



ISSN 2754-5547

<https://doi.org/10.52230/JVON5553>

## **‘Canadian Rangers: Community, Autonomy, and Sovereignty’**

**Samantha Stevens**

**To cite this article:** Samantha Stevens, ‘Canadian Rangers: Community, Autonomy, and Sovereignty’, *Journal of Australian, Canadian, and Aotearoa New Zealand Studies* 1, issue 2 (December 2021): 8-40, <https://doi.org/10.52230/LMIU1341>

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

## Canadian Rangers: Community, Autonomy, and Sovereignty

Samantha Stevens<sup>1</sup>

The Canadian Rangers represent a mutually beneficial balance between Indigenous and Canadian Arctic interests. By situating community as the core ethical principle of the branch, the Canadian Forces (CF)<sup>2</sup> has, in effect, created a non-hierarchical paramilitary structure that dismantles the binary of country over community. The Rangers represent a structural innovation that centralizes community alongside country in an equitable partnership. Given the importance of community and love of place in many Indigenous cultures,<sup>3</sup> the CF is demonstrating that culture has a place within service. For Indigenous people serving in the CF, this innovation paves the way forward in a way that may help alleviate issues of racism and discrimination based on ignorance or lack of education on Indigenous cultures in the CF.

Given Canada's history of working with and, at times, relying on Indigenous soldiers, it is unfortunate that certain attitudes about Indigenous peoples persist today. We need to only think of Sgt. Tommy Prince, one of the most decorated First Nations soldiers in Canada who served during World War II and the Korean War, to see the important role Indigenous members play within the CF.<sup>4</sup> The push to recruit

---

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the editor of the journal as well as the two anonymous peer reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Since this article relies heavily on military jargon, abbreviations, and draws on the author's 12 years of Canadian Forces service, a glossary of some common military terms is outlined in Appendix 1. I would also point out that I am not Indigenous, I am British/Canadian, but I am also an affiliate member of Nipissing First Nation through marriage to an Anishinaabe man currently serving in the CF. Also, this article was conceptualized and written while I was in traditional Nipissing territory and unceded Algonquin territory.

<sup>3</sup> John Borrows, "Gift One: Love," in *Law's Indigenous Ethics* (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 24–49.

<sup>4</sup> Sergeant Tommy Prince was an Anishinaabe soldier from Brokenhead Ojibway Nation. Prince received both a Military Metal and a Silver Star during his military service, making him one of the most decorated Indigenous members of the Canadian Forces. See: P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "A Hell of a Warrior": Remembering Sergeant Thomas George Prince," *Journal of Historical Biography* 1 (n.d.):

and retain Indigenous personnel further underscores the important role Indigenous soldiers play in the CF. But the central importance of community in many Indigenous cultures cannot be understated, especially when recruits are often forced to give up parts of their culture and community to fit in with CF culture.<sup>5</sup> That said, it seems ridiculous that the core CF ethics and values means giving up the love one has for their community when they finish their swearing in ceremony.<sup>6</sup> Promoting a binary of nation over community only acts to dissuade many Indigenous people from enlisting.

There is one success story, however, where loyalty to community is equal to all other duties performed as a member of the CF. As a primarily Indigenous unarmed reserve branch of the CF, there is perhaps no more important group to Canada, the Arctic, and Inuit expressions of sovereignty than the Canadian Rangers.<sup>7</sup> Their sole doctrine focuses on community safety and security first. Indeed, while Canadian Rangers are generally thought to be a para-military arm of CF, with Southern Canadians expecting them to operate on par with their combat-trained colleagues, their standard operating procedures are the anthesis of the nationalistic priority of the CF, because their first responsibility is the safety and security of their communities. Though this does not mean that their contributions to the standard Canadian notions of sovereignty should be considered lesser.

---

27–78.; n.a., “Prince of the Brigade,” Government, Veterans Affairs Canada, 2019, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/aboriginal-veterans/native-soldiers/prince>.

<sup>5</sup> A primary example of this is the typical military haircut. Today, many Indigenous CF members have long hair, styled as per their cultural traditions. But while this regulation has been in place since the mid-70s, CF culture has only just started to accept it. Indigenous members wishing to attend ceremonies such as smudges, sweat lodges, and powwows are now given accommodations to do so, but with CF operations taking priority over such requests.

<sup>6</sup> A swearing in ceremony happens upon enlisting, when a recruit swears to uphold the CF’s values, ethics, and principles. This is also when a recruit swears allegiance to the Crown and Canada, willingly giving up things like the right to protest, participate in political activities, and other freedoms typically enjoyed by Canadians.

<sup>7</sup> It’s important to note that while the Canadian Rangers are primarily associated with Arctic sovereignty, not all Rangers are Inuit. There are many First Nations and Métis Rangers, making this model of partnership and cooperation a vital example for other Indigenous and non-Indigenous CF personnel relations.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine the role of the Canadian Rangers, specifically the Inuit Rangers, within the CF and how they navigate differing interpretations of sovereignty. In doing so, this article will first look at the Ranger's history, current operations, and how, specifically, the Inuit concepts of sovereignty guide the operating procedures of the Rangers and how those concepts differ from the non-Indigenous concepts of sovereignty. A section will also be dedicated to the treaties and land claims in the Arctic, and the relationship between the CF, the Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). This article concludes that the Rangers function on a non-hierarchical command structure, and the centralization of Inuit culture within the Ranger Patrol Groups who work specifically with Inuit peoples, makes this sub-component of the CF unique, and a model for CF non-Indigenous and Indigenous members relations. However, despite this success, this article also concludes that more attention needs to be given to the many Rangers who still face barriers to equitable employment and access to healthcare, while also struggling with the realities of overcrowding, addictions, suicides, and domestic violence.

### The Canadian Rangers

Though many Canadians are not aware of them or their important roles in the Arctic, the Rangers have a long history operating as security patrols and search and rescue (SAR) personnel. To meet the threat of potential Japanese coastal attacks during World War II, Canada formed their version of a home guard that would rise to the challenge. Known as the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, this home guard created the legacy of Canadian Rangers protecting Canada's sovereign interests while its main

military force was deployed elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> The concept of a home defence force manned by retired soldiers or frontiersmen was a popular one used by Allied forces during the war. A similar concept was used in the British Isles with the appropriately named Home Guard.<sup>9</sup> With 15,000 volunteers by August 1943, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers was disbanded after the Japanese surrender at the end of the war in 1945.<sup>10</sup>

When Cold War tensions between the Western and Soviet blocs brought unprecedented attention to the Canadian North, the force was resurrected in 1947.<sup>11</sup> The Canadian Ranger program then expanded to include Inuit, Dene, Cree, Anishinaabe, Métis and other residents who lived in the remote northern and coastal regions.<sup>12</sup> Rather than having to deal with undertaking the logistics and management of stationing regular force troops throughout the Arctic, the military employed the Rangers to serve as scouts, perform regular sovereignty patrols, and to act as escorts for troops as required.<sup>13</sup>

Today, while they have maintained their roles as unarmed reserve members, they are provided with all the gear they require to fulfill their patrol and SAR duties and represent a unique sub-component that is an exemplary example of diversity and inclusion.<sup>14</sup> The Rangers are issued kit like other soldiers. Like other members of the CF, Rangers are provided with a uniform unique to their element or branch. However, they are also issued equipment specific to their branch: communication

---

<sup>8</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Peter Kikkert, “Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers” (North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, Trent University, 2020); James Wood, “Canadian Rangers: Canadian Paramilitary Organization,” in *Britannica*, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Canadian-Rangers>.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, “Canadian Rangers.”

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Lackenbauer and Kikkert, “Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers”; Wood, “Canadian Rangers.”

<sup>12</sup> Wood, “Canadian Rangers.”

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Lackenbauer and Kikkert, “Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers.”

and navigation equipment, a C-19 rifle with up to 200 cartridges of ammunition annually, First Aid equipment, and an annual allocation of meal rations.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the most notable piece of kit that Rangers are issued is the C-19 Rifle with up to 200 cartridges of ammunition annually. While all other CF members are trained on the C-7 rifle, they are not issued a specific weapon or ammunition unless on an exercise, task, mission, or patrol that warrants it. Even then, it is more likely that a member belonging to the Army would regularly carry a C-7 than a member in the Navy serving on a ship. Therefore, in this way, the Rangers are unique in their weapons assignment and proficiency, as having a dedicated weapon allows them to hunt and protect themselves from dangerous wildlife.

There are other major differences between Rangers and their regular and reserve force counterparts. Their recruiting parameters vary greatly from that of typical prospective regular and reserve force recruits. Prospective Canadian Rangers must be intimately familiar with the local population, terrain, weather, and other conditions within their area; be able to recognize, observe and report on any unusual ships, aircraft, or incidents within their area; and, in the opinion of the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Ranger Patrol Group in their area, possess useful skills for duties in their area.<sup>16</sup>

Also, while regular and reserve force members' tasks are determined by their trade and branch, Canadian Rangers fulfill a wide array of tasks uniquely suited to their locale and mission. They conduct and provide support to sovereignty operations, such as reporting suspicious and unusual activities. They also collect local information of military significance, conduct and aid CAF domestic operations

---

<sup>15</sup> "Canadian Rangers," <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/canadian-rangers/index.page>, Canadian Army, 11 March 2021.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

such as providing local knowledge and expertise or participating in search and rescue operations, and maintain a CF presence in the local community through instruction, mentoring, and supervision of youth in the Junior Canadian Rangers Program.<sup>17</sup> Finally, while CF Task and Operations pages are published in English and French, the Rangers' Task and Operations are published in English, Denesuline, Ojibway, Ojicree, Inuktitut, and Montagnais.<sup>18</sup>

Now while these language considerations reflect the people who make up the Rangers, finding accurate and reliable statistics on the number of Indigenous peoples, and specifically Inuit peoples, in the Rangers is significantly more difficult. According to P. Whitney Lackenbauer, the House of Commons's 2019 report *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces* misrepresents the number of Indigenous peoples in the CF and leaves the Rangers out altogether.<sup>19</sup> However, a member of the committee reported that 26% of the Rangers self-identify as Indigenous peoples.<sup>20</sup> Given that the approximately 5000 Rangers are framed by the government as primarily a group of Indigenous peoples from the regions in which they operate, it seems unreasonable that just over a quarter of the personnel are Indigenous peoples.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, upon Lackenbauer's closer inspection of the census's sent out in 2016 attempting to collect this data, it becomes apparent that only 31.5% of the surveys were returned in the First Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CPRG),<sup>22</sup> a patrol group which includes the areas in Nunavut Territory, Yukon Territory,

---

<sup>17</sup> "Canadian Rangers," <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/canadian-rangers/index.page>, Canadian Army, 11 March 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Office of the Ombudsman, "Tasks and Operations," Government of Canada, November 25, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/career/canadian-rangers/tasks-operations.html>.

<sup>19</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Diversity Statistics, Self-Identification Data, and the Canadian Rangers: Underestimating Indigenous Peoples' Participation Rates in the Canadian Army," Policy Brief: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, April 19, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Lackenbauer, "Diversity Statistics, Self-Identification Data, and the Canadian Rangers."

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Northwest Territories and Atlin, British Columbia.<sup>23</sup> Further information collected by Lackenbauer from Census Canada in 2017 and other sources from within the 1 CPRG headquarters, shows that in 1 CPRG alone over 80% of Rangers are Indigenous peoples, with the highest being in Nunavut with 612 people out of 632 identifying as Indigenous.<sup>24</sup>

This statistical misunderstanding could have been an honest mistake. But given the CF's drive to recruit and retain Indigenous personnel in all facets of the CF, it is important that proper data and analysis is used. This is perhaps more apparent when funding for operations and supplies in the Arctic is a focal point. Moreover, attempts to fully understand and analyze Indigenous people's representation in the CF are hindered when statistics reported by the government are compromised. This is especially important in the case of the Rangers where so much effort is put forth to create an equitable sub-component of the CF based on focused and tailored approaches to wellness, employment, and supplies.

Indeed, despite all these tailored provisions, considerations, and important assigned tasks, the benefits afforded to the Rangers could be seen as inadequate. Not only do many of the Inuit personnel face the same hardships as other Indigenous peoples living in remote regions,<sup>25</sup> as a specialized reserve unit, they are only eligible to receive benefits consisting of appropriate compensation and limited healthcare related to duty when on officially assigned tasks. In contrast, regular force members are always on salary and covered medically. On the other hand, Class "A"

---

<sup>23</sup> Office of the Ombudsman, "Canadian Rangers," Government of Canada, November 25, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/career/canadian-rangers.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Lackenbauer, "Diversity Statistics, Self-Identification Data, and the Canadian Rangers."

<sup>25</sup> Most notably Inuit Ranger personnel are still faced with family and community issues such as addictions, suicides, proper housing, domestic violence, and sustainable access to foods, some issues which are also exacerbated by climate change in the Arctic. See: "About Canadian Inuit," ITK: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2021, <https://www.itk.ca/about-canadian-inuit/>.



reserve force members are trained to the same level as their reg force counterparts, but only work one night a week and weekends, are compensated only for the time they are on duty and can pick up more “shifts” as they like. For the Rangers, their tasks and compensation, or types, are determined by whose command they are under and what task they have been assigned. As shown in Table 1, Rangers are expected to operate in a vast array of tasks, yet for most of those tasks are only compensated under the Class “A” regulations. It’s important to note that Rangers are not trained to the same level as combat trained members but are expected to be an integral part of Canadian Arctic security and sovereignty.

LEAD	TYPE	EVENT	CLASS
<b>CANADIAN ARMY LEAD</b>	1	Basic Training (e.g., field training, traditional skills, mentoring Junior Canadian Rangers)	Class “A”
	2	Individual Training (e.g. building leadership traits)	Class “A”
	3	Collective Training (e.g. familiarization with other patrols and communities)	Class “A”
<b>CANADIAN JOINT OPERATIONS COMMAND LEAD</b>	4	Training, Exercise, and Event (e.g. support to Canadian Armed Forces training and exercises)	Class “A”
	5	Domestic Operation (e.g. conduct or assist in Search and Rescue)	Class “A” or “C”
	6	Sovereignty Operation (e.g. enhanced sovereignty patrols)	Class “A” or “C”

Table 1: Canadian Rangers: Types of assignments <sup>26</sup>

However, given their large assignment of tasks, the move to reinvent the Rangers as a full-time militarized force in the Arctic does not seem to be on the

<sup>26</sup> Office of the Ombudsman, “Tasks and Operations.”

horizon. One major reason may have to do with the location of patrol areas and the headquarters that regulate them. As mentioned above, the First Canadian Ranger Patrol Group includes patrol areas in Nunavut Territory, Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, and Atlin, British Columbia.<sup>27</sup> Their headquarters is in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. The Second Canadian Ranger Patrol Group is responsible for the area of Northern Quebec, James Bay, and the Lower North Shore, but they report to the Second Canadian Division and Joint Task Force (East) headquartered in St. Jean sur Richelieu, Quebec.<sup>28</sup> The Third Canadian Ranger Patrol Group covers remote coastal and inland regions of Northern Ontario, and they report to the 4th Canadian Division in CFB Borden.<sup>29</sup> The Fourth Canadian Ranger Patrol Group covers British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, and their headquarters is in Victoria, British Columbia.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the Fifth Canadian Ranger Patrol Group encompasses Newfoundland and Labrador, and is headquartered in Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador.<sup>31</sup>

Note that for most of the patrol groups their headquarters are in Southern Canada, which, as will be discussed later in this article, are often staffed with non-Indigenous personnel. This geographical division not only potentially creates communication and supply delays, but it also means that many of the Rangers have never directly met their chain of commands. This is an anomaly in the CF, as most units, platoons, hangars, or ships are not only familiar with their chain of commands (including their COs) they also often work alongside them. Therefore, the move to make the Rangers a full-time force would have to include relocating the

---

<sup>27</sup> Office of the Ombudsman, "Canadian Rangers."

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Office of the Ombudsman, "Canadian Rangers."

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*; Perhaps understandably there are no patrol groups in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

headquarters. For Canada, a full-time presence in the Arctic would ensure sovereignty under the Crown, but for the Indigenous people, and especially the Inuit, that move could interfere with their own autonomy and sovereignty.

### OPERATION NANOOK

OPERATION (Op) NANOOK is a joint-task force operation that occurs each year across Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Labrador and features up to four deployments throughout the year. This northern operation features multiple exercises that test the Arctic defence of Canada, familiarize personnel with Arctic climate, practice search and rescue operations, and make a show of Canadian sovereignty.<sup>32</sup> However, one of the most important aspects of Op NANOOK is that it is designed to improve coordination with Indigenous, federal, and territorial governments, northern partners, and the Rangers.<sup>33</sup>

Conceptualized in 2007 when Arctic security and sovereignty was at the forefront of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's political agenda, Op NANOOK began with only one annual operation and, in 2018, expanded into four distinct activities held in different northern communities throughout the year.<sup>34</sup> The operation is focused on ensuring Canada's presence in the Arctic, especially following Russia's show of force in 2007 when they placed a Russian flag on the seabed under the

---

<sup>32</sup> "Operation NANOOK," Government of Canada, October 1, 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-nanook.html>.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Klaus Dodds, "We Are a Northern Country: Stephen Harper and the Canadian Arctic," *Polar Record* 47, no. 243 (2011): 371–82; "Operation NANOOK."

ice.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Op NANOOK is framed by the federal government as a contribution to the Canada-United States defence relationship.<sup>36</sup>

Though, while the importance of Indigenous communities in the Arctic were included in speeches and operation descriptions, the Rangers were only specifically mentioned by Harper to assert military presence in the Arctic.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the people were framed by the CF and Harper simply, and possessively, as the people living in “Canada’s North”.<sup>38</sup> Harper’s desire to expand the size and capabilities of the Rangers was announced without consultation with the Inuit and communities that the Rangers came from.<sup>39</sup> Really, in the conceptualization of Op NANOOK there was little attention given to the needs of the Inuit and First Nations communities in the Arctic altogether.<sup>40</sup> Though such interventions and program conceptualizations are at a disconnect with the actual realities of life and community standards of those living in the Arctic, determining what is to occur in the Arctic by Southern Canadian institutions and government entities is a pattern that happens across many facets of Canadian Arctic governance.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, expecting the Rangers to be a militarized and combat trained force in the Arctic, as Harper seemed to envision, is very far removed from their actual purpose and directive. It is for this reason that some would even have the Rangers disbanded all together, believing that if they are not of use to actual Canadian sovereignty expressed through force, then they are useless.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Dodds, “We Are a Northern Country.”

<sup>36</sup> “Operation NANOOK”

<sup>37</sup> Dodds, “We Are a Northern Country”

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*; “Operation NANOOK.”

<sup>39</sup> Dodds, “We Are a Northern Country: Stephen Harper and the Canadian Arctic.”

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Timothy Di Leo Browne, “Consent and Ethics on Local and Traditional Knowledge in the Internet Era: Some Key Questions” (D. R. Fraser Taylor and Canadian International Polar Year Federal Program Office, Ottawa: Carleton University, April 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Robert Smol, “A Canadian Rangers Reset Would Help Armed Forces Keep Pace with a Changing North,” *CBC*, October 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/opinion-canadian-rangers-arctic-sovereignty-1.5763215>.

### What does sovereignty even mean?

Simply put, ideas of Canadian sovereignty stem from the Crown's assertion of sovereignty on these lands, which presumed that these lands were empty and unowned (in the European liberal sense).<sup>43</sup> This legal assertion was directly influenced by the Doctrine of Discovery and the principle of *terra nullius* and is responsible for delegitimizing Indigenous sovereign titles and rights.<sup>44</sup> Even today these ideas persist despite the government officially recognizing "the reality that Indigenous peoples' ancestors owned and governed the lands which now constitute Canada prior to the Crown's assertion of sovereignty".<sup>45</sup>

What is extremely problematic about this idea of sovereignty is that it is largely a fallacy built on a "fantasy of entitlement".<sup>46</sup> For instance, consider that Indigenous peoples must prove title to lands in Canadian courts, while the Crown does not.<sup>47</sup> The Crown's sovereign rights and title are assumed and sometimes blindly accepted. This is a simplistic approach to the ideas embedded within Canadian sovereignty, but it is powerful when considering Canada's claims to the Arctic and the protection of its supposed sovereign interests.

Given that most Canadians, let alone the Canadian government, don't venture to the Arctic, and probably never will, the ideas of Crown sovereignty as

---

<sup>43</sup> John Borrows, "The Durability of Terra Nullius: Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia," *University of British Columbia Law Review* 48, no. 3 (2015).

<sup>44</sup> Borrows, "The Durability of Terra Nullius."

<sup>45</sup> Government of Canada, "Principles Respecting the Government of Canada's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples," Government of Canada, 2018, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/principles-principes.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Eva Mackey, *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land and Settler Decolonization* (Fernwood Publishing, 2016).

<sup>47</sup> Gordon Christie, "Who Makes Decisions over Aboriginal Title Lands," *UBC Law Review* 48, no. 3 (2015): 743–92.

conceptualized above are oppressive to Inuit people and are directly in opposition to Inuit ideas of sovereignty.<sup>48</sup>

Broadly, Inuit concepts of sovereignty contain distinct perspectives about the land, interpersonal relationships, and responsibilities, and are more than the mere role of the state and assumptions of sovereignty that come to mind when thinking about Canada and the Arctic.<sup>49</sup> For instance, within international relations, according to Jessica Shadian, Indigenous sovereignty can be reconceptualized as ‘a process of power [that] is abstracted from traditional, static and ahistorical physical features and is relocated in the constitutive process of collective political identity construction and institution building.’<sup>50</sup> An example of this reconceptualization can be seen in the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), which emerged and operates within Inuit concepts of sovereignty as it also steps away from the confines and myths of state interests in the Arctic. Operating as an NGO and as a representation of local governments and political representatives in the Arctic, the ICC represents, for the interest of this article, an ongoing Inuit political narrative.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Inuit political and cultural interests are declared and ensured within the provisions of *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic*. If sovereignty is governance and politics in action, then the ICC provides an avenue for the Inuit to do so on an international scale. Or as Shadian puts it, ‘Sovereignty is based on ascertaining cultural integrity rather than merely territorial integrity.’<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> As noted throughout history and by many researchers, these Crown sovereign fallacies have been oppressive and detrimental to all Indigenous peoples, but that lengthy and important topic is just beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>49</sup> Jessica Shadian, “From States to Politics: Reconceptualizing Sovereignty through Inuit Governance,” *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (2010): 485–510, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066109346887>.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 500.

Today, Inuit concepts of sovereignty have evolved to include the obligations that Canada has to the Inuit, including healthcare, education, and equality.<sup>53</sup> As Pujjuut Kusugak stated, 'Inuit did not pick Canada. Canada picked the Arctic and Inuit happened to live there and therefore gave weight to Sovereignty.'<sup>54</sup> Note that Kusugak is alluding to the idea that because of the Inuit presence in the Arctic, Canada's claim to the area is legitimized. In many ways, this turns the 'fantasy of entitlement' on its head, because it reminds us that Canada is only permitted in the Arctic because the Inuit allow it.

### Inuit perspectives on Arctic sovereignty and the Rangers

Yet, sovereignty, in all its conceptualizations, is important to many Inuit people. Now while perspectives on sovereignty and patriotism naturally differ from person to person, for some Inuit the concepts associated with Arctic sovereignty, such as those that aid in survival, predate colonial contact.<sup>55</sup> But, as Kevin Kablutsiak notes, while the Inuit have had to adapt to foreign languages, morals, and ideas due to colonization, governments rarely understand the perspectives and languages of the Inuit.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, similar situations are reported by Indigenous peoples throughout the Arctic.

An understanding of this complexity between Inuit existence and Arctic sovereignty is at the heart of the ethics guiding Rangers personnel. While there may be overlapping goals of ensuring Canadian state interests and territories in the

---

<sup>53</sup> Pujjuut Kusugak, "Sarimasuktitigut: Make Us Proud," in *Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives on Security, Patriotism and Sovereignty*, 2012, 16–18, <https://issuu.com/openbriefing/docs/nilliajut>.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Kevin Kablutsiak, "Almost Lost in Translation," in *Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives on Security, Patriotism and Sovereignty*, 2013, 4–5, <https://issuu.com/openbriefing/docs/nilliajut>.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

Arctic, realizing that notions and understandings of sovereignty can go beyond simple devotion to the survival of the settler-colonial state of Canada to include one's community is a powerful pushback against colonization and settler-colonial influences.

In many ways, the all-or-nothing sovereignty promoted by the Western nationalistic construct fails to recognize the power behind overlapping goals and the potentials in equal partnership. This is evidenced by the lack of equitable Indigenous access to healthcare, education, and food security in the Arctic, and inefficient moves by the Canadian government to adequately address such issues. As stated by the ICC in section 3.3 of *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic*, 'The inextricable linkages between issues of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic and Inuit self-determination and other rights require states to accept the presence and role of Inuit as partners in the conduct of international relations in the Arctic'.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the idea of partnership underscores everything from relations to sovereignty, and the expertise and knowledge of the Inuit on the Arctic should play a central role in any considerations regarding the Arctic by the Canadian government and Southern Canadian institutions.<sup>58</sup>

This is where the Rangers and their unique standard operating procedures come to play a crucial role in Inuit and Canadian relations. While even their bold orange uniforms account for competing, yet complementary, ideas of sovereignty as they are not the standard CF issue,<sup>59</sup> the Rangers function in a structure that is unique among the CF and has yet to be duplicated by any other group within the CF.

---

<sup>57</sup> Inuit Circumpolar Council, "A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic" (2009), Section 3.3.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Jason Dittmer et al., "Have You Heard the One about the Disappearing Ice? Recasting Arctic Geopolitics," *Political Geography* 30 (2011): 202–14, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.04.002>.



This 'structural adaptation' functions on a balanced and mutually beneficial relationship in lieu of the typical hierarchal military format that functions through a strict chain of command.<sup>60</sup>

By creating jobs and economic growth in a place where jobs are often difficult to get, the Rangers present an opportunity for Inuit people to not only secure employment, but also attain a standardized education while relying on their own traditional and cultural knowledge.<sup>61</sup> There is a unique focus on the welfare of individual Rangers, a deviation from the standard team-focused welfare model of the CF. There is also an expectation for non-Indigenous personnel working with the Rangers to learn Inuit culture and language.<sup>62</sup> This is an important evolution within CF culture, as no other group is given the similar considerations. Indeed, even when a CF member is posted to a primarily French unit, such as HMCS Ville De Quebec, there is an expectation of minimal French proficiency, but there are minimal consequences if a member fails to go beyond a working knowledge of the language, let alone learning French culture in depth.<sup>63</sup> The emphasis on non-Indigenous personnel learning and following Inuit language, culture, and ways of knowing is an important reversal that places much of the agency on Indigenous personnel to determine appropriate actions and operating procedures during Ranger tasks.<sup>64</sup> In

---

<sup>60</sup> Magali Vullierme, "Towards Human Security in the Arctic: Lessons Learned From the Canadian Rangers," in *Redefining Arctic Security: Arctic Yearbook 2019*, ed. L. Heininen, H. Exner-Pirot, and J. Barnes (Akureyri, Iceland: Arctic Portal, 2019), 129–41, <https://arcticyearbook.com/>.

<sup>61</sup> Lackenbauer and Kikkert, "Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers."

<sup>62</sup> Magali Vullierme, "The Social Contribution of the Canadian Rangers: A Tool of Assimilation or Means of Agency?," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2018): 193–211.

<sup>63</sup> This out-dated attitude is changing in CF culture as this article is being written, as more work is being done on cultural awareness, diversity, and inclusion. Today, many members take it upon themselves to learn French and Indigenous languages and cultures, and such members are given career rewards for doing so.

<sup>64</sup> Lackenbauer and Kikkert, "Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers"; Vullierme, "The Social Contribution of the Canadian Rangers."

many ways, this is an effective partnership where colonial-military structures give way to Inuit expertise and knowledge.

Yet, much of the leadership in the Rangers is still non-Indigenous.<sup>65</sup> This is most visible in the lack of media and research quotes from Inuit Rangers. There is one important exception that was included in an opinion piece for *Nunavut News* that was a rebuttal to calls for the dissolution of the branch published by CBC. In this quote, an Inuit Ranger expressed that, 'We are the eyes and ears of the military, but we are also the eyes and ears of our community. We protect our communities.'<sup>66</sup> Given that this is one of the few quotes from an actual Inuit Ranger, it is important because it highlights much of what has been expressed by researchers and Ranger leadership and includes one of the Rangers' core principles: community first. Moreover, it centralizes the Inuit ideas of sovereignty.

Concerning the lack of quotes by Inuit Rangers, this most likely has to do with CF's regulations regarding who talks to journalists and researchers and less to do with purposefully silencing Inuit Ranger voices. It is a well-known regulation in the CF that only public relations officers or designated spokespeople can talk to the media.<sup>67</sup> In fact, it is one of the core lessons that is repeated daily during a standard recruit's basic training, with the stipulation that if a member is caught off guard by a journalist they need to only reply 'no comment' or only comment on things a member knows directly, like their current task or overall job (with security considerations). At

---

<sup>65</sup> Concerning the non-Indigenous leadership personnel in the Rangers, such personnel typically hold key positions in headquarters and manage the assignment of tasks and operational control, such as the COs and SMs. Also, many of these personnel are retired reg force often from combat trades who switched to reserves on completion of their 20 or 30 years of service.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Kikkert, "'Rangers Reset' Ignores, Direspects What Actually They Do,'" *Nunavut News*, November 2020, <https://www.nunavutnews.com/opinion/rangers-reset-ignores-direspects-what-actually-they-do>.

<sup>67</sup> "DAOD 2008-2, Media Relations and Public Announcements," Government of Canada, April 19, 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2008/2008-2-media-relations-public-announcements.html>.

no time can CF personnel give their opinion on military matters. This is perhaps why in several studies where opinions are required, researchers are directed to only deal with the topmost Ranger leadership. However, it is still important to note that in some CRPGs, such as the First Patrol Group, majority of the personnel are Indigenous.<sup>68</sup> But it bears to keep in mind that there can be no partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous personnel without some representations of both groups. If all the Rangers were Indigenous personnel unfamiliar with the operations and procedures standardized in the CF, the potential for miscommunication and misunderstandings increases. In many ways, the non-Indigenous leaders, such as the CO and SM, act as translators between the centrally trained CF and differently trained Indigenous Rangers.

Still, more Inuit representation among Rangers leadership may be crucial to sustainable growth of the branch. A reconceptualization and expansion of the Rangers, in the imagining of some Inuit, means a greater focus on environmental monitoring, hunting and distribution of traditional foods, administrative and management jobs for those unable to fulfil typical Ranger duties, and a focus on land-based skills and cultural/linguistic continuity.<sup>69</sup> These community focused aims are more in line with Inuit conceptualizations of Arctic sovereignty. They are also keeping with the aims of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic*.

### Partnership is key

---

<sup>68</sup> Lackenbauer and Kikkert, "Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers."

<sup>69</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), "An Integrated Arctic Strategy" (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), 2008), <https://www.itk.ca/integrated-arctic-strategy/>.

Indeed, a major part of the CF and Ranger partnership functions on transparency, accountability, and consent across departments and agencies, ensuring that in many ways Indigenous and, especially, Inuit people are involved and aware of the military operations occurring within their territories.

For instance, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) is the legal representation of Nunavut which specifically ensures the land claim rights of the Inuit peoples in the territory and functions as a land claim organization. As per the *Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada* (2013), requires that the CF operates in collaboration with NTI through tasks given to the Rangers and information shared on those tasks.<sup>70</sup> As demonstrated through a letter to NTI, the CF aims to be transparent in their operations in the Arctic instead of simply doing as they please (which is sometimes assumed to happen with a settler-colonial government entity).<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the other recipients of this letter include the Kivalliq Inuit Association, Kangigliniq Hunters and Trappers Organization, Issatik Hunters and Trappers Organization, and Aqigiq Hunters and Trappers Organization.<sup>72</sup>

This advance notification of military maneuvers in Inuit territory which outlines the scope, personnel, and purpose of such maneuvers, and is written in English, French, and Inuktitut, is in keeping with Section 21.5.13 of the *Agreement* (2013). This section deals with government and military access to Inuit lands upon consent and provides provisions concerning interference with Inuit hunting and trapping and

---

<sup>70</sup> Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), "Annual Report on the Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement," 1995, [https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/ntar95\\_1100100031013\\_eng.pdf](https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/ntar95_1100100031013_eng.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> G. D. Loos, "Canadian Forces: Exercise Notification Letter," December 12, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

specifies environmental considerations.<sup>73</sup> In many ways, this declaration in the *Agreement* (2013) and advance notification is an act of acknowledging Inuit sovereignty with considerations given to the continued partnership between Canada and Inuit people. The *Agreement* (2013) is also a living documentation of the ethics and guiding doctrine informed by cultural tradition that is exemplified by the Rangers.

Now while NTI is concerned with the legal representation for the Inuit of Nunavut, the not-for-profit organization Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), formerly known as the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), is primarily focused on advocating for Inuit peoples and regions, or Inuit Nunangat, in the Arctic. However, they are not bound by the territorial boundaries as identified by the Canadian Government. This means that they represent all four Inuit regions: Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut,<sup>74</sup> which encompasses parts of the Northwest Territories, all of Nunavut, the northern parts of Quebec, and the northern tip of Labrador. These areas are covered by CRPG 1, 2, 5 respectively, meaning that ITK involvement in the wellbeing and operation of the Rangers is of great importance.

---

<sup>73</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), "Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada as Amended" (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), May 2013), [http://kivalliqinuit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/land\\_claims\\_agreement\\_nunavut.pdf](http://kivalliqinuit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/land_claims_agreement_nunavut.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), "About Canadian Inuit."

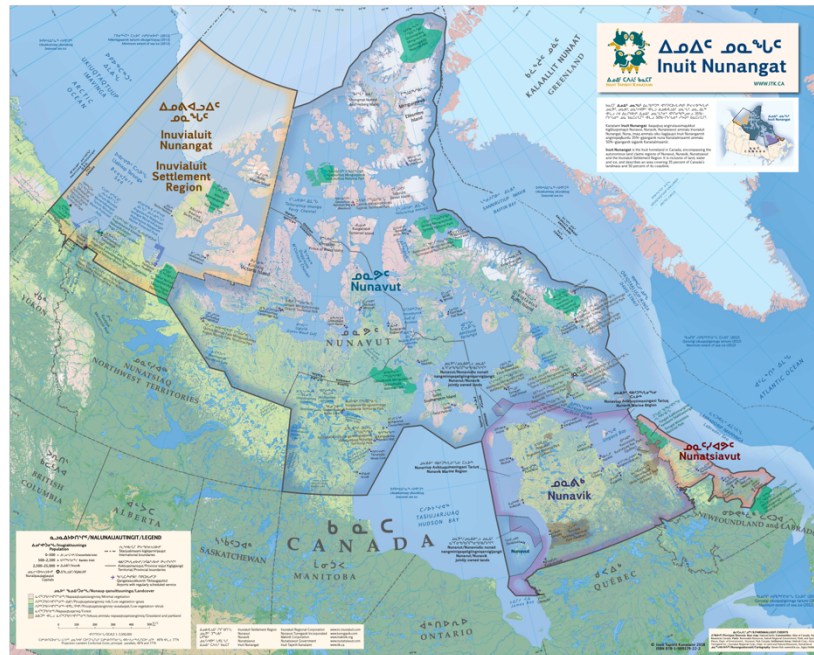


Image 1: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK): The Four Inuit Regions

However, first, it's worth noting without the early work of ITK, or ITC as it was formerly called, the NTI and the territory of Nunavut established in 1999 would not have been possible. This securing of an Inuit territory was only possible because it was preceded by years of hard work in the region. For instance, in 1973 Canadian courts were faced with several Indigenous land claims in the Arctic and near-Arctic regions which led to many "modern treaties" in the region: the *Calder* case which recognized the land title of the Nisga'a in Northwestern British Columbia, a land claim put forth by the Yukon Indian Brotherhood, recognition of Aboriginal title of the Dene of the Mackenzie River Valley in the Northwest Territories, and the title of the the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and the Inuit of Nunavik.<sup>75</sup> It was also the same year that the ITC presented their *Inuit Use and Occupancy Study* to the Canadian

<sup>75</sup> Michael Asch, "From Calder to Van Der Peet: Aboriginal Rights and Canadian Law, 1973-96," in *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada, & New Zealand*, ed. Paul Havemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 428-45.

government.<sup>76</sup> While many of these cases were unsuccessful, in 1975 the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and the Inuit of Nunavik signed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) to secure and protect their quality of life in the region in the face of the James Bay Hydroelectric project.<sup>77</sup> The JBNQA was the first comprehensive land claim of its kind<sup>78</sup> and the *Inuit Use and Occupancy Study* signaled a change for Indigenous peoples in the Arctic to secure their land rights and attempts to force Canada to engage in a meaningful partnership with them.

The work concerning land claims in the Arctic largely focused on securing hunting and fishing rights that were promised in the signing of the numbered treaties. For instance, Treaty 11, which covers parts of Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, was the last of the numbered treaties signed in 1921 between the Crown and twenty-one Indigenous communities including the Dene, Gwich'in, Tlicho (Dogrib), Sahtu First Nations and the Inuvik Nation Band, which is a community consisting of Inuit, First Nations, and non-Indigenous peoples.<sup>79</sup> This treaty, like many of the other numbered treaties signed in Canada during that time, promised hunting and fishing rights. This treaty also gave the government the ability to develop and extract resources from surrendered Indigenous lands, and in exchange they promised monetary annuities to Indigenous peoples.<sup>80</sup> However,

---

<sup>76</sup> Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), "A Plain Language Guide to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement," 2004, <https://www.tunngavik.com/documents/publications/2004-00-00-A-Plain-Language-Guide-to-the-Nunavut-Land-Claims-Agreement-English.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), "About Canadian Inuit.,"; Martin Papillon, "Aboriginal Quality of Life under a Modern Treaty: Lessons from the Experience of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee and the Inuit of Nunavik," *Institute for Research on Public Policy* 14, no. 9 (2008): 1–28.

<sup>78</sup> Papillon, "Aboriginal Quality of Life under a Modern Treaty: Lessons from the Experience of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee and the Inuit of Nunavik."

<sup>79</sup> Government of Canada, "Treaty Texts - Treaty No. 11," Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, n.d., <https://www.cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028916/1581294101357>.; Statistics Canada, "Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census Inuvik, Town [Census Subdivision], Northwest Territories," 2016, [https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=6101017&Data=Count&SearchText=Inuvik&SearchType=Begins&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=6101017&SEX\\_ID=1&AGE\\_ID=1&RES\\_GEO\\_ID=1](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=6101017&Data=Count&SearchText=Inuvik&SearchType=Begins&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=6101017&SEX_ID=1&AGE_ID=1&RES_GEO_ID=1).

<sup>80</sup> Government of Canada, "Treaty Texts - Treaty No. 11."

much of the treaty promises went unfulfilled by Canada, resulting in the land claims discussed above.

The work in the 1970s laid much of the groundwork for the establishment of the four Inuit Nunangat. Nunavik was the result of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), which was finalized in 1975.<sup>81</sup> In 1984, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region was the result of a comprehensive land claims agreement, which awarded the surface and sub-surface rights to most of the region.<sup>82</sup> Nunavut was established as a new Canadian territory in 1999 after the success of the The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA).<sup>83</sup> Finally, the Nunatsiavut government was established in 2005, four years after Labrador was recognized as a distinct area due to a name change by then Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson.<sup>84</sup>

While an in-depth discussion on each of these land claims and treaties, and many others, is warranted, it is also a deviation from the central focus of this article. Still, it is important to understand and recognize the ever evolving political and social landscape in the region as Indigenous peoples work to secure their inherent rights and continue to act in self-governance while challenging the Canadian government. Perhaps what is most important to understand is that these land claims represent the Inuit perspectives of partnership and collaboration, while simultaneously challenging the Canadian government on issues that affect them, reminding them of their obligations to Inuit peoples.<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, this is one of the important functions of ITK. As they are concerned with the wellbeing and rights of all Inuit peoples in the Arctic, ITK takes steps to

---

<sup>81</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), "About Canadian Inuit."

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> John Borrows and Michael Coyle, eds., *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties* (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2017).



continually remind Canada of their obligations to the Inuit. In their 2008 *Integrated Arctic Strategy* identified their aims for Arctic sovereignty which placed Inuit concepts of sovereignty as the main ideological centre.<sup>86</sup> Reflecting the community first perspective, ITK states that to reinforce 'Canadian sovereignty and security in the Arctic'<sup>87</sup> means that the Crown should first be focused on building healthy communities in the Arctic. This includes not only equitable access to healthcare, but the Crown should also focus on bolstering economic wellness, social wellness, and the self-sufficiency of the Inuit in the Arctic.<sup>88</sup>

ITK places the Rangers at the center of these initiatives. According to ITK, not only could new military infrastructure benefit civilian communities in the Inuit regions, a re-conceptualization and expansion of the Arctic Rangers program so that, in addition to serving as a resident militia, it can serve the following functions effectively:

- (a) environmental monitoring;
- (b) supply of country food to communities;
- (c) work for those unqualified or unable to work in wage employment, particularly in small communities; and,
- (d) sustaining of land based skills and cultural/linguistic continuity.<sup>89</sup>

Such a restructuring and repurposing of the Rangers would align well with the core ethical focus of community first, but ITK also seems to be misinterpreting the Rangers to some extent.

Framing the Rangers as a 'resident militia' is a dubious word choice. In some ways, 'militia' suggests the original function of the West Coast home guard during

---

<sup>86</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), "An Integrated Arctic Strategy."

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

WWII and such an evocation echoes Harper's assertion that the Rangers are Canada's military presence in the Arctic and revitalizes arguments that as a militarized force they are ineffective.<sup>90</sup> However, as had been discussed in this article, the Rangers only assist the CF, acting as a specialized subcomponent recruited for their intimate knowledge of the Arctic. Unlike many other members of the CF, they do not enjoy many of the same health and economic benefits afforded to their Southern Canadian counterparts, even something as simple as getting a doctor's reference to access services from Veteran Affairs.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, many of the Inuit Rangers are still susceptible to issues of inequitable access to health care, precarious employment, inefficient housing, suicides, and domestic violence. Therefore, while the ITK would envision them as being able to serve their communities more, many of the Inuit Rangers still need to have Canada focused on fulfilling their basic human needs alongside the rest of the Inuit in the Arctic.

That said, ITK is also deeply aware of the specific obstacles faced by the Rangers. In their 2016 *Submission to the Standing Committee on Veteran's Affairs*, ITK acknowledged that Rangers face the same detriments to social, health, and economic well-being.<sup>92</sup> They specifically mention that between 2011 and 2015, 49 Canadian Rangers died, which is twice more than the CF non-combat fatalities in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2012.<sup>93</sup> This is a staggering number that rarely gets acknowledgement from Southern Canadians and the Canadian government.

---

<sup>90</sup> Dodds, "We Are a Northern Country; Smol, "A Canadian Rangers Reset Would Help Armed Forces Keep Pace with a Changing North."

<sup>91</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), "Submission to the Standing Committee on Veteran's Affairs," 2016, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/ACVA/Brief/BR10034638/br-external/SubmissionFromInuitTapiriitKanatami-e.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> ITK, "Submission to the Standing Committee on Veteran's Affairs," 2016, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/ACVA/Brief/BR10034638/br-external/SubmissionFromInuitTapiriitKanatami-e.pdf>.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

Therefore, ITK presented 5 recommendations to the Veteran Affairs Standing Committee:

1. Consideration of recommendations from the Canadian Forces Ombudsman on improvements to policies, programs and, if necessary, legislation to improve the accessibility of services offered through Veteran's Affairs to Inuit;
2. Call for closer government collaboration with Inuit, in terms of interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaboration, to create more social infrastructure within Inuit Nunangat;
3. Recommend improved coordination between Canadian Forces, Veteran's Affairs, and other federal departments on how to contribute to, and take advantage of, existing federal, provincial or territorial strategies and action plans, particularly around provision of service for improved mental wellness;
4. Recommend the government of Canada, in collaboration with current and retired Canadian Rangers, commemorate and publicly acknowledge the contribution of Canadian Rangers to maintaining Canadian sovereignty, [and];
5. Recommend that Veteran's Affairs Canada implement a system for improved tracking of services provided and health outcomes for Inuit veterans and former members.<sup>94</sup>

These 5 recommendations are the least that could be implemented by the Canadian government and the CF who rely on the Rangers so heavily to keep Inuit communities safe and functioning in addition to the state's interests in sovereignty.

### Conclusion

The Canadian Rangers are not a militarized force or an armed militia. Instead, they are a specialized sub-component of the Reserves that operate on a community-based sovereignty perspective. While the Ranger command teams, such as the CO

---

<sup>94</sup> ITK, "Submission to the Standing Committee on Veteran's Affairs," 2016, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/ACVA/Brief/BR10034638/br-external/SubmissionFromInuitTapiriitKanatami-e.pdf>, 4.

and SM, are often combat trained (retired regular force members who then switch to the reserves), the Rangers themselves are not. Instead, they provide crucial support for their communities, functioning only as a specialized arm of the CF when assisting the Army, Navy, and Air Force during exercises, search and rescue operations, and patrols. In many ways, the Canadian Rangers as they operate today are a success story of Indigenous/Canadian military collaboration. Their non-hierarchical structure, an emphasis on cultural and language competency, understanding of community-first sovereignty, and focus on Indigenous partnerships are an example for other Indigenous/Canadian military collaborations throughout other areas of Canada.

Though, in keeping with the spirit of equal partnership that ensures equity for both groups, there is much work to be done to secure the health and wellness of the branch. To begin with the Rangers should evolve to secure full-time and guaranteed income and healthcare, instead of the on-task model that currently exists for Class “A” and “C” reservists. If the CF is serious about effectively working with the Rangers in the future, and in a way that decentralizes Canadian political needs before the needs of the Rangers, then all measures should be taken to provide them with full income and equitable access to the healthcare that their Southern military counterparts are privileged to receive.

### Appendix 1: Glossary

CF – Canadian Forces

Class “A” – Part-time reserve members trained to the same level as their Reg force counterparts.

Class “C” – Full-time reserves members but only for approved duties and operations

CO – Commanding Officer

CRPG – Canadian Ranger Patrol Group

Element – the branch of military a member belongs to; Army, Navy, Air Force, or Rangers

Reg force – Full-time military members

Reserves – Part or full-time military members

SAR – Search and Rescue

SM – Sergeant Major

## Bibliography

Asch, Michael. "From Calder to Van Der Peet: Aboriginal Rights and Canadian Law, 1973-96." In *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada, & New Zealand*, edited by Paul Havemann, 428–45. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Borrows, John. "Gift One: Love." In *Law's Indigenous Ethics*, 24–49. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2019.

Borrows, John. "The Durability of Terra Nullius: Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia." *University of British Columbia Law Review* 48, no. 3 (2015).

Borrows, John, and Michael Coyle, eds. *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2017.

Canadian Army. "Canadian Rangers." <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/canadian-rangers/index.page>, March 11, 2021.

Christie, Gordon. "Who Makes Decisions over Aboriginal Title Lands." *UBC Law Review* 48, no. 3 (2015): 743–92.

Government of Canada. "DAOD 2008-2, Media Relations and Public Announcements," April 19, 2017. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2008/2008-2-media-relations-public-announcements.html>.

Di Leo Browne, Timothy. "Consent and Ethics on Local and Traditional Knowledge in the Internet Era: Some Key Questions." D. R. Fraser Taylor and Canadian International Polar Year Federal Program Office, Ottawa: Carleton University, April 2012.

Dittmer, Jason, Sami Moisio, Alan Ingram, and Klaus Dodds. "Have You Heard the One about the Disappearing Ice? Recasting Arctic Geopolitics." *Political*

*Geography* 30 (2011): 202–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.04.002>.

Dodds, Klaus. “We Are a Northern Country: Stephen Harper and the Canadian Arctic.” *Polar Record* 47, no. 243 (2011): 371–82.

Government of Canada. “Principles Respecting the Government of Canada’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples.” Government of Canada, 2018.

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/principles-principes.html>.

Government of Canada. “Treaty Texts - Treaty No. 11.” Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, n.d.

<https://www.cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028916/1581294101357>.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI). “Agreement Between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada as Amended.” Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), May 2013. [http://kivalliqinuit.ca/wp-](http://kivalliqinuit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/land_claims_agreement_nunavut.pdf)

[content/uploads/2019/04/land\\_claims\\_agreement\\_nunavut.pdf](http://kivalliqinuit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/land_claims_agreement_nunavut.pdf).

Inuit Circumpolar Council. A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic (2009).

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). “About Canadian Inuit,” 2021. <https://www.itk.ca/about-canadian-inuit/>.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). “An Integrated Arctic Strategy.” 2008. <https://www.itk.ca/integrated-arctic-strategy/>.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK). “Submission to the Standing Committee on Veteran’s Affairs,” 2016. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/ACVA/Brief/BR10034638/br-external/SubmissionFromInuitTapiriitKanatami-e.pdf>.

Kablutsiak, Kevin. “Almost Lost in Translation.” In *Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives*

on *Security, Patriotism and Sovereignty*, 4–5, 2013.

<https://issuu.com/openbriefing/docs/nilliajut>.

Kikkert, Peter. ““Rangers Reset” Ignores, Direspects What Actually They Do.” *Nunavut News*, November 2020.

<https://www.nunavutnews.com/opinion/rangers-reset-ignores-direspects-what-actually-they-do>.

Kusugak, Pujjuut. “Sarimasuktitigut: Make Us Proud.” In *Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives on Security, Patriotism and Sovereignty*, 16–18, 2012.

<https://issuu.com/openbriefing/docs/nilliajut>.

Lackenbauer, P. Whitney. “‘A Hell of a Warrior’: Remembering Sergeant Thomas

George Prince.” *Journal of Historical Biography* 1 (n.d.): 27–78.

Lackenbauer, P. Whitney. “Diversity Statistics, Self-Identification Data, and the Canadian Rangers: Underestimating Indigenous Peoples’ Participation Rates in the Canadian Army.” Policy Brief: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, April 19, 2021.

Lackenbauer, P. Whitney, and Peter Kikkert. “Measuring the Success of the Canadian Rangers.” North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, Trent University, 2020.

Loos, G. D. “Canadian Forces: Exercise Notification Letter,” December 12, 2013.

Mackey, Eva. *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land and Settler Decolonization*. Fernwood Publishing, 2016.

n.a. “Prince of the Brigade.” Government. Veterans Affairs Canada, 2019.  
<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/aboriginal->



veterans/native-soldiers/prince.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI). "A Plain Language Guide to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement," 2004. <https://www.tunngavik.com/documents/publications/2004-00-00-A-Plain-Language-Guide-to-the-Nunavut-Land-Claims-Agreement-English.pdf>.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI). "Annual Report on the Implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement," 1995. [https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/ntar95\\_1100100031013\\_eng.pdf](https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/ntar95_1100100031013_eng.pdf).

Office of the Ombudsman. "Canadian Rangers." Government of Canada, November 25, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/career/canadian-rangers.html>.

Office of the Ombudsman. "Tasks and Operations." Government of Canada, November 25, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/career/canadian-rangers/tasks-operations.html>.

Government of Canada. "Operation NANOOK," October 1, 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-nanook.html>.

Papillon, Martin. "Aboriginal Quality of Life under a Modern Treaty: Lessons from the Experience of the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee and the Inuit of Nunavik." *Institute for Research on Public Policy* 14, no. 9 (2008): 1–28.

Shadian, Jessica. "From States to Polities: Reconceptualizing Sovereignty through Inuit Governance." *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (2010): 485–510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066109346887>.

Smol, Robert. "A Canadian Rangers Reset Would Help Armed Forces Keep

Pace with a Changing North.” *CBC*, October 2020.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/opinion-canadian-rangers-arctic-sovereignty-1.5763215>.

Statistics Canada. “Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census Inuvik, Town [Census Subdivision], Northwest Territories,” 2016.

[https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=6101017&Data=Count&SearchText=Inuvik&SearchType=Begin&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=6101017&SEX\\_ID=1&AGE\\_ID=1&RESGEO\\_ID=1](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/abpopprof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=6101017&Data=Count&SearchText=Inuvik&SearchType=Begin&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=6101017&SEX_ID=1&AGE_ID=1&RESGEO_ID=1).

Vullierme, Magali. “The Social Contribution of the Canadian Rangers: A Tool of Assimilation or Means of Agency?” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2018): 193–211.

Vullierme, Magali. “Towards Human Security in the Arctic: Lessons Learned From the Canadian Rangers.” In *Redefining Arctic Security: Arctic Yearbook 2019*, edited by L. Heininen, H. Exner-Pirot, and J. Barnes, 129–41. Akureyri, Iceland: Arctic Portal, 2019. <https://arcticyearbook.com/>.

Wood, James. “Canadian Rangers: Canadian Paramilitary Organization.” In *Britannica*, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Canadian-Rangers>.