Journal of Military and Strategic Studies

VOLUME 22, ISSUE 4

INTRODUCTION

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What do we know about women's contributions to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)? Usually, we hear stories of exclusion and stories of violence. These are true and valid stories that have shaped Canadian women's experiences in the military. However, those stories overshadow a wide and diverse history of women's participation in war and in the shaping of Canada as a nation through involvement in military matters. Women have served, too; in ways that are often invisible and that stand outside the outlook traditional military historians have adopted. Focus on operations as standing above the contribution of those in support roles or at the "home front," in which women have mostly occupied (by design or by choice), have pushed women to the margins of military history and Canadian history.

Starting with the 1885 Northwestern Rebellion, the military would allow women to take part in conflict as nurses – which they did during the Boer Wars and the First World War as well. During the Second World War, the roles in which women could serve expanded to include clerical and logistical positions, and nurses obtained officer status. A couple of years into the war, the services created their own women corps: the Women's Division of the Royal Canadian Air Force (1941), the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service, and the Canadian Women's Army Corps, in which enrolled women serving as mechanics, cooks, and clerk. After 1945 however, those corps disbanded and many

ISSN : 1488-559X

women left the military.[1] However, as you will read in Isabella Sun's contribution, some of these women – in this case Indigenous and Native American – continued to serve, in their own way. They helped elevate their communities, advocate for their rights, and empowered First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people all around Canada. Their American counterparts did the same for Native nations throughout the U.S. The Cold War, and particularly the Korean War, pushed the three services (Army, Navy, Air Force) to hire more women to serve in various support positions. Women served in peacekeeping missions, in anti-submarine warfare, and were active participants in the construction of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line. However, the military kept a number of restrictions on women's service.[2] Their initial period of enrolment was three years (versus 5 years for men), they could no longer serve after they got married or had children. Additionally, the number of positions they could join was rather small. As a result, by 1970, only 1,600 women served in the military, with certain restrictions.[3]

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women's Report in 1970 started an era of change for Canadian women and their relationship with their military. Pushed by a feminist movement seeking to assert women's rights as equal citizens to men, the Commission made five recommendations pushing for women to serve in all occupations, under the same conditions as men. A year later, the Canadian military opened all positions but those that would put them in front, near the line of fire, in remote locations, or at sea. This meant that the military opened 30,000 roles to women. By 1977, 4,405 women were serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. From then, the path towards the opening of all positions to women continued. The *Canadian Human Rights Act* of 1978, which removed sex as a justifiable ground for employment discrimination unless it constituted a bona fide occupational requirement, pushed the military to justify its exclusion of women. Section 15 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedom* (1982) went further, establishing sex as prohibited grounds for discrimination – which section 1 tampered by staying the *Charter* "guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably *justified* in a free and

[1] Barbara Dundas and Serge Durflinger, "The Canadian Women's Army Corps, 1941-1946," Canadian War Museum, accessed 21 Mar 2023, https://www.warmuseum.ca/learn/dispatches/the-canadian-womens-army-corps-1941-1946/#tabs; Philip McCristall, "(In)Visible Systemic Injustice: A Qualitative Inquiry Into Women's Experiences of Gender Discrimination In the Canadian Military," PhD. Diss (Queen's University, 2020), p. 6, https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/handle/1974/28225/McCristall_Philip_P_202010_PhD.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

[2] Roger Sarty and Barbara Dundas, "Women in the Canadian Armed Forces," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last updated 19 Jan 2023, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/women-in-the-military; Tabitha de Bruin, "Canadian Women in the Cold War Navy," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 26 Dec 2021, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-women-in-the-cold-war-navy

[3] Charlotte Duval-Lantoine, The Ones We Let Down: Toxic Leadership Culture and Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), p. 26.

democratic society (emphasis added)."[4] The military could no longer exclude women without justification. In response, the CAF set up the Service Women in Non-Traditional Roles and Employment (SWINTER) trials, in which they studied whether mixed-gender units could retain their operational effectiveness in non-combat and near combat roles in which only men could serve. As a result of the trials, the military made women eligible to join non-combat naval vessels and to serve as pilots, air navigators, and flight engineers on planes and helicopters not involved in combat.[5]

Continuing the idea that women could not be operationally effective and over concerns that opening certain occupations to women would decrease the number of men available to deploy, the CAF created in June 1986 the Minimum Male Requirements (MMR). They did not apply to all military occupations, only those that might be needed, should the CAF need to mobilize and deploy troops. This meant that, for a hundred occupations open to non-commissioned members, 29 were closed to women, 55 were restricted based on a calculated (MMR), and 16 were fully gender inclusive. In parallel, the CAF wanted to continue studying whether or not women could serve in combat roles effectively, and thereby started designing the Combat-Related Employment of Women (CREW) trials. Designed over the course of two years because the CAF needed to recruit a large number of women to participate, the CREW trials never took place, due to the conclusion of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case *Brown v. The Canadian* Forces.[6]

Brown v. The Canadian Forces found its roots in 1981 when Isabelle Gauthier filed a complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Commission after the military denied her application for transfer to the reserve armoured Régiment de Hull as an administrative clerk because the Régiment had already filled its 10 per cent quota of servicewomen. Retired pilot Joseph Houlden made the second complaint, stating that not making women subject to unlimited liability (i.e., the principle under which service members agree to be sent into harm's way) constituted gender-based discrimination against men by making women free to not risk their lives for mission success. The third complainant, Marie-Claude Gauthier went to the Canadian Human Rights Commission after the CAF refused to let her graduate from her marine engineer technician program, as the final requirement was a positing at sea still closed to women. Katherine McRae, a civilian-trained mechanic, filed the fourth complaint because an air reserve recruiter had declined her application to be a helicopter mechanic. The recruiter argued that women could not

[4] Duval-Lantoine, *The One spp.,pp.* 26-27; The Charter of Rights and Freedom
[5] Karen Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Military, 1970-1999," Ph.D. diss. (Royal Military College, 2013), 114-122.
[6] [6] Duval-Lantoine, *The Ones,pp. pp* 31-32.

serve in tactical helicopter squadrons. After merging all of those complaints into once case for the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to litigate, the Commission added a final one: commercial pilot Georgina Ann Brown, whom the CAF turned down after the tried to become an air force pilot or air navigator. In 1987, while hearings were underway, the Tribunal removed Houlden's complaints after the air force opened all of its positions to women without restrictions, and in 1988 the government settled with McRae, as women could in fact join tactical helicopter squadrons at the time she had tried to join. Following close to four years of hearings, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decided in February 1989 that the CAF failed to prove that sex constituted a bona fide occupational requirement under the *Canadian Human Rights Act,* and that the military had to open all of its positions – except submarines, for concerns over privacy. Consequently, it gave the military five additional orders: (1) because the decision itself canceled the need for the CREW trials (which were to start in the Fall of 1989), the military had to modify them to make them the initial plan for integration; (2) the military had a decade to reach "gender integration … in full," in the entirety of the CAF, and swiftly; (3) the CAF had to "immediately" put in place "new occupational personnel selection standards;" (4) two monitoring bodies – one internal and one external – had to oversee the process; and (5) the military had to work on creating a plan alongside the Canadian Human Rights Commission in order to ensure integration was happening "steadily, regularly, and consistently."[7]

However, the Canadian military did not reach that goal. In 1999, Canadian Human Rights Commissioner wrote a letter to the Chief of the Defence Staff expressing her disappointment in the CAF's inability to integrate women. In ten years, the number of women in the military rose to 0.9% (from 9.9% to 10.8%), due "piecemeal and uncoordinated process," according to an internal monitoring agency. Qualitatively, the decade of gender integration also proved unsuccessful, as the largest sexual misconduct scandal in recent Canadian history erupted in 1998. For half a year, *Maclean's* chronicled the stories of men and women being assaulted and harassed, physically and sexually.[8] It is also at this time that the military lifted its ban on LGBT Canadians, thereby ending half a century of persecution, which Charlotte Duval-Lantoine chronicles in her article for this issue. Happening in parallel was one of the darkest moments for the Canadian military, the Somalia Affair, which erupted in 1994 following news reports of the murder by torture of a Somali teenager at the hands of the Canadian Airborne Regiment and its subsequent cover-up. This era of the CAF was transformational, as it was put under close

[7] Duval-Lantoine, *The Ones,pp.* 39-40; Brown v. the Canadian Forces, D.T. 3/1989 (1989)
[8] Duval-Lantoine, *The Ones*,pp. 42-62, 80-84, 117-120; Chief Review Services, *Evaluation – Gender Integration in the CF,* Report 5001 (CRS) June 1998.

scrutiny by a public Commission of Inquiry, saw its airborne regiment disbanded in 1995, and had to go through government-mandated and civilian overseen change. But Canada's involvement in Somalia during the early 1990s was not simply bleak – it also contained shades of light. The mission in Somalia, Operation Deliverance, saw a number of women deploy alongside the Airborne. Among them, was a military nurse now known as Rear-Admiral (retired) Rebecca Patterson, currently serving Canada as a Senator. Retelling Patterson's life story, Dr. Isabel Campbell writes a tale of feminist awakening and of loyalty to the military and its ethical principles. This contribution underlines the complexity of unweaving the positive from dark stories, but also embraces the concept of personal growth as an integral part of the military story.

Fast forward two decades. The military is still struggling with sexual misconduct. In her piece, Dr. Claire Cookson-Hills deconstructs the scandals that have plagued the military since 98, and outlining the government responses to them. This is a dark part of Canadian history that society is still reconciling with, as close to 20,000 service members and veterans – 40 percent of whom are men – filed a claim to the Heyder-Beattie class action lawsuit about their experience with various forms of sexual violence while in service. But, most importantly, Dr. Cookson-Hills chronicles stories of courage, of women who have spoken up against a military that is still facing an uphill battle to address an intricate issue. An issue against which now women are leading: Minister of National Defence Anita Anand, Lieutenant-General Jennie Carignan, Chief Professional Conduct and Culture, and Major-General Lise Bourgon, acting Chief Military Personnel, to only name the three most prominent.

On the surface, the articles in this issue seem to perpetuate stories of women and LGBT folks as victims, or at the sidelines of violence. But it would be simplifying the works presented here. Between the lines, you will read stories of women who took their own agencies in the face of adversity. This issue seeks to challenge traditional stories of contributions to the military and to elevate those that stand on the margins. You will read stories of growth and stories of battles fought without guns. You will read celebration of women that have contributed to the military and to society in unconventional ways – by being themselves, by upholding military values, or by researching the military. This issue seeks not only to shed a light on women's service during their time in and outside of the military, but also to acknowledge the contribution of researchers and advocates who have helped advance women's rights in the military. This issue is also the result of those who are behind the creation of this issue. First, the invisible hands behind it; Dr. John Ferris from the University of Calgary, who pushed for the creation of this issue, and Dr. Allan English and Dr. Brad St-Croix, who have reviewed the articles presented here. Thank you

for being the rocks without whom this issue would not exist. I would also like to give my utmost gratitude to Isabella Sun, Dr. Claire Cookson-Hills, and Dr. Isabel Campbel for contributing an article. Their support, patience, and hard work have made this process a rewarding experience. And I hope this will be as valuable to the reader to go through these pieces as it was for me to support the writers in bringing them to life.