



When Will the Torch Be Passed?

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JCSP 50

Master of Defence Studies

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Abstract

Since confederation in 1867, Canadians have consistently answered the call to serve when and where required. Whether it was domestically or overseas, beginning with the Red River Rebellion in 1869 through to the present day, Canadians en masse have been willing and capable of mobilizing at moment's notice to serve King and country. Therefore, Canada's maturation as a nation domestically and internationally has been interwoven with the history and maturation of its military entities. With mobilization and military service come, veterans, a loyal group of men and women who have served within the military when asked to protect Canadian and humanitarian interests. Unfortunately, with service comes risk, and with risk comes injury and re-establishment needs and Canada is not exempt from this occurrence. Since its infancy, Canada has produced more than 2 million veterans through war, peacekeeping, and Cold War service and this continues to this day. Sadly, as the veteran diaspora has evolved and grown, the imagery, benefits, and gender parity have not kept pace, creating an untenable situation where contemporary veterans often are left questioning if they even really deserve the label.

This study illuminates the damaging effects that divisive veterans' benefits packages, gender integration, and institutional refusal to reimage what a veteran is has on the veteran population as a whole. This study is a comprehensive exploration of the experiences and challenges faced by Canadian veterans throughout history. It discusses the varying levels of support and benefits provided to veterans during and after different conflicts, highlighting the disparities between different generations of veterans. The document also examines the evolution of veterans' pensions and the formation of private veterans' organizations. It discusses the divisions within the veteran community and the need for unity and improved support. This study also delves into the definition and cultural aspects of being a veteran in Canada, including the impact of organizational culture and climate on veterans' identification. Finally, it examines and emphasizes the challenges faced by female veterans and the need for better recognition and support. Overall, the document calls for a reimagining of what a veteran is and highlights the importance of bridging generational gaps and addressing the specific needs of contemporary veterans.

Keywords: Veteran, Veteran's Affairs, Women, Rehabilitation, Re-establishment, Royal Canadian Legion

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When Will the Torch Be Passed?

The warm, dry air felt cool as it stung his lungs slightly while he sleepily sauntered toward the front of the plane. The nearly eighteen-hour plane ride from Guam to Edmonton had felt like just one more unnecessary delay in getting home. It was summer, almost 20° Celsius (C), a far cry from the coastal 30° C he had just left in Guam.¹ *Trust my luck it would be hotter here in the middle of the night than in KAF*, Private (Pte) (Liam) McGinnis thought to himself, *at least it isn't -10° C like it was when I left*.² As he stepped off the stairs from the plane, a wave of emotion came over him. This was the first time he had been back in Canada since he left for Afghanistan, just over six months ago. *What a fucking ride* he thought to himself as tears rolled down his cheeks. He had yet to observe his nineteenth birthday but felt embarrassed nonetheless for the overt emotional display, now wondering how the return went for all his buddies. He had been selected as part of the third-location decompression experiment, which saw him and a handful of others from the Battle Group go to Guam to talk about their experiences instead of coming home with the rest of his friends.³ Guam, it turns out was selected because it was considered culturally “halfway” between Canada and Afghanistan.⁴ *I bet Marc, Nate, Tony, and Ainsworth would have killed to have the chance to feel this*, he mused as he grabbed his duffle bags and shuffled off the apron to the bus that was waiting for them, about to start the one-hour drive back to the base.⁵ The boys had told him about the band and families waiting for everyone at the Lecture Training Facility on base. *Thankfully*, he thought, *we won't have to endure the same bullshit*. He was correct, there was no fanfare, no band, only a couple of the families of those who returned to Canada through Guam. Once back on base, everyone was given their instructions and sent home. *Home, some fucking home*, he thought as he shuffled to the base duty sergeant's (Sgt) desk to get his room key.

After getting to his room in the shacks he could not be bothered to make his bed.⁶ After all, it was supper time in Guam, so he was wide awake, *I slept better in Helmand for fucks sake*, he bemoaned. This situation continued for the next three weeks as he struggled to combat the jetlag. The next few days he was required to show up to the Battalion to complete his immediate post-tour administration and then was permitted to go on leave. All told he spent about six weeks on holiday: he went back to his parents' place on Vancouver Island to try and relax. The entire

¹ James Andrew Alexander, “Third-Location Decompression for Canadian Soldiers Ending a Tour of Duty: A Focus Group” (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 2012), 1.

² KAF was the acronym given to Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan by Coalition Soldiers. Pte McGinnis is a fictional character through which, the very real circumstances of returning home from Afghanistan for a young soldier are narrated.

³ Alexander, “Third-Location Decompression for Canadian Soldiers Ending a Tour of Duty: A Focus Group,” 1.

⁴ Jamie G. H. Hacker Hughes et al., “The Use of Psychological Decompression in Military Operational Environments,” *Military Medicine* 173, no. 6 (June 2008): 535, <https://doi.org/10.7205/MILMED.173.6.534>.

⁵ Veterans Affairs Canada, “Search Results - The Canadian Virtual War Memorial - Memorials - Remembrance - Veterans Affairs Canada,” February 20, 2019, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/results?submit=Search&war=6&book=100>. Sergeant Marc Daniel Léger, Corporal Ainsworth Dyer, Private Nathan Lloyd Smith, and Private Richard Anthony Green were the first 4 Combat casualties killed during the conflict when a coalition F-16 pilot erroneously dropped a 500 lbs bomb on the 4 Canadian soldiers conducting an exercise at a range complex outside of Kandahar.

⁶ Shacks is a colloquial term used by military members for the Barracks accommodations.

time he couldn't help but feel out of place, sometimes even waking in the middle of the night reaching for a rifle that wasn't there. Visiting his friends, he felt like a stranger, visiting his family was the same. *All they seem to care about is trivial shit, their cellphones, parking spaces, and their big bad boss, don't they realize how cushy they have it.* Even back in Edmonton he felt like an alien. Back at the Bn after leave had ended it wasn't any better. His peer group from the tour hardly talked, those who didn't deploy couldn't possibly understand. Everyone around him just pretended like nothing had happened. Shortly after returning to work, many of his friends and peers he deployed with began being posted and tasked out of the Bn, leaving increasingly few understanding outlets for the young Pte. After six months the increasing alienation he felt made the decision easy, he had done his part and would try his hand on civvy street and submitted his paperwork for release.⁷

Outside of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF),⁸ that lack of belonging was only exacerbated. Liam began an electrician's apprenticeship hoping to find a similar team cohesion that he knew in the military but was again disappointed. He decided that the Royal Canadian Legion may be a good outlet. After all, their entire *raison d'être* was to support veterans like him.⁹ He was able to join the legion easily enough, however, from his first time at the bar, he was met with doubt of his legitimacy as a veteran. Few patrons were willing to engage with him. It was clear they viewed him as a kid, and nothing more. *All these assholes were my age when they got home.* The blue hairs, as Liam referred to the old timers and their unspoken judgment seemed to run everything, including the bar's hours. The harder he tried to fit in and belong, the more it felt like he didn't. Whether it was Remembrance Day Parades or suggestions for improvements to the legion itself to draw increased business and sales, he was consistently met with condescension and dismissal. He kept trying, even though everything he was surrounded by in imagery and advocacy suggested he didn't belong there either. Unfortunately, Liam's story is not isolated and, although Liam's character is fictional, his experiences are all too familiar to Canadian soldiers and their post-Afghanistan experiences.

Since Canadian confederation, Canadians young and old have consistently answered the call when asked to serve, either by Canada itself, or the King and/or Queen under a Commonwealth banner. Each time, young Canadians have had to try and manage the alienation as described in Liam's narrative. While this story is as old as expeditionary military service in Canada, it has seen some particularly acute periods. The first of which was the Boer War, in which Canadians volunteered en masse to support the British Government to quash the Boer uprising in South Africa.¹⁰ The Boer War was quickly followed by the First World War in 1914. However, none would be as large as the 1.1 million Canadian men and women who served during the Second World War, marking the largest single influx of Canadian veterans in

⁷ Civvy street is a military colloquial term for life outside of the forces. i.e. A civilian existence, job, etc.

⁸ The author acknowledges that prior to Unification in 1968 each service was considered independent of each other. For the purposes of this paper, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is used as a universal term to describe the Canadian military.

⁹ "Who We Are," Legion BC/Yukon Command, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://legionbc yukon.ca/what-we-do/who-we-are/>.

¹⁰ Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 5th ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), 272.

history.¹¹ The Korean War followed closely afterwards which marked the end of Canadian military combat operations until 2001 when Canada committed to participating in the war in Afghanistan.¹² The 48 years between the Korean War and the war in Afghanistan saw another 350,000 Canadians serve in Canadian Forces Europe (CFE) and an additional 120,000 on peacekeeping operations globally.¹³ Further details of these operations will be discussed further in this paper, but it is mentioned here to illuminate the volume in which Canada has produced veterans and unfortunately mismanaged their homecoming, reintegration, and re-establishment.

The story of Pte McGinnis above is an example of the alienation that a veteran experiences upon return to Canada, both inside and outside the CAF. While the narrative is fictional, it provides what history and social science does not: a sense of his anguish, frustration, and self-punishment. Narrative allows us a glimpse into the interiority of a character and is thus of value in this study. It is for these reasons that this paper will argue that the failure of the government to reimage societally what Canadians view as a veteran continues to exacerbate veterans' well-being. This will be presented by first reviewing the history of Canadian service overseas and the volume of veterans produced along the way, followed by a discussion on the definition of what a veteran is and how that has impacted the situation. Next will be an in-depth review of veterans' support provided by the government and external agencies throughout history combined with a discussion about the division that these fluctuating policies and applications have created within the veterans' community. Following this, this paper will review the imagery surrounding present-day veterans and close out with a review of challenges specific to women within this domain, and offer relevant areas of further research.

It is important to note that this paper will *not* be arguing about definitions of what a veteran is or who should or shouldn't be considered a veteran. Due to constraints, the author acknowledges that the research that went into this paper, while not exhaustive, and there have been many comprehensive studies on veterans' issues in the past, nonetheless, this paper addresses the challenges of bridging the generational gaps that exist between cohorts. Finally, the author acknowledges that while a veteran himself, he has attempted to avoid his own biases and opinions throughout and allow the history and sourcing to tell the story. While this is intrinsically impossible, it is the human condition to be oneself and have that bleed into their work.

¹¹ "Canada and the Second World War," Canadian War Museum, accessed March 21, 2024, <https://www.warmuseum.ca/learn/canada-and-the-second-world-war/>.

¹² Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Directorate of History and Heritage, *Canada and the Korean War* (Montreal, Quebec: Art Global, 2002), 14; David Jay Bercuson et al., *Lessons Learned?: What Canada Should Learn from Afghanistan* (Calgary, Alta: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 2011), 1.

¹³ Marc Montgomery, "Canada History: Aug 31, 1993: Canada's Military Bids Farewell to Germany," Radio-Canada International (Radio Canada International, August 31, 2020), <https://www.rcinet.ca/en/2020/08/31/canada-history-aug-31-1993-canadas-military-bids-farewell-to-germany/>; John D. Conrad and Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), *Scarce Heard amid the Guns: An inside Look at Canadian Peacekeeping*, *Scarce Heard amid the Guns*, 1st ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2011), 757; Maj Ian Summerfield, "The Canadian Peacekeeping Identity - Myth or Reality" (Toronto, Ont., Canadian Forces College, 2018), 1.

Canadian Military History

Traditionally, colonies do not possess armies of their own, and for more than three decades after Confederation the Canadian Militia retained all the trappings of its ancient auxiliary status, regardless of the young country's claims to nationhood.

-James Woods, Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921

As far back as the American Revolution, the notion of loyalty has been a cornerstone of British North America, now Canadian, identity.¹ This idea of loyalty to the Empire and its significance within the development of Canada is so pervasive that G.W. Brown argued that “the [sic] history of the concept of loyalty would form one of the most important contributions to the story of the development of Canadian attitudes.”² Through many different facets, loyalty has been weaponized throughout Canadian history in order to achieve political and social gains, such as using it as justification to limit defence spending.³ So much so that both Britain and France offered *Seigniories* or plots of land to loyal soldiers as a show of gratitude and to bolster American Settlement in what is now Canada.⁴ Land offerings in exchange for loyal service continued until after the Boer War.⁵ However, the conservative, dogmatic exclusionary focus on loyalty eventually paved the way for what James Wood describes as the militia myth and would have long-lasting effects on the Canadian Military as a whole.⁶ Understanding this focus on loyalty is important to understanding the history of the Canadian military in Canada as well as the manner in which veterans have been manufactured and misunderstood.

As alluded to in the epigraph above, the militia myth is undergirded by the assumption that Canada did not require an extensive permanent military and instead would be able to defend itself by raising militia-based forces as required.⁷ This mindset can be attributed to the fact that the initial post-confederation military engagements were largely conducted by militia units. The first of which was the quashing of Louis Riel's Red River Rebellion in 1869, where 800 militiamen accompanied 400 British Regulars in the swift defeat of Riel and his supporters.⁸ This was succeeded by the successful repelling of the final two Fenian Raids on Eccles Hill and Trout River less than six months later in 1870, by a raised 13,000 militia volunteers.⁹ These three

¹ George W. Brown, “The Durham Report and the Upper Canadian Scene,” *Canadian Historical Review* 20, no. 2 (June 1, 1939): 145, <https://doi.org/10.3138/chr-020-02-04>.

² Brown, 145.

³ D. Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada, 1784-1850* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 7.

⁴ Robert England, “Disbanded and Discharged Soldiers in Canada Prior to 1914,” *Canadian Historical Review* 27, no. 1 (March 1, 1946): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.3138/chr-027-01-01>.

⁵ England, 15. It is important to note that the *South African Veteran's Scrip* which offered “two adjoining quarter sections of Dominion lands, without fee,” was open to female nurse volunteers as well.

⁶ James Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921* (Vancouver, CANADA: UBC Press, 2010), 22.

⁷ Wood, 20.

⁸ “Military History of Canada,” in *Wikipedia*, March 16, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_Canada#cite_note-132.

⁹ Hereward Senior, *The Last Invasion of Canada: The Fenian Raids, 1866-1870*, 1st ed., Canadian War Museum Publication 27 (Toronto, Oxford: Dundurn Press in collaboration with Canadian War Museum, Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991), 328.

events supported Prime Minister William Gladstone's desire to divest defence responsibility for Canada to the Dominion.¹⁰ This resulted in the last remaining British Regiment departing central Canada on 11 November 1871.¹¹ For the first time in its history, Canada was responsible for its own defence.

The first test of Canada's newly imposed defence autonomy came soon after when Louis Riel established a provisional Government in Saskatchewan in March 1885.¹² Within a matter of weeks, the government raised and mobilized 3,000 militiamen from across the country and traveled to Batoche to end the rebellion.¹³ While successful, it definitively highlighted some of the challenges with the militia first model which sparked Major-General (MGen) Ivor Herbert to make sweeping reforms to strengthen and professionalize the permanent force assuming the post of General Officer Commanding the Canadian Militia in 1890.¹⁴ The changes established by MGen Herbert suggest a new emphasis on the professionalization of Canadian defence and laid the groundwork for one of his successors, MGen Edward Hutton to continue campaigning for a more credible force, one that would be put to the test sooner than later.¹⁵

In July 1899, Joseph Chamberlain asked the Governor General of Canada if Canada would provide a contingent in the event of war in South Africa.¹⁶ Shortly after the official outbreak of war in the Transvaal on 1 October of the same year, Prime minister Laurier committed to sending a contingent of 1,000 men to South Africa in aid of the British conflict with the Boers;¹⁷ Thirty days later the first soldiers set sail for Cape Town, South Africa.¹⁸ All told 3,000 Canadian soldiers served in the Transvaal between 1899 and 1902.¹⁹ This was truly the first expeditionary employment of Canadian soldiers overseas and "provided a long-overdue dose of reality to the Canadian defence establishment," forcing realistic training and laying the foundations for a modern military.²⁰ This foundation was put to the test repeatedly over the next half century as Canada developed its own Navy, Air Force, and army that, at its largest, included 730,159 men and women.²¹

¹⁰ Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 217.

¹¹ Morton, 221.

¹² Wayne F. Brown, *Steele's Scouts: Samuel Benfield Steele and the North-West Rebellion*, 1st ed. (Surrey, B.C: Heritage House, 2001), 27.

¹³ "Military History of Canada."

¹⁴ Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 257.

¹⁵ Morton, 207. Noting the limited training afford militia soldiers, Hutton argued that in order to bolster defence capabilities, professionalization of the forces and a stronger permanent force was required.

¹⁶ Brian A. Reid, *Our Little Army in the Field: The Canadians in South Africa 1899-1902*, First Edition (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Ltd., 1996), 21.

¹⁷ Reid, 23.

¹⁸ Reid, 28.

¹⁹ Reid, 172.

²⁰ Reid, 173.

²¹ Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 231; "WarMuseum.ca - Democracy at War - The Canadian Army - Canada and the War," accessed March 21, 2024,

https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/canadawar/army_e.html.

The period between the Boer War and the forthcoming First World War saw Canada loosely commit to a Navy while investing heavily in the militia forces within Canada, their numbers swelling to approximately 75,000.²² The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 which set in motion the outbreak of war on 4 August of 1914 saw hundreds of thousands of Canadians flock to recruiting stations from coast to coast.²³ The initial commitment to the Commonwealth war effort was for 25,000 men (18,000 man division with 7,000 replacements) and the first of the 30,617 men who ultimately formed the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) began arriving at the hastily established military camp at Valcartier Que. on 18 August to begin their training and preparations to deploy.²⁴ Between August 1914 and 11 November 1918, some 619,636 Canadians served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force with approximately 424,000 seeing overseas service.²⁵ While this signified the largest mobilization of Canadians into military service ever, the conflict also produced the single largest cohort of former service members in Canadian history.

The relative peace enjoyed following the end of the First World War saw a Canada that was far different from the one anticipated by the soldiers of the First World War.²⁶ Work shortages, convalescing invalids, and a Bolshevik revolution in Russia all led to general unrest throughout Canada.²⁷ The prosperity and peaceful lifestyle that had become the rallying cry of soldiers throughout the war in Europe devolved into a global depression that saw deep federal cuts everywhere including defence.²⁸ The seven different federal governments that held power throughout the interwar period, the shortest being 88 days, tried desperately to navigate Canada away from the insipient conflict against fascism that was brewing in Europe throughout the late 1930s.²⁹ The mutual continental defence commitment made publicly by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister King in 1938 signaled a renewal and expansion of the Royal Canadian Airforce and Royal Canadian Navy, as they were seen as the primary providers of continental defence.³⁰ Seemingly as quickly as Canada had found itself at war in Europe in 1914, the Parliament of Canada declared war on 10 September 1939.³¹ This time, while Canadians shuffled to armouries and recruiting depots “[t]here was little of the naked enthusiasm for war of August 1914.”³²

²² Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 231; Morton, 234. The commitment by the Laurier Government to establish a Canadian Navy was largely to avoid political pressure from Britain to help subsidize financially their own Naval build up.

²³ Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End Volume One: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1914-1916*, First Edition (Toronto: Viking, 2007), 24.

²⁴ Cook, 32; Cook, 28; Cook, 35.

²⁵ “Legacy - The Cost of Canada’s War,” Canada and the First World War, accessed March 27, 2024, <https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/legacy/the-cost-of-canadas-war/>.

²⁶ *Canada between Two World Wars* (National Film Board of Canada, 2006).

²⁷ *Canada between Two World Wars*.

²⁸ Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 395.

²⁹ Morton, 397.

³⁰ Morton, 401.

³¹ “CANADA DECLARES WAR!,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 11, 1939.

³² Ian Miller, “Toronto’s Response to the Outbreak of War, 1939,” *Canadian Military History* 11, no. 1 (2002): 8.

The Canadian declaration of war in September 1939 was the first time in practice that the independence afforded by the 1931 Statute of Westminster was exercised.³³ While reluctant, Prime Minister Mackenzie King understood that the fascist tyranny that was tearing across Europe was a universal evil and the people of Canada agreed.³⁴ While King's initial intent was to limit Canada's participation in the war, the overall contribution was profound. By the end of the year, Canada had raised two divisions of 16,000 men each of volunteers to go fight in Europe.³⁵ The British government had a unique request for Canada, based on its vast geography, distance from the European theatre, and its distinguished record as pilots and aircrew in the First World War, The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP).³⁶ By the end of the war six years later, more than one million Canadians served overseas³⁷ a remarkable feat for a country of just twelve million people;³⁸ On top of this Canada trained an additional 131,553 Commonwealth pilots and aircrew trained as a part of the BCATP.³⁹

World War II set a new bar for the number of former service members. The postwar consolidation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) concurrent with the emergence of the United States of America (USA/US) saw the emergence of bipolarity and the Cold War.⁴⁰ The vacuum created by the defeat of Japan in 1945 effectively split the trusteeship of Korea between the US (south of the 38th Parallel) and the USSR (north of the 38th parallel).⁴¹ Communist North Korea was ruled by Kim Il Sung, while the South worked towards autonomy under the supervision of the newly formed United Nations (UN).⁴² Kim sought to reunify the peninsula, which after three years of subversive efforts, resulted in the North's formal invasion of the South on 25 June 1950.⁴³ Capitalizing on the Soviet boycott of the UN Security Council, the UN established the United Nations Command (South Korea), plunging the US along with fifteen other countries into war on the peninsula, including Canada.⁴⁴ Between 18 December 1950, the armistice on 27 July 1953, and the cessation of the subsequent Canadian peacekeeping

³³ J. Andrew Ross, "Canada's First Declaration of War," *Library and Archives Canada Blog* (blog), September 10, 2018, <https://thediscoverblog.com/2018/09/10/canadas-first-declaration-of-war/>.

³⁴ Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 468.

³⁵ Edgar Packard Dean, "Canada at War," *Foreign Affairs (Pre-1986)* 18, no. 2 (January 1940): 301, <https://login.cfc.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fcanada-at-war%2Fdocview%2F198230439%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9867>.

³⁶ F. J. Hatch, *The Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, 1939-1945*, Monograph Series / Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, no. 1 (Ottawa, Canada: Directorate of History, Dept. of National Defence, 1983), 1.

³⁷ "Canada and the Second World War."

³⁸ Jonathon Gatehouse, "Canada's Population Tops 37 Million after Record Two-Year Surge," *CBC News*, June 14, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/thenational/national-today-newsletter-trump-sued-canada-population-1.4700759>.

³⁹ Hatch, *The Aerodrome of Democracy*, 202.

⁴⁰ "Cold Conflict," The National WWII Museum, accessed April 3, 2024, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/cold-conflict>.

⁴¹ Carter Malkasian, *The Korean War 1950-53* (Dublin, Ireland; New York, New York; Cumnor Hill, Oxford, United Kingdom; Osprey Publishing, 2023), 23.

⁴² Malkasian, 31.

⁴³ Korea (South). Chŏnsa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, *The History of the United Nations Forces in the Korean War*, vol. V (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 1972), 5.

⁴⁴ Malkasian, *The Korean War 1950-53*, 48.

contributions on 25 June 1957, 26,791 Canadian soldiers, sailors, airmen, and airwomen participated in the Korean conflict.⁴⁵

The armistice on the Korean peninsula effectively signaled two important changes in the global balance that set the stage for how Canada generated veterans for the 48 years that followed. First, the global expansion ambitions of the Soviet Union signaled during the Korean conflict⁴⁶ put in question the security of the eastern European flank and the second, was the United Nations mission in Korea had legitimized and codified the global commitment to collective security through the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This led to the establishment of Canadian Forces Europe (CFE) in 1953, and an invigorated shift towards peacekeeping operations. Between 1953 and 1993, approximately 350,000 Canadians served in Europe, while globally over 120,000 Canadians served on over sixty different Peacekeeping missions from 1953 to present.⁴⁷ This new era of veteran generation was distinctly separate from those before and helped fuel the peacekeeping myth described by Eric Wagner.⁴⁸ Despite the forty-eight years of ‘non-combat operations’ that Canada was experiencing, the delicate balance that existed ceased to exist on 11 September 2001.⁴⁹

At 08:45 am Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), 11 September 2001, the first of two Boeing 767 aircraft filled with passengers and fuel crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Centre in New York City in the United States of America. Seventeen minutes later the second plane impacted the south tower causing the eventual collapse of both by 10:28 am EDT.⁵⁰ The September 11th terrorist attacks precipitated the first-ever invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (NATO article 5),⁵¹ committing the alliance to the mutual defence of a member state based on a foreign attack of one of its members; an attack on one member was an attack on all.⁵² By October 2001 the first Canadian soldiers from Joint Task Force 2 deployed to begin operations against al Qaeda.⁵³ Between October 2001 and March 2014, 41,600 Canadian Forces members across all services deployed to Afghanistan in Canada’s “first openly stated

⁴⁵ Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Directorate of History and Heritage, *Canada and the Korean War*, 14; Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Directorate of History and Heritage, 148; Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Directorate of History and Heritage, 150; David J. Bercuson, “Korean War,” in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, ed. Gerald Hallowell (Don Mills, Ont: Oxford University Press, 2004), 379.

⁴⁶ Malkasian, *The Korean War 1950-53*, 11.

⁴⁷ Montgomery, “Canada History”; Conrad and Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), *Scarce Heard amid the Guns: An inside Look at Canadian Peacekeeping*, 757; Summerfield, “The Canadian Peacekeeping Identity - Myth or Reality,” 1.

⁴⁸ Eric Wagner, “The Peaceable Kingdom? The National Myth of Canadian Peacekeeping and the Cold War,” *The Canadian Military Journal* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 45.

⁴⁹ This assertion is a generalization made by the author and not intended or designed to disparage those peacekeepers who fell in the line of duty, nor those who encountered combat while on peacekeeping operations.

⁵⁰ Katherine Huiskes, “Timeline: The September 11 Terrorist Attacks,” University of Virginia - Miller Center, August 11, 2020, <https://millercenter.org/remembering-september-11/september-11-terrorist-attacks>.

⁵¹ Suzanne Daley, “THE ALLIANCE: For First Time, NATO Invokes Joint Defense Pact With U.S.,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2001.

⁵² J. L. Granatstein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, 3rd ed. (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 865.

⁵³ Bercuson et al., *Lessons Learned?: What Canada Should Learn from Afghanistan*, 1.

warfighting mission since Korea.”⁵⁴ For the first time in forty-eight years, a fresh influx of young combat veterans returned home, bringing with them a new set of challenges and reintegration hurdles.

⁵⁴ Stephen Aziz and Richard Foot, “Canada and the War in Afghanistan,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, June 4, 2009, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/international-campaign-against-terrorism-in-afghanistan>; Mary Beth MacLean et al., “Profile of Personnel Deployed to Afghanistan,” Research Directorate Technical Report (Charlottetown, PEI: Veterans Affairs Canada, December 14, 2015), 8; Granatstein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, 866.

Table 1. Summary of Veterans Created Through Expeditionary Service from 1867 to 2014 ⁵⁵		
Conflict	Time Period	Number of Veterans Produced
Red River Rebellion	1869	800
Fenian Raids	1870	13,000
North-West Rebellion	1885	3,000
Boer War	1899-1902	3,000
First World War	1914-1918	424,000
Second World War	1939-1945	1,100,000
Korean War	1950-1953	26,791
Canadian Forces Europe	1953-1993	350,000
Peacekeeping	1953-Present	120,000
Afghanistan	2001-2014	41,600
Total		2,082,191

As illustrated above, the experiences of Pte McGinnis became all too familiar to the young men and women returning home from Afghanistan. Not only was this the first time in nearly five decades that teenagers en masse were returning combat veterans, but it also was the first time in Canadian history that women were also returning combat veterans; prior to 1989

⁵⁵ Senior, *The Last Invasion of Canada: The Fenian Raids, 1866-1870*, 328; Reid, *Our Little Army in the Field*, 172; “Legacy - The Cost of Canada’s War”; Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Directorate of History and Heritage, *Canada and the Korean War*; Montgomery, “Canada History”; Conrad and Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), *Scarce Heard amid the Guns: An inside Look at Canadian Peacekeeping*, 757; Summerfield, “The Canadian Peacekeeping Identity - Myth or Reality,” 1; Aziz and Foot, “Canada and the War in Afghanistan”; MacLean et al., “Profile of Personnel Deployed to Afghanistan,” 8; Granatstein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, 866.

women were not permitted to serve in the Combat Arms trades.⁵⁶ While the challenges military members faced when they attempted to reintegrate after returning home from conflict were not new, the generation gap faced by the returning Afghanistan veterans exacerbated those challenges. Of the more than 2 million veterans produced throughout Canadian history, summarized in Table 1, the contemporary group of veterans have consistently found themselves alienated from a retired veteran population that did not identify with their contemporaries and vice versa. While the two groups certainly shared a similar culture, a further examination of culture and what it means to be a veteran will help illuminate the reasons why contemporary veterans do not embrace and identify with those who came before.

⁵⁶ “Equal Rights for Men and Women in Combat,” accessed April 8, 2024, <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/node/597>.

What is a Veteran?

A veteran — whether active duty, retired, or reserve — is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to “The Country of Canada” for an amount of up to and including their life.

-Unknown

According to Veterans Affairs Canada, “the definition of a veteran [is] [a]ny former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who successfully underwent basic training and is honourably discharged.”¹ As the official arm of the Government of Canada responsible to oversee and administer veterans’ programs and care it is a safe assumption to consider this definition as gospel, or can it? The Royal Canadian Legion defines a veteran as:

...any person who is serving or who has honorably served in the Canadian Armed Forces, the Commonwealth or its wartime allies, or as a Regular Member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or as a Peace Officer in a Special Duty Area or on a Special Duty Operation, or who has served in the Merchant Navy or Ferry Command during wartime.²

which differs from that presented by Pearce in 2020 as “a veteran is those who have served on any type of operational mission.”³ Interestingly, the Legion definition imposes a requirement for employment within a Special Duty Area (SDA) or on a Special Duty Operation (SDO) for police or peace officers but not CAF members. Section 69 of the *Veteran’s Well-Being Act* defines an SDA as an area outside Canada where [CAF] members have been or will be deployed as part of an operation that has exposed or has the potential to expose a member to elevated risk.⁴ An SDO, is defined by Section 70 as an operation that can be inside or outside of Canada, deemed by the Minister to have exposed or may expose CAF members to conditions of elevated risk.⁵ This contrast between the Canadian Government’s definition and that of Canada’s largest veteran support organization (the Legion) provides insight into some of the complications surrounding the characterization of what a veteran is and how a veteran will identify themselves. Suggesting a ‘them and us’ division between those who have served on operations and those who have not. For the purposes of this study, culture will be considered to be a set of mutually understood morals, norms, language, and experiences that unify a group under a singular purpose. As such, it

¹ “Mandate, Mission, Vision, Values and Ethics,” Veterans Affairs Canada, March 8, 2024, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/about-vac/what-we-do/mandate>.

² “Who We Serve,” The Royal Canadian Legion, accessed April 9, 2024, <https://legion.ca/support-for-veterans/who-we-serve>.

³ Keith Pearce, “A Review of Military Veteran Reintegration,” Scientific Letter (Ottawa ON: Defence Research and Development Canada, October 2020), 1.

⁴ Canada Minister of Justice, “Veterans Well-Being Act,” Pub. L. No. C.21 (2020), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-16.8/page-8.html#h-69077>.

⁵ Minister of Justice.

is important to look at what domains and determinants make up the cultural fabric that defines what being a veteran truly means to those who served.⁶

In order to better understand how former service members identify themselves as veterans, it is important to first look at what components unify former service members. According to Daniel Denison, there are generally two different facets that feed an individual's identification with an entity, culture and climate, both of which are relevant to this discussion.⁷ Organizational culture has been defined as an accumulation of shared learning experiences within a group as it responds to external pressures and internal adaptations.⁸ These shared learning experiences, once identified as valid, are incorporated and subsequently taught to new members of the group.⁹ Organizational culture "determines how an organization functions, how things are done, and how its members interact with each other and with those external to the organization."¹⁰ This definition suggests that veterans, no matter the conflict that they served in, should have a similar set of perceptions, interpretations, and ways of acting towards a given situation.¹¹ Organizational climate, on the other hand, is argued to deal with a situation and its links to thoughts, feelings, and behaviours; "Thus it is temporal, subjective, and often subject to direct manipulation by people with power and influence,"¹² Contrastingly, this definition of climate suggests that there is the potential for larger differences between the generationally distinguished groups of veterans especially in light of the argument that climate is "more susceptible to the positive or negative influences of [a] subculture."¹³ Given this dichotomy, a further review of the specific dimensions, domains and determinants that make up a culture, and specifically the culture of a veteran is necessary.

The foundational building blocks of any culture within a group setting are comprised of a multitude of facets, or categories that influence how people think, behave, and respond to challenges. This has been alluded to above with the examination of the definitions of culture and climate, however, these categories fall into two primary dimensions, the visible and the non-visible or invisible.¹⁴ The visible encompasses everything that people inside and outside the group can see, hear, and feel whereas the invisible is comprised of the underlying assumptions,

⁶ Canada Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*, 2020, 13.

⁷ Daniel R Denison, "What Is the Difference between Organizational Culture and Organizational Climate? A Native's Point of View on a Decade of Paradigm Wars," *The Academy of Management Review* 21, no. 3 (July 1996): 620, <https://login.cfc.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-is-difference-between-organizational-culture/docview/210951130/se-2?accountid=9867>.

⁸ Edgar H. Schein and Peter Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017), 6.

⁹ Schein and Schein, 6.

¹⁰ Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*, 12.

¹¹ Dept. of National Defence, 12.

¹² Denison, "What Is the Difference between Organizational Culture and Organizational Climate? A Native's Point of View on a Decade of Paradigm Wars," 644.

¹³ Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*, 12.

¹⁴ Dept. of National Defence, 12.

beliefs, biases, and expectations held by and endorsed (explicitly or implicitly) by the organization.¹⁵ This invisible category can be so strongly ingrained in a group mindset that members will adversely react to any behaviours or approaches based on other premises.¹⁶ This suggests that any deviation within the invisible category of cultural ingredients, or visible for that matter, between veterans cohorts are likely to be rejected by the others.¹⁷ Prior to accepting this as fact, a review of the domains and determinants that make up CAF culture will aid in clarifying why this hypothesis is relevant.¹⁸

As part of the renewed campaign planning for Operation Honour in 2019, the CAF undertook a holistic study of what comprised CAF culture. This was to better understand what determinants, made up the visible and invisible categories of CAF culture to more effectively address underlying cultural concerns within the CAF. This document, titled *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Response Strategy*,¹⁹ provided a detailed dissection of the individual facets that make up CAF and the greater military culture. Figure 1 depicts the comprehensive list of domains and determinants identified as being the foundational tapestry that collectively creates the culture within the CAF.

¹⁵ Dept. of National Defence, 12.

¹⁶ Canada Dept. of National Defence, “Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations” (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy, Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005), 31, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/dn-nd/D2-313-2-2005-eng.pdf.

¹⁷ Canada Dept. of National Defence, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada, Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Doctrine* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy, Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2009), 21–22.

¹⁸ Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*, 13. A determinant is a factor which decisively affects the nature or outcome of something (in a positive or negative direction). Domains represent the broad categories that determinants are grouped into, such as knowledge, activity, or function.

¹⁹ Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*.

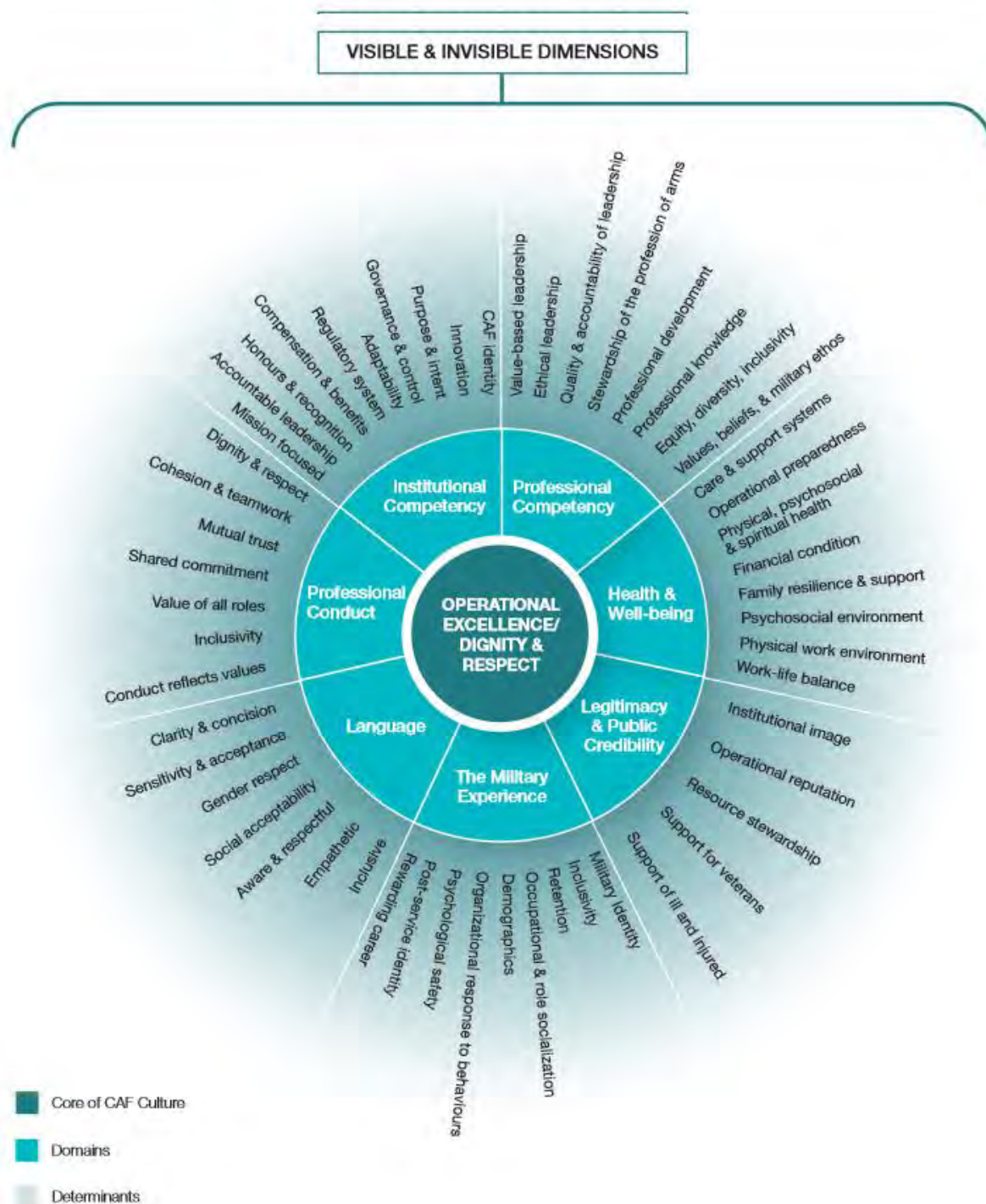


Figure 1 Domains and Determinants of CAF Culture

Source: Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*, 14.

While these seven domains and 54 determinants outline the individual facets that make the CAF, and those that served within it, a distinct and self-contained community.²⁰ Everyone who served in the CAF subscribed to the majority, if not all, of the domains and determinants listed above, however important to the discussion of veterans and what constitutes a veteran will focus on the CAF Identity determinant (visible) and The Military domain (invisible).

Beginning with The Military domain (invisible), the determinants that are listed in Table 2 combine to make up a significant portion of the invisible cultural facets that make veterans culturally identify as such. Many of these aspects are the foundations of the experiences that link CAF members and therefore veterans of the CAF. While the relevance of most of these determinants is self-explanatory, others such as inclusivity, organizational response to behaviours, and demographics/geography touch on aspects of military life that linger well into a veteran's post-military career. For example, geography is not simply geographic experiences inside Canada, but also can be linked to geography outside of Canada. As an example, anyone who had been to Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan during the Canadian operations there, will know of the 'poo ponds,' the open-air sewage settling ponds. It is these types of experiences, sights or smells that linger in the memories of former CAF members, and later can become rallying points for banter, humour, or just simple reminiscing.²¹ Inclusivity is another determinant that speaks to a CAF member, and important to this discussion, a Veteran's sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. Pte McGinnis' experiences and alienation were a direct result of not being able to find inclusivity both inside and outside the CAF following his deployment to Afghanistan. His narrative indicates his yearning for belonging. His story helps us

²⁰ Dept. of National Defence, 13.

²¹ Anecdotally, the author kept a picture of a colleague from Afghanistan standing in front of the 'poo ponds' in his office for several years as a memoir of their time and camaraderie.

understand the visible and invisible category of what makes a veteran, specifically, the symbology and value that veterans will put into identifying items or insignia.

Table 2. Description of the Military Experience Domain and associated Determinants

The Military Experience	
Individuals that join the CAF derive unity and military identity from their functions, their rank, environmental affiliations, and the compelling concepts of voluntary military service, unlimited liability and service before self. In return for their commitment, they expect to be treated with fairness and respect, to be employed and developed in ways that optimize their potential, and to contribute without experiencing unnecessary harm from those within the organization	
Determinant	Desired Outcome
Military Identity - Strong and Proud	Members take pride in their service. Society continues to support and respect the profession.
Inclusivity	All individuals feel they are recognized within the institution
Retention of Qualified Personnel	Members are willing to serve, families are satisfied with military life, retention rates are positive, and qualified personnel remain in the CAF.
Occupational and Role Socialization	Members are indoctrinated in the expected norms of behaviour, attitudes and beliefs specific to the CAF and individual trade, branches and environment. Individuals are properly socialized in roles.
Demographics/Geography	The variability of demographics and geographic locations is studied and compiled to inform career progression, personnel policy, training and support programs.
Organizational Response to Behaviours	Personnel are held accountable, responses are fair and appropriate.
Psychological Safety	A positive command climate is maintained and enforced by all leaders along the chain of command.
Post-Service Identity	Retired members maintain a positive relationship with the CAF, if desired. The institution remains accessible to former members.
Challenging and Rewarding Career Path	Members are involved in and influence decisions about their career. Flexible options for service are available.

Source: Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*, 19-20.

Table 3 outlines the detailed breakdown of the CAF Identity determinant below and highlights some of the most prominent visible facets of what identifies someone as a CAF member and subsequently a former CAF member. Within this determinant, the symbols, traditions, ceremonies, and the institution itself is found, which houses many of the visible facets

that are associated with CAF culture and Veteran identity.²² Symbols such as flags, uniforms and cap badges and other Corps identifiers become a large piece of how a veteran is visibly identifiable.

Table 3. Description of the Institutional Competency Domain and Relevant Determinant

Institutional Competency	
Numerous regulatory systems and subsystems operate within an environment with defined boundaries of governance, authority, responsibility and accountability. To remain operationally effective, the CAF must be able to adapt to complex and unstable domestic and global environments.	
Determinant	Desired Outcome
CAF Identity - Strong and Proud	The CAF is viewed positively by its members and Canadians. The CAF's positive identity is reflected in doctrine, symbols, traditions, ceremonies, and the institution

Source: Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*, 16.

The most significant, and visible of these is the uniform that a CAF member or veterans wear/wore. Each conflict since confederation has had a different uniform than those before, both in operational and dress uniforms, the exception being the Cold War period between 1966 and 1985.²³ This is a strong example of how the visible category significantly differs between generations of veterans. Another example in stark contrast in this determinant is the flag of Canada. The current 11-point maple leaf laden Canadian flag was adopted in 1965, prior to which the official flag of Canada was the Canadian Red Ensign.²⁴ As shown in Table 1, this means that of the 2,082,191 expeditionary veterans in Canadian history, only 511,600 have worn the current Canadian flag on their arms. This even became a point of protest for veterans across the country as Prime Minister Lester Pearson attempted to promote the adoption of the current flag of Canada.²⁵ This clearly created a divide between veterans and the government, but also set the tone for a growing generational divide among veterans. Therefore, it suggests that while veterans share many similarities, there are many differences as well. Indeed, these differences, present some of the underlying genesis for the challenges discussed for contemporary veterans.

The visible and invisible tenets that make up CAF and ultimately veteran culture as described in the overview above, provide as many rallying as contrasting points for veterans. The symbology with which veterans identify is also as broad and varied as the locations in which Canadians have deployed on operations. Many contemporary expressions of veteran culture and the community differ significantly from those of the older generations of veterans. Items such as veteran's license plates on vehicles, flags flown at people's homes, and even tattoos, other

²² Dept. of National Defence, *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*, 16.

²³ Jack L. Summers et al., *Military Uniforms in Canada, 1665-1970*, vol. 16, Historical Publication (Ottawa, Canada: National Museum of Man, National Museum of Canada, 1981).

²⁴ "Flag of Canada," in *Wikipedia*, February 24, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Flag_of_Canada&oldid=1210076276.

²⁵ Adam Levine, "The Great Flag Debate," *Canada's History*, January 25, 2015, <https://www.canadahistory.ca/explore/politics-law/the-great-flag-debate>.

examples can be found in patches that veterans will have sewn on clothing, hats, and window stickers. While these symbols, both overt and covert, offer examples meant to represent belonging to the veteran community can also act as divisive reminders of generational differences. While it is clear there are many points of shared culture, there also appears to be a lack of a single, unifying symbol which is exacerbating how generations of veterans interact with each other.

Haves and Have-Nots: Divisive Veterans Support Through the World Wars

Elderly sadists of the last war are emerging from their obscurity to join the war-dance again, their eyes glistening and their mouths watering as they think of the young men whom they will send to the slaughter.

-F.R. Scott

Since its inception, Canada as a country has consistently produced veterans when required. From the Red River Rebellion through the war in Afghanistan, the nearly 2.1 million Canadians answered the call to defend Canada and her interests both domestically and abroad. Each time, being unsure of what lay in wait for them when they returned home. While a reasonable inference to this unknown that soldiers faced is the challenges of reintegration, the reality was that veterans' support, pensions, and societal acceptance have varied drastically from conflict to conflict. This combined with the fact that prior to the Korean War, the parameters surrounding Canadian military involvement were clearly defined; Canada was responding to an armed insurrection/war against a clearly defined enemy, who posed a threat to Canada or the commonwealth writ large. Further to this, in each case, Canadian soldiers came home knowing they had been a part of a great victory. This was not the case in post-World War II Canada. As post-war experiences varied throughout the veteran population, clear lines of segregation also started to appear within the veteran diaspora. To understand why these lines of segregation began, it is important to review the post-service experiences and services provided to each veteran cohort.

Beginning with the colonization of New France, parcels of land were granted to former military members in exchange for their loyal service. This practice was continued by the British government following the defeat of the French at the Battle of Quebec in 1759.¹ Prior to confederation, these grants varied in size based on rank. For example, Lieutenants-Colonel who fought in the War of 1812 received 2 months' pay and 1,200 acres of land whereas Privates received 2 months' pay and 100 acres of land.² This practice evolved into Homestead grants after 1867 and continued up to the beginning of the First World War.³ Table 4 outlines the schedule of land grants afforded to veterans of Canadian post-confederation conflicts. More than 2.26 million

¹ "Battle of Quebec," National Army Museum, accessed April 16, 2024, <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/battle-quebec>.

² England, "Disbanded and Discharged Soldiers in Canada Prior to 1914," 10.

³ England, 14.

acres of land were settled throughout British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan alone by Veterans of the Boer War.⁴ Although this method of compensation ceased following the

Boer War, the policy of land grants was responsible for a large portion of the settlement of Canada. As part of the agreement with the British government to send troops, “the Imperial Government [would] ... pay wound pensions and compassionate allowances at Imperial rates.”⁵ This made the land grant program the sole veterans’ program that the Government of Canada was responsible for and would remain such until the First World War.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, veterans’ pensions made up 0.5% of federal expenditures.⁶ By the end of the war and in the years that followed it, this number ballooned to more than 20%.⁷ These expenditures included the establishment of 50 veterans hospitals across the country under the Military Hospitals Commission in 1918 and retraining programs for the disabled and minors who had enlisted under the Department of Soldiers’ Civil Re-establishment.⁸ The meagre compensation available to soldiers prior to the First World War was principally managed by The Patriotic Fund, which provided compensation solely to families of fallen soldiers.⁹ Land settlement had been discussed to avoid postwar migration to urban centres and in 1919, the federal government and the provinces agreed to a loan program to

Table 4. Summary of Homesteads Granted to Veterans in exchange for their service by conflict 1867-1914		
Conflict	Time Period	Homestead Grant
Red River Rebellion	1869	160 acres
Fenian Raids	1870	160 acres
North-West Rebellion	1885	320 acres
Boer War	1899-1902	320 acres

Source: Robert England, “Disbanded and Discharged Soldiers in Canada Prior to 1914,” *Canadian Historical Review* 27, no. 1 (March 1, 1946): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.3138/chr-027-01-01>. 15.

⁴ England, 16. It is worth noting that British Columbia had a separate land grant program of 160 acres for veterans of the Boer War who hailed from the province prior to enlistment, however accurate records are not available.

⁵ Reid, *Our Little Army in the Field*, 22.

⁶ “Benefits and Land for Veterans,” Canada and the First World War, Canadian War Museum, accessed April 16, 2024, <https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/veterans/benefits-and-land-for-veterans/>.

⁷ “Benefits and Land for Veterans.”

⁸ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, “The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004” (Veterans Affairs Canada, March 2004), 4.

⁹ Desmond Morton and Glenn T. Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 6.

enable veterans to purchase homesteads.¹⁰ Further to this, the *Pension Act* was passed in 1919 which established disability pensions which, “based on application and medical assessment, were to be awarded on a percentage basis according to a table of disabilities.”¹¹ The final, cursory pieces of veterans support provisioned by the government was a clothing allowance of \$35, a service gratuity that was based on length and zone of service, an opportunity to buy life insurance, and preferential civil service hiring.¹² While these services seem like a drastic improvement from what existed prior to the Great War, the bureaucracy surrounding access to them gave rise to a much more enduring challenge, veterans' advocacy.

The years during the First World War, subsequent demobilization and the ensuing great depression brought trying times for all Canadians, and veterans returning home from the First World War were far from immune from them. Initially, within the purview of the government, through the Hospital Commission, was oversight of the creation of subsidized soldiers clubs across the country with the idea of attempting to control the grievance process and discourage agitators.¹³ Many of these soldier's associations kept control in the hands of the affluent, demanding annual membership fees for the right to vote within them that equated to weeks worth of pension funds.¹⁴ This resulted in private veterans associations beginning to spring up as early as February 1916, “independent of government, parties, politics benefactors and all other outside influences.”¹⁵ Many of these upstart organizations reserved membership exclusively for ‘overseas men.’¹⁶ For example, in Victoria, B.C. “returned men rebelled at having to join a bogus military organization to gain a voice in their own affairs.”¹⁷ This distinction between ‘overseas men’ and those who did not serve abroad suggests a cultural segregation between existing veterans of the North-West Rebellion and those with overseas service and is the first example of identity schisms within the veteran community.¹⁸ Of equal significance is the degree of consternation and interference that the government expressed at the creation of these private veterans' organizations.

As momentum built, so did the discussions of creating an independent national organization to oversee all the veterans' associations. After testifying at a national special committee on 23 March 1917 on the state of veterans' treatment, it was decided that a national convention would be held in Winnipeg to discuss the creation of a unifying organization.¹⁹ The subsequent convention, held on 10 April 1917 had delegations from all over the country and

¹⁰ Morton and Wright, 144.

¹¹ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, “The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004,” 4.

¹² Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 5.

¹³ Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930*, 62.

¹⁴ Morton and Wright, 64.

¹⁵ Morton and Wright, 66.

¹⁶ Morton and Wright, 67.

¹⁷ Morton and Wright, 67–68.

¹⁸ The North-West Rebellion is the only domestic campaign mentioned due to the time lapse between it and the First World War. The 30 years between the North-West Rebellion and the First World War would have veterans of the former well into their fifties and therefore nearing the end of their life expectancy.

¹⁹ Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930*, 69–70.

resulted in the creation of the Great War Veterans Association (GWVA).²⁰ During the convention, it was decided that full voting membership would require veterans to have crossed the Atlantic.²¹ This angered the Army and Navy Veterans (ANV) organization in attendance so much that they walked out, forming a lasting schism between the two organizations.²² Unfortunately, this infighting amongst veteran groups continued until amalgamation occurred on 30 November 1925 when every major veterans' organization, save the ANV, combined to become the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League.²³ Although veteran's support remained an extant issue, at least there was a much more unified voice to advocate on their behalf through the remainder of the interwar period.

As a result of the Royal Commission headed by Lieutenant Colonel J.L. Ralston in 1923-24, responsibility for veteran pension administration was removed from the Board of Pension Commissioners and was transferred in June 1928 to the newly formed Department of Pensions and National Health.²⁴ The commission was triggered by numerous complaints filed by the GWVA on veterans' behalf and marked a significant milestone for veterans' advocacy. Although there were additional improvements made, such as the creation of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires in 1936, much of the veterans' landscape remained unchanged up to the Second World War.²⁵

As the Second World War raged in Europe, veterans of the First World War continued to fight for fair access to the benefits that were owed to them. This struggle was so overt that it led to a soldier of the Second World War to muse:

What are the people at home going to do for all these lads and the parents or wives and family of the lads that get it? Will they have the same attitude as after the last war, that they are a lot of bums? Or will they face facts and realise the situation and plan now so that lads will be able to go home to an organized country instead of a lot of people worried about paying too many pensions.²⁶

Conscious of these concerns and of the blunders that followed the First World War in demobilization and re-establishment, the government of Mackenzie-King stood up a cabinet committee on demobilization in December 1939.²⁷ Moving forward, the government worked closely with the Canadian Legion to ensure that any amendments to existing policies and new policies were fair, accessible, and benefitted the veteran in practical ways.²⁸ A key tenet in this

²⁰ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 6.

²¹ Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930*, 70.

²² Morton and Wright, 70.

²³ Morton and Wright, 199. The Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League eventually became the Royal Canadian Legion.

²⁴ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 7.

²⁵ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 8.

²⁶ Donald Thompson to Mrs. J.E. Thompson, 21 January 1944 quoted in Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 9.

²⁷ Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein, eds., *The Veteran's Charter and Post-World War II Canada, The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, 1st ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 5.

²⁸ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 10.

renewed energy towards veterans' management was the principle "that the great majority of veterans would much rather work than receive relief in any form from the state."²⁹ This is significant in two ways. First, as Thompson highlights above, the government sought to shape the social image of the veteran. Second highlights the government had finally openly accepted responsibility for the care, re-establishment, and rehabilitation of all veterans returning from the Second World War. Unfortunately, the damage was already done for the veterans of the Great War who had suffered abandonment at the hands of the previous governments while the effects of the Great Depression ravaged what little compensation they had.

In 1944, the Department of Veterans Affairs was established which was charged with overseeing all rehabilitation, re-establishment, and any compensation entitlements of veterans returning from Europe. The *Veteran's Charter* as it was coined was a set of various acts and legislation that provided the legal framework for veterans' support following The Second World War.³⁰ One of the principal updates within the legislation for World War Two veterans was to the *Pension Act*, which shifted the previous compensation principle, to one of insurance, effectively providing "coverage on a round-the-clock basis for disability or death incurred during military service, regardless of cause."³¹ This effectively set similar conditions as discussed earlier regarding *Special Duty Areas* and *Special Duty Operations* in the Chapter on *What is a Veteran*.³² This suggests a clear effort on behalf of the government to improve access to veteran's benefits and support by removing barriers that existed for the veterans of the First World War.

While this topical overview of the challenges that faced veterans returning from both world wars is meant to highlight the challenges each group faced, it also highlights the drastic disparity between the two cohorts in how each was treated upon return. It is reasonable to infer that this disparity was a sore spot for those of the First World War and exacerbated animosity between the two groups. Lack of accessible support, deliberate interference to discourage benefit payout, depression-inspired claw backs, and a societal apathy towards veterans of the First World War paved the way for veterans' advocacy groups such as the Canadian Legion. Simultaneously, it also created a division between the generations of veterans as a colloquial have and have-nots situation evolved. While no system is perfect, this division between veteran cohorts became a recurring theme as Canada and its military matured and moved forward toward its next conflict.

²⁹ Neary and Granatstein, *The Veteran's Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, 7.

³⁰ Don Ives, "The Veterans Charter: The Compensation Principle and the Principle of Recognition for Service," in *The Veteran's Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, ed. Peter Neary and J. L. Granatstein, 1st ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 85.

³¹ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 10.

³² Minister of Justice, Veterans Well-being Act.

Korea, the Cold War, and Post-World War Veterans Challenges

The gravest danger that besets the veterans...is lack of unity.

-The Veteran, as quoted in Desmond Morton & Glenn Wright, Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930

The cessation of hostilities at the end of World War II brought a new set of challenges that marked the dawn of a new world order where no longer were the two preeminent global powers Britain and France. Two world wars, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki left former global powers reeling in the cases of France and Japan, while the postwar emergence of bipolar competition between the USSR and the United States set the stage for a new global struggle that defined the next 54 years of geopolitics. In just five years following the Second World War, the UN was formed, the Washington Treaty was signed, the Chinese communists consolidated power over the nationalists, the Soviet Union developed the bomb, and tensions rose between the previous allies US and the USSR. All of these events plus the Japanese withdrawal from the Korean peninsula laid the groundwork for the next major conflict and the Cold War that followed.¹ The ensuing Korean conflict saw 26,791 Canadians in the bloody conflict and peacekeeping endeavour that followed.² This new generation of veterans returned to Canada to a support structure that was born out of the Second World War but with a new set of challenges to face.

Initially through orders-in-council, the Canadian Government extended the benefits of the *Veterans Charter* to those returning from the Korean War and in 1954, *The Veterans' Benefits Act* was passed to officially codify it.³ In spite of the extension of the *Veterans Charter* benefits to Korean veterans, in reality, there was limited access, due to the fact that the majority of Korean War veterans were regular force members on full-time service rather than volunteers.⁴ Adding insult to injury, the veterans of the Korean conflict returned home to little acknowledgment or recognition, leading one Korean War veteran to remark that "[t]here were no parades or big welcome home parties for anyone ... It was sure different than it had been when the Second World War ended. Now, I am not saying that we had to have big celebrations, but in my case at least, no one seemed to even notice that I was home."⁵ This was in stark contrast to the 1.1 million World War II veterans who were predominantly volunteers who immediately returned to civilian life following the war and required immediate rehabilitation and re-establishment.⁶ This limited the immediate access requirements to support for Korean War veterans and allowed the Canadian Government to atrophy on their commitment to the delivery of them when the time came for retirement.⁷ Again, this created a situation where government

¹ Malkasian, *The Korean War 1950-53*, 25-43.

² Bercuson, "Korean War," 379.

³ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 19.

⁴ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 20.

⁵ John Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War, Korea*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2011), 384.

⁶ "Canada and the Second World War."

⁷ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 20.

policy surrounding benefits delivery created a schism between veteran cohorts. Further exacerbating this schism, were the attitudes of the veteran's groups themselves.

Due to the 'police action' definition applied to the Korean War, veterans of the Korean War did not meet the membership requirements for either the Canadian Legion or the Army and Navy Veterans' Association.⁸ Both organizations required service in either Europe, in any war of the empire, or having earned a service medal, none of which the Korean War met which severely limited the veteran's association options for Korean veterans.⁹ This distinction alone contributed to a unique sense of alienation, whereby Korean War veterans' access to peer support outside of the CAF was limited. In fact, it was not until 1964 that Korean War veterans became eligible for ordinary membership with voting privileges in the Royal Canadian Legion.¹⁰ While this led to the creation of the formation of the Korea Veterans Association of Canada in 1974, the struggle for recognition and acceptance as true war veterans continued for decades.¹¹ Concurrent with the Korean conflict, the Cold War rapidly shifted the Canadian veteran's landscape while the subsequent Canadian focus on peacekeeping operations continued to change how Canadians viewed veterans and their challenges.

For the first time in Canadian history, there was an involuntary divide among service members in the CAF as the majority of CAF members who did not make up the 26,791 service members that went to Korea ended up posted as a part of Canadian Forces Europe.¹² As an example, a close mentor of the author, Bud Septon, joined the CAF with two of his classmates in Antigonish, Nova Scotia in 1948. In 1950, Bud was posted to Germany as part of Canadian Forces Europe, and his two classmates were sent to Korea. Bud survived his service and went on to live a full life, dying in 2017 while his classmates became two of the 309 killed in action in Korea.¹³ Although this anecdotal example is one of many, Bud's biography highlights a natural division that occurred unintentionally within the rank and file of the CAF surrounding the Korean War and the variance of experiences of members within the CAF. This variance created further alienation between the veterans who saw Korea and those who did not, very similar to the alienation felt and experienced by the fictional yet real Pte McGinnis when he returned from Afghanistan. The experiences of Pte McGinnis and Bud illustrate the dichotomy between combat veterans and their peacetime peers. The advent of CFE along with Canadian peacekeeping

⁸ Sean Richmond, "Canada and the Korean War," in *Unbound in War?: International Law in Canada and Britain's Participation in the Korean War and Afghanistan* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 100.

⁹ Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930*, 75; Morton and Wright, 199.

¹⁰ "Membership Manual" (The Royal Canadian Legion, 2016), 27.

¹¹ "Korea Veterans Association Unit 27 Victoria BC Canada," Korea Veterans Association Unit 27 Victoria, British Columbia, accessed April 29, 2024, <https://www.kva27.ca/>.

¹² Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Directorate of History and Heritage, *Canada and the Korean War*.

¹³ Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Directorate of History and Heritage, 150. It is worth noting that the experience of Bud Septon and his classmates and his mentorship to the author was a significant influence on the author choosing the CAF as a career.

created an entire cohort of veterans that, although service members, were not considered combat veterans, further deepening the divide among serving members.

The 48 years that immediately followed the Korean War was a period of relative peace and downsizing of the CAF.¹⁴ As described above, Canadian military service outside of Canada was marked by over 50 peacekeeping missions involving over 120,000 CAF members and the 350,000 people who participated as part of the standing force in Germany as part of CFE.¹⁵ It is important to note at this juncture that although, for the purposes of this paper, peacekeeping missions are not considered to be combat missions or wars, that many people who participated in these missions did experience combat situations in limited numbers and duration. This is by no means meant to discount the experiences of those peacekeepers, but to highlight the clear delineation that exists among veterans between the two different types of deployments. From its inception until 1989, Canadians were involved in every peacekeeping mission the UN embarked upon.¹⁶ In experiences, symbology, and mission duration, peacekeepers created a new cohort of veterans that were distinct from those that came before.

As discussed above, symbols make up a large portion of what and how veterans identify with one another, and the unique symbols associated with peacekeeping missions are not only distinct from those that came before but carried with them a hotly emotional charge. While the benefits and support structure provided by the Government of Canada was largely unchanged, the manner in which veterans could freely access them became more difficult.¹⁷ This was highlighted in *A Study of the Treatment of Members Released from the CF on Medical Grounds* where a survey of those medically released from the CAF showed that only 44% of veterans who had applied for a disability pension had received one.¹⁸ Although this similarity between the Korean War veterans and those of the peacekeeping/Cold War era logically might have been a rallying cry, it was the evolving Canadian and CAF symbology that took centre stage.

The flag debate dominated discussions at veterans' conventions throughout the latter half of the 1950s and the early half of the 1960s as seen in reviewing the records of discussion from the Royal Canadian Legion during the period.¹⁹ CAF members from 1965 onwards no longer deployed under the Red Ensign and although the Maple Leaf had been a rallying symbol for Canadians through both World Wars the flag that the fallen lay under was the Red Ensign.²⁰ Once again there was a federal change that morphed how veterans identified themselves and this

¹⁴ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 51.

¹⁵ "Canadian Peacekeeping," in *Wikipedia*, April 23, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Canadian_peacekeeping&oldid=1220313270; Montgomery, "Canada History."

¹⁶ Colonel John Gardam OMM, CD, *The Canadian Peacekeeper* (Burnstown, Ont: General Store Publishing House, 1992).

¹⁷ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 20.

¹⁸ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 55–56.

¹⁹ James Hale and Royal Canadian Legion, *Branching out: The Story of the Royal Canadian Legion* (Ottawa: Royal Canadian Legion, 1995), 275–76.

²⁰ Levine, "The Great Flag Debate." Interestingly, the author while conducting a field study of First World War sites in 2008 saw maple leaves that were carved into the walls of the tunnels at Vimy Ridge by soldiers of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

time, how they identified as Canadians. The flag debate became one of many that drove a divisive wedge between veterans' cohorts and as alluded to above, preoccupied veterans' groups as their membership dwindled.²¹ This divide can be seen in the lack of acceptance of Regular Force CAF members as Ordinary Legion members with voting privileges without a minimum time served requirement until 1972.²² Further to this point, Reserve Force Members were not offered Ordinary Membership until the same year but with a minimum time requirement, when veterans of the US who had wartime service could become Ordinary members in 1966.²³ These double standards amounted to a lack of appreciation for contemporary veterans. While organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion claimed to be the voice of veteran's issues, it did little to bridge the divide between cohorts. Another exacerbating factor during the period involved uniforms.

It would be pejorative to attribute veteran cohort alienation to the iconic UN blue beret, however, it is worth pointing out that while all veterans who had come before served under their own individual uniforms, with their individual unit identifiers such as berets and cap badges, peacekeepers did not. The powder blue beret and UN cap badge gave a new distinct identity to peacekeepers around the world. Yet in Canada, this had the net effect of removing critical unifying symbology between generations of veterans. This was further complicated by the Government of Canada's decision to unify the Canadian Armed Forces in 1968.²⁴ Unification resulted in the integration of all previous service branches under one single green uniform, one single rank structure, and a generic organization structure, including the removal of the previously earned 'Royal' titles.²⁵ This was initially in an effort to streamline duplicated support lines to each service, create a single administrative process and structure, and ultimately limit allegedly frivolous defence spending.²⁶ The result was a universal displeasure within and outside the CAF including in the veteran's community. Once again, rather than unifying veteran's groups, the contemporary cohort who lived the change was further alienated from those that came before.²⁷ This friction is one that came to define an entire generation of veterans that spanned almost five decades.

The post-World War landscape that veterans faced left large gaps and disparities between veteran's cohorts. As Canadian veterans of the Korean War, Cold War, and peacekeeping era continued to navigate the post-World War era, the policies and their inequitable application combined with internal tribalism kept veterans from truly supporting and embracing each other. This tribalism remains so prevalent that the Legion manual on membership even warns that

²¹ Hale and Royal Canadian Legion, *Branching out: The Story of the Royal Canadian Legion*, 125.

²² "Membership Manual," 28.

²³ "Membership Manual," 28.

²⁴ "Unification of the Canadian Armed Forces," in *Wikipedia*, January 30, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Unification_of_the_Canadian_Armed_Forces&oldid=1201021802.

²⁵ "Unification of the Canadian Armed Forces."

²⁶ Sharon Adams, "All for One: How Unification Shook up the Military," *Legion Magazine*, February 1, 2021, <https://legionmagazine.com/all-for-one-how-unification-shook-up-the-military/>.

²⁷ Capt (N) J.Y. Forcier, "From Unification to Jointness: An Unavoidable Road for the Canadian Forces" (National Defence College of Canada, June 1994), 13, <https://cdm22012.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p22012coll4/id/11072>.

“[n]egative [b]ranch [d]ynamics [such as] petty bickering, cliques and prejudice amongst members can lead to a negative branch environment, and...can dissuade new members from joining.”²⁸ Unfortunately, government policy changes such as unification and the adoption of the current Canadian Flag further fuelled this separation and internal segregation between veteran groups by removing the common symbology that had existed previously. While this symbology has come to represent unifying symbology for post-1965 veterans, it has equally divided them from those who served under the Red Ensign. As discussed in the previous chapter, these frictions between generations of veterans have existed from the earliest days of the Canadian military. Unfortunately, these frictions continue to the present day and the Canadian participation in the War on Terror in Afghanistan brought to light a new set of challenges.

²⁸ “Membership Manual,” 123.

Canada's New War: Afghanistan and the Canadian Experience

Why are we still fighting certain veterans' groups in court? Because they're asking for more than we are able to give right now

-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau quoted by CBC News on 1 February 2018

The events of September 11th, 2001, reverberated around the world as a group of Al Qaeda terrorists hijacked 4 airliners and crashed two of them into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City.¹ The ensuing invocation of Article 5 of NATO's foundational Washington Treaty committed Canada to considering the attack on the US as an attack on Canada. Thus, within weeks, Canadians found themselves on the ground fighting Al Qaeda.² For the 48 years preceding the war in Afghanistan, Canadian military engagement around the world was limited to CFE and increasingly complex and volatile blue-beret peacekeeping missions.³ The war in Afghanistan became the backdrop for the creation of the latest generation of Canadian Combat Veterans and with it brought a familiar but new set of challenges for veterans similar to those experienced by Pte McGinnis earlier. As early as April 2002, the first of 159 combat casualties occurred, the youngest of which was 21 years old, while the war incurred an additional 2,071 wounded.⁴ Of the 41,600 men and women of the CAF, many would have the same experiences both overseas and upon return, and yet still feel the alienation and solitude of Pte Liam McGinnis.⁵

Canada's 13-year commitment in Afghanistan included deliberate combat missions, a training mission as well as Special Forces. As mentioned above, some 41,600 CAF members deployed to Afghanistan between October 2001 and March 2014 and while there had been some minor adjustments to the Veterans Charter, it had remained largely unchanged since the Korean War.⁶ Some of the more prominent changes included the establishment of an appeals board, the introduction of the Veterans' Independence Program (VIP), and the ability to collect a disability pension while still serving.⁷ Unlike their predecessors, veterans coming home from Afghanistan, such as Pte McGinnis, did not have a peer group that were considered combat veterans. The veterans from the Korean War were all in their seventies and the previous generation of peacekeeping Cold Warriors had lacked experience with combat, leaving Afghan combat veterans with little in the way of peer support and/or advocacy. Unfortunately, these returning

¹ "September 11 Attacks: Facts, Background & Impact," History, August 9, 2023, <https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks>.

² Daley, "THE ALLIANCE: For First Time, NATO Invokes Joint Defense Pact With U.S."; Aziz and Foot, "Canada and the War in Afghanistan."

³ The examples of Rwanda (United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR)) and Croatia (United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)) were particularly brutal involving mass graves, genocide and in the case of Croatia, limited examples of actual combat engagements.

⁴ "Tarnak Farm Incident," in *Wikipedia*, February 17, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tarnak_Farm_incident&oldid=1208455395; "Canadian Forces Casualties in Afghanistan," in *Wikipedia*, April 9, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Canadian_Forces_casualties_in_Afghanistan&oldid=1218061152.

⁵ Aziz and Foot, "Canada and the War in Afghanistan."

⁶ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 26.

⁷ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 26; Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 68.

veterans also faced similar challenges accessing their entitlements as their peacekeeping peers had, including having to prove any injuries were service related specifically from their deployment. This was one of many challenges that Afghanistan veterans faced when, in 2006, the Government of Canada once more changed the rules surrounding pensions.

In 2006, the *New Veterans Charter* was enacted which removed the lifetime pension provision and replaced it with a one-time, lump sum payout.⁸ This created yet another large divide between Afghanistan veterans themselves as those injured prior to 2006 were entitled to a monthly payout whereas those injured after 2006 received a one-time lump sum payout. Furthermore, while the programs available throughout *The New Veteran's Charter* for things such as rehabilitation and retraining, were more robust, the process to recuperate lost wages, earning potential and compensation for caregivers was overly cumbersome, rife with red tape, and required reapplication annually.⁹ Although the finite details of *The New Veteran's Charter* have been the subject of many previous studies and parliamentary committee reviews,¹⁰ the important aspect to note for this discussion is that this set of changes once again created a support-driven disparity between veterans of the same generation, fighting the same war. While changes to the veterans' benefits package between veterans' cohorts have happened in the past, never has the scale and delivery of benefits changed so drastically in the middle of a conflict. This friction is not the only aspect of veterans' culture that has created issues for the latest cohort of veterans.

A cursory search on *Google* of Remembrance Day throughout the Afghanistan years shows a bias towards historical veterans rather than contemporary ones. For

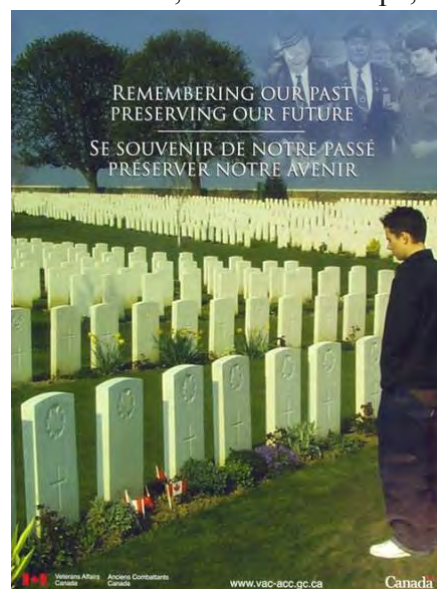


FIGURE 3. 2007 REMEMBRANCE DAY POSTER

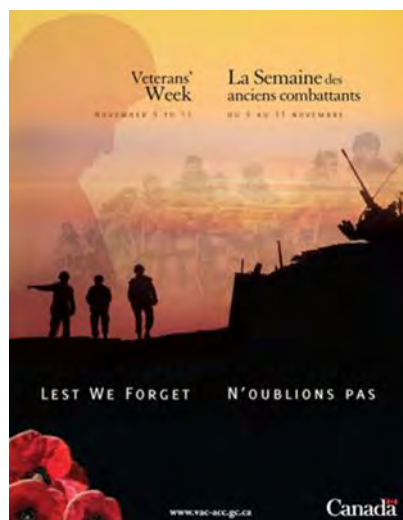
Source: Veterans Affairs Canada, 2020, October 8, 2020, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/get-involved/posters/2007>.

⁸ Greg Kerr, "The New Veterans Charter: Moving Forward," Report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, June 2014, 29.

⁹ Kerr, 12–23.

¹⁰ Kerr, "The New Veterans Charter: Moving Forward."

example, the official 2002 Remembrance Day poster from the Government of Canada (figure 2) depicts a Canadian youth visiting the Vimy Ridge cemetery with zero reference to the ongoing war in Afghanistan.¹¹ A similar story played out in 2003 when the Government of Canada poster



featured a Korean War memorial.¹² In fact, it wasn't until 2007 that the first reference to Afghanistan appeared in the national Remembrance Day poster, and even then it was a silhouette of 3 soldiers in body armour and a Light Armoured Vehicle (LAV) (Figure 3).¹³ The poster for 2008 had the same silhouettes but was the last time that the National Remembrance Day Poster had a reference to Afghanistan until 2013 when there was a small thumbnail that featured a soldier in Afghanistan.¹⁴

Unfortunately, it was a similar story in 2014, 7 months after the close of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan when a single, non-identifiable soldier in Afghanistan is depicted in a single thumbnail photo.¹⁵ Surprisingly, however, there has not been another reference or image of an Afghanistan veteran on the national poster since that thumbnail in 2014. Throughout this period, however, the posters have heavily featured the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, and peacekeeping. This lack of imagery surrounding veterans of Afghanistan perpetuates an ageist Canadian sentiment that in order to be a veteran, a person must have served in either of the world wars or Korea.

Now imagine Pte McGinnis, who has just experienced the horrors of war, sent to a country he could not find on a map before 11 September 2001, coming home to a country that can not seem to be bothered to acknowledge his experiences. As time went on, Liam saw each and every death make front-page news across the country, but the Government and Veterans Affairs can not be bothered to acknowledge his and his peer's sacrifices on Remembrance Day. *What the fuck is the point?* he continues to bemoan, *have they not read their own definition of what Remembrance Day is?* Remembrance Day, according to *The Canadian Encyclopedia* in Canada is "a yearly memorial day that is observed in many Commonwealth countries, including Canada, to remember those who died in military service, and honour those who served in

¹¹ Government of Canada, *2002 Remembrance Day Poster*, 2002, Poster, 2002, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/get-involved/posters/2002>.

¹² Veterans Affairs Canada, "2003 Remembrance Day Poster - Posters - Veterans Affairs Canada," October 8, 2020, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/get-involved/posters/2003>.

¹³ Veterans Affairs Canada, "2007 Remembrance Day Poster - Posters - Veterans Affairs Canada," October 8, 2020, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/get-involved/posters/2007>.

¹⁴ Veterans Affairs Canada, "2008 Remembrance Day Poster - Posters - Veterans Affairs Canada," October 8, 2020, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/get-involved/posters/2008>; Veterans Affairs Canada, "2013 Remembrance Day Poster - Posters - Veterans Affairs Canada," October 8, 2020, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/get-involved/posters/2013>.

¹⁵ Veterans Affairs Canada, "2014 Remembrance Day Poster - Posters - Veterans Affairs Canada," October 8, 2020, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/get-involved/posters/2014>.

wartime.”¹⁶ Between his (Liam’s) reception at the legion and the lack of visual inclusion, Liam began to believe that this talk about a ‘Sacred Obligation’ was bullshit.

This example is important to acknowledge as are the sentiments of Pte McGinnis. “How a nation defines a veteran impacts policy, including entitlements to benefits and services, as well as society’s perceptions of veterans.”¹⁷ This quote comes straight from a Defence Research and Development Agency report and suggests that the Government of Canada is, or ought to be, fully aware of the role that they play in creating the visual image for Canadians of what a veteran is.¹⁸ If this assertion is accepted as true, then it stands to reason that the Government of Canada has continued to fail in its responsibility to acknowledge and reimage what a veteran is during each significant conflict or era. This lack of visual acceptance and representation combined with the inequality in benefits provision has created a large void between the Canadian understanding of what a veteran is and therefore how young veterans are treated. Unsurprisingly, this has led to increased challenges for people like Liam McGinnis, such as a higher risk of suicide, substance abuse, and significant mental health issues.¹⁹ These challenges are exactly the genesis of this discussion but will be addressed in greater detail in a subsequent section, they are presented here as a checkpoint of the discussion thus far.

The war in Afghanistan brought with it a host of challenges that were seemingly new to the emerging cohort of combat veterans. The unfortunate reality is that many of the challenges that veterans of Afghanistan faced were evergreen, similar in many ways to those experienced by the generations that came before them but not fully understood or recognized. The application of benefits through Veteran’s Affairs and the changes that came with *The New Veteran’s Charter* created an acute point of friction for Afghanistan Veterans. This was further exacerbated by a distinct lack of visual appreciation or recognition for those who survived the war. This lack of acceptance has had the tertiary effect of further alienating a veteran population who desperately attempted to navigate life in Canada after their experiences in Afghanistan. Whether it was alienation from their peers who had not yet deployed, the in-place veteran’s support institutions such as the Royal Canadian Legion, or a Canadian population who had no way of understanding what soldiers like Liam McGinnis experienced overseas and upon their return, veterans of Afghanistan continue to fight an uphill battle for recognition. Unique to the Afghanistan war experience was the inclusion of female combatants as part of the CAF. This was the first time in Canadian history that women were permitted in actual combat roles and their experiences bring to light a distinctive set of challenges and alienation that merits further discussion.

¹⁶ James H. Marsh, Richard Foot, and Tabitha Marshall, “Remembrance Day in Canada,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, November 7, 2011, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/remembrance-day>.

¹⁷ Pearce, “A Review of Military Veteran Reintegration,” 1–2.

¹⁸ Pearce, 1–2.

¹⁹ James M. Thompson et al., “Group Identity, Difficult Adjustment to Civilian Life, and Suicidal Ideation in Canadian Armed Forces Veterans: Life After Service Studies 2016,” *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health* 5, no. 2 (September 1, 2019): 101, <https://doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh.2018-0038>.

Your Mom Wears Combat Boots: The Female Experience with Expeditionary Service

The greatest heroes are those who do their duty in the daily grind of domestic affairs whilst the world whirls as a maddening dreidel.

-Florence Nightingale

The Canadian military has a long and progressive history of women serving in various roles. As early as the North-West Rebellion in 1885, women have consistently answered the call for volunteers to serve Canada's national defence interests.¹ The initial inclusion of women as Nursing Sisters supporting expeditionary forces was inspired by the work of Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War in the 1850s.² While these early examples of female volunteer service were acknowledged with campaign medals, it was not until the Boer War in South Africa that women saw any form of service compensation.³ While recognition and compensation were present in various manifestations, women's roles within the military remained highly gendered, restricting women to administrative and nursing roles well into the 20th century.⁴ Even so, women and their involvement in the Canadian Armed Forces has a rich history, but not one without its unique challenges. Historically, the challenges faced by women in the service can be characterized pejoratively as a persistent fight. Whether it was the right to vote, the winning of which had a military nexus to it, or fighting for the right to serve, time and time again women have and continue to petition for equal roles and responsibilities within the CAF.⁵ While women's service makes them no less veterans than any other's, the unique experiences and inequality that they have had to endure throughout their fight to serve merits dedicated discussion.

The challenges and experiences faced by female veterans in Canada encompass a remarkably broad spectrum. The earliest of these examples was the denial of voting rights to women prior to 1918. Interestingly, it was a discussion in February 1918 between the leaders of the women's suffrage movement and the Canadian Cabinet War Committee on how to attract more women volunteers during the First World War that brought the two sides together.⁶ This conference highlights the Government of Canada's acknowledgement of the important role of women in the Canadian political process as just three months later, women were granted the right to vote.⁷ Unfortunately, this acknowledgment was short-lived as returning female veterans (nursing sisters) were initially included in the Homestead Loans Programs but "were urged to

¹ Barbara Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, *A History of Women in the Canadian Military* (Montréal: Art global and Dept. of National Defense in co-operation with de Dept. of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2000), 17.

² Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, 18.

³ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, 19; England, "Disbanded and Discharged Soldiers in Canada Prior to 1914," 15.

⁴ Roger Sarty and Barbara Dundas, "Women in the Canadian Armed Forces," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, February 7, 2006, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/women-in-the-military>.

⁵ "Women's Suffrage," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/womens-suffrage>; Sarty and Dundas, "Women in the Canadian Armed Forces."

⁶ "Women's Suffrage."

⁷ "Women's Suffrage."

look elsewhere for re-establishment. [for] They cannot (sic) qualify the rough and strenuous duties of settlers.”⁸ Widows of soldiers were also initially allowed access to these grants with the caveat that they had sons who could work the land.⁹ This insulting proposition was made worse in 1920 when the offer was rescinded and the policy changed to exclude female veterans altogether.¹⁰ The next insult came in the creation of veterans organizations, who, as ‘men’s clubs’ permitted women, whether veterans or not, to join a Ladies Auxiliary but not be ordinary voting members.¹¹ This situation with the legion lasted decades, as highlighted by Shane Ross in his account of Jean Maclean, who did not receive membership after being a cook in Halifax during World War II.¹² Another strong and recent example of this is the fact that the last military trade to allow women into its ranks was the submarine service in 2001.¹³ These are but a few examples of the discrimination and challenges faced solely by women throughout their service history.

Initially, the Commonwealth and Canada initiated a strong and progressive approach to compensating women for their service. This is most clearly highlighted by the inclusion of women volunteers in the *South African War Veteran’s Scrip* which compensated Boer War volunteers with two adjoining quarter sections of land, or a \$500 stipend in lieu.¹⁴ While this sentiment continued through the First World War through the inclusion of women widows and volunteers in the Homestead Loan Program, however, there were gendered qualification requirements placed on participation that made it horribly inequitable.¹⁵ By 1920, the Homestead Loan Program was amended to exclude women altogether.¹⁶ This is an example of a government policy that purposely alienated women veterans from their male counterparts. As the First World War ended, the value of having a women’s corps was generally accepted across the Canadian Government, however, after multiple approvals in principle failed, the creation of a permanent women’s corps proved futile.¹⁷ Yet still, women continued to volunteer, as is showcased by the formation of the British Columbia Women’s Service Corps (BCWSC) in 1938 as war seemed again inevitable.¹⁸ Many similar groups formed during the same period, training, clothing, and funding themselves in an effort to gain recognition and inclusion in the military, even going so

⁸ Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930*, 145.

⁹ Morton and Wright, 145.

¹⁰ Morton and Wright, 145.

¹¹ Hale and Royal Canadian Legion, *Branching out: The Story of the Royal Canadian Legion*.

¹² Shane Ross, “Denied in 1945, Female WWII Vet Finally Gets Membership to Legion at Age 96,” *CBC News*, March 9, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-jean-maclean-kingston-legion-1.5941520>.

¹³ Sarty and Dundas, “Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.”

¹⁴ England, “Disbanded and Discharged Soldiers in Canada Prior to 1914,” 15.

¹⁵ Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930*, 145.

¹⁶ Morton and Wright, 145.

¹⁷ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, *A History of Women in the Canadian Military*, 36.

¹⁸ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, 38.

far as to petition the UK government to permit their service.¹⁹ Finally in 1941, as war raged in Europe the Government of Canada relented and formed the Canadian Women's Army Corps.²⁰

As Women's Corps were established in all three services, the number of permitted trades open to them increased. By the end of the war, women could serve in clerical roles, as cooks, in laundry facilities, and even as mechanics.²¹ It is important to acknowledge that the majority of these trades are all highly gendered and that women were not permitted in combat roles until 1989 when a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that women were to be permitted in combat roles.²² This legal challenge was brought forward when Isabelle Gauthier, Marie-Claude Gauthier, Georgina Anne Brown, and Joseph Houlden filed a complaint with the tribunal in 1989 claiming discrimination based on sex.²³ The ruling declared that the CAF is subject to both the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; the equality provisions of the latter became effective in 1895.²⁴ Still, women's inclusion was not without its discrimination however, for example, members of the RCAF Women's Division (WD) were paid 20% less than their male counterparts who held the same positions, were not initially eligible for dependant allowances, and were initially denied separation allowance as well.²⁵ While there are many other examples of discriminatory treatment, those listed above serve to contextualize the challenges and mistreatment of women in the service. Despite this, nearly 50,000 women answered the call to serve Canada during the Second World War, 71 of whom gave their lives for the cause.²⁶

Unfortunately, the end of the Second World War brought with it demobilization and again, the women's service corps were disbanded, despite the success they brought to the war effort. By 1951 however, the Government of Canada was forced to face the reality that in order to be effective, women were required in the ranks.²⁷ As such, "the reserve elements of all three services began to recruit women, as did the regular air force."²⁸ By 1954-55, the regular army and navy had followed suit and began to recruit women as well.²⁹ While this in itself was a progressive step for women in the service, as mentioned above, it was not until the CAF was ordered to open all trades to women in 1985 that women were permitted an equal chance to service.³⁰ Likewise, throughout this period, women still faced pay, enlistment criteria,

¹⁹ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, 40.

²⁰ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, 42.

²¹ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, 47-52.

²² "Equal Rights for Men and Women in Combat."

²³ "Equal Rights for Men and Women in Combat."

²⁴ Government of Canada, "Canadian Human Rights Act," R.S.C., 1985, c. H-6 § (2021), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/?wbdisable=false>; Government of Canada, "Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms" (n.d.), <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/resources-ressources.html#copy>.

²⁵ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, *A History of Women in the Canadian Military*, 52.

²⁶ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, 88.

²⁷ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, 95.

²⁸ Sarty and Dundas, "Women in the Canadian Armed Forces."

²⁹ Sarty and Dundas.

³⁰ Sarty and Dundas. As noted above, the last trade to permit women into its ranks was the submarine service in 2001.

discrimination based on family status, and exclusion from attending military colleges.³¹ Throughout this period, rampant misogyny and an “unbearable climate” within military units further exacerbated and undermined any attempts at meaningful gender integration.³² Although graphic, the examples below are included to highlight the deplorable conditions in which women were expected to serve.

In August 1980, the first cohort of female cadets were admitted to the Royal Military College of Canada.³³ This initial class of 32 women was subject to horrendous treatment as male staff made bets on how many female cadets they could sleep with, how many they could break, and how it was the male staff’s ‘duty’ to run the women out of the college.³⁴ This type of behaviour was not exclusive to the college and persisted for decades as the *Macleans* exposé ‘Rape in the Military’ by Jane O’Hara brought to light in 1998.³⁵ In it, O’Hara recounts the experiences of 13 different women, representing all service environments in the CAF, and their accounts of sexual trauma, discrimination, and rape at the hands of their peers and superiors.³⁶ The hyper-sexualized, toxic atmosphere that women were expected to serve in as described by Armstrong, Duval-Lantoiné, Davis, and O’Hara has continued until present.³⁷ This again was brought to light in 2015 when Madame Marie Deschamps released the *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces*.³⁸ In it, she described “an underlying sexualized culture in the CAF that is hostile to women and LGBTQ members, and conducive to more serious incidents of sexual harassment and assault.”³⁹ Shortcomings in the CAF’s response were confirmed in The Honourable Louise Arbour’s *Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review* in May 2022 in which she presented 48 recommendations to combat the still present issues surrounding CAF culture, specifically citing changes that the Royal Military Colleges of Canada must undertake.⁴⁰ While it is clear that these

³¹ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, *A History of Women in the Canadian Military*, 110.

³² Charlotte Duval-Lantoiné, *The Ones We Let down: Toxic Leadership Culture and Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces*, 1st ed., vol. 16. (Montréal, Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2022), 113.

³³ Kate Armstrong and Inc, *The Stone Frigate: The Royal Military College’s First Female Cadet Speaks Out, The Stone Frigate*, 1st ed. (Toronto: Dundurn, 2019), 17.

³⁴ Armstrong, 296.

³⁵ Jane O’hara, “Rape in the Military: Maclean’s Magazine,” *Maclean’s Magazine* 111, no. 21 (May 25, 1998): 14, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mma&AN=127689395&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

³⁶ O’hara, 14–21.

³⁷ Armstrong, *The Stone Frigate: The Royal Military College’s First Female Cadet Speaks Out*; Duval-Lantoiné, *The Ones We Let down: Toxic Leadership Culture and Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces*; Karen D. Davis and Royal Military College of Canada, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces, 1970-1999: Négociation Entre Les Sexes Dans Les Forces Canadiennes, 1970-1999” (Royal Military College of Canada, 2013); O’hara, “Rape in the Military.”

³⁸ Marie Deschamps, “External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces,” March 27, 2015.

³⁹ Deschamps, 22.

⁴⁰ The Honourable Louise Arbour C.C., G.O.Q., “Part III – Conclusion and List of Recommendations,” navigation page (National Defence, June 10, 2022), <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/report-of-the-independent-external-comprehensive-review/part-iii.html>.

issues have yet to be addressed in a meaningful manner, they highlight the clear and omnipresent segregation that exists for current CAF members and veterans.

As of May 2023, 16.06% of the CAF Regular Force are women, 17.39% of the Reserve Force totalling 16.48% of the entire CAF population as women.⁴¹ While these numbers are encouraging, in the face of the challenges presented above, it is not surprising that women are ostracized from their veteran colleagues as a result. This situation has become so pervasive that the author heard instances of female members not being invited to social gatherings by young CAF members (Non-Commissioned Members and Officers alike) in order to prevent any obfuscation occurring surrounding sexual misconduct. If the CAF cannot organize itself to prevent segregation between genders, is it a surprise that these issues pervade the veteran community as well? Or that women do not want to join the CAF? Simply putting a smiling woman on a recruiting poster does nothing to address the underlying lack of meaningful gender integration as outlined by Davis.⁴² Although Dundas urges caution towards focusing on the negative, the halting nature of progress thus far highlights the amount of work remaining to fully integrate women into the CAF overall and more importantly to this discussion, veteran's groups.⁴³

⁴¹ National Defence, "Statistics of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces," September 23, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces/statistics.html>.

⁴² Davis and Royal Military College of Canada, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces, 1970-1999: Négociation Entre Les Sexes Dans Les Forces Canadiennes, 1970-1999," 40.

⁴³ Dundas and Canada. Dept. of National Defence, *A History of Women in the Canadian Military*, 152.

Counterarguments

“You don’t win a debate by suppressing discussion; you win it with a better argument.”

-Frank Sonnenberg, Soul Food: Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life

While not unique to the CAF, the act of self-congratulation is particularly strong within Government and CAF circles, and it is no different when it comes to addressing veteran’s issues. This tends to complicate, convolute, and diminish any tangible efforts at discourse or improvement of existing processes and structures. This fact has been alluded to throughout this paper at various stages but nowhere was it as prevalent as in the previous discussion on women’s challenges. With that being said, it behooves this discussion to acknowledge some of the prevailing counterarguments that continue to be presented when dissension occurs surrounding veteran’s issues.

The principal counterargument that has been repeatedly uncovered throughout the research into this discussion is that ‘Canada looks after its veterans better than its peer nations.’ This can be seen in quotes such as “nearly nine in 10 Veterans reported being satisfied/very satisfied with life (86 per cent) and their family (88 per cent) from *Rehab Magazine*.¹ What this quote fails to highlight is cited in the same article, the government has spent more than \$40 million fighting lawsuits against veterans’ groups.² This is in stark contrast to Prime Minister Trudeau’s campaign promise in 2015 where he exclaimed that “no veteran will be forced to fight their own government for the support and compensation that they have earned.”³ This promise was succeeded by the government continuing to fight veterans in court and a damning 2019 Parliamentary Budget Office report that reported disabled veterans under *The New Veteran’s Charter* would have received approximately 1.5 times more financial compensation under the old charter than the present one.⁴ This provides a brief contextual understanding of some of the self-congratulatory rhetoric that exists surrounding the subject, however, it as showcased here, stops well short of exonerating the Canadian Government and its departments.

An additional argument that has been made throughout the research of this discussion is that the myriad of policy changes specific to veterans’ benefits and re-establishment have been with a view to improvement, such as the *New Veterans Charter*.⁵ While it is true that fundamentally, veterans’ benefits have never been an issue in party politics, in that it is generally accepted that the “social covenant” must be honoured, there remain disparities, as highlighted throughout this discussion.⁶ Unfortunately, the examples provided throughout this paper have shown that the extensive list of policy changes, have generally been with a view to limitation and

¹ Mary Bart, “How Is Canada Taking Care of Its Veterans?,” *Rehab & Community Care Medicine Magazine*, January 17, 2019, <https://www.rehabmagazine.ca/uncategorized/how-is-canada-taking-care-of-its-veterans/>.

² Bart.

³ Lee Berthiaume, “After Years of Broken Promises, Vets Struggle with Which Party to Support,” *CBC News*, September 28, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/after-years-of-broken-promises-vets-struggle-with-which-party-to-support-1.5301468>.

⁴ Berthiaume.

⁵ Kerr, “The New Veterans Charter: Moving Forward.”

⁶ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, “The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004,” 1.

or exclusion. In the context of the *New Veteran's Charter*, these *improvements* have again created division among veterans and created further hardship. This is most acutely displayed in the 2004 *Origins* document where the Canadian Forces Advisory Council acknowledges that the adaptation of the *Veterans Charter* for veterans of the Korean War was not followed up and that this atrophy had adverse consequences that exist to this day.⁷

The disparity in application of veterans' benefits has been discussed extensively throughout this paper in various contexts and examples. Still, the *New Veterans Charter* created a large division between veterans of the same war in Afghanistan. An example of this can be seen where a double-leg amputee, subject to the *New Veterans' Charter* is forced to prove annually to Veteran's Affairs that he did in fact, still lack both legs in order to ensure the continuity of his benefits.⁸ It goes without saying that amputated limbs and the challenges they present will not ever alleviate themselves, however, unlike their peers whose injuries were subject to the old charter they still need to spend the time and effort to prove their disability each and every year. The final example surrounds delays in claim processing time. Often, veterans when released from the service medically will be forced to wait for years to have their claim accessed.⁹ In many of these cases, especially those surrounding invisible injuries (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Operational/Occupational Stress Injuries (OSI)), these delays equate to an inability to access the required mental health or therapeutic supports. The current backlog is estimated at approximately 40,000 claims which has been highlighted by the Veteran's Ombudsman as a source of additional hardship and stress for veterans.¹⁰ Finally, there remain the challenges of the Royal Canadian Legion.

As stated previously, The Royal Canadian Legion is the self-proclaimed largest veteran's advocacy group in Canada, largely recognized by successive governments "as the primary institutional stakeholder when it comes to setting policy for veterans."¹¹ Unfortunately, as the legion scrambles for membership, its perpetual, and almost dogmatic obsession with exclusionary practices has done the opposite.¹² These practices are so well acknowledged that the 2016 Legion Membership manual warns branches from "Negative Branch Dynamics...(including) petty bickering, cliques and prejudice amongst members."¹³ While the legion is attempting to modernize, it is doing so at the expense of current veterans. A strong example of this is branch 179 in Vancouver's east end, where the legion has reinvented itself as a 'hipster haven,' making veteran members uncomfortable to attend in the evenings.¹⁴ While this is

⁷ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, 20.

⁸ Berthiaume, "After Years of Broken Promises, Vets Struggle with Which Party to Support."

⁹ Lee Berthiaume, "Why the Parties Aren't Talking about Veterans Issues This Election," *National Post*, September 16, 2021, <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/election-2021/afghanistan-fatigue-blamed-as-veterans-issues-go-missing-in-action-on-election-trail>.

¹⁰ Berthiaume.

¹¹ Sean Bruyca and Robert Smol, "Calling Out the Great Veteran Pretender," *Esprit de Corps*, December 15, 2016, <https://www.espritdecorps.ca/perspectives-1/calling-out-the-great-veteran-pretender>.

¹² "Membership Manual," 123.

¹³ "Membership Manual," 123.

¹⁴ Laura Trethewey, "Why Royal Canadian Legion Halls Are Now Hipster Havens," *The Walrus*, November 7, 2017, <https://thewalrus.ca/why-royal-canadian-legion-halls-are-now-hipster-havens/>.

positive for the business of the legion, it is exactly the opposite of what the legion stands for, to support veterans. Further alienating veteran membership from the legion is a lack of leadership representation that contemporary veterans can identify with. This is most prevalent in the example of the Dominion Command President, Bruce Julian, whose biography lists service in the 3rd and 4th Battalions of the Royal Canadian Regiment but does not have a Canadian Forces Decoration (CD), nor an operational service medal of any kind.¹⁵ How can he represent the national voice for veterans' issues when he, himself is not a veteran with operational service? Circumstances such as this have led critics to describe the legion as an "alleged veteran organization (that has) devolved into an institutional lie."¹⁶ While this argument could be dismissed as pejorative, it highlights a sentiment and feeling that the legion is not trying to modernize within its *raison d'être*, it is simply trying to survive while maintaining its self-importance.

Now think back to Pte Liam McGinnis, who was trying to navigate this quagmire as an unsupported young man, not only trying to figure out who he is, but how to reconcile his experiences both overseas and upon his return home. His story is a recipe for disenfranchisement and will continue to be so until the institutions that are responsible or claim responsibility for veterans and their well-being can start to march to the same beat. Unfortunately, the "social covenant" that the Canadian Forces Advisory Council references is not universally understood, nor is it a statutory protection or requirement, which is part of the challenge when approaching veterans' issues.¹⁷

¹⁵ "Dominion President," Legion.ca, accessed May 6, 2024, <https://www.legion.ca/who-we-are/our-members/our-executive/dominion-president>. A Canadian Forces Decoration denotes 12 years of service in the CAF.

¹⁶ Bruyee and Smol, "Calling Out the Great Veteran Pretender."

¹⁷ Canadian Forces Advisory Council, "The Origins and Evolution of Veterans Benefits in Canada 1914-2004," 1.

Conclusion

The journey of Pte Liam McGinnis is one that is all too familiar to anyone who has served and manifests itself in many different facets. Everyone who has served has had a different experience, whether it is service in a support trade who did not deploy on an overseas operation or Canadian veterans who have experienced the Baptism of Fire that combat can be. The one thing that is universal is that with limited exceptions, since the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, consistently and proudly Canadians from all walks of life have volunteered time and time again to serve their country, no matter the flag that was flying. While traditionally this section would be reserved for a summary of the arguments or key findings presented above, As a serving member who has spent almost a year working on a directed research project in the context of completion of the Joint Command and Staff Programme and a masters' degree, I would like to auto-ethnographically present my own interpretations, the genesis of my interest, and provide a sense of where further research should go and policy should address.

The inclusion of Liam and his experiences were not unlike my own upon return from my first tour in Afghanistan and the challenges that he felt, feels, and experienced were very similar to my own. Liam was used as an example of the human dimension to the challenges faced by veterans of any walk of life. Initially, my aim was to highlight the responsibility of the Government of Canada, Veteran's Affairs, and the Royal Canadian Legion to reimage what a veteran is in the minds of Canadians. This was based largely on my own feelings of misappreciation and lack of acknowledgment upon my return home, specifically on Remembrance Day. In a one-month period of time, while seconded to Helmand province to the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade in December 2011, I stood on 26 different ramp ceremonies, saluting the caskets of the fallen from the US, Britain, and Georgia.¹ This had a profound impact on me and how I viewed my service and potential sacrifice, and it was this point specifically that inspired this paper. The topic of this paper was adjusted to the arguments you see presented due to the accessibility of resources within the time constraints of this assignment. It became clear while researching and writing that the issue was more complex than simply imagery.

It is still salient that, while remembrance is itself important, we as a Canadian society must accept that regardless of service, remembrance and more importantly, the work of Veteran's Affairs is to look after and support veterans. In the current climate, this is not happening as I hope I have highlighted (and at times condemned) throughout this paper. The sheer fact that I could have written an entire paper and then some on the challenges that women face and have faced in their service is a testament to this point. More research is required in this area, and certainly, more work is needed to fix both attitudes and any extant policies used to justify toxic culture and inequality. I acknowledge that the discussion on women's challenges was focused primarily on challenges within the service overall and less specifically about life afterwards. This was due largely to the impact that the research had on me personally. The fact that the Legion refuses to acknowledge its own history of misogyny towards membership while continuing to laud the efforts of the Ladies Auxiliaries is proof of this. Recognition is the first

¹ A Ramp Ceremony is when military members stand on an airfield apron, or ramp, to pay our respects to a fallen member in a coffin as they are loaded on a plane to return home for their funeral and interment.

step in addressing a difficult and painful past. Regardless, the fact remains, that the work and effort of women in the CAF has been and continues to be critical to any successes that the institution will have. Until this institution finds a way to support, secure, and follow through on the values that it espouses, specifically to its own, this will continue to be an unacceptable and untenable existence.

While this paper has attempted to discuss and bring to light the unacceptable differences between different eras of veterans and their treatment by the Government of Canada and the various organizations that claim to support them, it is important to acknowledge veterans' responsibility in this as well. We are all interwoven into Canadian history, whether the government or our institutions care to accept and celebrate that, and it behooves us as veterans to accept this challenge and work together to navigate the challenges that lie ahead. Afterall, as Liam has shown us, only a veteran, can truly appreciate or understand the challenges that lie ahead and it is only through unity, which we currently lack that we stand a chance to triumph.

Further to this, I would be remiss if I did not discuss what work remains that this study did not have the purview to cover. The subject of imagery needs further discussion and review. The fact that there are more Cold War, peacekeeping, and even Afghanistan veterans alive today than those from Korea and the Second World War is demographic proof; Canada needs to see what contemporary veterans 'look like' and acknowledge their service. Consequently, the Royal Canadian Legion needs to stop simply trying to survive and uphold its mission statement of supporting veterans, and this means all veterans. There is a reason why current veterans identify more closely with motorcycle groups and other external organizations than the Legion and this chasm needs to be bridged. Finally, a much deeper discussion and understanding at all levels needs to take place on the role of women, historically and in the contemporary context. The CAF has women at all ranks and in all trades who provide exceptional value to the organization and those the CAF aims to serve. If Liam had a hard time coming home and trying to go to a Legion, I cannot fully imagine what it would feel like for a female veteran to attempt the same when their own website only speaks of Ladies Auxiliaries. Afterall, their fight to serve was not to end up making sandwiches and fundraising for the rest of the veteran community. This history is deeply gendered, and acknowledging the current divide by acknowledging that past is critical and necessary.

As mentioned above, the imagery surrounding what a Canadian visualizes as being a veteran is not a middle-aged woman, it is not a 20-year-old young man, and it certainly is not a 30-year-old with pink hair and four tours overseas, yet that is exactly the reality of today's CAF diaspora. We, as a Canadian society, have evolved. If the CAF is a representation of Canadian society, this needs to be considered, accepted, and celebrated. The time away is no different than those that came before and the hardships and risk are equally as horrific; I am sure the 159 Canadians that died in Afghanistan and their families would agree and are worthy of deference.

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