

Special Issue of the *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*

**The Role of Indigenous Peoples in Armed Forces: Canadian and
International Perspectives**

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On 7 June 2017, Canada's Department of National Defence released *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. Developed under the banner of diversity and inclusion, themes dear to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, this new defence policy proposed three objectives aimed at Indigenous peoples: reviewing recruitment and retention practices to promote Indigenous inclusion; focusing on Indigenous youth by expanding the Junior Canadian Ranger program; and strengthening links with Northern Indigenous communities through the Canadian Rangers and the Junior Canadian Ranger program.

That same month, professor Jean-François Savard from ENAP (School of Public Administration, Université du Québec) was awarded a two-year SSHRC Insight Development grant to study how Indigenous people's perceptions of the Canadian Armed Forces affect enlistment. At the same time, he secured a grant from the Department of National Defence's (DND) Targeted Engagement Grant program to hold a conference on the roles of Indigenous people in the Canadian Armed Forces and, in turn, other international comparisons of Indigenous military service. Held in December 2017, the conference brought together fifteen academic researchers from Canada, the United States, Asia-Pacific, and Europe. In fact, more than those fifteen authors we originally invited, including indigenous authors, but given the time of year the conference was held, most of the invited speakers had to decline the invitation due to professional obligations and commitments.

The conference was opened by BGen Jocelyn Paul, a member of the Huron-Wendat nation. BGen Paul first discussed the reasons that lead him to enroll in the CAF and then told the audience about his career within the CAF. Far from drawing a negative picture of his years as a member of the CAF, BGen Paul explained that his career was an opportunity for him to rediscover his indigenous identity and take pride of it. In fact, identity was the focus of his presentation, highlighting the compatibility of the indigenous identity with that of the CAF. He claimed that the possibility of reconciling both identities (indigenous and member of the CAF) is beneficial for both parties. In that regard, he ended his address by presenting different programs offered by the CAF for indigenous people, and more particularly for young indigenous people.

Given the quality of the papers, Savard and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (now Canada Research Chair in the Study of the Canadian North at Trent University) invited presenters to develop their papers as articles for this thematic volume that fills substantive gaps on our understandings of Indigenous people and military service, both past and present.

A recent review of books and journal articles related to Indigenous people and armed forces reveals a disproportionate emphasis on historic perspectives. "The rise of Indigenous military histories across the major Anglo settler societies of the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa ..., especially since the 1990s, has aligned with national reconciliation agendas, as well as efforts among Indigenous

communities to commemorate the contributions of their forebears to their country's defense," historian Noah Riseman notes. "This project of historicizing Indigenous military service continues around the world, exposing the complex histories of Indigenous peoples who are constantly negotiating their statuses and military service, as well as their own traditions" (Riseman 2017, p. 6). In the Canadian literature, Sweeny (1979), Gaffen (1985), Dempsey (1999), Sheffield (2004), Lackenbauer et al (2010), and Winegard (2012) have looked at the contributions of Indigenous people(s) in the First and Second World Wars and the legacies of their participation. The official Department of National Defence *Commemorative History of Aboriginal People in the Canadian Military* (Lackenbauer et al 2010) spans from pre-contact to the early twenty-first century, and Lackenbauer's detailed study on the Canadian Rangers (2013) spans the Cold War to present, but none of these studies purports to cover the full spectrum of issues associated with Indigenous military service and implications for Indigenous communities.

Winegard (2011) and Sheffield and Riseman (2019) have undertaken comparative historical studies of British settler colonies (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States), while edited volumes on Indigenous military service have surveyed experiences across various settler societies (Lackenbauer et al 2007a, 2007b). Similarly, books addressing cases in the Pacific (Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, United States) and South Africa have mainly focussed on Indigenous peoples'/ people's role and treatment during the world wars (Hall 1989, 1995; Riseman 2012; Riseman 2016; and Scarlett 2014), with only rare exceptions examining the Cold War era and beyond (eg. Ball 1991; Holm 1996; Riseman 2012, 2013).

Various articles in this special issue build on these historical perspectives addressing the role and treatment of Indigenous people in the Canadian Armed Forces as well as other national armed forces (the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan) during and after the world wars, as well as "intersections between military service and themes such as colonialism, gender, race relations, and martial race theory" (Riseman 2017, p. 6). Other contributions analyze the contemporary contributions of Indigenous people in the Canadian armed forces, with particular emphasis on the Canadian Rangers – a unique sub-component of the CAF Reserves who account for most Indigenous service personnel in the CAF. Finally, this special issue addresses

contemporary public administration issues, including recruitment, systemic racism, equality, and organizational perceptions. An underlying theme running through the articles asks how the Armed Forces can be more inclusive of Indigenous people. Accordingly, we hope that this volume will demonstrate the relevance of Indigenous-military relations to the fields of political science, public policy, public administration, history, and sociology.

In the first article, “‘The Exigencies of the Military Situation Must be the Primary Consideration’: The Department of Indian Affairs, Communication Control, and Indigenous Families in the First World War,” University of Waterloo Ph.D. candidate Tim Clark maintains that during the First World War Indigenous peoples in Canada contributed to the war effort through enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), Patriotic Fund contributions, and agricultural and industrial production. These contributions, however, were not universally accepted in Indigenous communities. For many aging, non-military eligible individuals, enlistment and off-reserve work deprived families of care-givers, bread-winners, and youth who were essential to household and community well-being. Their petitions to the Canadian government, filtered through the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), reveal the breadth of opinion and sources of frustration from across Indigenous communities in Canada. For the DIA, however, the years from 1914-1918 provided a crucial opportunity to solidify its power over Indigenous communities. Through a three-pillared archetype of communication control, the DIA increased its unilateral dominion over Indigenous affairs, largely at the expense of the eldest members of Indigenous communities, remaining traditional governance structures, and especially women. While the DIA rightly lauded Indigenous contributions to Canada’s war effort in post-war declarations, it conveniently ignored the costs associated with such contributions, thus denying a crucial aspect of Indigenous First World War history – an omission that historians have too often indulged.

In “Wartime Experiences and Indigenous Identities in the Japanese Empire,” cultural anthropologists Lin Poyer from the University of Wyoming and Futuru Tsai from National Taitung University in Taiwan demonstrate how new research reveals how indigenous communities in the Japanese empire experienced competing currents of loyalty and identity during the Pacific War. They examine how three indigenous

populations—Ainu, indigenous Taiwanese, and Micronesian Islanders—survived the ideological and social pressures of an empire at war and, despite intense assimilationist demands of Japan’s *kōminka* program and traumatic wartime experiences, retained cultural identities sufficiently robust to allow expression at the end of the century in the form of action to maintain community lives apart from, while engaged with, the nation-state.

University of the Fraser Valley history professor Scott Sheffield, in “Exploring the Meaning of Indigenous Military Service during the Second World War in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States,” interrogates the diverse meanings of military service for Native American, First Nations, Māori, and Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander soldiers in a transnational fashion. He considers concepts of soldiers’ indigeneity, as well as identities shared with their non-Indigenous comrades-in-arms, emphasizing how meanings were situational and fluid, shaped by the specific contexts in which they arose. Thus would-be recruits held specific notions about military service prior to enlisting, which inspired them to offer their services. Once in uniform, and especially once serving overseas in combat, the meaning of their service was profoundly reshaped by new realities. The overlap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous soldiers’ understandings of their service increased markedly, Sheffield argues. When Indigenous service men returned home and transitioned into veterans, the shifting context of their post-war lives reshaped the meaning of their military service. Furthermore, the meanings and memory of military service for Indigenous increasingly diverged from those of non-Indigenous veterans, with distinctions of Indigeneity reasserting themselves in civilian life.

In her article “Embracing Indigenous culture in military organizations: the experience of the Māori in the New Zealand military,” Professor Grazia Scoppio of the Department of Defence Studies at the Royal Military College of Canada builds upon research on Indigenous peoples in the New Zealand Defence Force that she carried out in 2007 during an exchange between the Canadian and New Zealand Departments of Defence. This collaborative project identified potential lessons and best practices from New Zealand that Canada could draw upon to enhance participation of Indigenous peoples within the Canadian Armed Forces. Using organizational culture theory as a conceptual framework, this article investigates the main approaches and practices that

have enabled a positive partnership with the Māori and the successful inclusion of this nation culture in the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). Specifically, she investigates the mechanisms put in place by the NZDF leadership and the internal and external environments of the organization supporting the participation of Indigenous peoples in the New Zealand military. The ensuing discussions explore ways in which Indigenous practices and customs can be incorporated into other military systems and protocols. Her article concludes that, among military organizations, the NZDF is a leader in transforming the organizational culture and enabling the organization to embrace Indigenous culture and empowering the Indigenous members within its ranks.

In the next article, historian Magdalena Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek of Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, highlights the challenges of extending veterans care to Indigenous peoples. Her article, “‘They Should Vanish Into Thin Air ... and Give no Trouble’: Canadian Aboriginal Veterans of World Wars,” suggests that Canada was exceptional when compared to other fighting countries, with the federal government preparing far-reaching and efficient systems of care for the returning soldiers, backed by robust funding. Thanks to the introduction of the *Pensions Act* and *Soldier Settlement Act* during WWI, and the comprehensive *Veterans’ Charter* during WWII, the vast majority of Canadian ex-servicemen were offered retraining courses, employment and educational possibilities, land grants and disability pensions. Canadian Indigenous ex-servicemen were exceptions to this rule, however, receiving equal treatment only on paper and largely denied opportunities to make their own, informed and rational decisions about reintegration into civilian society. In the case of status Indians, this inequitable situation stemmed from the fact that their benefits and services were administered by the Indian agents who rarely interpreted benefit plans to their wards’ advantage. Other Indigenous people, particularly Métis and non-status Indians, were not subject to the control of Indian agents, but they also faced difficulties and did not take advantage of many veterans’ services because they came from remote communities, with limited communications facilities, far from Department of Veterans’ Affairs offices or Royal Canadian Legion branches.

History professor Noah Riseman from Australian Catholic University offers a comparative perspective using cases from Australia. In “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Military Service in the Second World War,” he stresses that an estimated 4,000

Aboriginal Australians and 850 Torres Strait Islanders served during the Second World War. They joined the armed forces despite over 150 years of colonialism and policies which indicated that recruits must be 'substantially of European origin or descent'. His article provides a brief overview of the many facets of Australian Indigenous military service during the war, including the policies, motivations to serve, and the experiences of these Indigenous men and women. While there were differences depending on gender and place of service, particularly between those who served in regular units and those from remote regions of Australia who served in more informal capacities, almost unanimously the Second World War represented an opportunity. The improved economic situation, social status and, for those in regular units, glimpse of equality represented a break from the norm which empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women to improve their personal and collective lot in Australian society.

In "Indigenous Communities are at the Heart of Canada's North: Media Misperceptions of the Canadian Rangers, Indigenous Service, and Arctic Security," historian P. Whitney Lackenbauer analyzes how and why the Canadian Rangers – an unorthodox military organization comprised predominantly of Indigenous people – have emerged from the shadows to become a highly visible example of diversity and inclusion in today's Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Countering critical assessment of the Rangers by two particular journalists, he paints the portrait of an organization that successfully mobilizes Indigenous Canadians living in remote regions and situates them appropriately within the defence team. The Rangers are neither a military nor an Indigenous *program* (as they are sometimes misidentified), Lackenbauer emphasizes, but rather a subcomponent of the Reserves that embodies the benefits of leveraging the unique skillsets of Canadians from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds to support home defense and public safety. Explaining their unique terms of service and roles, the socio-political contexts in which they operate, their command structure, and their practical contributions to the defence team in the Canadian North, Lackenbauer explains why Rangers offer core capabilities that meaningfully and practically leverage the rich diversity, knowledge, and skills of Indigenous peoples in Northern Canada. Rather than adopting a deficit approach to explaining the under-representation of Indigenous people in the CAF, including the Canadian Rangers in military participation statistics encourages a reappraisal of why the Canadian Rangers have become a "career

of choice” for many northern Indigenous people. As a bridge between diverse cultures and between the civilian and military realms, the Rangers, he says, represent a successful integration of national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based activities and local stewardship. This practical partnership, rooted in traditional knowledge and skills, promotes cooperation, communal and individual empowerment, and cross-cultural understanding.

French scholar Magali Vullierme’s article on “Social Contribution of the Canadian Rangers: Tool of Assimilation or Mean of Agency?” highlights that Canadian Ranger patrols are composed mainly of Indigenous people under the responsibility of non-Indigenous instructors. This close association of Indigenous people with a non-Indigenous military force raises the questions of assimilation and agency. How do patrol members describe their service in the Canadian Rangers? Do elements of assimilation or of agency transpire from their discourse? Based on interviews conducted with Rangers and instructors or other ranked officers of the 2 CRGP in 2016, she raises two central themes. First, she identifies phrases related to “assimilation” – but these elements refer to the *assimilation of non-Indigenous instructors* rather than Indigenous people. Second, she highlights perceptions that the Rangers positively contribute to Indigenous agency, which helps to explain the active participation of Indigenous people in this subcomponent of the Army Reserves.

John MacFarlane, a historian with the Directorate of History and Heritage in the Department of National Defence, updates his reflection on “The Cultural Contribution of Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Army” based on a series of interviews that he conducted with Indigenous veterans or serving members in 2001 and 2002. One hundred years ago, when the Canadian Army was overseas at war, the organization reflected the attitudes of the society at the time. The white male was prominent in representations of army culture and ideals. Other groups (including francophones, visible minorities and women) were segregated or assimilated, if not completely banned. Today, however, Indigenous peoples are welcomed, and their cultural heritage is not only appreciated and accepted but has significantly transformed the Canadian Army. His research note presents the perception of some veterans who adapted, in various ways, to mainstream military culture while also retaining elements of their own culture that has helped significantly influence the Canadian Army over the past

century, most notably over the past fifty years. In most histories of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian Army, the focus has been on how the Armed Forces changed them. After a century, he observes that it is increasingly clear how much they have changed the Army.

The research note by historian Katharine McGowan of Mount Royal University and political scientist Simon Palamar, a research associate at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), offers “A Mixed Methods Study of Enlistment on Reserves in the First World War.” Their findings highlight considerable debate amongst historians about the relative effect of Indian Agents and the Department of Indian Affairs during the First World War. Did these government actors essentially dictate and direct? Did they evoke protest, were they largely irrelevant, or somewhere in between? Answering these questions is challenging because the Department’s own reports mix hyperbole, wishful thinking, and racist assumptions about Indigenous peoples. In their study, McGowan and Palamar contribute to this debate by testing whether the presence of an Indian Agent as recruiter could be demonstrated as having any effect on enlistment rates across Agencies in the country. Their preliminary results support the hypothesis that, with the exception of British Columbia, Indian Agent recruiters had a statistically significant effect on recruiting, although much remains to be understood about the dynamics in action.

Public administration scholars Sébastien Girard-Lindsay (now a Ph.D. student at the University of Ottawa) and Jean-François Savard follow with similar logic. In “Military Perceptions over Aboriginal People in the Canadian Armed Forces: the Organizational Influences on Individual Perceptions,” they emphasize that the Canadian state is in the process of reaching out to Indigenous communities in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. Public organizations must therefore be actively involved in integrating Indigenous people into their communities so that they are representative of the Canadian society as a whole. The question of the perceptions of Indigenous employees becomes crucial because it may be a factor that facilitates or restricts their access to public organizations. As such, Indigenous people have a special, complex and rich relationship with the military. It is thus relevant to study the Indigenous people’s perception of the Canadian military. Using the theory of social representations, this article exposes the structure of these perceptions. The

authors discovered that the military perceives the army through the prism of excellence and legal authority. Thus, the perception scheme is not *a priori* an obstacle to the integration of Indigenous people, but there are indeed prejudices and stereotypes on the periphery of the representational structure. These prejudices and stereotypes could constitute an obstacle to the effective integration of this population.

Western University professor emerita Carol Agocs's "Canadian Dilemma: Is There a Path from Systemic Racism Toward Employment Equity for Indigenous People in the Canadian Forces?" points out that Indigenous peoples in Canada continue to be oppressed by a system of racial discrimination enacted, in part, through government legislation, policies and practices. As a significant component of the state, the Canadian Armed Forces have been part of this troubled history. Systemic racism at the level of the organization, practiced through customary decision-making, policies and behaviours, results in inequality or disadvantage for some groups and privileges for others. Since 2002 the CAF has been covered by the federal *Employment Equity Act* which requires employers to remove and prevent systemic barriers to equality for Indigenous people, women and "visible minorities" and to maintain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Canadian population. Aside from its legal obligation, it is in the interest of the CAF to recruit and retain Indigenous People because they are an increasingly important part of Canada's labor supply. Indigenous members of the CAF comprise a small and marginalized minority within a large hierarchical organization that may be experienced as culturally foreign and rigid. Like other organizations, the CAF must change and become more diverse and inclusive if there is to be reconciliation and employment equity for Indigenous People in Canada. Implementing the *Employment Equity Act* can assist the CAF to move toward reconciliation, fairness and equality for Indigenous people. This article reviews available evidence bearing on the CAF's employment equity record, which unfortunately has been marked by a pattern of resistance to the Act's requirements and failure to attain a representative workforce. The CAF has contested the employment equity goal-setting process since 2002 and has not been transparent or accountable to the public with regard to the situation of its Indigenous members. Agocs points to the CAF's lack of success in identifying and removing barriers in its policies, practices and culture that stand in the way of recruiting, retaining and promoting Indigenous People, particularly in the Regular Force. The CAF's response to its employment equity responsibilities from 2002 to the present has

reflected, at best, an orientation toward minimal compliance with the Act. In the absence of a demonstrated commitment to action for change, the CAF shows that it has yet to find a path from systemic racism toward employment equity for Indigenous People.

“The Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence greatly value the contribution of Indigenous people to our organization and the Defence of Canada,” Lieutenant-General Paul Wynnyk, the Commander of the Canadian Army and Defence Team Champion for Indigenous Peoples noted in an Indigenous Awareness Week address in May 2018. The theme for that year’s activities was “Dancing in Unison”, which invited Defence Team members to reflect on past Indigenous or non-Indigenous relationships as well as forward “to a positive future where we ... can all thrive alongside each other to build a better society, and a better Canada” (Canadian Army 2018). The emphasis on the rich cultural diversity, history, and contributions that Indigenous Peoples have made, and continue to bring to Canada’s Defence Team, as well as opportunities to further develop relationships with Indigenous communities and their leaders, has become a consistent message in recent years.

During its 2016 Defence Policy Review consultations, the Canadian Department of National Defence convened a specific roundtable on Indigenous issues in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on 14 September. “Over the course of the roundtable, at different times the conversation turned to building trust, relationships, and knowledge,” an official report summarized. “Learning is a two-way process – there must be resiliency, and good communications. Participants noted that Canada has a unique relationship with Indigenous people” (DND 2016: iii). The proceedings highlighted the importance of making Indigenous people (particularly youth) more aware of opportunities within the military, as well as providing Indigenous veterans and families with more respect and support for their service. For his part, Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan thanked the elders for opening with a smudging, a pipe ceremony, and an honour song, and acknowledged that the meeting is being held on Treaty 1 traditional territory and the Métis homeland. “The Government of Canada (GOC) has an important government-to-government relationship with Indigenous peoples,” the minister

explained, tying his government's efforts to build a renewed relationship with respect for Indigenous teachings and values that animated aspects of their military service.

[Sajjan] spoke of his personal experience in the service, and the history of Indigenous people in the military. The Minister acknowledged that Indigenous members of the military brought their skills and bravery to the forces. He stated that there are many lessons to be learned, and that the philosophies of Indigenous peoples that can better the military. There are many examples, individual and collective, that can be brought to the military, and many conversations to be had. These can apply here in Canada and around the world. (DND 2016: 2)

By critically analyzing historical and contemporary relationships, identifying and addressing current systemic problems, and helping to anticipate how new policies and initiatives might affect Indigenous members, their families, and their communities, we hope that the articles in this special issue contribute to these conversations. As Wynnyk suggests in trumpeting "the great contributions" that Indigenous peoples have made to the Canadian Armed Forces, "diversity is a source of strength and flexibility, and plays a pivotal role in ensuring that we stand strong, proud, and ready to serve Canadians and meet ever more complex challenges at home and abroad" (DND 2018). We hope that the contributors' explorations of varied forms of military service by Indigenous people(s), political and cultural challenges that they faced, and sacrifices made in Canada and in other countries encourages further dialogue on how Indigenous service can be rooted in trustful relationships and how respect for Indigenous cultures, values, and knowledge can inform defence policy and practice.

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