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Cultural Understanding and Dialogue within the Canadian Armed Forces: Insights from Canadian Ranger Patrols

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Abstract: In November 2015, Prime Minister Trudeau stressed in his Minister of Defence Mandate Letter that “no relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples. It is time to renew the nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples so that it is based on recognition of rights, respect, collaboration and partnership.” In order to assess the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), this article is centred on the relationships between Indigenous reservists and non-Indigenous military. Based on an inductive analysis of semi-structured interviews and field observations conducted in 2016 and 2017 in Nunavik, Quebec, and Nunavut, this contribution studies the relationships between Indigenous reservists and military within Canadian Rangers patrols, and aims at demonstrating how those patrols reinforce understanding and dialogue between the different cultures. As a subcomponent of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserve, Canadian Ranger patrols from Nunavik and Nunavut are mainly composed of Indigenous Rangers under the responsibility of non-Indigenous Ranger instructors. Providing a meeting place between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals, the patrols enable cultural understanding and dialogue between different cultures. An analysis of the relationships within those patrols offers a particularly relevant illustration of Inuit issues and people in the Canadian Armed Forces, and more broadly in Canadian society.

You have to be open ... and humble If I were not able to change, to adjust my mentality, I would still be considered the “Guy from the South” who shows up with his southern mentalities in the North. I am a little chameleon perhaps but, in the end, I like to have an open mind. And I think it brings me a lot ... because they see it too in my attitude, in my character. (M-7, a Ranger Instructor, 2 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, Quebec, December 2017)

Introduction

In November 2015, Prime Minister Trudeau stressed the following in his Minister of Defence Mandate Letter, “No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples. It is time to renew the nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples so that it is based on recognition of rights, respect, collaboration and partnership” (Canada, 2015). A new mandate letter was issued in December 2019 using similar language (Canada, 2019a). The very essence of this statement deserves attention. Addressed to the minister of defence, these mandate letters underlined the necessity to renew the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), based on the recognition of rights, respect, collaboration, and partnership.

Indigenous–military relations or, more broadly, civil–military relations, can be analyzed, at the national level, through three lenses: first, the relationships between Indigenous conscripts, volunteers, or military and the Armed Forces as an institution (Canada, 1996, 2019b,c,d; Riseman, 2012 & 2014; Bosa, 2010; Jordens, 1989; MacFarlane & Moses, 2005; Moses, 2000; Moses, Graves & Sinclair, 2004; Sheffield, 1996 & 2007; Shewell, 2006; Innes, 2000; Paluszkiwicz-Misiaczek, 2014; Fraser, 2013; Jung, 2007; Scoppio, 2009; Winegard, 2011 & 2012); second, the relationships between Indigenous civilians and the military units responsible for applying (federal) state policies (Christensen & Sorensen, 2001; De Lint, 2004; Canada, 1996; Mahony, 2001; Trudel, 2009 & 2010); and, finally, the relationships between Indigenous reservists and the military, for instance within the Canadian Ranger patrols (Griffiths et al., 2011; Kikkert & Stern, 2017; Lackenbauer, 2006, 2011a,b & 2013; Lackenbauer & Kikkert, 2020; Lackenbauer & Mantle, 2007; Rangers canadiens, 2015; Vullierme, 2018a,b & 2019). This article is centred on the latter.

The history of the Canadian Rangers dates back to the Second World War after what is believed to be a 1942 Japanese bombing attack in British Columbia. Located far from Army reserves, local inhabitants (Indigenous and non-

Indigenous) formed unofficial militias to defend their homes and families. Highly efficient, autonomous, and skilled, these militias were officialized under the name Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR) (Wood, 2015). Put on hold at the end of the Second World War, patrols were relaunched by the CAF in 1947 under the name “Canadian Rangers.” Today, Canadian Rangers are residents of remote, sparsely populated areas in Canada, and are reservists recruited based on their local knowledge and skills (Lackenbauer, 2006, 2007 & 2013). Five Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups (CRPG) exist, each in charge of a specific geographic area. Their main tasks consist of conducting and providing support to sovereignty operations, conducting and providing assistance to CAF domestic operations, and maintaining a Canadian Armed Forces presence in local communities (Canada, 2015; Canada, 2019e; National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, 2019). In Arctic regions, where this research took place, Canadian Ranger patrols are mainly composed of Inuit men and women trained by non-Indigenous Canadian Ranger Instructors (2 CRPG, 2016a,b).

Since those patrols are a meeting place between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples, they act as a place where different cultures can share mutual understanding and dialogue. According to previous studies, the current structure of Canadian Ranger patrols derives from a continuous process of adaptation to—or taking into account—Indigenous cultures, allowing those patrols to be respectful of Indigenous cultures (Kikkert & Stern, 2017; Lackenbauer 2006, 2007, 2011a,b & 2013; Lackenbauer & Kikkert, 2020; Vullierme, 2018a,b, 2019). However, beyond this structural adaptation, how do Rangers and Ranger instructors dialogue and understand each other on the field? Could adaptation and respect, structurally implemented by the Canadian Rangers’ organization, exist without understanding and dialogue between Rangers and their Ranger instructors? In this article, I aim, through an analysis of the relationships between Indigenous Rangers and non-Indigenous Ranger instructors within Canadian Ranger patrols, to demonstrate how these patrols reinforce understanding and dialogue between cultures. Such an analysis also offers an illustration of Indigenous issues and people within the Canadian Armed Forces, and more broadly within Canadian society.

My research focuses on Arctic regions. It is based on field observations and semi-structured interviews involving participants from 2 CRPG, the Quebec patrol group. I conducted these observations and semi-structured interviews in 2016 during an exercise of the Rangers patrol from Aupaluk (Nunavik, Northern Quebec), and during a leadership exercise held at 2 CRPG headquarters in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu (Quebec). I interviewed ten Rangers—identified as R-1 to R-10—and eleven military from the chain of command (Ranger Instructors and above)—identified as M-1 to M-11. I also conducted field observations in 2017 during an exercise of the Rangers patrol from Naujaat (Nunavut). I analyzed the

interviews using an inductive methodology based on a threefold codification with the qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti. I formalized my daily observations and analysis in a logbook throughout my fieldwork. Although the latter was not coded using the Atlas.ti software, I constantly referred to it to compare my codification results with my field observations.

As a corollary of my geographical focus, the results presented below are mainly representative of Inuit Ranger patrols, especially when it comes to Ranger participants. However, the chain of command interviews sometimes encompass a broader angle since they work with patrols from different Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. In 2020, Rangers from Quebec were 41% Inuit, 31% Caucasians, 14% Cree, 8% Innu, 4% de Naskapi, and 2% from other Indigenous Peoples. Rangers speak Inuktitut (37%), English (27%), French (21%), Cree (10%), Innu (3%), and Naskapi (2%) (2 CRPG, 2020). Whenever needed, I have specified each of these wider references in the text.

In my study, the data shows how Canadian Ranger patrols enhance understanding between Rangers and Ranger instructors and reinforce dialogue between them.

Place for Understanding between Rangers and Ranger Instructors

According to my research findings, Canadian Ranger patrols act as a place for understanding between Rangers and Ranger instructors as a result of cultural exchange activities and shared values between Inuit and military culture. In addition, this understanding results in the cultural adaptation of Canadian Ranger patrols through the implementation of non-conventional military decision-making mechanisms.

Understanding through Cultural Exchange

In my data, this understanding through cultural exchange is closely linked to the reasons that Ranger instructors give for joining 2 CRPG. Although several instructors cited monetary reasons, they also stated that working at 2 CRPG allows them to get out of their comfort zone while working with other cultures.

First, joining 2 CRPG has financial advantages. Indeed, being a reservist within 2 CRPG is one of the rare positions within the Reserve Force that offers a full-time position. In interviews, this reason was always mentioned very quickly, along with other ones. More specifically, several Ranger instructors spoke about “challenge,” and about going “out of their comfort zone” by meeting different cultures within a non-conventional unit of the Armed Forces, as explained by M-5:

For me, it's a question of challenge. I knew that it will force me out of my comfort zone. Because ... it's still ... it's military. But it implies to take a group of civilians and to train them to have military skills so that they will be able to perform tasks on the ground. So ... from one day to the next, you work with soldiers, with the military strictness and the discipline, constantly. But with a group of civilians, basically, the approach is different. We cannot necessarily use the same processes. We have to talk more, to dialogue more, and we use ... a more accessible, a more ... elaborate way-of-doing. (M-5)

Second, others clearly mentioned their desire to learn more about Indigenous Peoples in Canada. For instance, M-4 wanted to “try traditional stuff in the communities.” For M-2, who “likes contact with people,” the Rangers allow him to “get to know a world, another culture that is really different from ours.” M-7 also shared that he “had an interest in the type of training within 2 CRPG ... so the unit, the Rangers, working with people from other cultures. For me, it was a personal interest.” M-5 also talked about this different culture:

In addition, working with a culture that is different from ours ... when working with Inuit or with Cree. It is not acceptable, given the history, to make judgments or anything about the way they act, the way they do things. So, this challenge pushes me to work with those Peoples. And today, well, I don't regret the fact that I apply to this mission. (M-5)

In addition, M-10 explained:

Yeah because, in my job, I am an infantryman, so when we heard about the Rangers, well we knew the type of exercises they were doing in the Far North, especially sovereignty operations but also that they always deal ... with coldness, deal with Indigenous people. I was interested, so when I saw an opportunity, I said, “Oh! Okay, Let's go have a look!” (M-10)

In connection with this cultural aspect, it is interesting to note that 2 CRPG sometimes invites anthropologists, as explained by M-7:

We learn a bit [at school] that the First Nations build teepees ... well. And now, being with them, eating with them, sharing with them ... I ate beluga whales, I ate seals. And I always try to get to know and to taste their culture. Luckily, the unit, the 2 CRPG, also encourages us to invite anthropologists, to invite people who give us a bit of history, a vision of the peoples, or of legal stuff ... It made me want to learn more. (M-7)

The understanding of a new culture is one of the key elements that motivates non-Indigenous reservists to become instructors within the Canadian Ranger patrols. In contrast, Inuit Rangers primarily join a patrol to save more lives thanks to the search and rescue training delivered within patrols (Vullierme, 2018a,b, 2019). For instance, R-5 explains he joined the Rangers “to gain knowledge on survival or like rescuing, helping people, to get trained, to protect ... just in case something happens to my family and my friends.”

Understanding through Shared Values

In their interviews, several participants spoke about shared values between Inuit and the military. Although the Rangers unanimously acknowledged sharing values with the military, they did not elaborate on this element further. The most detailed answers were given by the instructors. Most often, family, teamwork, respect, courage, integrity, and a sense of duty were cited. For instance, “the idea of working together to reach a goal,” local belonging, and pride were mentioned by M-1. This participant also observed that military operating modes seem very close to what he understood of Inuit culture:

I think it’s true for all communities, when they see that “I respect you, I listen to you, I hear you, and we share our knowledge instead of asserting it,” there is no conflict We have no choice, we must listen and then share... . On a military base, in any country, you help each other. Everyone works together, everyone helps each other, and everyone does the work together. ... You have to listen and share. Life in an Inuit community, life on the Arctic field, under a Ranger tent, is the same. You have to build, to be autonomous, to use field resources, and to adapt. (M-1)

These values of mutual aid are at the foundation of the military system in deployment. This mutual assistance in turn creates an environment for sharing knowledge and respect and, thus, understanding between peoples.

Understanding through Non-Conventional Military Decision-Making Mechanisms

Decision-making processes within Canadian Ranger patrols are currently based on inclusion and the regular consultation of members. Decisions are taken by consensus, especially after asking the Elders. As we will see, this approach allows patrols to deepen understanding between the different cultures of instructors and participants.

Previous studies have already reported consultation and inclusion of Rangers in patrols (Lackenbauer, 2013; Lackenbauer & Kikkert, 2020; Kikkert & Stern, 2017; Vullierme, 2018a,b, 2019). I recorded two observations in the field

corroborating this. I recorded my first observation during the December 2016 leadership training in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec. During this training, Ranger instructors showed Rangers prototype containers. These containers are used by each patrol to store equipment for Rangers and Junior Ranger patrols (a youth program launched in 1996) and include search and rescue rations, batteries, and clothing. Ranger instructors and Rangers chose and validated together the features for each of the prototypes—the number and location of shelves or lights, shelving arrangements, and type of items, for example.

I made my second observation during the fieldwork carried out in Nauyasat (Nunavut) in August 2017. The daily decision-making process of this patrol respects the following steps: first, the Ranger instructor explains the daily target to the patrol sergeant; the latter discusses with the patrols' Elders the best way to reach this daily target; then, the patrol sergeant reports back to the Ranger instructor; only then, the information is transmitted to the patrol—in English by the Ranger instructor and in Inuktitut by the patrol sergeant—for approval and validation by the rest of the members. This decision-making structure is completely different from the strictly hierarchical process of conventional Army units. These observations illustrate the unique organization of command within a patrol, and help create mutually inclusive exchanges.

Thanks to these regular consultations, Canadian Ranger patrols seem to function with a balanced understanding of Indigenous and military cultures, as illustrated by some participants' responses. To the questions—"In your opinion, is the relationship between instructors and Rangers balanced and if so, how?" and "Do you feel that you learn as much as you teach (as a Ranger or as an instructor) and if so, why?"—responses were uniformly positive is underlined by R-4:

Very much. I believe that it is always half and half yeah. I mean, we have a traditional day where the local Rangers show the southerners how to fish, to hunt, and stuff like that ... And there is a lot of technology we have to learn, the GPSs, the map, the compasses. But there is a real respect. (R-4)

M-6 also talks about field knowledge transmitted by 2 CRPG patrols:

What they teach us in the field is fun: the good tree, the birch, the mushrooms growing around; this is a matter of survival, of trapping. Lots of business that I didn't know how to do before I got here ... when you're in the woods, survival, how to react better, how to dress better, all things like that. Then, they are the ones who actually know, they live in it on a daily basis. (M-6)

In conclusion, cultural exchange, shared values, and systematic inclusion and consultation of Indigenous members deepen the understanding between Inuit Rangers and non-indigenous Ranger instructors within Canadian Ranger patrols.

According to my analysis of the interviews, these patrols also promote a better dialogue between members of the Canadian Rangers.

Place for Dialogue between Rangers and Rangers Instructors

Apart from being a place for understanding, Canadian Ranger patrols also act as a place for dialogue between Rangers and Ranger instructors, thanks to immediate conflict resolution and to Ranger instructors' preparations and personalities.

Dialogue for Immediate Conflict Resolution

In their interviews, some participants shared narratives of past or recent conflicts. I reproduce two narratives below.

The first narrative (R-4) reflects past tensions when Ranger instructors did not listen enough to their Rangers and, more specifically, to Elders, and instead applied a strict military style to the patrols. In this example, Ranger instructors insisted on completing the whole training program by sailing around a bay. They faced the refusal of an Elder.

Rangers did not appreciate how strict it was or how ... sometimes the military from the South were overbearing and they didn't take the advice of the Elders. There is one story I have, we were going by canoe around the Bay to the tip over there, and we were a little bit late in leaving and the tide was going down and we were intending to make it all the way around to the back side of the bay here and we didn't have time and the weather was not good. And the Elder just said "no, we are going in right now" because as the water goes down there is much chance we are going to hit the rocks in the low tide. And so we headed in, I was in the Elder canoe and the Rangers were behind us and they were very upset that we were headed in and they said "we could have still made it" and the Ranger in Inuktitut was being translated to say "no, in those waves in that wind, with the tide going down we could have easily been crashed on a rock and broken our canoe in half and there is no way we should have kept going" and so ... I always tell this story, the next morning he was late, our Ranger. And he is never late, he knows to be on time. So we said "oh oh, he is really not happy about that, about what happened yesterday" and he had to go to the bathroom so ... but he made a joke out of it, he said "you know what, that is the real boss, Nature is the real boss. When you have to go, you have to go, that is what you really have to listen." Because he was still upset that they were trying to

be so bossy so that was his way of making a joke out of it ... but those [Southern] Rangers they learned, they understood that he was right. (R-4)

The second narrative (M-7) reflects a more recent friction concerning respect of time schedules. Here, a Ranger returned to the camp six hours late because he was hunting caribou. The Ranger did not appreciate criticism from the instructor about this delay and wanted to quit.

I had a shock once. Yes, a shock because I was confronted with the fact that our mission was, for us, to return at a certain hour to the camp and some people left to ... well, we called that a “traditional activity” ... so they went hunting and it was okay, that was what was planned for the afternoon. But they found caribou and hunt them, until very late at night. So we agreed to come back to the camp at 5 p.m. When they finally arrived at 11 p.m., the other Inuit were starting to worry too. So I confronted that person a little bit by saying “Mmh, don’t you think that ... you went a little over the limit?” And then he said to me “no, I ran the caribou, it took us a long time and then we came back with meat.” So he was happy with his hunting and unhappy with my observation. And then, we had a talk at night, quite late, and he told me “I am leaving, I quit, I go back to the village.” So I told him, “if you want to leave, we all leave. We move out, we all return to the village.” And then he had a little step back We remained good friends ... But for me, it is the only time ... Everything else, by talking a bit, gets fixed relatively well. They are open-minded people. But I can’t be closed-minded either. (M-7)

These narratives illustrate two fundamentals of Canadian Ranger patrols: the absolute requirement for Ranger instructors to listen to the Elders and the need for Ranger instructors to be flexible when it comes to time schedules. This relationship to time is a key component of a patrol’s adaptation (Lackenbauer, 2013; Lackenbauer & Kikkert, 2020; Kikkert & Stern, 2017; Vullierme, 2018a,b, 2019). This was well-explained by a Ranger instructor who underlined that in the North, people do not hurry up, people do not run. People will hurry up if it is a matter of life or death, or if someone is injured. “Otherwise, why hurry up?” (M-9).

Today, this type of conflict seems rare. As already noted, a strict military style was abandoned within Canadian Ranger patrols and Ranger instructors incorporated communities’ cultural practices. As an Inuk Ranger said: “Yeah, yeah at first, they were doing the way they were supposed to do in the Army but sometimes, that does not work, sometimes we have to tell them how we do it

in the North” (R-10). In addition, R-10 also stressed the need to openly discuss conflicts as soon as they appeared to avoid past mistakes: “And if there is, we deal with it right away so that it doesn’t impact the patrol because ... it has in the past with some patrols, of larger number. If they didn’t deal with their problems, Rangers left the patrol” (R-10).

Dialogue due to Ranger Instructors’ Preparations and Personalities

My interviews reflect three elements related to the preparation and personalities of Ranger instructors that help the dialogue between Ranger participants and instructors. First, several Ranger instructors stressed the central role played by 2 CRPG’s preparations. To prepare for the field (i.e., patrol training), a new 2 CRPG instructor accompanies a senior instructor for two or three patrol trainings in communities:

It takes about a year for an instructor to be self-sufficient, to go on his own [in a community]. And meanwhile, a senior instructor mentors him during his preparation, in his progression, to ensure that his development follows [2 CRPG] criteria. Then, there is an assessment. When the instructor is considered autonomous, he is sent to train one of his patrols. We continue to keep an eye on him because it is not necessarily given to everyone to go on the field, so it is important to train them. (M-5)

This allows the senior instructor to introduce the new instructor to his future patrols, as shown by M-9:

It’s going well within the unit because ... when you leave for the first time, you don’t leave alone, and someone introduces you to the patrol, to the group. Then you get to know them a little bit ... So, it is done very well. (M9)

However, according to M-10, a single visit is not enough:

I would say that the best preparation is experience. And experience is acquired by doing more than one trip. I always say to the instructors, the new ones: during your first visit, you are in “observation mode.” Take the time to assimilate what you see, to compare what you see [in different communities]. Paying one visit doesn’t make you an expert, you know. It takes several trips, several communities, to really start feeling the pulse. And after that, I think it can take up to two years at least to feel the exact pulse. (M10)

In specific instances, data indicated that not all of the steps were performed systematically, therefore further study is needed in this area. For instance, the

handover between Ranger instructors might not be possible and the new Ranger instructor must then conduct his first trip to the community alone.

Second, a future instructor must also be able to adapt, and several participants reiterated that the Rangers were “not for everyone.” For M-5, approximately 10% to 15% of instructors leave, because “they just don’t feel comfortable in this unit.” As M-5 underlined, “depending on instructors applying, some start and realize just a few months after: “Oh no, no, this is really not for me” (M-5). “As we say in our unit [2 CRPG], it takes between six to eighteen months to see if you really like it; because it’s not for everyone Most of the time, if you stay more than ten months, the standard is that you’ll stay forever” (M-10). To sum up, “we volunteer twice: when we arrive and when we leave, because to date, nobody got fired. And we become quite comfortable with Indigenous cultures in the long run” (M-10). Indeed, some differences exist between the CRPGs, in particular regarding Ranger instructor status. At 2 CRPG, since instructors are reservists, they choose their affiliation and often stay within the unit for long periods. The Ranger instructors I interviewed in 2016 had joined 2 CRPG between one and seventeen years ago. In contrast, 1 CRPG (Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon) operates with military from the Regular Forces. Soldiers are posted as Ranger instructors. Therefore, they are not “volunteers” and they only stay for a few years before being posted elsewhere. This technicality was emphasized by M-11:

Not all military are able to make this transition. Because ... we have military coming ... you haven't seen them here, you don't see them here [in Quebec]. But if you go to 1 CRPG, which is in charge of the Canadian Far North, military come ... They are sent there to do the job for 3 years. Ok? In military jargon we say: “you are posted.” Then ... the man or the woman of 30, 35, 40 years old arrives up there, and ... “I am going to work with Indigenous, and with children [Junior Canadian Rangers], and it is not my job, I did not sign for that.” So, some are unable to adapt, and they do not stay long and leave. But most of them will successfully adapt, with a little coaching, they will succeed ... that's good. But it's completely different here. This morning for example, the parade [performed every morning during 2 CRPG Junior Canadian Rangers summer camp], in other CRPG, they don't do that at all. They gather around a fire, the information is passed along informally and that is much more ... Indigenous, First Nations' way-of-doing than here. Here, it's a little be more regimented for the summer camps. (M-11)

Third, in addition to the preparations and adaptability of future Ranger instructors, many participants emphasized a prerequisite to join the Rangers—to

be “open-minded.” As summed up by M-5: “We are really looking for people who have an open mind, who are able to adapt.” What does this concept of “open-mindedness” refer to? M-7 explained:

But if I were a close-minded person from the start, I wouldn't be able to understand all of that ... [the difference of culture]. You have to be open ... and humble ... I mean, we come up North to see them, we are welcomed at their home, we are here sometimes for twelve to fourteen days ... and then we come back South, we go back to our home. There is a balance ... If I were not able to change, able to adapt my mentality, I would remain the “Guy from the South” who shows up with his southern mentalities in the North. I am a bit like a chameleon perhaps but, in the end, I like to have an open mind, and I think it brings me a lot ... because they see it too in my attitude, in my character. I think we see each other more like brothers or uncles. Although they have huge respect for this idea of “instructor” And again, if someone is close minded, with a mentality like “No, I'm the instructor and tomorrow, we're going to work,” there is a little shock between what they say and what we are willing to hear. (M-7)

This concept can also refer to “the personal notion of not judging”:

I think that the personal notion of not judging really comes into play Again, I'm happy to be able to draw, not necessarily parallels, nor conclusions, but to be able to tell myself that I should not judge ... even in the South, even us, in our culture, we have the same problems, we have not overcome them. We're not better than them, we're not better. (M-7)

This element of “not judging” was also raised by M-9:

I loved it, discovering the Indigenous world, and even today! I have a lot of respect, I am lucky to know them much more than other persons. But you have to learn not to judge them. They are as valuable as anyone. They are fantastic. (M-9)

Hence, according to my participants, being “open-minded” implies “humility,” a “chameleon” personality, and a personal notion of not judging. These elements also appear essential for the adaptation of Ranger instructors to their various patrols. This is all the more important since 2 CRPG Ranger instructors may work both with an Inuit patrol and with an Innu or Cree patrol, for example.

While explaining what working with [Junior] Canadian Rangers brought to him personally and professionally, M-11 explained well the necessity to listen and to dialogue with Indigenous Rangers:

What I had not realized during the first twenty years of my career is that it is not always necessarily the “good” reality. Sense of flexibility, listening to others, understand what are their needs ... as military, we are not taught to do that at the beginning. At an early stage of our careers, we are taught to “do this, do that.” And at some point, you have to make the transition and you are the one telling others what to do. But you never say what to do because it is a need. You say what to do because somewhere, it says that this is what you have to do and it was instilled. ... Versus working with [Junior] Canadian Rangers, with Indigenous ... Well ... you really have to listen to them, because they are the ones who have to ask or tell us what they need. So, it pushed me to take the time to listen to these people ... Yes, it gave me the opportunity to listen more ... (M-11)

These narratives highlight how and why immediate resolution of conflicts and Ranger instructors’ preparations and personalities remain essential to help the dialogue between Indigenous Rangers and non-indigenous Ranger instructors within Canadian Rangers patrols. These answers are explained by the fact that patrols’ proper functioning seem closely linked to the adaptation of the instructors to the Inuit culture and not to the adaptation of Inuit to the non-Indigenous military culture (see Vullierme, 2018a).

Conclusion

In this article, I illustrate how Canadian Ranger patrols facilitate cultural understanding and dialogue between cultures in the Canadian Armed Forces. Composed mainly of Indigenous Rangers trained by non-Indigenous Ranger instructors, patrols located in the Canadian Arctic are a meeting place between Inuit and military personnel from southern Canada.

According to semi-structured interviews and observations conducted in 2016 and 2017 in Quebec and in Nunavut, Canadian Rangers patrols act as a place for cultural understanding and dialogue between Ranger instructors and Indigenous Rangers. First, cultural exchange, shared values, and non-conventional decision-making mechanisms within patrols deepen the understanding between cultures. Indeed, working with a different culture is the main reason why Ranger instructors join Canadian Ranger patrols. This understanding derives also from shared values and adaptation of the decision-making process to Indigenous cultures. Second, the immediate resolution of conflicts and Ranger instructors’ preparations and personalities help those patrols to act as a place for dialogue between Indigenous Rangers and Ranger instructors. Thus, this conflict resolution, and Ranger

Instructors' preparations and personalities, are key points to ensure a constant dialogue within a patrol.

Beyond the structural adaptation adopted through the years and highlighted by previous academics, my analysis shows how Canadian Ranger patrols act as a perfect medium to enhance understanding and dialogue between Canadian Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of a patrol. In a previous article, I argue that those patrols were not a modern tool to assimilate Indigenous Peoples further, but rather a means of agency for them, since Rangers are reservists choosing to join a patrol in order to help their community, to save lives, and to rebuild the intergenerational bonds broken by the Canadian government in residential schools (Vullierme, 2018a; see also Vullierme, 2018b & 2019). In this article, I elaborate further by illustrating how Canadian Ranger patrols are successful contemporary examples to enhance understanding and dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. This is all the more essential since Ranger instructors act as proxies between the Canadian Armed Forces and civil society. They share their experience with Indigenous Rangers with their friends and families, and sometimes even apply some elements of the Inuit educational system to their own parenting style (Vullierme, 2018a).

To conclude, the Canadian Ranger patrols play a crucial role in Canadian society. They act as a concrete model of knowledge sharing, respect, collaboration, and partnership for (re)building durable and balanced relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples—not only within the Canadian Armed Forces, but also among broader Canadian society—and perhaps of “engag[ing] with Indigenous Peoples in a just and honourable way in the future” (Simpson, 2011, p. 21).

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