

Training Won't Get the CAF a New Culture

Dr. Randall Wakelam
Royal Military College of Canada

The recent creation of the Chief, Professional Conduct and Culture (Chief PCC) has seen many commentators make the point that past training has failed and that new approaches are needed. Unfortunately training as understood by many militaries, including the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), has more to do with the learning of skills, typically hands on, but almost never with the sorts of things that are captured by the notion of culture. This paper examines culture and education and proposes means for reforming or perhaps transforming CAF culture through changes to the programme at the Royal Military College, a task that is of particular significance given that the College produces 30 percent or more of each year's new officers.

Some definitions, or some understanding of terms, are needed in order to effectively explore the issue. First, what is meant by culture and what is it that the CAF wants to change?

Culture as defined by the Canadian Oxford Dictionary points towards a system of values: "the mode of behaviour within a particular group."¹ As 2021 unfolds we must admit that as a nation we are experiencing pan-Canadian problems; we are currently witnessing many apparent flaws in our national value system, those linked to the failure of some groups to accept diversity and equality between different ethnicities. These ethnicities are represented across the CAF and thus we may reasonably conclude that the problems of Canadian society exist, whether apparent or not, within the CAF. Also present in Canadian culture is gender-based violence, particularly towards women. This violence is very present in the CAF and, indeed, is to a large degree the reason for the creation of the new Chief PPC organization.

Another perspective on culture, one oriented to the military, has been provided by Allan English. He introduces his 2004 study of military culture by stating: "Culture, described as 'the bedrock of military effectiveness' has been selected as a unifying concept here because it can help explain the 'motivations, aspirations, norms and rules of conduct' – what might be called the essence of the Canadian, or any other, military."² So if culture in a CAF context is that essence which captures the norms and rules of conduct, and if there are major problems with the identification, acceptance and adherence to those norms and rules then to focus on reforming culture is a valid approach to reforming the CAF.

Attempts at reform are not new; they were strikingly evident in the wake of the Somalia crisis where the profession of arms was put under the microscope both for the actions of soldiers in the field and for the failings of the many at senior ranks in subsequent decisions. It led to the dismissal of a CDS, to the early departure of a second and to the appointment of an Acting CDS. At the same time, it caused a deliberate rethinking of the values of the profession culminating in the publication in 2003 of the *Profession of Arms Manual*. In its examination of the 'military ethos' the *Manual* noted that: "the legitimacy of the profession of arms requires that it embody the same values and beliefs as the society it defends."³ This ethos was intended to do a number of things, including:

- Establish trust between the CAF and Canadian Society
- Provide a guide for the development of military leaders who would then manifest that ethos in their daily activities

- Create and shape the desired military culture [emphasis added]
- Enable self-regulation within the CAF
- Assist in the identification and resolution of ethical challenges⁴

From the foregoing can be distilled the requirement for the CAF to have a professional way of thinking and doing that encompasses Canadian societal values into a principled framework which permits the profession to act ethically. How one defines ethically would reasonably include acting morally and legally; that is to say in ways that cannot be construed as immoral or illegal misconduct. But ethical thought and actions are not apparently the case given the evidence of immoral and in many cases illegal actions, both proven and alleged, now before the public.

This being the case, at the moment the mandate of the Chief PPC seems to be centred on dealing with misconduct. The essence of the published mandate states:

The Chief, Professional Conduct and Culture will lead a fundamental transformation in the way systemic misconduct is understood and addressed in the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).

The term systemic misconduct includes sexual misconduct, hateful conduct, systemic barriers, harassment, violence, discrimination, employment inequity, unconscious biases, and abuse of power in the workplace.⁵

Clearly, none of these lacunae can be abided in an organization that takes its ethos from national values.

But how, one wonders, have such misconducts occurred within the profession? A statement by the Conference of Defence Associations' (CDA) Institute from early May explains this in part: "Many former senior members of the CAF and DND serving with CDA and the CDA Institute recognize that we did not do enough to address this scourge that is eating away at a storied and essential national institution."⁶

Hence as LGen Jennie Carignan, the new Chief PCC, said, again, early in May, her "priorities are to review and improve the complaint system for dealing with sexual

misconduct in the Forces, and to foster an environment where these abuses no longer happen." With respect to fostering that environment, presumably one that is embodied in the profession's ethos, she acknowledged that the current "training" is deficient. An effective training programme, she offered, would focus on "inclusivity, on fostering an environment where people feel safe." To do that she said that there was a need to create an environment where these abuses are prevented from occurring in the first place." This, she said, would help with the establishment of a trust relationship between leaders and subordinates.⁷

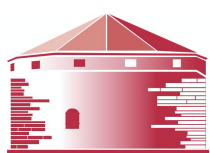
These are laudable and essential goals, but training will not help achieve these any more than past training efforts have fixed similar problems. Introduced in the mid 1990s, Standards for Harassment and Racism Prevention (SHARP) training consisted of four hours of videos, lectures and discussion, often stilted, which when completed certified the participant as having completed the training. It did not in any way confirm that that individual had actually accepted the values and practices encouraged by the training material; there was no 'exam'.

Part of the problem with SHARP and other training is that training by its nature does not focus on an individual's values. Instead, it is designed to elicit normalized responses to predicted situations. Education, on the other hand, tends towards giving the learner the abilities needed to deal with the unpredictable. Both training and education are associated with Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning. In the 1950s American educator Benjamin Bloom proposed three 'domains of learning' which are still widely accepted today. The Psycho-Motor domain focuses on acquiring manual skills where the mind works with the body to accomplish things. The Cognitive domain deals with learning concepts and putting them to use to examine problems and create solutions. The Affective domain deals with values. Some aspects of that domain include:

Receiving: being willing to listen

Valuing: finding worth in one's learning: accept, approve, commit

Characterization: value that will control one's outcome and behaviour:
act, behave, defend, exemplify⁸



Arguably what the CAF needs is some combination of activities that, soon after recruitment, both exposes the individual to the concepts of the desired culture and then works with them to the point that those values have been internalized and form the basis for decision making and actions. This is easy to propose, but harder to do.

For those officer cadets who spend their first four years of service at RMC completing a degree and learning the basics of the military profession there is, arguably, an opportunity to nurture this culture. Cadets complete a 'four pillar' programme which includes a baccalaureate degree, the development of second language competency, the honing of their physical fitness and the completion of military education, the latter consisting largely of 60-90 minutes a week of lectures on fundamental military topics. But where do values fit in? Seemingly they do not, or if they do the learning is far from successful. Statistics show that the rate of sexual misconduct is well above that of comparable civilian universities.⁹

Possible remedies may exist. For example, one English professor, Steven Lukits, has recently used a detailed discussion of former Officer Cadet Kate Armstrong's 2019 book, *The Stone Frigate: The Royal Military College's First Female Cadet Speaks Out* to sensitize incoming students to what has gone before. He says: "The 18-year-old women and men in my classes are shocked at the sexualized behaviour, harassment and abuse Ms. Armstrong suffered from the male cadets – men who are of the same generation as the former chief of the defence staff Jonathan Vance..."¹⁰ Surely this sort of discussion needs to occur across all four years and across all four pillars? There seems little indication that this is the case. There is one fourth-year course, "Military Professionalism and Ethics", taught by military faculty, that exposes students to many of the concepts and their failings that are at the heart of current and past problems.¹¹ This course, however, is scheduled almost invariably in the students' last semester before graduation so that there is no opportunity to reinforce the values taught.

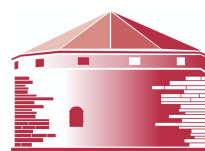
What would a better, and hopefully more effective, cultural socialisation look like? It would need to be introduced early, as with Lukits' course, and across the four pillars so that cadets are acquiring not just the skills

and knowledge of the profession but also the values. This would mean that values would need to be reinforced in all facets of college learning and operation, from the physics lab to the sports field to the conduct of routine administrative activities. Contributing to the culture formation might be seen by many faculty and staff as outside their remit, but RMC needs these people to support this learning of values.

It would also mean that cadet commitment to, and use of, those values was evident in their actions. The reinforcement of ethics and values and the monitoring of those actions would enter the realm of coaching and mentoring where the right numbers of the right sorts of coaches and mentors would work across the college to help the cadets where they might ethically stumble from time to time. Coaching and mentoring would not necessarily be the job of the military staff of the Training Wing who are already busy enough, but of individuals, typically former service personnel, brought on board for their unquestionable ethical leadership. They would interact with cadets in small groups and in one-on-one settings. The success of this new pillar of the RMC programme would require a long term investment, both philosophical and practical, one stretching well past the four years that any one student normally spends at RMC, to the point in time when this new culture is firmly entrenched. Leaders at RMC and in headquarters above RMC would need to commit to a new way of creating officers, officers both espousing the warrior spirit needed for the profession, but also an ethical and moral approach to dealing with the people who make up the profession.

Introducing coaching and mentoring at RMC would also have larger implications. This approach would necessarily be required during cadet summer training. In turn, this would then require and allow the schools of the services to develop this capability, facilitating its eventual and necessary employment across the military. Starting at RMC is just the first step in embracing a new culture for the CAF.

Editor of the CIDP Policy Brief Series: Thomas Hughes



ENDNOTES

¹ Katherine Barber, ed. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004), 369.

² Allan English, *Understanding Military Culture: A Canadian Perspective* (Montreal: McGill-Queens' University Press, 2004), 5. English's construct was based on a study by Paul Johnston "Doctrine is Not Enough: The Effect of Doctrine on the Behaviour of Armies", *Parameters* 30, no.3 (August 2000): 30-9.

³ Canada, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada*, 30. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/dnd-mdn/documents/reports/2019/duty-with-honour-en.pdf> accessed 13 Jun 2021. A second edition, used for these citations, was issued in 2009.

⁴ *Duty with Honour*, 26.

⁵ Canada National Defence, Organization Structure, "Chief, Professional Conduct and Culture". <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/organizational-structure/chief-professional-conduct-culture.html> accessed 9 June 2021.

⁶ Conference of Defence Associations Institute, "Statement On Sexual Misconduct And Culture Change In The Canadian Armed Forces", <https://cdainstitute.ca/statement-on-sexual-misconduct-and-culture-change-in-the-canadian-armed-forces/> accessed 9 June 2021.

⁷ LGen Carignan's comments to the House of Commons Status of Women Committee, 11 May 2021 cited in Anja Karadeglija "We

need to change the culture in military, says general in charge of rooting out sexual misconduct," *The National Post* 11 May 2021, <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/we-need-to-change-the-culture-in-military-says-general-in-charge-of-rooting-out-sexual-misconduct> accessed 10 June 2021.

⁸ University of Waterloo Centre for Teaching Excellence, "Bloom's Taxonomy: Affective Domain" https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/sites/ca.centre-for-teaching-excellence/files/uploads/files/affective_domain_-_blooms_taxonomy.pdf accessed 13 June 2021.

⁹ Ashley Maxwell, "Experiences of unwanted sexualised and discriminatory behaviour and sexual assault among students at Canadian military colleges, 2019," *Statistics Canada* 8 October, 2020 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00011-eng.htm> accessed 29 June 2021.

¹⁰ Steven Lukits, "The young men entering the military must change its sexualized culture," *The Globe and Mail*, 31 May 2021 <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-young-men-entering-the-military-must-change-its-sexualized-culture/> accessed 10 June 2021.

¹¹ RMC Calendar, "PSE401 Military Professionalism and Ethics" <https://www.rmc-cmr.ca/en/registrars-office/undergraduate-psychology-courses#pse-psf-401> accessed 13 June 2021.

