers would open up new spaces. Accordingly, Schubert produced a theoretical total of 2,400 potential Rangers in the Territorial North.<sup>34</sup> 1 CRPG eventually settled on a more modest target of 1,800 Rangers in sixty patrols by 2012.<sup>35</sup>

This expansion plan met with a mixed response at the patrol level. When 1 CRPG cleaned up its administrative files and removed inactive personnel from its nominal roll in 2009, its Ranger strength actually decreased by 300 members. Although this did not surprise local patrol commanders, they now faced pressure to make up "lost ground" in addition to expanding their membership more generally. Some long-serving Rangers expressed concern that increasing numbers for arbitrary political reasons could actually dilute the quality of recruits and destroy the fabric of their patrols. As self-administered units, many patrols managed to strike a healthy balance between youth and

experience. A rapid influx of people without experience on the land or the right chemistry with existing Rangers could lessen the patrol's ability to respond confidently in an emergency.<sup>36</sup> The long-term implications remain unclear, but 1 CRPG is set to exceed its expansion quota, indicating (numerically at least) that the growth plan has proven successful.<sup>37</sup>

The national attention directed towards Rangers in the Territorial North conceals the simple reality that expansion plans after 2007 focused on Rangers "south of sixty." Indeed, two-thirds of the expanded Ranger organization would be located in the provinces.<sup>38</sup> Defence planners had previously hesitated to authorize new patrols in the Subarctic, which faced no perceived sovereignty threat. National Defence Headquarters had invoked Operation Pause in 2003 precisely to ensure that regional socio-political agendas, developed by individual patrol group commanders, did not propel Ranger growth. The political imperative to reach a national target set by the prime minister himself trumped these concerns. The restraints were lifted.

The overall impact of this latest round of Ranger expansion remains to be seen. Once the organization reaches an active strength of 5,000 Rangers, it will have reached the authorized ceiling set in 1947 for the first time – a political triumph.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, one wonders if the old maxim from the early postwar period still rings true: having the right Rangers in the right locations, doing the right things, is more important than having more of them.<sup>40</sup>



## Operational Roles

Are the Rangers doing the right things? Since the Second World War, military officials have debated the Rangers' role, mission, and tasks. History reveals a litany of enhancement proposals. Some officials wanted more Ranger training, others more equipment, and still others a more orthodox military structure. Bold plans to reconstitute the Rangers as a typical Regular or Reserve Force unit have never come to fruition. Typically, authorities in Ottawa cast aside ambitious plans because of their cost. For years, the patrol groups operated on subsistence funding augmented by money from their respective land force or joint task force headquarters.<sup>41</sup> With the federal government's commitment to dramatically increased funding and its promise to enhance the Rangers, is it time to update their responsibilities?

The Rangers evolved from simply being the military's eyes and ears to serving operational, socio-political, and representational functions. Patrol group commanders continue to debate whether the operational or the social dimension should take priority, and commentators from outside the military have joined the discussion. Seldom do their proposals display an appreciation for how and why the Rangers took their unique form or how the Rangers' role, mission, and tasks translate across national, regional, and local scales – for both military and civilian partners. Instead, various stakeholders have pushed to repackage the Rangers into a form that fits their agendas, without recognizing the broader implications for the organization.

First and foremost, Aboriginal advocacy groups hold strong opinions about what the Rangers are and what they should become. Their perceptions align with the four pillars of Canada's Northern strategy as well as their calls for a deeper understanding of sovereignty than simply "use it or lose it."<sup>42</sup> Mary Simon, the leader of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, which represents the 55,000 Inuit in Canada, insisted in 2007 that Canada needed more than new Arctic patrol ships to prove that "sovereignty begins at home." Suicide rates, respiratory diseases from overcrowded housing, unfulfilled land claims provisions, and global climate change all pose more serious challenges to Inuit communities than external military threats. "It is sometimes said that war is too important to be left to the generals," Simon wrote. "In Canada's case, Arctic sovereignty is too important to be treated as just an adjunct to foreign relations or as a stage for foreign investment. It must be built from the inside out. The bedrock of Canada's status as an Arctic nation is the history of use and occupation of Arctic lands and waters by Inuit for thousands of years." Simon's practical program of action suggested ways "to goose up Arctic surveillance at a fraction of the cost" of new naval vessels. She included within her list the dramatic expansion of the Canadian Rangers.<sup>43</sup>





Northern Aboriginal groups tout the Rangers as a key component of an integrated Arctic strategy that can contribute positively to isolated communities. The Rangers confirm how Aboriginal people “continue through use and occupancy to assert sovereignty in quiet ways.”<sup>44</sup> Ranger service meshes well with messages of Aboriginal patriotism, cultural viability, capacity building, and community sustainability. As a result, spokespersons have promoted transforming the military-community partnership to create jobs and to effect socio-political change. Why not have the military hire full-time Rangers to alleviate unemployment in Arctic communities rather than paying transient southern troops to fly North on sovereignty exercises?<sup>45</sup> Why not recast the Rangers as a work-training program? Nunavut Senator Willie Adams observed that “boosting the Rangers’ abilities could lead to more jobs for Inuit, who could work on ships and in the Canadian Coast Guard.”<sup>46</sup> In Pond Inlet, settlement manager Malachi Arreak argued that “we want our Rangers trained to be pilots, military specialists, search and rescue technicians, anything to create jobs.”<sup>47</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami called for “a re-conceptualization and expansion of the Arctic Rangers program [*sic*]” so that the Rangers’ official tasks would include environmental monitoring, supplying country food to communities, providing “work for those unqualified or unable to work in wage employment, particularly in small communities,” and sustaining land-based skills, cultures, and languages.<sup>48</sup>

Rangers already perform many of these tasks. The net result of formalizing this vision, however, would be the transformation of the Rangers into a military workfare program directed at Aboriginal communities.<sup>49</sup> The Rangers are not an Aboriginal program, even if some military officers, journalists, and politicians have characterized them as such. The Rangers are a subcomponent of the Canadian Forces Reserves. Proposals to recast them as a socio-economic program, however well intentioned, threaten to erode the Rangers' relationships with and within the Canadian Forces. Their credibility with the broader military community – one half of their identity – is at stake.

Rising expectations in regard to the Rangers' operational role may also pull them away from community activities and local service, the other half of their identity. In 1 CRPG, the heightened tempo of activity, coupled with shortages of clerks and Ranger Instructors, began to have direct effects on the ground. Ranger Instructors had managed to insulate the Rangers from staffing shortages in the past, but they could not contain the impact of a deluge of extra taskings in 2009. Rangers learned that 1 CRPG would not support the Yukon River Quest, the Yukon Quest, or territorial shoots in the upcoming year. These important regional and community events fell below sovereignty operations and implementing a new national training program on the list of priorities.<sup>50</sup> Rangers took offence. They had built and maintained the Yukon Quest trails as an official military exercise for seventeen years and considered the task an important way to exercise their skills, publicize their contributions, and support a Yukon tradition.<sup>51</sup> They questioned whether the third pillar of Ranger tasks – that of maintaining a Canadian Forces presence in the community – had become less important than politically motivated growth plans hatched in Ottawa. After a change in patrol group leadership, Ranger support for the





Yukon Quest and similar community-based events resumed in 2011.<sup>52</sup>

Although these situations reinforced the need for a careful balance between operational and community roles, concerns about Arctic sovereignty and security renewed debates about whether the Rangers should evolve into a more typical military unit and receive more conventional training. Photographs of Rangers in Zodiac skiffs participating alongside southern troops in beach landings during Operation Nanook in 2009 suggested a tactical role, but the Rangers officially served as guides and as “predator control” during the exercise.<sup>53</sup> Back in the 1950s, Ranger liaison officers in Newfoundland and Quebec had cautioned that Ranger activities during army exercises could set up unrealistic expectations and distort perceptions about roles. Was imagery of Rangers operating alongside combat-ready soldiers during high-profile sovereignty operations having the predicted effect a half century later?

In a world where perception often matters more than reality, some commentators believed that the military should better prepare the Rangers for combat. Unaware of previous proposals to improve the Rangers and oblivious as to why the Rangers’ responsibilities and relationships had evolved to their present form, these pundits downplayed the Rangers’ practical contributions while propagating the idea that without more formal training they would not, and could not, contribute to Canadian sovereignty or security. One former intelligence officer scolded the Canadian Forces for vesting its Arctic defence responsibilities in Reservists, particularly the Rangers, who, despite “the flow of public affairs ink at National Defence,” were “nowhere near being a serious military presence in the region.”<sup>54</sup> This observation reflects historical debates about amateur versus professional soldiering as much as it is a critique of the Rangers themselves. Geographer and popular author James Raffan asserted that “the Rangers’ sovereignty patrols on snowmachines are something of legend, but for all their virtues, this willing band of some 4,000 part-time armed reservists in 163 communities across the North hasn’t the training or the equipment to consider any kind of interdiction, in winter or summer, on the open sea, where the only real tests to Canadian sovereignty will occur.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, unless they could enforce Canadian laws themselves, the Rangers had little value.

Other commentators went further in their calls to professionalize the Rangers. John Ralston Saul, renowned author and formerly Canada’s vice-regal consort, told an audience in Montreal in 2010, “I think if you asked any Canadian officer in any one of the three services they would tell you that the defence of the Arctic must primarily be civil, although there is a real need for a military presence ... There is a very real need not simply to enlarge the Canadian Rangers – the one truly Northern force – but to formalize them as a

Regiment with Inuit and other Northerners in its officer-level leadership.”<sup>56</sup> Without explaining how or why formalization would improve the organization, Saul’s solution sought to correct the “perfectly colonial” way in which Rangers reported to “southern commands.”<sup>57</sup> He did not explain how command and control actually functioned or acknowledge the military hierarchy’s respect for and unique relationship with the Rangers’ patrol-level leadership.

Parliamentary committees provided similar lines of advice. In April 2009, the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans recommended that the military should make the Rangers “an integral part of the Canadian reserves” and provide them with a “marine capability.”<sup>58</sup> Committee Chair William Rompkey of Labrador explained that this would entail converting them into full Reserve units with extensive formal training and more equipment. “It’s a signal for us that they’re not useful simply as guides,” Rompkey explained to reporter Bob Weber. “They are fully capable of doing the job that needs to be done in the Arctic.” Rompkey acknowledged that transforming the Rangers into Primary Reservists would change their terms of service, but he promised – like others before him – that a more formal maritime role and enhanced military status would bolster Canadian sovereignty over lands and seas. Who better to assert ownership and control over coastal and marine resources than a more muscular Ranger force?<sup>59</sup>

As the debate about Arctic sovereignty and security picked up tempo, Northerners complained that their voices were being marginalized by so-called experts who had jumped on the bandwagon and had no qualms about offering recommendations on how to improve matters, without having spent actual time on the ground. Few of these southern pundits displayed the self-awareness of Captain Ambrose Shea, who, humbled by his travels north in the mid-1950s, studiously avoided claiming any special authority on Arctic matters. As he put it, “the only real Arctic experts are the Eskimoes, who have forgotten more about living in the North than most white men ever learn.” Had anyone canvassed the Rangers (or the Instructors who worked with them on a regular basis) about whether they thought their military status needed to change? Were commentators aware that their proposals to reconstitute, modernize, and professionalize the Rangers had been floated (and sunk) previously? Could they anticipate the real consequences for the Rangers, or could they only proffer answers to national sovereignty and security questions as they framed them from afar?

Local reactions to these calls for militarization varied, but the core debate revolved around training for combat and interdiction. “I didn’t become a Canadian Ranger to go fight in combat,” Master Corporal Warren Esau of Sachs Harbour explained. “I’d have a big problem if they decided to do



something like this ... I'd rather be out shooting caribou and geese, not humans. It's not what I want to be doing as a Ranger." Sergeant Jonah Nakimayak of Paulatuk, a Ranger since 1988, said that he would quit if the military foisted combat training on the Rangers. "I'm getting up there in age and it wouldn't be something I'd be interested in doing," he said. "I can't speak for the younger rangers, it might be something they would want to do, but I don't really like the idea personally."<sup>60</sup> These voices (and others like them) clearly indicated that the Rangers had a strong sense of their personal contributions. Many imposed specific conditions on their service, and the vast majority of Rangers whom I interviewed over the last decade were pleased with their unique military status. Nevertheless, did treating and equipping the Rangers differently than other members of the Canadian Forces imply that they were lesser members?

"Let's hope there's never a Canadian Ranger put in a potential combat situation," Darrell Greer, a reporter in Nunavut, stated. "But it's asinine to suggest large numbers of Canadian Rangers would quit if the challenge to Canadian sovereignty in the North ever reached the point where they were called upon to do their share." The Rangers' origins lay with the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, which had been designed to repel a Japanese invasion. During the Cold War, the Rangers formed to defend Northern communities from the Soviets. "Maybe it's just me," Greer stated, "but that doesn't sound like the lineage of a group of people who would cut and run at the first sign of trouble." Although he found it ridiculous to expect Elders to prepare themselves for combat, he conceded that they would be among the first to sign up in an

emergency. “Either way you cut it, they’re indicative of most Nunavummiut in that they’re a long way from being the undereducated and unpatriotic bunch some who don’t know any better suggest they are.”<sup>61</sup>

Greer, and others like him, missed the point. No one was questioning Northerners’ patriotism, their knowledge of the lands and waters, or their capacity to learn from the military. The real issue was not whether the Rangers *could* be trained up to the Primary Reserve’s standards, but whether they *should* be. The Rangers had proven their value in recent decades, and they had achieved a balance between their military and community contributions. Their original combat role had been removed from the Ranger task list, but that did not mean that the Rangers ceased to contribute to the Canadian Forces. The military still had to be able to “force project” into remote regions in case of emergency, and the Rangers remained a vital force multiplier – essential subject-matter experts and enablers in their home areas. Was there a probable threat of enemy invasion that required enhanced military status and rigorous combat training for citizen-soldiers who were never expected to deploy overseas? Journalists seldom explored the deeper question of *probable* risks; they preferred instead to cite *potential* scenarios that played to a basic (and largely fictional) storyline of volatility and uncertainty in the Circumpolar Arctic.<sup>62</sup>

History should play a greater role in discussions about the Rangers’ future. Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Keane wrote in 1947, “We don’t want, and we don’t need, further organized military bodies supplementing Active and Reserve Forces but what we need is that small groups of specially adapted people take an interest in the defence of their country in order that we may derive the greatest benefits from their knowledge and particular facilities and it is



necessary that they be organized to some extent; but I am afraid that if we try to make them too military we will certainly stand to lose by it.”<sup>63</sup> This line of argument is as valid today as it was when Keane wrote it more than six decades ago. The Ranger organization, managed on a local level, succeeds because it draws on the indigenous knowledge of its members rather than conditioning them through regularized military training regimes. If the Rangers as an organization are not broken and actually accomplish their mission through an intimate connection between the military and their home communities, why do they need to be fixed?

Fortunately, the Canadian Army has rejected the idea of turning the Rangers into combat-ready units.<sup>64</sup> Public statements by senior military officers suggest that the Canadian Forces are pleased with the Rangers’ existing roles and contributions and do not intend to add new responsibilities.<sup>65</sup> The Army already considers the Rangers a cornerstone of its emerging Arctic strategy, which relies heavily upon Reservists: four newly created Arctic Response Company Groups (ARCGs) designed to respond to incidents in the Arctic, as well as the Yellowknife Company of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment.<sup>66</sup> Building an effective response capability will take time, but the Army considers the Rangers “a mature capability” and “the foundation of the CF’s operational capability across the North for a range of domestic missions.”<sup>67</sup> In a military emergency, the Canadian Army would expect the ARCGs, not the Rangers, to conduct “combined arms kinetic manoeuvre operations” – military jargon for actual fighting.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, the Rangers could keep them abreast of local developments and would help to advise and act as guides. In preparing for this unlikely eventuality, the Rangers play an important role in teaching southern-based units how to survive on the land, a skill not included in training tailored for foreign missions such as Afghanistan.<sup>69</sup>

The patrol groups still have latitude within their areas of responsibility to undertake activities that reflect national, regional, and local priorities. Major Jeff Allen, who assumed command of 1 CRPG in mid-2010, insists that the Rangers’ official role, mission, and tasks do not need amending.<sup>70</sup> Rangers have ample room to support nonconventional activities that meet military, community, and “whole of government” objectives. For example, during Nunavut’s two-week mass vaccination program against swine flu (the H1N1 virus) in November 2009, Rangers played a pivotal role guiding Nunavummiut through the process and helping them fill out paperwork. *Nunatsiaq News* editor Jim Bell noted that, alongside health workers, the Rangers “achieved something that most other governments in the country have fumbled so far.... They managed to conduct a mass flu-shot clinic that worked.”<sup>71</sup> On the scientific front, Rangers supported southern scientists working on an

International Polar Year project on ice shelves during Operation Nunavut in 2008 and set up huts for polar bear researchers along M'Clintock Channel in 2010. They also supported other government departments in identifying and verifying sites as part of the federal "legacy sites" cleanup project, and they worked with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to install navigation buoys. Allen encourages these activities, which provide new opportunities for collaboration, serve broader national interests, and give his Rangers opportunities to "patrol with a purpose."<sup>72</sup> Maintaining the balance between operational and socio-political benefits continues to lie at the heart of sustaining the Rangers as both a military formation and a community-based organization.

### **Enhancement**

What does Ranger enhancement actually mean if the Rangers, and the military establishment more generally, consider their existing role and military status to be sound? After the Chief of the Land Staff became the Canadian Rangers National Authority on 1 April 2007, he set up a dedicated cell of staff at National Defence Headquarters to provide "overall direction and clarity" to the Canadian Army commander, the patrol groups, and the Rangers. This direction included establishing national policy, validating equipment and training needs, coordinating dress changes, standardizing human resources and financial management practices, and ensuring that patrol groups had a similar structure and organization across the country.<sup>73</sup> In short, the Army would provide the Rangers with a stronger national framework without making that framework so restrictive that the Rangers could not do their job in their particular environments. In this context, *enhancement* meant improving the day-to-day operations and administration of the Rangers as a national organization while fostering the unique aspects of each patrol group and each patrol. The Army would need to recognize and balance the Rangers' operational and representational value to the military with their roles in local communities and in Canada as a whole.

Striking the right balance between national direction and flexibility is challenging. The Canadian Army could no longer use the Rangers' distinctiveness as an excuse to avoid devising and implementing national policies. New Land Force Command Orders standardized enrolment, set criteria to determine whether individual Rangers were "non-effective," and articulated a formal process for releasing them.<sup>74</sup> The National Authority also simplified the claims process for damaged equipment,<sup>75</sup> and it raised and standardized compensation rates for equipment use.<sup>76</sup> The net result brought more coherence and greater protection for Rangers and patrol groups across the country. Master Warrant Officer Bruce Dunn, responsible for implementing

national training standards, explained that the National Authority got rid of the grey areas that used to get the commanding officers into trouble. Clearer policies meant that they were “no longer put out on a limb and acting in a dangerous zone.”<sup>77</sup>

What about safeguarding the Rangers themselves? Staff officers had long complained about the lack of national policies to cover Rangers whose activities in harsh and unforgiving environments placed them in hazardous situations. The military expected Rangers to report unusual activities but did not pay them for this everyday task. What if Rangers had accidents that caused damage to themselves or their equipment en route to reporting a submarine or strange aircraft? What liability would the military incur for medical injuries and long-term disability benefits?<sup>78</sup> When Ranger Sergeant Jamesie Kootoo of Kimmirut broke his pelvis while providing support to a dog sled race across frozen Frobisher Bay, he was airlifted to hospital in Ottawa, where he remained for several months.<sup>79</sup> To apply due diligence, 1 CRPG began to apply basic medical screening to Rangers who wanted to participate in sovereignty patrols.<sup>80</sup> And what if a Ranger died on duty? In April 2007, Pauloosie Paniloo, a sixty-four-year-old Ranger and highly respected Elder from Clyde River, died during a routine patrol to the Fox-3 North Warning System (NWS) site. His family requested that he be buried in his Ranger uniform, a tremendous honour to the Rangers given his distinguished political career. He received a full military funeral akin to that of a soldier killed overseas.<sup>81</sup> The death of Ranger Corporal Donald Anguyoak, a member of the Gjoa Haven patrol, in a





snowmobile accident at the start of Exercise Polar Passage on 17 February 2013, serves – in the words of Prime Minister Harper – as “a stark reminder of the very real dangers that the Canadian Rangers and other members of the Canadian Armed Forces face regularly while promoting national security and exercising sovereignty in our harsh northern territories.”<sup>82</sup> Deceased Rangers are now recognized for their Canadian Forces service with permanent grave markers on their headstones,<sup>83</sup> physically marking their military status.

While national policies made sense in many respects, the Ranger organization needed to retain enough latitude to manage regional diversity. The Canadian Ranger National Authority had no interest in making Rangers into warriors through standardized and streamlined training. Although the original Ranger concept had not included formal military training, over time Rangers had received both basic and collective instruction. Each patrol group had developed its own training packages and standards with varying degrees of formality and success. Representatives from each patrol group and the Director of Reserves had met to discuss training policies, but the need to incorporate regional uniqueness stymied efforts to standardize the training regime. When the Canadian Army commander assumed responsibility for the Rangers in 2007, he specifically tasked the Directorate of Army Training and the National Authority with developing a Canadian Ranger training package in line with the Canadian Army training system.<sup>84</sup> The resulting program comprised two development phases: DP1 Ranger, designed to provide Canadian Rangers with the general military knowledge and skills necessary to operate as a patrol member and to interoperate with other Canadian Forces units; and DP2 Patrol Commander, designed to enhance Ranger leadership skills.<sup>85</sup>

During my visits to patrols across the country, long-serving Rangers expressed frustration that training had become boring and repetitive. Instructors trained recruits and experienced Rangers simultaneously; some Rangers had heard the same material on expectations and basic skills for decades. The new training system introduced in 2009 allowed Ranger recruits to take their DP1 course at a centralized location within their patrol group area. They received basic training in map and compass, GPS, first aid, weapons safety, and marksmanship. Much friendlier than “boot camp” in southern units, the course gave new Rangers an opportunity to receive focused attention from Instructors (both patrol group staff and Canadian Rangers), meet new people, and build a sense of patrol group identity. When they returned to their patrols, they had basic qualifications that paved the way “for more advanced, formal training that would keep the Canadian Rangers interested, motivated and challenged.”<sup>86</sup>



According to Canadian Rangers and Ranger Instructors, developing and applying common training standards helps everyone, as long as the Instructors can deliver the program in ways that can be adapted to the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the Rangers they visit. Whereas training lessons in the past had been inconsistent, the new national training plan has both substance and structure. Alongside common courses, delivered to every Canadian Ranger, Rangers take supplementary courses customized for their patrol's tasks, terrain, population, location, and culture.

One of the most acute pressures facing the Ranger organization is the need for more Regular and Reserve Force Instructors. Historically, these soldiers forged and sustained relationships based on trust even as high-level support for the Rangers ebbed and flowed. They often did (and do) so at personal expense, enduring much of the year "on the road" or "on the land," adapting their training to distinct communities and cultures, all the while learning from the Rangers.<sup>87</sup> When the government promised expansion and enhanced training in 2007, the patrol groups were already overstretched by the high tempo of training and the small number of Instructors available. Some patrol groups found it difficult to fill Instructor positions given the competition for experienced combat arms sergeants while Canada was at war abroad. For all the heightened political interest in the Rangers, Instructors remain a Priority 6 posting – the lowest in the military.<sup>88</sup> More money now flows into the Ranger organization than ever before, but Instructors – the critical link between the patrols and the military establishment – remain the scarcest commodity of all.

If the chief constraint on the Rangers' growth has been their budget, this ceased to be the case when Prime Minister Harper made his announcement in August 2007. To facilitate expansion, his government promised sustained annual funding of \$29 million: an incremental investment of \$12 million annually that would amount to more than \$240 million over twenty years.<sup>89</sup> Once the money started flowing, it more than doubled the operating budget of some patrol groups.<sup>90</sup>

The Rangers reaped material benefits. Equipment usage rates for "use, wear and tear" on their personal equipment during formal activities increased, as did their allotment of Ranger "kit."<sup>91</sup> Since the initial Ranger Enhancement Project in 1995, patrols and individual Rangers had received a growing array of military-issued equipment. The Canadian Rangers Equipment Modernization Project allotted \$45 million to ensure that the Rangers have "light equipment of the best quality to allow them to perform their tasks effectively."<sup>92</sup> The new equipment list (scale of issue) includes duffel bags, ballistic eyewear, backpacks, and multi-tools.<sup>93</sup> Despite this investment, communications remain a persistent issue. The modernization program has allocated satellite phones to patrols and

will also deliver a new radio.<sup>94</sup> More equipment (still unspecified) will be prepositioned in communities so that Rangers can respond more quickly to emergencies.<sup>95</sup>

The Ranger uniform is also changing. The red sweatshirt, however modest a form of military dress, is distinctive and unique to the Canadian Rangers. It is also compatible with the original principle that the Rangers be self-equipped and wear their own environmentally appropriate clothing when operating on the land. For decades, Rangers have requested additional army clothing so they can look more uniform while on parade. Individual patrol groups issued pieces of clothing on their own initiative, but senior military authorities usually resisted increasing the official scale of issue on logistical and financial grounds. After the handover ceremony of the Ranger National Authority in October 2007, however, the Chief of the Land Staff committed to a "Clothe the Ranger" project so that all Rangers would receive tangible evidence that the Army valued them.<sup>96</sup> Only a few years before, patrol groups were refused CADPAT (Canadian Disruptive Pattern) combat pants for their Rangers. Once they joined the Army, however, the rules changed. The military has begun to supplement the Rangers' ball cap, sweatshirt, and t-shirt with a red fleece, an "ICE" jacket, a rain suit, wet-weather boots, socks, wind pants, and combat gloves.<sup>97</sup> The Army still expects the Rangers to wear personal clothing appropriate for local conditions, but this new ensemble has clearly expanded the "Ranger red" brand.

Although the red sweatshirt has become an icon of Canadian sovereignty and patriotism in remote regions, the .303 bolt-action rifle remains the most enduring symbol of the Rangers. "For more than half a century, the mostly Inuit patrols have roamed around the rugged region on snowmobiles and on foot, toting antique wooden rifles in defence of Canadian sovereignty," one journalist noted.<sup>98</sup> The depiction of the rifle as an obsolete relic of a bygone era is less a metaphor for the Rangers themselves than a means for media commentators to criticize the military for not supporting the organization sufficiently. A few Rangers complained about the rifle,<sup>99</sup> but most appreciated its reliability. Military officials had discussed replacing the rifle for decades, but without a clear deficiency, they had trouble identifying and justifying a replacement. General Walt Natynczyk, the Chief of Defence Staff, explained the problem during a brief stop in Yukon in January 2011: "Over the past five years, this is an issue that's come in and gone out so many times, because we have folks, mostly from the South, who want to give the Rangers a newer, more modern weapon.... But the feedback we get from many Rangers, depending on who you talk to, they want a simple weapon. And the Lee Enfield .303 rifle that the Rangers have, although it's old, it's one of the most reliable, simple and

accurate weapons, that's ever been designed." He recalled a conversation at Rideau Hall with Ranger Sergeant Allan Pogotak of Ulukhaktok (Holman), who told him that "you can take this weapon, it can be dropped in the ocean, you pick it up and shoot and it fires and fires true. And when anyone in my patrol breaks this weapon, I can go on the Internet and order the parts, and it's delivered in a week."<sup>100</sup>

Time, however, has caught up with the Ranger rifle. In 2007, the military estimated that, with the planned expansion to 5,000 Rangers, its existing stock of Lee Enfield rifles would only last up to twelve years. The worldwide pool of used .303 rifles has shrunk steadily, and there is a high risk that the Canadian Forces will not be able to procure suitable replacements when its stock runs out. Finding a replacement will not be easy. "There is a good probability that the New Ranger Rifle would resemble the current rifle in fit, form and function," Major Jim Mills, the staff officer responsible for Ranger training and equipment, noted. "Only a very robust model, with a bolt-action would have the guaranteed reliability and service life to meet the Rangers' expectations."<sup>101</sup> Delivery of the new rifle is expected to start in 2014.<sup>102</sup> Time will tell if the replacements have the same endurance, reliability, and mystique as the vaunted .303.



## Conclusion

"If Canada's Arctic sovereignty has a brand, it's the red Rangers hoodie," journalist Tim Querengesser noted in *Up Here* magazine in 2010.<sup>103</sup> The military does not take this symbol lightly. Historically, commentators often associate military practices (and those of the state more generally) with physical dislocation, environmental degradation, political disruption, and culture shock.<sup>104</sup> In the case of the Canadian Rangers, however, the interconnectedness between the military, remote communities, and Canadian society is respected as a constructive force. "We're here to make sure Canada's North stays safe and sovereign," Ranger David Nivingalok explained. "Rangers patrol some of the most important hunting ground of the Inuit people."<sup>105</sup>

This comment encapsulates how Ranger service straddles community, nation, and country. During a decade of travel with Rangers across the country, I have been struck by the strong current of patriotism and loyalty that underpins their sense of service. One of the original benefits that defence planners emphasized when they conceived the Rangers was having "friends on the ground" when conducting operations in remote regions. This remains as true today as it was during and immediately after the Second World War. In Inukjuak, Ranger Eli Weetaluktuk told me that the Rangers bring "respect and integrity" to the military in Nunavik.<sup>106</sup> This is true from coast to coast to coast.

Rangers in the Eastern Arctic unilaterally added the word *voice* to their organization's official motto: they consider themselves the eyes, ears, and voice of the Canadian Forces in their communities and in the North more generally.<sup>107</sup> This grassroots addition reinforces the importance of meaningful communication at all levels. The Rangers represent an ongoing dialogue – about what is happening in remote regions, about how the military can best operate in the North, and about the importance of connecting considerations of sovereignty and national security to an intimate sense of place. Skeptics may dismiss the Rangers as another form of subordination – as token accommodation by the military to co-opt Aboriginal people into accepting state sovereignty, militarism, and liberal state hegemony<sup>108</sup> – but this view denies the Rangers' own sense of empowerment. Rangers recognize that they have power – the military depends upon them. During annual patrol training in 2007, Sergeant Simeonie Nalukturuk, the patrol commander in Inukjuak, described the Rangers as "the eyeglasses, hearing aids, and walking stick for the CF in the North."<sup>109</sup> His allusion to the Canadian Forces' inability to operate unassisted in Inuit Nunangat – the Canadian Inuit homeland – is unmistakable.



The positive relationship between the Canadian Rangers, their communities, the military, and the Canadian state is a striking example of what can be achieved when policies and practices are rooted in a spirit of accommodation and mutual respect. Even strong relationships can be enhanced, but when something is not broken, it is important not to break it. Promised investments to enhance the Rangers' capabilities and training can be well directed, as long as they respect the Rangers' longstanding roles and mission and are rooted in a robust awareness of how and why the organization has evolved into its current state. Canadians must be careful not to set up the Rangers to fail by asking too much of them, unravelling their ties and relevance to the military, or, conversely, trying to over-militarize them to face a theoretical enemy that is unlikely to challenge our Arctic sovereignty and security in the near future.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security, and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed history of the Canadian Rangers, including full citations, see Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> On this notion, see Rob Huebert, "Canada and the Changing International Arctic," in *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects in Canada's North*, eds. Frances Abele, Thomas J. Courchene, F. Leslie Seidle, and Francis St-Hilaire (Ottawa: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2008), 1. For indications of popular support, see Ekos Research, *Rethinking the Top of the World: Arctic Security Public Opinion Survey – Final Report* (Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and the Canada Centre for Global Security Studies at the Munk School of Global Affairs, January 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Harris, "Laying Claim to Canada's Internal Waters," *Toronto Sun*, 23 February 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Speech from the Throne, 16 October 2007. See also Don Martin, "Invisible Force in the North; Rangers Guard Sovereignty with Old Guns, Radios," *National Post*, 26 October 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Darrell Greer, "Commander Visits Rangers in Eight Communities," *Northern News Services*, 11 March 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *Managing Turmoil: The Need to Upgrade Canadian Foreign Aid and Military Strength to Deal with Massive Change*, interim report (October 2006), 83.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Mirror Images? Canada, Russia, and the Circumpolar World," *International Journal* 65/4 (2010): 879-97.

<sup>9</sup> Franklyn Griffiths coined the label "purveyors of polar peril." Byers changed his tune abruptly in 2008 and became a strong proponent of Arctic cooperation. On these trends in a Canadian context, see Kenneth Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Bill Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2008); Michael Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic? Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2009); and Griffiths, Huebert, and Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic*.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Harper, "Expanding Canadian Forces Operations in the Arctic," 10 August 2007, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1785>.

<sup>11</sup> Prime Minister's Office, news release, "Prime Minister Announces Expansion of Canadian Forces Facilities and Operations in the Arctic," 10 August 2007, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1784>.

<sup>12</sup> In the North, some residents welcomed new infrastructure that could reduce transportation costs; others, such as Arctic Bay Ranger Sergeant Manasie Kilukishak, worried that the port and noise pollution associated with marine traffic could affect wildlife in the area. CBC Calgary, "Northerners Divided over Proposed Arctic Military Facilities," 13 August 2007.

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<sup>13</sup> Martin, "Invisible Force in the North."

<sup>14</sup> Maj D.C. Knowles, "Record of Discussion of the Canadian Ranger National Authority Working Group held in JTFNHQ Yellowknife 31 Jan--2 Feb 2007," March 2007, Department of National Defence (DND), f. 5030-1 (ACOS DGLRes Sec).

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Valpy, "Operation Nunaliut 08," *Northern News Services*, 28 April 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Kent Driscoll, "Where Only Rangers Tread," *Northern News Services*, 9 April 2007.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Adrian Humphreys, "Defending the North," *National Post*, 7 March 2006, A8; Philippe Morin, "Boots on the Ground," *Northern News Services*, 21 August 2006; John Thompson, "Military Mounts Its Most Ambitious Arctic Trek," *Nunatsiag News*, 23 March 2007; Hon. Lawrence Cannon, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 2009; Hon. Chuck Strahl, *Debates*, 16 November 2009; and Claude Bachand, *Debates*, 23 February 2009 and 4 May 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Chief of Review Services (CRS), "Review of the Canadian Rangers," draft, September 2003, iii-v, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Staff officers could work on force and policy development on behalf of the entire organization and "plug into proper homes" within the larger Land Staff. Maj Guy Ingram, interview with author, Geraldton, ON, 8 July 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Colin Campbell, "Canada's Ragtag Arctic Forces," *Maclean's*, 22 August 2006, 30-32.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Randy Boswell, "Inuit Ask Ottawa for Authority to Keep Eye on Arctic," *Edmonton Journal*, 2 October 2009. The official website describes the Canadian Rangers as dedicated, knowledgeable members of the forces who "play an important role in advancing public recognition of Canada's First Nations and Inuit Groups." Quoted in Kenn Oliver, "Unsung Arm of Military Work for Common Good of the Nation," *The Labradorian*, 5 March 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Sheila Watt-Cloutier, "Inuit, Climate Change, Sovereignty, and Security in the Canadian Arctic" (remarks presented to Canadian Arctic Resources Committee Conference, Ottawa, 25 January 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Kerry McCluskey, "The Critical Role of the Canadian Rangers," *Naniiliqpita* (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.), Winter 2006, 12-15.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Paul Kaludjak, "Use the Inuit," *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 July 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Franklyn Griffiths, "The Shipping News," *International Journal* 58/2 (2003): 279.

<sup>26</sup> Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, *Hansard*, 2nd session, 16th Assembly, 12 June 2008, 1181.

<sup>27</sup> Captain Terry Stead, the commander of the 5 CRPG detachment in Gander, explained that the basic army principle of reinforcing success, not trying to reinvent the Rangers, should guide the process. Capt Terry Stead, "5 CRPG Rangers Briefing," Gander, NL, 31 October 2008.

<sup>28</sup> LGen M.J. Dumais, "Commander Canada Command Recommendation for the Expansion of Canadian Ranger Patrols," 20 March 2008, DND, Canada Command, f. 3440-2 (J3 Plans 7), referencing "VCDS Report on Plans and Priorities 07/08."

<sup>29</sup> This ambiguity was not helped by the October 2007 Speech from the Throne, which reiterated that "the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers will be expanded to better patrol our vast Arctic territory."

<sup>30</sup> Dumais, "Commander Canada Command Recommendation."

<sup>31</sup> Capt Conrad Schubert to Comd., JTFN, "Briefing Note – 1 CRPG Ranger Expansion," 22 October 2007, DND, 1 CRPG, f. 1920-1(DCO).

<sup>32</sup> See the 2006 community profile at <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/>. The 2001 census listed five residents at Bathurst Inlet.

<sup>33</sup> Schubert to Comd., JTFN, 22 October 2007. The Northwest Territories had three communities with populations over 300 that could support Ranger patrols (Norman Wells, Hay River, and Yellowknife--Detah--N'Dilo) and two in Yukon (Watson Lake and Faro).

<sup>34</sup> Schubert to Comd., JTFN, 22 October 2007.

<sup>35</sup> BGen G.J.P. O'Brien, "Canadian Ranger Expansion Update," 20 April 2010, DND, f. 1920-1 (CRNA).

<sup>36</sup> Based on interviews in the Northwest Territories and Yukon in 2009. I have chosen not to cite individuals in light of the sensitive nature of this material.

<sup>37</sup> Capt Neal Whitman, "1 CRPG Sit Rep," 29 October 2009. Copy provided by CRNA.

<sup>38</sup> LCol Ian Pedley and Master Warrant Officer (MWO) Bruce Dunn, interviews with author, Ottawa, ON, 17 February 2011.

<sup>39</sup> It would silence critics who have chastised the Conservatives for failing to meet their Arctic sovereignty commitments. See, for example, Liberal Party of Canada, "Harper Conservatives' Latest Northern Strategy Announcement Amounts to Much Ado about Nothing," *States News Service*, 30 July 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Maj Jeff Allen, interview with author, Yellowknife, NT, 13 June 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Maj K. Sproule, "JTFC/LFCA Response: 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Enhancements," April 2007, DND, f. 3121-2-1 (J5 Ops). Copy provided by CRNA.

<sup>42</sup> The government's Northern strategy, outlined in the 2007 Speech from the Throne, "focused on strengthening Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and improving and devolving governance, so that northerners have greater control over their destinies." On these speeches, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World* (Toronto: Canadian International Council, July 2009), and Klaus Dodds, "We Are a Northern Country," *Polar Record* 47/4 (2011): 371-74.



<sup>43</sup> Mary Simon, "Inuit: The Bedrock of Arctic Sovereignty," *Globe and Mail*, 26 July 2007. For a similar message, see Paul Berton, "Time to Stake Solid Claim over Arctic," *Toronto Sun*, 27 February 2007, and Mary Simon, "Inuit and the Canadian Arctic," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43/2 (2009): 250-60.

<sup>44</sup> Jose Kusugak, "Stewards of the Northwest Passage," *National Post*, 3 February 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Patricia Bell on CBC Radio, *The House*, hosted by Chris Hall, 12 August 2006.

<sup>46</sup> CBC North, "Reaction Mixed to Senate Call for Stronger Canadian Ranger Presence," 11 May 2009.

<sup>47</sup> Bruce Valpy, "Operation Lancaster Launched," *Northern News Services*, 21 August 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, "An Integrated Arctic Strategy," January 2008, 15, <http://itk.ca/>.

<sup>49</sup> On the concept of "military workfare," see Deborah Cowen, *Military Workfare: The Soldier and Citizenship in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

<sup>50</sup> Rangers in Haines Junction warned that 1 CRPG would start losing people if it started cancelling things such as shoots. Other Rangers said the patrol members would run these activities regardless of whether they got compensated. Observations by the author at the monthly patrol meeting, Haines Junction, YT, 16 June 2009. Rangers used to be paid in cash at the end of exercises. They had gone to direct deposit, but it now took months to get paid because headquarters was short-staffed. Larry Bagnell, Member of Parliament (MP) for Yukon, also raised this issue in the House of Commons on 10 April 2008.

<sup>51</sup> CBC News, "Canadian Rangers Pull Out of Yukon Quest," 10 November 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/>. See also Annalee Grant, "Yukon Quest Plans Alternative as Canadian Rangers Step Down," *Whitehorse Star*, 10 November 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Several Rangers said they would break and maintain trail and run shoots without Instructor support or pay. Suzanna Caldwell, "2011 Yukon Quest Begins Today in Whitehorse, Yukon," *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, 5 February 2011. On the superiority of the trail put in by the Rangers compared to the Alaskan leg, see Justine Davidson, "Quest Stalwart Pushes All-Yukon Replacement Race," *Whitehorse Star*, 25 February 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Gabriel Zarate, "A Simulated Apex Invasion," *Northern News Services*, 24 August 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Smol, "When Will We Get Serious about Arctic Defence?" CBC News, 11 May 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/>. See also Robert Smol, "We're Not Serious about Arctic Defence," *National Post*, 27 August 2009.

<sup>55</sup> James Raffan, "Policing the Passage," *Canadian Geographic* 127/1 (2007): 43-47, 50-52, 54, 56, 58, 60.

<sup>56</sup> John Ralston Saul, "The Roots of Canadian Law in Canada," *McGill Law Journal* 54/4 (2010): 671-95. Saul is married to Adrienne Clarkson and, as her consort, visited many Ranger patrols during her tenure as governor general.

<sup>57</sup> John Ralston Saul, "Listen to the North," *Literary Review of Canada*, October 2009, 3-5. His idea of re-enrolling Rangers in Primary Reserve battalions is rebuked by Geoff Hamilton in a letter to the editor, *Literary Review of Canada*, December 2009, 31.

<sup>58</sup> The report cited Joseph Spears, who "believed that marine-capable Canadian Rangers would be useful in the areas of pollution response, marine SAR, security (naval boarding), climate change research, and in the exercise of jurisdiction in conjunction with other federal departments." Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, *Rising to the Arctic Challenge*, 12 March 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Bob Weber, "Arm Icebreakers, Beef Up Rangers to Assert Canadian Control of Arctic: Senate," *Whitehorse Star*, 7 May 2009. In Rompkey's view, giving the Rangers enforcement powers would help the government beef up control of the Northwest Passage by monitoring small vessels and provide the Coast Guard with "the necessary muscle to enforce Canadian law." Bob Weber, "Clamp Down on Arctic Shipping, Beef Up Coast Guard Armament: Senate," *Waterloo Chronicle*, 14 December 2009. The government backgrounder that outlined Ranger expansion in August 2007 mentioned that the Rangers would also see an "enhancement of transportation capabilities." As part of the Arctic Strategy Plan in 2007, Brigadier-General David Millar, the commander of Joint Task Force North, intended to formalize the tasks of water surveillance and search and rescue for the Rangers. This would require equipping specific patrols with boats. Whitman, "1 CRPG Sit Rep." In a 2011 article, former Canadian Forces Northern Area Commander Pierre Leblanc concurred that it is time to "think outside the igloo" and equip and train the Rangers for a maritime mission. See "Northwest Passage Unguarded: Thinking Outside the Igloo?" *FrontLine Defence* 3 (2011): 58-59. Commentators never discuss the practical issues of responsibility for these boats and how government ownership would affect the basic principle that the Rangers be "lightly equipped" and "self-sufficient."

<sup>60</sup> Andrew Livingstone, "Make Rangers Reservists," *Northern News Services*, 20 May 2009. In this article, Dennis Bevington, the New Democratic Party (NDP) Member of Parliament representing the Western Arctic, concurred that militarizing the Rangers and changing their mandate was the wrong approach to bolstering Arctic sovereignty. "Reservists can be called up for duty in Afghanistan," he warned. "The assumption was that Canadian Rangers were civil authority, search and rescue and giving capacity to the communities with linkage to the military. I think they can be enhanced within that concept without having to look at full militarization." See also CBC North, "Reaction Mixed to Senate Call for Stronger Canadian Ranger Presence." These concerns were not confined to the North. "If

you try to turn the Rangers into the Primary Reserve,” Major Tim Byers explained to me in Victoria on 13 July 2005, “it will die miserably.” Making the Rangers more militaristic would kill it, Ranger Sergeant Curtis Hicks of the Cape Freels patrol in Newfoundland told me during an interview in Musgrave Harbour on 1 November 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Darrell Greer, “Not as Slow as Some May Think,” *Kivalliq News*, 20 May 2009.

<sup>62</sup> For a larger discussion of this theme, see Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga*.

<sup>63</sup> LCol B. Keane to Col L.M. Chesley, 9 July 1947, DND, Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), f. 112.3M2(D49), vol. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Because many Reserve Force policies did not apply to the Rangers, the Armed Forces Council directed in April 2006 that the Rangers should form their own component of the Canadian Forces outside of the Reserve Force. LGen W.J. Natynczyk and LGen A.B. Leslie, “Canadian Rangers National Authority Transfer Instruction – Vice Chief of the Defence Staff to Chief Land Staff,” 31 May 2007, DND, f. 1950-3 (1901-260/4 D Res).

<sup>65</sup> Scott Taylor, “On the Road with the CDS,” *Esprit de Corps* 16/10 (2009): 14. In early 2011, the Chief of the Defence Staff clarified that the *Canada First Defence Strategy* was intended to increase Ranger membership, not responsibilities. Jason Unrau, “General Visits ‘the Eyes and Ears of Canada,’” *Whitehorse Star*, 12 January 2011.

<sup>66</sup> LGen A.B. Leslie, “CLS Planning Guidance: Land Force Arctic Strategy,” 9 March 2009, DND, f. 3000-1 (DLFD).

<sup>67</sup> LGen A.B. Leslie, draft, “CLS Planning Guidance – Arctic Response,” July 2009, DND, f. 3000-1 (A/DLFD). This Ranger contribution includes sovereignty patrolling and the majority of activities in extreme conditions.

<sup>68</sup> Leslie, “CLS Planning Guidance: Land Force Arctic Strategy.” The Rangers are cast as a “critical enabler and capability for operations in Canada’s north.” BGen G.R. Thibault, “Operationalization of Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups: Support to Canada Command,” 16 October 2006, Joint Task Force Central (JTFC) HQ, f. 4500-1 (COS). Copy provided by CRNA.

<sup>69</sup> Herb Mathisen, “Looking for Company,” *Northern News Services*, 12 June 2009; Keith Doucette, “Forces to Set Up Permanent Reserve Unit in Yellowknife,” *Waterloo Region Record*, 6 September 2008. 1 CRPG developed a concept plan with Joint Task Force North (JTFN) so that the unit could act as a rapid reaction force in the North. It was first tested during Operation Nunavut 2011. This concept repackaged an existing capability, and the implications remained unclear at the time of writing. Jeanne Gagnon, “Speeding Up Response Time,” *Nunavut News/North*, 28 March 2011; Whitman, “1 CRPG Sit Rep”; Captain Neil Whitman, interview with author, Yellowknife, NT, 17 June 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Allen interview.

<sup>71</sup> Editorial, "When Government Serves the Public Good," *Nunatsiq News*, 3 November 2009. See also Jim Bell, "It Is Still the Best Protection You Can Get," *Nunatsiq News*, 1 November 2009.

<sup>72</sup> Maj Luc Chang, "1 CRPG Briefing to CRNA WG," October 2008, copy provided by CRNA; Allen interview.

<sup>73</sup> Col S.C. McQuitty, "Briefing Note to CLS on Command and Control of 1 CRPG," 24 April 2006, DND, f. 1310-1 (DGLRes); LCol B.G. Derbach, "Briefing Note for Commander Canada Command – Subject: Transfer of Authority – 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CRPG)," 24 July 2006; LGen A.B. Leslie, "Transfer of Canadian Ranger National Authority to Command of Land Force Command – 1 Apr 07," DND, f. 1310-1 (CR Fin DGLRes). Within the Land Staff, the Assistant Chief of Staff Director General Land Reserve Secretariat oversees four CRNA positions staffed by Reservists: policy, training and equipment, human resources, and finance. Natynczyk and Leslie, "Canadian Rangers National Authority Transfer Instruction."

<sup>74</sup> "LFCO 11-99 – Canadian Rangers," 1 December 2010. Copy provided by CRNA.

<sup>75</sup> BGen I.C. Poulter, "Submission of Loss or Damage Claims for Personal Equipment Used in the Performance of Canadian Ranger Duties," 16 May 2008, DND, f. 7200-1 (CRHR). Previously, processing claims for damaged equipment took too long, making Rangers reluctant to use their personal equipment. "2005 Annual Historical Report – 5 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group," 27 February 2006, f. 1326-2 (LFAAHQ).

<sup>76</sup> Annex A to 7209-1 (Dres), 1 April 2003; Annex C to LFCO 11-99, 1 August 2009, copies provided by CRNA.

<sup>77</sup> MWO Bruce Dunn, interview with author, Ottawa, ON, 17 February 2011. DAOD 5100 - Canadian Rangers and DAOD 5511-0 - Promotion, Seniority, Reversion and Relinquishment (to be issued) will provide national direction on day-to-day operations.

<sup>78</sup> CRS, "Review of the Canadian Rangers." Participants in the 2009 CRNA working group agreed that Rangers would be considered on duty when they were being paid or when authorized by the chain of command and that they were covered by the Queen's Regulations and Orders, Chapter 9, when travelling to and from a place of duty. Maj Jim Mills, "Record of Discussion of the Canadian Ranger National Authority Working Group (CRNA WG) held in Ottawa, 29 Sep-1 Oct 2009," 2 November 2009, DND, f. 5030-1 (SO CR Pol DGLRes Sec).

<sup>79</sup> Yumimi Pang, "Ranger Injured While Helping Dog Race," *Nunavut News/North*, 31 March 2008; CBC North, "Military to Investigate Accident Involving Canadian Ranger," 1 April 2008; Yumimi Pang, "Kimmirut Ranger Recovering," *Nunavut News/North*, 7 April 2008; Gabriel Zarate, "Making Ready for the Qimualaniq

Quest," *Northern News Services*, 9 February 2009; Herb Mathisen, "Alone in the Snow with Broken Bones," *Northern News Services*, 15 September 2008.

<sup>80</sup> Chang, "1 CRPG Briefing to CRNA WG."

<sup>81</sup> Paniloo died while hunting caribou for his tent group. He had served as Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for the former Baffin Centre Riding in the Northwest Territories government from 1983 to 1987 and was a former mayor of Clyde River. Adrian Humphreys, "A Ranger's Final Patrol," *National Post*, 25 April 2007. On Paniloo's death, see also Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Liberal), *Hansard*, 23 April 2007. Paniloo's wife, Lucy Mingeriak, was eligible for the Memorial Cross, a medal for the next of kin given when soldiers die for their country. A second death of a Ranger on active duty – that of Corporal Charlie Sheppard of Flat Bay, Newfoundland, who died during a winter indoctrination exercise with the Second Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment, in 2008 – confirmed the need for clear policies. 2Lt G.J. (Junior) Roberts, "Tribute: Farewell to Ranger Cpl. Charles Sheppard," *Western Star* (Corner Brook), 5 March 2008.

<sup>82</sup> "Nunavut Canadian Ranger dies in snowmobile mishap," *Nunatsiaq News*, 19 February 2013.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Moon, "Veterans' Grave Markers," *Northern Voice* (Cochrane, ON), 3 November 2009. In October 2009, the Last Post Fund presented the first headstones to deceased Rangers in Sandy Lake and Fort Albany. Maj G.C. Ingram, "Annual Historical Report 2009 for 3 CRPG," 21 January 2010, DND, DHH, 3687.

<sup>84</sup> Mills, Record of CRNA WG.

<sup>85</sup> Lt G.J. Roberts, "5 CRPG Offers First Formal Training to Canadian Rangers," *What's New* (5 CRPG), September 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Ranger Sergeant George Sutton of Milltown, quoted in G.J. Roberts, "Busy Weekend for Canadian Rangers of the Milltown Patrol," *The Coaster* (Harbour Breton, NL), 29 September 2009. See also Jennifer Geens, "New Rangers Graduate from Training Course," *Northern News Services*, 27 March 2009; Chang, "1 CRPG Briefing to CRNA WG"; Lt Shalako Smith, "Canadian Rangers Go Back to the Basics," *The Labradorian*, 20 July 2009; Emily Ridlington, "Nunavut Has Four New Canadian Rangers," *Northern News Services*, 26 February 2010.

<sup>87</sup> On their roles, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Teaching Canada's Indigenous Sovereignty Soldiers," *Canadian Army Journal* 10/2 (2007): 66-81. In 2007, all five commander officers at the Canadian Ranger national working group agreed to try to reduce the Instructor-to-patrol ratio from one to six to one to four. This reduction would heighten demands for new Instructors even further. Maj T.C. Byers, "Request for Additional Canadian Ranger Patrols within Land Force Western Area," 2 March 2007, DND, f. 1901-1-2 (GSC).

<sup>88</sup> In 2007, 1 CRPG requested support from CRNA to increase its posting priority from six to at least five or four to address personnel shortfalls. Mills, Record of

CRNA WG. It noted that further expansion would require at least two more Ranger Instructors in the patrol group (assuming seven patrols per Instructor). Schubert to Comd., JTFN, "Briefing Note – 1 CRPG Ranger Expansion."

<sup>89</sup> Harper, "Expanding Canadian Forces Operations."

<sup>90</sup> Pedley and Dunn interviews. For example, 5 CRPG's budget rose from \$2.5 million in 2008 to \$4.2 million in 2009. LCol Jamie Morse, "5 CRPG Canadian Ranger Program," Briefings to CRNA WG, October 2008 and October 2009. Copies provided by CRNA.

<sup>91</sup> "LFCO 11-99 – Canadian Rangers." Rangers could freely invest this money in either maintaining or purchasing new personal equipment, which they could also use in their daily lives. This directive reinforced the principle that Rangers would be lightly equipped, self-sufficient, and not dependent on the military for equipment and vehicles. Most of the Rangers I spoke to preferred increasing these allowances over (taxable) increases in pay. On the pay issue, see, for example, the editorial "Enhancing the Uniform," *Northern News Services*, 21 July 2008; Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi--Baie-James--Nunavik--Eeyou, BQ), *Hansard*, 13 June 2007; and Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Liberal), *Hansard*, 4 November 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Harper, "Expanding Canadian Forces Operations."

<sup>93</sup> "Canadian Ranger Prioritized Individual Clothing and Equipment List as of 24 October 2007," Flag C to DND, 22 October 2007, DND, f. 100001-1 (DGL Res Sec).

<sup>94</sup> The Rangers' current radios have limited range, cannot be operated on the move, and are unreliable in extreme conditions, which Rangers frequently encounter. CRNA WG, minutes, October 2007.

<sup>95</sup> Sproule, "JTFC/LFCA Response: 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Enhancements." See also "New Equipment Will Soon Be Distributed," *Arctic Exposure: 1 CRPG Newsletter*, 1 March 2010, 9.

<sup>96</sup> Capt J. Mills, "Briefing Note to the CLS on the Proposed Canadian Ranger Equipment Modernization Project (CRMP) and Immediate Individual Equipment Requirements," 29 October 2007, DND, f. 10001-1 (DGL Res Sec), and Pedley and Dunn interviews.

<sup>97</sup> Capt J. Mills, "Record of Discussion of CRNA WG, 30 Sep-2 Oct 2008," CRNA files.

<sup>98</sup> Alexander Panetta, "Jean Dons Red Sweater on Her Arctic Visit," *Globe and Mail*, 14 April 2008.

<sup>99</sup> For example, Sergeant Eddie McPherson, the patrol commander in Tulita, told a reporter that his biggest frustration was with "these antique guns ... It's hard to get parts for them. A lot of them have bent barrels." Tim Querengesser, "Embedded with the Canadian Rangers," *Up Here* 26/7 (2010): 31.

<sup>100</sup> Unrau, "General Visits 'the Eyes and Ears of Canada.'"

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<sup>101</sup> Capt J. Mills, "Briefing Note to DGL Res on the Proposed Canadian Ranger Equipment Modernization Project (CRMP)," 31 August 2007, DND, f. 10001-1 (DGL Res Sec). Mills noted that very few modern "sport model" rifles would compare favourably to the Lee Enfield. The calibre will be 7.62 mm/.308 Winchester, thus ending the historical connection between the Rangers and the .303 Lee Enfield. Mills, "Record of Discussion of CRNA WG, 30 Sep-2 Oct 2008."

<sup>102</sup> Pedley and Dunn interviews. The rifle replacement is part of the formal Small Arms Modernization Project, a Canadian Army project of which the Ranger rifle is only a small part. Delivery will be phased in over three years. Mills, "Record of Discussion of CRNA WG, 29 Sep-1 Oct 2009." This timeline was confirmed the following year. See LCol Tim Byers, "CO's Corner," *The Ranger*, Fall 2010, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Querengesser, "Embedded with the Canadian Rangers," 24.

<sup>104</sup> See, for example, Frances Abele, "Confronting 'Harsh and Inescapable Facts': Indigenous Peoples and the Militarization of the Circumpolar Region," in *Sovereignty and Security in the Arctic*, ed. Edgar Dosman (London: Routledge, 1989), 189, and Mary Simon, "Militarization and the Aboriginal Peoples," in *Arctic Alternatives: Civility or Militarism in the Circumpolar North*, ed. Franklyn Griffiths (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1992), 60.

<sup>105</sup> Darren Stewart, "Extreme Weather School," *Northern News Services*, 24 March 2003.

<sup>106</sup> Eli Weetaluktuk, interview with author, Inukjuak, QC, 1 September 2006.

<sup>107</sup> Peter Kuniliusee, quoted in an interview with Petty Officer Paul Smith, flight from Toronto to Halifax, 20 February 2006.

<sup>108</sup> For example, Peter Kulchyski insists that "regardless of the level of power provided to Aboriginal governments, every decision that is made following the dominant logic, in accordance with the hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of the established order, will take Aboriginal peoples further away from their own culture. Every decision that is made in the form appropriate to traditional cultures will be another step in the life of that culture": *Unjust Relations: Aboriginal Rights in Canadian Courts* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 121.

<sup>109</sup> Participant observation with the Inukjuak patrol, 22 August-1 September 2006.





# 7

## The Canadian Rangers and the Practical Benefits of Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian North

First published as “The North’s Canadian Rangers,” in *Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion*, eds. Alistair Edgar, Rupinder Mangat, and Bessma Momani (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 67-86.

*As Indigenous communities are at the heart of Canada’s North, we will also work to expand and deepen our extensive relationships with these communities, particularly through the Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers. This will also include engaging local populations as part of routine operations and exercises.*

– Strong, Secure, Engaged (2017)

In the twenty-first century, the Canadian Rangers – an unorthodox military organization comprised predominantly of Indigenous people – have emerged from the shadows to become a highly visible example of diversity and inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Currently numbering about 5,000 members, Rangers live in more than 200 Canadian communities and, according to the official website, speak “26 different languages and dialects, many Indigenous.”<sup>1</sup> As part-time, non-commissioned members of a subcomponent of the CAF Reserves, the Rangers’ official mission is “to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces.” Creating an organization that successfully mobilizes Canadians living in remote regions and situates them appropriately within the defence team has entailed moving beyond conventional military structures and practices.

Canada’s extensive coastlines and vast northern expanses have presented security and sovereignty problems since the Second World War. “Spanning three Territories and stretching as far as the North Pole, Canada’s North is a sprawling region, encompassing 75 percent of the country’s national coastlines and 40 percent of its total land mass,” Canada’s recently released defence policy



highlights. This tremendous expanse, “coupled with its ice-filled seas, harsh climate, and more than 36,000 islands,” poses particular monitoring and surveillance challenges. Furthermore, Canada’s three Northern territories have the lowest population density in North America – a significant constraint on conventional operations that also amplifies the benefits of drawing on access to local resources. *Strong, Secure, Engaged* notes that “the region is spotted with vibrant communities, many inhabited by Canada’s Indigenous populations. These communities form an integral part of Canada’s identity, and our history is intimately connected with the imagery and the character of the North.”<sup>2</sup>

The Rangers are neither a military nor an Aboriginal *program* (as they are sometimes misidentified), but rather a subcomponent of the Reserves that embodies the benefits of leveraging the unique skill sets of Canadians from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds to support home defence and public safety. While Indigenous Canadians represented 2.2% of the total Canadian Armed Forces in 2013 (an official figure that does not seem to include the Canadian Rangers because they are neither Regular Force nor Primary Reserves), they make up more than two-thirds of the Canadian Rangers in Northern Canada.<sup>3</sup> Given the defence policy’s commitment to “better forecast occupational requirements and engage in more targeted recruiting, including capitalizing on the unique talents and skill-sets of Canada’s diverse population,”<sup>4</sup> the successful inclusion of Northern Indigenous peoples in the defence team through the Rangers represents an important case study. How can we explain the historical emergence of the Rangers as a diverse and inclusive organization? How do the Rangers’ role, mission, and tasks accommodate



and knowledge to survive and operate effectively in Arctic and Subarctic environments. The Canadian Rangers not only benefit their communities in a direct social and economic sense, but they also empower Northern Canadians who mentor and educate other members of the CAF on how to manage, respect, and ultimately care for their homeland.<sup>7</sup>

As a bridge between diverse cultures and between the civilian and military realms, the Rangers represent a successful integration of national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based activities and local stewardship. This practical partnership, rooted in traditional knowledge and skills, promotes cooperation, communal and individual empowerment, and cross-cultural understanding. Accordingly, the Rangers represent a compelling case study of the practical benefits of harnessing diversity to enhance CAF capabilities.

## **Background**

... The Rangers' established record of operations, extending back more than seven decades, affirms the interconnectedness between Indigenous and local knowledge, identities, and practices, on the one hand, and the nation's interest in exercising its sovereignty on a continuous basis, on the other. Over the past decade, when national political interest in the Arctic surged owing to broadened awareness about climate change impacts in the Arctic, visions of increasingly accessible natural resources and navigable polar passages, insecurities about sovereignty, and our responsibilities as stewards of a homeland with intrinsic value to Northerners and to Canadians more generally,<sup>8</sup> the Rangers became an increasingly regular fixture in the Canadian media. Growing and strengthening the Rangers featured prominently in the Harper government's plans to bolster Arctic sovereignty and enhance the safety and security of Northerners,<sup>9</sup> with the Canadian Rangers reaching an average paid strength of 5,000 by 2013.<sup>10</sup> This number has been sustained since that time. Well-publicized Ranger involvement in signature "sovereignty" initiatives, such as the annual Operation Nanook summer exercises and Nunavut winter operations in the High Arctic, consolidated the Rangers' place as icons of Canada's efforts to assert sovereignty and promote security. "If Canada's Arctic sovereignty has a brand, it's the red Rangers hoodie," journalist Tim Querengesser observed in *Up Here* magazine in 2010.<sup>11</sup> Under the Ranger hoodies, Canadians find a representative cross-section of Northern Canadian society – a visible and celebrated example of diversity in action.

## **Diversity as a Force Multiplier**

Canada's three Northern territories are a diverse human geography, with Indigenous peoples comprising a substantial portion of the population.

Combined, Canada's three territories were home to just over 113,600 people in 2016, representing 0.3% of the total Canadian population. Outside of the territorial capitals, most residents live in small, dispersed communities (many without road access) with concomitant challenges of economies of scale and delivery of government services. Whereas Indigenous people (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) made up 4.3% of the total Canadian population in the 2011 census,<sup>12</sup> they comprised 23.1% of the population in Yukon, 51.9% in the Northwest Territories (NWT), and 86.3% in Nunavut. Each of the territories has a distinct demographic profile. In Yukon, 19.8% of the population identifies as First Nations, 2.5% as Métis, and 0.5% as Inuit. In the NWT, 32.7% of the population identifies as First Nations, 10.6% as Inuit, and 8.0% as Métis. In Nunavut, 85.4% of the population identifies as Inuit, with 0.5% identifying as Métis or First Nations.<sup>13</sup> These categories can also conceal tremendous diversity, with fourteen First Nations in Yukon speaking eight different languages, and the NWT boasting nine official Indigenous languages.

The lack of Ranger self-identification data in 1 CRPG does not allow for firm statistics, but conversations with Ranger Instructors and headquarters personnel (as well as my own field work over the past fifteen years) affirm that more than two-thirds of all Canadian Rangers across the Territorial North are of Indigenous descent. The rates of Indigenous participation are highest in Nunavut and the NWT, with Yukon having higher numbers of non-Indigenous members, as the demography of that territory would predict. At the local level, individual patrols are representative of their communities' ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity. These are important considerations, given the Government of Canada's strong focus on the centrality of Northern Indigenous leadership and the defence policy declaration that "Indigenous communities are at the heart of Canada's North" and that the military will "work to expand and deepen our extensive relationships with these communities, particularly through the Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers."<sup>14</sup>

To facilitate the inclusion of a diverse range of Northern Canadians, the Rangers have unique enlistment criteria. The only formal entry criteria for men and women who wish to join the Rangers stipulates that they be over eighteen years of age; are Canadian citizens or landed immigrants who reside in a remote, coastal, or isolated area; are in sufficiently good health to carry out their duties; are knowledgeable of the local terrain and are competent to operate on the land; and are free of any legal prohibitions.<sup>15</sup> There are no fitness or aptitude tests that Rangers must take prior to joining, nor do they face any hard medical criteria. Given social indicators that reveal significant health and education gaps between Northern and southern Canadians,<sup>16</sup> these are important accommodations that allow the Ranger organization to include a

more representative sample of Northern society than might otherwise be the case. "More than anything else, [Rangers] have a very clear and strong understanding of local community and their environment," Brigadier Kelly Woiden, the Chief of Staff, Army Reserve, told the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence on 18 February 2015. "Many of them are individuals who have prominence. They can be an elder within the native community with their local Inuit or other ... first nations peoples across the country. However, they could also just be rank-and-file folk because of their background and knowledge, for instance, the local snowmobile mechanic who has done well and he's the best guy."<sup>17</sup>

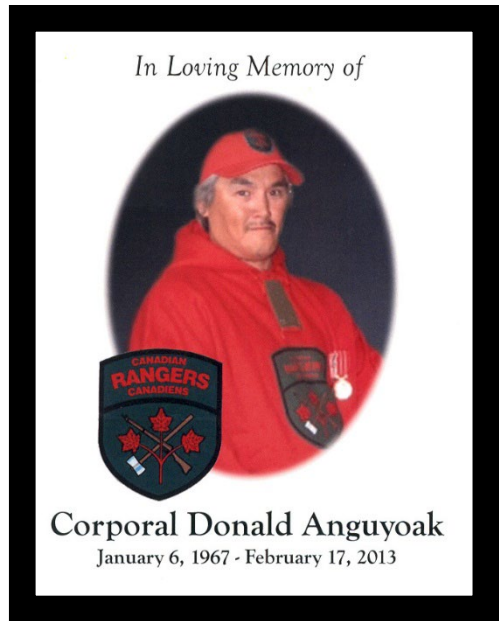
Ranger enrolment criteria also respect the local and Indigenous knowledge and practical experience operating in their homelands that recruits bring to the organization. Upon enrolment, Canadian Rangers are considered to be "trained, self-sufficient, equipped, and clothed to operate as self-sufficient mobile forces in support of CAF sovereignty and domestic operations in Canada in their local area of responsibility (AOR)." This AOR is generally described as a 150-km radius around their home communities.<sup>18</sup> New Rangers are generally provided with a ten-day orientation course, provided by Regular or Primary Reserve Force Ranger Instructors,<sup>19</sup> which focuses primarily on marksmanship and learning basic facts about the history and structure of the CAF. There is no "basic training" akin to the Regular Force or Primary Reserves, and Rangers are not required to undertake annual training. Accordingly, Rangers do not conform to the principle of universality of service because knowledge of the military and conventional "soldiering skills" are not prerequisites to their participation. Their role is not to serve as combat forces (which I explain later), but rather to serve as enablers for other elements of the defence team in a warfighting scenario. This precludes the need to assimilate them into more typical modes of military culture and training – an important consideration given the sensitivities around a long history of state-led assimilationist agendas seeking to eradicate Indigenous cultures and recast Indigenous people into Euro-Canadian moulds.

The organization is also unique in that there is no compulsory retirement age for Rangers. Instead, a Ranger is only considered non-effective when they can no longer patrol their AOR in the process of their individual normal routine; they do not reflect good credit upon their community, their patrol, and the CAF; they are not accepted as an equal and participating member within their respective patrol; or they no longer provide tangible advice and guidance to the patrol that is grounded in experientially based, traditional knowledge. If the patrol membership decides by consensus that the individual is non-effective, then the commanding officer of the patrol group can release the

member.<sup>20</sup> This process not only reinforces the community-based philosophy of the Ranger organization, but it also reflects a deep-seated respect for the role of Elders in Indigenous communities. As long as individuals contribute to their Ranger patrol, in the eyes of the other patrol members, they can remain in the organization and make positive contributions. For example, people unable to travel on the land can serve as communication contacts back in the community. Elders also serve as important cultural mentors and subject matter experts, lending traditional and local knowledge to the planning of operations, management of relationships within a patrol, training of other Rangers, and mentoring of youth. Accordingly, the absence of any compulsory retirement age not only brings greater generational diversity<sup>21</sup> within the Rangers than in the Regular and Primary Reserve Forces, but it also facilitates the trans-generational transfer of knowledge within Northern Indigenous communities.

The decision not to impose an age cap or strict medical conditions on Ranger service can lead to confusion. Overzealous media stories in recent years that suggest a crisis in the organization because of the number of Rangers who have died while still serving (forty members in 1 CRPG from 2012-15) seem completely unaware of these policies.<sup>22</sup> While the tragic death of Ranger Donald Anguyoak of Gjoa Haven during Exercise Polar Passage was operationally related (and prompted Prime Minister Stephen Harper to remind Canadians that this demonstrated how the Rangers and other CAF

members face “real dangers as they safeguard Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic”<sup>23</sup>), the other thirty-nine Rangers had died due to non-duty-related causes. Most passed away due to natural causes, including old age. For example, Ranger Alex Van Bibber, who passed away in November 2014 at the age of ninety-eight, had served with the Rangers since the late 1940s – and had still run his trap line only weeks before he died of heart failure.<sup>24</sup> Although these deaths have a significant impact on the Rangers and their communities, the military does not have the ability to influence the number of Rangers who die of natural causes. Unacceptably high suicide rates in the North also have an





impact on the Rangers, both directly and indirectly. There is no evidence indicating that stresses related to Ranger service have any correlation with suicides, and some observers suggest that more military-supported activities, providing Northerners with a sense of purpose and self-worth, might actually play a positive role in reducing suicide rates.<sup>25</sup>

The Rangers organization has also become a more inclusive place for women since the first women broke the gender barrier in 1991. As of December 2016, there were 408 female Rangers in 1 CRPG, representing 22.7% of the unit strength – a much higher percentage than in the Regular Force or Primary Reserves. Eight of the sixty Ranger sergeants (patrol



commanders) in 1 CRPG are women (13.3%), as are fifty-two of the 237 master corporals (21.9%) and forty-six of the 181 corporals (25.4%).<sup>26</sup> These statistics affirm that women feel that they can and should play a leadership role in the Rangers, as well as their acceptance by their peers (who elect them into these positions). They also reflect the prominent role of women in overseeing the Junior Canadian Ranger (JCR) patrols in their communities, which is typically done by a master corporal. For example, Master Corporal Therese

“Dollie” Simon, a Ranger since November 1994, leads the JCR program in Fort Resolution, NWT. In her “day job,” she is a coordinator for the Deninu K’ue First Nation Community Wellness Program, where she works with local people with addictions. “Basically, I was looking to do something different but little did I know that it was something I was missing – going out onto the land, hunting and reconnecting that way,” she explained about her decision to join the Rangers. “I enjoy it and I now have lifetime friends that I have made all over the Yukon and Northwest Territories. And, we are always learning something new.” She describes the Rangers as a uniformly “positive experience – a break from the busyness of the day though we do work hard. The bonus is that we get paid.”<sup>27</sup>

Although southern Canadian media commentators often criticize the lack of pay, equipment, and clothing provided to Rangers compared to their Regular



and Reserve Force counterparts, my extensive conversations with Rangers from across the North over the last two decades suggest that these criticisms are generally ill-informed or misplaced. Although Rangers are not paid for their year-round service as “eyes and ears” on the land, Rangers are paid for force generation activities such as annual training patrols, local meetings, and leadership workshops, with an average of twelve paid days per year. Furthermore, they are paid when they participate in force employment activities such as Operations Nanook, Nunaliut, and Nunakput, as well as when they provide support to southern units on Northern training exercises (NOREXs) or are officially tasked to conduct search and rescue. Although the influx of several thousand dollars into a community at the end of a Ranger patrol or military exercise might appear paltry, this Ranger pay can constitute a substantive part of an Indigenous economy that balances short-term paid labour with traditional harvesting activities, thus supporting a social economy that does not conform to Western models.

The diverse landscapes in which Rangers live and operate also prescribe different equipment and clothing needs. The philosophy of treating the Rangers as self-sufficient, lightly equipped members of the defence team recognizes this reality, as well as the military’s limited capabilities for providing logistical support and sustainment to community-based patrols distributed across the territorial North. The Rangers are known for their much-publicized “red hoodies,” and are also provided with t-shirts, ball caps, CADPAT (Canadian Disruptive Pattern) pants, military boots, and red jackets intended for parade. On operations, however, Rangers are expected to use their own environmentally appropriate clothing, which they deem best suited to local conditions, rather than being assigned standard military gear. While media commentators often dismiss the Rangers as “rag-tag forces” as a result, they fail to observe that this lack of uniformity embodies a respect for diversity, allowing Rangers to make their own decisions about what they should wear to operate comfortably and effectively in their home environments. This same logic extends to transportation and camping equipment. During training and official taskings, Rangers are paid for the use of their own equipment and vehicles (such as snowmachines, all-terrain vehicles, and boats) according to an established equipment usage rate (EUR). This arrangement provides Rangers with tax-free reimbursements that they can invest in their own equipment and tools, appropriate to their local environment, which they can then use in their everyday lives without having to ask the government for permission to do so. By allowing individuals to invest in their own, privately owned equipment, this approach represents a material contribution to local capacity building.

## Inclusion in Practice

In previous publications, I have described the Rangers' activities in detail, arguing that the Rangers have proven their value in recent decades by striking an appropriate balance between their military and community contributions.<sup>28</sup> The combat role originally assigned to the Rangers in 1947 has been removed from their official task list because they are neither trained nor equipped for this role, leading some commentators to declare that they are not a "real military force" and use this as a prime example illustrating that the CAF is unprepared to defend Canada's Arctic from foreign adversaries.<sup>29</sup> This logic is problematic on several levels, revealing a profound misunderstanding of both the Rangers and how they fit within the defence team.

The Rangers' national task list encompasses three broad aspects: conducting and supporting surveillance and presence patrols; conducting and assisting with domestic military operations; and maintaining a Canadian Armed Forces presence in local communities. This includes reporting unusual activities or sightings; collecting local data for the CAF; land-based and maritime patrolling (by snowmachine in winter and by boats in summer); training and guiding Regular and Primary Reserve Force units operating in remote regions; assisting in search and rescue efforts and in local domestic emergencies; and assisting with natural disasters such as forest fires and floods.<sup>30</sup> The Army considers the Rangers "a mature capability" and "the foundation of the CF's operational capability across the North for a range of domestic missions."<sup>31</sup> In emphasizing their myriad contributions, the Army notes that the "Rangers will remain a critical and enduring presence on the ground, valuable in many roles, including amongst others, the CAF's eyes and ears for routine surveillance purposes, its guides, local cultural advisors, interpreters, and the core of our liaison capacity in many locations, while remaining immediately available to support local government or other agencies."<sup>32</sup>



The key Arctic defence documents produced by the Canadian military over the last decade all emphasize integrated defence team and whole-of-government approaches to meet challenges across the mission spectrum.<sup>33</sup> Within these concepts, the Rangers are situated as facilitators or enablers for other military components providing combined response capabilities. Lessons learned or post-exercise reports regularly highlight the benefits of this partnership and the need to leverage the Rangers' knowledge and capabilities to facilitate operations and further develop Regular and Primary Reserve Force units' operating skills in remote areas. Rather than dismissing the Rangers for not simply replicating existing army capabilities that reside in southern-based units, these exercises affirm the value of having access to subject-matter experts with extensive experience operating in austere conditions and who are willing to share their local and traditional knowledge about lands and waters and provide practical support for activities in what southerners consider to be "extreme environments."

As members of their local communities, the Rangers also represent an important source of shared awareness and liaison with community partners<sup>34</sup> and, by virtue of their capabilities and location, regularly support other government agencies in responding to the broad spectrum of security and safety issues facing isolated communities. For example, their leadership and training make them the *de facto* lead during states of emergency in their communities – from avalanches, flooding, extreme snowstorms, and power plant shutdowns, to forest fires and water crises. Accordingly, they are the CAF's first responders in most safety and security situations.<sup>35</sup> Rangers are also called upon to assist with search and rescue in their communities both as volunteers who know how to work effectively as a group and, when called upon, as an official military tasking. ... Their familiarity with local cultures, fluency in Indigenous languages, and vested interest in the welfare of their fellow community members make them valuable, trusted assets.

The Rangers also provide an important outlet for Indigenous peoples and other Northerners who wish to serve in the defence of their country without having to leave their communities. Ranger activities also allow members of Aboriginal communities to practice and share traditional skills, such as living off the land, not only with people from outside their cultures but also across generations within. These skills are central to Indigenous identities, and there is a persistent worry that these will be lost unless individuals have opportunities to exercise them and share them with younger generations. By celebrating traditional and local knowledge and skills, and encouraging and enabling community members to go out on the land and share their knowledge and expertise, the Rangers can play an important role in supporting the retention or

**Table 7-1: Canadian Ranger Tasks**

The tasks in the following table may be undertaken by a CR [(Canadian Rangers)] member on duty when authorized by their CRPG HQ:

Tasks	Examples
Conduct and provide support to sovereignty operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct and provide support to surveillance and sovereignty patrols, including training in Canada.</li> <li>• Conduct North Warning System site patrols.</li> <li>• Report suspicious and unusual activities.</li> <li>• Collect local information of military significance.</li> </ul>
Conduct and provide assistance to CAF domestic operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct surveillance of Canadian territory.</li> <li>• Provide local knowledge and CR expertise (i.e. advice and guides).</li> <li>• Participate in search and rescue operations.</li> <li>• Provide support in response to natural or man-made disasters and support in humanitarian operations.</li> <li>• Provide assistance to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal government authorities.</li> </ul>
Maintain a CAF presence in the local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruct, mentor and supervise Junior Canadian Rangers.</li> <li>• Participate in and support events in the local community (e.g. Yukon Quest, Canada Day, Remembrance Day, etc.).</li> </ul>

The following tasks may not be assigned to a CR member, except when placed on active service under section 31 of the *National Defence Act*:

1. undertaking tactical military training;
2. performing immediate local defence tasks, such as containing or observing small enemy detachments pending the arrival of other forces;
3. providing vital point security (e.g. dams, mines, oil pipelines, etc.);
4. assisting federal, provincial, territorial or local police in the discovery, reporting and apprehension of enemy agents, saboteurs, criminals or terrorists; and
5. serving in aid of the civil power.

*Source:* Defence Administration Order and Directive (DAOD) 2020-2 - Canadian Rangers, 21 May 2015, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-defence-admin-orders-directives-2000/2020-2.page>.

expansion of core cultural competencies. In turn, the Ranger concept is inherently rooted in the idea that the unique knowledge of Northern peoples can make an important contribution to effective military operations. It is this partnership, rooted in mutual learning and sharing, that has made the Rangers a long-term success on the local and national levels. It also reflects the achievement of inclusion, building on an appreciation of Northern diversity.

## **Discussion**

The Canadian Rangers are a strong example of how a subcomponent of the Reserve Force can harness the benefits of diversity, ensuring that Northerners are integrally involved in the defence team when it operates in the North and developing local capabilities that both reflect and support the interests of local communities.<sup>36</sup> Although commentators often associate military practices (and those of the state more generally) with physical dislocation, environmental degradation, political disruption, and culture shock for Indigenous peoples,<sup>37</sup> the interconnectedness between the military, remote communities, and Canadian society is respected as a constructive force in the case of the Canadian Rangers. It serves as a striking example of what can be achieved when policies and practices are rooted in a spirit of accommodation, trust, and mutual respect.

Promised investments to enhance Ranger capabilities and training can be well directed, as long as they respect the Rangers' longstanding roles and mission and are rooted in a robust awareness of how and why the organization has evolved into its current state. I have argued previously that tensions between commentators who want to convert the Rangers from their current role into a more conventional Primary Reserve mould, as well as those who would seek to expand the Rangers into a work-training program to create more employment for Northern Indigenous communities, threaten to break an organization that is not broken. Seldom do outside proposals display an appreciation for how and why the organization has assumed its unique form or how the Rangers' role, mission, and tasks translate across national, regional, and local scales, addressing both military and local civilian needs. Instead, various stakeholders have pushed to repackage the Rangers into a form that fits their agendas, without recognizing the broader implications for the organization. Canadians must be careful not to set the Rangers up to fail by asking too much of them, unravelling their ties and relevance to the military, or, conversely, trying to over-militarize them to face a theoretical enemy that is unlikely to challenge our Arctic sovereignty and security in the foreseeable future.<sup>38</sup>

Canada's defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged* commits the defence team "to enhance the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to operate in the Arctic and

adapt to a changed security environment” by “enhanc[ing] and expand[ing] the training and effectiveness of the Canadian Rangers to improve their functional capabilities within the Canadian Armed Forces.”<sup>39</sup> This marks a subtle but important shift from the minister’s mandate letter released in November 2015, which had directed the military to “increase the size of the Canadian Rangers.”<sup>40</sup> Rather than seeking to increase the number of Canadian Rangers at this point, military resources should be allocated to increasing the number of Ranger Instructors and clerks that support the Ranger organization. The recent expansion to 5,000 Rangers across Canada has already over-stretched human resources in various patrol group headquarters, which provide critical administrative, training, and staff support to the Rangers.<sup>41</sup> By consolidating previous growth by strengthening the CRPGs and resourcing them properly, the government can improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the Rangers while improving the health and wellness of the military members who support them. Addressing gaps in Rangers’ access to the health care (including mental health services) that is available to other CAF members, clarifying the appropriate class of service that Rangers should be on for the tasks they perform, and processing compensation claims for damaged equipment in a timely fashion should help to remove barriers that affect the overall well-being of Rangers and their families.<sup>42</sup>

Maintaining the balance between operational and socio-political benefits continues to lie at the heart of sustaining the Rangers as both a diverse military formation and a community-based organization.<sup>43</sup> As the Rangers continue to evolve, however, there are opportunities to increase diversity and ensure more equitable opportunity within the organization. While I have depicted 1 CRPG as a model of successfully mobilizing Indigenous peoples to participate in a military organization, this does not preclude the need for concerted efforts to recruit Rangers from Indigenous communities that are currently unrepresented or underrepresented in specific patrols. While the lack of statistics on the ethnic background of Rangers in 1 CRPG remains a hindrance to deep analysis, a formal diversity assessment would help to identify potential barriers that may be preventing some people from participating more fully or equally within the organization. A study on the roles and status of women in the Rangers would also be helpful. Furthermore, while the contributions of Inuit serving as Rangers in the Far North (where Canadian sovereignty is allegedly imperilled) are well reflected in national media coverage, First Nations and Métis in the Northwest Territories and Yukon, as well as non-Indigenous Northerners serving in 1 CRPG, receive less attention. Celebrating the diversity of the Rangers means expanding our understanding to include a more nuanced portrait that reflects the wide range of Northerners serving in the unit.

The evolution of the Rangers suggests a political environment and a military institutional environment in which Indigenous peoples' contributions to the defence team are seen as both proper and legitimate, reinforcing the "value of inclusion in a culture of uniformity."<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, greater efforts should be made by the Department of National Defence to publicly acknowledge the Rangers' myriad forms of service to their country, heighten the political and public understandings of the ethnic and gender diversity of Rangers, and articulate how diversity and inclusion can serve as a "force multiplier" for security and public-safety missions. "Military forces operating in the North face a number of unique challenges not typically faced operating elsewhere in Canada or around the world," the Canadian Joint Operations Plan for the North noted in 2015. "While not insurmountable, these challenges require unique solutions and approaches."<sup>45</sup> The Rangers, an example of successfully mobilizing diversity in remote regions through an unconventional form of military service, are a prime example of a unique and inclusive approach that demonstrates the merits of diversity in the defence and security sectors on functional grounds.<sup>46</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Army, "Canadian Rangers," <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/canadian-rangers/index.page>, last accessed 12 September 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Department of National Defence (DND), *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 79, <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Only 25.6% of Rangers in 1 CRPG had completed a cultural self-identification survey by July 2016, with nearly all returns appearing to come from Yukon. Accordingly, the statistics are not representative. By contrast, 81.7% of Rangers in 2 CRPG completed the survey, with 56.9% self-identifying as Aboriginal peoples, 2.5% as visible minorities, and 1.1% as persons with disabilities. Statistics provided by the office of the Chief of Staff Army Reserve.

<sup>4</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> This chapter adopts a mixed qualitative methodology based on several decades of archival research, field research with the Rangers, and my regular visits and conversations with Rangers as the Honorary Lieutenant Colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CRPG) since 2014. This chapter expresses my personal views and assessments and in no way should be misconstrued as the official position of the Government of Canada or the Canadian Armed Forces.

<sup>6</sup> As of 15 June 2017. <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/1-crpg/index.page>.

<sup>7</sup> For more on this theme, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Vigilans: The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group* (Yellowknife: 1 CRPG, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Prime Minister's Office, "Prime Minister Announces Expansion of Canadian Forces Facilities and Operations in the Arctic," 10 August 2007, <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2007/08/10/prime-minister-announces-expansion-canadian-forces-facilities-and-operations-arctic>.

<sup>10</sup> LGen M.J. Dumais, "Commander Canada Command Recommendation for the Expansion of Canadian Ranger Patrols" (March 2008); DND, Canada Command, file 3440-2 (J3 Plans 7), referencing "VCDS Report on Plans and Priorities 07/08." On the achievement of this benchmark, see Bryn Weese, "Harper Welcomes 5000<sup>th</sup> Ranger, Becomes Honorary Member," *Sarnia Observer*, 21 August 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Querengesser, "Embedded with the Canadian Rangers," *Up Here* 26/7 (October-November 2010): 24.

<sup>12</sup> Data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) show that 1,400,685 Canadians self-identified as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis in 2011. 851,560 people identified as a First Nations person, representing 60.8% of the total Aboriginal population and 2.6% of the total Canadian population. 451,795 people identified as Métis, representing 32.3% of the total Aboriginal population and 1.4% of the total Canadian population. In 2011, 59,445 people identified as Inuit, representing 4.2% of the total Aboriginal population and 0.2% of the total Canadian population. Aboriginal people accounted for 3.8% of the population enumerated in the 2006 Census, 3.3% in the 2001 Census, and 2.8% in the 1996 Census. Statistics Canada Analytical Document, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit: National Household Survey, 2011*, Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011001, available online at <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Nunavut recorded the highest rate of growth among the provinces and territories from 2011-16 (+12.7%), with Nunavummiut women giving birth to 2.9 children on average (compared with the national average of 1.6 children). The population of Yukon grew 5.8% during this timeframe, while the Northwest Territories' population continued to increase slowly (up 0.8%). <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170208/dq170208a-eng.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 80. On the Trudeau government's Indigenous emphasis in its emerging Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Arctic Defence and Security: Transitioning to the Trudeau Government," in *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens*, eds. Lackenbauer and Heather Nicol (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2017), 308-40.



<sup>15</sup> The official website specifies that prospective Rangers “must not have been convicted of a serious offence under the Criminal Code of Canada for which a pardon has not been granted, including firearms offences, violent crimes, drug-related offences, and other offences at the discretion of the Canadian Ranger Instructor.” Canadian Army, “Canadian Rangers: Frequently Asked Questions,” <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/canadian-rangers/faq.page>, last accessed 21 July 2017.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Thomas Anderson and Amanda Thompson, “Assessing the social determinants of self-reported Inuit health in Inuit Nunangat” (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, February 2016), <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2016009-eng.htm>; Canadian Polar Commission, “Health and Well-being in the Canadian North: Recent Advances and Remaining Knowledge Gaps and Research Opportunities” (2014), [http://www.polarcom.gc.ca/sites/default/files/health\\_and\\_wellbeing\\_summary.pdf](http://www.polarcom.gc.ca/sites/default/files/health_and_wellbeing_summary.pdf); and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, “The Community Well-Being Index,” <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100016579/1100100016580>.

<sup>17</sup> BGen Kelly Woiden testimony, House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence, 18 February 2015, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Commander Canadian Army, Master Implementation Directive (MID) – Canadian Ranger Organization, 27 April 2015, DND file 1901-1 (CRNA).

<sup>19</sup> On the critical role of Ranger Instructors in serving as the “glue” between Rangers and the military establishment, as well as their functional imperative to embrace diversity and inclusivity, see Lackenbauer, “Teaching Canada’s Indigenous Sovereignty Soldiers ... and Vice Versa: ‘Lessons Learned’ from Ranger Instructors,” *Canadian Army Journal* 10/2 (Summer 2007): 66–81. See also Peter Kikkert with Doug Stern, “Finding Ihuma: Inuit Leadership Norms and Ranger Operations,” in *Canadian Armed Forces Arctic Operations, 1945–2015: Historical and Contemporary Lessons Learned*, eds. P.W. Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse (Fredericton: Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society, 2017), 370–86.

<sup>20</sup> Canadian Army Order (CAO) 11-99: Canadian Rangers, 1 November 2013.

<sup>21</sup> On this topic, see Daniel McDonald and Kizzy Parks, *Managing Diversity in the Military: The Value of Inclusion in a Culture of Uniformity* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Kristen Everson, “‘Significant number’ of Canadian Ranger deaths flagged by military chaplain,” CBC News, 20 April 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/significant-number-of-canadian-ranger-deaths-flagged-by-military-chaplain-1.3035683>.

<sup>23</sup> Bob Weber, “Canadian Ranger dies on Arctic military exercise,” Canadian Press, 19 February 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Ian Stewart, “Alex van Bibber, an incredible Yukon trapper, just may have been the toughest man in Canada,” *National Post*, 28 November 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Inuit Tuttarvingat describes Inuit suicide rates, which are eleven times the Canadian average, as a “national tragedy.” See <http://www.naho.ca/inuit/mental-wellness/suicide-prevention/>. From 2009-13, Canada’s suicide rate was eleven per 100,000. In Inuit Nunangat, rates ranged from sixty per 100,000 in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region to 275 per 100,000 in Nunatsiavut. Nunavik and Nunavut’s rates for this period were each more than ten times the national rate. This is one of the highest suicide rates in the world. On mitigation strategies, see Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy* (2016), <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ITK-National-Inuit-Suicide-Prevention-Strategy-2016.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Statistics provided by 1 CRPG, November 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Anne Duggan, “The work of Canadian Ranger Dollie Simon is never done,” Army Public Affairs, 21 March 2016, <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/news-publications/national-news-details-no-menu.page?doc=the-work-of-canadian-ranger-dollie-simon-is-never-done/im0s9xag>.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Lackenbauer, “The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia That Works,” *Canadian Military Journal* 6/4 (Winter 2005-06): 49-60; Lackenbauer, “Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Rangers: Canada’s ‘Eyes and Ears’ in Northern and Isolated Communities,” in *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture*, Vol. 2, eds. Cora Voyageur, David Newhouse, and Dan Beavon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 306-28; Lackenbauer, *Vigilans*; and Lackenbauer, *If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers*, Working Papers on Arctic Security No. 6 (Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and ArcticNet Arctic Security Projects, March 2013).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, the commentaries by Robert Smol: “When will we get serious about Arctic defence,” CBC, 11 May 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/when-will-we-get-serious-about-arctic-defence-1.813981>; “Standing on guard for free (almost),” iPolitics, 28 August 2013, <https://ipolitics.ca/2013/08/28/standing-on-guard-for-free-almost/>; “The Norwegian Juggernaut,” *National Post*, 4 April 2014; “Canada’s Arctic sovereignty is on thin ice,” *Now magazine*, 20 January 2016, <https://nowtoronto.com/news/northern-exposure-canadas-arctic-sovereignty/>; and “Canada’s ‘Arctic soldiers’ shouldn’t be our only line of defence in the North,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 2017.

<sup>30</sup> See Canadian Army, “Canadian Rangers”, and Defence Administration Order and Directive (DAOD) 2020-2 - Canadian Rangers, 21 May 2015, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-defence-admin-orders-directives-2000/2020-2.page>.

<sup>31</sup> LGen A.B. Leslie, draft, "CLS Planning Guidance – Arctic Response," July 2009, DND file 3000-1 (A/DLFD).

<sup>32</sup> DND, *Northern Approaches: The Army Arctic Concept 2021* (Kingston: Canadian Army Land Warfare Centre, 2013), 23.

<sup>33</sup> Analysis here focuses on Chief of Force Development (CFD), *Arctic Integrating Concept* (2010); *Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)/Deputy Minister (DM) Directive for DND/CF in the North* (12 April 2011); *Canadian Forces Northern Employment and Support Plan (CFNESP)* (November 2012); and Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC), *CJOC Plan for the North* (28 January 2014), 3.

<sup>34</sup> Chief of Land Staff, "Army Support Plan Immediate Reaction Unit – Northern Contingency Plan," 14 December 2011, DND file 3350-1 (Army G35).

<sup>35</sup> See CFD, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, 23. Alan Okros notes that the need for comprehensive or whole-of-government approaches to address large-scale disasters has heightened the emphasis on cooperating across a range of first responders. Alan Okros, "Rethinking Diversity and Security," in *Defending Democracy and Security Diversity*, ed. Christian Leuprecht (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4-31. See also P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Heather Nicol, eds., *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Paul Kaludjak, "Use the Inuit," *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 July 2007, and Mary Simon, "A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model," March 2017, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1492708558500/1492709024236>.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Frances Abele, "Confronting 'Harsh and Inescapable Facts': Indigenous Peoples and the Militarization of the Circumpolar Region," in *Sovereignty and Security in the Arctic*, ed. Edgar Dosman (London: Routledge, 1989), 189, and Mary Simon, "Militarization and the Aboriginal Peoples," in *Arctic Alternatives: Civility or Militarism in the Circumpolar North*, ed. Franklyn Griffiths (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1992), 60.

<sup>38</sup> Lackenbauer, *If It Ain't Broke*. On over-inflated threats to Canadian Arctic sovereignty and security, see, for example, Lackenbauer, "Polar Race or Polar Saga? Canada and the Circumpolar World," in *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, ed. James Kraska (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 218-43, and Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16/4 (March 2016): 7-66.

<sup>39</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 108.

<sup>40</sup> Justin Trudeau, Minister of National Defence mandate letter, November 2015, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-national-defence-mandate-letter>.

<sup>41</sup> 1 CRPG conducts approximately 200 exercises, operations, and other activities annually. A small headquarters staff of sixty-two Regular and Reserve Force personnel are responsible for the administration, training, and operations of sixty Ranger patrols (with 1,800 Rangers) and forty-one JCR patrols (1,320 youth). Of

the sixty-two HQ staff, approximately twenty are Ranger Instructors (RIs) and deploy on a monthly basis for up to ten days at a time. The remaining HQ staff deploy less frequently, but have a demanding workload throughout the year supporting the activities associated with the Rangers, Junior Canadian Rangers, and Ranger Instructors. In a report to the defence minister, military ombudsman Gary Walbourne highlights the ratio of support staff to Rangers. That ratio for the Rangers' largest patrol group – 1 CRPG – is one Canadian Forces Regular Force member to twenty-seven Rangers. If Junior Rangers are included, the ratio is one to fifty-three. Walbourne said ratios that high are “not sustainable,” can affect training, and have an impact on programs. “Additional programs and incentives that the Canadian Armed Forces would like to roll out are going to be hindered if we don't have the right ratio of management to the Rangers.” Quoted in Kristen Everson, “Canadian Rangers lack support and health care access, military ombudsman says,” CBC News, 23 January 2017,

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canadian-rangers-arctic-patrol-reserves-1.3938299>.

<sup>42</sup> National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, “Ombudsman Message: Progress Update on the Canadian Army's Review of the Canadian Rangers Organization,” 20 September 2017,

<http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-news-events-messages/ombudsman-message-update-on-rangers-review.page>; Ombudsman, “Ranger Health Care Entitlements,” <http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-questions-complaints-helpful-information/healthcare-for-canadian-rangers.page>; P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Arctic Defence and Security: International and Domestic Dimensions,” submission to Defence Policy Review consultation meeting, Yellowknife, 24 May 2016, <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/docs/yellowknife/lackenbauer-yellowknife-submission.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> On the debate over the Rangers' role and the Army's justification for not making the Rangers more like Primary Reserve units, see Lackenbauer, *If It Ain't Broke*. On the concept of “military workfare,” see Deborah Cowen, *Military Workfare: The Soldier and Citizenship in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). For a recent critique of the Rangers along these lines, see Cece Hodgson-McCauley, “Scouting the Rangers: A job creation project?” *News/North NWT*, 1 May 2017, 9.

<sup>44</sup> McDonald and Parks, *Managing Diversity in the Military*, 14.

<sup>45</sup> CJOC Plan for the North, 3.

<sup>46</sup> See Christian Leuprecht, “Diversity as Strategy,” in *Defending Democracy and Security Diversity*, ed. Leuprecht (New York: Routledge, 2011).

## 8

**“Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada’s North”: Media Misperceptions of the Canadian Rangers, Indigenous Service, and Arctic Security**

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*Having spent two decades in uniform and a third reporting on military affairs, I can say I’ve never seen a component of the Canadian Armed Forces so frequently and impulsively photographed, praised and promoted as the Canadian Rangers... So who exactly are these Canadian Rangers, these alleged “soldiers of the North” riding across the tundra with Canadian flags flying from their snowmobiles? .... The Canadian Rangers are not soldiers in any professional sense of the word because they are not trained to actually go to war and fight. They are political props, the blunt end of Canada’s Arctic defence delusion.*

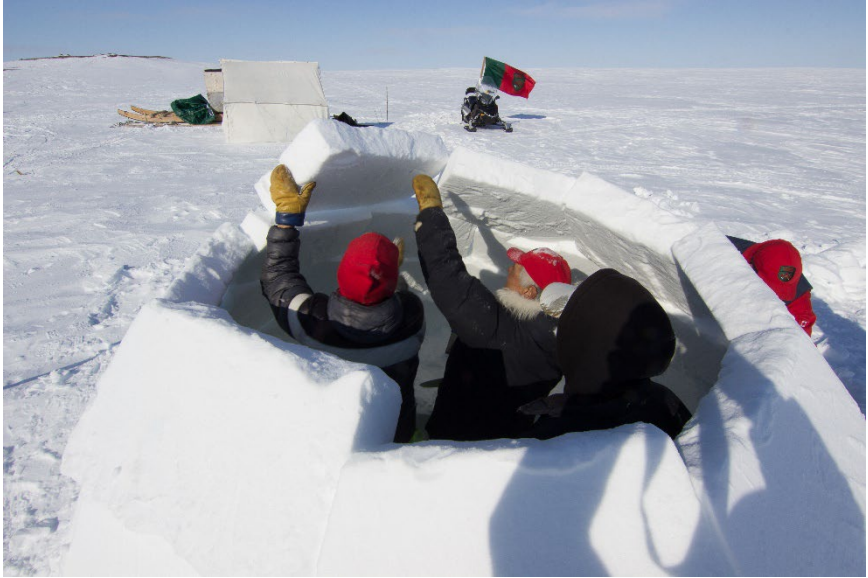
– Robert Smol (2013)<sup>1</sup>

Canada’s extensive coastlines and vast Northern expanses have presented security and sovereignty problems since the Second World War. As *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Canada’s defence policy) highlights, “spanning three Territories and stretching as far as the North Pole, Canada’s North is a sprawling region, encompassing 75 percent of the country’s national coastlines and 40 percent of its total land mass.” This tremendous expanse, “coupled with its ice-filled seas, harsh climate, and more than 36,000 islands,” poses particular monitoring and surveillance challenges for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and for the Government of Canada more broadly. Furthermore, Canada’s three Northern territories have the lowest population density in North America – a significant constraint on conventional operations that also amplifies the benefits of drawing on access to local resources. *Strong, Secure, Engaged* notes that “the region is spotted with vibrant communities, many inhabited by Canada’s Indigenous populations. These communities form an integral part of Canada’s

identity, and our history is intimately connected with the imagery and the character of the North.”<sup>2</sup>

In the twenty-first century, the Canadian Rangers – an unorthodox military organization comprised predominantly of Indigenous people – have emerged from the shadows to become a hallmark of Canadian sovereignty and security in the North. With approximately 5,000 members, Rangers live in more than 200 Canadian communities and speak “26 different languages and dialects, many Indigenous.”<sup>3</sup> As part-time, non-commissioned members of a subcomponent of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves, the Rangers’ official mission is “to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces.”<sup>4</sup> Creating an organization that successfully mobilizes Indigenous people and other Canadians living in remote regions and that situates them appropriately within the defence team has entailed moving beyond conventional military structures and practices. Instead, it embodies various “postmodern” characteristics including permeability between civil and military spheres, heightened diversity and cultural exchange, less hierarchy, and a greater focus on non-traditional missions.<sup>5</sup>

In *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, the Government of Canada commits to “enhance and expand the training and effectiveness of the Canadian Rangers to improve their functional capabilities within the Canadian Armed Forces.”<sup>6</sup> What does the phrase “improved functional capabilities” actually imply and entail? In previous books and articles, I have furnished detailed overviews of the history of the Canadian Rangers, their unique or unorthodox characteristics as a military component, the relationships between the Rangers and other CAF elements, and the high rates of Indigenous participation in the organization. This article does not seek to replicate those efforts or to revisit this same ground. Instead, I have chosen to critically interrogate the assumptions and critiques levelled at the Canadian Rangers. In particular, I carefully deconstruct and analyze the work of the Rangers’ two most ardent media critics: former Army intelligence analyst and Toronto-based freelance journalist Robert Smol, and *Maclean’s* reporter Scott Gilmore. In contrast with their assessments, I argue that the Rangers are an appropriate and operationally valued component of a Canadian military posture designed to address Northern risks across the defence-security-safety mission spectrum. They serve as enablers or “force multipliers” for conventional operations, while at the same time supporting the “soft security” responses that CAF operational concepts identify as being the most probable threats to the Canadian North. Rather than seeing the Rangers as a sideline to the “serious” military show that Smol and Gilmore would like to see play out in



the North, this unique component is better understood as offering core capabilities that meaningfully and practically leverage the rich diversity, knowledge, and skills of Northern Canadians – and, most relevantly for the theme of this volume, of Indigenous peoples.

### **Context and Background<sup>7</sup>**

The Rangers are neither a military nor an Aboriginal “program” (as they are sometimes misidentified), but rather a subcomponent of the Reserves that leverages the skill sets of Canadians from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds to support home defence, security, and public safety missions. While official figures suggest that Indigenous Canadians represented 2.2% of the total Canadian Armed Forces in 2013, they make up more than two-thirds of the Canadian Rangers in Northern Canada.<sup>8</sup> The defence policy includes the need to “better forecast occupational requirements and engage in more targeted recruiting, including capitalizing on the unique talents and skill-sets of Canada’s diverse population.”<sup>9</sup> The successful inclusion of Northern Indigenous peoples in the defence team through the Rangers represents an important example of how an appreciation of Indigenous knowledge and local skills not only accommodates but promotes diversity and benefits from it in tangible ways.

My writing over the years has highlighted the Rangers’ practical contributions to the defence team in the Canadian North. By bridging diverse cultures and the civilian and military realms, I have argued that the Rangers represent a successful integration of national security and sovereignty agendas

with community-based activities and local stewardship. The identity of the Indigenous peoples is tied to the land, and the CAF's decision to gain their assistance in defending that land and that identity has yielded a practical partnership, rooted in traditional knowledge and skills, that promotes cooperation, communal and individual empowerment, and cross-cultural understanding. Although commentators often associate military practices, and those of the state more generally, with physical dislocation, environmental degradation, political disruption, and culture shock for Northern Indigenous peoples,<sup>10</sup> the interconnectedness between the military, remote communities, and Canadian society is respected as a constructive force in the case of the Canadian Rangers. Accordingly, I argue that it serves as a striking example of what can be achieved when policies and practices are rooted in a spirit of accommodation, trust, and mutual respect. Recent studies by Peter Kikkert, Sébastien Girard Lindsay, and Magali Vullièrme confirm these assessments.<sup>11</sup>

### **(Misplaced) Criticism**

Not all media commentators share my enthusiasm for the Canadian Rangers or the capabilities that their Indigenous members represent. Robert Smol, a freelance pundit, represents himself as "a retired Army intelligence officer who served over 20 years in the Canadian Armed Forces" and has spent the last decade as an educator and writer in the Greater Toronto Area.<sup>12</sup> His opinion pieces often target the Canadian Rangers as the epitome of what he considers to be Canada's lamentably weak Arctic defence posture. He regularly dismisses the Rangers as "political props"<sup>13</sup> and a "token military force"<sup>14</sup> because they are neither designed nor trained for combat. "The flow of public affairs ink at National Defence ... seems determined to portray our Canadian Rangers, in particular, as a bulwark in Canada's determination to assert its sovereignty in the Far North," Smol wrote in May 2009. "Primarily of members of local Inuit and other First Nations people," he acknowledged that the Rangers are "extremely useful in search and rescue missions in the North, and in training others in winter survival skills," but they were "nowhere near being a serious military presence in the region."<sup>15</sup>

The only true measure of military seriousness, in Smol's eyes, is a conventional Regular Force capability prepared to defeat a hostile enemy surging over the North Pole and threatening Canada's territorial integrity. Anything less, he argues, is "dangerous optimism." Ironically, the former officer notes that "like every other nation, we have a unique set of geographic, political and demographic challenges that need to be dealt with if we are truly to take control of our own defence and assert our sovereignty at the same time." He fails to grasp the value of the Rangers as a capability that is well suited to



Canada's "unique set of geographic, political and demographic challenges." Rather than reflecting Canada's "dangerously naïve sense of optimism that no country will ever seriously follow through and violate our borders,"<sup>16</sup> the Rangers represent a key element in a defence posture that is not as inconsequential as Smol asserts, given the lack of an imminent conventional military threat facing the Canadian Arctic. Furthermore, it does indicate a successful, made-in-the-Canadian-North solution to Northern defences that does not require permanent garrisons of full-time, professional soldiers sprinkled across Canada's Arctic expanses. Instead, it offers Northerners – and mainly Indigenous Northerners – a chance to serve as "force multipliers" within the CAF in a way that reinforces and shares Northern knowledge and does not require them to leave their homelands.

"So who exactly are these Canadian Rangers, these alleged 'soldiers of the North' riding across the tundra with Canadian flags flying from their snowmobiles?" Smol asked in a follow-up article in 2013:

For Ottawa, they are made to stand as proof that the Harper government is doing something substantial to protect Canadian interests in the North. To the public, they represent some perceived "effort" and "sacrifice" Canada is making already to defend its territory — making it seem like nothing more needs to be done.

The reality is quite different. The Canadian Rangers are not soldiers in any professional sense of the word because they are not trained to actually go to war and fight. They are political props, the blunt end of Canada's Arctic defence delusion — the naïve belief that we possess the capability to actually defend ourselves in a way comparable to other Arctic nations. They're casual help, in other words.

While acknowledging the Rangers' potential value in search and rescue or in an emergency, he considers their role "peripheral" to a substantive military presence in the region. "Our Canadian Rangers do not receive any combat training in winter warfare — no training in how to conduct offensive, defensive and transitory operations in the extreme environmental conditions of the Arctic," he asserts. "Rangers lack the complex logistical, mobility and communication assets that are so vital to sustaining a military force in the far North."<sup>17</sup> The weight that he assigns to conventional land force combat operations is unmistakable.

In a recent volley, published in August 2017, Smol suggests that "Canada's 'Arctic soldiers' shouldn't be our only line of defence in the North." With reference to the annual Operation Nanook being held in Nunavut and Labrador, he sneered that: "As with each and every sovereignty exercise, the



vaunted Canadian Rangers, our so-called ‘Arctic soldiers’ will be touted by the Armed Forces and government as the permanent military symbol of Canada’s determination to assert its sovereignty in the region.”<sup>18</sup> He never specifies who exactly refers to the Rangers as “Arctic soldiers” – a phrase not commonly used in 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (CRPG) or in wider CAF circles. As the “only permanent military presence in the North,” Smol points to the Rangers’ limited ability to fight off a hostile foreign land force invading our Arctic shores:

Just how secure should we feel knowing that our Rangers are on duty? Dispense with the standard cheesy accolades and one can see that, operationally, the Rangers are not much more than a public affairs ruse aimed at placating Canadians into believing that Canada is actually taking Arctic defence seriously.

Granted, the Canadian Rangers do occasionally assist in search and rescue and may provide other needed public assistance in their communities. But place our Rangers under an operational military lens and all one sees is a network of minimally trained, non-combat, part-time auxiliaries. The Canadian Ranger recruit receives all of 10 days military training. Most are not employed in a continuous manner. They do not have a uniform (other than sweatshirts and ball caps) and are usually required to supply their own snowmobiles when “on patrol.”

Thus it should not come as a surprise that Canadian Rangers are in no way expected to go into military combat. As each Rangers unit is allotted about 12 days of paid employment for the year, we can hardly expect them to provide any systematic sovereignty patrol in the Arctic.

Deriding the Rangers' .303 Lee Enfield rifles (which are currently being replaced, one should note, not because they are obsolete but because they are no longer available in sufficient quantities) as "museum-worthy," Smol suggests that "by placing minimally trained, non-combat, part-time reserve auxiliaries as the symbol of Canadian resolve to assert our sovereignty, we are, in essence, saying that Arctic sovereignty is not a responsibility we as a nation are willing to take seriously."<sup>19</sup>

By comparison, Smol has intense admiration for the other Arctic states and their efforts to militarize their Northern territories by investing in more conventional forces.<sup>20</sup> Norway, for example, has "a permanent, professional boots-in-the-snow presence in the Arctic, letting the world know that they are present, poised and prepared to stand and defend its own territory first and foremost before any outside help arrives."<sup>21</sup> If Canada had any self-respect, he reiterated in August 2017, "we would be doing what the Danes, Norwegians, Finns, Swedes, Russians and Americans have been doing for decades. That is to maintain full-time, well equipped, professional and specialized 'boots in the snow' ready to assert and defend their Arctic sovereignty."<sup>22</sup>

What is the threat environment that Smol – a former intelligence officer – anticipates in the Arctic to justify his need for robust, combat-ready land forces to defend the Canadian Arctic? Without any substantiating evidence or argumentation, he seems to rely upon the unstated, "common sense" logic that because the Russians are building weapons systems and have shown aggression in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria, they are similarly disposed to attack Canada. His advocacy efforts insist on the need for a robust Canadian Army presence, presumably in anticipation of a conventional land-based ground assault across the North. Smol is either unaware or dismissive of the threat assessments produced by the Department of National Defence (DND)/CAF over the past decade, which emphasize that there is no immediate conventional military threat to Canada's Arctic.<sup>23</sup> Although his desired defence posture is modelled on the Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes, he fails to consider how geographical realities make their Arctic very different than Canada's (both physically and demographically) and, as close land neighbours to Russia (and, in the case of Norway, with a unique relationship related to Svalbard), why they might face a different threat environment. By ignoring these core considerations, he simply smooths the entire Circumpolar North into an undifferentiated space, and champions the Swedish "Arctic garrison" model – a model that, for good reason, Canadian strategists have dismissed since the 1940s.<sup>24</sup>

A systematic analysis of how the Canadian Rangers and the CAF's Arctic plans compare to other countries' Arctic defence postures is sorely needed. Any such analysis will require an awareness of the different operating environments,

demographic realities, and political relationships across the Circumpolar Arctic. Moreover, it will have to acknowledge (as Smol entirely fails to do) that most Canadians living in the Arctic – particularly outside of the territorial capitals – are Indigenous people who are rightsholders with a clear sense of how their own sovereignty is nested within and interacts with that of the Canadian state.<sup>25</sup> The logic that “sovereignty begins at home,”<sup>26</sup> with Inuit and other Northerners themselves, seems entirely lost on Smol. Furthermore, he is oblivious to overtures by the Alaskans and Danes/Greenlanders to explore the Canadian Rangers model as an option to better engage members of their Indigenous communities in a form of military service. Given this international interest, it is hard to justify dismissing either the Canadian Rangers or their place within the CAF’s Arctic operational concept more broadly.

Scott Gilmore – a *Maclean’s* correspondent, “Conservative appointee to the board of the International Development Research Centre,” and husband to Liberal Cabinet minister Catherine McKenna<sup>27</sup> – provides more explicit analysis of the Arctic threat environment while arriving at a similar denigration of the Rangers as a token symbolic force with little practical value for national defence. “Canada has an Arctic problem: our northern marches are increasingly important to us and others, but no Canadian government has ever made even the minimum investments necessary to safeguard it,” he wrote in November 2015. Contrasting Russian investments in their North with Canada’s, he observes that Russia “remains the sole superpower” in the Arctic. In light of this hegemonic status, Gilmore notes that Russia’s “undisputed position does not require a bellicose strategy” – a contrast to its strategies in Ukraine and Syria.



Although “a rules-based international system works in Moscow’s favour” in the Circumpolar North, which makes it “unlikely to see Russian icebreakers steaming defiantly past our ragtag force of part-time Canadian Rangers in the short term,” he uses the Russian threat as a pretext to advocate for billions in federal investments – or “Canada’s Arctic problem is only going to get worse.”<sup>28</sup> The dismissal of the Rangers as a “rag-tag force,” which harkens back to depictions by earlier *Maclean’s* reporters,<sup>29</sup> is telling. The following year, Gilmore similarly used Canada’s declining footprint at the Port of Churchill to lament its unwillingness to invest in the Arctic, holding up the Rangers’ use of “Second World War era Lee Enfield rifles” as another example.<sup>30</sup>

Gilmore’s September 2016 article on “The Great Canadian Lie” situates the Rangers in a more substantive critique of Canada’s failure to invest sufficiently in a Northern strategy. “Canada is not a proud northern nation,” Gilmore chastises. “Its Arctic is undefended, undeveloped and socially fraught.” In contrast to other Arctic regions, he laments the lack of economic activity in the Canadian North, the absence of a vigorous fishing industry, and the dismal social and health indicators. “Canada has also left its north largely undefended,” he suggests, with only a small 120-personnel headquarters in Yellowknife and no “ice-strengthened warships” (in contrast to Denmark’s seven). Lest anyone hold up the Canadian Rangers as evidence of a military presence, Gilmore preemptively offers the following dismissal:

Usually, whenever anyone points out the total absence of Canadian Forces in the Arctic, someone mentions the Canadian Rangers. This volunteer militia is made up mostly of Indigenous Canadians living in the North. They are the backbone of our military presence, providing surveillance and conducting “sovereignty patrols.” To complete this mission they are issued a sweatshirt, a baseball cap, and a Second World War-era rifle. (This week they were promised, again, that these would all be replaced by 2019.) Rangers must supply their own snowmobiles and radios. They may be hardy, but they’re no replacement for an actual military presence.

Canada’s North is empty. We stopped trying to develop it generations ago.<sup>31</sup>

Gilmore’s commentary is problematic in many respects. First, the whole notion of an “empty” Arctic is reflective of a classic “Settler Frontier” mindset that dismisses the fundamental reality of the region as an Indigenous homeland with a long history of human use and occupancy. Second, the idea that the Canadian Rangers are “no replacement for an actual military presence” is also condescending in denying the Rangers their status as an official subcomponent of the Canadian Army. Presumably, they are not “real” members of the military

because, like Smol, Gilmore's concept of the CAF is predicated entirely on a conventional model of Regular Forces and Primary Reservists singularly trained to ward off foreign military invaders. Like Smol and other critics, Gilmore also alludes to the Rangers' .303 Lee Enfield rifle as a relic of a bygone era – perhaps an analogy to his view of the Rangers themselves.

Picking up on his theme of the “undefended” Canadian North, Gilmore insisted in 2017 that “there is no place on earth as poorly defended as the Canadian Arctic,” thus rendering the region “essentially the largest military-free zone in the world.” Typically dismissive or ignorant of the CAF's expanding footprint over the previous decade, he was consistent in his dismissal of the Rangers – “local volunteers who are given Second World War rifles, a hoodie, a ball cap and an annual photo op with whichever politician is shameless enough to fly north for 24 hours to emote about the Canadian North from the depths of his or her \$1,200 Canada Goose parka.” While the journalist recognizes that “the Canadian Arctic is more remote and difficult to access than Russia's,” he likens it to the Amazonian rainforest – and finds our defences comparatively lacking.<sup>32</sup>

These stories furnish an incomplete or distorted picture of the logic behind having Canadian Rangers purchase, maintain, and use their own environmentally appropriate equipment. Although southern Canadian media commentators like Gilmore often criticize the lack of pay, equipment, and clothing provided to Rangers compared to their Regular and Reserve Force counterparts, my extensive conversations with Rangers from across the North over the last two decades suggest that these critiques are generally ill-informed or misplaced.<sup>33</sup> The diverse landscapes in which Rangers live and operate prescribe different equipment and clothing needs. The philosophy of treating the Rangers as self-sufficient, lightly equipped members of the defence team recognizes this reality as well as the military's limited capabilities for providing logistical support to community-based patrols distributed across the territorial North. The Rangers are well known across the North for their “red hoodies,” and are also provided with t-shirts, ball caps, CADPAT (Canadian Disruptive Pattern) pants, military boots, and red jackets intended for parade. On operations, however, Rangers are expected to use their own environmentally appropriate clothing, which they deem best suited to local conditions, rather than being assigned standard military gear. While media commentators often dismiss the Rangers as “rag-tag forces” as a result, they fail to observe that this lack of uniformity embodies a respect for diversity, allowing Rangers to make their own decisions about what they should wear to operate comfortably and effectively in their home environments.



This same logic extends to transportation and camping equipment. Gilmore's critique that "Rangers must supply their own snowmobiles and radios" neglects to mention how, during training and official taskings, Rangers are compensated for the use of their own equipment and vehicles – including snowmachines, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and boats – according to an established equipment usage rate (EUR). This arrangement provides Rangers with tax-free reimbursements that they can invest in their own equipment and tools, which they can then use in their everyday lives without having to ask the government for permission to do so. By allowing individuals to purchase their own, privately owned equipment, this approach represents a material contribution to local capacity building. Furthermore, it means that the military does not have to assume an unnecessarily high sustainment burden when it comes to maintaining equipment dispersed across more than sixty communities in the territorial North.

In general, the ongoing criticisms of the Canadian Rangers levelled by Smol and Gilmore highlight their persistent frustration with Canada's modest Arctic defence posture compared to other Arctic countries, and their dismissal of a largely Indigenous, Northern-based military organization that does not fit their traditional concept of national defence. On the one hand, the Rangers are held up as a "strawman" for these journalists to knock down in their overall critique of Canada's alleged failure to invest in "serious" or "real" military capabilities. Second, their unwillingness to embrace any concept of military service that does not involve conventional soldiers preparing for warfighting is limiting in a defence-of-Northern-Canada context. When the Rangers are situated in a more robust strategic and operational context, I contend that the journalists'



criticisms fall short. Conventional military threats to Canada's Arctic are less acute than sensational media coverage or implicit assumptions suggest, and Canada's defence capabilities in the region, while admittedly modest compared to other parts of the world, are proportionate and sufficient to meet them.<sup>34</sup> By turning to self-sufficient, locally based Canadian Rangers as an enabler or "force multiplier" for conventional southern-based military units and as an organized body of first responders in and for their communities, Canada has developed a successful model for the defence of regions remote from the southern population belt that face no conventional military threat.

### **Situating the Canadian Rangers in the Canadian Armed Forces' Arctic Operational Picture**

The traditional view of Arctic sovereignty and security, perpetuated by Smol and Gilmore, focuses entirely on military defence, especially the protection of national borders and the assertion of state sovereignty over Arctic lands and waters. During the Cold War, Arctic security was inseparable from national security, nuclear deterrence, and the bipolar rivalry between the American and Soviet superpowers.<sup>35</sup> Alternative understandings of security that emphasize economic, social, cultural, and environmental concerns have emerged in the post-Cold War period, however, and many scholars and politicians now promote a broader and deeper conception of security that reflects new and distinct types of threats – and encompasses human and environmental



security.<sup>36</sup> This understanding frames Canada's whole-of-government (WoG) approach to Arctic security, which involves many departments and agencies (at various levels of government) and Northern community stakeholders.<sup>37</sup> While overshadowed by popular depictions of circumpolar competition and a so-called Arctic arms race in popular media coverage,<sup>38</sup> the Government of Canada's integrated, comprehensive approach to defence and security reflects an increasingly concerted effort to reduce risks across the mission spectrum and strengthen the resilience of Arctic communities.<sup>39</sup> DND policy has reflected this framework for more than a decade, which, I have argued, offers a strong and appropriate basis upon which to build.<sup>40</sup>

*Strong, Secure, Engaged*, released in June 2017, shows that the Arctic remains an area of particular interest and focus. Climate change, resource issues, undefined continental shelf boundaries, potential maritime transportation routes, and security concerns have factored significantly into the domestic and foreign policy agendas of Arctic states, non-Arctic states, and organizations. "To succeed in an unpredictable and complex security environment," the new defence policy committed to "increase [the military's] presence in the Arctic over the long-term and work cooperatively with Arctic partners,"<sup>41</sup> reiterating longstanding images of the Arctic as a region undergoing massive change. At the same time, it explains that "Arctic states have long cooperated on economic, environmental, and safety issues, particularly through the Arctic Council, the premier body for cooperation in the region," and that "all Arctic states have an enduring interest in continuing this productive collaboration."<sup>42</sup>

Strategic documents produced by DND/CAF consistently emphasize that Canada does not face any conventional military threats to the Arctic in the foreseeable future. Recent Russian activities (Ukraine, Syria, strategic bomber flights to the limits of North American airspace) indicate a return to great power competition globally, which warrants careful monitoring and analysis in concert with our "premier partner" (the United States) and other NATO partners. Changes to the global threat environment, however, have not changed the perception of the conventional military threat to the *Canadian* Arctic. Although meeting near-peer competitor threats globally requires new or renewed capabilities that will be deployed in the Canadian Arctic (such as interceptor aircraft to replace the CF-18 and post-North Warning System detection systems), these requirements are not borne of threats emanating from Arctic-specific sovereignty issues/disputes. Furthermore, Russian military activities in its Arctic do not relate, in any obvious way, to environmental change or to maritime corridors in the Canadian Arctic.<sup>43</sup> A false correlation between Russian investments in Arctic capabilities and a commensurate increase in the threat to the Canadian Arctic perpetuates misconceptions by

conflating *Arctic issues* (those emerging in and from the Arctic region) with *grand strategic issues* that may have an Arctic nexus but that are appropriately dealt with at a global (rather than narrowly regional) level. If Canada fails to reflect this nuance in its official policy, it risks generating the very misconceptions that build mistrust and create conflict.

A sober Arctic defence and security policy requires leveraging relationships with allies, as Canada has always done. While Smol might consider this a “colonial mentality” that indicates subordination to the United States,<sup>44</sup> it is a sensible and realistic approach that is consistent with both past practice and current international norms and relationships (including the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)). As Global Affairs Canada has consistently reiterated, the longstanding Canada-US disagreement on the status of Canada’s Arctic waters remains manageable and does not detract from their deep, longstanding cooperation in the defence of North America. Furthermore, the Trudeau government’s emphasis on nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous peoples reinforces the central importance of respect for and reconciliation with these Canadians to his political agenda. “No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples,” Trudeau highlighted in his publicly released mandate letter to each of his Cabinet ministers in November 2015. “It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.”<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, Canada will continue to place the highest priority on ensuring that its activities in the Arctic (both domestic and international) acknowledge, protect, and promote Indigenous peoples’ rights – including military activities.

President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau emphasized in their 10 March 2016 joint statement that a shared Arctic leadership model should “embrace the opportunities and ... confront the challenges in the changing Arctic, with Indigenous and Northern partnerships, and responsible, science-based leadership.” It need not be built around inflated military threats to Arctic sovereignty and security, as Smol and Gilmore believe are paramount. Instead, the four main objectives focus on conserving biodiversity; building a sustainable Arctic economy; collaborating with “Indigenous and Arctic governments, leaders, and communities to more broadly and respectfully” incorporate Indigenous science and traditional knowledge into decision-making; and supporting strong Arctic communities by “defining new approaches and exchanging best practices to strengthen the resilience of Arctic communities and continuing to support the well-being of Arctic residents, in particular respecting the rights and territory of Indigenous peoples.” This objective



stresses that “all Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic are vital to strengthening and supporting U.S. and Canadian sovereignty claims,” and both countries “commit to working in partnership to implement land claims agreements to realize the social, cultural and economic potential of all Indigenous and Northern communities.” Taking “greater action to address the serious challenges of mental wellness, education, Indigenous language, and skill development, particularly among Indigenous youth,” is identified as one of the key priorities.<sup>46</sup> Although this may not reflect the vision of the Trump administration in Washington, it is reinforced by Mary Simon’s proposed “Shared Arctic Leadership Model” (2016) and the Government of Canada’s “Arctic Framework Policy: Discussion Guide.”<sup>47</sup>

DND/CAF Arctic plans also anticipate that the CAF is likely to play an increasingly active domestic role in support of civilian authorities in the future. I have argued elsewhere that investments already announced to enhance Arctic capabilities, such as the HMCS *Harry DeWolf* class of Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) and the Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre, as well as recent organizational and doctrinal developments, are sound and appropriate. Although Smol and Gilmore are dismissive of or oblivious to the land force concept designed around Primary Force Immediate Response Units, Primary Reserve-generated Arctic Response Company Groups, and the Canadian Rangers, there is no indication that this concept – once fully implemented – is ill-suited to meet the most probable defence threats that land

forces will be required to meet *in Canada's Arctic* today and in the foreseeable future.<sup>48</sup>

While noting enduring responsibilities to defend Canada and North America and deter would-be aggressors, as well as the importance of monitoring military activities across the Arctic region (particularly by Russia) primarily through surveillance missions, strategic documents emphasize that the security risks and “threats” facing Canada’s Arctic are unconventional, with the lead management responsibilities falling primarily to other government departments and agencies.<sup>49</sup> Strategic and operational-level documents guiding the military’s Northern planning focus on WoG responses to law enforcement challenges (such as upholding Canadian fishing regulations vis-à-vis foreign fishing fleets), environmental threats (such as earthquakes and floods), terrorism, organized crime, foreign (state or non-state) intelligence gathering and counterintelligence operations, attacks on critical infrastructure, and pandemics.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, rather than focusing solely on training for Arctic combat, the military has embraced what the *Land Force Operating Concept 2021* describes as a “comprehensive approach” to WoG integration, with the CAF providing assets and personnel to support other government departments and agencies dealing with issues such as disaster relief, pollution response, poaching, fisheries protection, and law enforcement.<sup>51</sup> From a military perspective, this means *supporting* the many stakeholders responsible for implementing federal, territorial/provincial, local, and Indigenous government policies in the North.

In order to fulfill the military’s roles in leading or assisting in the response to security incidents, defence officials recognize the need to build strong, collaborative relationships with Northern partners. DND/CAF strategic documents clearly highlight the threats to Indigenous communities posed by climate change, economic development, and increased shipping activity. Furthermore, these documents consistently emphasize that Northern domestic partners must be involved in the planning and enactment of policies and activities in the region, with information shared across government departments and with Arctic stakeholders. Because of the military’s training, material assets, and discretionary spending powers, as well as the specialized skill sets held by its personnel, defence documents affirm that the CAF has an essential role to play in government operations in the North – albeit an explicitly supporting role.<sup>52</sup> Otherwise stated, while other departments and agencies are mandated to lead the responses to Northern security threats and emergencies, the military will “lead from behind” in the most probable security and safety scenarios. (The exception is search and rescue (SAR), where DND has the lead for coordinating air and maritime SAR and providing aeronautical SAR.)

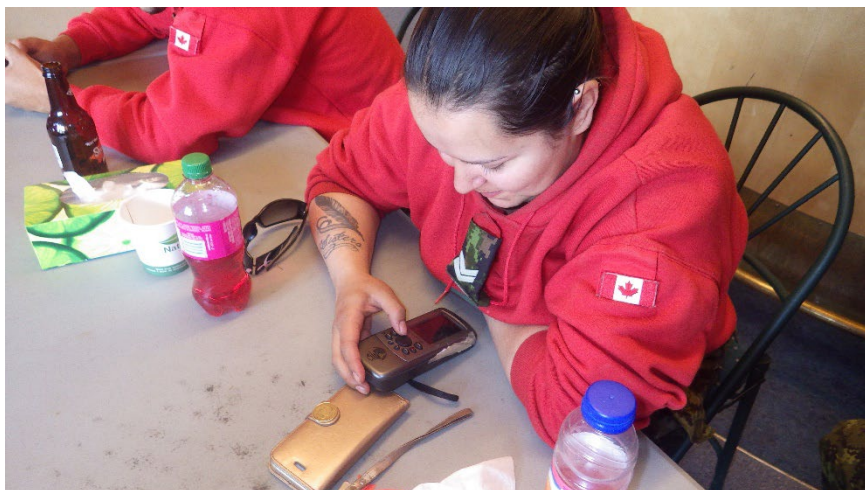
Recent analysis of strategic documents produced by DND during the Harper era reveals how military planners did not subscribe to a “sovereignty on thinning ice” thesis, nor did military implementation plans build on rhetoric about a foremost need to “defend sovereignty” against foreign military threats emanating from resource or boundary disputes. While political leaders often cited the need for enhanced military capabilities under the sovereignty pillar of Canada’s *Northern Strategy*, the military did not interpret this as an urgent need to develop conventional warfighting capabilities to ward off foreign state aggressors. Instead, the military articulated, promoted, and sought to implement a WoG approach that clearly emphasized unconventional security and safety challenges. Rather than dismissing human and environmental security considerations, DND/CAF conceptualized these “soft” missions as the most probable situations where it would be called upon to provide security to Canadians. In these scenarios, enhanced military capabilities would help to address these challenges in a *supporting* way rather than as the main line of the government effort to “enhance” sovereignty.<sup>53</sup> Cast in this light, the Canadian Rangers are far from irrelevant to military capabilities designed and equipped to meet threats to the Canadian Arctic across the defence-security-safety mission spectrum. They are deliberately designed to be a practical mechanism that avoids the perception of undue “militarization” of Canada’s North – from both national and international perspectives.<sup>54</sup>

### **“Sovereignty Begins at Home”: Indigenous Service in the Canadian Rangers**

Brigadier General Kelly Woiden, the Chief of Staff, Army Reserve, explained to the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence on 18 February 2015 that:

More than anything else, [Rangers] have a very clear and strong understanding of local community and their environment. Many of them are individuals who have prominence. They can be an elder within the native community with their local Inuit or other ... First Nations peoples across the country. However, they could also just be rank-and-file folk because of their background and knowledge, for instance, the local snowmobile mechanic who has done well and he’s the best guy.

Rather than seeing the Rangers as a sideline to the “serious” military show that Smol and Gilmore would like to see play out in the North, this unique component is better understood as offering core capabilities that meaningfully and practically leverage the rich diversity, knowledge, and skills of Northern Canadians – and, most relevantly for the theme of this volume, of Indigenous



peoples. Canada's three Northern territories are a diverse human geography, with Indigenous peoples comprising a substantial portion of the population. Combined, Canada's three territories were home to just over 113,600 people in 2016, representing 0.3% of the total Canadian population. Outside of the territorial capitals, most residents live in small, dispersed communities, many without road access, with concomitant challenges of economies of scale and the delivery of government services. Whereas Indigenous people – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis – made up 4.3% of the total Canadian population in the 2011 census, they comprised 23.1% of the population in Yukon, 51.9% in the Northwest Territories (NWT), and 86.3% in Nunavut. These demographics are reflected in the Canadian Rangers.

The lack of Ranger self-identification data in 1 CRPG does not allow for firm statistics, but conversations with Ranger Instructors and headquarters personnel, as well as my own field work over the past fifteen years, affirm that more than two-thirds of all Canadian Rangers across the Territorial North are of Indigenous descent. The rates of Indigenous participation are highest in Nunavut and the NWT, with Yukon having higher numbers of non-Indigenous members, as the demography of that territory would predict. At the local level, individual patrols are representative of their communities' ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity. These are important considerations, given the Government of Canada's strong focus on the centrality of Northern Indigenous leadership<sup>55</sup> and the defence policy statement that "Indigenous communities are at the heart of Canada's North" and the military will "work to expand and deepen our extensive relationships with these communities, particularly through the Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers."<sup>56</sup>

Elsewhere, I have explained the historical emergence of the Rangers as a diverse and inclusive organization, and explored how the Rangers' role, mission, and tasks accommodate Indigenous and local knowledge and expertise. To facilitate the participation of a wide range of Northern Canadians, the Rangers have unique enlistment criteria<sup>57</sup> that respects the experiential and traditional knowledge that recruits bring to the organization. Upon enrolment, Canadian Rangers are considered to be "trained, self-sufficient, equipped, and clothed to operate as self-sufficient mobile forces in support of CAF sovereignty and domestic operations in Canada in their local area of responsibility" (generally described as a 150-km radius around their home communities).<sup>58</sup> New Rangers are typically provided with a ten-day orientation course, provided by Regular or Primary Reserve Force Ranger Instructors, which focuses primarily on marksmanship and learning basic facts about the history and structure of the CAF. There is no "basic training" akin to the Regular Force or Primary Reserves, and Rangers are not required to undertake annual training. Accordingly, Rangers do not conform to the principle of universality of service because knowledge of the military and conventional "soldiering skills" are not prerequisites to their participation. Furthermore, there is no compulsory retirement age for Rangers in recognition of the essential role of Elders in Indigenous communities.<sup>59</sup>

... In terms of harnessing diversity, the Rangers organization has also become a more inclusive place for women since the gender barrier was first broken in 1991. As of December 2016, there were 408 female Rangers in 1 CRPG, representing 22.7% of the unit strength – a much higher percentage



than in the Regular Force or Primary Reserves across the CAF. Eight of the sixty Ranger sergeants (patrol commanders) in 1 CRPG are women (13.3%), as are fifty-two of the 237 master corporals (21.9%) and forty-six of the 181 corporals (25.4%).<sup>60</sup> These statistics affirm that women feel that they can and should play a leadership role in the organization, and have acceptance from their peers (who elect them into these positions). It also reflects the prominent role of women in overseeing the Junior Canadian Ranger patrols in their communities, which is typically done by a master corporal.

While Smol and Gilmore would likely dismiss these diversity statistics as evidence of mere “symbolism,” they speak to the Ranger organization’s success in achieving broader DND/CAF objectives to “better forecast occupational requirements and engage in more targeted recruiting, including capitalizing on the unique talents and skill-sets of Canada’s diverse population.”<sup>61</sup> Particularly in isolated Northern communities, where Indigenous peoples make up such a high proportion of the population and southern units have less familiarity with operational constraints related to environmental conditions and mobility, being able to leverage this expertise is highly valuable. Unfortunately, convincing some critics of the value of a diverse military that does not fit their preconceived notions of “serious” capabilities can be difficult. General Jonathan Vance, the Chief of the Defence Staff, noted at the 2018 Halifax Security Forum that “military leaders have failed to grasp the importance of recruiting more women and minorities, partly because they have for too long relied on an antiquated template for recruits.” In his view, deepening the diversity of the CAF is essential. “We know that the future of warfare is going to demand different ways of thinking in different domains so that we can prevail,” he asserted.<sup>62</sup> While he is likely referring to domains such as cyber and the piloting of unmanned aerial vehicles, the Canadian Arctic domain is another area where conventional models do not fit – but not because the nature of warfighting has changed.

Smol and Gilmore are correct in highlighting that the Rangers are not intended as combat forces. This role, which was originally assigned to Rangers in 1947, was removed from their official task list because they are neither trained nor equipped for it.<sup>63</sup> This does not justify the declaration that they are not a “real military” capability, or that their lack of combat training renders the CAF less prepared to defend Canada’s Arctic from foreign adversaries. Understanding the Rangers and how they fit within the defence team is key. They are intended to serve as enablers or “force multipliers” for other CAF elements in preparing for Arctic warfare and, presumably, an actual warfighting scenario (however highly improbable that is in the Canadian North).



Rangers *could* be trained for more kinetic military tasks – but there is no indication that they *should* be, given the threat environment and the important roles that they already play through their unique terms of service. ...

## Conclusions

*“I know where I’d be placing my bets should the Rangers actually have to go to war in defence of Canada.”*

- Robert Smol (2009)<sup>64</sup>

*“Most importantly, the Canadian Armed Forces must reflect the diversity of the country we defend. We need a military that looks like Canada.”*

- DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*<sup>65</sup>

Critiques of the Canadian Rangers by Smol and Gilmore are indicative of misrepresentations and misunderstandings of both the limited conventional military threat facing the Canadian North and where the Rangers fit within the Canadian Armed Forces’ Arctic strategy and operational concepts. By offering a persistent military presence in communities across the Canadian North, serving as critical enablers for southern-based units operating in the region, and providing “first responder” capacity in case of local emergencies, the Rangers help the CAF deliver on its mission to defend Canada’s security, protect its citizens, and promote its strategic interests at home. Just because the Ranger model does not fit conventional force structures or combat capabilities does not, as Smol suggests, render the Rangers irrelevant or a “token military force.” Their proven ability to operate in austere and difficult environmental conditions – often reflecting applied Indigenous knowledge of their homelands – and to maintain interoperability with mission partners to address practical security challenges remains highly valuable. By serving as the “Eyes, Ears, and Voice” of the CAF in their communities,<sup>66</sup> the Rangers also embody federal approaches to collaboration and partnership predicated on ideas that Northerners are best placed to make decisions in areas that impact them.

The Rangers exemplify how a subcomponent of the Reserve Force can harness the benefits of diversity, ensuring that Northerners are integrally involved in the defence team when it operates in Indigenous homelands, and developing local capabilities that both reflect and support the interests of local communities. Although Canada’s defence policy lists Indigenous peoples as an “under-represented population within the Canadian Armed Forces,”<sup>67</sup> this is not reflective of the situation in Canada’s Territorial North. Through the Canadian Rangers, Indigenous people in Canada’s North serve in the CAF at a



far higher rate per capita than Canadians do on average. Rather than adopting a deficit approach, a more appropriate framework might be to analyze why the Canadian Rangers have made the CAF an “employer of choice” for Indigenous men and women living in Northern communities.<sup>68</sup>

The Rangers provide an important outlet for Northern Indigenous peoples who wish to serve in the defence of their country without having to leave their communities. Ranger activities allow members of Indigenous communities to practice and share traditional skills, such as living off the land, not only with people from outside their cultures but also across generations within. These skills are central to Indigenous identities, and there is a persistent worry that these will be lost unless individuals have opportunities to exercise them and share them with younger generations. By celebrating traditional and local knowledge, and encouraging and enabling community members to go out on the land and share their knowledge and expertise, the Rangers can play an important role in supporting the retention and expansion of core cultural competencies. In turn, the Ranger concept is inherently rooted in the idea that the unique knowledge of Northern peoples can make an important contribution to effective military operations. It is this partnership, rooted in mutual learning and sharing, that has made the Rangers a long-term success on the local and national scales.

## Notes

I have served as the Honorary Lieutenant Colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CRPG) since 2014. This chapter expresses my personal views and assessments and in no way should be misconstrued as the official position of the Government of Canada or the Canadian Armed Forces.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Smol, "Standing on guard for free (almost)," iPolitics, 28 August 2013, <https://ipolitics.ca/2013/08/28/standing-on-guard-for-free-almost/>.

<sup>2</sup> Department of National Defence (DND), *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 79, <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Army, "Canadian Rangers," 2017, <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/canadian-rangers/index.page>, last accessed 12 September 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Defence Administration Order and Directive (DAOD) 2020-2 - Canadian Rangers, 21 May 2015, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-defence-admin-orders-directives-2000/2020-2.page>.

<sup>5</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia That Works," *Canadian Military Journal* 6/4 (2006): 49-60.

<sup>6</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 113.

<sup>7</sup> Parts of this section are derived from a chapter on "The North's Canadian Rangers" in *Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion*, eds. Alistair Edgar, Rupinder Mangat, and Bessma Momani (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> This official figure of Indigenous people's participation in the CAF does not include the Canadian Rangers because they are neither Regular Force nor Primary Reserves. Self-identification surveys related to the Rangers are highly unreliable. Only 25.6% of Rangers in 1 CRPG had completed a cultural self-identification survey by July 2016, with nearly all returns appearing to come from Yukon. Accordingly, the statistics are not representative. By contrast, 81.7% of Rangers in 2 CRPG completed the survey, with 56.9% self-identifying as Aboriginal peoples, 2.5% as visible minorities, and 1.1% as persons with disabilities. Statistics provided by the office of the Chief of Staff Army Reserve.

<sup>9</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Kevin McMahon, *Arctic Twilight: Reflections on the Destiny of Canada's Northern Land and People* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1988); Frances Abele, "Confronting 'Harsh and Inescapable Facts': Indigenous Peoples and the Militarization of the Circumpolar Region," in *Sovereignty and Security in the Arctic*, ed. Edgar Dosman (London: Routledge, 1989), 189; Mary Simon, "Militarization and the Aboriginal Peoples," in *Arctic Alternatives: Civility or Militarism in the*

*Circumpolar North*, ed. Franklyn Griffiths (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1992), 60; P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Matthew Farish, "The Cold War on Canadian Soil: Militarizing a Northern Environment," *Environmental History* 12/3 (October 2007): 920-50; and Sarah Bonesteel and E. Anderson, *Canada's Relationship with Inuit: A History of Policy and Program Development* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> See Peter Kikkert with Doug Stern, "Finding Ihuma: Inuit Leadership Norms and Canadian Ranger Operations," in *Canadian Armed Forces Arctic Operations, 1941-2015: Lessons Learned, Lost, and Relearned*, eds. Adam Lajeunesse and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Fredericton: Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society, 2017), 370-86, <https://www.unb.ca/fredericton/arts/centres/gregg/what/publications/CdnArcticOps2017.pdf>; Sébastien Girard Lindsay, « L'intégration Des Autochtones Dans L'armée Canadienne – Entre Émancipation et Assujettissement : Une Étude des Représentations Sociales qu'ont Les Militaires des Autochtones dans L'armée Canadienne » (MA thesis, École Nationale d'Administration Publique, 2017); and Magali Vullièrme, « Les Rangers et les Rangers Juniors canadiens : vecteur de sécurité humaine des Inuit canadiens » (PhD dissertation, Université de Versailles St-Quentin, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Robert Smol, "A teacher speaks out on students bullying teachers," CBC News, 5 December 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-teacher-speaks-out-on-students-bullying-teachers-1.738684>; Smol, "The Norwegian Juggernaut," *National Post*, 4 April 2014, <http://nationalpost.com/opinion/robert-smol-the-norwegian-juggernaut>.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Smol, "When will we get serious about Arctic defence," CBC News, 11 May 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/when-will-we-get-serious-about-arctic-defence-1.813981>.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Smol, "Canada's Arctic sovereignty is on thin ice," *Now magazine*, 20 January 2016, <https://nowtoronto.com/news/northern-exposure-canadas-arctic-sovereignty/>.

<sup>15</sup> Smol, "When will we get serious about Arctic defence."

<sup>16</sup> Smol, "When will we get serious about Arctic defence."

<sup>17</sup> Smol, "Standing on guard for free (almost)."

<sup>18</sup> Robert Smol, "Canada's 'Arctic soldiers' shouldn't be our only line of defence in the North," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 2017, <http://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/canadas-arctic-soldiers-shouldnt-be-our-only-line-of-defence-in-the-north>.

<sup>19</sup> Smol, "Canada's 'Arctic soldiers' shouldn't be our only line of defence in the North."

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Smol, "When will we get serious about Arctic defence"; Smol, "Canada's Arctic sovereignty is on thin ice"; and Robert Smol, "Canada has a

'colonial mentality' when it comes to funding our military," CBC News, 31 March 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/canada-defence-spending-1.4048409>.

<sup>21</sup> Smol, "The Norwegian Juggernaut."

<sup>22</sup> Smol, "Canada's 'Arctic soldiers' shouldn't be our only line of defence in the North."

<sup>23</sup> See P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16/4 (March 2016): 7-66, available online at <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj3brzmITzAhX0dM0KHagQBHkQFnoECAQQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fjms.org%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F58175%2Fpdf%2F&usq=AOvVaw1quFf14fsyYaVJRskV9VUY>.

<sup>24</sup> See Kenneth C. Eyre, "Custos Borealis: The Military in the Canadian North" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London - King's College, 1981); Eyre, "Forty Years of Military Activity in the Canadian North, 1947-87," *Arctic* 40/4 (December 1987): 292-99; Bernd Horn, "Gateway to Invasion or the Curse of Geography? The Canadian Arctic and the Question of Security, 1939-1999," in *Forging a Nation: Perspectives on the Canadian Military Experience*, ed. Bernd Horn (Vanwell: St. Catharines, 2002), 307-32; and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, K.C. Eyre, and Peter Kikkert, "Lessons in Arctic Warfare: The Canadian Army Experience, 1945-55," in *Canadian Armed Forces Arctic Operations, 1945-2015: Historical and Contemporary Lessons Learned*, eds. Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse (Fredericton: Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society, 2017), 47-104.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, N. Loukacheva, *The Arctic Promise: Legal and Political Autonomy of Greenland and Nunavut* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), and Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* (2009), <https://iccalaska.org/wp-icc/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Signed-Inuit-Sovereignty-Declaration-11x17.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Mary Simon, "Does Ottawa's Focus Look Backwards," *Nunatsiaq News*, 11 April 2008; Simon, "Inuit and the Canadian Arctic: Sovereignty begins at home," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43/2 (2009): 250-60; and Heather Nicol, "Reframing sovereignty: Indigenous peoples and Arctic states," *Political Geography* 29/2 (2010): 78-80.

<sup>27</sup> Scott Gilmore, "Vladimir Putin, Justin Trudeau, and Canada's Arctic problem," *Maclean's*, 4 November 2015, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/vladimir-putin-justin-trudeau-and-canadas-arctic-problem/>.

<sup>28</sup> Gilmore, "Vladimir Putin, Justin Trudeau, and Canada's Arctic problem."

<sup>29</sup> See P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *If It Ain't Broke, Don't Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers*, Working Papers on Arctic Security No. 6 (Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and ArcticNet Arctic Security Projects, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Scott Gilmore, "How Ottawa abandoned our only Arctic port," *Maclean's*, 18 August 2016, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/abandoned-churchill/>.

<sup>31</sup> Scott Gilmore, "The North and the great Canadian lie," *Maclean's*, 11 September 2016, <http://www.macleans.ca/politics/the-north-and-the-great-canadian-lie/>.

<sup>32</sup> Scott Gilmore, "The Canadian North is the least defended territory on earth," *Maclean's*, 21 March 2017, <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/the-canadian-north-is-the-least-defended-territory-on-earth/>.

<sup>33</sup> Although Rangers are not paid for their year-round service as "eyes and ears" on the land, Rangers are paid for force generation activities such as annual training patrols, local meetings, and leadership workshops, with an average of twelve paid days per year. Furthermore, they are paid when they participate in force employment activities such as Operations Nanook, Nunaliut, and Nunakput, as well as when they provide support to southern units on Northern training exercises (NOREXs) or are officially tasked to conduct search and rescue. Although the influx of several thousand dollars into a community at the end of a Ranger patrol or military exercise might appear paltry, this Ranger pay can constitute a substantive part of an Indigenous economy that balances short-term paid labour with traditional harvesting activities, thus supporting a social economy that does not conform to Western models.

<sup>34</sup> Lackenbauer and Lajeunesse, "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic."

<sup>35</sup> Ken Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Bill Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen & Son, 2008); Peter Kikkert and Lackenbauer, "The Militarization of the Arctic to 1990," in *Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy*, eds. Ken Coates and Carin Holroyd (Cham: Palgrave, 2020), 487-506.

<sup>36</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Wilfrid Greaves, "Re-thinking sovereignty and security in the Arctic," OpenCanada/Arctic Deeply, 23 March 2016, <https://www.opencanada.org/features/re-thinking-sovereignty-and-security-arctic/>.

<sup>37</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canada's Northern Strategy: A Comprehensive Approach to Defence, Security, and Safety," in *North of 60: Toward a Renewed Canadian Arctic Agenda*, eds. John Higginbotham and Jennifer Spence (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2016), 43-48; Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "The Emerging Arctic Security Environment: Putting the Military in its (Whole of Government) Place," in *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens*, eds. Lackenbauer and Heather Nicol (Antigonish: Mulroney Institute on Government, 2017), 1-36.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Elana Wilson Rowe, "A dangerous space? Unpacking state and media discourses on the Arctic," *Polar Geography* 36/3 (2013):

232-44; and R. Pincus and S.H. Ali, "Have you been to 'The Arctic'? Frame theory and the role of media coverage in shaping Arctic discourse," *Polar Geography* 39/2 (2016): 83-97.

<sup>39</sup> Lackenbauer and Lajeunesse, "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic."

<sup>40</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Arctic Defence and Security: Transitioning to the Trudeau Government," in *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens*, eds. Lackenbauer and Heather Nicol (Antigonish: Mulroney Institute on Government, 2017), 308-40.

<sup>41</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 50.

<sup>43</sup> Alexander Sergunin, *Russia in the Arctic: Hard or Soft Power?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Canada & Russia: Toward an Arctic Agenda," *Global Brief* (Summer/Fall 2016): 21-25.

<sup>44</sup> Smol, "Canada has a 'colonial mentality' when it comes to funding our military."

<sup>45</sup> Justin Trudeau, "Ministerial Mandate Letters" (2015), <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/ministerial-mandate-letters>.

<sup>46</sup> Barack Obama and Justin Trudeau, "U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership" (10 March 2016), <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/03/10/us-canada-joint-statement-climate-energy-and-arctic-leadership#sthash.XjRoT2R7.dpuf>.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Simon, Interim Report on the Shared Arctic Leadership Model (31 October 2016), <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1481656672979/1537886690726>; Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Arctic Policy Framework: Discussion Guide (2017), [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2017/aanc-inac/R74-37-2017-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/aanc-inac/R74-37-2017-eng.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> Lackenbauer and Lajeunesse, "The Emerging Arctic Security Environment."

<sup>49</sup> Chief of Force Development (CFD), *Arctic Integrating Concept* (2010), 5-6; Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)/Deputy Minister (DM), *Directive for DND/CF in the North* (12 April 2011), 9; Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC), *CJOC Plan for the North* (28 January 2014).

<sup>50</sup> CFD, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, 23-24; CDS/DM, *Directive for DND/CF in the North*, app. A, 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> J.T. Sheahan and P.J. Gizewski, *Land Force Operating Concept 2021* (January 2011), 1.

<sup>52</sup> CFD, *Arctic Integrating Concept*, ix, 10, 23, 49.

<sup>53</sup> See Lackenbauer, "Canada's Northern Strategy"; P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Ryan Dean, eds., *Canada's Northern Strategy under Prime Minister Stephen Harper: Key Speeches and Documents, 2005-15*, Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security (DCASS) No. 6 (Calgary and Waterloo: Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies/Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism/Arctic Institute of

North America, 2016), <http://pubs.aina.ucalgary.ca/dcass/82783.pdf>; and Lackenbauer, "Toward a Comprehensive Approach to Canadian Security and Safety in the Arctic," in *Understanding Sovereignty and Security in the Circumpolar Arctic*, eds. Wilfrid Greaves and Lackenbauer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 137-67.

<sup>54</sup> Thanks to Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Halfkenny, the Commanding Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, for reinforcing this point after reading a preliminary draft of this article.

<sup>55</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Conceptualizing 'One Arctic' as the 'Canadian Arctic'? Situating Canada's Arctic Council Chairmanship (2013-15)," in *One Arctic: The Arctic Council and Circumpolar Governance*, eds. Lackenbauer, Heather Nicol, and Wilfrid Greaves (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee/Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, 2017), 46-78.

<sup>56</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 80.

<sup>57</sup> The only formal entry criteria for men and women who wish to join the Rangers stipulates that they be over eighteen years of age; Canadian citizens or landed immigrants who reside in a remote, coastal, or isolated area; in sufficiently good health to carry out their duties; knowledgeable of the local terrain and competent to operate on the land; and free of any legal prohibitions (DAOD 5002-1 - Enrolment, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-defence-admin-orders-directives-5000/5002-1.page>). There are no fitness or aptitude tests that Rangers must take prior to joining, nor do they face any hard medical criteria. Given social indicators that reveal significant health and education gaps between Northern and southern Canadians, these are important accommodations that allow the Ranger organization to include a more representative sample of Northern society than might otherwise be the case.

<sup>58</sup> Commander Canadian Army, Master Implementation Directive (MID) – Canadian Ranger Organization, 27 April 2015, DND file 1901-1 (CRNA).

<sup>59</sup> A Ranger is only considered non-effective when they can no longer patrol their area of responsibility (AOR) in the process of their individual normal routine; they do not reflect good credit upon their community, their patrol, and the CAF; they are not accepted as an equal and participating member within their respective patrol; or they no longer provide tangible advice and guidance to the patrol that is grounded in experientially based, traditional knowledge. If the patrol membership decides by consensus that the individual is non-effective, then the commanding officer of the patrol group can release the member. Canadian Army Order (CAO), 11-99: Canadian Rangers, 1 November 2013. This process reinforces the community-based philosophy of the Ranger organization. As long as individuals contribute to their patrol, in the eyes of the other patrol members, they can remain in the organization and make positive contributions. For example, people unable to travel on the land can serve as communication contacts back in the community.



Elders also serve as important cultural mentors and subject-matter experts, lending traditional and local knowledge to the planning of operations, management of relationships within a patrol, training of other Rangers, and mentoring of youth. Accordingly, the absence of any compulsory retirement age not only brings greater generational diversity within the Rangers than in the Regular and Primary Reserve Forces, but it also facilitates the trans-generational transfer of knowledge within Northern Indigenous communities.

<sup>60</sup> Statistics provided by 1 CRPG, November 2017.

<sup>61</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 12.

<sup>62</sup> Canadian Press, "Canadian Military's Template for Perfect Recruits Outdated: Vance," *Vancouver Sun*, 17 November 2018.

<sup>63</sup> DAOD 2020-2.

<sup>64</sup> Smol, "When will we get serious about Arctic defence."

<sup>65</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 20.

<sup>66</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013; Lackenbauer, *Vigilans: The 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group* (Yellowknife: 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 23.

<sup>68</sup> Directorate Strategic Human Resources (D Strat HR), "The Canadian Forces as a Career of Choice for Aboriginal Canadians," D Strat HR News, Strategic HR Outlook Series no. 2 (2003).





## 9

## **The Canadian Rangers: Strengthening Community Disaster Resilience in Canada's Remote and Isolated Communities**

With Peter Kikkert

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In early April 2020, the Regional Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee, established to coordinate the response to COVID-19 in Nunavik, Quebec, confirmed the first five cases of coronavirus in the region and requested that local Canadian Rangers be mobilized to assist in response efforts in their communities.<sup>1</sup> As part-time, non-commissioned members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Reserves, the Rangers' official mission is "to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces."<sup>2</sup> The fact that the Committee turned to the Rangers – the vast majority of whom are Inuit – in Nunavik's fourteen communities to assist health and emergency management agencies in their efforts to stem the spread of COVID-19 is a testament to the Rangers' perceived value to human security and emergency response.<sup>3</sup>

In the days and weeks that followed, the CAF activated hundreds of additional Rangers across the country as part of Operation Laser, the military's effort to support the Government of Canada's objectives and requests for assistance in the fight against COVID-19. Serving in their own or neighbouring communities, Rangers performed community wellness checks, prepared triage points for COVID testing, raised awareness about social distancing, established community response centres, cleared snow, cut and delivered firewood, and provided food (including fresh game and fish) and supplies to Elders and vulnerable community members.<sup>4</sup> They also acted as a conduit between their communities and the government agencies involved in responding to potential community outbreaks, with important roles in passing along reliable information about local needs. In short, during this time of domestic and international crisis, the Canadian Rangers provided the

Government of Canada with an additional layer of local capacity that it could quickly leverage to enhance its COVID-19 response efforts. “The advantage,” concluded one government official in Nunavik, “is that the Rangers are already here, in their communities.”<sup>5</sup>

As Rangers carried out their new COVID-19-related duties, they continued to perform their traditional tasks, which include preparing for the spring-time natural hazards that threaten their communities and participating in disaster response. In April and May 2020, the communities of Fort Vermilion in northern Alberta,<sup>6</sup> Hay River in the Northwest Territories,<sup>7</sup> and Kashechewan in northern Ontario<sup>8</sup> requested the assistance of their local Rangers in the face of heavy flooding. Fort Vermilion, in particular, faced “once-in-a-generation” flooding, and its twenty-five Rangers were engaged in monitoring water levels, setting up roadblocks, transporting and distributing logistical equipment, placing sandbags around critical infrastructure, staffing the Emergency Operations Centre, and helping over 450 residents with the evacuation of their homes.<sup>9</sup>

The Rangers’ involvement in flood relief activities and in the response to COVID-19 highlights a role that Canadian Rangers have been playing for decades: by virtue of their capabilities and presence, they regularly support other government agencies in preventing, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the broad spectrum of emergency and disaster scenarios facing isolated communities. Rangers are a source of disaster resilience in their communities by helping to “anticipate, and where possible prevent or at least minimize the potential damage a disaster might cause,” and helping to cope with the effects of a “disaster if it occurs, to maintain certain basic functions and structures during the disaster, and to recover and adapt to the changes that result.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite these contributions to community safety, the Canadian Rangers’ role has been largely ignored in the literature on community disaster resilience (CDR) and emergency and disaster management in Canada – even by studies focused on remote, isolated, Northern, and/or Indigenous communities.<sup>11</sup> In this article, we argue that the Rangers offer a response to a difficult question: how can targeted government investment effectively build disaster resilience in at-risk, remote, and isolated communities with small populations, limited infrastructure, few local resources, and little access to rapid external assistance? Building upon an examination of government documents and media reports on the Rangers’ role in past emergencies and disasters, and focus groups and interviews we conducted with serving members, we assess how the Rangers strengthen the disaster resilience of their communities through their organization, leadership, and training; their ongoing involvement in

community preparedness and hazard risk analysis; their social relationships and networks; and the trust they have earned from fellow community members. We end with thoughts on how the Rangers might be leveraged to build greater community disaster resilience – an important consideration with climate change reshaping Northern environments and exacerbating risks and hazards – and with suggestions for how the Ranger model could be used to bolster community capacity in other jurisdictions.

## **Methods**

The empirical evidence gathering for this study began with a comprehensive review, synthesis, and analysis of media sources and government documents discussing Canadian Ranger involvement in emergency and disaster events over the last three decades. This review included an assessment of the Rangers' emergency response roles listed in publicly available territorial, provincial, and municipal emergency and evacuation plans.

We then conducted interviews and focus groups with Canadian Ranger patrols as part of our broader community-collaborative Kitikmeot Search and Rescue (KSAR) project, which seeks to identify and assess the existing community-based search and rescue (SAR) and emergency management capabilities in the communities of Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak, and Kugaaruk. In cooperation with community-based SAR organizations, data collection for the KSAR project began with capacity-mapping workshops in each community to determine local assets and resources, identify untapped or unrecognized resources, and register collective and individual capacities.<sup>12</sup> Capacity mapping laid the groundwork for capability-based planning, which asks whether communities or organizations have the right mix of assets – equipment, organization, planning, training, and leadership – to perform a required emergency task. As part of this process, we met with the twenty-two members of the Gjoa Haven Canadian Ranger Patrol between 23–24 October 2019; eight members of the Cambridge Bay Canadian Ranger Patrol on 18 April and 21 October; eighteen members of the Kugluktuk Ranger Patrol on 23 April and 16–17 October; and twenty-five members of the Taloyoak Canadian Ranger Patrol on 15 April. While these meetings focused heavily on the technical aspects of SAR operations, Rangers also discussed their broader roles in community public safety and emergency management.

Fifteen of these Canadian Rangers also participated in the Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue (KRSAR), organized by the authors and Angulalik Pedersen. Held at the High Arctic Research Station in Cambridge Bay on 31 January and 1 February, the roundtable brought together fifty-five

members of community-based organizations (CBOs) from the five Kitikmeot communities, academics, and representatives of federal and territorial departments and agencies to discuss best practices, lessons learned, challenges, and future requirements for search and rescue in the Kitikmeot region. During the roundtable, the Ranger participants shared their views on search and rescue operations and emergency response, thus providing an additional source of data for this article.<sup>13</sup>

We then applied the empirical data gathered on the roles Rangers play during emergencies and disasters to the theoretical framework provided by the rich scholarship on community disaster resilience, which refers to a community's ability to



anticipate, prevent, prepare for, manage, and recover from emergencies and major incidents.<sup>14</sup> A community's level of disaster resilience is contingent upon a complex array of factors: strong socio-economic, physical, and psychological health; a diverse economy able to withstand shocks; effective local government and key services; recognition of the inequity around risk and vulnerability; and adequate physical infrastructure.<sup>15</sup> The most important element is human infrastructure – the area in which the Rangers make their most significant contribution. Scholars and practitioners agree that a community's disaster resilience should be built from the bottom up, in a whole-of-community approach that taps into the personal and collective capacities of its people.<sup>16</sup> Such an approach should also strive to leverage and bolster a community's social capital, defined as the "aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of relationships."<sup>17</sup> Resilience flows from community members working together to strengthen these relationships and networks, and to enhance the trust, social cohesion, and social support inherent within them.<sup>18</sup> Communities also build resilience when they are "empowered to use their existing skills, knowledge, and resources to prevent/mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters," and are

provided with opportunities to develop other required capabilities.<sup>19</sup> Key capacities include hazard identification and risk awareness, planning and preparedness initiatives that outline the roles and responsibilities of various groups, effective formal and informal communication, emergency response training and exercises, and partnerships between the different internal and external organizations involved in disaster response.<sup>20</sup> Finally, a community requires good leadership and effective organization to allow it to mobilize these assets for a sustained period during disasters.<sup>21</sup>

The presence of community-based organizations directly engaged in disaster management can play a key role in developing many of the assets required by disaster-resilient communities,<sup>22</sup> particularly in rural and underserved communities.<sup>23</sup> Community groups of all types – from voluntary societies to faith groups – can make essential contributions in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a disaster. If they are not effectively integrated into the emergency plans and procedures, and have no training, volunteer responders can also interfere with more formal efforts and risk doing more damage than good. In recognition of this, the last decades have seen the proliferation of voluntary and trained local emergency response teams in communities around the world (e.g., the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Emergency Response Teams in the United States, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Community Disaster Teams, and the Ontario Volunteer Emergency Response Team). During a disaster, members of these community-based organizations deploy to their assigned areas to extinguish small fires, perform light search and rescue, render basic first aid, perform wellness checks on community members, direct traffic, assess damage, and execute other roles as required.<sup>24</sup> Given their pre-existing relationships with fellow community members, local responders can persuade people to take action, whether it be evacuating or taking immediate shelter. These relationships also allow them to identify the most vulnerable members of their communities and ensure that these people receive priority assistance. Emergency response team members can also serve an essential function by rapidly funneling a steady stream of accurate and essential information to outside agencies responding to a disaster, and by facilitating immediate cooperation between these agencies and their communities.<sup>25</sup> Provided they are trained and well organized, local emergency response teams can make a significant contribution to the resilience of their communities.

Many of the key building blocks of community disaster resilience are brought together in community-based Canadian Ranger patrols. They are an example of how community resilience can be strengthened from the bottom up, with the Canadian Armed Forces empowering Rangers to use their existing



skills and social relations within an organizational structure that provides them with the framework, training, and equipment they require to assist in every phase of disaster management.

### **The Canadian Rangers: Who Are They?**

The Canadian Rangers serve as the “eyes, ears, and voice” of the Canadian Armed Forces, providing a military presence in the remote parts of the country “which cannot conveniently or economically be covered by other elements of the CAF.”<sup>26</sup> They are not intended to act as combat forces and receive no tactical military training. Instead, their regular tasks include surveillance and presence patrols, collecting local data for the CAF, reporting unusual sightings, participating in community events, and assisting with domestic military operations. To facilitate these operations, Rangers share their knowledge and skills with regular members of the CAF, teaching them how to survive and function effectively in Arctic, Subarctic, and rugged coastal environments. They are also heavily involved in leading and mentoring youth in their communities through the Junior Canadian Ranger program, a Department of National Defence initiative that promotes traditional cultures and lifestyles and other developmental activities. Furthermore, Rangers are often called upon to respond to local emergencies and disasters, conduct search and rescue operations, support humanitarian operations, and perform other public safety missions.<sup>27</sup>

The Canadian Rangers are a diverse force. Approximately 5,000 Rangers live in more than 200 Canadian communities – over 60% are Indigenous, they speak at least twenty-six different languages and dialects, and 21% are female.<sup>28</sup> Canadian citizens can join the Rangers at the age of eighteen if they have not been convicted of a serious offence under the Criminal Code of Canada and if the community-based patrol confirms that they are “knowledgeable and personally equipped to survive and operate on the land.”<sup>29</sup> There is no retirement age and no operational standard for physical fitness (although they must be physically and mentally able to perform Ranger duties), which allows Elders to participate and share their knowledge with younger members.

The Rangers are organized into patrols by community (e.g., the Fort Vermilion Canadian Ranger Patrol; the Kashechewan Canadian Ranger Patrol), with an average of twenty-five to thirty members and a minimum of eight. Patrols are led by a patrol commander (sergeant) and second-in-command (a master corporal), who are elected into these positions by patrol members, and they are divided into ten-member sections, each commanded by a master corporal. Ranger patrols are separated into five Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups (CRPGs) that encompass distinct geographical regions (see Table 9-1) and have



their own headquarters and a staff to oversee administration, training, and other activities.<sup>30</sup> The Department of National Defence spends approximately \$38 million annually to support all five patrol groups.<sup>31</sup>

While Rangers are expected to be self-sufficient when on the land – and to use their own personal gear, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, or boats to conduct their duties (for which they are reimbursed according to nationally established equipment usage rates) – the military also provides them with modest equipment and training. Each Canadian Ranger is issued a red hoodie sweatshirt, CADPAT (Canadian Disruptive Pattern) pants, red fleece, a water-resistant shell jacket, combat boots, a baseball cap, a safety vest, navigation aids, and a bolt-action rifle (for protection against predatory animals, not for military combat). In addition, patrols are generally given a supply of camp stores, including tents and lanterns, two satellite phones, and two Track 24 devices (an Iridium satellite system that facilitates the monitoring and tracking of on-the-land movements). A ten-day Basic Ranger Qualification Course is held for new Rangers, which includes rifle handling, general military knowledge, navigation (map and compass, GPS), first aid, search and rescue, and communications.

Each year, Rangers are paid for up to twelve days of service, which includes annual patrol training and a field exercise, providing patrols with the opportunity to practice essential skills and work together as a team. Often, members also have the chance to participate in additional non-mandatory train-

**Table 9-1: Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups – Patrols and Rangers**

Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (CRPG)	Region	Patrols	Canadian Rangers
1 CRPG	Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory, Nunavut	61	2,000
2 CRPG	Quebec	25	752
3 CRPG	Ontario	20	591
4 CRPG	Manitoba, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta	43	988
5 CRPG	Newfoundland and Labrador	32	929

*Source:* Office of the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman, “Canadian Rangers,” 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/career/canadian-rangers.html>, last accessed 4 June 2020; updated statistics from 1 CRPG.

ing courses, such as advanced SAR. In addition to these training activities, Rangers are paid when activated for official CAF tasks, which include emergency response activities and SAR operations. Importantly, beyond their paid service, Rangers perform their “eyes and ears” function as part of their everyday lives and are always present in their communities, ready to respond as required.<sup>32</sup>

### **A Ready and Willing Community-Based Organization**

Canadian Rangers view the protection of their communities as one of their primary responsibilities (see Table 9-2). A 1 CRPG Ranger from Taloyoak, Nunavut, asserted that “we are the eyes and ears of the military, but we are also the eyes and ears of our community. We protect our communities.”<sup>33</sup> Another Ranger from 1 CRPG explained that “we [Rangers] are the people to call when things go sideways – period.”<sup>34</sup> This willingness to help extends to emergencies involving outsiders operating in and around their communities. When asked about the possibility of a cruise ship running aground near their communities, for example, each of the Ranger patrols we interviewed said it would respond to such an incident. “We may not be happy that you’ve brought this trouble, but we will try our best to help you out of it,” a Ranger noted at the Kitikmeot Roundtable on SAR.<sup>35</sup> The Rangers’ sense of social responsibility ensures that they are willing to respond to emergencies and disasters.<sup>36</sup> When the CAF decided to activate Rangers as part of its response to COVID-19, for example, it was able to secure sufficient volunteers, even though this was an unusual and intimidating role for many people.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, 4 CRPG recruited a group of volunteers when wildfires ripped through 1.2 million hectares of British Columbia in 2017. As one Ranger explained, “being here and helping out my community really brings out a sense of pride and joy from being able to assist those who need it.”<sup>38</sup>

While many people join the Rangers out of a desire to safeguard their communities, the modest pay, annual training, and additional tasks they are given also serve to keep them prepared and engaged.<sup>39</sup> In comparison, local emergency response teams often struggle to retain personnel and secure the funding they require for training and equipment, and have few opportunities to practice as a team or with other organizations. Referencing Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in the US, Brennan and Flint underline that, because disasters generally occur relatively infrequently in most areas, many teams are “without a mechanism for maintaining [the] coordination, structure, communication, and interaction necessary for them to function at optimal efficiency.” During long periods of downtime, CERT members lose interest and “local channels of communication, interaction, and capacity for

quick response became noticeably diminished due to lack of action.”<sup>40</sup> The Ranger organization bypasses many of these challenges: patrols do not have to fundraise for training and equipment, annual exercises and assigned tasks keep them active and ready to respond, and modest military pay supports retention.

The organization of the Rangers into patrols at the community level ensures that they can respond as a group almost *immediately*: an important consideration in austere Northern environments. The unique context of the Canadian North (and other parts of the Arctic) – remote and isolated communities, limited physical and human infrastructure, and insufficient response capabilities coupled with low temperatures and extreme weather – has led some scholars to argue for the establishment of a special category of “cold disasters.”<sup>41</sup> Given the vast distances involved, outside help often takes a long time to arrive and, without an effective and timely initial local response, cold disasters can cascade and worsen quickly.<sup>42</sup>

**Table 9-2. Possible Hazards Facing Communities with Ranger Patrols**

- Flood
- Forest and tundra fire
- Earthquake
- Avalanche
- Mudslide
- Prolonged, severe weather or extreme cold
- Blizzard
- High wind
- Tsunami
- Storm surge
- Epidemic or medical evacuation
- Obstructed transportation corridor
- Oil or fuel spill
- Mining accident
- Industrial accident
- Dam failure
- Plane crash
- Maritime disaster
- Systems failure (generator breakdown)

Due to their presence and state of readiness, Ranger patrols can provide an effective and timely response. Canada's Northern communities rely on diesel generators for power, and their failure for extended periods in the winter can pose a serious risk to human life (e.g., Sanikiluaq, Nunavut, in 2000; Kuujjuarapik, Nunavik, in 2001; Pangnirtung, Nunavut, in 2015; Wawakapewin and Muskrat Dam in northern Ontario in 2018). In these situations, Rangers quickly assist by establishing emergency shelters, going house-to-house to perform wellness checks, assisting Elders, providing information about food and alternative housing, preparing meals, ensuring that people have access to a heat source, and informing residents about potential dangers such as carbon monoxide poisoning from using camping stoves indoors.<sup>43</sup> Through these efforts, the Rangers directly contribute to the health, well-being, and morale of their fellow community members and provide an additional safety net to ensure that no one slips through the cracks of the emergency response.

The avalanche that struck the community of Kangiqsualujjuaq (the easternmost settlement in Nunavik) on New Year's Eve in 1999 also highlights the value of the Rangers as a rapid reaction force. As 300 of the community's 650 residents celebrated in the school gymnasium, a wall of snow from an adjacent hill smashed through the building, burying many. The community's Ranger patrol quickly mobilized and helped pull dozens of injured men, women, and children from the carnage throughout the night and following day. Eighteen Rangers from the nearby community of Kuujjuaq also mobilized within a few hours and took civilian aircraft to Kangiqsualujjuaq to assist in the search and the ultimate recovery of the bodies of four adults and five children killed by the avalanche. Within days, Rangers from eleven of the fourteen communities in Nunavik deployed to offer assistance to Kangiqsualujjuaq as it recovered from the disaster, performing wellness checks, assisting with funerals, and providing fresh country food (freshly harvested caribou). For their efforts, the Chief of the Defence Staff awarded 2 CRPG with a Canadian Forces' Unit Commendation.<sup>44</sup>

1 CRPG also earned a Canadian Forces' Unit Commendation for the role that Rangers played in the response to the crash, near the Resolute airport, of First Air Flight 6560 on 20 August 2011. Rangers were amongst the first on scene – had the military not been deployed to Resolute as part of Operation Nanook, the community's Rangers would likely have been the first and primary responders. After the crash, Rangers guarded the site all day and night and provided predator control against polar bears drawn to the smell of rotting food from the plane. Hay River Ranger Kevin Lafferty reflected that “to switch gears so quickly for something so obviously so tragic, wasn't the easiest thing ...



[There were] a lot of sleepless nights initially, as everybody tried to get a handle on what had actually happened. Everybody did their job, their duty.”<sup>45</sup> Rangers have also responded to smaller-scale plane crashes in the Northwest Territories (NWT). In January 2019, they responded to the crash of an Air Tindi King Air 200 aircraft outside Whatì, which claimed the lives of two pilots. The forced landing of a Buffalo Airways plane 169 km from the Hay River airport runway in May 2019 also necessitated a Ranger response. Working with fire crews and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), members of the Hay River patrol rushed to the crash site with their ATVs and helped to retrieve two people.<sup>46</sup> These incidents illustrate the quick response times made possible by the presence of community-based Ranger patrols.

### **Training, Experience, and Knowledge Sharing**

The CAF provides Canadian Rangers with flexible training that is tailored to local terrain and environmental conditions but that generally involves several elements directly related to emergency and disaster management capabilities: first aid, wilderness first aid, ground search and rescue, constructing emergency airstrips on land and ice, and communications. Depending on the hazards faced by a Ranger patrol’s community, training might also include flood, fire, and/or earthquake evacuation, major air disaster response, and other location-specific emergency scenarios.<sup>47</sup> Patrols are taught how to work together as a cohesive unit (a necessity during an emergency), and training exercises sometimes involve patrols from multiple communities and other CAF personnel with whom they might have to respond to a disaster.<sup>48</sup> In 2017, Rangers from several patrols in British Columbia participated in wildfire response, working with the RCMP to establish and operate highway checkpoints, providing local knowledge to deployed CAF units, sharing information with local residents, and assisting in ground evacuation efforts and in the delivery of essential aid.<sup>49</sup> Private John Hill of the Vanderhoof Ranger Patrol highlighted how, in these

dangerous conditions, “after many years of training and working with the military and other units, everything came into place.”<sup>50</sup>

In all of the Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups, advanced SAR training courses and exercises also bolster community resilience. In 3 CRPG, for example, Rangers can take the two-week-long Ontario Provincial Police SAR course that is mandatory for personnel in its elite emergency response teams. That patrol group also holds an annual RANGER TRACKER exercise, which brings together Rangers from across northern Ontario to conduct SAR-related scenarios.<sup>51</sup> Ranger patrols have also practiced SAR exercises with local search and rescue associations, community volunteers, and other agencies to share knowledge and skills.<sup>52</sup> Ranger Sergeant Jean Rabbit-Waboose from Eabametoong First Nation (3 CRPG) emphasized the value of SAR education, explaining that “the army’s training and funding for us has been a blessing for all our communities. It has saved a lot of lives.”<sup>53</sup>

Over the decades, Canadian Rangers have put their SAR training to good effect, executing hundreds of searches across some of the harshest terrain in the country, often acting as individual volunteers or in small groups with other community-based organizations when not officially activated as full patrols.<sup>54</sup> A member of the Taloyoak Ranger Patrol emphasized how “the Rangers can make a big difference in search and rescue. We are organized and trained. We know how to work together.”<sup>55</sup> Between 2015 and 2018, Rangers in 3 CRPG in northern Ontario rescued ninety people in seventy-nine official ground and marine SAR operations.<sup>56</sup> The Rangers’ SAR role is essential – the loss of a hunting party, for instance, could be disastrous to the general health and well-being of a small community. As climate change exacerbates the risks that forest fires, flooding, and severe weather pose to Northern communities, Ranger SAR skills will become even more important.

Rangers also partake in major domestic military exercises that mimic disasters and other emergency management scenarios. Over the past thirteen years, Rangers from 1 CRPG have participated in Canada’s annual Northern training exercise, Operation Nanook, which has simulated major oil spills, a petrochemical leak, ships in distress, air disasters, mass rescue operations, an earthquake, wildfires, evacuations, and even epidemic response. During Nanook 2015, for example, Rangers from Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, had the opportunity to assist in testing their community’s wildfire response, practiced evacuating Elders, and were taught how to FireSmart at-risk areas (e.g., thinning out the forest and clearing deadfall).<sup>57</sup> In Nanook 2016, Rangers in Yukon were involved in a scenario that simulated an earthquake hitting the territory.<sup>58</sup> A major objective of these exercises is to practice cooperation and collaboration between all of the partners involved in responding to these

disasters, from the municipal to the federal level (e.g., Public Safety Canada, emergency management organizations, Public Health, local government). In their examination of the pre-disaster integration of Community Emergency Response Teams, Carr and Jensen highlight the importance of this objective, noting that “trust-based relationships with other emergency management relevant organizations” are essential and that local responders must be able to coordinate and cooperate with outside agencies as required.<sup>59</sup> Ranger participation in disaster response exercises teaches them new emergency management skills and builds relationships and experience working with outside organizations that they can leverage during emergencies in their communities.

Canadian Ranger patrols also serve as platforms for the transmission of local and Traditional Knowledge and skills, generally from Elders to younger members,<sup>60</sup> but also to responders from territorial and federal agencies. For Indigenous people serving as Rangers, this Traditional Knowledge often includes information on how to identify natural hazards, reduce risks, and determine appropriate responses (e.g., how to predict flooding). Referencing the possibility of a cruise ship or commercial vessel running aground in the Northwest Passage, one Ranger participant at the Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue highlighted the role this knowledge could play in a mass rescue operation: “We know the local weather. We know the conditions. We know the water and ice, the rocks. We know how the ice works. We know the best routes to take, the fastest, the safest routes to take. We know things that you can’t get from a GPS or a weather report. We know how the tides work. If you are coming in by zodiac or lifeboat, we can help you avoid dangers ... You have to listen.”<sup>61</sup>

Ranger Sergeant Roger Hitkolok, the patrol commander in the Inuit community of Kugluktuk, Nunavut, emphasizes the importance of this knowledge sharing.<sup>62</sup> Hitkolok focuses on teaching his younger Rangers how to respond and adapt effectively to changing environmental conditions. Within Inuit culture, people who maintain their equanimity in the face of difficulty and changing environmental conditions have *ihuma* (adulthood, reason).<sup>63</sup> On the land, a hunter who uses their mind will be careful to look at each new situation they encounter in its totality, figuring out its implications and requirements. When new conditions make it imperative, the hunter with *ihuma* will respond with calmness and patience, adjust their conceptions, weigh options, and respond appropriately.<sup>64</sup> Hitkolok and the other Elders in the patrol try to provide the younger Rangers with the extensive knowledge, training, and practice required to develop their *ihuma*.<sup>65</sup> Hitkolok explained that the mental processes involved in safely operating and surviving on the land



also apply to other “hard” situations, such as emergencies and disasters. If an individual can function well while travelling during a blizzard, they will be able to respond quickly and effectively if their community faces unexpected flooding or a power failure.

The formal training provided to Rangers and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge that occurs amongst Rangers within patrols effectively address several gaps identified in disaster risk reduction in Canadian Indigenous communities.<sup>66</sup> More specifically, scholars and practitioners have pointed out the need to create space for Traditional Knowledge and practices in Canada’s broader disaster risk reduction efforts.<sup>67</sup> Critics have also underlined the lack of opportunity provided to Indigenous communities to develop their local emergency response capabilities. Many remote Indigenous communities face difficulties in applying larger regional or national emergency response frameworks (such as the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary or the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association) to their unique contexts, as well as challenges working with outside agencies (including the Canadian Armed Forces) stemming from limited interactions and a lack of trust.<sup>68</sup> Ranger patrols represent a community-based, culturally appropriate solution to many of these challenges.

### **Planning, Preparedness, and Hazard Risk Analysis**

In order for community-based organizations involved in disaster management to be effective, capabilities and responsibilities should be clearly reflected in community emergency plans.<sup>69</sup> Various Ranger roles are defined in



provincial and territorial emergency frameworks and in local community plans across the country. Ontario's mass evacuation plan for the province's Far North highlights Ranger involvement in community evacuations.<sup>70</sup> In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Rangers of 5 CRPG have a prominent role as the first (and sometimes only) line of emergency response in remote areas. In a discussion of emergency services in Labrador, one municipal official explained that "Canadian Rangers are here for natural disasters or if someone goes missing. No RCMP in community ... if there's a house fire the Canadian Rangers and members of the community pitch in with a bucket brigade."<sup>71</sup>

The emergency plans of several coastal communities in British Columbia include local Canadian Ranger patrols assisting with evacuations in the case of an earthquake and/or tsunami.<sup>72</sup> In Manitoba, the Town of Snow Lake's emergency plan gives the Rangers a central role in community outreach and house clearing, and the local government has involved the patrol in community-driven tabletop exercises to work through these plans.<sup>73</sup>

In Yukon, the Village of Teslin's emergency plan lists the community's Ranger patrol on its resource list.<sup>74</sup> Dawson City's emergency plan provides the Rangers with a larger role, listing them as members of the Municipal Support Group (MSG) that advises and assists the mayor and Civil Emergency Measures Commission. Members of the MSG – which also includes municipal and non-governmental officials – collect and disseminate emergency information. The emergency plan also gives the Ranger patrol in Dawson City a rescue role during major incidents – removing people from danger; providing medical treatment; establishing emergency health facilities, shelters, and refreshment centres; and transporting the injured to medical facilities.<sup>75</sup>

In the NWT, the emergency plan for the Town of Fort Smith places members of the Ranger patrol on the Emergency Response Advisory Group, which responds to requests given to it by the mayor.<sup>76</sup> The Town of Hay River's Emergency Plan notes that the Rangers can provide "support for searches, assist in dissemination of emergency notices, [and] assist in the transport of residents in evacuation."<sup>77</sup> The town's plan also gives the Rangers a role on the Flood Watch Committee, which monitors "changing breakup or flooding conditions to maintain situational awareness," provides early warning to residents, and helps to protect private property and critical infrastructure.<sup>78</sup>

The Hay River Ranger Patrol's participation in the town's Flood Watch Committee reflects the contributions that Rangers can make to hazard risk analysis, prevention, and mitigation efforts. As the "eyes and ears" of the military and of their communities, Rangers watch for potential natural hazards, such as ice and water levels in nearby river systems, dangerous wildfire conditions, and ongoing tundra fires. A Ranger from Cambridge Bay,

Nunavut, explained that when going out on the land, whether on official patrol duties or as an individual, he is constantly keeping an eye out for potential hazards. “[It is] important to get out of the community and report on the changes,” he noted, “because there are a lot of changes happening, and people need to hear about them.”<sup>79</sup> Some Ranger patrols use their monthly meetings to conduct informal hazard risk analysis by discussing what they have seen on the land and what might pose a risk to their communities.<sup>80</sup> By identifying hazards early, Rangers can play a part in preventing and mitigating possible dangers.

Simply knowing the local resources to which communities have access, and relaying this information to relevant local and external agencies, is integral to disaster preparedness and response. Given how well Rangers know their communities, they are well placed to execute whole-of-community resource mapping to identify capacity, strengths, and deficits.<sup>81</sup> Ranger patrols are sometimes tasked with updating Local Area Resource Reports (LARR), which catalogue essential information about local infrastructure and community assets that could be used in disaster response. Through their LARR, the Quesnel Ranger Patrol (4 CRPG) has tracked the state of local roads, fuel reserves, the size of the airport runway, where helicopters can land, and valuable logistical information.<sup>82</sup> This in-depth knowledge of local resources proved vital during the patrol’s participation in the CAF’s response to the BC wildfires in 2017. Master Corporal Juri Agapow of the Quesnel Canadian Ranger Patrol earned a Joint Task Force Command Commendation for his service, which highlighted that “his knowledge of the local area was an outstanding resource to the Task Force, specifically, his in-depth knowledge of the Chilcotin Plateau area was of great value during evacuation operations. This knowledge, combined with his personal connections, greatly contributed to the success of operations.”<sup>83</sup> When integrated into the planning and preparation phase of disaster management, the local knowledge possessed by Rangers can contribute substantively to effective and efficient responses.

## **Leadership**

Strong formal organization and leadership, which delegate responsibilities and tasks in an expedient manner, are key enablers during an emergency.<sup>84</sup> Focus group participants emphasized that the Ranger organization provides important opportunities and space to develop a deep pool of leaders at the local level. “Communities need good leaders,” one Ranger explained, especially a “more diverse leadership” that can bring in new ideas, skills, and leadership styles.<sup>85</sup> Ranger patrols can identify potential leaders amongst their ranks, provide the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, and encourage them

to take on leadership roles. Ranger sergeants and Elders in patrols often mentor younger members, encouraging them to become corporals and take on greater responsibilities.<sup>86</sup>

The CAF also provides Ranger sergeants and master corporals with annual leadership training to help them organize, plan, coordinate, and solve problems more effectively. Ranger leadership training is highly practical – generally a task is given out and participants are taught how to break it down into its component parts. They are taught how “to solve the parts, delegate some of the work to other people, how to supervise and pull it all together to have everyone meet the same objective.”<sup>87</sup> The training also teaches participants how to keep a patrol motivated, organized, and focused, and how to coordinate and cooperate with other members and units of the CAF.<sup>88</sup> Major Charles Ohlke (3 CRPG) emphasized that leadership trainees go back “to their communities with some planning tools in their toolbox that will enable them to react to any situation with a sound plan of action.”<sup>89</sup> The training brings together Rangers from different communities, allowing them to share best practices that are relevant when orchestrating responses to emergencies and disasters.

Some Ranger leadership training is specifically directed at bolstering emergency response. During a 3 CRPG advanced leadership session in December 2019 at the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry wildfire forward attack base, Rangers learned how to “run a command post during an emergency, build an emergency landing zone for a helicopter to use during the day or at night, and how to deal with an emergency involving mass casualties.”<sup>90</sup> Master Corporal Lilly Kejick of Pikangikum First Nation relayed that the experience was “fun but difficult at the same time. It’s something I’ve never done before. I’ve learned stuff I never knew I could do. I’m going to be able to take that back to Pikangikum and pass it on to the other Rangers.”<sup>91</sup> In January 2017, Ranger patrol leaders from 1 CRPG exercised a mock scenario involving a satellite re-entry that threatened a Northern community, including planning, geographical analysis for the positioning of observation points, and preparations for mass medical evacuations. After the exercise, Sergeant Titus Allooosoo of Pond Inlet highlighted that “Ranger training helps remote Arctic communities build their ability to provide emergency response, by honing existing skill sets of Northerners” – an essential element of which is effective leadership.<sup>92</sup>

## **Relationships and Networks**

Canadian Ranger patrols consist of individuals who are part of relationships, groups, and networks that span the social breadth of their communities. “Rangers wear a lot of hats,” one patrol member from Kugluktuk explained.

“We are in local government, hunter and trappers organizations, Coast Guard Auxiliary units, housing associations. We are coaches. We volunteer at community events. We have coffee with elders. We go to church. We run bingo. We work with a lot of different people.”<sup>93</sup> At the same time, Ranger patrols foster new relationships and associations between members, ultimately forming a nexus that a community can draw upon during an emergency or disaster. The intersection of multiple social networks in a patrol ensures that its members know most or all community members and understand who is vulnerable and who needs assistance (hence their prominent role in performing wellness checks during emergencies). When outside agencies respond to local emergencies and disasters, Ranger patrols provide a ready entry point into the community and offer immediate access to extensive networks, all of which facilitates response activities.

Many remote Canadian communities have had a Ranger patrol for decades, and the reputation that Rangers across the country have earned for contributing positively to their communities provides new patrols with a high degree of trust and respect. When a new patrol was set up in her community in northern Ontario, Aroland First Nation Chief Dorothy Towedo noted that “I’m very pleased and very happy for my First Nation that we are finally getting the Canadian Rangers. It’s something that’s been needed in our community for a long time. Now we have our own Rangers. This is a good day.”<sup>94</sup> The high degree of trust that Rangers enjoy in Indigenous communities also flows from their respect for and understanding of local cultural norms (which they actively work to strengthen) and their fluency in Indigenous languages – an important asset during emergency scenarios, particularly when explaining complex evacuation plans.

The Rangers’ presence at the community level, training and experience, knowledge and leadership, and extensive relationships and social networks make many Ranger patrols key contributors to community disaster resilience. “I think the red hoodie does matter [in an emergency]. People know us and trust us. They’d listen to us,” one Ranger from Kugluktuk insisted.<sup>95</sup> Several Rangers at the Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue also emphasized the positive psychological impact that seeing the red hoodie and an organized military unit has during emergencies, whether a community-level event or during the evacuation of a cruise ship.<sup>96</sup>

### **Putting it all Together: Community Evacuations**

Many Northern Canadian communities have a heightened need for evacuation preparedness given their remoteness and susceptibility to wildfires and floods. Existing research identifies myriad challenges and issues in evacuating



isolated Indigenous communities, and how government efforts to do so tend to be poorly conceptualized and executed at every stage: from the initial communication of an evacuation order (sometimes hampered by poor connectivity in remote communities and language barriers), to coordination and execution on the ground, to the placement of evacuees in temporary facilities or host communities, to the process of returning evacuees to their communities. Indigenous community members emphasize a lack of translation services, medical care, and mental health supports, as well as weak lines of communication to raise emerging needs and concerns. They also identify problems with the initial registration of evacuees, the transportation of people to evacuation sites, and the general lack of capacity building in communities prior to a disaster or emergency.<sup>97</sup> When Rangers are involved in evacuating remote Indigenous communities, their training, experience, networks, leadership, and trust relationships enable them to mitigate some of these issues.

During wildfire and flood evacuations in northern Ontario, 3 CRPG Rangers have carried out the essential public safety tasks that they have performed in other emergencies, while also registering evacuees, moving them to evacuation sites, providing emotional support for evacuees, acting as intermediaries while in host communities, and organizing social activities and church services. Rangers have also volunteered to remain in evacuated communities to conduct safety patrols and to assist in running essential

services.<sup>98</sup> Two large-scale community evacuations in 2019 reveal their essential roles. Between May and July 2019, Rangers assisted in the evacuation of Pikangikum First Nation (a community of over 4,000, 510 km northwest of Thunder Bay), where a Ranger patrol with thirty-four members had been established that February.<sup>99</sup> At the end of May, when fire approached to within 2 km of the community, Pikangikum declared a state of emergency and started to evacuate vulnerable persons. In this first wave, military and civilian aircraft flew out 1,700 of the community's 4,300 residents, while others left by boat. The community's Rangers quickly applied their new training, skills, and organization to the situation. Chief Amanda Sainnawap later described how "the situation was chaotic," but the Rangers helped "just by being there in their red (Ranger) sweaters. It gave me peace of mind that they were trained. I don't know what we would have done without them."<sup>100</sup>

Two Ranger Instructors flew into the community on the first day of the evacuations to support the patrol's efforts. With the Rangers, they established a system to determine who should be evacuated first due to health and other considerations, and assisted with the movement of people and baggage to the evacuation planes. All of the Rangers could speak Ojibwe, which proved pivotal for relaying essential information to community Elders who spoke little to no English. After the first wave of evacuations, the community's Rangers stayed behind to perform wellness checks on people who chose not to evacuate. Meanwhile, evacuees were spread across six host communities in northern Ontario and Winnipeg, where they were housed in hotels and motels. Rangers from six other First Nations communities deployed to these host communities to provide translation services, perform wellness checks, reassure the evacuees, organize activities for adults and children, support Elders, and work with the provincial and federal agencies and officials involved.<sup>101</sup>

In 2019, 3 CRPG also assisted in the evacuation of Kashechewan First Nation in the face of serious flooding – a near-annual recurrence. The Rangers worked sixteen- to eighteen-hour days, helping evacuees at the airport as they prepared to fly out of the community, and monitoring water levels.<sup>102</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Matthew Richardson summarized how the "situation shows the interplay and the inter-operability between the Rangers and their community. It's what allows the Rangers to be so successful."<sup>103</sup> The Rangers also coordinated with outside agencies, including Emergency Management Ontario and the Canadian Red Cross, to make the evacuation go as smoothly as possible. These demonstrations of effectiveness during complex community evacuations reinforce the value of having modestly trained, locally available people who are woven into the community fabric and are highly attuned to community needs.

## **Moving Forward**

As climate change exacerbates the natural hazards that threaten many of Canada's remote and isolated communities,<sup>104</sup> the Rangers' role in building community disaster resilience is likely to increase in importance. We offer several practical ways – many of which have been suggested by or co-developed with our Ranger participants – to enhance this role through modest additional funding and an increase in the number of paid annual service days available to Rangers.

To support capacity building, Ranger training and exercises could integrate more emergency management training opportunities along the lines of the fire and flood watch training that some patrols already receive. Courses on hazard risk analysis, prevention, and mitigation could be offered in partnership with Public Safety Canada or provincial and territorial emergency management organizations. For example, in communities threatened by wildfires, patrols could be given regular FireSmart training, which teaches participants how to plan for fires, work with first responders, and minimize fire risks, particularly by controlling vegetation growth around communities and private homes.<sup>105</sup> In communities where flooding is a common issue, Ranger patrols could be taught advanced techniques on how to protect critical infrastructure.

Rangers might also benefit from training at the patrol level on how to set up emergency operation centres, communicate vital information to responding agencies, work with the incident command system, and respond to mass rescue operations or mass casualty events (particularly for those patrols situated on the Northwest Passage, which has attracted a growing volume of vessel traffic).<sup>106</sup> As one Ranger from Cambridge Bay highlighted, "If a major emergency happened, like if a cruise ship ran aground, people would come from the community to help. That's just the way it is up here. I guess it would be helpful to know how we could help. So, if we go out as Rangers, what could we do? Maybe not a lot, but something. People are going to go out anyway, can't we get some direction on how we might be able to help the most? I think that the Rangers would have something to contribute."<sup>107</sup> Rangers could also receive training similar to that provided to most community-based organizations involved in emergency response (particularly those modelled after the US CERT program), including how to extinguish small fires, remove fuel sources, shut off utilities, assess and communicate damage, and conduct urban and interior SAR.<sup>108</sup>

We suggest that annual Ranger exercises might include a routine preparedness component in which patrols practice possible disaster response tasks, including evacuations, flood relief activities, and power failures. As Sergeant Roger Hitkolok of the Kugluktuk Ranger Patrol noted, "we need to

find out what we can do [in an emergency]. We need to talk about it. We need to plan this out and train. Something will happen ... We need to be ready, we need to talk about it.”<sup>109</sup> Where possible, these exercises should include the other groups and organizations that operate at the community level. A Ranger at the Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue explained that,

Because people in these groups often know one another and there is usually a lot of crossover between them with all the hats people wear, there might be an idea that they can work together no problem. But in an emergency, when groups have different ways of communicating, different ways of doing things, different mandates from the South, we can quickly run into trouble. We need to practice cooperating. We need to practice working together.

Exercises should be informed by the lessons learned and best practices shared by Rangers who have been involved in disaster management activities – observations that should be disseminated throughout the Ranger organization.

Ranger patrols should also be more engaged in planning and preparedness activities at the community level. Monthly patrol meetings could include formalized hazard risk analysis (as some patrols are already doing), with patrol commanders passing pertinent information to their patrol group headquarters for dissemination to other government stakeholders. These activities might extend to include conducting community-level hazard risk assessments in cooperation with other local stakeholders. Likewise, Ranger patrols should be encouraged to participate in prevention and preparedness measures (such as flood watch committees), either on a voluntary basis or as part of their formal duties. Undertaking low-scale mitigation efforts, such as clearing away underbrush to reduce fire risks around their communities or marking tsunami evacuation routes, also contributes to community safety. Based upon best practices in some communities, Rangers should work with local governments to ensure that community emergency plans reflect their capabilities and provide patrols with clear roles and responsibilities – a process that can be facilitated by Public Safety Canada and provincial/territorial emergency management organizations. Furthermore, we recommend that Ranger patrols should complete Local Area Resource Reports regularly to ensure that their communities and responding agencies have ready access to up-to-date information.

## **Conclusion**

For governments looking to invest in relatively low-cost resilience-building measures with short- and long-term benefits, the Canadian Rangers offer a model for other jurisdictions with remote and isolated communities (particularly





those susceptible to cold disasters). An extensive body of literature warns how accelerating climate change exacerbates the threats posed by natural hazards to communities throughout the Circumpolar North. As Lauta et al. have argued, we should expect more cold disasters in the future owing to natural phenomena (such as changing ice conditions, earthquakes, volcanoes, and landslides) and “changing economic, political and social activities, [such as] ... commercial shipping, tourism, [and] off- and onshore natural resource exploitation.”<sup>110</sup> Remote communities in Canada’s North, Greenland, and Alaska face similar disaster management challenges – limited local capacity, long distances that delay the arrival of outside assistance, and harsh environmental conditions.

We suggest that the Canadian Rangers represent a resilience-building measure that might be adopted for and adapted to Alaskan Native and Greenlandic communities. Beyond providing these jurisdictions with a strong “first responder” capacity in case of local emergencies, the Ranger model also offers US Northern Command and Denmark’s Joint Arctic Command with a military presence in isolated communities that reflects local cultures, enhanced human surveillance capabilities, and a pool of experienced individuals who can teach southern-based units how to operate safely and effectively in diverse regions.<sup>111</sup> In short, the application of the Ranger model in Alaska and Greenland could enhance community disaster resilience while contributing to the broader national security priorities of the United States and Denmark in the Arctic, particularly around improved surveillance and domain awareness.

As this overview reveals, Rangers are involved in every phase of the disaster management spectrum: prevention and mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery. They have effectively responded to avalanches, forest fires, severe weather, power outages, and even pandemics. The training, organization, structure, leadership, local knowledge, cultural competence, and relationships of the Rangers allow many patrols to become cornerstones for disaster resilience in their communities. The Canadian Rangers are not a panacea, and remote Northern and coastal communities in the country require enhanced government support for essential infrastructure and other preventative measures. Nevertheless, we have shown how widely dispersed and locally rooted Ranger patrols play substantive roles in disaster response. Targeted training and activities to sustain and enhance the Rangers' functional capabilities in this respect represent an opportunity to build upon their proven effectiveness and bolster community resilience in regions that are particularly vulnerable and exposed to natural hazards.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Defence Administration Order and Directive (DAOD) 2020-2 - Canadian Rangers, 2015, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-defence-admin-orders-directives-2000/2020-2.page>, last accessed 15 April 2020.

<sup>3</sup> M. Vullierme, "Questions soulevées par les impacts de la crise de la COVID-19 sur les Rangers et sur les communautés du Nunavik," North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network *Policy Brief* (June 2020), <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Magali-Vullierme-Note-DOrientation-Impact-de-la-crise-de-la-COVID-19-sur-les-Rangers-et-sur-les-communaute%CC%81s-du-Nunavik-final.pdf>, last accessed 10 October 2020.

<sup>4</sup> D. Giles, "Canadian Rangers support northern Saskatchewan communities during coronavirus pandemic," Global News, 6 April 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6828250/canadian-rangers-northern-saskatchewan-coronavirus/>, last accessed 1 June 2020; O. Stefanovich, "Nothing like I've ever done before': COVID-19 poses new challenge for Canadian Rangers," CBC News, 16 April 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/stefanovich-canadian-rangers-help-first-nations-covid19-1.5531538>, last accessed 4 June 2020.

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<sup>34</sup> Focus group discussion during 1 CRPG Leadership Training Session, Yellowknife, 14 October 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Ranger participant, Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue, Canadian High Arctic Research Station, 31 January and 1 February 2020.

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<sup>100</sup> P. Moon, "Canadian Rangers Assisting Evacuees in Six Ontario Host Communities," NetNewsLedger, 7 June 2019,

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<sup>101</sup> Moon, "Canadian Rangers Assisting Evacuees in Six Ontario Host Communities." When a second fire again threatened Pikangikum in July, Sergeant Buster Kurahara noted that his Rangers had "learned from the first fire. We quickly got set up for this one and I didn't have to tell them what to do. They knew." Master Corporal Lilly Kejick explained that "the fires are the first time the Rangers have been able to serve our community and our people are proud of what we've been able to [do]. We're proud to have been able to do it for them." P. Moon, "Canadian Rangers Assist in North Spirit Lake FN and Bearskin Lake FN Crisis Situations," NetNewsLedger, 10 December 2019,

<http://www.netnewsledger.com/2019/12/10/canadian-rangers-assist-in-north-spirit-lake-fn-and-bearskin-lake-fn-crisis-situations/>, last accessed 4 June 2020.

<sup>102</sup> P. Moon, "Canadian Rangers assisting in emergency evacuation of Kashechewan," *The Maple Leaf*, 2019, <https://ml-fd.caf-fac.ca/en/2019/05/29660>, last accessed 4 June 2020.

<sup>103</sup> P. Moon, "Canadian Rangers assisting in Kash evacuation," *Timmins Daily Press*, 22 April 2019, <https://www.timminspress.com/news/local-news/canadian-rangers-assisting-in-kash-evacuation>, last accessed 4 June 2020.

<sup>104</sup> Government of Canada, *Canada's Changing Climate Report* (2019), <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/climate-change/impacts-adaptations/what-adaptation/canadas-changing-climate-report/21177>, last accessed 4 June 2020.

<sup>105</sup> FireSmart Canada, "What is FireSmart?" <https://firesmartcanada.ca/>, last accessed 10 November 2020.

<sup>106</sup> L. Copland, J. Dawson, A. Tivy, F. Delaney, and A. Cook, "Changes in shipping navigability in the Canadian Arctic between 1972 and 2016," *FACETS* 6/1 (2021): 1069-87; F. Lasserre, "Contrasting trends in regional arctic destination and transit shipping," in *The Arctic in World Affairs: 2020 North Pacific Arctic Conference Proceedings* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2020).

<sup>107</sup> Author interview with member of the Cambridge Bay Ranger Patrol, 18 April 2019.

<sup>108</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, CERT Basic Training.

<sup>109</sup> Ranger participant, Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue, Canadian High Arctic Research Station, 31 January and 1 February 2020.

<sup>110</sup> Lauter et al., "Conceptualizing cold disasters," 1277.

<sup>111</sup> For an extended discussion about how Canadian Ranger pay and equipment usage compensation, training, community service, and on-the-land capacity building serve both military and community needs, see P.W. Lackenbauer and P. Kikkert, *Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers* (Peterborough: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, 2020), <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Rangers-Success-Metrics->

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Lackenbauer-Kikkert-upload.pdf. For corrections to myths about the Ranger organization as an inadequate military force or as a haven for right-wing extremism, see Lackenbauer, “Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada’s North,” and Lackenbauer, “The Canadian Rangers, ‘Watching for Illegal Immigrants,’ and Far-Right Extremism,” North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network *Quick Impact* (9 September 2020), <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/20-sep-9-Lackenbauer-Quick-Impact-Rangers-Far-Right-Extremism.pdf>.





# 10

## **Diversity Statistics, Self-Identification Data, and the Canadian Rangers: Underestimating Indigenous Peoples' Participation Rates in the Canadian Army**

First published as a North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN) *Policy Brief*, 19 April 2021.

*... [W]itnesses told the Committee that Indigenous peoples – First Nations, Inuit and Métis – have a long and storied history of military service that dates back to the War of 1812, and includes substantial contributions to the First and Second World Wars, to the Korean War and in Afghanistan.... Lieutenant-General Jean-Marc Lanthier, Commander of the Canadian Army and Defence Champion for Indigenous peoples, said that there are currently “approximately 2,800 Indigenous members serving in the [CAF], in both the Regular Force and the Reserves, amounting to a representation of 2.8%.” As of February 2018, of 129 General and Flag Officers in the CAF, one had self-identified as Indigenous. These numbers do not include the Canadian Rangers, who support the CAF’s sovereignty and domestic operations in remote, northern and coastal regions of Canada. Lieutenant-General Lanthier commented that, as of February 2019, 26% of Canadian Rangers self-identified as Indigenous.*

House of Commons Standing Committee on National  
Defence, *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the  
Canadian Armed Forces* (2019), 10.

The House of Commons Standing Committee’s 2019 report *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces* was highly supportive of the Canadian Armed Forces’ (CAF) recruitment targets to increase the participation rates of women, Indigenous people, visible minorities, and members of the LGBTQ2 community given the benefits of embracing diversity as a “force multiplier.” Accordingly, it emphasized various deficits in the current composition of the CAF and the need for “new recruitment strategies;

recruitment in rural, remote and Indigenous communities; recruitment in urban centres; and Reserve Force recruitment.”<sup>1</sup> I applaud all of the efforts to make the CAF more accommodating and reflective of Canada’s diversity.

I am dedicated to supporting the Canadian Army by analyzing the data that it presents to assess if it reflects the actual diversity of its members and how this diversity is framed. The House of Commons report cites various statistics on Indigenous peoples’ participation rates, encapsulated in the quote above. This research note analyzes these statistics, pointing to their limitations in depicting Indigenous participation rates in the Canadian Army, and identifies the unintended implications of downplaying certain forms of Indigenous people’s service in statistical representations of the CAF. I suggest that official figures on rates of Indigenous people’s service in the Canadian Rangers (based on self-identification survey data<sup>2</sup> presented using a problematic methodology) significantly underrepresent Indigenous participation and, by extension, so do figures on Indigenous people’s participation rates in the CAF as a whole.

In Lieutenant General (now retired) Jean-Marc Lanthier’s 2019 summary, it is conspicuous that CAF participation statistics estimating “2,800 Indigenous members serving in the [CAF], in both the Regular Force and the Reserves, ... *do not include the Canadian Rangers*” (emphasis added). No explanation is provided in terms of why the Rangers, a subcomponent of the Canadian Army Reserve, would be left out of the calculation for CAF participation rates. Furthermore, Lieutenant General Lanthier told the Committee that “as of February 2019, 26% of Canadian Rangers self-identified as Indigenous.” My research suggests that this figure dramatically under-reports the percentage of Indigenous peoples actually serving in the Rangers across Canada – and that more robust statistics on Indigenous participation rates in the Rangers could significantly impact what targets the CAF should set to increase the representation of Indigenous peoples within the military.

Given the commitment in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* to “better forecast occupational requirements and engage in more targeted recruiting, including capitalizing on the unique talents and skill-sets of Canada’s diverse population,” the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the defence team represents an important case study. Having closely studied the Canadian Rangers as an academic for two decades, written several books and articles on the organization,<sup>3</sup> and enjoyed six years as the Honorary Lieutenant Colonel of 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CRPG) from 2014-20, I immediately sensed that the reported rates of Indigenous people’s participation in the Rangers far underestimated the actual rates of involvement.

While the data provided in this short research note may appear dated (and I have eagerly awaited revised statistics to appear since 2019), Department of





National Defence (DND)/CAF public-facing material continues to reference these numbers. The military backgrounder on “Indigenous People in the Canadian Armed Forces,” last modified on 26 February 2019, is a prime example,<sup>4</sup> which in turn feeds news media observations (such as a *Radio-Canada* story published on 9 April 2021) that “les Autochtones sont encore très peu nombreux dans l’armée canadienne.”<sup>5</sup> The DND website page on “Activities – Domestic,” last updated on 19 November 2020, also cites that there are “approximately 5,000 Canadian Rangers nation-wide of which 26% self-identify as Indigenous.”<sup>6</sup>

This research note does not purport to offer a precise figure of Indigenous participation rates in the Canadian Rangers or in the Canadian Army writ large. Doing so has proven notoriously difficult over the last century, with historians acknowledging that the official records generated by the Department of Indian Affairs/Indian Affairs Branch during both of the world wars and the Korean War underestimated the number of Indigenous people serving in uniform.<sup>7</sup> This remains a challenge today, as this research note reveals. Instead, my intent is to scrutinize the numbers publicly provided by the Canadian Army about Indigenous rates of service to determine how well they resemble the actual participation. Ultimately, I argue that the Canadian Army should reconsider presenting statistics indicating that “26% of Canadian Rangers self-identified as Indigenous” and that there is a 2.8% Indigenous participation rate in the CAF. These statistics project a highly distorted profile of Canadian

Ranger membership, send damaging messaging about the Rangers' place in the Canadian Army, and under-represent more significant rates of Indigenous participation in the CAF than these figures suggest.

### **The Canadian Rangers as an “Employer of Choice” for Indigenous Peoples?**

The Canadian Rangers are a part of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Reserves working in remote, isolated and coastal regions of Canada. They provide lightly-equipped, self-sufficient mobile forces to support CAF national security and public safety operations within Canada.

Canadian Army, “Canadian Rangers” (2019)<sup>8</sup>

The Canadian Rangers have emerged from the shadows in the twenty-first century to become a hallmark of Canadian sovereignty and security in the North. The organization was created in 1947 to accommodate a differentiated form of military service that explicitly embraces the operational benefits of having diverse groups of Canadians serve at home, rooted in the idea that they bring essential skill sets to the CAF from the time they enrol. As part-time, non-commissioned members of a subcomponent of the CAF Reserves, the Rangers' official mission is “to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces.”<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the Rangers are neither a military nor an Indigenous “program” (as they are sometimes misidentified), but rather Reservists serving in units that leverage the skill sets of Canadians from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds to support home defence, security, and public safety missions. Regular and Primary Reserve units rely on and learn from the experience and knowledge of the Rangers to survive and operate effectively in remote environments. Canadian Ranger activities also contribute in myriad ways to collective and individual resilience in isolated communities.<sup>10</sup>

Approximately 5,000 Canadian Rangers serve in more than 200 communities across Canada, organized into five Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups (CRPGs) each encompassing a distinct geographical area. According to the Army website, they “speak 26 different languages and dialects, many Indigenous.”<sup>11</sup> While most Canadian news media coverage, political statements, and academic studies emphasize the largely Indigenous composition of the Rangers (often excluding references to non-Indigenous members altogether), the Canadian Army's statistics presented to the House of Commons committee in June 2019 intimate that three-quarters of Canadian

Rangers self-identify as non-Indigenous. Does this mean that the widespread image of the Canadian Rangers as an organization primarily comprised of Indigenous members is a myth?

In this particular case, the statistic of 26% cited by the Canadian Army appears to reveal more about the limitations of a certain methodology and some misleading calculations than it is an example of the wilful distortion of data on the part of the military. The statistics that I offer below are illustrative, and merely need to be accepted as *more* precise than the self-identification data presented by the Army to demonstrate that the statistics provided in *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces* and subsequent DND reports are inaccurate and in need of re-evaluation.

The case of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CRPG) is indicative. According to statistics provided by Canadian Army Headquarters, only 25.6% of Rangers in 1 CRPG had completed a CAF cultural self-identification survey as of July 2016, with only 19.8% of respondents in the unit self-identifying as Indigenous people. My research affirms that these statistics offer a badly

CRPG	Census Completion Rate	Self-ID Rate	ABORIGINAL PEOPLES
1 CRPG	31.5%	25.6%	341 (19.8%)
2 CRPG	92.7%	81.7%	429 (56.9%)
3 CRPG	53.2%	39.5%	200 (35.3%)
4 CRPG	93.4%	71.5%	230 (23.0%)
5 CRPG	98.6%	76.0%	184 (20.0%)
TOTAL	68.3%	54.4%	1384 (27.9%)

**Numbers provided by the Chief of Staff Army Reserve** (based on 2016 numbers). The position of COS A Res no longer exists.

distorted portrait of how Ranger patrols in 1 CRPG reflect territorial and regional demographics. Given that 1 CRPG is the largest military unit in Canada both numerically and geographically, this constitutes a highly significant statistical error.

My conversations with Canadian Rangers, Ranger Instructors, and 1 CRPG headquarters personnel, as well as a detailed analysis of the active Rangers on the unit's nominal roll, suggest that at least three-quarters of all Canadian Rangers across the Territorial North are of Inuit, First Nations, or Métis descent. My systematic tally of active Rangers in late 2017 yielded the following:

Territory	# Rangers	# Indigenous	% Indigenous	Total Territorial % Indigenous (Census Canada)
Nunavut	632	612	96.8%	86.3%
NWT	465	408	87.7%	51.9%
Yukon	258	66	25.6%	23.1%
1 CRPG	1,355	1,086	80.1%	

Rates of Indigenous participation are highest in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories (NWT), with Yukon having higher numbers of non-Indigenous members, as the broader demographics of these individual territories would predict (as indicated by the Census Canada data provided in the right-hand column).

There is a dramatic statistical discrepancy between these numbers and the self-identification (self-ID) statistic cited by DND/CAF, with the latter indicating that only 25.6% of Rangers in 1 CRPG are Indigenous – a mere one-third of the calculation that I propose. This is a significant underrepresentation, and the Canadian Army should reconsider citing self-ID statistics that so clearly deviate from reality.

In 3 CRPG, 39.5% of Canadian Rangers completed a self-ID survey, with 200 identifying as Indigenous. In the CAF's calculations, this is presented as evidence that only 35.3% of the *total* Ranger membership in 3 CRPG is Indigenous, because the raw number of Rangers who self-identified as Indigenous is then applied to the total number of Rangers in the patrol group, not to the actual sample size. This is a methodological quirk that should be reconsidered in future calculations.

If we apply the 200 people who self-identified as Indigenous (presented as 35.3% of the total 567 Rangers in 3 CRPG) as a percentage of the 39.5% of Rangers (224 Rangers) in the patrol group who completed the survey, we might assume (based on the sample provided) that 89% of Canadian Rangers in 3 CRPG are of Indigenous descent.

This is more closely aligned with what we would expect in “an area that begins about 800 kilometres north of Toronto and extends to James Bay, Hudson Bay and the Manitoba border,” and “is home to more than 50 000 people, living in 49 First Nation communities” (as the 3 CRPG website notes). Indeed, the 3 CRPG Ranger Foundation website cites that 98.4% of the Rangers in that patrol group are First Nations.<sup>12</sup> A presentation given by an officer from 3 CRPG also cites this number, highlighting a unit strength of 620 Rangers and thus an estimate of 608 serving Rangers of First Nations descent in the patrol group.<sup>13</sup>

In the other patrol groups, rates of completing the self-ID survey were much higher. Accordingly, they likely provide a more representative picture of patrol group demographics. The numbers provided by the Army Reserve suggest the following:

Patrol Group	# Rangers	Self-ID rate	# Indigenous (in self-ID sample)	% Indigenous (of self-ID sample)	% Indigenous cited by Army Reserve
2 CRPG	754	81.7% (616)	429	69.6%	56.9%
4 CRPG	1,000	71.5% (715)	230	32.2%	23%
5 CRPG	920	76% (699)	184	26.3%	20%

Accordingly, if we correct for the methodological quirk in the Canadian Army's official calculations and present averages based upon the percentage of Rangers who completed self-ID surveys, we arrive at modestly higher estimates for Indigenous participation rates in each patrol group.

### Implications for CAF Diversity and Inclusion Metrics

The data provided to the House of Commons committee in January 2019 suggests that Indigenous peoples represent 2.8% of CAF membership (approximately 2,800 Indigenous members) *excluding* the Canadian Rangers, suggesting an estimated CAF strength of 100,000 members excluding the Rangers.<sup>14</sup> The CAF Employment Equity goal is to reach a target of 3.5% Indigenous representation by 2026.<sup>15</sup>

Why were the Rangers left out of the calculation? This is a striking omission that could be misconstrued as the CAF conceptualizing Canadian Ranger service as a lesser form of participation than the Regular Force or Primary Reserve. This would go against the spirit of *Advancing with Purpose: The Canadian Army Modernization Strategy*, which emphasizes how, “for the Canadian Army to succeed in the future, it must think of itself and operate as a unified *One Army* that consists of Regular, [Army Reserve], Canadian Rangers (CR), and civilians working together seamlessly to deliver on the Canadian Army's mission.”<sup>16</sup> Segregating Ranger service statistics from the rest of the Canadian Army and CAF membership has unfortunate connotations because it fails to reinforce this “One Army” message.



Excluding the Rangers from statistics about “the Regular Force and Reserves,” as the Canadian Army did in the numbers that it presented to the House of Commons committee and in its backgrounder on “Indigenous People in the Canadian Armed Forces” (which makes no mention of the Rangers whatsoever), not only suggests that Rangers are not part of the “real” defence team, but it also sends a signal that having Indigenous peoples serve as Reservists in their home communities is less valued than other forms of military service in other parts of Canada. This is clearly unintentional and runs directly counter to the narratives of inclusivity and embracing of diversity that the government highlighted in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.

The Canadian Army’s communication plan with respect to Indigenous peoples notes that the Army Commander, as the DND/CAF champion for Indigenous peoples, “serves as an active proponent of dedicated initiatives that support DND/CAF’s broader employment equity (EE), as well as recruitment, training and retention goals, demonstrating support of Indigenous military and civilian personnel.” This includes promoting “all current and future initiatives for serving Indigenous members,” as well as various DND “initiatives designed to help recruit Canadians of various cultures and backgrounds that accurately reflects Canada’s diverse population.” The expressed “aim is to educate Canadians on progress that has been made to date, which positions the [Canadian Army]/CAF as an employer of choice for all Canadians.” A primary objective is to “honour the significant contributions of Indigenous Peoples that served and continue to serve their Country,” and to message how “First Nations, Inuit and Métis are valued members of Canadian society and the defence community, succeeding in some of the most challenging and rewarding jobs.”<sup>17</sup>

A more holistic and robust accounting of Indigenous peoples’ participation rates in the CAF, which *includes* the Canadian Rangers as Reservists, may

produce participation rates for Indigenous people that exceed the 3.5% target set by the CAF.

### ***Scenario One***

Taking the revised figures (explained above) for Canadian Ranger participation in 1 CRPG and 3 CRPG into account, and applying these to overall Ranger participation rates, we arrive at the following:

Patrol Group	# Rangers	# Indigenous	% Indigenous
1 CRPG	1,355	1,086	80.1% (1 CRPG)
2 CRPG	754	429	56.9% (Army self-ID stat)
3 CRPG	620	608	98.4% (3 CRPG)
4 CRPG	1,000	230	23% (Army self-ID stat)
5 CRPG	920	184	20% (Army self-ID stat)
Total	4,649	2,537	54.6%

### ***Scenario Two***

If we further adjust the numbers for 2 CRPG, 4 CRPG, and 5 CRPG to estimate the number of Indigenous people serving as Rangers within the units based upon the percentage of people who self-identified as such among those Rangers who completed the survey, we arrive at the following:

Patrol Group	# Rangers	# Indigenous (estimate)	% Indigenous
1 CRPG	1,355	1,086	80.1% (1 CRPG)
2 CRPG	754	525	69.6% (self-ID adjusted)
3 CRPG	620	608	98.4% (3 CRPG)
4 CRPG	1,000	322	32.2% (self-ID adjusted)
5 CRPG	920	242	26.3% (self-ID adjusted)
Total	4,649	2,783	59.9%

These are estimates, but I contend that they are more representative of the actual participation rates than the figures currently offered by the Canadian Army Reserves.

When we integrate these numbers with the overall estimate of Indigenous people serving in the Regular Force and Primary Reserve (2,800 members out of 100,000), revised figures would yield:

### *Scenario One*

Component	Total	# Indigenous	% Indigenous
Reg Force and P Res	100,000	2,800	2.8%
Canadian Rangers (1 CRPG and 3 CRPG adjusted)	4,649	2,537	54.3%
CAF Overall Total	104,649	5,337	5.1%

### *Scenario Two*

Component	Total	# Indigenous (estimate)	% Indigenous
Reg Force and P Res	100,000	2,800	2.8%
Canadian Rangers (all CRPGs adjusted)	4,649	2,783	59.6%
CAF Overall Total	104,649	5,583	5.3%

Given that, in both of these scenarios, the estimated rate of Indigenous participation in the CAF is well above the 3.5% target, this analysis would indicate that the CAF should either adjust its targets for Indigenous participation upward or clarify its language to specify which component(s) of the CAF require attention.<sup>18</sup>

Reconciliation involves recognizing the contributions that Indigenous peoples have made, and continue to make, in Canada. Underrepresenting rates of Indigenous service in the CAF does not help to advance this process, reinforcing a deficit mindset that both downplays the high rates of Indigenous people's service and fails to acknowledge the CAF as an "employer of choice" for Indigenous people in Canada.<sup>19</sup> The latter does not diminish the need to invest resources in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous people – it amplifies it. Furthermore, the public circulation of misleading data about Indigenous participation rates could be misrepresented as either deliberate misinformation or disinformation emanating from DND/CAF. In this case, it should not be misconstrued as either. It is an example of how an over-reliance on a single methodology (in this case, self-identification surveys) and misleading calculations based on partial data can dramatically distort the picture.





Statistics that treat Indigenous people serving in the Canadian Rangers *apart* from other Reservists, rather than as an intrinsic and valued *part of* the CAF,<sup>20</sup> send the wrong signals – and are not aligned with the Canadian Army’s strategic intent to situate the Canadian Rangers as an integral part of the “One Army.” Commitments to enhance the effectiveness of the Canadian Rangers, as a subcomponent of the Army Reserves who “are unique not only in the skills and expertise they bring, [but also in] the locations in which they operate and in their terms of service,” affirm that the Rangers and their differentiated form of service are highly valued.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, this briefing note does not question the Canadian Army’s commitment to the Canadian Rangers or to Indigenous people serving in the CAF. It only raises questions about the statistics that the military cites about participation rates.

Indigenous people have a long, distinguished history of service in the Canadian Armed Forces, and Indigenous veterans have won long-fought battles to have their contributions recognized and acknowledged by the Canadian public. The Canadian Rangers have become an integral part of this distinguished history of service, and the successful inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the defence team through the Canadian Rangers represents a poignant example of how embracing Indigenous knowledge and local skills not only accommodates but promotes diversity and the associated benefits that this brings to the CAF.<sup>22</sup> In the future, statistics released on Indigenous participation rates in the CAF should reinforce this positive message and, if my rough calculations are indicative of actual rates of service, should emphasize how the CAF is an employer of choice that already *exceeds* its goal of 3.5% Indigenous representation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on National Defence, *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces* (2019), 24, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/NDDN/Reports/RP10573700/nddnrp17/nddnrp17-e.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> For a basic discussion of constraints on DND/CAF efforts to secure accurate Employment Equity self-identification data with respect to Indigenous members, see ADM(RS) 1258-3-022, "Evaluation of the Indigenous Affairs Program" (February 2020), 16, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/audit-evaluation/evaluation-indigenous-affairs-program.html>.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia That Works," *Canadian Military Journal* 6/4 (2006): 49-60; Lackenbauer, "Teaching Canada's Indigenous Sovereignty Soldiers ... and Vice Versa: 'Lessons Learned' from Ranger Instructors," *Canadian Army Journal* 10/2 (2007): 66-81; Lackenbauer, "Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Rangers: Canada's 'Eyes and Ears' in Northern and Isolated Communities," in *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture*, Vol. 2, eds. Cora Voyageur, David Newhouse, and Dan Beavon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 306-28; Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Lackenbauer, *Canada's Rangers: Selected Stories, 1942-2012* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2013); Lackenbauer, "The Military as Nation-Builder: The Case of the Canadian North," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15/1 (2013): 1-32; Lackenbauer, *Vigilans: The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group* (Yellowknife: 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, 2015); Lackenbauer, "'Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada's North': Media Misperceptions of the Canadian Rangers, Indigenous Service, and Arctic Security," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 19/2 (December 2018): 158-92; Lackenbauer, "The North's Canadian Rangers," in *Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion*, eds. Alistair Edgar, Rupinder Mangat, and Bessma Momani (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 67-86; and Peter Kikkert and Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: Cornerstone for Community Disaster Resilience in Canada's Remote and Isolated Communities," *Northern Review* (forthcoming 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Backgrounder, 19 June 2017 (revised 26 February 2019), [https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/news/2017/06/les\\_peuples\\_autochtonesdanslesforcesarmeescanadiennes.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/news/2017/06/les_peuples_autochtonesdanslesforcesarmeescanadiennes.html).

<sup>5</sup> Delphine Jung, « Un Huron-Wendat devient un haut gradé de l'armée canadienne, » Radio-Canada, 9 avril 2021, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1783189/huron-wendate-grade-armee-canadienne-jocelyn-paul-autochtone>.

<sup>6</sup> DND Supplemental Estimates 2020-21, "Activities – Domestic," last updated 19 November 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/proactive-disclosure/supp-estimates-a-2020-21/other-issues/activities-domestic.html>.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Fred Gaffen, *Forgotten Soldiers* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1985); Janice Summerby, *Native Soldiers—Foreign Battlefields* (Ottawa: Department of Veterans Affairs, 2005); P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Craig Mantle, eds., *Aboriginal People and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007); Lackenbauer, R. Scott Sheffield, and Mantle, eds., *Aboriginal People and the Military: Canadian and International Perspectives* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007); and Lackenbauer, John Moses, Sheffield, and Maxime Gohier, *A Commemorative History of Aboriginal People in the Canadian Military* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2010), <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/themes/defence/caf/militaryhistory/dhh/popular/aboriginal-people-canadian-military.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Canadian Army, "Canadian Rangers" (2019), <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/canadian-rangers/index.page>.

<sup>9</sup> Defence Administration Order and Directive (DAOD) 2020-2 - Canadian Rangers, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-2-canadian-rangers.html>.

<sup>10</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Peter Kikkert, *Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers* (report submitted to 1 CRPG, October 2020), <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Rangers-Success-Metrics-Lackenbauer-Kikkert-high-res.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/canadian-rangers/index.page>. The official 1 CRPG, 2 CRPG, and 3 CRPG webpages all emphasize the Indigenous languages spoken by "many" of their Rangers and the strong First Nation, Inuit, and Métis identities within their membership. The 4 CRPG and 5 CRPG webpages, which cover areas where the majority of the population is non-Indigenous, do not highlight Indigenous participation.

<sup>12</sup> 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/3-crp/index.page> and [therangerfoundation.ca](http://therangerfoundation.ca).

<sup>13</sup> Lt Jason Dech, "3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group," PowerPoint presentation, available online at Microsoft PowerPoint - Greenstone deputation presentation ([civicweb.net](http://civicweb.net)).

<sup>14</sup> The report later cites statistics generated by Lindsay Rodman based upon a force of 93,953 excluding Rangers (63-64), but I have retained the round number of 100,000 given that the Ranger statistics that I offer are illustrative estimates.

<sup>15</sup> DND Supplemental Estimates 2019-20, "Personnel," last updated 8 July 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/proactive-disclosure/supplementary-budget-b-2019-2020/other->

issues/personnel.html. The Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Plan 2015-2020 identified a target of 3.4% Indigenous representation, which was revised to 3.5% in CAF Employment Equity reports from fiscal year 2016/17 onwards. See ADM(RS) 1258-3-022, "Evaluation of the Indigenous Affairs Program," 16.

<sup>16</sup> Canadian Army, *Advancing with Purpose: The Canadian Army Modernization Strategy*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Ottawa: Canadian Army HQ, December 2020), 16.

<sup>17</sup> Canadian Army, Communications Plan – In Support to Commander, Canadian Army as Defence Team Champion for Indigenous Peoples, 4 April 2018.

<sup>18</sup> The CAF Backgrounder on "Indigenous People in the Canadian Armed Forces" notes that, "based on self-identification figures from January 2019, there are approximately 2742 Indigenous members currently serving in the CAF Regular Force and Primary Reserve Force combined, or a representation of 2.8 per cent.... The Canadian Army has a representation of 3.0 per cent Indigenous people [not including the Canadian Rangers], the Royal Canadian Navy has a representation of 2.9 per cent, and the Royal Canadian Air Force is at 2.4 per cent." Backgrounder, 19 June 2017 (revised 26 February 2019).

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Murray Brewster, "Canadian military falling well short of its target for recruiting women," CBC News, 5 June 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/armed-forces-women-recruiting-1.4691356>.

<sup>20</sup> An evaluation of the DND/CAF Indigenous Affairs Program released by the Assistant Deputy Minister (Review Services) in 2020 "considers broader aspects of Indigenous affairs within DND/CAF" but that "Indigenous programs, activities and initiatives outside the evaluation scope that are not addressed include the Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers." Given the statistics provided in this research note, this is a major omission. ADM(RS) 1258-3-022, "Evaluation of the Indigenous Affairs Program."

<sup>21</sup> Canadian Army, *Advancing with Purpose*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> For recent studies, see Lackenbauer, "Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada's North"; Lackenbauer, "The North's Canadian Rangers"; Magali Vullierme, "The Social Contribution of the Canadian Rangers: A Tool of Assimilation or Means of Agency?" *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 19/2 (2018), <https://jmss.org/article/view/62820/46852>; Vullierme, "Towards Human Security in the Arctic: Lessons Learned From the Canadian Rangers," *Arctic Yearbook* (2019): 1-14, [https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2019/Scholarly-Papers/7\\_AY2019\\_Vullierme.pdf](https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2019/Scholarly-Papers/7_AY2019_Vullierme.pdf); and Lackenbauer and Kikkert, *Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers*.

# 11

## Military Metrics of Ranger Success

First published in *Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers* (report to the 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, released October 2020).

*Individual [Canadian Ranger] Patrols are composed of locally-based individuals with extensive knowledge of the land who are independently self-sufficient within their home environments. The mission of the [Canadian Rangers] is to provide lightly-equipped and self-sufficient mobile forces in support of CAF sovereignty and domestic operations in Canada. It is essential that all levels of the CAF and the [Canadian Army] Chain of Command understand the [Canadian Rangers'] Roles, Missions, and Tasks and interpret policy and guidance through this lens.*

-- Lieutenant-General J.M.M. Hainse, Commander Canadian Army  
Master Implementation Directive (MID) Canadian  
Ranger Organization, 27 April 2015<sup>1</sup>

In previous books and articles, I have argued that the Rangers are an appropriate and operationally valued component of a Canadian military posture designed to address Northern risks across the defence-security-safety mission spectrum. They serve as enablers or “force multipliers” for conventional operations, while at the same time supporting “soft security” responses that Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) operational concepts identify as the most probable threats to the Canadian North. This unique component offers core capabilities that meaningfully and practically leverage the rich diversity, knowledge, and skills of Northern Canadians. Although Canada’s defence capabilities in the region are modest compared to other parts of the country and many parts of the world, I argue that they are proportionate and sufficient to meet the low probability of conventional military threats that we face *to and in* the Canadian and North American Arctic. Turning to self-sufficient, locally based Canadian Rangers as enablers or “force multipliers” for conventional southern-based military units – with the added benefit of having Rangers serve as organized bodies of first responders in and for their communities – is a

successful element of a proportionate, sustainable, joint construct to protect, secure, and defend Canada's Territorial North.

The key Arctic defence documents produced by the Canadian military over the last decade all emphasize integrated defence team and whole-of-government approaches to meet challenges across the mission spectrum.<sup>2</sup> Within these concepts, the Rangers are situated as facilitators or enablers for other military components providing combined response capabilities. Lessons learned or post-exercise reports regularly highlight the benefits of this partnership and the need to leverage the Rangers' Indigenous and local knowledge and capabilities to facilitate operations and further develop Regular and Primary Reserve Force units' operating skills in remote areas.<sup>3</sup> These exercises affirm the value of having access to subject-matter experts with extensive experience operating in austere conditions and who are willing to share their local and traditional knowledge about lands and waters and provide practical support for activities in what southerners consider to be "extreme environments."

*Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)*  
108: Enhance and expand the training and effectiveness of the Canadian Rangers to improve their functional capabilities within the Canadian Armed Forces.

### 11.1 Roles and Tasks<sup>4</sup>

The Rangers are neither intended nor needed as a combat force given the military threat environment facing Canada's North. Although a kinetic role was originally assigned to the Rangers in 1947, it was explicitly removed from their official task list in the 2000s because they are neither trained nor equipped for this role.<sup>5</sup> Understanding the Rangers and how they fit within the defence team is key. They are intended to serve as enablers or "force multipliers" for other CAF elements in preparing for Arctic warfare and, presumably, in an actual warfighting scenario (however highly improbable that is in the Canadian North).

The Canadian Rangers are only expected to operate within Canada and are assigned three broad categories of tasks:

1. Conducting and providing support to sovereignty operations (e.g., they are a Canadian Armed Forces presence in Canada's North);
2. Conducting and providing assistance to Canadian Armed Forces domestic operations; and
3. Maintaining a Canadian Armed Forces presence in the local community.

Within these broad categories, they provide a range of specialized services within their areas of operation, including but not limited to:



- Reporting suspicious and unusual activities and collecting local data of military significance including coastal and inland water surveillance;
- Providing local knowledge and Canadian Ranger expertise (e.g., providing survival expertise to Regular Force and Primary Reserve members);
- Participating in search and rescue operations;
- Providing support in response to natural or man-made disasters and humanitarian response operations; and
- Instructing, mentoring, and supervising the Junior Canadian Ranger program.

Although Rangers are considered “trained upon enrolment” and are not required to undertake annual training, they train regularly in practical skills such as navigation, weapon safety, first aid, and preparing austere landing strips for fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, and each Ranger patrol undertakes at least one on-land exercise per year.

The Department of National Defence (DND)/CAF Ombudsman Office observes that “all Reservists, including Canadian Rangers, are expected to perform certain tasks while not on duty, including maintaining their uniforms and equipment, communications and planning associated with upcoming training or operations, and being prepared in the event they are called out on service.” In addition to these common tasks, “Canadian Rangers are uniquely

expected to observe and report suspicious or unusual activity and collect local information of military significance during the course of their daily routine.” Although this ongoing, year-round mission is “intrinsic to the role of the Canadian Ranger” and represents the CAF’s continuous presence in Northern communities, Rangers are only considered to be on duty status (with the related pay, entitlements, and benefits) when training has been authorized or a specific task has been assigned to them.<sup>6</sup> In those cases, a Canadian Ranger is placed on a class of service (“A”, “B”, or “C” Reserve Service) and receives suitable compensation as well as related health care and other benefits should they become ill or injured while on duty.<sup>7</sup>

The Canadian Army produced a Ranger patrol-type framework (in this case meaning an activity, rather than the community-based sub-unit) in 2013 that distinguishes Canadian Ranger tasks under the Canadian Army lead (“force generation”) from those under the authority of the Canadian Joint Operations Command (“force employment”). This Canadian Ranger Patrol Type Matrix applies to Rangers across Canada:

**Canadian Army lead:**

**Type 1 – Basic Training** (e.g. field training, traditional skills, mentoring Junior Canadian Rangers) – Class “A”;

**Type 2 – Individual Training** (e.g. building leadership traits) – Class “A”;

**Type 3 – Collective Training** (e.g. familiarization with other patrols/communities) – Class “A”;

**Canadian Joint Operations Command lead:**

**Type 4 – Training, Exercise, and Event** (e.g. support to Canadian Armed Forces training/exercises) – Class “A”;

**Type 5 – Domestic Operation** (e.g. conduct or assist in Search and Rescue) – Class “A” or “C”;

**Type 6 – Sovereignty Operation** (e.g. enhanced sovereignty patrols) – Class “A” or “C”.<sup>8</sup>

While Rangers are assigned a supporting role to assist with search and rescue (SAR), the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) has vested the commanding officers of each Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (CRPG) with discretionary power to authorize SAR operations in urgent cases within their areas of responsibility, as well as other “life and limb” situations such as “rescue and evacuation of individuals in emergency situations, emergency life-saving treatment, [and] the safeguarding of public health.”<sup>9</sup>



To adjust the Canadian Ranger Patrol Type Matrix to better reflect activities in Canada's Northern territories, 1 CRPG differentiates between force generation (FG) and force employment (FE) activities, as well as illustrating its relationships with Joint Task Force North (JTFN) in Yellowknife across different patrol types. 1 CRPG falls under the command of 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, which directs FG activities. Because 1 CRPG spans JTFN's area of operations, however, the joint task force has an interest in – and some influence over – all types of patrols, particularly in light of how individual and collective training activities often involve Rangers operating on the land and waters around their communities.

	JTFN Area of Interest (domain awareness)/some Influence					JTFN Area of Influence	
	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6	Engagement
Activity	Individual and Collective (patrol) Trg	Individual and Collective (patrol) Trg	Ranger Exercise Individual and Collective (multi patrol) Trg	Sp to CAF FG	Sp tasks (FE) to CAF, OGD, NGO	Operations (FE)	Community Events
Description	Unit Directed Mentored Activity	Unit Directed Directed Unmentored Activity	Unit Directed multiple community patrols	-NOREX -Arctic Advisor Crse -Canadian Forces School of Search and Rescue -Canadian Forces	-NWS -Yukon Quest -CROW -Bearwatch -SMARTice -IMMP	-SAR -N-Series	-Long John Jamboree -Sourdough Rendezvous -Support to youth programs
CA (1 CRPG) Mentored	Yes	No	Most Likely C2	Performs Liaison function	Performs liaison function	Performs Liaison function	Optional

## 11.2 1 CRPG Objectives

According to 1 CRPG's 2018-19 operating plan, the unit's mission is to "enhance its effectiveness and functional capabilities within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) while also remaining a relevant partner to communities, to regional/Indigenous, territorial and federal government departments and agencies, and to the scientific community in the Arctic and sub-arctic areas of responsibility." To enhance and expand the effectiveness of the Canadian Rangers, it sets eight objectives:

1. increasing overt Canadian Ranger presence at strategic locations, such as the Northwest Passage;
2. increasing the routine and deliberate collection of information to support land, coastal and inland water way domain awareness by the CAF and partners;
3. improving our search and rescue activation and control procedures, in coordination with territorial emergency management organizations (EMO) and JTFN;
4. enabling the Canadian Rangers to conduct critical infrastructure inspections in remote and isolated locations;
5. facilitating improved relations between communities and the CAF;

6. improving the control and communications capabilities between the HQ and patrols and within the patrols;
7. delivering timely and reliable administrative and logistical support to the Canadian Rangers; and
8. implementing risk management strategies that minimize the threats to personnel and equipment, particularly personal equipment.

It sets four objectives to enhance and expand Ranger training, including:

1. implementing unit level individual and collective Ranger Task Standards that will help drive training;
2. improve the training delivery method with a focus on enabling patrols to conduct more training on their own on a schedule that allows for maximum membership participation;
3. increasing weapons training and ranges, to include enabling Patrol Commanders to conduct their own live ranges, where appropriate; and
4. conducting first aid courses for all Canadian Rangers.<sup>10</sup>

From this, the unit articulated eleven success criteria for its performance in meeting these objectives:<sup>11</sup>

Key Success Criteria	Key Success Criteria
<b>Relevance</b> of the Canadian Rangers to their communities is maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # SAR activation (Type 6)</li> <li>• Patrol activities are coordinated with the Chiefs/Mayor/Council and post patrol information is shared</li> <li>• Canadian Ranger participation in important community events</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance</b> of the Canadian Rangers to the Canadian Armed Forces, OGDs [(other government departments)] and NGOs [(non-governmental organizations)]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of CAF Type 4, 5 and 6 activities supported</li> <li>• Domain awareness passed to JTFN</li> <li>• # of Type 5 OGD tasks supported (ie. Canadian Rangers Ocean Watch)</li> <li>• # of Type 5 NGO tasks supported (ie. Bearwatch/SMARTice)</li> </ul>
<b>Command and Control.</b> Communications with and amongst the Patrols is enabled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-800 system functioning is monitored by a duty officer</li> <li>• Satellite communications equipment available to each Patrol</li> <li>• Reliable emergency notification and tracking system issued to all Patrols and Sections</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APX-4000 issued to all Patrol (2/HQ and 2/Sect).</li> </ul>
<p><b>HQ Stewardship.</b> Personnel administration is processed in a timely manner ensuring the effectiveness of the unit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two CR [(Canadian Rangers)] per patrol are Advance Wilderness First Aid Qualified</li> <li>• All medical injuries are reported to the Adjutant within 48 hrs of injury</li> <li>• Recruiting and releases back logs reduced to one month</li> <li>• CR with 12 years of [service] or more receive a Depart with Dignity on voluntary retirement</li> <li>• Deaths are dealt with promptly and families receive the necessary support and recognition within 30 days of notification</li> <li>• Damage claims processed through to higher HQ within one month of receipt by the unit</li> </ul>
<p><b>Self-Sufficient.</b> Canadian Ranger Patrols are capable of planning and executing patrols on their own for a period of no less than 72 hrs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Type 2 Patrols and independent Type 3, 4 and 5 patrols per calendar year</li> <li>• Individual and Collective Ranger Task Standards implemented and tracked quarterly</li> </ul>
<p><b>Self-Sufficient.</b> All Canadian Rangers are trained to deal with medical situations while on the land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 CR Patrols per year are offered a First Aid/Wilderness First Aid [Course]</li> <li>• Two CR per patrol are Advance Wilderness First Aid Qualified</li> </ul>
<p><b>Self-Sufficient.</b> All Patrols have the infrastructure necessary to support routine administration, training and operations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Patrols have two CR and one JCR [(Junior Canadian Ranger)] designated storage facilities in the community. 10 locations completed per year</li> <li>• Select Patrols have office space within the community</li> </ul>
<p><b>Investing in Youth.</b> All JCR are provided a well-structured and resourced program that affords them culturally relevant and challenging activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each JCR Patrol has a three to six month plan for weekly activities that has been consulted with the community's leadership</li> <li>• Each JCR patrol completed two weekend training activities</li> <li>• JCR Patrol store requests are actioned promptly</li> </ul>

<b>Investing in Youth.</b> JCR are afforded challenging and exciting centralized activities, such as summer camps and shooting competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 340 JCR attend an [Enhanced Training Session] (ETS) ... as a participant or as JCR staff</li> <li>• All JCR Patrols are afforded an opportunity to compete in a Territorial Shoot</li> </ul>
<b>Gender Equity.</b> SSE <i>[(Strong, Secure, Engaged)]</i> gender based targets achieved/ exceeded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 CRPG HQ and Patrols consist of no less than 25% female, to include Ranger Instructors</li> <li>• No less than 25% of 1 CRPG leadership positions are held by females</li> </ul>
<b>Outreach.</b> All Canadian Ranger Patrols have supported a local on-the-land youth program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All JCR Ptls completed two weekend training activities</li> <li>• Communities with Cadets are supported in at least one weekend activity</li> <li>• Communities without JCR or Cadets received support to one on-the-land youth program</li> </ul>

Accordingly, we consider these to be existing indicators of “success” applicable to this study. The indicators suggested in this report are intended to supplement rather than replace these and, where appropriate, offer additional or more specific measures based on criteria derived from a deeper analysis of how Canadian Rangers contribute to various forms of resilience.

### 11.3 Canadian Ranger “Battle Task Standards” (Force Generation – Type 1-3 Patrols)

Pursuant to initiative 108 of SSE, Lieutenant-Colonel Luis Carvallo, the former Commanding Officer of 1 CRPG, devised a set of measurable individual and collective standards that could be applied to the Canadian Ranger training program in the unit based on existing Canadian Army Battle Task Standards (thus applying Canadian Army training language).<sup>12</sup> These standards are intended to serve as a guide for the planning and delivering of training within the unit and to assist the chain of command in making decisions on the training and employment of Ranger patrols.<sup>13</sup>

**Individual Battle Task Standards** include the following:

- Marksmanship - safely able to handle and fire the Canadian Ranger service rifle
- Communications - operate and maintain communications equipment issued to the Rangers (eg. Track 24, Iridium Satellite

phone, and PCX 250 portable radio) including training on proper voice procedure to send a situation report (SITREP), location report (LOCREP), and an unusual incident sighting report

- Navigation - navigate cross-country by day or night using conventional military methods (map and compass and GPS) and traditional Northern methods (such as sun and shadows, watches, celestial navigation, prevailing snow conditions, and techniques taught by patrol elders)
- Bushcraft - including knots and lashings; use of a compound pulley system to move a static load; tracking in a range of climatic conditions; building an improvised shelter sufficient to protect an individual or small group from climatic conditions for a period of 72 hours; exercising traditional survival skills (such as building a fire, identifying edible and medicinal plants, preparing game, fishing, traps and snares, and signaling fires and ground to air signals); and cold water survival
- Fieldcraft - conduct surveillance by establishing an overt observation post (day and night) and passing along relevant information; identify and categorize aircraft; and recognize marine vessels with[in] a patrol's area of operations
- Search and Rescue - understand and practice the searcher and team leader core competencies for search and rescue, cold water and ice rescue, and mountain and avalanche rescue (where applicable) to rescue other Rangers while patrolling through complex terrain and to support territorial rescue efforts when formally activated
- First Aid - all Canadian Rangers must attain or maintain currency on a first aid and a CPR level "C" qualification, and may complete either the Military Standard First Aid or a Wilderness First Aid course



- Administration - attend lectures on pay, allowances and benefits; medical support; the conditions under which Rangers are authorized to use their personal equipment in support of their Canadian Ranger duties (and how to complete a damage claim); dress and deportment (including Operation Honour briefings on what constitutes harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour and sexual misconduct); an overview of the basic CAF organization, ranks, and operations and activities in the North; and the history, mission, roles and tasks of 1 CRPG

**Collective Ranger Task Standards** include the following:

- Command and Control - a Ranger patrol commander must be able to advise a Canadian Army company on an exercise or operation, and a Ranger section commander must be able to advise a Canadian Army platoon on:
  - political issues (key leaders and organizations within the community and setting up meetings with them);
  - the Ranger patrol's capabilities and limitations;
  - the local economic situation, including practices to ensure that military activities [do] not adversely affect the community;
  - local customs and traditions (including opportunities for engagement); culturally and ecologically sensitive sites to be avoided;
  - key local infrastructure, capabilities, and limitations (i.e. water, accommodations, communications); and
    - the physical environment (i.e. weather, best routes and bivouac sites, safe and suitable activities, methods of survivability and mobility, and ways to reduce the environmental impact of military activities on the land and on the community)
- Command and Control - a Canadian Ranger (CR) Patrol or Section preparing to deploy on the land for multiple days to conduct a task or training must be able to: receive orders; issue a warning order; conduct a simple estimate; prepare and issue a simple set [of] orders; and supervise preparations/rehearsals
- Patrolling - a patrol must be able to conduct a multi-day mounted (eg. snowmachine or ATV) patrol over land and a multi-day patrol by boat along a river or coast line; two patrols moving over-land or by water must be able to link-up at a halfway point between their

communities to transfer a load or to work together onto a follow-on task; and a minimum of two Canadian Rangers per patrol must be physically capable of guiding a light infantry platoon dismounted on land during the spring or summer

- Bushcraft - a Canadian Ranger Patrol must be able to establish a bivouac site so that it can operate self-sufficiently from austere fixed (such as observation posts) or alternating locations (such as way points along a route) for an enduring period of time
- Fieldcraft - Rangers must be able to move in proper formation in order to maintain proper control while conducting a patrol on land or water; a Patrol must be able to establish and operate an overt observation post in an area of interest as part of domain awareness, maintaining a 24/7 rotation schedule, communicating with the Patrol headquarters, and producing and submitting siting reports and SITREPs; a Canadian Ranger Section or detachment must be able to work as a reconnaissance element to plan and issue orders, navigate to and from an objective, identify and mark routes around obstacles, and report information back to the Patrol commander; a deployed Patrol must be able to establish and operate a helicopter landing point in order to conduct a casualty evacuation or to conduct resupply from an austere site; and a deployed Patrol must be able to establish an improvised airstrip (runway) for a CC-138 Twin Otter equipped with skis to land on snow or ice in order to conduct a casualty evacuation or to conduct resupply.
- Plan and Control Search and Rescue (SAR) tasks<sup>14</sup> - when local volunteer SAR teams are unable to prosecute a search and rescue and



the local SAR Manager determines that CAF support is required, at least one Ranger section in each patrol must be prepared to assist with a search for at least 24 hours. A Patrol Commander acting as the team leader must be able to activate/call-out local Rangers, liaise with 1CRPG HQ and the local Incident Command Post throughout the deployment period, and coordinate activities with other SAR capabilities (eg. CASARA [(the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association)] and the Canadian Coast Guard). The Canadian Ranger search team must be able to complete a mission in a safe manner; integrate search theory and search types, patterns, and techniques into search operations; and submit reports. Every patrol should be able to conduct ground and shoreline SAR, as well as cold water rescue. Depending on local terrain, some patrols should be able to conduct mountain and avalanche SAR and/or a maritime or inland water SAR.

- Identify and Practice Disaster Relief Tasks<sup>15</sup> - In order to effectively assist their community with humanitarian/disaster relief tasks during an emergency, a Ranger patrol must understand the CAF's role in disaster relief operations, work with community leadership to review the community emergency response plan, and identify and exercise probable Canadian Ranger humanitarian/disaster relief tasks in the community (including training and equipment requirements).
- Patrol leaders must be able to administer all stages of a patrol, including personnel, pay and EUR [(equipment usage rate)] compensation, stores and materiel, vehicle use, and environmental plans for human waste and accidental hazardous material spills.
- Execute Local Recovery of a vehicle (snowmachine and komatic/sled, ATV, or boat) from complex terrain.
- Confirm weather forecasts and identify the impact on the patrol to determine go-no-go criteria.
- Conduct vehicle and equipment inspections, and determine load distribution and securing as required.
- During land-based patrols, organize the patrol into an advance group, main body, and rear party (each comprised of at least two Rangers); determine an appropriate route, way points, rest areas and bivouac site; communicate effectively within the Patrol, and establish communications with higher headquarters and keep them informed throughout the patrol (including daily patrol movements); employ traditional navigational methods; check on and assist patrol members during halts to help with vehicle and load issues as well as dealing



with environmental conditions; ensure a rear party will be prepared to assist with vehicle breakdowns and loads that have become unsecured; and ensure the survival of the patrol.

We note that each one of these task standards can be considered a measurable indicator of individual and patrol-level Ranger competencies and capability. Rangers are not obliged to undergo annual training under their terms of service, so the CAF should not attempt to test or validate these “standards” on a yearly basis or assume that individual Rangers need to meet all of these “standards” to contribute meaningfully to an effective Ranger patrol. More fundamentally, the 2015 Master Implementation Directive emphasizes that Canadian Rangers “do not conform to the principle of universality of service and are deemed trained on enrolment based on their knowledge of the land and not their knowledge of the military or soldiering.” Accordingly, “commanders at all levels are to keep this reality in mind when tasking” Rangers.<sup>16</sup>

#### **11.4 Canadian Rangers Support to CAF Force Generation Activities (Type 4 patrols)**

The CAF relies heavily on the Canadian Rangers’ expertise during training exercises and operations in the Territorial North. Canadian Arctic deployments and training for non-Ranger units are conducted as expeditionary operations. Accordingly, having “friends on the ground” with expert knowledge of the areas and/or conditions in which the units are deployed is a force multiplier. While it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a detailed analysis of Ranger support and training to southern-based elements, the goal is to help prepare



those units to operate with a high degree of readiness and effectiveness in the North.

The CAF Arctic Training Centre (CAF ATC) in Resolute Bay, Nunavut, provides a permanent military footprint in the High Arctic that allows for staging and force projection across the region. The Canadian Army-run centre facilitates training for the Arctic Response Company Groups, the Arctic Operations Advisor Course, the Canadian Forces School of Search and Rescue, and the Canadian Forces School of Survival and Aeromedical Training. Rangers from the community and other patrols in 1 CRPG are regularly hired by the CAF ATC to support these training activities. For example, members of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division's Arctic Response Company Group (ARCG) completed a ten-day training mission based out of Resolute Bay in winter 2015, where they practiced survival skills and tested equipment, clothing, and transport in frigid temperatures and harsh weather conditions rarely experienced in Ontario. "In a land so foreign to the visiting soldiers, local expertise is highly valued," *Nunatsiaq News* reported. "That's where 18 members of the 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group came in handy, to share their knowledge of the land." Sergeant Jarloo Kiguktak, a Ranger from Grise Fiord who had been guiding and training with CAF members in the High Arctic since 1978, shared his deep knowledge and experience as a teacher of Arctic survival methods. "I enjoy the trips and the camping," Kiguktak said. "The soldiers knew how to listen and we had a few laughs."<sup>17</sup>

Southern-based units on Northern Exercises (NOREX) also train in Resolute and other Northern communities. These exercises are intended to maintain an Arctic response capability and are designed to ensure that soldiers develop and retain the ability to move, communicate, and command in austere conditions. This includes exercising first response scenarios.<sup>18</sup> To



prepare for these exercises, Rangers conduct route reconnaissance and brief southern-based units on what to expect when they operate in the North, and then serve as guides, subject-matter experts, and trail parties during the exercises themselves. As advisors embedded within individual sections of soldiers from the south, Rangers serve as teachers and help to ensure safe operations under prevailing local conditions. Rangers also help to organize and participate in all community days, which often include traditional games, dancing, and singing. Rangers also provide essential liaison with local organizations, help to enhance southern forces' understandings of Northern culture, and build positive ties between the military and Northern communities.

### **11.5 Canadian Rangers in Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC)-Led Force Employment Operations (Type 5-6 patrols)**

The Rangers are also expected to conduct and provide assistance to CAF Domestic Operations, including support to other government departments, as Type 5 patrols. Operation Nunakput 2017 – which consisted of a series of maritime and safety patrols, water and ground reconnaissance, survival training, and a disaster preparation assessment – is illustrative. Throughout the 4,100-km operation along the waterways of the Northwest Territories (NWT), Rangers connected the naval component from one community to the next, meeting jet boats on the river and arranging overnight camps at each stop. A *News/North* story described the Rangers as “the glue that holds the operation together – the ‘eyes and ears’ of the North who not only provide fuel, the occasional meal and places for the operation’s personnel to set up camp, but knowledge of the local surroundings that is integral to navigating the North.” Tulita Ranger Benny Doctor and his grandson, twenty-four-year-old Ranger Sergeant Archie Erigaktuk, shared their survival knowledge with soldiers from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, including how to build a fire and how to read the river. Erigaktuk emphasized the importance of the Ranger-military relationship, explaining how the Army “give[s] us the resources to be trained for certain situations,”



whether search and rescue, a wildfire, or other “potential hazards.” The practical application of this training came during the operation when, after a day-long search and rescue exercise on 16 July, the Tulita Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachment received a distress call about a small Cessna aircraft experiencing engine failure outside the community that was attempting to glide into the local airport. “Erigaktuk doled out instructions to his Rangers on the beach: pack the boats with fuel, rations and prepare for a search in the bush in the event the plane does not land safely,” reporter Kirsten Fenn described. “The local Rangers are familiar with the land. At the time of the emergency, they were already mapping out a possible rescue location and resources they could use to help.” The day after, Erigaktuk told her that, “especially on the land, you have to be knowledgeable and be quick in your response or things can go wrong really fast.... That’s why it’s important for us to do our job and them respecting our job as much as we respect their job.”<sup>19</sup>

Rangers also provide support to non-military regional and community events that are important to Northern life. For example, Rangers have built and maintained trails for the Yukon Quest International Dog Sled Race from Whitehorse to Fairbanks, Alaska, as an official military exercise since 1984. This allows Rangers to plan and coordinate a complex task, exercise their skills on the land, publicize their contributions, and support a Yukon tradition. In 2018, nearly fifty Rangers from the Whitehorse, Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, and Dawson City patrols broke the 550-mile trail from Whitehorse to the Alaska border, which involved applying their knowledge of the terrain to clearing, setting, marking, and proofing the route. 1 CRPG also leveraged this as a training opportunity (Exercise Tay Naydan), with Rangers conducting surveillance and emergency response training along select portions of the trail during the Quest.<sup>20</sup>

1 CRPG also supports other federal departments; provincial/territorial authorities; Indigenous governments, associations, and organizations; non-governmental organizations; and scientists, often through a Provision of Services arrangement. These activities reflect whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to Arctic security and resilience. For example, the Canadian Rangers Ocean Watch (CROW) program, established in 2011, is a collaborative undertaking between 1 CRPG, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Vancouver Aquarium, and other governmental and non-governmental partners to study the salinity of water along the Northwest Passage. By leveraging Ranger knowledge and capabilities, scientists benefit from an expanded timeframe to collect data. DFO scientists train Rangers within their home communities to gather oceanographic data, which scientists and local communities then use to better understand ocean dynamics and

climate. “CROW is a way of adding depth to winter observations informing a number of different projects,” said Mike Dempsey, a DFO Arctic Oceanographic Technician. “Some of this is climate-related, some is related to fishery issues, and some is monitoring for long-term studies before potential development or increases in shipping. We learn a lot from the Rangers on navigating the ice and winter travel. We love working with the Rangers. They’re amazing.” In early 2017, DFO science advisors visited Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, and Paulatuk and trained local Rangers in the use of various instruments, which they left in the Rangers’ hands so the work could continue. Scientists also benefited from access to different forms of Ranger knowledge about the environment. “There’s a lot of information available from the elders who do a lot of navigation by eye and by memory about reading snow and ice,” Dempsey emphasized. “We’re always learning by talking to the Rangers about fish and seals and ice and currents and that sort of thing. The interplay between traditional knowledge and government science is a big part of this.”<sup>21</sup> Although the Rangers’ role in assisting with scientific and technological experiments (from drones for local area surveillance to oceanographic research) it not something that they have been trained to do, it draws upon their existing expertise. Furthermore, while testing technology like SmartICE – short for Sea-ice Monitoring and Real-Time Information for Coastal Environments (a climate adaptation tool) – “kind of takes away from traditional skills,” one Ranger explained, it also contributes to community knowledge and safety. As a patrol commander from Yukon noted, “the technology of today will be the traditional skills of the future” and does not “detract from our connection to the land.”<sup>22</sup>





1 CRPG has also started to work with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated's (NTI's) Inuit Marine Monitoring Program (IMMP), Parks Canada, and Environment Canada to synchronize domain awareness efforts along the Northwest Passage and in other territorial waterways. Pursuant to Operation Nunakput 18 between July and early September 2018, this effort involved the Taloyoak, Paulatuk, Kugluktuk, Pond Inlet, and Cambridge Bay Ranger Patrols establishing and operating static observation posts in key locations for fixed durations of time. Rangers were expected to maintain an overt presence and collect domain awareness information that was provided to JTFN for dissemination to other government departments, such as the Canadian Coast Guard, Environment Canada, and Parks Canada. Information was also provided to the community liaison officers for dissemination to regional/Indigenous organizations, such as NTI.<sup>23</sup>

**Type 6 patrols** (conducting and providing support to sovereignty operations) encompass JTFN-led Nanook-series operations, all of which involve Canadian Rangers, as well as the employment of Rangers in support of search and rescue operations and responses to natural or human-made disasters and humanitarian operations. The roles of the Canadian Rangers in community disaster resilience and SAR are discussed [elsewhere]. Ranger contributions to N-series operations from 2007-15 have been summarized elsewhere, as have their participation in Enhanced Sovereignty Patrols (long-range patrols to remote parts of JTFN's area of responsibility, or AOR).<sup>24</sup> Rebranded in 2018 as four distinct activities held in different Northern communities throughout the year, Nanook is intended to strengthen the CAF's knowledge of the Territorial North and fortify partnerships with federal, territorial, and local communities. "Working in Canada's North also hones our ability to operate in a challenging environment requiring unique skillsets, in-depth local knowledge and, support and equipment designed to operate in extreme weather conditions," the [DND website](#) explains. Accordingly, Ranger contributions – including their assistance with local area preparations for the arrival of CAF/OGD elements for sovereignty operations – should be measured against these general criteria.<sup>25</sup>

Operation (Op) Nanook-Nunavut is designed to develop and demonstrate CAF winter expeditionary capabilities in the High Arctic. A composite Canadian Ranger element drawn from various Arctic patrols supports this operation, with Rangers sharing their specific knowledge and expertise on extreme cold weather operations and participating in overland patrols. For example, in anticipation of Operation Nunavut 2018, Lieutenant Commander Melissa Syer noted that the Rangers "embed with the platoons, with the people out on the land. They're a resource for the platoon leaders in

terms of operating in the North.”<sup>26</sup> During that year’s operation, Canadian Rangers played an active role in Cambridge Bay and Resolute, teaching soldiers how to build shelters, fixing broken snowmobiles, and offering advice on how to survive and operate in extreme cold. JTFN Commander Brigadier-General Mike Nixon emphasized how this Ranger support “means everything” when southern-based CAF elements travel to the North. “When you travel east-to-west across the Arctic, each group has a very unique skill set for the areas in where they reside,” Nixon explained. “The Rangers are a part of the army, [and] the two parties collaborating up here is no different than two divisions in the south getting together and conducting operations together.” Ranger Matthew Manik from Resolute Bay instructed members of the Second Battalion Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry on how to build windbreaks on Intrepid Bay by carving “igloo style blocks” out of snow and stacking them in front of their tents. “They are always asking questions,” Manik recounted. “I just tell them what I do and then they try and do it the way I said.”<sup>27</sup> These operations can also turn to “life and limb” scenarios, as Rangers conducting a long-range patrol in Naujaat, Nunavut, as part of Operation Nanook-Nunalivut 20 discovered when they were activated to help with a real-life ground search and rescue for two eco-tourists in distress over 130 kilometres away from their location. After a seven-hour snowmobile trek in difficult conditions, the Rangers located the individuals and brought them back to safety.<sup>28</sup>



Op Nanook-Tatigiit is a whole-of-government operation designed to facilitate cooperation and enable CAF support to civilian agencies in the event of a real emergency. This operation, held in the summer, rotates between the three territories on an annual basis. For example, in September 2018, approximately 270 CAF members (including Rangers) participated in a major air disaster exercise in Yellowknife to practice a coordinated response with other government departments, non-governmental organizations, and private companies. Following this activity, CAF members worked with partners in and around Yellowknife and Behchokò, NWT, to practice how military and civilian organizations would respond to emergencies and natural disasters. Through a series of escalating scenarios, the CAF (including Rangers), the territorial government, and local municipal and Indigenous government partners exercised how they would evacuate people in the event of a forest fire.<sup>29</sup> The following May and June, the operation focused on wildlife evacuation training in Yukon so that participants could develop a common emergency operating picture and test and improve emergency preparedness.<sup>30</sup> Rangers from the Carcross, Whitehorse, and Teslin patrols also conducted SAR training near Marsh Lake, and trained with the City of Whitehorse, the Village of Teslin, and the Teslin Tlingit Council on emergency readiness.

Op Nanook-Nunakput is an annual, marine-based operation focused on asserting sovereignty over Canada's northernmost regions. Rangers from patrols are activated to establish a presence in locations along the Northwest Passage. Ranger participants at the Kitikmeot Roundtable on SAR hosted in early 2020 highlighted that the growing volume of vessel traffic in the waters of the Arctic Archipelago – from expeditionary cruise ships, to ore-bulk carriers, to pleasure craft – represents a growing concern for their communities (e.g., the risk of marine disaster, increased SAR operations, environmental damage, and challenges to law and order, such as people stealing artefacts from the land, illegal hunting and fishing, and bootlegging). Feedback from participants in the 2019 patrol highlighted the value Rangers place in their monitoring activities, which allow them to contribute to broad national defence objectives, while addressing a major community safety concern. Kugluktuk's Ranger patrol emphasized the value of Nunakput, but also noted that they had a very difficult time making radio contact with passing boats, which they attributed to VHF (very high frequency) issues.

Operation Nanook-Tuugaalik provides a military presence and domain awareness operation along the Northwest Passage and territorial waterways. From July-September 2018 and August-September 2019, Rangers monitored marine traffic in Canada's internal waters (including the Northwest Passage) during the most active season of activity, reporting on what they observed and





conducting presence patrols. The Rangers' maritime roles are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between 1 CRPG and the Directorate of Aerospace Equipment Program Management (DAEPM) (Radar and Communications Systems) (DAEPM (RCS)), Rangers from various patrols conduct inspections of unmanned North Warning System (NWS) radar sites throughout the year to ensure the security of these remote installations. After Rangers have travelled to the sites, they check for any signs of polar bear damage (or any bears taking shelter under the buildings), structural damage to infrastructure, fuel leaks, safety problems with the helipads (owing to ice, snow, or erosion), vandalism, property damage or forced entry, or garbage and debris. They also ensure that all doors and hatches are locked, valves are secured, and gauges are in place. Once the Rangers have finished with their site inspection, the patrol leader calls the NWS duty technician from a telephone on the site and reports the observations. A written report is also submitted after the patrol members return to their home community.<sup>31</sup> These NWS patrols have proven a cost-effective way to reduce the need for expensive overflights and monitoring by the contractors who run the NWS, while offering Rangers opportunities to exercise their land skills and contribute to continental defence.<sup>32</sup> These inspection patrols may also serve as a model for Rangers to help monitor and maintain the layered systems that replace the NWS as part of North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) modernization plans over the next decade.

### 11.6 Maritime Patrols: The Myth of a “New” Ranger Mission<sup>33</sup>

The Special Senate Committee on the Arctic’s June 2019 report *Northern Lights: A Wake-Up Call for the Future of Canada* recommends “that the Government of Canada enhance maritime and aerial situational awareness of the Canadian Arctic, including improving the icebreaking capacity of the Canadian Coast Guard, and equipping the Canadian Rangers with marine capabilities.”<sup>34</sup> This recommendation logically flows from the Committee’s emphasis on the effective enforcement of Canadian regulations in the Arctic. The insistence on equipping the Rangers with new marine capabilities, however, is rather peculiar given that the organization garners only one other line in the entire 138-page report.

Over the past decade, various commentators and federal committees have recommended tasking the Rangers with a wide range of marine roles, ranging from search and rescue, to oil spill response, to marine law enforcement.<sup>35</sup> In April 2009, for example, the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans recommended that the military should make the Rangers “an integral part of the Canadian reserves” and provide them with a “marine capability.”<sup>36</sup> Colonel (Retired) Pierre Leblanc, the former commander of Canadian Forces Northern Area (now Joint Task Force North) from 1995-2000, has been the most adamant in insisting on the need to “provide the Canadian Rangers with a maritime role.” In February 2018, he advised the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (which was investigating maritime search and rescue or SAR) that the Rangers could “increase our SAR capabilities but also act as first responders to report illegal fishing, initiate action on marine spills and provide a sovereignty presence throughout the Arctic.” He advised that giving the Rangers a marine role should be one of the top priorities of the Canadian government to increase SAR capabilities in the region.<sup>37</sup> On several occasions he has suggested that “we could quickly, and at little cost, train and equip Ranger patrols along the Northwest Passage with a respectable sea-capable vessel like the Rosborough boats that are being used by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.”<sup>38</sup> Senator Dennis Patterson, who chairs the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic, has echoed Leblanc’s appeals for an expanded maritime role for the Canadian Rangers, suggesting that they could perform the roles mentioned above, as well as serve in national parks and marine protected areas, assist with the collection of scientific samples, and act as “first responders” in support of whatever else federal departments might require in the marine domain.<sup>39</sup>

The argument that the government should give the Canadian Rangers a maritime role in the Arctic overlooks an obvious and important fact: Rangers already operate in the maritime domain, by boats in summer and by snow-



mobile in winter. Currently, the Canadian Rangers perform several roles in the maritime domain as part of their broader mission. The official Ranger tasking list includes coastal and inland water surveillance, and during training exercises Ranger patrols often use boats to travel between destinations. While on the water, the Rangers report unidentified vessels and any unusual activities or sightings, and collect local data for the CAF. If the conception of the maritime domain is expanded to include the months that the Arctic waters are covered in ice, Ranger activity in a marine operating environment becomes even more impressive.

The Kugluktuk Ranger Patrol is a case in point. From August-September 2018, when 1 CRPG deployed Rangers from patrols across Nunavut and the NWT to monitor the Northwest Passage,<sup>40</sup> Sergeant Roger Hitkolok led his Rangers on a boat patrol from Kugluktuk to Victoria Island to track vessels. They also perform annual checks on the North Warning System (NWS) station situated on southwestern Victoria Island near Lady Franklin Point. As part of the Canadian Ranger Ocean Watch Program (established in 2011), the Kugluktuk patrol has acted as guides and collected samples for Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) researchers carrying out oceanographic research in the region – an example of the kind of scientific monitoring that Ranger patrols often undertake on the waters and ice of Canada's Arctic.<sup>41</sup> Several Rangers from the Kugluktuk patrol have also participated in oil spill and environmental response training over the last decade, which they have received during

Operation Nanook or through the annual training patrols conducted in the communities.

In short, commentators and committees urging the federal government to expand the maritime role of the Canadian Rangers must be aware of the roles that Rangers already perform in the marine domain and of the mandates and missions of complementary community-based organizations operating in the North. There is scope within the Rangers' existing orders and directives to extend the frequency or scale of the sovereignty and surveillance patrols that they conduct "as part of the systematic observation of Canada's air, land and ocean areas by all available and practicable means, primarily for the purpose of locating, identifying and determining the unusual movements and activities of aircraft, ships, submarines, vehicles and unknown persons."<sup>42</sup> Rangers should also continue to train for the various roles that they might play in a mass rescue operation or mass casualty event in the Arctic maritime domain. These areas of emphasis do not require a "new" maritime role, and should not be used as the basis to change the established practice of having the Rangers use their own boats and snowmobiles to operate in the maritime domain – a practice that enables Rangers to invest in their own equipment and tools, appropriate to their local environment, which they can then use in their everyday lives without having to ask the government for permission. These themes are expanded upon in later chapters. Furthermore, recommendations to expand the Rangers' maritime role tend to miss and even undermine the attempts by the Canadian Coast Guard, the Nunavut Inuit Monitoring Program, and the Inuit Guardians initiative to bolster community-based marine capabilities and local maritime domain awareness.

Rangers employ their own marine vessels for open-water patrolling during the summer and fall, for which they receive cash reimbursement according to an established equipment usage rate (EUR). In employing their own watercraft, they are fulfilling the Canadian Rangers' primary mandate, which is to "provide lightly equipped, self-sufficient, mobile forces in support of the CF's sovereignty and domestic operation tasks in Canada."<sup>43</sup> This also recognizes the value of having Rangers use and maintain their own equipment, as well as the military's limited capabilities for providing logistical support and sustenance to community-based patrols distributed across the territorial North.

### **11.7 Equipment and EUR**

The Canadian Army considers the Canadian Rangers "to be fully trained, self-sufficient, lightly-equipped, and fully clothed to operate in their Area of Responsibility (AOR) upon enrolment."<sup>44</sup> That stated, sustained funding has supported ongoing material "enhancement" efforts over the last fifteen years,

including the Canadian Rangers Equipment Modernization Project intended to provide Rangers with “light equipment of the best quality to allow them to perform their tasks effectively.”<sup>45</sup> Patrols received satellite phones and new radios to address communication gaps, and the military promised to pre-position more equipment in communities so that Rangers can respond more quickly to emergencies.<sup>46</sup> Although Rangers are still expected to wear their own environmentally suited clothing on operations, a “clothe the Ranger” program has supplemented their famous red hoodies with new jackets, rain suits, and other accoutrements. Finally, the Rangers have received a new bolt-action .308 rifle as part of the Army’s Small Arms Modernization Project to replace the venerable .303 Lee Enfield No. 4 (which was difficult to maintain owing to a scarcity of replacement parts).<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, patrols are provided with a sub-scale of issue of individual items that form the basic Canadian Ranger entitlement, as well as equipment issued to each patrol (such as tents, stoves, lanterns, satellite phones, Track-24s, HF (high frequency) and VHF radios, GPS units, first aid equipment, and rations). A 2015 Army directive clarifies that “entitlement does not necessarily mean that an item has to be issued,” and that particularly in the Canadian Ranger/“remote access context, the distribution of a minimal amount of equipment is preferred.”<sup>48</sup>

The logic behind having Canadian Rangers purchase, maintain, and use their own environmentally appropriate clothing and equipment is poorly understood in broader military and public circles. Although southern Canadian media commentators often criticize the lack of pay, equipment, and clothing provided to Rangers compared to their Regular and Reserve Force counterparts, our conversations with Rangers confirmed that these critiques are generally ill-



informed or misplaced.<sup>49</sup> The diverse landscapes in which Rangers live and operate prescribe different equipment and clothing needs.

The Rangers are well known across the North for their “red hoodie,” and are also provided with t-shirts, ball caps, CADPAT (Canadian Disruptive Pattern) pants, military boots, and red jackets intended for use on Temporary Duty (TD), parades, and other ceremonial activities.<sup>50</sup> On operations, however, Rangers are expected to use their own environmentally appropriate clothing, which they deem best suited to local conditions, rather than being assigned standard military gear. Although some Rangers have asked 1 CRPG to issue winter parkas and boots to Rangers who do not have adequate clothing, this overlooks the requirement that Rangers be “self-sufficient” to operate on the land – a core ethos that has guided the Ranger organization since 1947. Furthermore, issuing, accounting for, maintaining, and replacing full outfits of military-issued clothing that is suited to diverse regions in the Territorial North, in all seasons, would impose an excessive logistical burden on 1 CRPG.

During training and official taskings, DND compensates Rangers when they use their own small-engine equipment (such as ice augers, chain saws, generators, and welding machines) and vehicles (including snowmachines, all-terrain vehicles/ATVs, dog teams, and boats) on duty according to a fixed equipment usage rate (EUR). Not only does this allow Rangers to identify and purchase appropriate equipment and tools suited to the area in which they live, but it also means that the military does not have to assume an unnecessarily high sustainment burden when it comes to maintaining equipment dispersed across sixty-five communities in the Territorial North and northern BC. During 1 CRPG leadership sessions, Rangers have raised questions about specific rates, and the appropriateness of having the same fixed rates applied across the territories (given cost-of-living differentials in communities with road access and those without).

In general, encouraging individuals to invest in their own, privately owned equipment (rather than government-owned assets) allows Rangers to procure appropriate vehicles and vessels to operate in their home environments while representing a material contribution to local capacity building. Providing Rangers with CAF-owned snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs/quads), and boats would not only add a tremendous logistical burden on the military, but it would also undermine the guiding philosophy that Rangers are best suited to make their own decisions about what they need to operate comfortably and effectively across diverse Northern environments. Asking the right questions is important. When Rangers are asked if they would like the military to give them vehicles and equipment, most will respond affirmatively. When Rangers are asked whether they would prefer being given equipment owned and maintained





by the military (with all the proverbial strings attached) or being provided EUR for use of their own equipment over which they retain full control while not on authorized Ranger training or operations, conversations during focus groups over the last two years (and my conversations with several hundred Rangers over the last two decades) confirm that the vast majority of Rangers support the latter option.

If a Canadian Ranger's equipment breaks during an approved operation or task, they are entitled to compensation for loss of or damage to personal property. As discussed in [the following chapter on individual resilience], the loss of access to vehicles and equipment can have a serious effect on a Ranger's ability to pursue a subsistence livelihood. Unfortunately, Rangers cited lengthy delays in getting reimbursed for damage claims as a regular and acute concern in the mid-2010s.<sup>51</sup> Reports from patrol commanders at the last two Ranger leadership meetings in Yellowknife in 2018 and 2019 suggest a marked improvement in the speed of processing damage claims, and it is essential that this responsiveness continues so that Rangers retain trust in a system that depends upon them being willing to use their own vehicles and equipment.

**Figure 11-1: Ombudsman Office: most common reasons for delays in reimbursement for loss and damage claims**

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**1) Lack of access in remote locations – particularly in those communities only accessible by air**

- Delay in Reporting: The Ranger will most likely experience a delay in reporting damage to personal equipment that occurs during an authorized activity when no military staff member is present.
- Delay in Obtaining Quotes: It is very challenging and takes an unreasonable amount of time for a Canadian Ranger to obtain quotes for damaged parts or equipment.
- Delay in Obtaining Signatures: There are instances when computers are not accessible. Claims must be filled out at headquarters and subsequently mailed – and sent back and forth to the community for the Canadian Ranger and then Commanding Officer’s signature or approval.
- Delay in Reimbursement(s): The lack of access to staff and to office locations can cause delays for Canadian Rangers seeking reimbursements.

**2) The issue of incomplete and/or inaccurately filled-out paperwork**

- Standard Operating Procedures: There is no standard operating procedure observed by all units for filling out and submitting claims.
- File Complexity: More complex claims may require further review, clarification, and additional signatures, by the different levels of the organisation

*Source:* Gary Walbourne, “Ombudsman Message: Rangers Loss Damage Claims,” 15 March 2017, <http://ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-news-events-messages/ombudsman-message-rangers.page>.

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## **11.8 Criteria for Success: Diversity**

... At the local level, individual patrols should be representative of their communities’ ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity. These are important considerations, given the Government of Canada’s strong focus on the centrality of Northern Indigenous leadership and the defence policy statement that “Indigenous communities are at the heart of Canada’s North” and that the military will “work to expand and deepen our extensive relationships with these communities, particularly through the Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers.”<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, it is relevant for 1 CRPG to assess how reflective Ranger membership is of local demographics.



Rates of female participation in the Rangers (and in elected leadership positions) are appropriate measures of CAF commitments “to gender equality and providing a work environment where women are welcomed, supported and respected.”<sup>53</sup> There were 408 female Rangers in 1 CRPG as of December 2016, representing 22.7% of the unit strength – a much higher percentage than in the Regular Force or Primary Reserves across the CAF (15%). Furthermore, 13.3% of patrol sergeants, 21.9% of master corporals, and 25.4% of corporals were women.<sup>54</sup> Building on this solid foundation, 1 CRPG should aspire to be a leader in gender balance in the CAF by seeking to increase the representation of women in the unit (and particularly in leadership positions) and by promoting the myriad contributions of female Rangers throughout the North.

During our focus group discussions, Rangers also highlighted the importance of developing and sharing knowledge and skills across the generations. Accordingly, analyzing the age profiles of the unit at territorial, regional/zone, and patrol levels can yield important insights into the “health” of patrols and the unit. The statistical profiles provided in a companion volume to this report provide examples of how data can be used to assess the demographic profiles of patrols and zones.



## 11.9 “Growing” the Number of Rangers as a Poor Metric of Success

DND’s *Defence Plan 2018-2023: Operationalizing Canada’s New Defence Policy* (2018) notes that the Canadian Army

will continue its review of the Canadian Rangers and enable growth as resources allow. The Canadian Rangers are integral to northern surveillance and regularly provide support to ground search and rescue. They are Canada’s eyes and ears in the sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada. In response to the Minister’s mandate letter, Defence will continue to focus on surveillance and control of Canadian territory, which includes *increasing the size of the Canadian Rangers as well as other capability enhancements*. [emphasis added]<sup>55</sup>

This return to language about increasing the size of the Canadian Rangers as a metric of enhanced capability is, in my view, a poor metric of gauging the “success” or “health” of the organization in the Territorial North. During the Defence Policy Review consultations in 2016, I provided a submission emphasizing:

Rather than expanding the number of Canadian Rangers (as suggested in the Minister’s mandate letter), resources should be allocated to increasing the number of Ranger Instructors and CRPG staff to support them. The recent expansion to 5000 Rangers across Canada has already over-stretched resources, and consolidating this previous growth by strengthening the CRPGs will improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the Rangers while improving the health and wellness of military members who support them.<sup>56</sup>

The logic flowed from observations during the previous round of Ranger expansion in the late 2000s, which had been driven by political considerations rather than any evidence-based calculations that more Rangers would improve the effectiveness of the organization. In a 2013 paper titled “If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Break It” (chapter 6 in this book), I summarized some of the tensions that flowed from the Harper government’s promise to expand the Canadian Rangers to an average paid strength of 5,000 members by fiscal year 2011-12.<sup>57</sup> “There is no evidence that increasing the Rangers’ size would have any effect on the Canadian Forces’ ability to fulfill its mission,” I noted. “Five thousand Rangers would not provide more security or more sovereignty than forty-two hundred Rangers. By championing Ranger expansion, however, the new government could claim an existing success story as its own.” Ultimately, the simplistic equation that “more is better” proved a poor substitute for a substantive, evidence-based appraisal of what size of Ranger presence, with what skills and training, would enable the CAF to achieve practical goals in the



North. Numeric growth does not mean greater effectiveness, even if it may hold political appeal as a simple way to indicate that a government is doing “more” than its predecessors. A lack of in-depth thinking and creativity about how DND/CAF resources could best be used to enhance Ranger effectiveness harmed the organization.

Ironically, despite the government’s strong focus on Arctic sovereignty and the political packaging of Ranger expansion as an Arctic security-bolstering initiative, 1 CRPG saw the smallest percentage of overall growth of patrol groups across the country. After all, the Rangers organization had a long-established, permanent footprint in every High Arctic community. This presence, coupled with simple demographics, limited expansion possibilities north of the treeline. ...

At the time, expansion plans met a mixed response at the 1 CRPG and patrol levels. ... In response to Ranger feedback, 1 CRPG Headquarters soon reversed its direction and stopped recruiting directly from Yellowknife. Furthermore, 1 CRPG resisted pressure from Ottawa to dramatically expand the number of Ranger positions and eventually settled on a more modest target of 1,800 Rangers in sixty patrols by 2012.<sup>58</sup> Although there is a wide discrepancy between the number of Rangers on the unit nominal rolls and the number of “active” Rangers (estimated at 1,350 in 2020), this should not be considered a “failure” on the part of patrols because of longstanding issues with releasing inactive Rangers, the high proportionate rates of Northern service in the Rangers, and demographics in individual communities.

In short, recent history, as well as conversations with Rangers over the past two years pursuant to this project, points to the dangers of increasing the authorized number of Rangers in 1 CRPG as a measure of “success.” The

Commanding Officer of 1 CRPG and other expert voices worked diligently to have the language in the Minister's 2015 mandate letter (which spoke of increasing "the size of the Canadian Rangers") adjusted to focus on an *expansion of capability*. The latter was reflected in the 2017 defence policy. Unfortunately, the recent retreat to the earlier language<sup>59</sup> may indicate a failure to understand the reasons behind the nuanced language in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* or a simple institutional laziness to develop more creative and appropriate ways to measure "enhance[d] and expand[ed] ... training and effectiveness of the Canadian Rangers." Arbitrarily seeking to increase the number of Rangers in 1 CRPG would place additional pressures on unit and patrol resources. While various CRPGs "south of 60" are requesting growth, we have found no indication that 1 CRPG has done so. Instead, ongoing efforts to process releases more efficiently and remove "non-effective Rangers" from 1 CRPG patrol nominal rolls (with the possibility of re-allocating positions from "under-strength" patrols to those with waiting lists of qualified applicants) represent a more appropriate goal. Our conversations with Rangers confirm an old assessment drawn by a CAF officer in the early postwar period: "having the right Rangers in the right locations, doing the right things, is more important than having more of them."<sup>60</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> LGen J.M.M. Hainse, Commander Canadian Army Master Implementation Directive (MID) Canadian Ranger Organization, 27 April 2015.

<sup>2</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "The Emerging Arctic Security Environment: Putting the Military in its (Whole of Government) Place," in *Whole of Government through an Arctic Lens*, eds. Lackenbauer and Heather Nicol (Antigonish: Mulroney Institute on Government, 2017), 1-36.

<sup>3</sup> See P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Vigilans: The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group* (Yellowknife: 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, 2015), and Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16/4 (2016): 7-66, <http://jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/view/615/pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> This section draws from Lackenbauer, "Arctic Defence and Security: International and Domestic Dimensions," submission to help frame the Defence Policy Review roundtable discussion in Yellowknife, May 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Defence Administration Order and Directive (DAOD) 2020-2 - Canadian Rangers, 21 May 2015, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-defence-admin-orders-directives-2000/2020-2.page>.

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<sup>6</sup> Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Ombudsman, *Report on the Canadian Rangers* (2017), 10, <http://ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-canadian-rangers-report/canadian-rangers-english.page>. On page 12, the report observes that “Canadian Rangers are not compelled to meet universality of service, but we found that, in the context in which they work, Canadian Rangers injured while practicing and maintaining Ranger-specific skills, without prior approval from the chain of command, would not be eligible for Canadian Armed Forces health care entitlements and related benefits.”

<sup>7</sup> DND/CAF Ombudsman, “Canadian Rangers Tasks and Operations” (2018), <http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-questions-complaints-helpful-information/ranger-tasking-methodology-post-department-review.page>. The Ombudsman Office explains that “most of the tasks assigned to Canadian Rangers result in short periods of Class “A” Reserve Service, but specific operations usually related to Search and Rescue can result in Class “C” Reserve Service” (with approval authority for Class “C” service resting with Commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command).

<sup>8</sup> Canadian Rangers Patrol Types Matrix for Operations and Employment, Annex A: Canadian Ranger Patrol Types Matrix.

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Joint Operations Command’s Commander’s Guidance – Force Employment of Canadian Rangers, 23 June 2014. The Canadian Rangers Patrol Types Matrix for Operations and Employment, Annex A: Canadian Ranger Patrol Types Matrix, Task & Pay Authority, Type 5, Domestic Operations, notes that Class “C” Reserve Service will always be considered for Canadian Rangers who participate in life and limb search and rescue operations, at the authority of the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC).

<sup>10</sup> LCol L.C. Carvallo, 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CRPG) Operating Plan Fiscal Year 2018-2019, 15 May 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Carvallo, 1 CRPG Operating Plan Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

<sup>12</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Individual Ranger Task Standards and Collective Ranger Task Standards, issued on the authority of CO 1 CRPG, effective 8 February 2018.

<sup>13</sup> The document notes that “not all standards are meant to be achieved on an annual basis, even if the standard is listed with a 12-month currency. The reality that we cannot achieve everything in one year is an accepted fact.”

<sup>14</sup> See also Canadian Ranger Handbook, chapter 10; Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada, Canadian Standards Association (CSA) 21620, *Core competency standards for ground search and rescue operations: Searcher, team leader, and SAR manager for Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) in Canada* (Ottawa: CSA, May 2015).

<sup>15</sup> See also Canadian Forces Joint Plan (CFJP) 3-2 Domestic Operations, Chapter 5, Section II - Humanitarian Assistance; CFJP 3-4.1 Humanitarian Operations and Disaster Relief Operations, Chapter 3, Section II - The CF and Disaster Relief Operations.

<sup>16</sup> Hainse, MID Canadian Ranger Organization.

<sup>17</sup> "Nunavut's Canadian Rangers lend a hand in military training exercise; "This [Arctic response] is our thing,"" *Nunatsiaq News*, 1 April 2015.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, DND News Release, "Canadian Army Deploys to the Arctic to Conduct Northern Exercise 2018 (NOREX 18)," 2 February 2018, [https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/news/2018/02/canadian\\_army\\_deploystothearctictoconductnorthernexercise2018nor.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/news/2018/02/canadian_army_deploystothearctictoconductnorthernexercise2018nor.html).

<sup>19</sup> Kirsten Fenn, "Joining forces," *News/North*, 31 July 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Yukon Quest, "Canadian Rangers Continue to Break Trail for Yukon Quest," 11 January 2018, <https://www.yukonquest.com/news/canadian-rangers-continue-break-trail-yukon-quest>.

<sup>21</sup> Steven Fouchar, "Canadian Rangers Ocean Watch program assisting Arctic research," *Canadian Army News*, 16 February 2018, <http://army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/news-publications/national-news-details-no-menu.page?doc=canadian-rangers-ocean-watch-program-assisting-arctic-research/jdooocbei>. Funding is cost captured against an interdepartmental agreement with the DFO.

<sup>22</sup> Focus group discussion, 1 CRPG Ranger Leadership Meeting, Yellowknife, 14 October 2018

<sup>23</sup> Carvallo, 1 CRPG Operating Plan Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Lackenbauer, *Vigilans*; Lackenbauer and Lajeunesse, "Emerging Arctic Security Environment"; and Adam Lajeunesse and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, eds., *Canadian Armed Forces Arctic Operations, 1945-2015: Historical and Contemporary Lessons Learned* (Fredericton: Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> DND, "Operation NANOOK," <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-nanook.html>. We do not discuss Ranger support to Operation Nevus, which undertakes annual maintenance on the High Arctic Data Communications System (HADCS) located on Ellesmere Island. In June-July 2019, for example, 1 CRPG provided two Rangers from Zone E to support this operation with local predator control.

<sup>26</sup> Derek Neary, "Preparations begin for large-scale military exercise," *Nunavut News*, 3 February 2018.

<sup>27</sup> "Protectors of the north," *Yellowknifer*, 16 March 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Joint Task Force North Facebook post, 18 March 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/FOIN.JTFN/photos/a.292768534133048/2807863752623501/?theater>.

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<sup>29</sup> DND, "Operation NANOOK."

<sup>30</sup> Yukon Government, "Operation NANOOK-TATIGIIT provides opportunity to practise emergency response," 23 May 2019, <https://yukon.ca/en/news/operation-nanook-tatigiit-provides-opportunity-practice-emergency-response>.

<sup>31</sup> Service Level Agreement between DAEPM(R&CS) and 1CRPG Concerning the North Warning System (NWS) Site Security Patrols, 19 December 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Lackenbauer, *Vigilans*, 71.

<sup>33</sup> This section is derived from Peter Kikkert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Bolstering Community-Based Marine Capabilities in the Canadian Arctic," *Canadian Naval Review* 15/2 (October 2019): 11-16, <http://www.navalreview.ca/wp-content/uploads/public/vol15num2/vol15num2art2.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Arctic, *Northern Lights: A Wake-Up Call for the Future of Canada* (June 2019), 108.

<sup>35</sup> Ed Zebedee (Director, Protection Services, Government of Nunavut) at the Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee, 26 February 2013, <https://openparliament.ca/committees/foreign-affairs/41-1/67/ed-zebedee-1/only/>.

<sup>36</sup> Bob Weber, "Clamp Down on Arctic Shipping, Beef Up Coast Guard Armament: Senate," *Waterloo Chronicle*, 14 December 2009.

<sup>37</sup> The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, Evidence, 15 February 2018, <https://sencanada.ca/en/Content/SEN/Committee/421/pofo/53827-e>.

<sup>38</sup> As the head of Arctic Security Consultants, Leblanc has provided services to Rosborough Boats, which specializes in small enforcement and patrol boats. See, for example, Pierre Leblanc, "Thinking Outside the Igloo?" *FrontLine Defence* 8/3 (2011), <https://defence.frontline.online/article/2011/3/1891-Thinking-Outside-the-Igloo%3F>; Leblanc, "Is the Arctic Focus Being Lost," *Hill Times*, 18 March 2013.

<sup>39</sup> See presentation, "Ranger Maritime Role Iqaluit July 2016," posted to Senator Patterson's personal website, <https://www.dennispatterson.ca/den>.

<sup>40</sup> Derek Neary, "Operation Nanook swings into high gear; Rangers will play key role," *Nunavut News*, 6 August 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Fouchard, "Canadian Rangers Ocean Watch program assisting Arctic research."

<sup>42</sup> DAOD 2020-2 - Canadian Rangers, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-2-canadian-rangers.html#pat>.

<sup>43</sup> Government of Canada Response to the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans: *Rising to the Arctic Challenge: Report on the Canadian Coast Guard* (October 2009), <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/reports-rapports/200910a-eng.htm>.

<sup>44</sup> Hainse, MID Canadian Ranger Organization.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen Harper, "Expanding Canadian Forces Operations in the Arctic," 10 August 2007, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1785>. The new equipment list

(scale of issue) includes duffel bags, ballistic eyewear, backpacks, and multi-tools. "Canadian Ranger Prioritized Individual Clothing and Equipment List as of October 24, 2007," Flag C, 22 October 2007, DND file 100001-1 (DGL Res Sec).

<sup>46</sup> Maj K. Sproule, "JTFC/LFCA Response: 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Enhancements" (April 2007), DND file 3121-2-1(J5 Ops). See also "New Equipment Will Soon Be Distributed," *Arctic Exposure: 1 CRPG Newsletter* (March 2010), 9.

<sup>47</sup> The replacement rifle is based on the SAKO T3 CTR (Compact Tactical Rifle), produced by a Finnish company, and Colt Canada will produce the barrel, bolt, and receiver for the new Ranger rifle under licence from Sako. Modifications for the Ranger pattern include a larger bolt handle and enlarged trigger guard to accommodate gloved hands, plus protected front and rear iron sights; orange or red colour with the Ranger crest; and a two-stage trigger with three-position safety. "Meet the Canadian Rangers' New Sako Rifle, Built to Defend Against Large Carnivores, Extreme Temperatures," *National Post*, 25 June 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Hainse, MID Canadian Ranger Organization.

<sup>49</sup> Although Rangers are not paid for their year-round service as "eyes and ears" on the land, Rangers are paid for force generation activities such as annual training patrols, local meetings, and leadership workshops, with an average of twelve paid days per year. Furthermore, they are paid when they participate in force employment activities such as Operations Nanook, Nunaliut, and Nunakput, as well as when they provide support to southern units on Northern training exercises (NOREXs) or are officially tasked to conduct search and rescue. Although the influx of several thousand dollars into a community at the end of a Ranger patrol or military exercise might appear paltry, this Ranger pay can constitute a substantive part of an Indigenous economy that balances short-term paid labour with traditional harvesting activities, thus supporting a social economy that does not conform to Western models.

<sup>50</sup> Hainse, MID Canadian Ranger Organization, 16: "The new CR distinctive uniform items (Jacket, Rain Jacket and Fleece) [are] for use when on Temporary Duty (TD), parade or in garrison."

<sup>51</sup> The Directorate of Compensation Benefits Administration office in Ottawa, which is responsible for reimbursing these claims, told the Ombudsman Office that "loss and damage claims are processed as quickly as possible once a complete claim is received. In 2016, the majority of claims were processed within 8.5 to 17 weeks." Gary Walbourne, "Ombudsman Message: Rangers Loss Damage Claims," 15 March 2017, <http://ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-news-events-messages/ombudsman-message-rangers.page>.

<sup>52</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 80, <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.



<sup>53</sup> DND, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 21.

<sup>54</sup> Statistics provided by 1 CRPG, November 2017.

<sup>55</sup> DND's *Defence Plan 2018-2023: Operationalizing Canada's New Defence Policy* (2018), <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/dnd-mdn/documents/reports/2018/defence-plan-2018-2023.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Lackenbauer, "Arctic Defence and Security."

<sup>57</sup> LGen M.J. Dumais, "Commander Canada Command Recommendation for the Expansion of Canadian Ranger Patrols," 20 March 2008, DND, Canada Command, f. 3440-2 (J3 Plans 7), referencing "VCDS Report on Plans and Priorities 07/08."

<sup>58</sup> BGen G.J.P. O'Brien, "Canadian Ranger Expansion Update," 20 April 2010, DND file 1920-1 (CRNA).

<sup>59</sup> For example, the *Defence Plan 2018-2023* directs that the Canadian Army "will continue its review of the Canadian Rangers and enable growth as resources allow," with continued "focus on surveillance and control of Canadian territory, which includes *increasing the size of the Canadian Rangers as well as other capability enhancements*" (italics added). <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/dnd-mdn/documents/reports/2018/defence-plan-2018-2023.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> Maj Jeff Allen, interview with author, Yellowknife, NWT, 13 June 2011.





# 12

## The Canadian Rangers and Individual Resilience

With Peter Kikkert

First published in *Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers* (report to the 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, released October 2020).

*People are at the core of everything the Canadian Armed Forces does to deliver on its mandate. As we look to the future, we will also refocus our efforts on ensuring the entire Defence team has the care, services and support it requires. Doing so will be central to attracting and retaining the people we need to keep Canada strong, secure, and engaged in the world. Investing in our people is the single most important commitment we can make.*

*Strong, Secure, Engaged* (2017)

When framing her 2017 report on Arctic leadership models, Mary Simon highlighted that the Canadian North continues “to exhibit among the worst national social indicators for basic wellness” and that, despite “all the hard-earned tools of empowerment, ... many individuals and families do not feel empowered and healthy.”<sup>1</sup> Many statistics bear out her observation about unacceptably poor living standards. For example:

- 50% of Inuit households do not have acceptable housing, and the incidence of core housing need in the Northwest Territories (NWT) is the second highest in Canada (with almost one in five households reporting the need for adequate, accessible, and affordable housing).
- There is almost a 10% gap between NWT residents and other Canadians with respect to their perceived health and mental health, with Indigenous populations reporting significantly poorer health and mental health.
- In 2019, Nunavut had the highest unemployment rate in Canada (13.4%) (while Yukon had the lowest at 3.6%).
- High rates of alcoholism, sexual and physical abuse including domestic violence, criminal incarceration, and suicide.

- In 2016, the tuberculosis rate amongst Inuit was over 290 times higher than that amongst the Canadian-born non-Indigenous population.<sup>2</sup>

As a 2017 study by the Conference Board of Canada on “How Canada Performs” observed, the territories generally fall behind the Canadian average on measures of equity (e.g., poverty, income distribution, gender and racial wage gaps) and social cohesion (e.g., unemployment rate, homicides, suicides).<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps counterintuitively, the Arctic Social Indicators (ASI) project, completed under the auspices of the Arctic Council, discovered that, despite the relatively low score on measures such as the United Nations Human Development Index (UNHDI), many individuals in the Circumpolar North exhibit a strong sense of well-being.<sup>4</sup> To better understand Northerners’ sense of well-being, the *Arctic Human Development Report* (AHDR) is intended to highlight “dimensions of human well-being that are not prominent in mainstream discussions of this topic,” and it emphasizes the need to develop a system for tracking trends in human development in the Arctic over time, through the identification of a set of indicators.<sup>5</sup> Alongside well-established

As Arctic groups adapt, they have indicated that the viability of their communities relies on, or at least is much enhanced by, having control over their own fate, sustaining contact with nature, and retaining their cultural identity.

*Arctic Human Development Report* (2004), 240.

UNHDI measures related to material well-being, health, and education, the report identified three additional domains: fate control, cultural well-being and vitality, and contact with nature. These six domains were further articulated in the ASI report published in 2010, which sought to facilitate an analytical approach “that is broad and inclusive while remaining manageable.”<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, we adopt and apply the ASI framework to the Canadian Rangers in 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (CRPG) as a means of analyzing individual resilience, with well-being indicators grouped into six broad domains:

- Material well-being
- Health
- Education
- Cultural well-being and cultural vitality
- Fate control
- Contact with nature

Our analysis reinforces that these domains are neither mutually exclusive (there is extensive overlap) nor exhaustive in capturing the many forms of individual resilience articulated by the Rangers. Nevertheless, the ASI framework strikes an appropriate balance “between the analytic attractions of relying on a single indicator and the temptation to introduce a large number of indicators in the interests of developing a more accurate picture of complex and multi-dimensional phenomena.”<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, we base most of our analysis on discussions with Canadian Rangers through focus group discussions at the 1 CRPG Ranger leadership meeting in Yellowknife on 14 October 2018 and the Junior Canadian Ranger leadership meeting on 18 January 2019, as well as visits to Ranger patrols in the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut by Kikkert and/or Lackenbauer in April 2019, October 2019, and January 2020.

Human development is extraordinarily complex. To document all its facets would be impossibly complicated, time-consuming, and costly. Even a single domain (or category for the construction of indicators), such as education or health, has countless aspects that could be measured. A pragmatic approach is to choose a small, representative set of indicators for key domains, to track over time and across space. Such indicators condense real-life complexity into a manageable amount of meaningful information. They are proxy measures, used to infer the condition and, over time, the trends in a system.

*Arctic Social Indicators (ASI)*  
report (2010), 23.

## 12.1 Definitions and Key Themes

Individual resilience, sometimes known as psychological resilience, is a contested term with different definitions, no clear consensus on measurement, and questions about its conceptual usefulness.<sup>8</sup> There is concern, for instance, that the focus on individual resilience and those who possess its traits could stigmatize those deemed “non-resilient” who struggle to cope. Nevertheless, the American Psychological Association embraces the concept, defining resiliency as “a process of adapting well when encountering adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress including workplace, family and relationship stress.”<sup>9</sup> The Preventing Violence Across the Lifespan Research Network (PReVAiL) (an international research collaboration funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research’s Institute of Gender and Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada) defines resilience as “a dynamic process in which psychological, social, environmental, and biological factors interact to enable an individual at any stage of life to develop, maintain, or regain their mental health despite exposure to adversity.”<sup>10</sup> This definition captures the

dynamic nature of individual resilience, which can be acquired, lost, and regained, and which is influenced by multiple factors.<sup>11</sup>

Resilience is “ordinary, not extraordinary.”<sup>12</sup> People demonstrate resilience all the time. Psychological characteristics that have been tied to resiliency in the face of stress or adversity are adaptability and flexibility, a positive outlook, openness to experience, emotional stability, self-esteem, coping by humour, problem solving, planning and decision-making, communication skills, hope, creativity, and goal orientation. Social or group characteristics tied to resiliency include close relationships with family and friends, social networks, community engagement, and social support that can provide tangible assistance, advice, and emotional support. The research on individual resilience highlights the importance of supportive and caring relationships that an individual can draw upon, which provide love and trust, offer positive role models, and

“Resilience is the capacity of an individual or a group to remain operationally effective despite adversity and potential traumatic events. Resilience includes the physical and psychological ability to cope with, recover quickly from, and potentially thrive in, challenging environments.”

Canadian Army, *Leader’s Guide to Readiness and Resilience* (2015)

serve as a source of encouragement and reassurance. Resilience-building initiatives focus on helping people make connections, improve their self-esteem, embrace a positive outlook, and develop strategies on how to navigate problems, accept change, set goals, and learn from past issues, challenges, and/or failures.<sup>13</sup>

The approach of the Canadian Armed Forces to individual or psychological resilience mirrors the basic definitions and highlights many of the characteristics listed above. The Canadian Army’s *Mission: Ready – Leader’s Guide to Readiness and Resilience* defines resilience as “the capacity of an individual or a group to remain operationally effective despite adversity and potential traumatic events. Resilience includes the physical and psychological ability to cope with, recover quickly from, and potentially thrive in, challenging environments. Resilience applies in garrison, in training, during operational deployments and in an individual’s personal life.”<sup>14</sup> The Army’s *Leader’s Guide to Resilience* emphasizes individual, family, unit, and community factors that affect resilience:

- **Individual-level Factors** that affect resilience include skills such as using positive coping (e.g. active, problem-focused or spiritual approaches); maintaining a positive affect and thinking; having



realistic expectation, self-esteem and self-efficacy; maintaining behavioural control; regular physical fitness; and being altruist.

- **Family-level factors** that can impact resilience include the establishment of close emotional ties; communication skills to facilitate exchange of thoughts, opinions, or information, problem-solving and relationship; support, closeness, nurturing and parenting skills, and adaptability to the changes associated with Army life.
- **Unit-level Factors** that can impact resilience include a positive command climate which facilitates interactions, builds pride/support for the [Canadian Army], unit and mission, where leadership provides positive role-modeling, and teamwork and cohesion are promoted in order to sustain commitment to each other, the mission, military ethos.
- **Community-level Factors** that can have an impact on resilience include the development of a sense of belongingness which includes participation in spiritual/faith-based organizations, social groups; building community bonds and connectedness and a perception of collective efficacy.<sup>15</sup>

The Army gauges resilience through six “domains” (physical fitness, emotional fitness, social fitness, spiritual fitness, intellectual fitness, and familial fitness), each of which has a set of key performance indicators.

We do not attempt to formally assess each of the Army’s performance criteria for their Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+)/cultural suitability or their applicability to the Rangers as a distinct subcomponent of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Reserves. For example, unlike Regular and Primary Reserve Force members, Rangers are exempted from meeting the minimum operational standards related to universality of service, including the operational standard for physical fitness.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the application of common physical fitness criteria to individual Rangers is questionable, given their unique terms of service, wide age profile, and determinants of health in Northern Canada. Other domains resonate with our conversation with Rangers, such as an emphasis on familial health. For example, Ranger participants in one focus group emphasized how family ties reinforce a feeling of unconditional acceptance and belonging, which draws people back to remote communities. Furthermore, there are many situations where multiple family members (grandparents, partners, siblings, children) are active in the Canadian Rangers, as well as many examples where youth are “brought up” through the Junior Canadian Rangers (JCRs) and, in time, become Rangers. The spiritual fitness performance measures (see **Table 12.1**) also appear to resonate across ethno-cultural and gender lines, although a formal study of the applicability of these

Army readiness and resilience factors to the Canadian Rangers would be required to draw any firm conclusions.

**Table 12.1: Spiritual Fitness Performance Continuum**

OPTIMAL	NORMAL	REDUCED	DISTRESSED
1. Engages with one's life's meaning and purpose.	Maintaining one's life's meaning and purpose.	Losing one's sense of life's meaning and purpose.	Believes life has no meaning or purpose.
2. Integrates morals, core values and beliefs.	Exploring morals, core values and beliefs.	Disregarding morals, core values and beliefs.	Abandons morals, core values and beliefs.
3. Hope-filled about life and future.	Maintaining a sense of hope about life and future.	Having very little hope about life and future.	Hopeless about life and future.
4. Able to forgive self and others.	Seeking to forgive self and others.	Unwilling to forgive self and others.	Unable to forgive self and others.
5. Recognizes and respects the value of others and diversity in beliefs.	Understanding of others and their beliefs.	Disregarding others and their beliefs.	Disrespectful of others and their beliefs.
6. Cultivates positive relationships and a sense of belonging.	Maintaining positive relationships and a sense of belonging.	Having few positive relationships and little sense of belonging.	Destroys relationships and isolates themselves.
7. Connected to one's world view and/or what one believes is Sacred.	Engaging with one's world view and/or what one believes is Sacred.	Disengaging with one's world view and/or what one believes is Sacred.	Disconnected from one's world view and/or what one believes is Sacred.

## 12.2 Health

As the ASI report notes, the concept of individual health includes both physical and mental conditions. When devising social indicators, measures usually reflect “the most tractable manifestations ... of physical ill health such as incident counts for specific kinds of illness, injury, or death.” Although assessing mental health is often more difficult than physical health, “observable proxies” include rates of suicide, teenage births, substance abuse, smoking, and crime (especially violence and domestic abuse). Other common measures include obesity, divorce rates, and school completion rates.<sup>17</sup> In a Canadian North context, however, applying many of these measures without cultural context can be problematic. Other health-relevant conditions include health infrastructure, sanitation, nutrition, behaviour, social problems, and disease.

Measuring the comparative health of Canadian Rangers to the general population, or even over the course of a Ranger's service, is complicated on various levels. First, Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) 5002-1 states that, upon enrolment, a Canadian Ranger must be physically and



psychologically fit to perform foreseeable duties, and that a medical examination is not required.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, because Rangers are not subjected to standardized individual health checks upon enrolment (as are other members of the CAF), there is no formal benchmark against which to assess or monitor their comparative fitness and health during their service. The measure of “physically able to continue performing their duties” is subjective, granting flexibility to individual Rangers, patrols, and 1 CRPG to interpret as they see fit. Furthermore, unlike all other CAF members, there is no compulsory retirement age for Rangers. Accordingly, the imprecision around the idea that a Ranger can continue to serve as long as they are physically and mentally capable of doing so (and as long as their patrol agrees this is the case) allows for forms of service that accommodate different circumstances and the unique social and physical environments in which Rangers live and operate.

While systematic data on personal health and fitness could be collected from Rangers through self-assessments or the self-identification of specific health problems, we concur with the Department of National Defence (DND)/CAF Ombudsman that there is no need to formally assess or monitor the overall fitness of Rangers beyond the informal methods of monitoring that already exist at the patrol level. Many Rangers might perceive the formal collection of data on smoking, alcohol and drug consumption, rates of physical activity, and diet as intrusive and even offensive. Furthermore, as the Ombudsman reported:

Members of the chain of command and Canadian Rangers alike indicated that, while not a perfect system, the current practice with respect to the assessing and monitoring of Canadian Rangers’ fitness works well overall. The lack of formal monitoring, reporting mechanisms and tracking for health and fitness provides leadership with the flexibility to enrol and assign tasks to Canadian Rangers based on factors not limited to their physical abilities. The absence of a baseline medical assessment does not affect access to Canadian Armed Forces health care entitlements or related benefits: eligibility is solely determined by [the] type of service being performed at the time of illness or injury, and not by the pre-existing state of [a] Canadian Ranger’s health.<sup>19</sup>

Accordingly, we do not recommend trying to systematically collect Ranger-specific health data for the purposes of measuring organizational “success.” Instead, 1 CRPG staff and Ranger Instructors should have a strong awareness of health indicators (including the social determinants of health) at the territorial and community levels that are available through existing government and academic population surveys when they are making decisions that affect individual Rangers.

**Ombudsman's Office Recommendations to the DND/CAF:**

**Recommendation 1:** eliminate ambiguity and inconsistency in language in the policy framework for Reservists, with a focus on health care entitlements....

**Recommendation 2:** ensure compliance with the existing illness and injury reporting process so that Canadian Rangers are not inadvertently barred from accessing their health care entitlements and related benefits.

**Recommendation 3:** ensure the delivery of health care to Canadian Rangers to which they are entitled by:

3.1 Engaging with Canadian Rangers with the view of identifying the barriers to their access to Canadian Armed Forces health care, and their health care needs within their social and cultural contexts.

3.2 Identifying and implementing a service delivery model for Canadian Armed Forces health care that is responsive to the identified needs of the Canadian Rangers.

**Recommendation 4:** take concrete steps to ensure Canadian Rangers have a clear understanding of the importance of reporting injuries, and to improve their knowledge and awareness of the health care entitlements and related benefits available to them by:

4.1 Amalgamating information on Canadian Ranger health care entitlements and related benefits; distributing this information to Canadian Rangers in various languages and formats as necessary...

4.2 Ensuring that this information is integrated into formal and any other relevant training offered to the Canadian Rangers....

The CAF is responsible for providing health care to a Canadian Ranger when an illness or injury is attributable to his/her military service. In 2016, the Office of the DND/CAF Ombudsman conducted a systemic investigation into Canadian Rangers' access to health care entitlements and related benefits. This study uncovered various concerns about the lack of medical examinations for Rangers prior to enrolment, the lack of awareness amongst Rangers about their entitlement to CAF health care treatment and employment benefits (including Veteran Affairs benefits for which Rangers injured on duty can submit claims), and a reticence of many Rangers to seek treatment at medical facilities outside of their communities. Furthermore, the Ombudsman report pointed out that "Canadian Rangers, similar to other Reservists, are failing to report or consistently track their illnesses and injuries." Reasons included underestimating the severity of the injury, fear that they would be removed

from participating in a particular activity, and fear of long-term career implications.<sup>20</sup>

... Ranger participation can influence individual decision-making and promote health and wellness. Ranger focus group participants highlighted that drugs, alcohol, and bullying are a major problem in almost every community in the North. Substance abuse is weakening individuals and, by extension, their communities. Rangers articulated the importance of more extensive and culturally appropriate educational programming on the harms of drug and alcohol abuse, as well as bullying, especially for youth. All participants suggested that these were major issues that need to be talked about more openly in their communities. One Ranger suggested that the problem did not stem from a lack of education about the harms caused by substance abuse, but rather poor education about how to cope with pain and sorrow, and “how to deal with reality.” Individuals need to be taught how to deal with their problems and to talk about their problems with people whom they trust. They need to be taught how to deal with challenges, because “life can be very hard and challenging for these kids and they need to be taught how to properly handle everything thrown at them.” Drugs and alcohol are the easy answer to some of these issues, and thus exacerbate health problems. As one Ranger explained, people need to be “given good medicine.”

The severity of mental health challenges in Arctic and Northern

Mental health and wellness include both the mental and emotional aspects of being - how you think and feel. Some signs of good mental health include:

- knowing and taking pride in who you are
- enjoying life
- being able to form and maintain satisfying relationships
- coping with stress in a positive way
- striving to realize your potential
- having a sense of personal control

*Mental Health and Wellness in First Nations and Inuit Communities,*

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1576089278958/1576089333975>

communities was a common theme raised by Northerners at regional engagement sessions leading up to the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. This emphasis also reflects the high rates of trauma amongst Northern Indigenous populations, including those flowing from assimilation programs and other legacies of colonialism.<sup>21</sup> Ensuring that individual Rangers have access to appropriate mental health supports, particularly after traumatic searches, accidents, or incidents, is important. The DND/CAF Ombudsman report conceded that:

Members of the chain of command and the Canadian Ranger community alike identified access to mental health services as problematic. The majority of the commanding officers interviewed recommended a review of the delivery of mental health services in this regard. In their support of Canadian Armed Forces operations, Canadian Rangers can be exposed to traumatic situations (for example, on Search and Rescue operations), and one senior leader stressed that “we need to have something in place to help them.” The greatest challenge raised with respect to mental health was the lack of access to psychological support services within isolated and remote communities. Indeed, many national psychological service providers might not understand the context within which the Canadian Rangers work and live.<sup>22</sup>

Several Rangers emphasized similar points during conversations at the patrol level and during the Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue held in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, in early 2020.<sup>23</sup>

Unacceptably high suicide rates in Canada’s Territorial North also have an impact on the Rangers, both directly and indirectly. Tremendous effort has been placed on identifying and addressing complex risk and protective factors to reduce suicide in the region. For example, the *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy* sets out a series of actions and interventions to address the high number of deaths by suicide among Inuit.<sup>24</sup> There is no evidence indicating that stresses related to Ranger service have any correlation with suicides, and some observers suggest that more military-supported activities, providing Northerners with a sense of purpose and self-worth, might actually play a positive role in reducing suicide rates. All of this remains speculative without more analysis. A specific study consolidating the extensive research that has been conducted on suicide in Northern communities, and mapping where the Rangers organization (and the JCR program) can contribute to developing individual resilience and prevention, may be appropriate.

### 12.3 Material Well-Being

The ASI report defines material well-being in an Arctic context “as some measure of local residents’ command over goods and services. That is, material well-being is not happiness or general wellbeing, but in its strict sense ‘material.’ It is a measure of what is consumed, not what is produced.”<sup>25</sup> Rather than adopting this rather abstract and amorphous definition, for the purposes of this report we focus more narrowly on Ranger contributions to material well-being in terms of the Arctic economy, paid income, and access to equipment that enables subsistence activities.



In general terms, the importance of the subsistence or traditional economy (which intersects with the conservation economy described in Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework), as well as the high rates of transfers from the federal government to the territorial governments and Indigenous governments, differentiate the economies of Canada's Northern territories from those of Canada's provinces. Eminent political scientist Oran Young notes that:

Economic conditions in the Arctic present a paradox that has important implications for human development. In terms of GDP [(gross domestic product)] per capita, the Arctic has experienced considerable growth in recent decades. Yet Arctic economies are narrowly based and subject to great fluctuations driven largely by outside forces. In much of the Arctic, there is a dual economy in which one component is heavily based on extractive industries generating income and rents that tend to flow out of the Arctic and the other component primarily features a combination of subsistence activities and transfer payments from higher levels of government. The resultant dependence of Arctic communities makes it hard for individuals to sustain a sense of control over their own destinies. Increasing numbers of Arctic residents have come to depend on relatively low level jobs in volatile extractive industries and on transfer payments provided by outsiders....<sup>26</sup>

These observations are reflected in Canada's Northern territories, and particularly outside of urban centres. There is no single Northern Canadian economy, however, and variations across regions and communities complicate the task of devising appropriate indicators of material well-being that apply to Rangers across 1 CRPG. Furthermore, decision-makers must factor in the high rates of social assistance, poverty, and food insecurity in parts of the Canadian North.

For Rangers with wage employment jobs, Ranger pay enhances their material well-being as supplemental income, the equipment usage rate (EUR) provides money to reinvest in equipment, and access to a Ranger rifle and an annual allotment of ammunition provides protection on the land and can support hunting. In areas with high wage employment rates (such as communities with ready access to jobs in the mining, forestry, or public sectors), Ranger activities must be scheduled well in advance and timed, where possible, to not compete with a Ranger's other job (or giving them sufficient notice to secure leave from it). In these cases, the military's efforts to reach out to employers and secure Rangers adequate leave and job protection as Reservists<sup>27</sup> is highly relevant to an individual Ranger's material well-being, particularly when Ranger pay is often much lower per day than what these individuals earn in their full-time jobs.

For Rangers who do not have permanent wage employment (including those who are involved in the "informal," subsistence/traditional economy on a full-time basis), Ranger pay and reimbursements for the use of their personal equipment (discussed below) can represent a significant contribution to or proportion of their annual income. During our focus groups, some Rangers explicitly noted that the payment they receive for annual training or for going on a Type 2 represents a vital supplement to their income. For example, the Taloyoak Ranger Patrol highlighted the high unemployment rate in their community and the positive impact that Ranger pay had on members of the patrol and their families. "When we get paid as Rangers, we spend this money in the community, it stays in the community," explained one Ranger. "We spend it on hunting and fishing gear, which we will use to get food, which we

Subsistence activity can be described as local production for local consumption. A significant number of indigenous people throughout the Arctic continue to depend largely on harvesting and the use of living terrestrial, marine, and freshwater resources. Many of these resources are used as food and for clothing and other products. They also figure prominently in the cash economy of local households and communities.

*Arctic Social Indicators*  
(2010), 51.



feed to our families and the community. This money is important.”<sup>28</sup> During the focus group meetings, many Rangers noted the high costs of purchasing and maintaining vehicles and tools needed to hunt and fish to provide for their families and their communities.

Rangers emphasized the benefits of receiving money for the use of personal equipment and vehicles that they can use to (re)invest in new equipment. As noted elsewhere in this report, Rangers are paid for the use of their own equipment and vehicles such as snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs/quads), and boats during training and official taskings according to an established equipment usage rate (EUR). This arrangement provides Rangers with tax-free reimbursements that they can invest in their own equipment and tools, appropriate to their local environment, which they can then use in their everyday lives without having to ask the government for permission to do so. By allowing individuals to invest in their own, privately owned equipment, this approach represents a material contribution to capacity building. “There is lots more equipment in our community because of EUR,” one Ranger sergeant observed. “This equipment is used for SAR, hunting, and First Nations events, not just Ranger activities.”

If a Canadian Ranger’s equipment breaks during an approved operation or task, they are entitled to compensation for loss of or damage to personal property. Because of the various factors described in the previous paragraphs, delays in reimbursing Ranger claims for loss of or damage to personal equipment can have strong implications. While snowmobiles, ATVs/quads, boats, and trailers are often seen as “pleasure” vehicles in southern Canada, they



represent essential means of transportation for many Northerners, especially those living outside of urban areas. Accordingly, loss of access to vehicles and equipment can have a serious effect on a Ranger's ability to pursue a subsistence livelihood or feed her/his family, and can reverberate throughout communities where country food is shared widely. Given the high rates of unemployment, low per capita incomes of Indigenous Northerners, high costs of living, and limited local access to replacement parts (which have to be ordered in), a Ranger may not be able to afford to fix damaged equipment until they receive reimbursement.

During a focus group meeting in Cambridge Bay, Ranger patrol members also emphasized the enduring value of the annual allotment of ammunition that they receive as individual Rangers (which they can use for personal hunting and target practice), as well as the opportunities that they have to practice their shooting as Rangers. "Being a Ranger has helped me to shoot better, which has helped me to hunt better," one participant explained. This is an enduring theme, with Rangers often highlighting the value of having Ranger Instructors offer them advice on how to improve their marksmanship, fix their sights, and replace damaged weapons. There are also early indications that some Rangers have found the new C-19 rifle less robust and reliable than the .303 Lee Enfield Mark 4, which they had been issued since the late 1940s.<sup>29</sup> In this sense, considering a trusted Ranger-issue rifle as an indicator of individual resilience makes it important to carefully monitor the confidence that Rangers have in the C-19.

## **12.4 Education**

Mary Simon's 2017 report outlining *A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model* called upon the federal government to make education "the cornerstone of the Arctic Policy Framework as the key to healthy people and social and economic progress," building upon her decades of advocacy for more culturally relevant, adaptive, and flexible Inuit education. "Improving educational outcomes in the Arctic and supporting Indigenous languages to survive and thrive after years of destructive education policy is, at its core, the highest test of nation building," she suggested. Her recommendations focused on schooling for youth, Indigenous-language teaching, skills training policies and programs dedicated to the Arctic, and an Arctic university. These reflect conventional definitions of school-based education and skills training for wage employment for which standard measures (such as the proportion of students pursuing secondary diplomas/post-secondary degrees and completing their education) might be adequate to gauge "success."



Canadian Rangers in 1 CRPG have a wide range of formal schooling levels, from limited elementary schooling to graduate university degrees. In our research, we found no direct correlation between formal education levels and the ability to contribute meaningfully and substantively as a Ranger, given the diverse forms that Ranger service can take. In short, more formal education does not inherently make someone a better Ranger. Some Rangers within each patrol must be able to communicate with 1 CRPG headquarters using email and other technology, and some individuals must be able to fill out and submit forms in English to get pay and EUR for their Rangers. Not every individual Ranger needs to have a high degree of competency and comfort in writing, reading, or speaking multiple languages. In short, most conventional metrics of education have little applicability for measuring “Ranger success.”<sup>30</sup>

Expanding the definition from “formal” schooling to the benefits that individuals accrue from the “on-the-land” education provided through Ranger activities encourages a different set of metrics. [As other chapters have discussed,] the Rangers act as a valuable conduit for cultural teachings and the transfer of land-based knowledge. One focus group participant explained that the absence of the Rangers “would accelerate the loss of traditional knowledge because people would not be out on the land as much as they are as Rangers.” He described his patrol as the “vanguard” of keeping traditional skills alive and in “sharpening the axe” by ensuring that land skills are passed down from generation to generation. As an example, one Ranger highlighted an igloo-building activity between Rangers from Pangnirtung and Qikiqtarjuaq during Exercise Ki Tit Tut (conducted to practice Ranger skills in a winter environment and to develop interoperability amongst patrols and with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) on Baffin Island) in 2017. Lackenbauer has observed countless examples of practices over the last two decades that encourage the sharing of skills within and across Northern cultures, both inculcating pride in



local and traditional knowledge and skills and representing a form of adult education or life-long learning.

During an April 2019 visit to the Kitikmeot region, Rangers in the Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak, Cambridge Bay, and Kugluktuk patrols placed a strong emphasis on the sharing and transmission of traditional knowledge/skills. A Ranger patrol facilitates this process by bringing different generations together to learn from one another, and by providing the opportunity to get out on the land as a group. In Taloyoak, a Ranger noted: "Without the Rangers, a lot of these young guys wouldn't get the chance to learn from some of the older ones who are really good on the land. Years ago, these older guys would have shared their skills with everyone, passed along their knowledge, but they have less of a chance to do that these days. The Rangers lets them pass along all of this to the younger people, who will then be able to pass it along to the next generation, and then to generations down the line." Another Ranger explained: "In my culture, you don't just teach people, you watch and learn. You watch a camp being set up and then you set it up. You watch a kamotik being built and then you build one. You need to learn through action. The Ranger patrol gives us the chance to do this."

The Ranger organization provides individuals with access to leaders with other skill sets *and the opportunity to develop them*. Various Ranger leaders expressed frustration or concern that they were "not getting challenged enough in recent years." Examples included the arbitrary imposition of a 100-km geographical restriction on community-based training, which some patrol commanders believed "hindered our ability to keep Rangers engaged."<sup>31</sup> During our Kitikmeot outreach trip, Rangers in each community insisted that they want more training opportunities and want Ranger Instructors to "push" them more during annual patrols, insisting that they not be "held back." In Gjoa Haven, a Ranger commented that, in the past, Ranger Instructors seemed to care more and tried to teach the patrol more. He explained that there would be an audience for whatever training 1 CRPG chose to provide to the patrols, but that Rangers would particularly like training in first aid, search and rescue (SAR), and airstrip construction (all of which Rangers had applied in real-life SAR situations). In Taloyoak, the Rangers commented on how much they appreciated their Ranger training, but they complained that the time is often too short to learn skills such as first aid and GPS. Members of the Kugluktuk and Gjoa Haven patrols suggested that the Instructors did not provide as much instruction and training as they used to. Furthermore, sometimes the training was out of order or did not make sense, Roger Hitkolok explained. "You need to know a lot of things before learning other things."<sup>32</sup>

## 12.5 Contact with Nature

The ASI report notes that Arctic residents often assert their connection to the land as a key element of well-being. “This well-being includes both the physical dimension of harvesting country food and recreational activities,” it highlights, “and the more cultural and spiritual elements of communing with nature while pursuing such activities.”<sup>33</sup> Most Rangers’ stories are about experiences “on the land,” whether epic trips by snowmachine or dog sled, encounters with polar bears or other animals, survival stories, or recollections about traditional forms of life and subsistence. For Rangers, time on the land is more than simply travelling to new places, improving their navigation skills and marksmanship, or harvesting food to feed themselves and their families (with the military footing the bill). It is also about social connections, a sense of identity, and spiritual replenishment. As a Ranger once told Lackenbauer, what binds the diverse organization is a “common love for the land” – an emotional attachment that can mean different things to different people, but is inextricably tied to a sense of place.

By encouraging individuals to go out on the land, patrol areas around their communities, and exercise their skills, Ranger service reinforces individual resilience, situated knowledge, and connectedness to place. “Town life has made things very easy in some ways,” one Ranger explained. “We have furnaces, running water, indoor plumbing, grocery stores – things are so easy, that we very easily lose some of our strength.” During the focus group, most of the Rangers around the circle agreed with this statement. In town, it is easy to grow

“As an Inuk, I go out on the land – returning home, I feel more healthy.”

Ranger at the 1 CRPG JCR Patrol  
Commander Leadership Meeting,  
Yellowknife, 18 January 2019

complacent and to lose the strength and ability that parents and grandparents once exuded. “Once that strength is gone it can be hard to get it back.” Rangers highlighted that this made getting out on the land so important, especially for youth. Being out on the land “is so different from town life,” one Ranger explained. “It is about survival. Nothing is easy, at least not without practice. This is a good way to help a person grow strong.” Individuals need that strength to overcome adversity and to succeed.

While discussing the importance of culture and traditional knowledge, for example, participants in one focus group stressed the value of spontaneity and flexibility. People need to be able to “react to the land” immediately and effectively, one Ranger explained. If caribou or other game are spotted, people need to be able to go out and catch them at a moment’s notice. This requires



experience, skill, and a level of comfort that only comes from time spent on the land practicing the essential skills. It also requires that a person have ready access to equipment at a moment's notice. Through the Canadian Rangers (and the Junior Canadian Ranger program), people develop skills, build confidence, and acquire and maintain equipment so that they are prepared for immediate action. One participant noted that this ability to be "spontaneous" can also save lives in emergency situations, such as a fire or a flood, and that the Rangers should encourage and sustain this "mindset."<sup>34</sup>

Many Rangers highlighted that culture, tradition, and time on the land are especially important for youth (which includes young adults serving in the Rangers). They need to travel to camps, hunt, and fish. They need to be taken out of the town setting on a regular basis and given the opportunity to experience their traditions and culture. In the town, they regularly confront drugs and alcohol, bullying, and boredom. Many Rangers suggested that youth are too attached to their phones, to Facebook, and social media, which is unhealthy. They need to get out on the land and away from the technology that often leads to destructive behaviour. As one Ranger put it, youth need to be "brought out of service" and onto the land where they can participate in healthy activities.

## **12.6 Cultural Well-Being and Cultural Vitality**

A sense of cultural well-being and vitality is connected to a notion of belonging, of feeling comfortable living in a community and region, and of being accepted for one's sense of identity. Individual Rangers must feel that

they are free to practice and celebrate their cultural traditions, beliefs, and values. In turn, a sense of cultural security or well-being allows them to acknowledge and respect cultural differences in others. The notion that Rangers are “trained upon enrolment,” and that the military values the cultural knowledge and training that they bring with them, serves as a source of positive affirmation of their identities. Previous chapters provided various examples of how Rangers reinforce collective and community resilience that build upon that of individual members. By enhancing the intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge, facilitating access to cultural networks that allow individuals to gain on-the-land experience in their local environments, and providing material supports to land-based activities, Ranger service can support and enhance cultural well-being and vitality.

Ranger participants in all of the focus groups emphasized that culture and traditional and local knowledge are at the foundation of a strong and healthy community. Northerners need to get out on the land and spend a lot of time on the land. They need to practice skills that allow them to survive and thrive on the land – such as hunting, fishing, trapping, sewing, and building shelter. They need to hunt and eat country foods, and they need the opportunity to share that food with Elders and other community members. Whenever they can (and especially when on the land), Rangers emphasized that Indigenous people should be encouraged to speak their traditional languages. They need to listen and learn from the stories of their Elders. A person needs all these things to be strong, positive, and healthy.

The Canadian Rangers organization is built around the idea that individuals who retain cultural autonomy (and are not assimilated into a military culture at the expense of their own) bring special skills and value to the Canadian Armed Forces. Given the diversity of the Territorial North, it is important that 1 CRPG adopt a general definition of culture that is not derived from a single cultural group or people. “A flexible, culturally-sensitive approach and a willingness to become acclimatized to the ways of diverse groups of people are ... essential,” Lackenbauer observed in a 2006 article framing the Rangers as a “post-modern” military organization predicated on inclusiveness and acceptance. “Most Instructors stress that mutual learning, credibility and trust are crucial to effective relationships with patrols.”<sup>35</sup> Rangers and Ranger Instructors regularly highlight how training frameworks that accommodate different forms of delivery, and that are attuned to diverse audiences, are more effective than a standardized curriculum delivered as it is to other CAF audiences. As Magali Vullierme highlighted in a recent study, Northern communities’ active support of the Canadian Rangers and the JCR program



In Kugluktuk, Ranger Sergeant Roger Hitkolok (who has been a sergeant for two decades) also highlighted the role of the Rangers in teaching the younger generations how to function on the land, but also how to function within society. He emphasizes his role as a trainer of the Rangers in his patrol.

- “We have people in the patrol who are very good, and some who need more experience. Some have forgotten how to build an igloo or that you can survive off caribou skin if you have to. You need to give the Rangers a hard time sometimes, make them practice in weather or land they aren’t used to, make them lead the patrol in bad weather. The people with a lot of time on the land train those who don’t have as much. Our young fellas know how to travel on the land, but sometimes they don’t know how to do it over long distances, and they lose their minds a little. I train them to listen to me and I put them through hard times. In a blizzard, I have told a Ranger he had to lead now, it’s up to him. This teaches them how to travel safely. When the Ranger did this in the blizzard, he came back and told me, ‘I feel so good.’ Only way for them to learn, is to make them lead. It can’t be the same people all the time, everyone, men and ladies, have to lead. We use our GPS all the time, and it helps, but we have to rely on our traditional knowledge – it is what lets us travel safely. Snow drifts don’t lie – and so this is why I teach the Rangers the traditional ways. I teach my Rangers to constantly be on the watch, it is the only way to be safe here. So I give them a hard time a little bit, because sometimes it is hard up here.”
- “When we do activities in the community, I teach the Rangers to be respectful. They need to lead in community events. Be respectful always. At the Remembrance Day event, I tell them not to laugh or joke, need to be respectful.”
- “I meet with my corporals all the time, and we talk about things. I prepare them for when I am away. I meet with my MCpl every other day just to chat about things.”
- “We try to do things the right way. Sometimes we as a patrol have to make changes. We have to change how we do things. We have to get all of the Rangers together because we can’t change things ourselves. We try to get everyone to understand and agree.”
- “We train people ourselves, that is important. Even the young JCR. We make them look for things on the land, let them do things on the land themselves. We make them find things, teach them how to use maps, not to rely on GPS. We teach them safe boating.”
- “I am always thinking of their safety. We have to do things right.”





reflects how Ranger service is seen as a way to reinforce agency rather than acting as a tool to assimilate Northerners into southern military norms.<sup>36</sup>

## 12.7 Fate Control

A person's sense of their ability to guide their own destiny, or "fate control," is an outcome of empowerment. Inuit leader Mary Simon, in proposing a new shared Arctic leadership model in 2017, noted that:

A significant number of conversations I had with leaders and other stakeholders [in Inuit Nunangat] circled back to a central premise: healthy, educated people are fundamental to a vision for sustainable development ... and fundamental to realizing the potential of land claims agreements, devolution and self-government agreements. While this may seem obvious, I kept returning to two vexing questions:

1. Why, in spite of substantive progress over the past 40 years, including remarkable achievements such as land claims agreements, Constitutional inclusion and precedent-setting



- court rulings, does the Arctic continue to exhibit among the worst national social indicators for basic wellness?
2. Why, with all the hard-earned tools of empowerment, do many individuals and families not feel empowered and healthy?<sup>37</sup>

This sense of empowerment and fate control is felt collectively and also by individuals who have confidence in their ability to make appropriate choices, act upon them, and realize desired outcomes.

The ASI report explains that Northerners “who feel they are unable to control their own destiny, whether political, economic or along other axes, also may feel anomie. Those feeling empowered to control their fate are more likely to take actions needed to better their situation.”<sup>38</sup> Extensive research shows how colonial and neo-colonial relations have eroded Northern Canadians’ sense of fate control.<sup>39</sup> While Canada has made significant advances in implementing innovative governance models at the local, Indigenous, and territorial levels that include land claim and self-government agreements and co-management regimes, many Northern Canadians still feel the impacts of externally-imposed control and reduced autonomy. “In small northern settlements, local people could not escape the impression that they were watching helplessly while things were being done around them and supposedly for them,” the ASI report summarized. “The feelings of estrangement caused by the loss of control over changes in turn contributed to the rise of social problems, such as suicide, violence, law-breaking, and alcohol abuse.”<sup>40</sup> The “by Northerners, for Northerners” mantra that animates the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework and many territorial and Indigenous government strategies reflects a deliberate focus on locally-adapted and locally-driven solutions rather than distant colonial ones.<sup>41</sup>

Ranger Sergeant John Mitchell of Dawson observed during Operation Kigiliqavik Ranger in 2002 that “the Rangers are one of the things that link the whole North.” During that same enhanced sovereignty patrol from Resolute to the Magnetic North Pole (close to Isachsen at that time), Sergeant Darrel Klemmer of Tulita explained that “[y]ou get 30 different Rangers together and they’ll have 60 different ways of doing the same thing. But we talk about our families and our communities and tell stories of the old ways.



Everybody has hunting in common.”<sup>42</sup> Lackenbauer has heard these ideas reiterated time and again over the past two decades – that, despite diverse backgrounds, Rangers are bound by a common “love for the land” and for their communities. Given the complexity of Northern issues, there can be no “one-size-fits-all” approach, and adaptability borne of experience and faith in one’s knowledge, judgment, and creativity in the face of adversity is essential.

Our discussions with Rangers confirm a strong sense of confidence that their service and skills are highly valued. Rangers in each of the patrols that we visited expressed a strong sentiment that Rangers recognize that they make important contributions to the safety and security of their communities, both as individuals and as a group. “Rangers are the eyes and ears of the military and of the people.... We protect our communities,” a patrol member in Taloyoak noted on 15 April 2019. Three days later, a Ranger in Cambridge Bay explained: “Going out with the Rangers, whether it be for annual training, or to check the DEW line [North Warning System] sites, lets us get out of the community and report on the changes, because there are a lot of changes happening, and people need to hear about them.” This provides collective benefits – and affirms an individual sense of purpose and fate control.

Early chapters have already covered various aspects of fate control. Rangers wield decision-making power in electing their own patrol leadership according to a decentralized model that affirms their suitability to determine who is best suited to lead their local patrol. Their ability to choose their own equipment and clothing also represents a form of fate control. The Army “can’t provide us with

“I joined the Rangers to give back to my community and to give back to Canada.”

Sergeant Jorgan Aitaok,  
Cambridge Bay Patrol, 18 April 2019





equipment,” a Ranger from Fort Simpson insisted. “We need to know our equipment, and work on it. You can’t just polish up your equipment and take it off the shelf once a year [to use]. Kinda like the Rangers. .... We are supposed to be lightly-equipped, and our furs are better than the stuff they give us anyway.” Rangers liked the flexibility to choose their own clothing to wear on the land, as well as personal equipment that was tried, tested, and true to local conditions.<sup>43</sup> As Northerners, Rangers also represent a functional ability to exercise control over local areas or homelands and to exercise their rights to land and sea resources. Because of their particular knowledge of local and region-specific conditions, they are considered “trained upon enrolment” to serve in and around their home communities – and are not trained to deploy overseas or elsewhere in Canada.

A Ranger’s resistance to proposed or imposed changes also can serve as an expression of fate control. As the ASI report notes, “in broad terms, resistance might be seen as an indicator of lack of control, or as an indicator of an incipient stage in the evolution of empowerment.”<sup>44</sup> In the past, for example, individual Rangers have responded to proposals to have the organization assume a more typical Primary Reserve combat-oriented role by threatening to resign. Furthermore, some Ranger patrol leaders are vocal in articulating critiques of problematic or unclear policies or practices at annual Ranger leadership meetings in Yellowknife and to Ranger Instructors who visit them at a local level. Forms of resistance include everything from threats to resign as Rangers if proposed actions are taken or enforced, refusal to go out on the land or conduct certain activities in conditions that they perceive as dangerous to Rangers

Derek Neary, "Ranger Ookookoo Quaraq has been protecting the land for 54 years," *Nunavut News North*, 23 August 2018.

Ookookoo Quaraq has never tired of search and rescue training exercises and teaching younger Rangers how to build iglus so they can survive on the land.

He's been doing it for 54 years.

There were few Nunavut Rangers in 1964 when Quaraq enlisted to help address the need, he says. He was around 20 years old at the time.

Since then, he's been on multiple patrols to the North Pole.

"He's very proud of going there three times," interpreter Christine Ootova says. "He went (one time) on a sunny day and he said it was quite an experience for him."

The number of exercises has increased, the amount of equipment has grown and the technological advances have been numerous over those 54 years, Quaraq acknowledges.

"He prefers it today," Ootova says after asking him if patrols are better than in the past. "Sometimes it's really hard but he still is a Ranger and he enjoys what he does."

Something else that has changed over the decades is the weather, sometimes making travel by snowmobile and all-terrain vehicles more perilous.

"Climate change has really affected the North. The ice is starting to freeze later than it used to before and it takes longer for the ice to freeze (in the fall) now because of climate change," says Quaraq. "Now it's unpredictable. One day it would be clear blue sky and then all of a sudden it will be windy... We used to have endless, beautiful blue sky in Pond Inlet, now it's cloudier than it used to be."

Despite the danger, he's never come close to losing his life on the land, he says. The worst he's suffered was an injured back when he fell off his snowmobile.

In addition to a Commissioner's long-service award, Quaraq has earned the Canadian Decoration (4th Clasp), Special Service Medal with Ranger Bar, Queens Diamond Jubilee Medal and the Canadian Forces Decoration, according to 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group.

How much longer will he serve?

"There were a couple of times that he wanted to retire but he knows so much about the land and survival skills and they need an elder to guide them," says Ootova. "He wants to continue being a Ranger but he's not sure how long."





or their personal equipment, or simply a quiet refusal to implement changes and instead “wait out” a Ranger Instructor or commanding officer in hopes that a successor will provide more satisfactory direction. Non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers in 1 CRPG should see these forms of resistance as expressions of concerns about priority issues that authorities must address. From an analytical point of view, these acts of “resistance” can serve as an indicator of fate control, either in terms of the perception that it is being threatened or as an assertion of control by an individual Ranger. Furthermore, Ranger “resistance” to proposed changes might be read as attempts to preserve the cultural integrity of the Ranger organization – particularly in a situation where a Ranger does not believe that a longstanding practice or relationship is “broken” but that, by changing it, someone may run the risk of straining or breaking proven ways of doing things.<sup>45</sup>

Assessing the “success” of the organization must also account for the intense pride that many Rangers feel in being associated with the organization and “wearing the Red Hoodie.” Examples abounded during the focus groups: the many Elders who continue to serve into their seventies and eighties; a Ranger who has terminal cancer but insists that he wants to be a Ranger until he dies; and the many Rangers who request to be buried in their Ranger uniforms. Given the pride associated with Ranger status, there is also consensus that longstanding Rangers should be formally recognized for their service when they release. One Ranger described them as “veterans who served their country but never went to war.” Another suggested that Rangers who retired after a long period of service could be conferred the status of



“Honorary Ranger” – a way to ensure that they are still recognized. As one patrol commander from the High Arctic noted, not all of the Rangers who released were old, “and it is a good idea to have something for them” to recognize their service.

Following frequent appeals by Canadian Rangers seeking recognition for fellow Rangers who decide to honourably release/retire from the unit, 1 CRPG has notified patrol leadership that it will support retiring Rangers with documentation associated with conventional CAF Depart with Dignity (DWD) practices effective 1 April 2020. Patrol leaders are expected to notify their Ranger Instructor when a Ranger has indicated their intention to release or retire, and the Instructor will request a unit certificate and, based on established military criteria, other certificates from senior military or government officials. These will be provided to the Ranger patrol to present to the retiring member, ideally by someone from 1 CRPG Headquarters to demonstrate the military's formal recognition and appreciation.

## 12.8 The Junior Canadian Rangers

*"The kids need people to look up to – role models – a lot, and they often look up to Rangers."*

- Canadian Ranger, Cambridge Bay, 18 April 2019.

During the focus groups, Rangers regularly referred to the need for self-reliant, respectful, confident, and responsible youths. "A strong community starts young," one participant concluded. Children and teenagers who have these traits will be stronger and healthier as individuals, which in turn makes the community stronger and healthier. Youth need access to programs that foster the development of these characteristics: traditional activities, sports, camps, and other recreational activities. Several participants also highlighted the benefits that come with travel to other communities and other parts of the country. This travel helps to build awareness, open new possibilities, and improve self-confidence and self-reliance. All of our discussions offered positive appraisals of the JCR program in fostering strong, healthy Northerners who contribute to their families, their communities, and their country. "These kids are the leaders of tomorrow," one Ranger sergeant explained, "so if we give them the right morals, they build community." Another Ranger described his pride in "watching JCRs buy their first firearm, going to hunt safely to take care of their family and to protect their hunting parties." The program is intended to provide social support to people learning to cope with and overcome stress and adversity in their lives by improving cultural connectedness, encouraging community involvement, and providing tools for young people to reach their goals.

Promoting Healthy and Safe Experiences (PHASE) training is a major component of the JCR Life Circle of Learning and has direct correlations to the healthiness of youth and their communities. It provides Rangers in leadership



positions vis-à-vis the JCR program with tools to talk about complicated and sensitive topics such as sexual harassment and abuse. PHASE training also helps leaders to know what to say when a young person approaches them with a difficult situation, and the curriculum is being updated to include topics such as cyber bullying, with which adult leadership may not have personal experience. This training also promotes healthy living amongst the JCR leadership, premised on the idea that healthy leaders are strong leaders. It also provides young people with access to support resources and adults outside their immediate family unit with whom they can speak and who can offer reassurance that they are not alone in dealing with their problems. Rangers also emphasized the importance of youth having access to an adult who they can trust. Accordingly, the JCR program must be measured on how it enhances youth resilience by promoting good physical and mental health, imparting life skills, and building social connections.

**JCR Program Values and Principles**

Inclusion	Understanding	Equality
Cooperation	Safety	Culture
Sharing	Openness	Tradition
Respect	Responsibility	Diversity



During our conversations, we were also struck by the number of Canadian Rangers (including many in leadership positions) who were previously Junior Canadian Rangers. While the JCR youth *program* is separate from the Rangers (a form of CAF Reserve service) and is not formally intended as a recruiting tool, several Rangers explained that they look to senior JCRs with strong land skills (or a dedicated interest to learning them), leadership qualities, reliability, and commitment as potential Rangers. There are many cases of former JCRs now serving as Rangers leading JCR patrols. Soupi Idlout in Resolute Bay (Qausuittuq), who “aged out” as a JCR and was immediately sworn in as a Ranger master corporal in fall 2019 to take over her community’s JCR patrol, is a case in point. While producing Rangers is not a primary aim of the JCR program, it is an indirect benefit of helping to foster the talents and leadership of youth and thus serves as an indicator of trust in and respect for the Ranger organization.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mary Simon, "A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model" (March 2017), <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1492708558500/1537886544718>.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics from [https://www.eia.gov.nt.ca/sites/eia/files/arcticnorthernpolicyframework\\_-\\_final-web.pdf](https://www.eia.gov.nt.ca/sites/eia/files/arcticnorthernpolicyframework_-_final-web.pdf); Government of Canada, "Medium-Term Planning Diagnostic: Improving relationships, rights, and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples" (draft 2 April 2019), ATIP A-7040-19-061 (NRCan).

<sup>3</sup> Conference Board of Canada, "Social Outcomes in the Territories" (July 2017), <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/society/territories.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> Joan Nymand Larsen, Peter Schweitzer, and Gail Fondahl, eds., *Arctic Social Indicators: A Follow-Up to the Arctic Human Development Report* (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Niels Einarsson, Joan Nymand Larsen, Annika Nilsson, and Oran R. Young, *Arctic Human Development Report* (Akureyri: Stefansson Arctic Institute, 2004), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Heidi Cramm, Deborah Norris, Stephanie Venedam, and Linna Tam-Seto, "Toward a Model of Military Family Resiliency: A Narrative Review," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 10 (2018): 620-40. See also A. Pangallo, L. Zibarras, R. Lewis, and P. Flaxman, "Resilience through the Lens of Interactionism: A Systematic Review," *Psychological Assessment* 27/1 (2015): 1-20.

<sup>9</sup> American Psychological Association (APA), "The Road to Resilience," <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience>.

<sup>10</sup> PreVAiL (Preventing Violence Across the Lifespan Research Network), "Themes," <https://prevailresearch.ca/our-research/themes-i-ii-iii/>.

<sup>11</sup> Donald R. McCreary and Deniz Fikretoglu, "Psychological Resilience," in *The Human Dimension of Operations: A Personnel Research Perspective*, eds. Gary Ivey, Kerry Sudom, Waylon Dean, and Maxime Tremblay (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2014), 55-70.

<sup>12</sup> American Psychological Association, "Road to Resilience."

<sup>13</sup> John Fleming and Robert Ledogar, "Resilience, an Evolving Concept: A Review of Literature Relevant to Aboriginal Research," *Pimatisiwin* 6/2 (2008): 7-23; C. Olsson, L. Bond, J.M. Burns, D.A. Vella-Broderick, and S.M. Sawyer, "Adolescent Resilience: A Concept Analysis," *Journal of Adolescence* 26 (2003): 1-11; Deniz Fikretoglu and Donald McCreary, *Psychological Resilience: A Brief Review of Definitions, and Key Theoretical, Conceptual, and Methodological Issues* (Defence Research and Development Canada Technical Report, December 2012); APA, "Road to Resilience."

<sup>14</sup> Canadian Army, *Mission: Ready – Leader's Guide to Readiness and Resilience*, <https://strongproudready.ca/missionready/en/home-en/key-publications/>.

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<sup>15</sup> Canadian Army, *Leader's Guide to Resilience*, [https://strongproudready.ca/missionready/wp-content/uploads/4500-1\\_caips\\_annex\\_f\\_app2\\_en.pdf](https://strongproudready.ca/missionready/wp-content/uploads/4500-1_caips_annex_f_app2_en.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) 5002-1 - Enrolment: Component and Sub-Component Selection, and DAOD 5023-1 - Minimum Operational Standards Related to Universality of Service. According to DAOD 5023-1, "The principle of universality of service or "soldier first" principle holds that CAF members are liable to perform general military duties and common defence and security duties, not just the duties of their military occupation or occupational specification. This may include, but is not limited to, the requirement to be physically fit, employable and deployable for general operational duties."

<sup>17</sup> Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> DAOD 5002-1.

<sup>19</sup> Office of the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, Report to the Minister of National Defence, *Canadian Rangers* (September 2017), 14.

<sup>20</sup> Ombudsman Report, *Canadian Rangers*.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Centre for Suicide Prevention, "Trauma and Suicide in Indigenous People" (2020), <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/resource/trauma-and-suicide-in-indigenous-people/>, and R. Linklater, *Decolonising Trauma Work: Indigenous Practitioners Share Stories and Strategies* (Toronto: Fernwood, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Ombudsman Report, *Canadian Rangers*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Kikkert, Angulalik Pedersen, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Kitikmeot Roundtable on Search and Rescue – General Report and Findings*, report from a workshop hosted at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, 31 January – 1 February 2020 (Peterborough: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network (NAADSN), 2020), <https://www.naadsn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Kitikmeot-Roundtable-on-Search-and-Rescue-General-Report-and-Findings-Feb-2020.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy* (2016), <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ITK-National-Inuit-Suicide-Prevention-Strategy-2016.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 49.

<sup>26</sup> Oran Young, "From AHDR to ASI," in Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> DND/CAF Ombudsman, "Leave for Reservists," <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/reservist-information/leave-reservists.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Focus group with Taloyoak Ranger Patrol, 15 April 2019.

<sup>29</sup> General Walt Natynczyk, the Chief of Defence Staff, noted in 2011 that "the Lee Enfield .303 rifle that the Rangers have, although it's old, it's one of the most reliable, simple and accurate weapons, that's ever been designed." He recalled a conversation at Rideau Hall with Ranger Sergeant Allan Pogotak of Ulukhaktok (Holman), who told him that "you can take this weapon, it can be dropped in the

ocean, you pick it up and shoot and it fires and fires true. And when anyone in my patrol breaks this weapon, I can go on the Internet and order the parts, and it's delivered in a week." Jason Unrau, "General Visits 'the Eyes and Ears of Canada,'" *Whitehorse Star*, 12 January 2011.

<sup>30</sup> We would not make this same point about the JCR program, however, where Rangers frequently mention high school participation and completion rates as measures of "success."

<sup>31</sup> Focus group discussion, 1 CRPG Ranger Leadership Meeting, Yellowknife, 14 October 2018, and issues raised by the Gjoa Haven patrol with the CO 1 CRPG, April 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Kitikmeot Outreach Trip, 9-26 April 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> Focus group 1, 1 CRPG JCR Patrol Commander Leadership Meeting, Yellowknife, 18 January 2019.

<sup>35</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: A Post-modern Militia That Works," *Canadian Military Journal* 6/4 (Winter 2005-06): 49-60.

<sup>36</sup> Magali Vullierme, "The Social Contribution of the Canadian Rangers: A Tool of Assimilation or Means of Agency?" *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 19/2 (2018): 194-95. This theme was developed earlier in Lackenbauer, "The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia" (chapter 4) and "Teaching Canada's Indigenous Sovereignty Soldiers" (chapter 5).

<sup>37</sup> Simon, "New Shared Arctic Leadership Model."

<sup>38</sup> Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 16.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), *Canada's Residential Schools: The Inuit and Northern Experience* (Ottawa: TRC, 2015), [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Volume\\_2\\_Inuit\\_and\\_Northern\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Volume_2_Inuit_and_Northern_English_Web.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 94.

<sup>41</sup> This colonial framework does not just apply to Indigenous peoples. See, for example, Ken Coates, *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985), and Coates, "The Rediscovery of the North: Towards a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Northern/Remote Regions," *Northern Review* 12/13 (1994): 15-43.

<sup>42</sup> "Rangers Mark 60th Year with Polar Trek," *Montreal Gazette*, 9 April 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Lackenbauer conversation with Derek Erasmus, Exercise Dene Ranger, February 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Larsen et al., *Arctic Social Indicators*, 134.

<sup>45</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *If It Ain't Broke, Don't Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers*, Working Papers on Arctic Security No. 6 (Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and ArcticNet Arctic Security Projects, 2013).

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3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (3 CRPG): 7, 219, 259

5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (5 CRPG): 243

Combat Camera: xviii (bottom), 132, 139, 143, 149, 150, 196, 198, 201, 205, 212, 234, 267, 284, 299

Department of National Defence: 71, 73, 93

Hélène Girard: 5, 293

Joint Task Force North: 291, 333

Peter Kikkert: 224

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: dedication, xii, xv, xvii, xviii (top), xxii, xxiii, xxviii, 8, 48, 53, 77, 79, 91, 98, 101, 106, 112, 116, 118, 121, 124, 127, 135, 145, 153, 159, 172, 193, 202, 255, 279, 283, 287, 289, 291, 297, 308, 319, 323, 326, 328, 330, 332, 338, 339, 346

NWT Archives: 57

*The Ranger*: 15, 17, 19, 20, 23, 25, 28, 30, 33, 34

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# THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES' **EYES, EARS, AND VOICE IN REMOTE REGIONS**

SELECTED WRITINGS ON THE CANADIAN RANGERS

Canadian Studies scholar Whitney Lackenbauer has been observing, researching, and participating in Canadian Ranger activities for more than twenty-five years. This volume brings together insights from his extensive writing on why this unique military organization has taken the shape that it has, and where the Rangers fit within the Canadian Armed Forces. It is also a celebration of the diversity and resilience of Canada through the richness of its remote communities, and the strength of the people who live therein.

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