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**Major Karine Roy**

**Guided by the North: Leveraging Canadian Rangers Success to  
Improve Diversity and Create an Inclusive Culture Within the Canadian Armed Forces**

**JCSP 47**

**Exercise Solo Flight**

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## **GUIDED BY THE NORTH- LEVERAGING CANADIAN RANGERS SUCCESS TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY AND CREATE AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE WITHIN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES (CAF)**

The institutional failures associated with addressing sexual misconduct, the allegations within the senior ranks and the subsequent challenges associated with recruitment and retention has threatened the viability of the CAF. The most recent Prime Minister's Mandate Letter to the Minister of National Defence states as its first priority "to take concrete steps to build an inclusive and diverse Defence team, characterized by a healthy workplace free from harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct and violence"<sup>1</sup>. Interestingly, the Canadian Rangers, most notably those situated within the territories, possess diverse teams representative of their community, where 80% are Indigenous<sup>2</sup> and speak 26 different language<sup>3</sup>, enjoy a higher rate of serving women, encompass an inclusive culture highly respected within their community and has a military service rate that is 5x<sup>4</sup> higher than their southern peers. In addition, the CAF's relationship with the Rangers in the North, has been described as a partnership of mutual benefit, which strengthens northern communities and increases resilience, bolsters northern sovereignty and supports reconciliation. The purpose of this research paper is not to advocate for more Rangers, even though this may seem like a tempting expedient political solution.<sup>5</sup> Most studies acknowledge that their current size and scope of duties is adequate but can use further support

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<sup>1</sup> Canada. *Minister of National Defence Mandate Letter* (December 16, 2021)

<sup>2</sup> Samantha Stevens, *Canadian Rangers: Community, Autonomy, and Sovereignty* (JACANZS, vol.1, issue 2, 2021) 14

<sup>3</sup> Whitney P. Lackenbauer, "Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada's North": *Media Misperceptions of the Canadian Rangers, Indigenous Service, and Arctic Security* (Journal of Military and Strategic Studies, Volume 19, Issue 2, 2018) 158

<sup>4</sup> Whitney P. Lackenbauer and Peter Kikkert, *Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers* (Peterborough, Ontario, 2020) 55

<sup>5</sup> Whitney P. Lackenbauer, *Canada's Northern Strategies: From Trudeau to Trudeau, 1970-2020* (UCalgary, 2020) xx

from their headquarters staff.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of this paper is to analyze CAF related Ranger policies in order to suggest recommendations that can be applied more broadly to improve overall CAF diversity and inclusion. This paper will argue that the CAF will only achieve diversity once it embraces inclusion. In addition, the CAF will only be truly inclusive if/when it recognizes the mutual value or need for the group it is trying to include. The CAF's partnership with the Rangers is a case in point.

## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION DEFINED**

The CAF currently has Employment Equity goals legislated through the Employment Equity Act, setting recruitment and retention targets for women, aboriginal peoples and visible minorities.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the Prime Minister, through his mandate letter to the MND has been asked to “undertake ambitious actions to improve the diversity of the CAF, including efforts to increase the recruitment and promotion of women, LGBTQ2, Indigenous, Black and racialized Canadians and people with disabilities”.<sup>8</sup> The CAF Defence Policy and CAF Diversity Strategy provides further details as to why diversity is important beyond the legal requirements or human rights by linking diversity to operational effectiveness. For example, by recognising that diverse teams broaden perspectives<sup>9</sup> and to remain relevant as an institution by connecting to the society that it serves.<sup>10</sup>

More recently, as the CAF reckoned with the latest misconduct allegations<sup>11</sup>, the Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC) organization was stood up to “establish

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<sup>6</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) 54

<sup>7</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Plan, 2021-2016*, (2021) 9

<sup>8</sup> Canada. *Minister of National Defence Mandate Letter* (December 16, 2021)

<sup>9</sup> Canada. *Strong, Secure, Engaged, Canada's Defence Policy* (2017) 23

<sup>10</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Armed Forces Diversity Strategy* (2017) Forward

<sup>11</sup> CBC News. *A military in crisis: Here are the senior leaders embroiled in sexual misconduct cases.*

comprehensive strategies to create a healthier, safer and more inclusive organizational culture”<sup>12</sup>. Within the CAF, inclusion was defined as “a collective culture in which people feel valued, respected, connected, psychologically safe, involved in decision-making, recognized as having unique characteristics that contribute to organizational success, and empowered to bring their authentic selves to the workplace”.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the stand-up of CPCC, “Diversity and Inclusion” was often discussed as one term. For example in Canada’s Defence Policy – Strong, Secure, Engaged, while neither term is defined, the expression itself is quoted 8 times to describe an initiative that needs to be promoted, embraced, supported or prioritized.<sup>14</sup> TED Star and Diversity and inclusion expert Verna Myers described the differences as such: “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance”.<sup>15</sup>

### **EMBRACING INCLUSION – “IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME”<sup>16</sup>**

Although “Diversity and Inclusion” often go hand in hand, by separating the two terms, it becomes much easier to pinpoint the root cause of recruitment and retention challenges. Targeted recruitment will only get you so far. Retention rates for white men are higher than every other demographic and the proportion of white men increases with each rank<sup>17</sup>. The Minister of National Defence Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination highlighted the following example related to Indigenous recruitment and retention. The CAF has

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<sup>12</sup> Canada. *CDS/DM Initiating Directive for Professional Conduct and Culture*, (April 2021) para 1

<sup>13</sup> Department of National Defence. *Aide-Memoire on Inclusive Behaviours and the CAF Competency Dictionary* (2022)

<sup>14</sup> Canada (2017) SSE. Embrace D&I, pg 23. Support D&I, pg 23. Prioritize D&I, pg 104. Promote D&I, pg 23 & 107.

<sup>15</sup> Cleveland.com, “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance,” Verna Myers tells Cleveland Bar

<sup>16</sup> Field of Dreams (1989)

<sup>17</sup> Canada. Minister of National Defence *Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination*, Final Report (January 2022) 16

targeted recruitment Indigenous programs such as the Aboriginal Leadership Opportunities Year (ALOY), the Canadian Forces Aboriginal Entry Program and various summer training programs such as Bold Eagle and Black Bear, yet recruitment and retention remains a challenge. The indigenous members recruited through these programs described feelings of culture shock and dissonance due to the CAFs lack of respect for their traditions and being forced to assimilate to the “traditional military mould”<sup>18</sup>. By not maintaining the inclusionary aspects well practiced during ALOY or the summer training programs, the CAF provided false promises to these members who ultimately returned “to their communities and share[d] their negative experiences”<sup>19</sup>, further challenging recruitment. By embracing inclusion on the onset, the CAF would be in a much better position to achieve (and maintain) diversity.

The Canadian Rangers, a reserve sub-component of approximately 5000 members, serves within remote, northern, coastal and isolated communities. For example, nearly all communities within the Northern Territory possess a Ranger Patrol<sup>20</sup> consisting of approx. 25-30 members, named after the community they serve<sup>21</sup>. Their most common responsibilities include conducting sovereignty patrols, assisting with search and rescue operations, acting as guides for southern armies and running the junior Rangers programs.<sup>22</sup> From a policy perspective, the Rangers are quite unique within the CAF. They are considered trained upon enrolment and are not required to undergo basic training. They have no universality of service requirements, no aptitude, physical or fitness requirement and no compulsory retirement at age 55/60. These various accommodations serve to bolster inclusion by expanding the pool of members available to serve

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<sup>18</sup> Canada (2022) 31

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 31

<sup>20</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) 5

<sup>21</sup> Whitney P. Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers, A Living History* (UBC Press, 2013) 41

<sup>22</sup> DAOD 2020-2, *Canadian Rangers*

and limiting the entry criteria to only the most essential. Specifically, to join the Canadian Rangers, they must be at least 18 years of age and “in sufficiently good health to carry out their duties; knowledgeable of the local terrain and competent to operate on the land”.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to removing these barriers to recruitment and retention, the CAFs interactions with the Rangers can also be described as inclusive. A study of interactions between Rangers from 2 Canadian Rangers patrol Group in Nunavik, Quebec, a predominantly indigenous patrol group, and the southern instructors tasked to provide yearly training were conducted in 2016-17.<sup>24</sup> The author noted in field observations that the CAF’s (non-indigenous) instructors respectfully adapted their training to account for Indigenous culture by adopting the Rangers sense of time, internal teaching methods and decision making styles. The Northern Rangers have a different concept of time compared to their southern military peers, where the Rangers prefer a slow and right approach and can only be hastened in emergencies. In addition, indigenous groups tend to use the “watch and learn” method of instruction when educating each other. These specific instructional techniques, while used for centuries for teaching drill, are used as standard practice within indigenous communities for imparting generational skills. Ranger instructors have noted how these expanded techniques have served them well when they returned to their regular duties. Lastly, and perhaps most notably, while operating in patrols, the Rangers adopt a participatory, non-hierarchal decision making style.<sup>25</sup> Before any decision is made, members will consult with each other and their elders and consensus will be sought.<sup>26</sup> In all three examples above, while operating with the Rangers, the instructors have assimilated to the indigenous

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<sup>23</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) 6

<sup>24</sup> Magali Vullierme, *Cultural Understanding and Dialogue within the Canadian Armed Forces; insights from Canadian Ranger Patrols* (The Northern Review 52, Yukon University, Whitehorse, Canada, 2021) 3

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 134

<sup>26</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) 103

cultural way of life, showing respect and appreciation and being culturally inclusive with the Rangers.

The Rangers methods of decision making also highlights how inclusive Ranger patrol groups are with each other. Besides their participatory decision making style, the Rangers elect individual members and those occupying leadership positions (Cpl, MCpl and Sgt). For example, a member may be selected as a Ranger due to her skills as a snow machine mechanic. A much needed skill while patrolling between remote northern communities in extreme climates. Or an elder may step back and adopt a role of radio operator closer to his community.<sup>27</sup> Striving for inclusivity is a part of indigenous culture in general. The Inuit societal values and principals cited by the Government of Nunavut included the following: “respecting others, fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive, decision making through discussion and consensus”.<sup>28</sup> The Dene values include “showing respect for oneself and for others... equality among all people... has reason to respect themselves and take pride in doing well”.<sup>29</sup> Recall the CAF’s latest definition of inclusion presented above and you will find many similarities.

The Rangers have achieved a level of diversity that is representative of their community because policy barriers were removed, the CAF was inclusive toward the Rangers and the Rangers are inclusive in and of itself. Broadly speaking, although the CAF can try and legislate inclusion through Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), education, and promoting inclusion through the performance appraisal process, barriers will remain until all groups see and understand the mutual value of inclusion.

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<sup>27</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) 7

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 109

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 109



## VALUING INCLUSION

When the CAF opened up all occupations to women in 1989, they didn't do so because they valued women's skills or they needed a bigger recruitment pool as was the case during the World Wars<sup>30</sup>. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women, The Canadian Human Rights Act, and the Charter of Rights and Freedom made it so the CAF had no other choice but to allow women to serve.<sup>31</sup> The integration of women in the military has not gone smoothly as evidenced by the Maclean's article titled "Rape in the Military" from 1998,<sup>32</sup> the L'actualité article detailing further stories of sexual assault in 2014<sup>33</sup> and the Deschamps report in 2015.<sup>34</sup> During a House of Commons hearing on Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the CAF in 2019, Sandra Perron, the first serving woman CAF Infantry soldier testified that "you cannot order soldiers to respect women... the CAF needs to create situations where a light appear in the CAF members' mind and they'll say, 'Wow, luckily we have women on board'".<sup>35</sup>

The Canadian Rangers were initially formed in 1942 as the Pacific Coast Militia Reserves. They were tasked with reporting suspicious activities and providing coastal defence against a Japanese invasion. They were stood back up in 1947 as the Canadian Rangers in response to the Cold War, where their focus shifted to protecting their remote communities. Later, when an American Icebreaker transitioned through the Northwest Passage, their focus shifted to protecting Arctic sovereignty. As northern policy evolved, so did the Rangers responsibilities. Although they are no longer expected to serve as a combat force, the Rangers

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<sup>30</sup> The Canadian Encyclopeida, *Canadian Women and War*

<sup>31</sup> Government of Canada, *Women in the Canadian Armed Forces*

<sup>32</sup> J. O'Hara et al. *Rape in the Military*. (Maclean's, 25 May 1998 )

<sup>33</sup> N. Mercier and A. Castonguay. *Crimes sexuels: le cancer qui ronge l'armée canadienne*. (L'actualité, 15 mai 2014)

<sup>34</sup> Marie Deschamps, *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces* (27 March 2015)

<sup>35</sup> Stephan Fuhr, *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces* (June 2019) 47

remained a “lightly-equipped and self-sufficient mobile force”.<sup>36</sup> In recent years, the value that the CAF and Government has placed on the Rangers has only increased. In fact, the year 2022 has been named “The Year of the Canadian Rangers”<sup>37</sup> by the CAF. The Rangers continue to provide value for money by using their own equipment such as boats, quads or snowmobiles (but get re-imbursed usage fees) and select their own operational clothing based on climate and traditions. Besides their low cost, the Rangers possess immeasurable traditional knowledge, local navigation and survival skills in extreme climates that they are willing to share with the CAF when they act as scouts or guides.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the Rangers are normally the first point of contact for CAF members when organizing northern exercises or operations. The Rangers, being integrated within their community can act as cultural advisors and have forged relationships with key leaders and organizations within their community. Throughout the 75 year history of the Rangers, the CAF valued the skills and knowledge from the mostly indigenous Ranger and continued to nurture the partnership.

From a federal policy perspective, the Rangers play a key role in protecting and exercising Northern sovereignty by conducting regular patrols into the Northern wilderness and inspecting the North Warning System site.<sup>39</sup> A much more affordable option than operating bases up north with Regular forces. The Rangers were also an enabler for key government objectives such as improving relations with indigenous people after the Oka Crisis in 1990<sup>40</sup> and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People.<sup>41</sup> In the 1990s and early 2000s, northern policy emphasized human security and prosperity, promoting concepts such as diversified economies, safety and

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<sup>36</sup> DAOD 2020-2, *Canadian Rangers*

<sup>37</sup> Department of National Defence. ‘*Year of the Canadian Rangers*’ celebrated in Victoria (23 May 2022)

<sup>38</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) 2-3

<sup>39</sup> DAOD 2020-2, *Canadian Rangers*

<sup>40</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) 4

<sup>41</sup> Vullierme (2021) 2

promoting indigenous languages and culture.<sup>42</sup> The Rangers played a role in all cases. Notably, the Jr Rangers program, administered and led by the Rangers was initially created to help fight indigenous youth suicide.<sup>43</sup> More recently, with the Liberal government, northern policy has shifted towards reconciliation and northern resilience.<sup>44</sup> Recent studies by Lackenbauer and Kikkert showed that the Rangers contributes to both due to their positive relationship with the CAF and their community.<sup>45</sup> Since the Rangers were able to play a key role in advancing northern policy objectives, they were consistently expanding in the 90s while the remainder of the CAF was contracting.<sup>46</sup>

While the CAF may see value in the Rangers, in order to form partnerships, attraction must go both ways. Besides creating an environment for diversity to thrive by being inclusive, the members that the CAF are trying to recruit and retain must see value in the CAF as well. The CAF instructors provide Rangers with training and skills that are also useful within their community. For example, common training includes first aid, Search and Rescue techniques, marksmanship, use of communication equipment like satellite radios and building airstrips.<sup>47</sup> Learning these skills was often cited as the reason for wanting to join the Rangers.<sup>48</sup> When living in extremely cold remote communities, citizens often go missing for reasons as simple as a snowmobile breaking down. Being a Ranger is also valued since it allows indigenous members to practice their traditional skills while on patrol and facilitates the traditional transfer of knowledge between elders and youth.<sup>49</sup> Lastly, the Rangers feel pride in serving and act as

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<sup>42</sup> Lackenbauer (2020a) xvi

<sup>43</sup> Vullierme (2021) 2

<sup>44</sup> Canada, *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework: Safety, Security and Defence Chapter Objective 5*

<sup>45</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) i

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 62

<sup>48</sup> Vullierme (2021) 7

<sup>49</sup> Lackenbauer (2020b) 81

leaders and mentors within their community.<sup>50</sup> The CAF and the Canadian Rangers have found synergy by forming a mutually beneficial, force multiplying, partnership. By recognizing, in this case, what the Northern indigenous members can contribute, the CAF was willing to make numerous exceptions and act in an inclusive matter to integrate their different cultures.

## CONCLUSION

Much can be learned from studying diversity and inclusion within the Canadian Rangers and between the Rangers and the broader CAF. To value inclusion, you have to see it in action. First and foremost, by amplifying the indigenous success stories to help educate those ignorant of what indigenous members can bring to the table. Besides all of the indigenous knowledge and skills mentioned above, indigenous cultures are also skilled at restorative justice, a concept currently being explored for addressing military sexual misconduct.<sup>51</sup> Many indigenous communities also have peacekeepers, philosophies and practices that can be shared and amalgamated with current CAF practices.<sup>52</sup> The same can be said for women, who have been recognized by the UN for their role “in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, humanitarian response and in a post-conflict reconstruction”.<sup>53</sup> Or for first generation immigrants who bring much needed cultural and linguistic diversity on deployments.<sup>54</sup> Or for transgender members who possess “unique perspectives [and] lived experiences”<sup>55</sup> that can help identify other barriers to inclusion. Or for Black people for their resilience, tenacity and persistence, attributes accumulated by most Black people in order to fight

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 78

<sup>51</sup> Government of Canada. *About Restorative Engagement*.

<sup>52</sup> Department of National Defence, *2016 Defence Policy Review- September 14, 2016 Indigenous Roundtable Discussion Summary Report* (October 18, 2016) 8

<sup>53</sup> UN Resolution 1325. *Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security*.

<sup>54</sup> Canada. *Strong, Secure, Engaged, Canada's Defence Policy* (2017) 23

<sup>55</sup> Canada (2022) 49

persistent racism throughout their lives.<sup>56</sup> In all cases, the solution lies in recognising their value and including them on your team. Once you build that inclusive culture, diversity will come.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 37

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