

Canadian Dilemma: Is There a Path from Systemic Racism Toward Employment Equity for Indigenous People in the Canadian Forces?

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Indigenous peoples in Canada continue to be oppressed by systemic racial discrimination enacted, in part, through government legislation, policies and practices. As a significant component of the state the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have been part of this troubled history of Canadian society. In addition, systemic racism at the level of the CAF organization, practiced through customary decision-making, policies and behaviours, results in disadvantage for some groups and privilege 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 labour 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 become more diverse and inclusive if

there is to be reconciliation and employment equity for Indigenous People in Canada. The Summary Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission noted, “for governments, building a respectful relationship involves dismantling a centuries-old political and bureaucratic culture in which, all too often, policies and programs are still based on failed notions of assimilation” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015, 21).

Implementing the *Employment Equity Act* can assist the CAF to move toward reconciliation, fairness and equality for Indigenous people. This discussion 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 not succeeded 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. In the absence of a demonstrated commitment to action for change, the CAF shows that it has yet to find a path from Canada’s history of systemic racism toward employment equity for Indigenous people.

The structure of systemic racism that oppresses Indigenous people is built on the institutional foundation of colonial relations created by the Indian Act (1876) and the Canadian state’s betrayal of the treaties, which are nation-to-nation agreements, between First Nations and the British crown (Russell, 2017). The colonial system represented political democracy and access to land and resources for white male settlers while creating political powerlessness, oppression and economic impoverishment for Indigenous people. The structures of systemic racism imposed on Indigenous people through government actions included the system of residential schools, in existence until 1996, that forcibly separated children from their cultures, families and communities and left a legacy of abuse whose effects continue today. The on-going lack of federal funding to provide equitable educational opportunities for reserve communities results in the need of many families to send their children away to urban centres to continue their education beyond the eighth grade (Talaga, 2017). Some of these children and youth, separated from the support of their families and communities, suffer traumatic and even fatal experiences of racism, alienation and neglect.

Systemic racism at the societal level and its consequences for employment is directly relevant to the question of under-representation of Indigenous people in the CAF. Systemic racism creates barriers to entry and equal participation for Indigenous people in the form of policies and practices that adversely affect them. For example, to be eligible for a career in the CAF an individual must have completed the 10th grade, a reasonable requirement on the face of it, but one that poses a systemic barrier for many residents of remote reserve communities that lack educational opportunities beyond grade eight. Another likely barrier to joining the Regular Force is the requirement to serve for a minimum of three years wherever posted, perhaps far from the family and community that give life meaning. Research has pointed to the importance of family and community ties for the employment outcomes of Indigenous people, particularly women, noting that employment policy affecting Indigenous people must take social ties into consideration and not treat individuals in isolation (Ciceri and Scott, 2013, p. 20, 23).

As a significant component of the Canadian state, the CAF has been part of its oppressive and troubled relationship with Indigenous peoples in ways that may burden individual decisions to consider a career in the Canadian Forces. The role of the CAF in the Oka crisis and other recent conflicts, for example, and the appropriation of Indigenous lands for military uses, may be deterrents for some (Fonseca and Dunn, 2012, p. 12; Lackenbauer, 2007; Shewell, 2006). There is a complex of historical experiences and continuing patterns of systemic discrimination in Canadian society that symbolizes inequality and exclusion of Indigenous people.

In addition to its manifestations at the level of Canadian society and its governance, systemic racism is also entrenched at the level of the organization. Systemic racial discrimination in a workplace produces inequality through the organization's prevailing culture and customary decision-making policies and practices, some of which create inequality or disadvantage for racialized groups, Indigenous people and women, while protecting the privileges and power of white men.

This article examines available evidence of the under-representation of Indigenous people and some of the barriers to their access and full participation in

employment in the CAF. It reviews the extent to which the CAF has demonstrated a commitment to comply with the *Employment Equity Act*, whose purpose is to reduce systemic discrimination that creates barriers to the access and equal participation in the workplace of Indigenous people as well as “visible minorities”, persons with disabilities and women (Agoecs, 2014).

Mutual Benefits of Employment Equity to the CAF and to Indigenous People

Every Canadian, and every Canadian organization, community and public institution is challenged to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s call for actions toward reconciliation with the First Peoples. The Canadian Forces has a particular responsibility and opportunity to show the way as well as organizational interests that can be advanced through equitable representation of Indigenous people among its members. The legal responsibilities of the CAF include compliance with the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, which requires federal employers to protect employees from racial, gender and other forms of discrimination, and the *Employment Equity Act*, which requires employers to take proactive steps to create and maintain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Canadian population. Furthermore, as holders of treaty rights as well as constitutional and human rights, Indigenous people are “entitled to justice and accountability” in their dealings with the Government of Canada and its agencies (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015, 209). As a central institution of the Canadian state the Canadian Forces also has an obligation to be a model employer by demonstrating progressive human resources management policies and practices. This includes a responsibility to show leadership relative to other employers in taking action toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

The CAF is an all-volunteer force. Offering and delivering opportunities to Indigenous youth and adults for training, education, rewarding careers and a supportive community in the workplace can benefit Indigenous people who decide to join the CAF. In successfully reaching out to Indigenous communities and their members in ways that increase their representation in the CAF the organization can also help to recruit the diversified talents and skills it requires to respond to the security needs of Canada at home and abroad. This is an issue that the CAF needs to address

according to the Auditor General's 2016 report. The CAF is experiencing high levels of attrition, amounting to seven to eight percent of total membership in the Regular Force in 2014-15 and 2015-16, reflecting an ineffective retention strategy. In addition, insufficient numbers are being recruited and trained and recruiting targets are set below the level of need (Auditor General, 2016, sec. 5.113, sec. 5.117).

The Indigenous population is a young and rapidly growing sector of Canada's total population (Statistics Canada, 2017a) and will play an increasingly important part in the labour force of the future as the Canadian population ages. In the northern territories, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Indigenous people are expected to account for over half the growth of the labour force over the next decade or so (McKenna, 2017). More than half the Indigenous population now lives in urban centres of at least 30,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2017a), and its educational attainment is rapidly progressing: nearly 70 percent of Aboriginal people age 25-64 have completed a high school diploma or equivalent, 11 percent hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and 19 percent have a college diploma (Statistics Canada, 2017b). These qualifications open doors to opportunity for many and will increase their competitiveness in the labour market. The federal public sector, especially the core public service, is already the leading employer of Indigenous people in Canada and is the employer of choice for many (Lynk, 2014). For unemployed First Nations and Métis people living off reserve a shortage of jobs is the most commonly experienced barrier to employment (Labour Market Experiences of First Nations 2018, p. 9; Labour Market Experiences of Métis, 2018, p. 9). Indigenous people are an important part of Canada's available and qualified labour force. Implementing employment equity in the Canadian Forces so that Indigenous people are better represented at all levels will contribute to meeting its labour force needs and legal responsibilities, and this will also benefit the organization's fulfillment of its mission and its legitimacy in Canadian society.

These mutual benefits can only be realized if the CAF succeeds in taking action to effectively address the issues of systemic racism and sexism that have been identified in recent surveys, external and internal inquiries, research and media reports which will be mentioned later in this discussion. Indigenous people now serving in the CAF face the barriers and challenges of being members of a small and marginalized minority

within a large and highly structured hierarchical organization that may be experienced as culturally foreign, insensitive and socially cold. The Canadian Forces, like other organizations, must change and become more diverse and inclusive.

Can the Canadian Forces succeed in addressing systemic barriers that exclude Indigenous people? Can this traditionally bureaucratic and hierarchical organization find a path toward becoming an open, fair, equitable and inclusive organization in which all individuals are treated with respect? Implementing the requirements of the *Employment Equity Act* could contribute substantially to the changes that will be required if the CAF is to move toward reconciliation and respect and play the leadership role it envisions for itself in Canada and the world. Compliance with the requirements and the spirit of the *Employment Equity Act* requires commitment to an ambitious and long-term change process consisting of actions that can transform the culture and many of the traditional structures and practices of the organization. In the words of Justice Murray Sinclair, “Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts” (website of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada).

Overview of Employment Equity Requirements

The purpose of the *Employment Equity Act* is

to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences (*Employment Equity Act* 1995, p. 2).¹

²The first Employment Equity Act came into force in 1987. It was replaced by a new Act in 1995. The terminology referring to aboriginal people and visible minorities reflects the usage prevalent then and has not been updated in the legislation. Unless making specific reference to the Act or CAF reports this discussion uses the terms “Indigenous” people” and “members of racialized groups.”

The legislative purpose of the Act is not to assimilate the groups mentioned into the workplace as it has traditionally existed, but to identify and remove the discriminatory barriers in the way of their access, career progression and full participation. Implementing the *Employment Equity Act*, then, is a process of organizational change designed to replace systemic barriers embedded in customary practices in the workplace with practices that are inclusive and designed to promote access and equality. The envisioned goal is that the employer's workforce will be representative of the Canadian workforce or the segments of it from which the employer may reasonably be expected to recruit. The Act protects the employer from having to hire or promote people lacking in essential qualifications or take measures that would cause undue hardship to the employer (*Employment Equity Act 1995*, p. 5, 6). On the other hand, the Act has been interpreted as a means of protecting under-represented groups from forced assimilation as the price of fair and equitable employment. The relationship between the workplace and the employee should be one of mutual benefit, accommodation and respect.

Under the Act the Canadian Forces as an employer is required to do the following (*Employment Equity Act 1995*, p. 9-17):

1. Conduct a census of its workforce, using self-identification, to determine the under-representation of each designated group in its workplace in relation to the larger labour market from which it hires;
2. Review employment systems, which are the policies and practices that guide decisions about individuals' access and careers, to identify employment barriers to the designated groups;
3. Prepare an employment equity plan specifying the positive measures and "reasonable accommodations short of undue hardship" the employer will undertake to eliminate barriers and address the special needs of each under-represented group. The plan also sets out numerical goals for hiring and promotion of under-represented groups and a timetable for implementation. The goals are set by the employer with reference to each group's representation or availability in the labour market;
4. Periodically review and revise the plan to keep it current;

5. Inform all employees about the purpose of employment equity, the measures to be taken in the workplace and progress in implementation;
6. Consult with employee representatives including designated group members, inviting them to assist in employment equity implementation and communication and in the preparation and revision of the plan;
7. Maintain and update records regarding the workforce, the plan and its implementation, including the measures taken, results achieved and consultations, and report annually.

Compliance of the CAF with the *Employment Equity Act* is subject to audit by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC), which is required to use “persuasion and negotiation” insofar as possible to resolve issues of non-compliance (*Employment Equity Act* 1995, p. 22), but it can issue undertakings and directions on issues of concern. The Commission is not permitted to give a direction that would “cause undue hardship on an employer,” require the hiring or promotion of persons who do not meet “essential qualifications”, or impose a quota on an employer, where “quota” is defined as “a requirement to hire or promote a fixed and arbitrary number of persons during a given period” (*Employment Equity Act* 1995, p. 33).

Reasonable Accommodation for Whom? The Canadian Forces as a Special Case under the Employment Equity Act

The CHRC audited the CAF in 2005-2007 and issued two undertakings related to the inadequacy of the employment equity goals of the CAF and the standard to be used for setting goals. The CHRC’s 2011 report on the audit found that the CAF had responded to the undertakings and achieved compliance with the *Employment Equity Act* (CAF Employment Equity Report, 2010-2011, p. 3).

However, from 2007 to the present, the CAF has continued to express concern about the standard to be used in setting goals for representation of the employment equity groups (CAF Employment Equity Report, 2007-2008, p. 6). It undertook a research program, which appears to have been unsuccessful, to try to establish a technical approach to setting an employment equity goal lower than the representation of the equity groups in the civilian labour market. This is the standard generally used

by federally regulated employers, but the CAF considers it “unrealistic”. Concurrently, the CAF engaged in several years of negotiations with the CHRC and the Labour Program, which provides support to employers in implementing employment equity, in an attempt to secure agreement on a method for setting reduced targets for recruitment. The CHRC was proposing standards generally used for goal setting and asking the CAF to demonstrate why those goals were unrealistic.

Recently, the Labour Program gave the CAF the option of using two National Occupational Classification codes used in the census to report military employment (CAF Employment Equity Report, 2014-15, p. 2). In the words of the current CAF Employment Equity Plan, “the NOC data therefore establishes the minimum level of representation that must be achieved to be in compliance with the EEA [*Employment Equity Act*]” (Department of National Defence, 2015, p. 6). This arrangement permits the CAF to set conservative and outdated goals. Aside from census data being as much as five years out of date, the NOC standard is based on the current representation of designated group members in the military, not in the labour market -- a benchmark that is clearly inadequate and must be surpassed if there is to be progress on employment equity in the CAF. To compound the problem, the Employment Equity Plan in force for 2015-2020 indicates that because of the “recent guidance” from the Labour Program “the specific selection of goals for women, Aboriginal peoples and visible minorities is still under consideration,” and until new goals are approved the CAF will continue to use the employment equity goals in its 2010 employment equity plan (Department of National Defence, 2015, p. 7).

Observers of the CAF push-back on the issue of employment equity goal setting commented that the problem was not that the goals proposed by the CHRC were unrealistic, but that the CAF was not doing enough to recruit members of the designated groups including Indigenous people, and therefore was failing to attain its goals (Berthiaume, 2014). A skeptic might suggest that changing the targets was considered more important by the CAF than improving recruitment and retention efforts, raising the question of whether recruitment results could have been enhanced by applying the resources spent in resisting the CHRC’s proposed goals to actions toward reaching those goals. As it is, the goals the CAF has been using, which are

significantly lower than the representation of Aboriginal people in the population, have never been met for the Regular Forces and Primary Reserves, which are the cohorts central to employment equity compliance (see Table 1).

One of the CAF's arguments for permission to use reduced goals for recruiting is that the military is a special kind of organization different from others covered by the Act and faced with recruiting challenges that others do not have. Every annual Employment Equity Report emphasizes the "military factor" and "universality of service", which in plain language means that CAF members are under orders at all times, have little or no control over their deployment, face relocation and separation from family and community, and are subject to danger and the possibility of injury or death. The CAF is a total institution, not an employer that offers a conventional job or career: everyone is a soldier all the time no matter what their trade or profession is, and being a member of the CAF is a way of life. Furthermore, several of the CAF's primary occupational groups, notably "combat arms", are unique and without parallel in other organizations. The CAF reports refer to these realities, rather abstractly, as challenges the organization faces in recruiting members of the employment equity groups. No mention is made of considering the possibility of modifying some of these conditions to modernize the relationship between the CAF structure and culture and its members and prospective members, while maintaining or even improving the CAF's performance as a military organization.

Beginning in 2002, when the CAF came under the *Employment Equity Act*, the Department of National Defense argued that because of the CAF's "need for operational effectiveness" and its unique relationship to its employees it required special regulations to adapt some *Employment Equity Act* requirements to accommodate unique needs of the Canadian Forces. Under the regulations the Chief of Defense Staff rather than the Canada Public Service Agency, which handled employment equity compliance for the public service, was given responsibility for employment equity for the CAF. Detailed requirements different from those covering other employers were set out for the collection and reporting of workforce information applicable to military occupations and ranks within the Regular Forces and the Reserves, for officers and non-commissioned members.

A premise of the *Employment Equity Act* is that the publication of annual data on employers' workforces covered by the Act and the steps they have taken to implement employment equity will enable interested stakeholders, researchers, elected officials and members of the public to hold employers accountable for poor results and recognize progress. This form of accountability is largely lacking in relation to the CAF because under the regulations the Chief of Defense Staff is not obligated to make public the required annual reports on employment equity in the Canadian Forces, although they can be obtained on request. The Canadian Human Rights Commission is required to protect Classified/Protected information related to the CAF. In order to conduct the research and analysis reported in this article I had to request copies of the employment equity annual reports and other relevant documents from the Director of Human Rights and Diversity in the Department of National Defence.² In response to my requests I was provided with several CAF Employment Equity Annual Reports, the current Employment Equity Plan, and other unclassified documents cited in the reference list for this article. However my requests for reports on the CAF's employment equity activities and on surveys and consultations with members, including designated group members, were denied because these documents were protected or classified. Information on the Canadian Human Rights Commission's audit of the CAF was also unavailable. The discussion that follows will note the lack of availability of information where relevant.

The Canadian Forces' Relationship with Indigenous People over the Past Decade: Is There Progress Toward Equity?

An analysis of the situation of Indigenous people in the CAF must begin with a basic mapping of the structure of the organization and the roles within it. The Canadian Forces includes the Regular Force consisting of officers and non-commissioned members who serve on a full time continuing basis and the Reserve Force whose officers and non-commissioned members serve part time. The Reserve Force is further

² I am grateful to Major Robert Soucy, Director of Human Rights and Diversity, Employment Equity Regulations Officer, Department of National Defence, Ottawa, for providing me with the employment equity annual reports and several other unclassified/unprotected documents.

divided into the Primary Reserve (Naval, Army, Air, Communication, Health Services and National Defense Headquarters), Supplementary Reserve, Cadet Instructor Cadre and Canadian Rangers (Canadian Forces Employment Equity Report, 2007-2008, p. 3-4). The Cadet Instructor Cadre consists of reserve officers who supervise and train the sea, army, and air cadets who are youth age 12-19. The Canadian Rangers are part time reserve members who work in remote communities across Canada to support CAF operations related to sovereignty, national security and public safety. Their duties include search and rescue, assistance with natural disasters and reconnaissance. Approximately half the members of the Rangers are Indigenous and live in their home communities and provide local expertise as needed for CAF operations. An amendment to the Regulations permits Reserve Force members to be counted for employment equity reporting, which is important for the CAF because many more Indigenous people serve in the Reserves than in the Regular Force, often in the Canadian Rangers or the Cadet Instructor Cadre.

The following discussion will examine three aspects of the relationship between the CAF and its Indigenous members and prospective members using a framework for diagnosing systemic discrimination in the workplace discussed by Agocs, Burr and Somerset (1992, ch. 13). Numerical representation, employment systems and organizational culture are critical organizational characteristics that can reveal patterns of inequality and discrimination affecting members of employment equity groups, in this case Indigenous men and women. These features may reveal organizational policies and practices that have created barriers or had a positive impact on the representation of under-represented groups. A discussion based on these concepts can address the question of whether there has been progress toward equity in the relationship between the CAF and Indigenous people over the past decade.

a. Numerical representation:

Using tables based on data gathered from the annual employment equity reports, the numerical representation of Indigenous people in the CAF is discussed in relation to CAF employment equity goals over the past decade. At four points over the past decade we look at their representation in the Regular and Reserve forces, in officer and non-commissioned roles, as well as their representation among enrollments (hires) and releases (separations) in those

categories. The occupational groups in which Indigenous people are concentrated are also identified and compared with those of men and women in the CAF as a whole. The analysis addresses the CAF Indigenous population as a whole as well as a breakdown by gender.

b. Employment systems:

Employment systems are the decision-making policies and practices, both formal and informal, that govern access to the CAF, career development and promotion, and treatment on the job. The required review of employment systems is at the heart of employment equity implementation because this exercise is intended to identify the barriers to fair and equitable treatment of members by the organization. A large-scale employment systems review was conducted by the CAF in 2012-14 resulting in a report that subsequently served as the foundation of the CAF Employment Equity Plan for 2015-2020. Unfortunately, the report on the employment systems review was not made available to me so my discussion of employment systems is limited to examples of potential systemic barriers that I and other researchers have identified, but it identifies some significant barriers and points toward additional directions for investigation.

c. Organizational culture:

The culture of an organization encompasses its values, norms, artifacts and behaviours, both those emanating from the top leadership and those that are evident among work groups at lower levels. An organization's culture can contain subcultures that may be based on occupational or work groups such as the Army, Navy and Air Force, or professions such as pilots or nurses, or rank, or divisions between men and women, or ethnicity or place of origin, or a number of other social bonds and divisions in the workplace. Culture is an important dimension of a workplace from an employment equity standpoint because it is a powerful influence on social behaviours that may undermine or support fair and equal treatment of the equity groups. These behaviours may involve communication patterns and practices, informal social relations of inclusion or

exclusion, norms about what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, and the prevalence and content of harassment or discrimination against members of employment equity populations.

An analysis of numerical representation of equity groups, employment policies and practices, and organizational culture in a workplace can identify ways in which systemic barriers on the basis of race or gender, or both, may influence outcomes for equity group members. The discussion that follows is intended to raise questions about practices that may create barriers to equity in the CAF and that may deserve further research and scrutiny. Its purpose is to prompt awareness, questions and critical thought about systemic barriers to the full participation of Indigenous people in the CAF, and whether change is possible to remove some of these barriers and move toward inclusiveness and equity.

Numerical Representation of Indigenous People in the Canadian Forces

Table 1 summarizes the representation of Indigenous people in the Regular and Reserve Forces over the past decade in comparison with the CAF's employment equity goals. The values for the Regular Force and Primary Reserves, excluding the Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service (COATS) and Rangers, conform to the definition of "employee" in the *Employment Equity Act* (75 or more days of paid service) (Canadian Forces Employment Equity Report, 2009-2010, p. 4). Aboriginal representation in the Regular Force and Primary Reserves is generally significantly higher when members of the Rangers and COATS are included since there are concentrations of Indigenous men and women in these two occupational groups.

The employment equity goal remained fixed for six years at 3.4 percent, a level considerably lower than Indigenous representation in the Canadian population, which was 3.8 percent in 2006 and 4.9 percent in 2016 and (Statistics Canada, 2017a). (A mandatory census using a comparable methodology did not take place in 2011). The representation of Aboriginal people in the CAF Regular Force and Primary Reserves did not come close to the employment equity goal throughout the study period: its

highest level was 2.6 percent in 2015-16. However, representation improved incrementally since 2011 from 2.1 percent to 2.6 percent (Table 1).

When the Rangers and COATS are included representation matched or exceeded the employment equity goal since 2013; however the goal is unacceptably low, as noted previously. The CAF maintains that these members are in a continual relationship with their employer. From an employment equity stand point it is also important to recognize that the Rangers provide valuable employment to Indigenous men and women living in remote areas, allowing them to remain in their communities and pursue their preferred economic activities, such as hunting and fishing, while receiving some remuneration and participating in satisfying and important work. The Rangers provide an interesting example of a bona fide occupational requirement: it is their presence in and knowledge of their local environment, not their educational level, that qualifies them to contribute to CAF operations.

Tables 2 and 3 report data on representation at four points during the past decade, allowing for comparison over time and between the Regular and Reserve forces, and the Officer and Non-commissioned cohorts in each, for Indigenous men and women. The representation of Aboriginal people, predominantly men, in the Non-commissioned segment of the Reserve force, including Rangers and COATS, stands at 6.7 percent in 2013-14 and 4.5 percent in 2015-16. Their representation in the Officer cohort of the Reserves in 2015-16 is 2.0 percent, a high for the decade. Clearly Indigenous members are under-represented among officers.

It is interesting to note that Indigenous women are better represented relative to Indigenous men than the general population of CAF women relative to CAF men. Overall roughly 20 percent of Indigenous members of the CAF are women while about 15 percent of the CAF as a whole are women. Women are significant contributors to the Indigenous population of the CAF and plans for improving the recruitment and retention of Indigenous members should recognize this and encourage the enrollment of women.

Table 3 reports on enrollments and releases at the four points in time for the total forces, Indigenous men and Indigenous women. The enrollment numbers are small for

Indigenous members, especially women, but in general enrollments exceed or are in approximate balance with releases. In 2013-14 and 2015-16 Indigenous men and women who are non-commissioned Reserves members show release numbers that exceed enrollments, suggesting a need to examine reasons why they are leaving and whether there are barriers to their retention. The larger context, however, is that the CAF has difficulty in retaining members in the Reserve forces as a whole: “about 50 percent of our Reservists leave within the first five years” (quoted in Ombudsman, 2016, 4).

It was possible to examine concentrations of Indigenous and total men and women in specific occupational groups in both Regular and Reserve forces in order to identify differences in their patterns at four points in time over the past decade. Occupations in which 20 percent or more of men or women members were concentrated in a given year were identified. The occupation in which Indigenous men, as well as CAF men in total, have been most concentrated at each point in time is combat arms, for both the Regular and Reserve forces. Other typical occupational groups for Indigenous men are COATS (cadet instructors and administration) and Rangers. Occupational concentrations for Indigenous women include the medical and dental group, clerical personnel, logistical support, support (general), COATS, and Rangers. These are also the occupational groups in which the total population of CAF women are concentrated. The occupational concentrations of Indigenous members, whether commissioned or non-commissioned, do not differ much from those of the total CAF population. This suggests equality between Indigenous and total members in the kinds of jobs held, but those jobs are segregated by gender in both populations.

The pattern is different and unequal when we examine the ranks held by members. Table 2 shows few Indigenous members among officers in the regular and reserve forces: their representation has crept up to only two percent of officers in the reserves despite a reasonably large pool of non-commissioned members from which to draw as of 2016. This suggests the need to identify and remove systemic barriers to promotion for Indigenous women and men, and actions to provide career development and fair opportunities for promotion for these members.

Representation among those promoted is an important metric in employment equity implementation, both to ensure fair and equal opportunities and to increase the

availability of role models, mentors and advocates for lower ranking Indigenous members including new recruits. A CAF with a representative number of Indigenous officers would present a more attractive career option to potential Indigenous recruits including those with university degrees.

An employment systems review conducted more than a decade ago found that Aboriginal people were under-represented in both the Regular and Reserve forces with the exception of the Canadian Rangers, and that a glass ceiling existed, posing barriers to promotion for officers. Retention was also identified as an issue (Coulthard and Tanner, 2009, p. 10). Years have passed and there is no evidence that this has changed.

It is appropriate to consider the theory of representative bureaucracy in making a case for improving the numerical representation of Indigenous people in the CAF's regular and reserve forces and in its officer ranks. A representative bureaucracy can be defined as a public organization whose membership reflects the demographic composition of the population it serves and to which its policies apply (Agocs, 2012). One of the purposes of the *Employment Equity Act* is to create and maintain a public service that is a representative bureaucracy by taking actions to ensure that its workforce reflects the representation of women, racialized groups and Indigenous people in the labour market from which it draws. The benefits that have been theorized to follow from creating a representative bureaucracy include improvements in the quality, responsiveness and inclusiveness of government policies and service delivery in a diverse society, and there is some research evidence to support this claim (Bradbury and Kellough, 2011). Equally important is the argument that members of all of Canada's diverse communities should be able to see themselves reflected in the workforce of their public service and should benefit from the employment opportunities provided by agencies of their government. The government agency that is a representative bureaucracy can be seen as a model employer that is a leader in the implementation of fair, progressive and equitable employment practices. These arguments are all applicable to the CAF and provide a rationale for it to commit itself to becoming a representative bureaucracy whose workforce, organizational structure and culture would be inclusive of the diversity of Canadian society. The CAF would become

a more attractive employment option for Indigenous people as well as women and “visible minorities” if this were the case.

Employment Systems and the Organizational Structure of the CAF

As mentioned previously, employment equity regulations require employers to conduct an employment systems review to identify and remove barriers to the equal participation of designated group members. The Canadian Forces conducted an employment systems review in 2004 and again in 2012. The 2012-13 review was the basis for the CAF employment equity plan for current and future actions to remove barriers, provide reasonable accommodation, and undertake special programs that will foster inclusiveness for equity group members.

Because the employment systems review documents were not made available to me on the grounds that they are protected or classified, I have relied on other sources to suggest possible barriers to the equal access and participation of Indigenous people in the CAF. These sources, identified in the Reference list, include the annual Employment Equity reports submitted by the CAF, stories from reliable journalists (eg. Auld, 2013; Berthiaume, 2014; Burke, 2016; MacIntosh, 2016; McKenna, 2017; Talaga, 2017), reports by researchers contracted to conduct studies for the CAF (Coulthard and Tanner, 2009; Fonseca and Dunn, 2012), publications by scholars (Ciceri and Scott, 2013; Lynk, 2014; MacJaurin, 2004; Pinch, 2004; Shewell, 2006), and reports issued by Statistics Canada (Cotter, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2017c).

My discussion of employment systems focusses primarily on recruitment and on barriers to retention since these are critical areas to consider if the goal is to improve the representation of Indigenous people. Fonseca and Dunn’s focus group research with Indigenous participants in CAF programs (2012, p. iii-iv) found that the most important influence on decisions of Indigenous youth to join the CAF was encouragement from their families and communities, as well as outreach by Indigenous recruiters. Other important attractions were pay and benefits, job security, educational opportunities, challenge, and a good career.

Counting against a decision to join was reluctance to move away from family and community, according to the focus group study. The requirement to deploy on short notice, perhaps to a location far away from home for extended periods, certainly constitutes a barrier to entry for both women and men, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, particularly those with families. A recent report by Statistics Canada on a survey dealing with labour mobility in Canada points out that relocation is a barrier for a majority of unemployed Canadians, who would not accept a job offer away from their home community (Statistics Canada, 2017 C, p. 6). For members of the CAF relocation is not a choice: when they are posted they must go or face consequences that may lead to release (Ombudsman, 2016, p. 16). This requirement would pose an insurmountable barrier for some Indigenous people, particularly women, for whom ties to family and community involve both obligations to care for family members and a focus of personal identity and well-being.

Other barriers to access identified in the focus group study included wariness about the experience of culture shock that frequently occurs when young adults move from a remote community to an urban centre, away from home, family and the support systems they depend on (Fonseca and Dunn, 2012; Talaga, 2017). The fear of pressures to assimilate and negative perceptions of the CAF's dealings with Indigenous people and of the treatment of Indigenous people in Canadian society may also present barriers to entry.

Some values central to Indigenous communities may be compatible with the culture of the CAF but some are not. For example, the hierarchical and rules-based structure of the military organization and the inequality of power and social status it engenders is inconsistent with Indigenous notions of consensual decision making, equality and respect for self and others and the central importance of extended kinship relations (MacLaurin, 2004). As well, current perceptions of the CAF as posing threats of PTSD or experiences of discrimination and/ or harassment on grounds of Indigenous identity or gender may dissuade individuals from considering a career in the CAF.

Indigenous participants in the focus group study emphasized that individual recruiting staff play a large role in their propensity to consider a career in the CAF and

to decide to join. They suggested that recruiters who were poorly informed about opportunities for Indigenous people in the CAF or about their community did not attract them to consider the CAF, while the approach of Indigenous recruiters familiar with their community was encouraging. Responses to a prospect survey revealed that Indigenous people and visible minorities who visited a recruiting centre were less likely to join the CAF than their white counterparts (Coulthard and Tanner, 2009, p. 12). An obvious job barrier, then, is sending a recruiting officer who is a poor fit to meet potential Indigenous candidates.

The CAF addressed this barrier to improved recruiting results by sending an email to more than 1,500 Indigenous members of the CAF inviting them to assist in outreach in communities and recruiting centers, and over 200 volunteered (CAF Employment Equity Report, 2014-15, p. 17). It is not known whether this initiative received high level support to continue and whether it succeeded in developing new relationships with potential recruits.

This kind of initiative may illustrate another potential barrier – inadequate face to face consultation and relationship-building with Indigenous community leaders and young adults to learn their views about the CAF, how they perceive that the organization needs to change, and how they would like to participate in a change strategy. Authentic consultation focussed on listening to Indigenous leaders and youth could yield essential knowledge about what the barriers to access are. It may also push the CAF to develop relationships with specific Indigenous communities and organizations rather than continuing the practice of dealing with Indigenous individuals as members of an undifferentiated category. To improve recruiting results and the climate for Indigenous members, the CAF needs to learn about and specifically address Métis, status and non-status members of many First Nations, and Inuit. Consideration needs to be given to how the CAF can relate to members of these populations living in urban, small town, rural and remote communities, on and off reserves, and to learning through those relationships what the CAF may have to offer each. There is no evidence that this kind of relationship-building strategy is being considered as part of the CAF's recruitment plans. Instead, new approaches include a revamped website with virtual reality tours, television advertising and a smartphone app (Akin, 2018).

Barriers to access for Indigenous women and many men are in part the same as those that stand in the way of all potential women recruits. Foremost among these is the male-centric warrior image that continues to be discouraging to many women and that poses structural barriers to entry in the form of physical and other requirements that are unlikely to be bona fide occupational requirements for a majority of occupations in the CAF. If the entire organization is designed around the occupation of combat arms, even though large numbers of members do not perform that work, it is likely that few women and men, regardless of their ancestry, would consider the CAF as an occupational choice.

What may reduce barriers to entry and encourage more interest in careers in the CAF is the prospect of working in domestic security, humanitarian efforts at home and abroad and supporting peace and community development (Pinch, 2004). These are domains in which the CAF has been active and may be involved more intensively in the future (National Defence, "Canada's National Action Plan," 2018). Recruitment in general, not just recruitment of Indigenous people, has been problematic for the CAF in recent years and this is likely to continue unless the traditional structure and culture of the organization changes and principles such as "universality of service" are critically scrutinized for their appropriateness in a diverse and changing democratic society.

The CAF is justifiably proud of its special regional programs for Indigenous youth that serve to acquaint them with military life and teach teamwork, fitness, self-discipline and self confidence, and also offer them a grounding in Indigenous teachings, culture and identity. These could be considered special programs under the *Employment Equity Act* and are successful initiatives to create relationships and mutually beneficial opportunities with members of Indigenous communities. Some who complete these programs decide to join the CAF in some capacity; numbers are unfortunately not available, so their success as an approach to recruiting Indigenous members is not known.

The Bold Eagle program for young adults entering the Primary Reserve in western Canada began in 1990 as a partnership between the CAF and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and other western First Nations organizations. It

combines basic military training with teachings on Indigenous culture by Indigenous counsellors and elders. Participants are paid for their training and can apply for full time or part time employment in the regular force or reserves after completing the program. Similar programs are offered in Victoria (Raven Program, for possible entry into the Naval Primary Reserve, since 2003), and eastern Canada (Black Bear, for army recruitment, introduced in 2009). A French language six-week summer program called Carcajou was inaugurated at Valcartier in 2018. The CAF also offers the Canadian Forces Aboriginal Entry Program to introduce individuals to the military life before they make a commitment to join, and a Junior Canadian Rangers program for Inuit and other Indigenous youth age 12-18.

Since 2008 the Royal Military College has offered a one-year Canadian Forces Aboriginal Leadership Opportunity Year (ALOY) which is a preparatory year leading to further study in a degree program at RMC. Graduates may take up a position as a commissioned officer in the CAF or a career in the civil service. In 2014-15, 17 participants were admitted to the program and 15 graduated. Of these, two joined the Regular Officer Training Program, five became non-commissioned members of the Regular force and three joined the Reserve force as non-commissioned members (CAF Employment Equity Report, 2014-15, 18).

Focus group research on recruitment involving Indigenous members and participants in the CAF Aboriginal programs from across Canada reported “very positive experiences” with the Bold Eagle, Black Bear and Raven programs. Research participants mentioned that the most important program element for recruiting success was having Aboriginal instructors, who provided “a bridge between their cultures and the CAF organization” (Fonseca and Dunn 2012, 13). In 2014-15 a total of 181 participants joined the Bold Eagle, Black Bear and Raven programs, and 155 graduated (CAF Employment Equity Report, 2014-15, 17). The number of graduates deciding to join the CAF was not reported. There is a lack of transparency about the extent to which these programs lead to gains in recruitment, though they clearly have a value in developing awareness and relationships between Indigenous participants and the CAF.

The Culture of Harassment in the CAF

In the 2015 report by former Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps entitled “External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces,” the culture of the CAF was identified as an environment in which sexual harassment flourishes, impeding progress toward employment equity. Over the past two decades the culture of the CAF has been the subject of headlines that have no doubt created barriers to the recruitment of women, including Indigenous women, and many men. Justice Deschamps’ review found that the culture of the CAF was a hostile environment for women, especially those in the lower ranks. Most members who experienced sexual misconduct did not report it because they feared retaliation or doubted that officers would deal effectively with complaints, fears that are justified in view of the inadequacy of arrangements for addressing complaints. The review found a difference in perspective between male and female members, with denial that there was a problem on the part of male members while women considered sexual misconduct to be pervasive. The report noted that there was a basic issue of power and control in the CAF, rooted in its hierarchical structure and warrior culture, and senior leaders had failed to maintain a culture of respect and inclusiveness.

An important barrier to justice for individuals who experience harassment on the basis of race or gender in the CAF is the lack of a complaint procedure outside the chain of command. Under CAF policy (Department of National Defence, 2017, p.8), formal complaints of harassment must be made to the complainant’s commanding officer or immediate supervisor, a process which the complainant may not believe offers impartiality and fairness. The Deschamps report recommended the creation of an independent organization to accept complaints and provide support to individual survivors of sexual harassment, and a ministerial decision has been taken to establish an independent agency to investigate complaints of sexual misconduct in the CAF. It is unclear whether complaints of racial harassment and discrimination will receive similar treatment.

It is striking that the Deschamps report did not mention the possibility – I suggest probability – that racialized members who are women suffer harassment on the

basis of both sex and race, and that individuals who are both women and Indigenous, or members of visible minorities, are likely to be especially vulnerable to harassment. None of the documents I was able to examine that were produced by or for the CAF mentioned the notion of intersectionality – the overlapping of two or more identities, as when a woman is also Indigenous – or the need to be aware of and responsive to women of Indigenous identity. The employment equity reports provided statistical tables in which data were provided separately for Aboriginal women and men, as the employment equity regulations require, but there was no discussion about women’s representation or experience. One can assume that Indigenous women are invisible in the CAF.

The case of Esther Wolki illustrates the need for the CAF to be aware of the need to address the injustices experienced by racialized and Indigenous women (MacIntosh, 2015). Wolki is an Inuk woman from the Northwest Territories who served in the CAF in Afghanistan. She was compelled to leave a satisfying career as a bombardier in the CAF because of the racism, harassment and sexual assault she endured. She was insulted on a daily basis and “stereotyped as a native” and “manhandled” by a male colleague; a superior ripped up her letter requesting to be moved. Later she was sexually assaulted, and again her chain of command did not take her complaint seriously and local police decided her complaint was unfounded and did not lay charges. After talking to a superior and receiving no help or compassion she decided to end her life. She survived the suicide attempt but left the CAF. Since then she has suffered from depression and PTSD for which she has not received the treatment she needs (Burke, 2016b). Publicity surrounding her case resulted in the opening of an investigation by the CAF, but this will be an internal and administrative “fact-finding process” that cannot find civil or criminal liability or release a report to the public (MacIntosh, 2015).

A 2012 CAF workplace harassment survey found that women, Indigenous people and members of visible minorities were considerably more likely than other CAF members to say they had experienced sexual or personal harassment, but few reported it for fear of negative consequences (Auld, 2013). A 2016 survey by Statistics Canada of sexual misconduct in the CAF, a follow-up to the Deschamps report, did not explicitly address assault and discriminatory behaviours against Indigenous people, but

it did report statistics showing that individuals of Aboriginal identity were more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be victims of sexual assault or discriminatory behaviors in the preceding 12 months (Cotter, 2016, p. 14, 33).

The CAF addresses the *Employment Equity Act's* requirement to consult with its members by maintaining a volunteer Defence Advisory Group representing each designated group to provide advice to decision-makers about matters of concern. Each advisory group works closely with a National Champion who is a senior officer. This provides the group with a conduit for communicating issues of concern to the chain of command, but it raises questions about the group's level of independence and the risks to members if its messages are unwelcome.

In 2016 the Defence Aboriginal Advisory Group (DAAG) produced a report on systemic racism in the CAF based on an enquiry it conducted which reported a "systemic issue" of incidents of racial discrimination and abuse. My request for a copy of this report was denied, but it was obtained and covered by CBC News (Burke, 2016b). The DAAG canvassed 230 Indigenous members of the CAF but there were only 16 respondents who reported 40 incidents. Despite the low response rate, a perception that racist incidents are widespread and are not reported because of fear of reprisal raises the question of whether Indigenous CAF members considered the DAAG enquiry safe for them to participate in. The DAAG report stated that "abuse of authority will continue as the aggressors are protected by their chain of command" (Ward, 2017). The report cited Indigenous members' allegations and anecdotes of experiences of the "worst racism they'd ever faced," of being regularly singled out, called racist names and harassed (Burke, 2016b). The report commented, "this is not the military our Aboriginal members signed up for and this is not the military they dedicated their lives to. Victims are being forced out of the military, yet the aggressors continue on—some excelling at their careers" (Burke, 2016b). The DAAG report called for an independent investigation similar to the Deschamps investigation of sexual misconduct, harassment and assault in the CAF (Deschamps, 2015), which resulted in a high-profile response from the Chief of Defence Staff. However, I found no evidence that the DAAG report was given serious attention and response by CAF decision-makers.

There were a reported 290 complaints of racism in the CAF between 2001 and 2012, 129 of which were substantiated. Since 2012 the CAF says it has not compiled annual data on complaints, but 11 human rights complaints on grounds of race, colour or religion were forwarded to the CAF by the Canadian Human Rights Commission from 2013 to 2016 (Burke, 2016a).

The CAF does not appear to have undertaken research or an independent investigation to determine the prevalence or form of harassment experienced by Indigenous men or women in the CAF, its impacts on survivors, and how the CAF can effectively respond to this persistent systemic problem. Such an enquiry is clearly needed. There is enough information about Indigenous experience with discrimination to justify a robust research effort to identify its prevalence, types and effects, and to establish a credible system for receiving and investigating complaints and responding appropriately to overcome individuals' fears of making complaints. Until this takes place it is unlikely that the CAF will have the success it seeks in recruiting and retaining Indigenous people.

Toward Inclusion and Equity: Effective Approaches

The need for basic research on barriers to equality for Indigenous people in the CAF points to an obvious source of information and suggestions to inform such research: Indigenous women and men who are members, or past members, of the CAF. To benefit from their knowledge and experience about the barriers faced by Indigenous people in the CAF, a safe trustworthy and respectful means of listening to them and responding appropriately should be established. An effective organizational change strategy for identifying and removing barriers to the access and full participation of Indigenous people in the CAF should begin with meaningful consultation and learning from them.

Training is usually considered an essential part of any organizational change effort, including employment equity implementation, since it addresses the beliefs and behaviours that are part of the organization's culture. Training is needed to inform members at all ranks about employment equity and explain its purpose and significance

for the organization. Training is also required to create awareness about Indigenous history, culture and past and current treatment in Canadian society. If mandatory training is taken seriously and involves all members, starting with the highest ranking officers and progressing throughout the organization, it can potentially help to equip members with understanding and skills to facilitate an environment where everyone can work together in ways that contribute to an inclusive and productive workplace. However training is only a starting point, not a powerful agent for change.

The CAF offers an Aboriginal Awareness Course to CAF staff who work with Aboriginal people, including HR practitioners, employment equity representatives, and those who supervise Aboriginal members. An employment equity training course is also offered to recruiting staff. Workshops and forums that bring CAF staff together with representatives of Indigenous organizations are held periodically in various locations across Canada. It is not known how extensive and effective this training and exchange has been or the extent to which it has contributed to cultural change or employment equity outcomes.

While training is necessary it is not sufficient to give confidence that behaviour will be influenced. The External Review Authority on sexual harassment in the CAF noted that training about prohibited sexual conduct was mandatory but it seemed to have had little impact on members, some of whom did not remember having the training or did not take it seriously (Deschamps, 2015, p. 83). The same may be true of equity-related training.

Kalev and Dobbin (2006) have done extensive research in the United States on the relative effectiveness of various kinds of interventions in improving the representation of white women and Black women and men in managerial positions in private sector organizations. They found that efforts to use training to reduce biased attitudes and behaviours among management decision-makers were ineffective in producing gains and at times produced backlash. Complaint procedures are ineffective if they are poorly designed or if those who experience discrimination do not use them because they fear retaliation.

Effective measures included appointing diversity managers who could provide expertise and challenge discriminatory practices, and action plans that assign responsibility to people and groups and make them accountable for moving toward diversity goals. The most effective measures to increase managerial diversity made organizational decision-makers responsible and accountable for getting results (Kalev and Dobbin, 2006; Dobbin and Kalev, 2016). This worked not by using a command and control approach, telling people what to think, do and not to do, but by using voluntary training, giving people choices and challenging organization members to volunteer to become diversity champions and mentors. Effective approaches included asking managers to volunteer to go into educational institutions to recruit candidates from under-represented groups, encouraging them to mentor minority employees, and arranging for Black and white organizational members to work together as equals, just as soldiers do in the field, or self-managed teams do in factories or offices. Cross-training and job shadowing can be used to allow minority members to move around the organization and meet others as equals. Diversity task forces that bring together volunteers from across the organization to investigate problems and find solutions proved to be effective in boosting commitment to diversity.

Kalev and Dobbin reported that the most important overall influence on improving the representation of diverse groups in the work place in the United States was federal affirmative action legislation that is enforced by means of compliance reviews, with consequences in the form of significant lawsuits resulting in financial penalties and negative publicity for failure to end discrimination. Canada's employment equity policy framework could be a step toward external oversight and enforcement of measures to address systemic discrimination. However, to be effective, employment equity requirements must be implemented by all federally regulated employers, their compliance must be audited, and they must face consequences for lack of compliance. Unfortunately, this has not been the case (Agocs, 2014).

In Canada, there is a need to put into practice what we are learning from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and the growing conversation in our country about our responsibilities to address the oppression of Indigenous peoples. It is essential to involve, listen to and empower Indigenous people at the beginning of any initiatives

that concern them. Success in recruiting and retaining more Indigenous people in the CAF will depend on developing relationships of mutual respect between CAF representatives and members and leaders of Indigenous communities, acting on their advice, listening and responding to their concerns, and ending the culture of systemic racial discrimination and harassment. This is the starting point on the path to inclusiveness and equity.

Mind the Gap: Policy vs Practices and Outcomes

At this stage in its history the CAF is challenged to take committed, concrete and vigorous action to address the issues of systemic racism, discrimination and harassment it can no longer ignore. The issue of sexual harassment is squarely in the public's sights after the media coverage of the Deschamps report and stories of the struggles of individuals to wring justice from a resistant CAF organization. The CAF's lack of success in recruiting and retaining the members it needs to meet its mandate, from a population that is increasingly diverse, qualified, and able to choose from a range of career options, is a threat to the organization.

Under the leadership of General Jonathan Vance, Chief of Defence Staff, the CAF undertook Operation Honour, a mission to eliminate inappropriate and harmful sexual behaviour in the Canadian military. This response to the Deschamps report on sexual harassment has produced organizational changes and some improvement in the recruitment of women. However the CAF has not implemented measures to reduce race-based harassment and other barriers to the full participation of Indigenous people and "visible minorities" in the CAF. And it has not established a system of adjudicating complaints, independent of the chain of command, that members who experience harassment can trust to deliver justice, accountability and compassionate treatment of survivors.

On the issue of under-representation of Indigenous people, this discussion has portrayed an organization whose modus operandi is to resist change and accountability to external scrutiny, even though this is legally required and institutionally regulated as

well as normative in a democratic society. The protracted resistance to setting reasonable employment equity goals is just one telling example.

The “Canadian Armed Forces Employment Equity Plan, 2015-2020” is a statement of the organization’s intentions regarding employment equity implementation at this critical juncture. It begins with statements of commitment to equal opportunity and good intentions, and contains the expected policy statements. It cites the 2012-12 employment systems review and the 2012 diversity climate and harassment surveys as the foundation of the employment equity plan but does not mention a commitment to address the barriers and the issues of harassment and discrimination those enquiries identified.

The plan’s approach to employment equity implementation is focussed narrowly on compliance with the special regulations it secured under the *Employment Equity Act*, which give particular attention to reporting procedures. The plan mentions new structures of governance, “supporting committee structure”, senior level employment equity champions, and the Defense Advisory Groups which are the CAF’s mechanism for compliance with the Act’s consultation requirement. It gives major employment equity responsibilities for cultural change to the Chief Warrant Officer/Petty Officer 1st Class rank, which serves as a link between junior and senior ranks, without discussing whether and how these individuals are supported and prepared for this critical role. It emphasizes that the chain of command is to support requests for accommodation of special needs to the point of undue hardship. The plan discusses arrangements to ensure that members of the designated groups self-identify so that they will be counted in the employment equity census, thus maximizing the CAF’s statistics on representation. It gives considerable attention to justifying the standard it will use for goal-setting, which was discussed previously, as well as the goal in place, which continues to be 3.4 percent for Indigenous representation at a time when Indigenous people comprise almost 5 percent of Canada’s population. It discusses the “consistent message” that “should be conveyed by the chain of command to all CAF personnel”, which focusses on the CAF’s commitment to diversity and employment equity. But there is no mention of accountability of officers for attaining employment equity results or for addressing discrimination and harassment.

Slightly over a half page in the Employment Equity Plan is devoted to “activities” to “support a more inclusive CAF”. These include commemorative events to raise awareness about the equity groups and their involvement in the CAF, recruiting and outreach focusing on “liaison and communication” with equity group “leaders and elders”, training of CAF personnel which should “boost the ongoing cultural change we are experiencing”, internal communication by leaders to CAF members about diversity, and external communication (“an image of a diverse and inclusive CAF must be communicated to all Canadians”). Five lines in the Plan are devoted to employment equity implementation. A process for reporting on employment equity implementation and undertaking performance measurement and evaluation is mentioned. A list of tasks is appended.

My view is that the CAF Employment Equity Plan is a bureaucratic document that aspires to achieve minimum compliance with regulations, not an action plan to transform the organization. It does not commit to removing barriers to the full participation of Indigenous people and other employment equity group members and moving toward the large scale cultural change that is clearly needed. There is a focus on improving numerical representation using unreasonably low goals, rather than an effort to engage with Indigenous members who are already serving in order to learn from them what the barriers to change are. Christian Leuprecht’s observation is apt. Referring to “spreadsheet diversity,” he notes that “we put the number of checkmarks into boxes and demonstrate how many women we recruited this year and how many Aboriginals we recruited and we’re not, I think, as good as we could be at understanding the particular challenges and alienations that these individuals face” (MacIntosh, 2015).

The words of the Ombudsman (National Defence and Canadian Forces) convey clearly the impression created by the CAF Employment Equity Plan:

The Department [of] National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are awash in studies; many of which are little more than a rehashing of previous studies with the same recommendations dressed in different wording. For each emerging problem involving the welfare of serving members – especially problems that reach national public attention—the

response is invariably another study or review. After many years of study and review its time to 'do' more and halt the treadmill that is paralysis by analysis. The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces need to embrace fresh thinking and rid themselves of outdated, cumbersome regulations that do not help define a modern military (2016, 3).

A great deal is generally known about how to be successful in changing organizational culture and improving representation of under-represented groups. What is needed is action to identify and remove the barriers to access and equality that are build into the policies and practices, structure and culture of the organization. There is little evidence that the CAF is committed to learning about and removing the systemic discrimination that continues to limit the participation and opportunities of Indigenous people. To return to the question posed in the title, there are known pathways to change that can reduce systemic racism and organizational inertia and lead an organization toward equity and inclusiveness, but there is little evidence that the Canadian Forces is committed to moving forward on this path.

Table 1. Representation of Aboriginal People in the Canadian Forces, by Self-identification, 2007-2016

Sources: Canadian Forces Employment Equity Reports, 2007-08, p. 6; 2008-09, p. 7; 2009-10, p. 4; 2010-11, p. 4; 2014-15, p. 4; 2015-16, p. 5

	CAF Regular Force and Primary Reserves (excluding Rangers and COATS) ¹	CAF Regular Force and Reserve Force (including Rangers and COATS) ¹	CAF Employment Equity Goal for Aboriginal Representation
2007-08	1.8% ²	2.6%	none
2008-09	2.2%	2.8%	none
2009-10	2.0%	2.9%	3.4%
2010-11	2.1%	3.1%	3.4%
2011-12	2.1% ²	2.1% ²	3.4%
2012-13	2.2% ²	3.3% ²	3.4%
2013-14	2.3% ²	3.4% ²	3.4%
2014-15	2.5%	3.7% ²	3.4%
2015-16	2.6%	3.9% ²	3.4%

Notes:

¹ Cadet Organizations
Administration and Training
Service² Not reported in the Employment Equity Reports; calculated by the author
from reported EE data (appendices, schedules 3 and 5)

Table 2. Representation of Aboriginal People in the Regular and Reserve Forces, 2007-08, 2010-11, 2013-14 and 2015-16
 Number and Percent of Total Regular or Reserve Forces in Officer or Non-commissioned Category

	Total Forces	Aboriginal Members						
		Total		Men	Women			
		number	%	number	number			
2007-2008								
Regular Force								
Officers	15,085	170	1.1	140	30	17.6		
Non-Commissioned	48,134	1,067	2.2	869	198	18.6		
Reserve Force								
Officers	13,108	167	1.3	110	57	34.1		
Non-Commissioned	32,529	1,441	4.4	1,156	285	19.8		
2010-2011								
Regular Force								
Officers	16,216	233	1.4	182	51	21.9		
Non-Commissioned	51,790	1,239	2.4	1,009	230	18.6		
Reserve Force								
Officers	4,918	66	1.3	57	9	13.6		
Non-Commissioned	13,964	271	1.9	197	74	27.3		

Table 2 Continued. Representation of Aboriginal People in the Regular and Reserve Forces, 2013-14 and 2015-16
Number and Percent of Total Regular or Reserve Forces in Officer or Non-commissioned Category

	Total Forces	Aboriginal Members				
		number	Total %	Men number	Women number	
						% of Aboriginal total
2013-2014						
Regular Force						
Officers	16,588	238	1.4	184	54	22.7
Non-Commissioned	50,465	1,307	2.6	1,045	262	20.0
Reserve Force						
Officers	12,112	178	1.5	117	61	34.3
Non-Commissioned	28,737	1,922	6.7	1,490	432	22.5
2015-2016						
Regular Force						
Officers	16,048	289	1.8	221	68	23.5
Non-Commissioned	50,324	1,482	2.9	1,183	299	20.2
Reserve Force						
Officers	27,919	572	2.0	389	183	32.0
Non-Commissioned	77,447	3,487	4.5	2,741	746	21.4

Table 3. Enrollments and Releases, Regular and Reserve Forces, 2007-08, 2010-11, 2013-14, 2015-16

Source: Canadian Forces Employment Equity Reports, 2007-08, 2010-11, 2013-14, 2015-16

	Total Forces		Aboriginal Members					
	Enrollments	Releases	Total		Men		Women	
			Enrollments	Releases	Enrollments	Releases	Enrollments	Releases
2007-2008								
Regular Force								
Officers	935	450	16	7	14	5	2	2
Non-Commissioned	4,597	2,847	237	63	109	57	28	6
Reserve Force								
Officers	896	252	24	4	11	2	13	2
Non-Commissioned	4,403	1,940	88	70	65	50	23	20
2010-2011								
Regular Force								
Officers	748	737	28	19	21	13	7	6
Non-Commissioned	2,757	3,420	87	104	76	96	11	8
Reserve Force								
Officers	75	70	1	2	1	2	0	0
Non-Commissioned	367	175	4	4	2	3	2	1

Table 3 continued. Enrollments and Releases, Regular and Reserve Forces, 2013-14, 2015-16

Source: Canadian Forces Employment Equity Reports, 2013-14, 2015-16

	Total Forces		Aboriginal Members					
	Enrollments	Releases	Total		Men		Women	
			Enrollments	Releases	Enrollments	Releases	Enrollments	Releases
2013-2014								
Regular Force								
Officers	640	507	3	9	3	9	0	0
Non-Commissioned	2,599	2,438	101	84	80	78	21	6
Reserve Force								
Officers	454	1,022	3	11	1	8	2	3
Non-Commissioned	2,739	3,303	87	147	65	119	22	28
2015-2016								
Regular Force								
Officers	683	687	16	21	12	14	4	7
Non-Commissioned	3,204	2,806	88	90	74	79	14	11
Reserve Force								
Officers	426	813	7	12	5	12	2	0
Non-Commissioned	2,842	2,428	78	223	52	168	26	55

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