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**EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS: A SHIFT TOWARD A  
STAKEHOLDER APPROACH IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Corporations often view the communications, public relations, advertising or marketing function within their organizations as a means of controlling a public's perception of their brand or reputation. They do this through one-way, top-down communication strategies in an attempt to influence what information is being shared with which audience, however a modern 24/7 and digital communications environment seeks to change how organizations approach communication both externally and internally with their employees. Companies and news media no longer have a monopoly on information and managers must recognize that if employees do not receive the necessary information to do their jobs, they will seek that information elsewhere and the message control will be lost.

Despite having a traditional hierarchical organizational structure, the Canadian Armed Forces are not immune to this new internal communications reality. This paper examines organizational communications theories, network analysis and Canadian Armed Forces specific case studies to demonstrate a need for the institution to prioritize a leadership responsibility in its communications efforts and adapt to a stakeholder communications approach that utilizes symmetric communications channels and engages and empowers members of the Canadian Armed Forces to become ambassadors for the institution.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Corporations often view the communications, public relations, advertising or marketing function within their organizations as a means of controlling a public's perception of their brand or reputation. Often this is done to increase revenue and profits, where in other organizations such as government departments, it is done to increase public support through accountability to taxpayers. Public Relations theorist James Grunig posits that although many corporations believe that their one-way communications policies of broadcasting information to their audiences are influencing these perceptions, recent research suggests that any appearance of message control is simply an illusion and any brand or reputation success is instead based on what "members of different publics think and say to each other, not something that organisations can create or manage."<sup>1</sup>

In the past, this idea of top-down communication with targeted audiences made sense, and it worked. Corporations could control what information was being shared, where and to who through paid advertising, news releases and other one-way channels of information flow. Carefully crafted messages in favour of the companies would be widely accepted by journalists and news outlets as truth, and all communications activities were performed in a manner that painted any potentially problematic situation in a positive light and that favoured the corporation's reputation. In contrast, with the advent of the digital era, information can no longer be so carefully controlled and successful public relations efforts are those that are symmetrical and that develop relationships between organizations, consumers and stakeholders.<sup>2</sup>

Because organizations and media no longer have a monopoly on what information is shared and when, and audiences now can dictate how they receive their information,

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<sup>1</sup> James Grunig, "Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalisation", *Prism*, Vol 6 No 2 (2009), 5.

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

management and communications professionals must also consider how employees access information that pertains to their jobs and the company they work for. Michał Chmielecki highlights the newfound importance of internal communications, calling it the “lifeblood of the organization”<sup>3</sup>. He says that inadequate internal communications is often the root cause of most operational problems within an organization.<sup>4</sup> This not only causes problems with productivity, output and morale, but it also affects how ill-informed employees will communicate externally about their employer. It is safe to say that management can no longer assume that internal and external communication efforts operate as separate entities<sup>5</sup>, and that anything communicated outside of an organization must also be shared internally. Richard Dolphin says that in today’s communications environment an organization can never share information with external audiences that they have not yet shared internally because the company’s employees are the most important assets it has.<sup>6</sup>

Companies around the world are beginning to recognize these realities and according to Richard Dolphin, some of the most successful companies are reported to spend more money on internal communications than those who aren’t as successful, and that the top corporations have spent more than 50 percent of their communications budgets on internal efforts.<sup>7</sup> This is because in an increasingly complex and complicated communications environment, it is imperative to always have an understanding of what narrative is being shared in regards to an organization.

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<sup>3</sup> Michał Chmielecki, "Factors Influencing Effectiveness of Internal Communication." *Management and Business Administration*. 23, no. 879110 (2015): 28

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Mary Welch and Paul R. Jackson. "Rethinking Internal Communication: A Stakeholder Approach." *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 12, no. 2 (2007): 180.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Dolphin, "Internal Communications: Today’s Strategic Imperative." *Journal of Marketing Communications* 11, no. 3 (2005): 182.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

Today, employee morale and public perception has as much effect on an organization's bottom line as production or marketplace challenges.<sup>8</sup>

This research paper attempts to examine the current communication realities that organizational messages can no longer be controlled by corporations or organizations through easily defined channels, and how the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence must acknowledge that it cannot neglect internal communications in favour of external efforts and media relations. The Department must make efforts to evolve how they communicate internally and externally by providing service members and civilian employees with information through a symmetric communications channel, treating them as stakeholders and ambassadors for the institution. The paper will examine how various communications theories would be applied in today's digitized environment; how information is shared within organizational structures and how external and internal communications efforts must be closely coordinated. The paper will also consider various Canadian Armed Forces specific case studies and how the institution can continue successful communication efforts and how they can adapt some common themes into their existing communications strategy.

## **Definitions**

It would be prudent to begin with an explanation of some commonly used terminology in this paper in order to lay the baseline of understanding. Although this paper focuses more on the Canadian Armed Forces than the Department of National Defence, often many communication efforts currently underway applies to both in either an equal or unequal manner. The *Department of National Defence* refers to the Canadian federal department and is responsible for

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<sup>8</sup> Keith Burton, "The Future of Corporate Culture: How to Achieve Excellence in Internal Communications Management." *Public Relations Strategist* 22, no. 4 (2016): 9.

“defending Canada’s interests at home and abroad”<sup>9</sup>. The terms ‘Department’ or ‘Department of National Defence’ will be used interchangeably throughout this paper. The Department of National Defence consists of both the civilian employees of the Department, and the full-time (Regular Force) and part-time (Reserve Force) members of the Canadian Armed Forces. The *Canadian Armed Forces* refers to the uniformed members of the Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Air Force and Canadian Special Operations Forces who may be called upon by the Government of Canada at any time to “undertake missions for the protection of Canada and Canadians and to maintain international peace and stability”<sup>10</sup>. The *Defence Team* is often used to refer to both employees of the Department and service members of the Canadian Armed Forces at the same time.

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have a common communications policy to inform the public of its activities in a timely, accurate, open and transparent way; consider Canadian’s concerns when making decisions or plans; integrate public affairs considerations when making decisions or plans; and ensure all communications activities are carefully coordinated between public affairs and communications staff and the chain of command.<sup>11</sup> The term *Public Affairs* refers to all “activities related to informing internal and external audiences”.<sup>12</sup> Depending on the context, Public Affairs can also be referred to as *Public Relations, Marketing, or Communications*. It is important to note that any of these activities are not limited to the public affairs or communications professionals within an organization. Communication within the Canadian Armed Forces is a command responsibility. It is the Public

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<sup>9</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence, “Mandate of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces,” last modified 4 September 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/mandate.html>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives: Public Affairs Policy*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 2008-0.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Affairs Officer or Communication Advisor's role to support and enhance those communication efforts through guidance, advice and available public relations tools.

Although the lines have recently blurred between external and internal communications, many organizations, including the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces continue to define them separately. Although this paper will advocate the use of both collaboratively, it is important to note that *external communications* will refer to any corporate information-sharing with the public, while *internal communications* will refer to any communications within the organization to include day-to-day information sharing between commanders or managers and subordinates, official corporate internal communications activities by the Department or the passage of administrative information through orders or directives. Alternatively, *Corporate Internal Communications* will refer to any internal communications activities “designed to inform [Canadian Armed Forces] members and/or [Department of National Defence] employees”<sup>13</sup> through official and formal communications channels such as e-mails, newspapers, or video updates.

For the purposes of this research paper, there three terms that may be used when describing urgent or immediate communications needs. An *emergency* refers to any event that may occur that requires “immediate action”<sup>14</sup> and that could affect the ability of a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, or an employee of the Department of National Defence to do their job, or threaten their health or safety. This could include the closing of a base, a critical weather event, or a threat from an outside source. Alternatively, as described in the *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives*, a *crisis* is “any event or series of events that undermines public confidence, causes damage to an organization, or threatens public safety, security or

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2008-5.

<sup>14</sup> Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “Emergency.”



values”<sup>15</sup> and a *significant incident* refers to any incident... ..that could cause concern for [the Department of National Defence], the [Canadian Armed Forces] or the Minister of National Defence”<sup>16</sup> Of note, most, if not all communications efforts within the Department or the Canadian Armed Forces must carefully consider *operational security* as a determining factor of what and how to communicate. DAOD 2008-xx describes operational security as the “principle of safeguarding the integrity of a military operation or activity, or the safety of CAF members or members of allied forces”<sup>17</sup>. It is important to note that operational security should never be used as an excuse to withhold information that might be controversial or embarrassing to the organization.

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have various orders, policies and directives which purpose ranges from passage of information to instructions on how things are to be done. *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives* is a manual, which provides administrative direction to members of the Defence Team to outline effective management of the Department and the Canadian Armed Forces.<sup>18</sup> A *Canadian Forces General (CANFORGEN) message* is a Canadian Armed Forces-wide application, which allows senior leadership and policy makers the means to disseminate information that is relevant to the majority of the organization. Examples of messages include changes in policy, senior promotion announcements and specialized training and selection instructions. *Public Affairs Plans* are defined by the *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives* as “specific documents that articulate the public affairs objectives, themes, approaches and activities required to support the

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<sup>15</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives...*, 2008-3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives: Foundation Framework for Defence Administrative Orders and Directives*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 1000-0.

implementation of a policy, program, operation or initiative”.<sup>19</sup> These plans can be written as strategic-level plans over the course of a year or longer, or they can be written to support a specific issue or theme. Sometimes, in lieu of a formal plan, *Public Affairs Guidance* might be written as a short direction on how a specific issue might be dealt with.

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<sup>19</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives...*, 2008-0.

## CHAPTER 2: ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION THEORY

Communication Theorists examine how organizational structure affects information flow and how organization culture affects how employees communicate internally and externally.

Although various theorists have different approaches to how they review organizational communications, by examining various researchers' approaches, Stanley Deetz notes that because each theorist has different perceptions of what is important, it can be very difficult to summarize any common themes in research. However, a few do stand out as being perceived as most important by two or more researchers: a) superior/subordinate relationships; b) information flow; c) organizational culture and climate; and d) formal and informal networks and channels.<sup>20</sup>

Although these themes are the most common, how each organization communicates is heavily affected by other factors that will be different from company to company. Charles Conrad and Julie Haynes discuss analyzing organizational communications by looking at various clusters within an organization. They describe clusters that prefer structure to action; action to structure; and those that integrate the two.<sup>21</sup> The clusters that prefer structure to action focus on how information is shared within an organization through networks, technology and chains of command. The action-focused clusters lean toward culture, meanings and symbolism in the information exchanges within an organization. There lies a tension between these two cluster theories and Conrad and Haynes posit that in order to best understand cluster theory is to examine them as combined and complementary systems.<sup>22</sup> They seek to understand information flow within an organization by examining how social constructs interact with formal structures.

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<sup>20</sup> Stanley Deetz, "Conceptual Foundations," in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 7.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Conrad and Julie Haynes, "Development of Key Constructs," in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 51-6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Another means of understanding how information can flow effectively within an organization is through the various sociolinguistics that exist throughout the organization and the ability to examine and understand how various groups interact within one another through language. It is important to understand the varying factors that can affect how language is used within an organization. Employees who come from different regions, upbringing, gender or education will use language differently.<sup>23</sup> Recently, while hosting up to 2,500 United States military members on a training exercise in Australia, soldiers in the Australian Army have been ordered to avoid using Australian slang during the exercise out of fear that the lack of common terminology will cause a communication breakdown among military troops who must work together toward a common goal, potentially causing fatal consequences.<sup>24</sup>

An employee's status within an organization will also affect how they use language to communicate; however, Putnam and Fairhurst suggest that the language gap is less likely within common departments of an organization and more likely across separate departments.<sup>25</sup> Traditional hierarchical organizations that continue to retain their tall structures are more likely to use formal titles to indicate status. The Canadian Armed Forces with a specific and formed rank structure is one such example. To be expected to refer to a senior employee using a title or formal address indicates a non-reciprocal relationship<sup>26</sup> in which one employee has power over another.

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<sup>23</sup> Linda L. Putnam and Gail T. Fairhurst, "Discourse Analysis in Organizations," in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 82.

<sup>24</sup> Ally Foster, "Australian soldiers banned from using slang around US troops," NewsCorp Australia (2019), last accessed 5 May 2019, [https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/australian-soldiers-banned-from-using-slang-around-us-troops/news-story/2cb4cc445963a8de788d830ca1722625?fbclid=IwAR3ben\\_V3wKJ4ZGcuokAQOvDUy-oWQF6nitxhC9ku9Tk5tkc5S0O\\_QNdAKY](https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/australian-soldiers-banned-from-using-slang-around-us-troops/news-story/2cb4cc445963a8de788d830ca1722625?fbclid=IwAR3ben_V3wKJ4ZGcuokAQOvDUy-oWQF6nitxhC9ku9Tk5tkc5S0O_QNdAKY)

<sup>25</sup> Putnam and Fairhurst, *Discourse Analysis in Organizations*...., 82.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

Putnam and Fairhurst note however, that there has been a recent shift toward more informal forms of address such as the use of first names as opposed to formal titles within modern organizations.<sup>27</sup> Although many organizations have clearly defined and specific terminology to be used, there are less common terms that when used can cause confusion. In organizations with unique terminology, there is also a seniority gap with regards to language used within the organization. Newer employees may not use established language as comfortably as those who have been employed much longer. As well, through informal communication, formal terms might be replaced by accepted informal terms within a smaller group.<sup>28</sup> According to Putnam and Fairhurst, “words become the markers for the class, occupation, and professional roles in organizations”.<sup>29</sup>

### **Organizational Change And Managing Culture**

When it comes to organizational change and managing culture, internal communications plays an enormous role. The meaning of the term ‘organizational culture’ or ‘corporate culture’ has long been debated. Some use the term when referring to how an organization is structured, some believe it is how an organization operates and conducts their business, while others believe it refers to the shared sets of values and principles that guide the organization’s identity.<sup>30</sup>

Michael D. Watkins, an author and professor of organizational change and transition, notes that despite the variations of the meaning behind the term, there is no disagreement that organizational culture exists, and that it is a key aspect that defines how people behave within an organization.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>30</sup> Michael D. Watkins, “What is Organizational Culture? And Why Should We Care?” Harvard Business Review (2013), last accessed 15 December 2018, <https://hbr.org/2013/05/what-is-organizational-culture>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

At the end of the day, regardless of how organizational culture is defined, an understanding of how it influences behaviour and perceptions within an organization is required in order to communicate effectively and to promote change, if required. Eric M. Eisenberg and Patricia Riley highlight this importance, noting that many managers have attempted to push a change agenda that doesn't take into consideration an organization's existing culture, to limited success. This has led many researchers to believe that although management might be able to affect changes in behaviour or perception, it is nearly impossible to manage the actual culture that underpins these behaviours.<sup>32</sup>

Eisenberg and Riley hypothesize that if management attempts to change culture by changing those "shared meanings and assumptions", the effort will be unsuccessful. Instead, they suggest that by attempting to "reshape practices – including communication practices – is less likely to be resisted" and the change will have longer lasting effects.<sup>33</sup> Culture and communication are not separate entities within an organization. It must be understood in today's evolved communications environment that communication can affect culture, but an organization's culture also affects how that organization communicates. It is a two-way street.

Colonel (retired) Marc Rouleau's research leads him to believe that culture change is not possible if it does not have "integrated and assertive supporting communications".<sup>34</sup> In his research paper, 'Enabling Institutional Change Through Effective Communication', he explains that leadership cannot simply order organizational culture change to happen; rather it needs to occur through "buy-in" by the majority of the managers and employees. The only way this can

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<sup>32</sup> Eric M. Eisenberg and Patricia Riley, "Organizational Culture," in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 310.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Marc Rouleau, "Abstract: Enabling Institutional Change Through Effective Communication" Operation HONOUR Research Papers. Last accessed 2 April 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/operation-honour/research-data-analysis/operation-honour-research-papers.html>

happen, he insists, is through communication that ensures that everyone knows that change is needed, why it is happening and how they will be affected by the change. The way to ensure this buy-in is through engagement with everyone internal and external to the organization that has a vested interest in the outcomes of the change.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

### CHAPTER 3: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The practice of public relations is undergoing a global and drastic shift. The belief previously that messages can be carefully controlled and that organizations can push their themes and messages without public scepticism has already been invalidated in a digital and 24/7 communications environment. Grunig points out that already for many years, publics interpret messages on their own, and choose how they wish to react to those messages. He suggests that organizations need to recognize the direction public conversations are going and organizations need to do more than force one-way crafted messages on various audiences, they need to become part of the conversations that are already happening.<sup>36</sup> Management and even communications practitioners often forget the ‘relations’ of public relations, both externally and internally. The default communications approach has often been to push information to the public, and push it down to the employees. No longer will publics and stakeholders accept information at face value; they want organizations to be responsive, answer questions and provide explanation. Grunig notes that organizations that engage and interact with their publics have more successful brand recognition and reputation than those that do not. He emphasizes that in today’s complex communications environment, brands and reputations can no longer be dictated by the organization. The audiences, publics and stakeholders are now the ones that have conversations about a corporation’s identity and they are the ones that determine their presence.<sup>37</sup>

As the lines between external and internal communications continue to blur, it is understood that employees within organizations obtain more information from outside sources. The use of social media platforms and chat sites such as Reddit allows employees to obtain, clarify and influence information about almost any topic, including their employer. As such, how

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<sup>36</sup> Grunig, *Paradigms of global public relations...*, 15.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



organizations approach communications as a whole, and how they consider the implications of this new communications environment when communicating internally needs renewed focus. Managers and Communications practitioners must factor this new environment into how they engage with their employees. According to *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives*, internal communications in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces must be the responsibility of leaders within the chain of command as well as carefully coordinated with any public affairs activities and plans.<sup>38</sup>

According to Mary Welch and Paul Jackson, little research has been done that is focused specifically on internal communications within organizations and theorists acknowledge that even today they haven't quite developed a firm understanding of how to employ internal communications tools most effectively to see tangible results within an organization.<sup>39</sup> This is likely due to the fact that each organization has separate structure and separate informal networks that have an affect on how information is shared. They explain that managers must acknowledge that formal channels and "informal chat" happen concurrently<sup>40</sup> and as such, planned communication efforts must take this reality into consideration.

While examining effective internal communication, Michał Chmielecki analyzes various theories on what the top goals and objectives of internal communication in an organization should be. He notes that there has been a shift away from "controlling and directing" employees to "engaging, challenging and stimulating" them, thus creating a an environment that is collaborative, adaptable and flexible.<sup>41</sup> Theorists say that this type of environment results in a workforce that participates in decision-making and achieving strategic goals through their action

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<sup>38</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives*...,2008-3.

<sup>39</sup> Welch and Jackson. *Rethinking Internal Communication*..., 178.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Chmielecki, *Factors Influencing Effectiveness of Internal Communication*..., 27.

and communication.<sup>42</sup> The following goals and objectives are common throughout the various theories or come out on top:

1. Leadership must be committed to developing their own communication skills and committed to communication efforts within the organization;
2. Messages are conveyed in a way that is understood, accepted and relevant to the receiver;
3. Messages are consistent with actions and policies; and
4. Communication efforts should facilitate dialogue, participation and engagement.

One of the most important factors of effective internal communications within an organization is often forgotten, and that is that of a leadership responsibility. If leaders are not engaged with their employees at every level, they will be unable to understand the true culture of how people interact and behave within the organization, the internal communication networks, and the supervisor/subordinate relationships. Without this understanding, it will be nearly impossible inform and enable employees to achieve strategic goals. According to Linjuan Men and Don Stacks, it has been proven that when internal communication is applied effectively, it creates feelings of “trust, inclusion, commitment, and job satisfaction, which result in higher productivity and performance, which leads to better external relations”.<sup>43</sup> When analysing the internal communications efforts of the Royal Canadian Navy, Corina De Guire surmised that effective internal communications results in trust in the organization and thus enables employees who positively represent their organization through high morale, loyalty, and dedication.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Linjuan Rita Men and Don Stacks, "The Effects of Authentic Leadership on Strategic Internal Communication and Employee-Organization Relationships," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 26, no. 4 (2014): 301.

<sup>44</sup> Corina Lyne De Guire, “Internal Communication in the Canadian Navy” (Master’s Thesis, Royal Roads University, 2005), 75-6.

Michał Chmielecki highlights that organizations can no longer assume that communications happens on its own, nor can they assume that pushing information out will result in the intended audience receiving the information and processing it. He says that it is the responsibility of leaders and communications practitioners to make their best effort to limit the amount of unnecessary information that gets passed to subordinates without denying them the data they need to do their jobs or understand policy.<sup>45</sup>

### **Corporate Communication**

When referring to internal communications, many organizations define it as the activity of corporate communications or corporate internal communications, that is, official messages and products that originate from or are disseminated by a formal communications team. Often, the act of supervisor/subordinate interaction is assumed to be part of daily operations as opposed to being a key part of the organization's communications goals. Corporate communications, in reality is a tool within the internal communications construct.

In the following figure, Mary Welch and Paul Jackson highlight that corporate communication in most organizations relates to passing strategic information having to do with branding, identity and policy.<sup>46</sup> The challenge with corporate internal communications is whether the messages sent from the top level are tailored for optimal reception by all employees, or if they only reach a select demographic within the organization.<sup>47</sup> Corporate communication efforts must be implemented with a comprehensive understanding of the organization's structure and culture. Each communication product must take into consideration how it may affect workplace morale and adjustments in current culture,<sup>48</sup> and must contribute to enhancing internal

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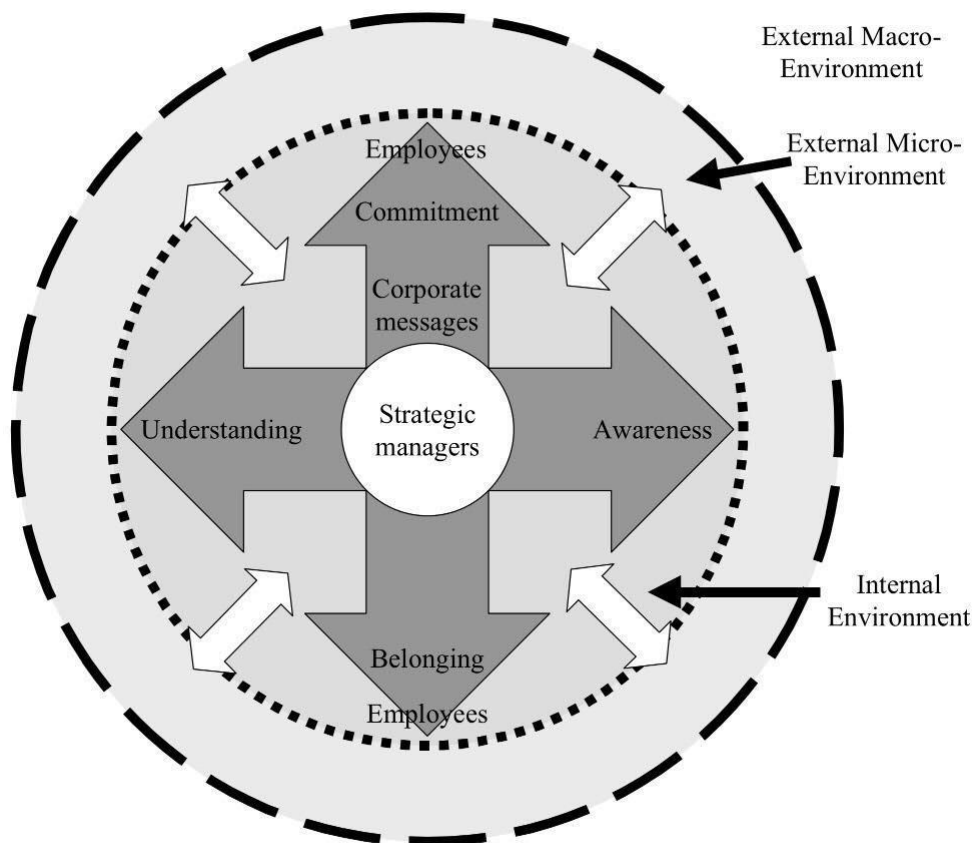
<sup>45</sup> Chmielecki, *Factors Influencing Effectiveness of Internal Communication...*, 35.

<sup>46</sup> Welch and Jackson. *Rethinking Internal Communication...*, 181.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-190.

relationships, loyalty, understanding of organizational effects, and employee ownership of the organization's strategic goals.



**Figure 2.1 Internal Corporate Communication.**

Source: Welch and Jackson. *Rethinking Internal Communication: A Stakeholder Approach*, 186.

*Defence Administrative Orders and Directives* dictate that Corporate Internal Communications in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces must be closely aligned with both internal and external communications efforts. It outlines how leadership and managers within the Defence Team shall always ensure that appropriate resources are dedicated to internal communications efforts and that all communications programming considers strategic-level communications direction. Alternatively, the Assistant Deputy Minister (Public Affairs) team is responsible for ensuring that the efforts within the Canadian Armed

Forces Corporate Internal Communications products such as the annual strategic public affairs plan, the Department-wide newspaper *The Maple Leaf*, and *Defence Team News*, a weekly strategic-level internal e-mail product are coordinated closely with Commanders and other Level 1 principals.<sup>49</sup> The two efforts go hand-in-hand in order to ensure successful implementation of corporate-level information activities.

The Department of National Defence Corporate Internal Communications team conducted an Internal Communications survey in 2015 to examine various internal communications channels and corporate communications practices in an attempt to gauge successes and challenges of current corporate communications practices. Some interesting, yet not surprising results came from the research.

The Department of National Defence has an internal network, called the ‘Defence Wide Area Network’ (or DWAN) in which it has the ability to host its corporate e-mail platform, shared drives, and an Intranet with internal web pages. Of those surveyed, more than half of the respondents indicated that they did not have access to the Defence Intranet through a login account nor did they have a personalized corporate e-mail address. Of those who did have access, however, more than eighty percent had their own access at their desk or in their cubicle.

While the majority of those Defence Team members with regular access to the Intranet responded that they received about the right amount of Defence Team e-mails– a product that is sent weekly to all members of the Defence Team through the Defence Wide Area Network – less than ten percent of those respondents felt that the e-mails contained relevant information to their jobs.<sup>50</sup> Instead, many respondents noted that they receive about the right amount of information

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<sup>49</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives...*, 2008-5.

<sup>50</sup> Department of National Defence. DRDC-RDDC-2015-L361, *2015 Defence Team Internal Communications Survey*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 21.

about their job through other means. They prefer to receive relevant information from their direct supervisors, either in person or through email messages, through formal orders and directives and by searching on the Internet.

This kind of information is particularly important to allow communications practitioners to better understand the communications environment they are working in. As an example, it can be safe to assume that based on the survey results, there is a large population of the Canadian Armed Forces who do not have access to the e-mail product being sent. That's not to say the product should be discontinued, rather it suggests that there needs to be alternate means of passing information to people at all levels and with varying access.

### **Leadership Responsibility**

According to Richard Dolphin, internal communications is not just about passing information to audiences within an organization; it is about building relationships, trust and motivation between employers and employees.<sup>51</sup> Many communication professionals believe this can be achieved through their own internal communication efforts combined with effective leadership communication, however the reality is that not all leaders and managers express the same level of commitment to communication.

Citing various communications researchers, Linjuan Men and Don Stacks highlight the importance of the affinity between leadership and internal communication. They suggest that the majority of an organization's internal communications success depends on the leader/follower communication relationship, and not on corporate internal communications activities.<sup>52</sup> They also assert that the difference between communication style and behaviour among leaders results

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<sup>51</sup> Dolphin. *Internal Communications: Today's Strategic Imperative...*, 171.

<sup>52</sup> Men and Stacks. *The Effects of Authentic Leadership...*, 302.

in uneven information flow across the same organization.<sup>53</sup> According to Michał Chmielecki, this means that management; leadership and communications professionals need to work together to ensure “external and internal communications efforts are given equal attention in the organization”<sup>54</sup>, and he notes that as recently as the last seven years, corporations have been observed increasing their focus and budgeting toward internal communications efforts and activities.<sup>55</sup> Leaders should use their communications staff to guide their approach and assist in dissemination. These communications efforts from leadership should be personal and come from the individual in order to be perceived by employees as being legitimate.

Although the Canadian Armed Forces often recognizes the importance of leadership and mentorship, these important skills are often given little attention during developmental periods, leadership and command training. The Basic Military Officer Qualification, as an example, dedicates an 80-minute lecture toward ‘Applying Communication Skills’. This lecture has a Performance Objective, which requires the candidate to “communicate verbally, in one of Canada’s official languages, by being capable of receiving and issuing basic oral instructions”<sup>56</sup> and focuses on tone, body language and effective listening. However, the majority of the instruction is focused on one-way, hierarchical communication and the practical test requires candidates to develop and deliver a five-minute speech.<sup>57</sup>

The Army Tactical Operations Course also addresses leadership communication. This course trains junior officers in the Canadian Army to act as a tactical level commander of staff officer and “effectively contribute to the tactical employment, sustainment, and leadership of a

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Chmielecki. *Factors Influencing Effectiveness of Internal Communication...*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>56</sup> Department of National Defence, 000002.1.N.01, *Training Plan: Basic Military Officer Qualification* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 175.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

sub-unit engaged in land operations”.<sup>58</sup> Within this course, 50 minutes is dedicated to leading subordinates and addresses a number of leadership requirements including Ethos, loyalty, courage, resiliency and self-discipline.<sup>59</sup> Candidates are expected to demonstrate the “five vital skills” of Leadership; Decision Making; Communication; Organization; and Tactical Acumen.<sup>60</sup> The Training Plan defines Communication Skills as “the ability to effectively communicate ideas through combat net radio, oral presentations and formal orders”.<sup>61</sup>

In Corina De Guire’s dissertation on ‘Internal Communication in the Canadian Navy’, she outlines a number of recommendations for improved internal communications within the Royal Canadian Navy. Among those nine recommendations, all of them have undertones of leadership responsibility in all levels of communications, and three of them relate directly to the requirement of managers and leaders to play specific roles. First and foremost, she recommends the involvement and integration of leadership at all levels across both the internal and external communications effort<sup>62</sup>; second, she reminds Canadian Armed Forces leadership that they are mandated to make communications a command responsibility and recommends that they lead by example by “demonstrating that internal communications is valued in the Navy”<sup>63</sup>; third, she recommends that leadership within the Royal Canadian Navy take advantage of the expertise of their communications staff and employ them in a way that allows them to assist Commanders and managers in communicating the right messages<sup>64</sup>

### **Symmetrical vs. Asymmetrical Communication**

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<sup>58</sup> Department of National Defence, A-P1-002-ATO/PC-B01, *Qualification Standard: Army Tactical Operations Course* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2014), 1-1.

<sup>59</sup> Department of National Defence, A-P1-002-ATO/PH-B01, *Training Plan: DP2 Army Tactical Operations Course (ATOC)*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2015), 24.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> De Guire. *Internal Communication in the Canadian Navy...*, 86.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.



In order to apply a concept that puts the internal communications onus on leadership within the Canadian Armed Forces, one must re-examine how the communications in an organization happens. In a traditional hierarchy such as a military, the culturally acceptable way of communicating has always been a top-down, one-way method of passing information. Two alternative approaches as defined by James Grunig would be through a two-way symmetric or two-way asymmetric communication. Both of these approaches focus on two-way communication between supervisors or managers and their subordinates and champions feedback in the information flow as a way of involving employees in critical decision-making. A symmetric communications model focuses on even communication in both directions, which includes negotiation, collaboration and honest feedback,<sup>65</sup> while an asymmetric communications model also permits two-way engagement but the information flow favours the information of the top of the chain of command as opposed to being equal. Grunig notes that asymmetric communications are primarily used by organizations that desire their “publics to come around to its way of thinking, rather than changing the organization’s culture, policies or views”.<sup>66</sup> The choice to use either of these approaches and the resulting successes from the choice remains uncertain. Grunig noted that in his research that many companies that were known to have “excellent communications practices” embraced the symmetric approach, but acknowledged that there also existed a number of companies who used the asymmetric approach with much success.<sup>67</sup> Other theorists argue that a symmetrical communication approach is almost always much more effective<sup>68</sup>, but almost all agree that the symmetric approach is the preferred model

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<sup>65</sup> Michael Turney, “Asymmetric v. symmetric public relations,” last modified 30 November 2010, <https://www.nku.edu/~turney/prclass/readings/3eras3x.html>

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Kathleen M. Sutcliffe, “Organizational Environments and Organizational Information Processing,” in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 215.

within an organization which is dealing with a “constraining, uncertain environment” and that a symmetric model will “achieve stable, predictable, and dependable relations” with all stakeholders within and outside of that organization.<sup>69</sup> Understanding the needs of all stakeholders in an organization and soliciting their feedback, then, results in dialogue concerning important issues within the organization, no surprises when decisions are made, and internal communications messages and activities that reflect their communications needs.<sup>70</sup>

As understood, the lines between internal and external communications are increasingly becoming more blurred in today’s digital and social communications environment. According to George Cheney and Lars Christensen, “many organizations have begun to realize the difficulties of convincing an external audience about their deeds... .if the internal audience does not accept the message – and vice versa”.<sup>71</sup> Today it is much more important that organizations coordinate their internal and external activities so that messages are complementary and aligned and especially so that internal audiences who will likely receive information through external sources will not experience frustration on how and what information is being passed. In the Department of National Defence, for example, there are still organizations that have separate internal and external communication teams. Even further complicating the matter, some have internal teams within their organization, while the external team is structured elsewhere.

Organizational researchers have long advocated for two-way communications within organizations, saying they not only shape the organization’s culture, but they promote “employee participation and engagement, facilitate conversation and allow employees to voice their

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>70</sup> Grunig, *Paradigms of global public relations...*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> George Cheney and Lars Thøger Christensen, “Organizational Identity: Linkages Between Internal and External Communication” in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 232.

concerns and opinions.<sup>72</sup> They also advocate for rich engagements, that is, face-to-face interaction within an organization, saying it improves upon that corporation's communication climate and culture but facilitating immediate interaction and discussion. They highlight that interactions such as town halls, working groups, coordination meetings and other in-person interactions creates a positive communications environment and a "sense of community and belonging among employees."<sup>73</sup> Much research supports these claims as well as that employees are moving away from preferring "print channels such as memoranda, brochures, newsletters, policy manuals and posters."<sup>74</sup>

### **Conceptual Shift: Receiver vs. Stakeholder**

As will be discussed further in this paper, organizational structure has evolved over the past twenty to thirty years. No longer does the organization enjoy a carefully controlled and one-way communication relationship with its employees, and senior managers are no longer the sole decision-makers regarding changes and initiatives. Stanley Deetz notes that organizations must now recognize that those who communicate and those who make decisions are not longer formally identified and that leaders and managers must listen to the advice and opinions of their employees if they are to allow their corporation to continue to thrive in a social-centric market.<sup>75</sup>

The new structure means that organizations must no longer view employees as 'receivers' of information, and should instead consider them as 'stakeholders'. Although employees don't initially seem to fit the traditional understanding of what a stakeholder is – people or organizations with a financial or vested interest in the success of a company<sup>76</sup> – more and more

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<sup>72</sup> Linjuan Rita Men, "Strategic Internal Communication: Transformational Leadership, Communication Channels, and Employee Satisfaction," *Management Communication Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2014): 270.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-70.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>75</sup> Deetz. *Conceptual Foundations...*, 38.

<sup>76</sup> Welch and Jackson. *Rethinking Internal Communication...*, 183.

employees are expressing interest in the accomplishments and failures of the companies that they work for. According to Mary Welch and Paul Jackson, “stakeholder theory encourages managers to consider different groups with different stakes in an organization”<sup>77</sup>, and that when addressing this theory within an internal communication construct, every employee should be considered as a stakeholder and their individual interests must be considered when interacting with them. Welch and Jackson have narrowed this theory down to four types of communication: one-way communication from the strategic level to all employees (corporate communications), and two-way communication between supervisors and subordinates, within formal teams, and within specific projects.<sup>78</sup>

This shift to a stakeholder approach recognize that although final decision-making authority on strategic issues continues to rest at the top end of the organizational structure, employees, through their day-to-day efforts in the workplace are considered to have also invested in the company and therefore have a say in how the organization operates.<sup>79</sup> This approach has been more widely accepted lately in democratic and capitalist democratic societies. Deetz notes that allowing employees to provide input into organizational decisions can “lead to greater effectiveness in meeting the diverse social and economic goals” of the organization,<sup>80</sup> but despite the recognition that employees should be invited to provide more input into organizational decisions and the acknowledgement to these employees that their voices will be heard, there is still little evidence that the model is being put into practice.<sup>81</sup>

In the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, it is much more challenging to embrace the stakeholder model. The culture of a hierarchical and bureaucratic

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>79</sup> Deetz. *Conceptual Foundations...*, 38.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

government organization is hard to shift, and many would argue that it shouldn't shift that far. The business of serving and protecting Canadians at home and abroad requires for a more strict organizational structure. That being said, soldiers, sailors and aviators are spokespersons whenever they are seen in uniform in public and they represent the Department at all times through their words and actions. The culture within the institution is changing because the demographics of the Defence Team echoes those of Canada as a whole: society today demands more say on issues, including how an organization's policies may affect them, and they expect to be heard. In the Canadian Armed Forces, some recent examples of how the institution is slowly shifting to a stakeholder model can be seen in recent policy changes that affect the quality of life of service members. In September 2018, the Canadian Armed Forces announced through a Canadian Forces General message that the regulations regarding facial hair would be relaxed. Previously, soldiers, sailors and aviators were heavily restricted on length and style of haircuts as well as whether they could sport facial hair. The senior non-commissioned officer of the Canadian Armed Forces, Chief Warrant Officer Alain Guimond told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that service members had been asking for years to relax the facial hair policy, and leaders only recently began looking into whether it could be done. He said that the new grooming policy "recognizes that greater control over personal appearance enhances organizational morale and our ability to attract a wider range of Canadians".<sup>82</sup>

The recent policy changes in the Canadian Armed Forces are an indicator that the institution recognizes that the uniformed members of the Canadian Armed Forces are the most important part of the force. Without their well-being, equipment, vehicles and other capital assets are essentially useless, and they will not express loyalty or dedication to the institution,

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<sup>82</sup> Murray Brewster, "Canadian military OK's beards, as long as they're not hipster-style," Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (2018), last accessed 2 November 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/military-hipster-beards-1.4839426>

and without that loyalty and dedication, then the Department cannot rely on them to be ambassadors and advocates. Appropriate communication enables employees and then empowers them to represent the organization both on and off duty. Without the serving members, the Canadian government cannot meet its commitments at home and around the world.

In keeping with the need for employees to act as ambassadors, Alessandra Mazzei notes that “the main outcome when employees are enabled to be strategic communicators is that they actively contribute”<sup>83</sup> This means that they participate in change initiatives, they share their thoughts and ideas, and they believe they are part of the organization’s success. This then gives employees the tools they need to perform their required tasks, but also to leverage their knowledge external to the organization.<sup>84</sup> Senior leaders and managers must understand that employees of an organization are capable of so much more than their defined job description. They must understand that their employees share information on a daily basis both within and outside of the boundaries of the corporation, as described by Mazzei. “they can be very effective in referring to their organization, circulating strategic knowledge, [and] building networks”<sup>85</sup>

### **Technology and New Media**

One aspect of internal communications that doesn’t fit neatly into a single stream of any of the other discussions is how technology and new media play a ground breaking role in the communications culture of an organization. The increased availability of various digital tools both internally and externally, coupled with the increase in a younger workforce, who have been exposed to these types of collaborative tools their whole lives,<sup>86</sup> has resulted in more engaged

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<sup>83</sup> Alessandra Mazzei, "Internal Communication for Employee Enablement," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 19, no. 1 (2014): 87.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>86</sup> Michele Ewing, Linjuan Rita Men and Julie O’Neil. "Using Social Media to Engage Employees: Insights from Internal Communication Managers." *International Journal of Strategic Communication* (2019): 1.

and interactive communications cultures across organizations. Many private companies, particularly in the computer and software arena have seen great success in developing and applying their own internal networks to their communications efforts. In 2015, Lenovo, a computer manufacturing company with upwards of 60,000 employees acknowledged that they weren't getting the level of engagement out of their employees through traditional external social media sites, such as Facebook.<sup>87</sup> Employees were unable to sift through the overwhelming combination of personal and work-related information on the platform and would revert back to using the site for solely personal use. So Lenovo created its own social media platform. Through leadership advocacy and rewards for participation, the company was able to get 30 percent of its employees connected and participating in very short order, and immediately began seeing positive employee engagement both inside and outside the organization.<sup>88</sup>

Research has shown a positive correlation between organizations that make the best use of internal social networks and their external brand reputations as engaged employees share information about their employer outside of the office walls. As such, more and more organizations are examining the potential of social channels and incorporating them into their internal and external communications strategies.<sup>89</sup> As well, the role of leadership in implementing and promoting internal social engagement cannot be understated. According to Michele Ewing, Linjuan Men and Julie O'Neil, leadership involvement results in a more symmetric communication relationship between managers and subordinates, they can act as role models and encourage creative thought, and they can engage with and address employee

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<sup>87</sup> Shareen Pathak, "Lenovo created an internal social network to improve employee engagement," Digiday (2015), last accessed 10 February 2019, <https://digiday.com/marketing/lenovo-created-internal-social-network-improve-employee-engagement/>

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Ewing *et al.*, *Using Social Media to Engage Employees...*, 1.

concerns in a timely manner.<sup>90</sup> Ultimately, the use of social networks in an organization engages and empowers employees to be natural spokespersons and brand ambassadors for their company. They may not share information in a formal setting such as through press releases or media interviews, but they will share the aspects of their company that they enjoy the most to their informal networks, thus creating a positive image outside of the corporation's boundaries.<sup>91</sup>

Although the use of internal social networks is recognized as being key to a more stakeholder-focused and symmetrical communications climate, theorists note that oftentimes these networks are not only viewed as a fad application by managers, they are used in a more asymmetrical or even one-way manner, in which leaders or communications practitioners simply push messages to employees but fail to stick around and engage. For the most part, this has resulted in poor implementation and integration of social networks into many organization's structures and although this has partly to do with lack of time and resources, but more to do with a lack of understanding of the tangible benefits of engaging with employees in this manner.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>92</sup> Mark Verheyden, "Social Media and the Promise of Excellence in Internal Communication." *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 6, no. 1 (2017): 13.



## CHAPTER 4: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Twenty years ago, organizational structure was easy to define. The way it appeared on an organizational chart could reliably predict how the organization worked and how entities within were linked. Employees worked set hours, and were often collocated in a clearly defined workspace, which made information sharing extremely easy. Eric Eisenberg and Patricia Riley suggest however, that today we can no longer look at organizational structure as a “place bounded in space and time”.<sup>93</sup> Although telecommunications have allowed a form of virtual collaboration in the past, the advent of the Internet and shared networks have resulted in a drastic shift toward ‘virtual workplaces’ – a concept that allows employees to collaborate across borders, time zones, and even set working hours<sup>94</sup>. This also means that employee communication preferences are seeing an increasing shift from in-person, face-to-face communications to more virtual engagements, such as online video conferencing, messaging or file synchronization platforms.

These ‘virtual’ organizational shifts, however, do not come without problems. It has been acknowledged that regardless of an organization’s structure, there continues to exist differing communication style and behaviour between levels of the organization.<sup>95</sup> For example, managers at the executive level tend to communicate differently than those mid-level managers who communicate differently than front-line employees. Because of this, it is important to understand not just how a particular organization communicates, but also how they communicate at the various levels of the hierarchy.

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<sup>93</sup> Eric M. Eisenberg and Patricia Riley, “Organizational Culture,” in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 316.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Robert D. McPhee and Marshall Scott Poole, “Organizational Structures and Configurations,” in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 507.

It is highly believed that the size of an organization can have a negative effect on any informal or ‘virtual’ networks within an organization.<sup>96</sup> The informal networks may work well within smaller working groups, but it was noted by Robert McPhee and Marshall Poole that managers within larger organizations continued to prefer the existing formal channels of communication as opposed to supporting more informal networks.<sup>97</sup> As well, because a larger organization has a more complex structure, there are many more factors at different levels that can have a profound effect on the organization’s internal communications efforts. For example, micro-cultures within the organization, communication barriers, leadership style, group dynamics, as well as the organization’s overall communications culture, to name a few.<sup>98</sup> Michał Chmielecki notes “the hierarchy model is fraught with problems such as loss of information, slow distribution or misplaced data”<sup>99</sup>

### **Communication Networks**

One of the main challenges of communicating effectively within the Canadian Armed Forces is the complexity of formal and informal communication networks that exist due to the size and organizational structure of the institution. The Canadian Armed Forces is structured as a traditional hierarchy (or ‘tall’ organization), which is no surprise, considering traditional hierarchies were first used by militaries to demonstrate clear chains of command.<sup>100</sup> Having a tall structure results in a downward, one-way communication flow, and has the potential to stifle feedback and innovation.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 506.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Chmielecki. Factors Influencing Effectiveness of Internal Communication..., 28-30.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>100</sup> Jacob Morgan, “The 5 Types of Organizational Structures,” *Forbes* (2015), last accessed 3 January 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacobmorgan/2015/07/06/the-5-types-of-organizational-structures-part-1-the-hierarchy/#5514ea6d5252>

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite the perceived need to retain a traditional hierarchy in the Canadian Armed Forces, the fact that information can no longer be controlled by chains of command cannot be denied. According to Peter Monge and Noshir Contractor, communication networks are “the patterns of contact between communication partners that are created by transmitting and exchanging messages through time and space”.<sup>102</sup> Communication networks vary greatly between organizations, based on the relationships between employees, the method and means in which official information is shared, and informal alliances.

In order to conduct a network analysis of communication networks that exists within the Canadian Armed Forces, one must consider the uniqueness of military culture and the military organizational structure that is not normally found within large corporate organizations. First of all, the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence have a culture like no other. The Canadian Armed Forces exists as a representation of the demographics that are seen across the country of Canada, with membership from every province and territory and all ethnic backgrounds.<sup>103</sup> The institution also has a unique mandate of “defending Canada and Canadian interests and values while contributing to international peace and security”<sup>104</sup>, and as such, must maintain careful control over the actions of the Defence Team and the information that is shared through a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure. The institution is accountable to every Canadian taxpayer, and as such, is held to a much higher standard than a private corporation. Every member of the Defence Team has an obligation to be accountable for any information they share internally and externally to the public.<sup>105</sup>

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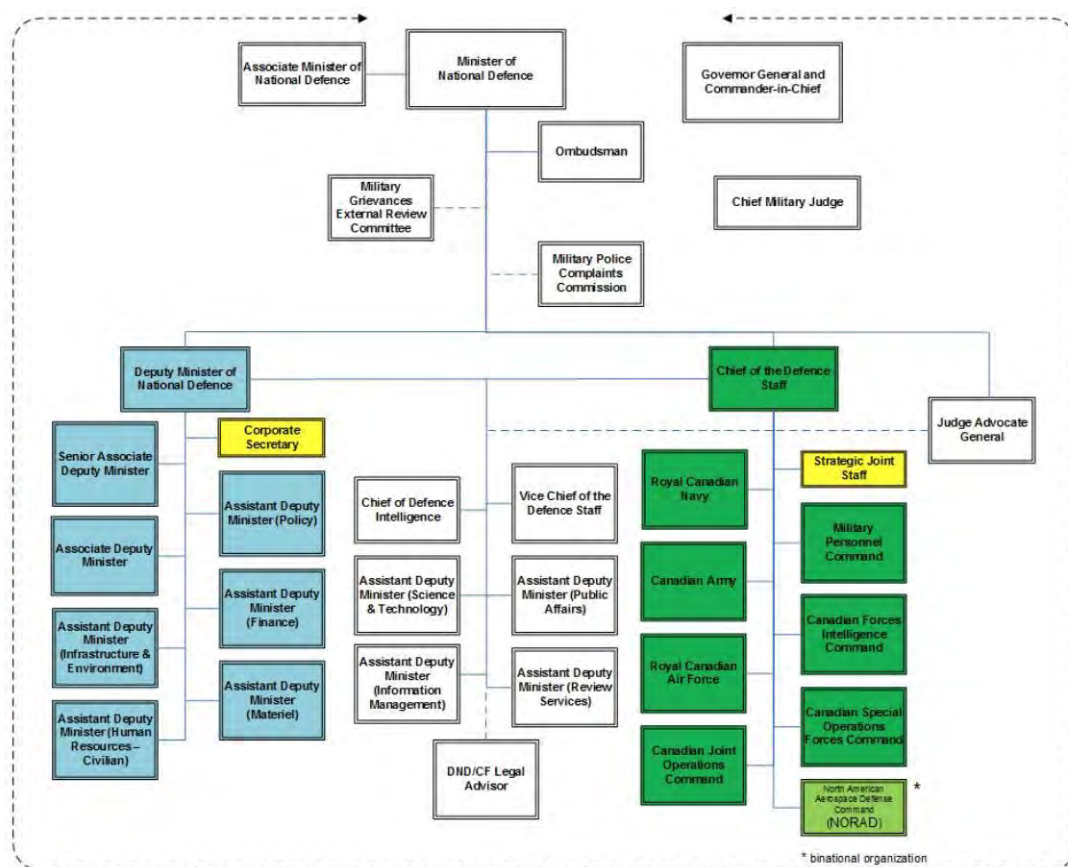
<sup>102</sup> Peter R. Monge and Noshir S. Contractor, “Emergence of Communication Networks,” in *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, eds. Frederic M. Jablin and Linda L. Putnam (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001), 440.

<sup>103</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives...*, 2008-0.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite the need for information flow to be carefully controlled, the communities that form at bases, wings and ships result in many informal networks that allow information to be passed quickly and without confirmation. These networks do not appear on official departmental organizational charts and they contradict the belief that vertical or hierarchical organizations must – and can – control information flow within these communities.



**Figure 3.1: Organizational structure of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces**  
 Source: Department of National Defence, *Organizational structure of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces*.

As of October 2018, the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence comprised approximately 68,000 Regular Force personnel and 27,000 Reserve Force

personnel as well as 24,000 civilian employees.<sup>106</sup> In addition, in 2017 it was reported that 64 percent of Regular Force personnel and 38 percent of Reserve Force personnel had at least one dependant with a ratio of 1.5 dependants to each Regular Force member and 0.82 dependants to each Reserve Force member.<sup>107</sup> That ratio to the 2018 data would suggest that there would be approximately 102,000 Regular Force family members and 22,005 Reserve Force family members. Taking into consideration dependants of indeterminate, term and contracted civilian employees, this suggests that the internal ‘publics’ of the Canadian Armed Forces could exceed 243,000 people at any given time. Further compounding the communications challenges within the Defence Team, more than half of all full time soldiers, sailors and aviators currently working within Canada are considered millennials and of those, a large percentage have been in the Canadian Armed Forces for less than ten years.<sup>108</sup> This means that a large majority of service members grew up with different ideas of how organizations should be structured and different ideas of how information should be shared. Most, if not all of these demographics never knew what it was like to not have Internet or e-mail.

### **Network Analysis of the Canadian Armed Forces**

The following network analysis of the communication structures of the Canadian Armed Forces demonstrates the complexity of information flow in an organization that spans beyond the borders of our country and that hosts a number of sub-cultures. In keeping with Peter Monge and Noshir Contactor’s research, the network analysis uses formal (“provides information to”, “receives information from”) and informal (“communicates with”) communication relationships, formal senders (i.e., Chief of the Defence Staff), formal and informal receivers (i.e., service

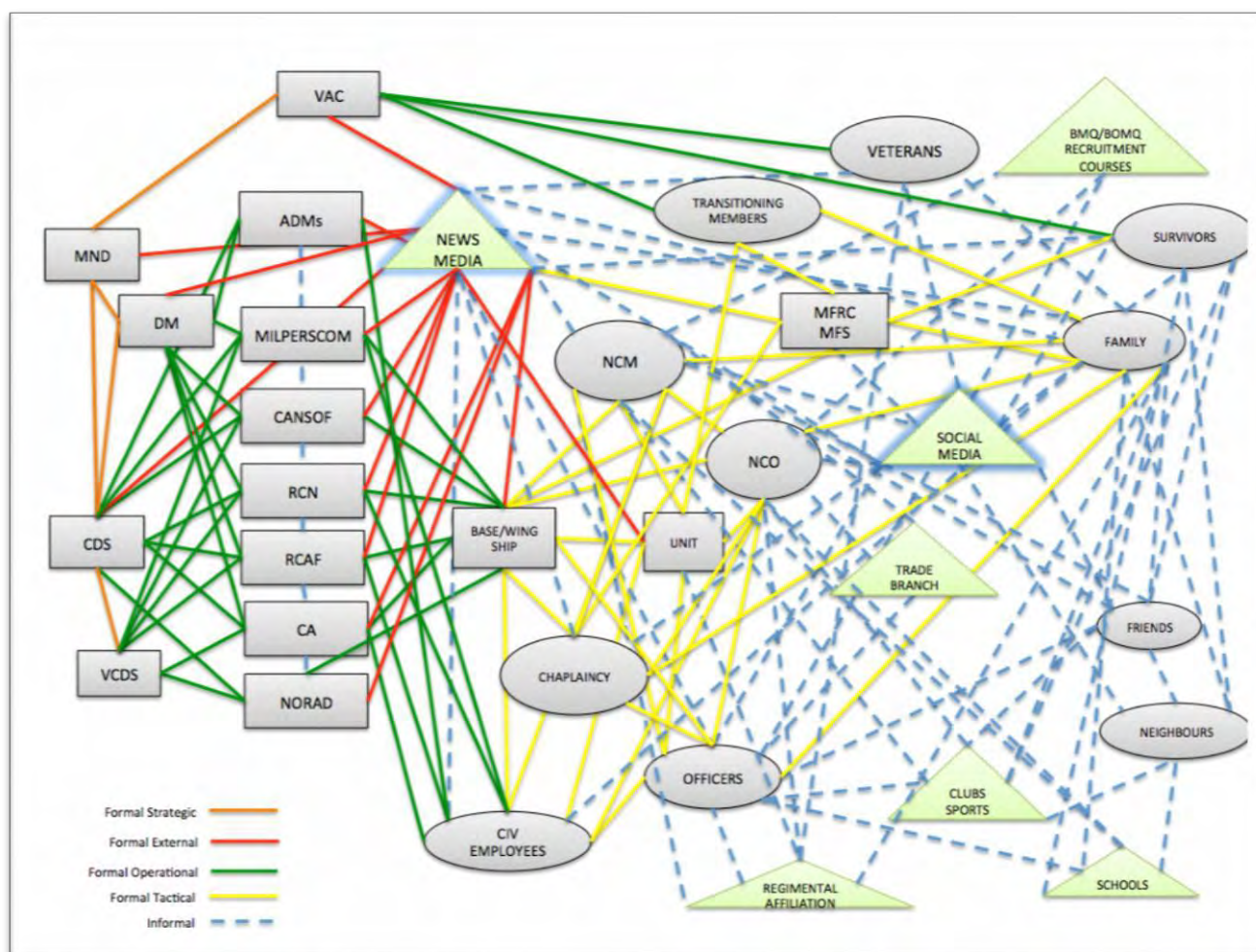
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<sup>106</sup> Department of National Defence, “Frequently Asked Questions,” last modified 29 October 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/contact-us/frequently-asked-questions.html>

<sup>107</sup> Manser, Lynda. Profile of Military Families in Canada: 2017 Regular Force Demographics. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Service, 2018: 6.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

members, civilian employees, family members), and informal conduits (i.e., social media, regimental affiliations, community groups).<sup>109</sup> The network analysis is unable to address “how” the communication happens, however, as this is a much more complicated concept to demonstrate on a simple diagram, but its intent is to demonstrate how complicated and complex the communication channels are within the formal and informal aspects of the institution.



**Figure 3.2: Network Analysis of the Canadian Armed Forces**

<sup>109</sup> Monge and Contactor. *Emergence of Communication Networks...*, 440.

As depicted on the network analysis, the communication starts at the strategic level. The Minister of National Defence (MND) and the Deputy Minister (DM) communicates formally with the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), while the DM has a direct line of communication to the Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADM) and the CDS has direct lines of communication to the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff (VCDS) and each of the Commanders of the Level One organizations: Military Personnel Command (MILPERSCOM), Canadian Army (CA); Royal Canadian Navy (RCN); Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF); Canadian Special Operations Forces (CANSOF); and the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) which has a unique reporting chain to both the CDS and the United States Secretary of Defense. VAC has its own formal communications channel to veterans, survivors, and transitioning members.

The ADMs and the Commanders of the Level 1 organizations have formal lines of communication to their Canadian Forces Bases, Wings and Ships, who then have formal lines of communication to the units they are responsible for, the officers, non-commissioned officers, non-commissioned members and civilian employees. From there, a number of additional formal connections to the chaplaincy, transitioning members, family, survivors and the Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC) or Military Family Services (MFS). The leadership of all formal Canadian Forces commands and units have a direct external communications line to news media. Some leaders within the Canadian Armed Forces also have official presence on social media, however it is not mandated.

As depicted on the network analysis, the informal communications channels are where things get complicated. There exists an informal communication channel between nearly every single entity on the network. There are informal sub-networks that exist geographically (such as

on a base or ship), structurally (such as official regimental or trade associations and networks), and virtually (such as connections held from military training, military college, or even connections to hometowns). These informal networks extend past members of the Canadian Armed Forces: they exist between family members, military and civilian friends, neighbours and acquaintances within schools, after-hours sports and clubs.

The network analysis, although simplified, demonstrates a need for engaged internal communications within the Canadian Armed Forces and a comprehensive bridge between external and internal communications efforts and activities. If the Chief of the Defence Staff informs the news media about a new policy or an event that has occurred, but this information has not yet been shared internally by the institution, there is an understanding that a) news media and journalists are very likely to publish key aspects of the announcement, due to space and time constraints, and b) members of the Defence Team and their informal networks will be left to try and fill in the blanks. This is particularly problematic if the information might have implications for how the military might be employed. As such, the institution can mitigate these communication gaps by ensuring leadership has the skills and tools to communicate effectively to their subordinates, and by implementing internal communications approaches that treats members of the Defence Team as stakeholders and enables them to become Ambassadors for the institution. Then, they can clarify information within their informal and even formal networks, if required.



## CHAPTER 5: CANADIAN ARMED FORCES CASE STUDIES

As discussed previously, the organizational structure and communication networks within the Canadian Armed Forces are much more complex than those of large corporations. The military culture and size of the organization, along with the existence of Canadian Forces Bases, Wings and Ships in smaller and semi-remote communities, results in the necessary inclusion of families to the list of internal ‘publics’. This chapter will examine a number of case studies that highlight the complexity of sharing critical information in a complex and complicated communications environment.

### **Sexual Misconduct in the Military (Operation HONOUR)**

Among the challenges of a militarized organization that began as a predominately male organization, reports and complaints of sexualized culture have been prevalent over the past three decades in almost all Western militaries. With the rise of the international #Me Too movement in 2017 against sexual harassment and assault, public, private and government organizations have taken great effort to ensure harassment-free workplaces for their employees. Some militaries have seen vast improvements while most, if not all still face significant challenges in changing this unwanted and inappropriate culture, despite their best efforts. The United States Department of Defense recently acknowledged that despite previous years of notable drops in the numbers of reported sexual assaults, the latest anonymous survey released on May 2, 2019 indicated an approximate 44 percent increase in female victims since the previous survey in 2016.<sup>110</sup> Meanwhile, in on April 6, 2019, leadership within the British Ministry of Defence and the British Army issued statements condemning the behaviour of their

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<sup>110</sup> Luis Martinez, “Sexual assaults in military rise to more than 20,000, Pentagon survey says,” ABC News (2019), last accessed 2 May 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/military-sexual-assault-numbers-increase-young-female-service/story?id=62762858>

members following reports of the arrest of six British soldiers in connection with an alleged sexual assault of a female soldier.<sup>111</sup>

In Canada, sexual misconduct has been the focus of media outlets on and off since the Canadian Armed Forces opened all occupations and trades (with the exception of submariner) to female service members in 1987.<sup>112</sup> Recently in 2014, the media coverage of a culture of sexual harassment and assault prompted the then Chief of the Defence Staff General Tom Lawson to request an external review of the allegations by former Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps. In 2015, Mme. Deschamps' report indicated a highly sexualized culture within the Canadian Armed Forces and comprehensive recommendations on how to correct the problem.<sup>113</sup> The report laid much blame on the “failure of Canadian Armed Forces senior leaders in maintaining a respectful and inclusive environment,<sup>114</sup> and recommended that the first step to changing culture was for leadership to condemn the use of sexualized or disrespectful language in the workplace, calling it a “critical step in reforming the culture of the Canadian Armed Forces to create a more inclusive organizational culture and to reduce the incidence of sexually inappropriate conduct”.<sup>115</sup>

The leadership example that needed to be set, described by Mme. Deschamps meant that leaders at all levels of the organization needed to “act as role models”, although she noted that due to the “low representation of women in senior positions in the organization”, there remained

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<sup>111</sup> Zamira Rahim, “Six soldiers arrested over sex assault claims,” Independent (2019), last accessed 15 April 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/army-sexual-assault-soldiers-arrest-attack-mod-military-a8857571.html>

<sup>112</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. “Backgrounder: Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.” Last modified 14 August 2018, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=women-in-the-canadian-armed-forces/hie8w7rm>

<sup>113</sup> Carignan, Jennie. “Progress of Operation HONOUR Within 2nd Canadian Division.” The Maple Leaf (2018). Last modified 2 January 2019, <https://ml-fd.caf-fac.ca/en/2019/01/23279>

<sup>114</sup> Deschamps, Marie. External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces (2015).

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

a significant challenge in having enough champions, mentors and peer support for other women in the Canadian Armed Forces, and there remained a distrust that the leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces would take any complaints seriously.<sup>116</sup>

In response to the report, a programme titled Operation HONOUR by Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance was implemented in 2015. Operation HONOUR's goal is to "eliminate harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour within the Canadian Armed Forces",<sup>117</sup> and consists of two key principles: "every man and woman who serves their country deserves to be treated with dignity and respect"<sup>118</sup>; and "harmful attitudes and behaviours which undermine the camaraderie, cohesion and confidence of serving members threatens the Canadian Armed Forces' long-term operational success".<sup>119</sup> Leading the effort was the creation of a Strategic Response Team on Sexual Misconduct, and a Sexual Misconduct Response Centre

Colonel (retired) Marc Rouleau, in his research paper 'Enabling Institutional Change Through Effective Communication' examined the communication aspect of how to ensure programme success with regards to Operation HONOUR. He noted that from the beginning, a "twofold communications focus"<sup>120</sup> was carried out concurrently which included strategic communications considerations in all leadership, activities, operations, plans and policies integrated with a "robust public affairs capacity which would combine media engagement, internal and external stakeholder engagement and corporate internal communications content development".<sup>121</sup> The key behind this communications approach was that success would be tied

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Carignan. *Progress of Operation HONOUR Within 2nd Canadian Division...*

<sup>118</sup> Department of National Defence, "About Operation HONOUR," last modified 1 May 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/operation-honour/about-operation-honour.html>

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Rouleau. *Abstract: Enabling Institutional Change...*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

to a combination of leading by example, policy change and interactive engagement with all audiences within and outside of the Canadian Armed Forces.

As a result, the Canadian Armed Forces developed a concurrent, yet tiered approach to communicating culture change regarding harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Following the Operation HONOUR announcement by the Chief of the Defence Staff to external media outlets, he and other Canadian Armed Forces senior leaders conducted targeted media interviews to further explain the programme and to share updates on the programme's success.<sup>122</sup> Internally, orders and directives were issued across the Canadian Armed Forces and all senior leaders in the organization received "in-person direction" from the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Canadian Forces Chief Warrant Officer. Operation HONOUR 'pocket cards' and a mobile application, along with corporate internal communications products such as articles and videos, supported these activities. Despite these actions, success relied heavily on leadership buy-in, which could only be measured over time.<sup>123</sup>

While the communication focus described by Colonel (retired) Rouleau was implemented with a clear understanding of the challenges of changing culture within an institution such as the Canadian Armed Forces, and the need to integrate strategic communications considerations into every decision, the immediacy of the demand for change of the "shared meanings and assumptions"<sup>124</sup> counters Eisenberg and Riley's hypothesis discussed earlier in this paper. As a result, although externally, the perception of the Canadian Armed Forces taking action against a damaging culture was received rather positively, although it was noted in much public discourse that these actions should have been implemented a long time ago.

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<sup>122</sup> Department of National Defence. *Canadian Armed Forces Progress Report Addressing Sexual Misconduct*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019, 5-6.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Eisenberg and Riley. *Organizational Culture...*, 310.

Internally, however, there was much more resistance to change. Shortly after the announcement of Operation HONOUR (also referred to as Op HONOUR in military parlance), several members of the Canadian Armed Forces came up with a new name for the effort, a play on words of the shortened form: ‘Hop On Her’,<sup>125</sup> a term that seemed to joke about sexual misconduct against women instead of condemn it. In an institution with such a complex formal and informal communications network as demonstrated in this paper’s network analysis, it did not take long for the new name to take hold and spread across the entire organization. Prior to the release of the Deschamps report, it was clear that there was resistance to change attempts as well. In 2014, Julie Lalonde, an educator on sexual misconduct was invited to deliver lectures to students of the Royal Military College raising awareness of what language and behaviour in an educational setting is considered appropriate or inappropriate. Following her full day of lectures, she complained that throughout she was subjected to jokes, inappropriate comments and vocal resistance to her messages.<sup>126</sup>

On November 20, 2019, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada tabled *Report 5—Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour—Canadian Armed Forces* as an assessment of whether the Canadian Armed Forces “adequately responded to inappropriate sexual behaviour through actions to respond to and support victims and to understand and prevent such behaviour”.<sup>127</sup> The report concluded that the Canadian Armed Forces appears to be committed to changing the culture within the institution and that it done a satisfactory job of raising awareness of the

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<sup>125</sup> Editorial, “Operation Honour dubbed ‘Hop On Her’ by soldiers mocking military’s plan to crack down on sexual misconduct,” National Post (2015), last modified 26 October 2015, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/operation-honour-dubbed-hop-on-her-by-soldiers-mocking-militarys-plan-to-crack-down-on-sexual-misconduct>

<sup>126</sup> Editorial, “Educator recalls ‘horrific’ experience giving sexual harassment talks at RMC,” CTV News (2015), last accessed 1 April 2019, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/educator-recalls-horrific-experience-giving-sexual-harassment-talks-at-rmc-1.2387075>

<sup>127</sup> Office of the Auditor General. “2018 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada, Report 5 – Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour – Canadian Armed Forces,” Last modified 20 November 2018, [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_201811\\_05\\_e\\_43203.html#hd3b](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201811_05_e_43203.html#hd3b)

problem and that through an increase of reported incidents, it had also increased trust that complaints would be taken seriously. However, the report criticized a “fragmented approach to victim support”<sup>128</sup> and noted that many victims continued to have limited access to services as well as doubts as to the effectiveness of the complaint system.

On February 26, 2019, the Canadian Armed Forces released its fourth Progress Report Addressing Sexual Misconduct. This internal report acknowledged the findings of the Auditor General’s report from the previous autumn and highlighted three challenges of changing attitudes and behaviours of this significance. First that culture change is difficult and solutions are complex and take time to implement, second, while immediate action in response to the problem is critical, there are no “quick fixes” that might result in persistent culture change, and third, military-style punitive measures only affect behaviours over the short term. Once those measures are no longer in place, the underlying culture will prevail. The report noted that all efforts must target attitudes, beliefs and actions and the success of these efforts cannot be realized until after years.<sup>129</sup>

Regarding the implemented communications efforts noted earlier in this section, the Progress Report acknowledged that there had been some culture change activities that still required work. In particular, in terms of internal communication efforts, the report noted that in a rush to implement Operation HONOUR immediately, a unified updated policy on harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour was not promulgated at the same time as the proactive announcements, the Canadian Armed Forces has so far failed to “produce strategic direction and a campaign plan to guide the necessary culture shift”, strategic communications efforts were implemented based on a quantity versus quality approach, causing cognition fatigue among

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

members of the Defence Team, and although the Defence Team leadership did dedicate time and effort engaging with national media, they not dedicate sufficient time to engage with external stakeholders<sup>130</sup>. The report acknowledged that the desired culture change within the Canadian Armed Forces was still a work in progress, and that a number of the ways to reach that goal was through more effective internal communications. In essence, the majority of Canadians and members of the Defence Team have received the message that sexualized behaviour in unacceptable within the Canadian Armed Forces, the institution still has a long way to go to convince members within the organization to change their behaviour.

### **Flexible Career Paths (The Journey)**

As early as 2017, leadership began speaking publicly about a programme within the Canadian Armed Forces titled “The Journey”. In February 2017 at the Conference of Defence Associations Institute annual Ottawa Conference on Security and Defence, Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance told participants that Operation HONOUR was only a part of the Canadian Armed Forces strategy of changing culture in the institution for the better. He told the audience that the larger picture [which would include the problem of sexual misconduct] needed to look at how the requirements and expectations of military service can affect those in uniform at any given day and depending on what their personal circumstances might need. This larger picture, he said, would be called ‘The JOURNEY’ and it would be a flexible framework that would consider the needs of Canadian Armed Forces members beginning at recruitment and all the way through their careers until (and past) retirement.<sup>131</sup> It would provide members respite when they needed, and allow them to continue to contribute to their maximum potential. He

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<sup>130</sup> Department of National Defence. *Canadian Armed Forces Progress Report Addressing Sexual Misconduct*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019, 12.

<sup>131</sup> Stephen Thorne, “CAF needs to be more diverse, says general,” *Legion Magazine* (2017), last accessed 2 April 2019, <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2017/06/caf-needs-to-be-more-diverse-says-general/>

suggested that Canadian Armed Forces leadership would be looking at modernizing the organization, creating flexible career paths for member who need the flexibility and providing support services to members and their families.

Prior to General Vance’s comments, a job posting appeared on the federal government website [buyandsell.gc.ca](http://buyandsell.gc.ca) searching for a ‘Senior Leadership Advisor’ to assist in developing the concept of The Journey, which would “make Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel support more compassionate, dependable and comprehensive, while ensuring effectiveness, efficiency and affordability in a healthy and safe workplace”.<sup>132</sup> Later, that same year, reference to The Journey appeared in the *Canadian Armed Forces And Veterans Affairs Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy*, where it was described as a “people-oriented philosophical framework that will modernize the way the Canadian Armed Forces supports our members, Veterans and families”

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Despite these mentions of a ‘branded’ framework, and persistent references to The Journey in internal speeches, town halls and other engagements, little has been communicated either externally or internally between 2017 and 2019 that provides a clear understanding of what The Journey is and what it means to members of the Canadian Armed Forces. This is likely because as opposed to Operation HONOUR, which is a clearly defined directive, the leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces is still struggling to identify exactly what the quality of life issues are that need to be addressed, and how to go about addressing them whilst maintaining operational effectiveness within the organization. In an initial engagement strategy for the Journey, drafted by the Chief of Staff – Strategy’s Director of Strategic Communication and

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<sup>132</sup> Public Works and Government Services Canada, “Senior Leadership Advisor – The Journey (W2282-2016-AA10),” last modified 25 January 2017, <https://buyandsell.gc.ca/procurement-data/tender-notice/PW-17-00763465>

<sup>133</sup> Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada. *Joint Suicide Prevention Strategy*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017: 8.



Engagement within Military Personnel Command, the document acknowledges that over the past two years, “engagements have been largely reactive... [but] ...a more deliberate engagement plan... ..is [now] required”<sup>134</sup>

To highlight the recent confusion among audiences at all levels regarding The Journey, The Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs on March 8, 2017 criticizing the Department’s transition efforts of Canadian Armed Forces members from the organization to civilian life as retirees and/or veterans. He noted that he was experiencing difficulty in developing a clear picture of the transition review, and accused the Department of focusing more on reviewing the problem rather than acting on it. He drew the subcommittee’s attention to the fact that there are a number of concurrent initiatives such as “Convergence”, “the Journey”, and “Care, Compassion and Respect 2020”<sup>135</sup> that have direct influence on the transition issue, but do not seem to be connected in any meaningful way.

The draft of The Journey Engagement Strategy outlines the strategy objectives of “informing, updating, collaborating and consulting key stakeholders with the goal of achieving alignment and integration of Chapter One of [Canada’s Defence Policy:] Strong, Secure, Engaged.”<sup>136</sup> The external stakeholders are identified as international allies, other Canadian federal departments, private corporations, provincial and municipal representatives, and other influencers, while the internal stakeholders are identified as Commanders, Deputy Commanders and influencers of Canadian Armed Forces Level One organizations, the Canadian Armed Forces

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<sup>134</sup> Department of National Defence. *The Journey Engagement Strategy (Draft)*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019: 3.

<sup>135</sup> National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, “Gary Walbourne’s Opening Remarks: Ombudsman’s Appearance at the Senate Subcommittee on Veteran’s Affairs,” last modified 8 March 2017, [http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-news-events-messages/ombudsman\\_appearance\\_at\\_senate\\_subcommittee\\_vet\\_affair.page](http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-news-events-messages/ombudsman_appearance_at_senate_subcommittee_vet_affair.page)

<sup>136</sup> Department of National Defence. *The Journey Engagement Strategy...*, 4. (Draft).

Judge Advocate General, and departmental training institutions.<sup>137</sup> The challenge regarding execution of any communications efforts regarding The Journey is that the stakeholders who have been engaged regarding the framework are now referring to it both internally and externally, however the department as a whole has not yet ensured that members of the Defence Team at every level understands that The Journey is less of a “thing” and more of a continuous process toward ensuring there are programs in place that ensure individual needs while maintaining operational effectiveness.

To further emphasize this claim, there is evidence that operational and tactical leaders as well as service members at all levels of the Defence Team appear confused as to how The Journey is defined and what it means to them. In the subreddit r/CanadianForces, one member asked for an update on The Journey, believing it was the name for a new policy that would allow service members to take pay cuts in exchange for staying in a specific Canadian Armed Forces establishment.<sup>138</sup> A response to the post instated that The Journey was about “career progression as a whole”; while another believed The Journey wasn’t yet a solid policy and rather that it was a ‘buzzword’ at this point. Other discussion regarding The Journey suggested that most members of the Canadian Armed Forces who had heard of the framework, were of the impression that the only things that could be changed within the institution were gender and cultural issues and that any other aspect of The Journey would require changes to the National Defence Act and would need parliamentary approval.<sup>139</sup>

## **Emergency Communications**

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>138</sup> Canadian Armed Forces subReddit Thread, “Update on the Journey Program”, posted February 2019, accessed 10 March 2019, [https://www.reddit.com/r/CanadianForces/comments/ag3u4y/update\\_on\\_the\\_journey\\_program/](https://www.reddit.com/r/CanadianForces/comments/ag3u4y/update_on_the_journey_program/)

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

When it comes to internal communications, there are two types of emergency communication that must be addressed separately. First, crisis communications that affect both the organization, stakeholders and publics but doesn't warrant any action on the part of employees, and secondly, urgent information that must be passed quickly to employees that could affect their ability to arrive at or leave their workplace, or that might affect their health and safety. Regardless of the type of service or product an organization provides, it can be expected that some type of crisis would be possible and the emergency could happen at any time. Issues that could be considered crises vary from financial, environmental, theft, fraud or even death. Communications practitioners often stress the importance of having a comprehensive crisis communications plan, however, no crisis will ever be the same and the implications and outcomes of how a crisis is managed required catered responses, making it nearly impossible to rely on a single plan written to address any potential incident.<sup>140</sup>

In reality, many organizations do consider crises in their communications plans, but focus their efforts on how to communicate externally, mainly through direct channels to the public and with journalists and media outlets.<sup>141</sup> As a result, employees often hear of crises via the news media or social media, and not from within an organization. Strandberg and Vigsø note in their research that although externally-focused communication regarding a crisis does reach internal audiences, those employees express discontent in the quantity and quality of information received, causing employees to “construct their own narratives, based on assumptions and rumours, as well as on the culture within the unit.”<sup>142</sup> As such, it is critically important that major announcements or relevant information be shared with leadership before they go public.

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<sup>140</sup> Julia Matilda Strandberg and Orla Vigsø, "Internal Crisis Communication," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 21, no. 1 (2016): 89.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-3.

Media Lines and supporting information should be distributed ahead of time so that leaders can pass information, clarify public information and answer questions.

Critical information that affects employees' health, safety or ability to go to work can be extremely challenging to disseminate and requires not only a 'push' method of communication, but the message must also be sent and received expeditiously. Historically in the Canadian Armed Forces, this information was passed on through a call-out or recall roster in which the information would be passed down the hierarchical structure through phone calls and chains of command. This method worked in the past, but would rely heavily on every person along the chain to be available to both receive the information and pass it further along. In an age of immediate and digital communications, this process is slow-moving and ineffective. Many employees will receive information through other communication means, and there is the potential that information may not be accurate.

Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colorado

In 2014, Peterson Air Force Base (AFB), a United States Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado, rolled out a modern mass emergency communication system to inform base personnel of immediate and time-critical information through a variety of notification channels including text, email and installation 'Giant Voice' outdoor notification speaker networks.<sup>143</sup> Facilitated through a contract with Blackberry-owned networked crisis communications provider At-Hoc<sup>144</sup>, the system is able to send alert notifications regarding emergencies such as natural disasters, base or entrance closures, active shooters or other information directly affecting the

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<sup>143</sup> Jared Marquis, "Peterson stands up notification system," last modified 4 February 2014, <https://www.peterson.af.mil/News/Article/734225/peterson-stands-up-notification-system/>

<sup>144</sup> Blackberry, "Blackberry AtHoc Networked Crisis Communication," last accessed 17 March 2019, <https://www.athoc.com/>

base's population.<sup>145</sup> The system is structured as an 'opt-in' notification system, which means that although it is structured as a 'push' platform, recipients must first register their information (phone numbers and email addresses) to receive the alerts.

Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt, Victoria, British Columbia

In 2018, Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Esquimalt, located in Victoria, British Columbia installed a Mass Notification System (MNS) to provide timely warning of any critical emergencies.<sup>146</sup> The system at this particular base is designed specifically to warn of an "imminent threat" to the installation such as tsunami, lockdown, as well as the need for evacuation or shelter using a combination of sirens, alerts, and verbal directions.<sup>147</sup> Combined with the MNS, the base also uses what's referred to as the Canadian Armed Forces Emergency Mass Notification System, which allows members of the Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence employees sign up to receive direct alerts through their phones.<sup>148</sup>

Canadian Forces Support Unit (Ottawa), Ottawa, Ontario

The Canadian Forces Support Unit (Ottawa) (CFSU(O)) in the National Capital Region recently launched its own internal emergency communications tool in 2017.<sup>149</sup> CFSU(O) supports all Department of National Defence organizations in Canada's National Capital Region, including those in Ottawa Ontario, and Gatineau Quebec. This presents a need to not only pass timely urgent information, but also pass the information in both of Canada's official languages: English and French. The emergency communications approach in the National Capital Region

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<sup>145</sup> Marquis. *Peterson stands up notification system...*

<sup>146</sup> Editorial, "Earthquake and Tsunami Preparedness," *The Lookout* (2018), last accessed 8 February 2019, <http://www.lookoutnewspaper.com/issues/63/2018-02-05-05.pdf>

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> ERMS Advantage, *Canadian Armed Forces Mass Notification System Registration*, last accessed 8 February 2019, <https://www.ermsadvantage.com/register/caf/MARPAC>

<sup>149</sup> Catherine Villeneuve, "CFSU(O) launches new emergency communications tools," *The Guard* (2017), last accessed 29 November 2019, <https://infog.ca/cfsuo-launches-new-emergency-communications-tools/>

follows a three-tiered delivery plan, consisting of a) a red banner containing critical information on CFSU(O)'s website; b) recordings on a local hotline; and c) an email sent to all recipients on the Defence Wide Area Network.<sup>150</sup>

### Analysis

The *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives* state that when it comes to emergency or crisis communications, “the [Department of National Defence] and the [Canadian Armed Forces] should ensure that the requirement to inform the public is not delayed by the search for solutions”.<sup>151</sup> It demands that despite whether there is a mitigation or remediation in process, the Department should immediately address the issue internally and externally, and provide regular updates, balancing the need to share information with the requirement for operational security.<sup>152</sup>

Most military installations recognize the need for a comprehensive crisis communications plan. Some embed their plan within a broader annual communications strategy, while others draft separate plans in anticipation of crisis communications. Some military bases such as Canadian Forces Base Petawawa understand that their community relies on social media for important information and updates and uses a widely-followed Facebook page and Twitter profile to pass alerts.<sup>153</sup> The chance of an emergency might be more prevalent for other bases such as Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt, with the Cascadia Subduction Zone just off the west coast of Vancouver Island,<sup>154</sup> causing a pressing need for more proactive communication efforts in the event of an earthquake and potential tsunami.

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives...*, 2008-3.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 2008-4.

<sup>153</sup> Garrison Petawawa's Facebook page, accessed 12 February 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/GarrisonPetawawaGarrisonPetawawa/>

<sup>154</sup> Pacific Northwest Seismic Network, “Cascadia Subduction Zone,” last accessed 10 February 2019, <https://pnsn.org/outreach/earthquakesources/csz>

Despite the chance of emergency or crisis at different military bases, a few things are certain when it comes to crises that have the potential to affect immediate health and safety: a) Crisis Communications Plans are beneficial in knowing how to pass information quickly during an emergency, however they must be general enough to allow leadership and communications professionals to adapt to a variety of potential emergencies and they need to give equal attention to internal and external requirements; b) The Canadian Armed Forces can no longer rely on a slow and antiquated call-out or recall system of informing service members of emergencies; and c) Information must also be pushed to recipients using various channels that are accessible throughout the day and regardless of location. Organizational crises that don't present an immediate threat to employee health and safety must also be addressed in a timely manner, informing both external and internal recipients simultaneously. Leadership must understand that if employees do not receive timely and accurate information about an organizational problem, they will construct their own narrative, which could affect the existing organizational morale in a negative manner.

### **Domestic Operations (Operation LENTUS)**

Not all internal efforts within the Canadian Armed Forces are rife with so many communication challenges. The previous case studies were presented as an examination of some of the most complex and difficult aspects of communicating within such a large and hierarchical organization. Recently, despite undesirable circumstances, the Canadian Armed Forces was provided an opportunity to serve a number of struggling communities, and with a clear understanding of the mission, the Canadian Armed Forces response to the recent flooding in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario could be presented as an example of a successful stakeholder approach to internal and external communications.

Operation LENTUS is the formal name given to Canadian Armed Forces support to civil authorities in response to natural disasters within Canada. Examples of disasters requiring assistance from the Canadian Armed Forces are floods, wildfires, power outages and other emergencies such as earthquakes or unusual weather events. The operation's objectives are to "assist local authorities when requested by providing rapid and efficient capabilities to the affected area and ultimately by stabilizing the natural disaster situation".<sup>155</sup> In April 2019, due to an unusually heavy winter snowfall and rapid spring melt, the overwhelmed provinces of New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario requested support from the Canadian Armed Forces to assist in their flood relief efforts. From April 19 to May 3, 2019 in New Brunswick and from April 25, 2019 ongoing at the time of this paper's submission, up to 2,300 Canadian Armed Forces members have been assisting provincial authorities help citizens by filling and placing sandbags, conducting evacuations, protecting property, clearing routes and conducting wellness checks.<sup>156</sup>

Operation LENTUS is an easy example of a symmetric and stakeholder approach to communications because it is a good news story. Soldiers, sailors and aviators are deploying from bases across the three provinces and the Canadian public is seeing their efforts first-hand. Usually, when the Canadian Armed Forces deploys, they are conducting military missions in other countries and the majority of Canadians a) don't understand why they are there and what results they are achieving; and b) rely on information either from news media, or direct social media posts from the Department. On a domestic operation in support of local authorities, citizens are able to see the service members in uniform working alongside emergency relief organizations with one main goal – to help save their homes and prevent further destruction. As a

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<sup>155</sup> Department of National Defence, "Operation LENTUS," last modified 11 December 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-lentus.html>

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*



result, there is no ambiguity among the citizenry or among those in uniform as to why they are there and what aim they are achieving. This means that positive recognition of the Canadian Armed Forces is not just coming from the Department and the news media; it is coming from the soldiers, sailors and aviators themselves, family members, affected citizens, and appreciative law enforcement and local government employees.

Due to the fact that the operation is ongoing at the time of this writing, it is difficult to gauge the success of any communications efforts during these flood relief efforts. However, it should be noted that there are an unusually (but not unexpected) number of examples of Canadian Forces Members acting as Ambassadors in all three provinces. The Canadian Armed Forces official social media teams have also taken note, and used these examples to further expand on the coverage over the past month.

The first such example is an article posted on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's website, highlighting a number of reservists who took time from their full-time civilian jobs or post-secondary education in order to assist in the flood relief efforts.<sup>157</sup> Corporal Rosana Veliz, Corporal Afton Maisonneuve and Corporal David Claxton and Sergeant Ryan Moss, all local residents were interviewed by local news outlets and represented the Canadian Armed Forces not just as Ambassadors, but advocates for the opportunities that come with working civilian jobs and being able to serve their country when called upon. Sergeant Moss told the reporter that despite a career as an electrician and having served six months in Afghanistan, his participation

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<sup>157</sup> Editorial, "One of my proudest moments": Army reservist work to save Cumberland homes," Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (2019), last accessed 2 May 2019, [https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/army-reservists-help-cumberland-1.5117374?fbclid=IwAR1dsuc6lAFvKrOFck\\_3GMqmZ3Qw71p-NELk4bUJ2K465hY4BZOtqSqjAws](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/army-reservists-help-cumberland-1.5117374?fbclid=IwAR1dsuc6lAFvKrOFck_3GMqmZ3Qw71p-NELk4bUJ2K465hY4BZOtqSqjAws)

on Operation LENTUS and helping save numerous homes was one of his “proudest moments.”<sup>158</sup>

Events such as the flooding has brought out retired service members and veterans who have been advocating as well on the Canadian Armed Forces behalf.<sup>159</sup> Retired Canadian Armed Forces member Josh Bowen was also interviewed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation about his past experiences supporting domestic disaster relief efforts in Canada, that included fires in Fort McMurray and floods in Manitoba. The experience was so profound for him that he began to work in the emergency preparedness and management field after he retired. He told the reporter that “being able to protect and serve Canadians, at home, in their hour of need, it was an incredibly humbling experience.”<sup>160</sup>

Thirdly, local Ottawa resident Justine Miller shared a story on a community Facebook page about her young three and a half year old daughter who saw members of the Canadian Armed Forces helping to save homes from flooding, decided to make a card to thank them.<sup>161</sup> After the card was delivered to the troops in Constance Bay, Ontario, the mother posted photos of the young girl engaging with smiling soldiers. This type of third party endorsement for the Canadian Armed Forces can only happen when they are in the public eye, and engaged with the local population. Despite the tragic flood losses, members of the community were given an opportunity to interact with members of the Canadian Armed Forces and learn about what they do and why they serve.

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Duncan McCue, “Floods, fires and ice storms: An ex-soldier’s battle on the front line of natural disasters,” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (2019), last accessed 30 April 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/floods-fires-ice-former-soldier-on-natural-disasters-1.5114084?fbclid=IwAR3JqB1x36UtCS6ai4SeZz92PCeVZAVU2a2Y27k8wOQIKPi4WVa4JeTcS74>

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Justine Miller, Facebook post, 28 April 2019, 3:42p.m., accessed 28 April 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2361928027/permalink/10157515586853028/>

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, employees have been referred to as an organization's most important asset. Despite different culture, language, structure in different organizations, one thing is beginning to become widely understood in a new and complex communications environment, is that productivity, brand loyalty, public support and reputation all hinge on how leaders consider their employees in their communication strategies. Communications practitioners have long focused their efforts on external audiences, however, research has uncovered that engaging employees through a symmetrical communication approach results in effects such as "job satisfaction, identification, loyalty, employee-organization relationships, and employee communication behaviour."<sup>162</sup>

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are structured in a way that is unlike any other organization in the country. As highlighted in the *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives*, "they bring together Canadians from all regions of the country and all ethnic backgrounds... .. in pursuit of the common mission of defending Canada and Canadian interests."<sup>163</sup> Because of that unique structure and unique mandate, it is critical that all communications activities are conducted in a way that instils public confidence. If the Canadian citizenry understands what the mandate of the Canadian Armed Forces is and is confident in how the organization is achieving its mandate, they are more likely to support current and future policy decisions. That connection with the Canadian public is the most important relationship the Department must nurture, and as such communications objectives and

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<sup>162</sup> Men. *Strategic Internal Communication...*, 267.

<sup>163</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives...*, 2008-0.

activities must treat members at all levels of the organization as stakeholders and enable them to speak positively on behalf of the Department.<sup>164</sup>

The way to start a communications culture change involves three main theories: a) leaders must embrace communications as a function of their job, b) when organizations begin treating employees as stakeholders as opposed to receivers, these employees become Ambassadors for the organization, and c) in line with the stakeholder approach symmetric communications result in more loyal and engaged employees who believe that they are valuable. Through these three theories, the supervisor/subordinate relationship will evolve to one of mentorship, collaboration and shared culture, resulting in job satisfaction and positive communications efforts.

In order to nurture and grow this relationship, the Canadian Armed Forces can no longer rely on a traditional hierarchy structure of communicating both externally and internally. Despite the bureaucratic structure of the Canadian Armed Forces, hundreds of informal networks and connections mean that soldiers, sailors and aviators share and receive information regarding the institution in many ways other than what is passed down through official channels. If the information they receive is contradictory or confusing, they will seek information elsewhere, and they will lose trust in the organization they belong to. Richard Dolphin stresses that traditional hierarchy organizational structures challenges information flow within an organization<sup>165</sup> and that leaders and communications practitioners must work together to ensure that messages are clear, concise and timely.

The Canadian Armed Forces Case Studies presented in this paper highlight just how complex and challenging internal communications efforts can be within an organization as large

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<sup>164</sup> Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives...*, 2008-0.

<sup>165</sup> Dolphin. *Internal Communications: Today's Strategic Imperative...*, 173.

and spread out as a military. Despite the Canadian Armed Forces seeing initial understanding of what Operation HONOUR is and the need to eliminate harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour, it must be understood that organizational culture cannot be changed overnight, especially a culture that is so deeply rooted in pre-existing and sometimes archaic beliefs such as the military, and there is no quick fix to the problem. The communications efforts regarding The Journey highlight a different challenge. Communication must be consistent and equal in order to ensure that employees are receiving accurate information regarding their employer. In this case study, the Canadian Armed Forces began speaking publicly about The Journey before it was even clear what the framework would look like, causing internal confusion at multiple levels of the hierarchy as to what it actually would mean for service members. Crisis and emergency communications have their own challenge in a connected and 24/7 environment. How can leaders ensure appropriate urgent information that has the potential to save life or limb is disseminated to as many employees in as short a time possible? Finally, the most recent case study highlighting Canadian Armed Forces support to flood relief efforts shows how if stakeholders (including employees) are provided the information they need to feel as though they belong to a shared culture, they will express their loyalty outside of the organization and act as spokespeople and ambassadors. The Operation LENTUS example is an easy case study to showcase how an effective stakeholder approach can create organizational ambassadors because it is a good news story and the Canadian public have an opportunity to see Canadian Armed Forces soldiers, sailors and aviators at work in their own communities.

Regardless of an organization's history, or its hierarchical structure, internal communications proves to be a critical activity in any institution. It should be leader-driven,

public affairs enabled and should consider as much of a symmetric, stakeholder approach as feasibly possible.

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