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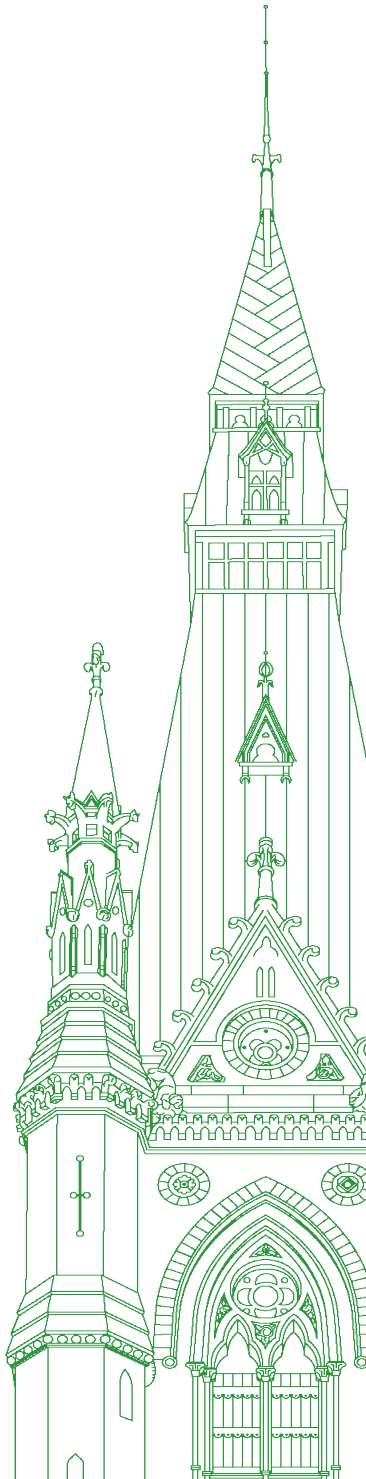

Chair: Charles Sousa

Standing Committee on National Defence

Monday, April 20, 2026

● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 31 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, September 16, 2025, the committee is meeting to study the situation of francophones and indigenous people in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person and remotely using the Zoom application.

Before we continue, I ask participants to consult the guidelines on the table. These measures are to help prevent audio and feedback incidences and to protect the health and safety of our interpreters.

I'd like to remind witnesses and members to please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand, and for those on Zoom please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

For interpretation, use your earpiece and select the appropriate channel of floor, English or French, which are also available on Zoom.

I'd now like to welcome our witnesses.

We have Grazia Scoppio, professor emerita of defence studies, Royal Military College of Canada, by video conference. We have Danielle Teillet with us here live, a historian on indigenous military history. We have Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, professor and Canada research chair in the study of the Canadian north, also by video conference. We have Peter Kikkert, associate professor, public policy and governance, Brian Mulroney Institute of Government, also by video conference.

I'll pass it over first to Grazia, and then to Danielle and Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer. We'll end with Peter Kikkert. You all have up to five minutes.

Ms. Grazia Scoppio, it's over to you, please.

Grazia Scoppio (Professor Emerita of Defence Studies, Royal Military College of Cananda, As an Individual): Good morning.

I am Dr. Grazia Scoppio. I'm joining this meeting from Kingston, Ontario, situated on the traditional homeland of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe people. I'm thankful to these nations for their care and stewardship of this shared land.

For over 20 years, I've been conducting research on military personnel, including recruitment of a diverse force, gender issues in the armed forces, immigrant participation in the military and indigenous people in the military. In recent years, the Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF, has made strides in its efforts to increase the diversity of its personnel, changing policies and improving organizational culture to become more inclusive and equitable. On the other hand, there are still challenges. I will highlight here only a few of the issues concerning indigenous members of the CAF, and I look forward to discussing them further during the meeting.

Representation rates of indigenous members in the CAF are slowly increasing and currently stand at about 3% of CAF members. However, this rate is still below the CAF recruiting goal of 3.5% and lower than the overall indigenous population in Canada of about 5%. Indeed, the CAF is still not meeting its overall recruiting targets. As documented in many reports, as recently as in the 2025 Auditor General of Canada's report, the recruiting system is very slow, and more than 50% of applicants, including indigenous individuals, withdraw from the process.

Indigenous programs, namely the CAF indigenous entry program, the indigenous leadership opportunity year, or ILOY, and the indigenous summer programs, such as Bold Eagle and Raven, are effective means of attracting indigenous youth, although all position are not filled, and there are challenges in retaining participants once they complete the programs.

There are also issues stemming from the CAF organizational culture. It has not been inclusive towards indigenous members, despite the creation of supports such as CAF indigenous advisers. Also, there is a mandatory indigenous cultural awareness course via distance learning for all CAF members, which ends up being a check in the box without much learning.

Other issues concerning indigenous members of the CAF include early attrition and a lack of support for travel to attend funerals in remote indigenous communities for family members, which may not fall under the CAF guidelines. Additionally, some indigenous members have experienced discrimination and racism during their military service. This is also the experience of other racialized groups in the CAF, as evidenced by the recent formal apology delivered by General Jennie Carignan, the chief of the defence staff, to current and former CAF members who suffered from the impacts of systemic racism, racial discrimination and racial harassment during their military service.

Despite these challenges and barriers, many indigenous members choose to join the CAF to serve Canada with loyalty. This provides them with a pathway to economic and social mobility, and a fulfilling military career.

Increasing the meaningful and respectful participation of indigenous members in the CAF is extremely important for many reasons, including to reflect the diversity of the Canadian indigenous population, to enhance the CAF's presence in the north and to promote reconciliation. To paraphrase the words of General Carignan, the CAF can do better and must do better.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

● (1105)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm passing it over now to Danielle Teillet for up to five minutes.

Danielle Teillet (Historian, Indigenous Military History, Canadian War Museum): *Taanishi*. Hello. My name is Danielle Teillet, and I am a Red River Métis and settler originally from Treaty No. 1 territory. I am now a guest here on the unceded and unsurrendered Algonquin Anishinabe territory. I'm also the inaugural historian of indigenous military history at the Canadian War Museum.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to contribute to this important study. As a historian, I can offer a historical overview of some experiences of indigenous military service, but I'm not well positioned to speak to more contemporary issues.

Understanding the historical context of indigenous military service can provide us with crucial insights into present-day issues. As you can imagine, five minutes can only scratch the surface of this very complex history. To understand the challenges indigenous service people faced in the early 20th-century World War era, it's critical to consider the broader context of how indigenous people were treated in general through systemic discrimination and colonial policies and legislation. The government and society's treatment of indigenous veterans was inextricably linked to the treatment of indigenous people in general.

There were certain barriers that shaped the voluntary enlistment and service of indigenous people during this era. For example, initially during the First World War, first nations people were dissuaded by the government from enlisting. This was partly based on unfavourable and racist depictions in popular literature at the time, which led to a paternalistic logic that the Germans might refuse to extend the supposed “privileges of civilized warfare” to first nation soldiers. In the Second World War, recruitment for the navy and air force initially required enlisters to be “of pure European descent and of the white race”. Restrictive policies like these were not applied universally, and as casualties mounted in both wars, these types of barriers were abandoned in an effort to boost recruitment.

Conscription, once introduced in both world wars, was intended to include all indigenous people, or at least the government did not see any reason that it would not. Petitions from first nations communities across the country argued that the lack of full citizenship rights of first nations people meant that they should not be forced to go to war like enfranchised Canadians.

Eventually, the government exempted all status Indians from being conscripted in the First World War. There was no such blanket exemption during the Second World War, so only first nations individuals from certain treaty areas, where verbal promises were made to not have to fight in future wars, were exempt from being compelled to serve overseas.

For many indigenous individuals who served during this era, wartime service was the first time they had experienced a sense of equality with their white settler peers. However, they would return to Canada, after their service, to the same discrimination they had known before they enlisted.

Indigenous veterans did not generally receive equal treatment after returning to civilian life. Status Indian veterans, specifically, returned home to a life as wards of the state. Restrictions such as the prohibition on the sale of alcohol to status Indians meant that many first nations veterans could not participate in Legion activities, since liquor was served at many functions. Furthermore, the right to vote federally did not come for status Indian men until 1960. They did not have the full rights and benefits of citizenship under Canada's Indian Act, but had voluntarily enlisted to go to war for Canada anyway.

There was a shared feeling among many indigenous veterans that there was a disconnect between the significance of their wartime service and sacrifices and the political, economic and social realities they returned home to. This was in large part because they were excluded in many cases from accessing veteran supports. Pensions and benefits, such as land and financial grants that the government set up to support veterans after both wars, were notionally available to all veterans; however, most indigenous claims were denied.

These injustices had lasting impacts for many indigenous veterans, some of whom went on to organize politically to lobby for indigenous and veterans rights after their service. These experiences are well documented in the literature and in interviews with indigenous veterans.

Hopefully, this very brief historical overview has provided some context as you explore more current issues in this study. The challenges indigenous service people faced in the post-world war era's discriminatory social, legislative and policy structures persisted for a long time, as did the lack of recognition they received.

● (1110)

Marsi, and thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Whitney Lackenbauer, it's over to you for five minutes.

P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Study of the Canadian North, Trent University): Thank you.

I'm glad to be joining you from Oxford County, on traditional Anishinabek and neutral territory that is covered by the Upper Canada treaties.

For the last three decades, I have dedicated much of my academic career to understanding indigenous people's service in the armed forces and their contributions to the defence of our homeland. From the outset, I have been enamoured with the Canadian Rangers—proud Canadians who serve in a unique subcomponent of the reserve force. Their long-standing mission is to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided by other components of the Canadian Armed Forces. With more than 5,000 members in more than 200 communities, they do so admirably.

In my assessment, the Canadian Rangers are a prime example of substantive versus symbolic integration of indigenous and military ways of knowing, being and seeing. We have lots of policies that have affirmative language about the importance of indigenous traditional knowledge and engagement, as well as the importance of consultation and partnership, but they ultimately do not share agenda-setting or decision-making authority in a substantive way. The Canadian Rangers are a success story of a practical indigenous-Crown partnership rooted in reciprocal trust and respect.

I have written lots of books and articles about the history of the Canadian Rangers, the high rates of indigenous participation in the organization and why I see the rangers as a positive example of reconciliation. I always want to highlight that the rangers are not part of an indigenous program. They are reservists. They are not part of a program, and participation is open to all Canadians. In small communities in our Arctic and north, where Inuit, first nations and Métis make up the largest percentage of the populations in their homelands, this is reflected in the composition of the Canadian Rangers.

The army's official statistics, which we just heard referenced, are rooted in a highly problematic methodology and a skewed self-identification dataset that continuously under-represent indigenous participation in the rangers, and they often exclude the rangers from statistics on indigenous people's participation rates in the CAF as a whole.

I wrote a report in 2021 in which I suggested that if we had corrected the figures for the rangers, it would have actually adjusted the estimated number of indigenous people serving in the CAF at that time to more than 5%. This is well above the CAF employment equity target of 3.5% indigenous representation.

The first thing I would suggest is to have these statistics critically re-examined and updated. I say this because I find the persistent under-representation of indigenous service troubling on various levels.

First, it fails to conceptualize the CAF as an employer of choice for indigenous peoples, particularly those living outside of the main population belt. This means a shift in mindset to understand how we can better support them to reinforce success and expand functional opportunities.

If I were being cynical, I might also read this under-representation in the context of Canada's historical failure to credit indigenous people for their service to Canada. In the case of the rangers, the per capita rates of service by indigenous people in remote communities in the territorial north and Inuit Nunangat are far above the national average. We need to celebrate this more directly and not turn immediately to the need to increase numbers.

I have said the rangers, in my mind, have always been more substantive than symbolic as a form of differentiated military service that's aligned with the priorities of northern indigenous communities. This logic was laid out in the 1970s, when the military began to revitalize the ranger organization in the Arctic when it moved to community-based patrols with leadership selected by the rangers themselves. This local self-determination has been a hallmark of the rangers ever since and brings legitimacy at the local level.

Also, by encouraging rangers to serve in their home communities, you're leaving talent in the north. You're not trying to recruit it outside of the north, and therefore you're leaving northern leadership where it is most needed. The value of this still holds today. Also, the simple fact that there is no retirement age is a strong validation of how the military accepts the value of the wisdom and expertise of elders in enabling safe and effective northern operations. We can talk during questions and answers about how the rangers use their own equipment and clothing on operations, and how this fits with indigenous practices.

To wrap up, a misplaced critique that you might hear is that the rangers are not trained for combat and therefore do not represent a credible defence. This misses the mark on several levels.

First and foremost, the rangers are force enablers who draw upon their local and indigenous knowledge to allow other CAF members to apply combat doctrine as required. They are pathfinders and guides, mentors and subject matter experts who know their communities and their homelands intimately. We have soldiers, special forces operators and other CAF personnel who can apply kinetic effects if needed. The rangers will get them onto target efficiently and effectively, and this is a huge competitive advantage.

● (1115)

Let's start talking seriously about the rangers' role as force multipliers. The late Simeonie Nalukturuk from Inukjuaq described the rangers to me as the eyeglasses, the hearing aids and the walking stick of the CAF in the north. In this, he suggested it's actually the regular forces and primary reservists who need the rangers to enable them.

Today, as we seek to bolster our northern defences, let's get the equation right. The rangers are a proven multiplier. If we want a larger product, we need to consider whether the regular force and primary reserves they are amplifying have the skills and experience needed to be multiplied effectively rather than thinking we need to retool the rangers. The old maxim “If it ain't broken, don't break it” applies here.

Rangers ensure that the CAF is stitched into the fabric of Inuit, first nations and Métis communities across the Canadian north. There is a reason the Greenlanders, the Danes, the Alaskans, the Swedes and other Nordic colleagues are interested in the ranger model for their countries.

The rangers are inseparable from indigenous self-determination, authority and resilience at the community level, and this must guide us forward as we consider how to enhance the organization to enable them more.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Lackenbauer.

Mr. Kikkert, it's over to you, sir.

Peter Kikkert (Associate Professor, Public Policy and Governance, Brian Mulroney Institute of Government, St. Francis Xavier University): I would like to begin by acknowledging that I am joining you from Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I have worked closely with the Canadian Rangers for 15 years, particularly in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Ranger patrol groups. Many of the rangers I work with are indigenous, and much of my research has focused on their roles in emergency response and in building resilience.

The Canadian Rangers are one of the most important emergency response assets in remote, northern and indigenous communities. They are present, organized, trusted and capable. As Abel Aqqaq, a ranger from Taloyoak, Nunavut, told me, “We are the eyes and ears of the military, but we are also the eyes and ears of our community. We protect our communities.” Baba Pedersen, another ranger from Kugluktuk, put it even more simply: “We are the people to call when things go sideways—period.”

They are. In recent years, rangers have responded to wildfires, floods, avalanches, severe storms, power outages, critical infrastructure failure, aircraft crashes and the COVID-19 pandemic. They conduct search and rescue, evacuations, wellness checks, resupply, and infrastructure protection. They provide the local and indigenous knowledge, the institutional awareness and the connections that make outside responses possible and effective.

They are exceptionally good at these roles. Just a few weeks ago, five rangers were awarded medals of bravery for rescuing two stranded French nationals in a blizzard near Naujaat, Nunavut, in 2020. During the 2019 evacuation of Pikangikum First Nation, Chief Amanda Sainnawap said the presence of rangers alone brought calm: “I don't know what we would have done without them.”

These are roles that rangers value and want to perform for their communities, and they are exactly the kinds of visible, meaningful activities that draw people to join. However, despite this, they face persistent barriers. It is often unclear when and how they can be activated for emergencies and search and rescue. Training opportunities are inconsistent. The emphasis on these roles waxes and wanes with leadership changes and shifting institutional priorities. As one former ranger from Kuujjuaq, Nunavik, told me, “The roles and expectations change a lot.... It's frustrating. We need consistency. We want to serve our communities, so give us the tools and skills to do this. Make it simple.”

Let me offer three recommendations:

First, make it easier to use the rangers. Although the Canadian Armed Forces is intended to be a force of last resort in domestic emergencies, in many northern and indigenous communities, the rangers are the only timely and effective response, and policy must reflect that reality.

Clarify authorities and reduce jurisdiction friction. Ensure civilian agencies understand ranger capabilities and how to employ them, and streamline activation processes so they can be deployed quickly when needed. The memorandum of understanding on search and rescue between 3CRPG and the Ontario Provincial Police shows what this can look like.

Second, give the rangers the tools they need. Increase and sustain training and exercises that reflect the incidents to which rangers might have to respond and the needs of their communities: ground, ice and light urban search and rescue; flood and fire response; mass rescue operations; evacuations; and wilderness and advanced first aid. Support these efforts with regional equipment and technology solutions, building on initiatives like the new ranger team awareness kits.

Third, we must better understand and support the human dimension of ranger service. For rangers, responding to emergencies often means searching for or assisting family, friends, neighbours and elders. Sometimes it means finding them deceased. A good example of what they face are the many aircraft crashes that rangers have responded to over the years. Few accidents cause greater physical trauma to the victims, and I've heard many rangers talk about the effects of responding to these incidents.

It's also critical to understand that rangers often wear many other responder hats. They are volunteer firefighters, paramedics, search and rescue volunteers, and members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The cumulative impact of the trauma they experience is profound. A more holistic approach to their well-being is required, including improved awareness of and access to support programs such as the member assistance program and Veterans Affairs services; critical incident stress programming that better reflects indigenous realities and requirements; and recognition of their service, including, perhaps, development of a ranger responder medal.

Acting on these recommendations will strengthen more than a capability. It will also bolster ranger recruitment and retention. It will improve the institutional experience of indigenous rangers by supporting them in roles that matter deeply to them and to their communities.

I will close with this. When emergencies happen in Canada's most remote regions, the Canadian Rangers are already there and ready. The question is whether we will give them the tools, training and support they need to keep protecting their communities.

● (1120)

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

I appreciate the opening remarks from all of you to start the session.

Ms. Gallant will begin our first round of questioning.

You have up to six minutes.

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Dr. Scoppio, the indigenous leadership opportunity year program, ILOY, is hosted by RMC. How many participants go on to join the CAF from that?

Grazia Scoppio: I can't tell you the numbers right off the top of my head, but I can tell you two things. One, for all the indigenous programs, including ILOY, not all positions are filled. Two, there is a retention issue. Despite how well these programs may be running and how well they may be providing a really good opportunity to attract indigenous members, there's an issue of retention past the completion of the program. There are these two things.

Also, ILOY participants are not necessarily integrated with the ROTP program. It's more like they get a flavour, if you will, of the academic program. They're not integrated with the ROTP program. I want to make sure everybody in the committee is aware of that.

This is not to diminish the importance of the ILOY program. It's just to make sure we understand that these programs have limitations in both recruitment and retention.

Cheryl Gallant: If the ILOY program were integrated with the ROTP, do you think there would be better retention?

● (1125)

Grazia Scoppio: I mean, it's possible, but that would present other challenges. There might be ways to better integrate that. That would be a question for both RMC and the leadership of the ILOY program to see if there is a better way to better integrate it.

The ROTP is a four-year program. There are specific academic requirements to be met, both for entry and for staying in the program. That part would pose a challenge, because there aren't the same requirements to enter the ILOY program. There might be ways to better integrate the two paths, if you will.

Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Scoppio, how are the youth programs you mentioned communicated to youth on reserves?

Grazia Scoppio: That's one of the challenges we've found. In particular, in communities of the north, there are difficulties in recruiting and in accessing the communities to even present these programs. There is also the importance of the face of the recruiters. We know this. Just as the CAF has been struggling for decades to increase the number of women in the CAF—still sitting at only about 17%—it's the same with other groups. The doors are open for other groups, such as newcomers to Canada. Permanent residents can now apply, finally, but really only a small percentage get in. It's the same with the indigenous programs. These are good programs. The intention is good.

The CAF can also recruit indigenous members for its regular service. It does not have to be only through the programs. Those are just a tool, one tool, at its disposal, but how many recruiters are indigenous? How many are going to make the journey to northern communities and so on and so forth?

Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Lackenbauer, why are there no plans from the CAF to set up on reserves a youth program similar to the cadets or junior rangers programs?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: First of all, there are Junior Canadian Ranger programs delivered in some reserve and first nations communities in the provincial norths. When we're looking at the territorial north, there are very few reserves, as all of you are aware. I think there are bigger discussions around how far the rangers should extend. From that standpoint, I'd suggest that in communities adjacent to reserves or on reserves, there is a process whereby Junior Canadian Ranger programs can be stood up, and in many cases are. I was just in some reserve communities in the provincial norths, and we were having that very conversation.

Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Lackenbauer, currently, we do not have enough rangers in the Arctic. How should CAF be approaching new recruits to the Canadian Rangers?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: First of all, I don't accept the premise of your question, which is that we do not have enough. I would want you to explain what rangers are unable to perform in terms of mission sets. That's just a question.

That said, when we look at reinvigorating or revitalizing the rangers and opportunities for recruitment, first of all, it starts from addressing the lessening of priorities given to the Canadian Ranger patrol groups in terms of staffing levels, particularly for the regular force. We hear talk about Arctic sovereignty and security being the government's foremost priority in defence and security, yet we don't see that matched in prioritizing the resource of support.

If we want to grow the rangers in the north, that begins with making sure there are more human resources and financial services people to process their claims. It means more ranger instructors to go into communities to deliver training to the rangers, to play those mentoring roles and to be a liaison with the military. From that standpoint, I think we can build forward.

I still always ask this question: Why do we default to suggesting that the problem is the number of rangers rather than providing more opportunities and more supports to the rangers we already have? I want to return to the notion that northern Canadians, particularly indigenous people, are already serving in far greater numbers per capita than southern Canadians are. At what point does it become unfair to constantly be repeating a refrain suggesting that they're not doing enough and they need to be doing more? Perhaps the problem is something else.

It's respectfully submitted, because I think it's a very good question you're asking. The question becomes how we create more opportunities and more support for people who are in the organization.

● (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lackenbauer and Ms. Gallant.

Ms. Lapointe, we'll go over to you for six minutes.

Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

My question is for Ms. Teillet.

What does the historical experience of indigenous service tell us about how the Canadian Armed Forces should engage with indigenous members today?

Danielle Teillet: That's a great question.

One of the biggest challenges, as I alluded to in my opening remarks, has been that, historically, indigenous people have been fully dissuaded or prevented from enlisting or, when the times are more difficult and when casualties are higher, it's been “Now it's okay for us to recruit you”, and those barriers start to go down. A lot of those historical challenges are and have already been dealt with through more modern times. I've spoken with a couple of indigenous Afghanistan war veterans who have spoken about feeling very well looked after through their experience in the CAF.

Part of what's challenging, perhaps, is ensuring that recruiters and people understand their history. It's understanding that this is the legacy of decades of discrimination and restrictions that have prevented indigenous people, who have voluntarily wanted to enlist, from being able to. Then, of course, there is the aftermath of supporting them as veterans after they have served.

Some of the folks on the committee may have heard of Francis Pegahmagabow. He was an Anishinabe First World War veteran and a very highly decorated sniper. He won the Military Medal three times—one of only 38 people who served for the Canadian Forces to do so. He was denied his claim when he applied for his supports after as a veteran. When you look at a story like that, you see it's potentially hard to motivate people to want to sign up for this. That's in part why there were also petitions made to fight against conscription.

Understanding a lot of those things is probably the first step. As a historian, I'd say that's usually my go-to: learning our history and understanding that this is the legacy.

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

Dr. Kikkert, in your opening statement, you talked about indigenous operational awareness and security. Can you expand on what is meant by the point you were making?

Peter Kikkert: Absolutely. In the context I was speaking in, I meant that when you have rangers on the ground who can report back to other external agencies on what is going on, what the situation looks like and how the hazard they're responding to is unfolding, it creates better situational awareness for all partners involved, which is going to lead to a much more effective response.

One of the great strengths of the rangers is that they're in their communities. They're ready to respond and they're able to get eyes on the scene very quickly, whether it be a wildfire, flood or some other critical incident, and bring that awareness to their partners.

It also means that they're able to infuse their local and indigenous knowledge into the problem. They can share their knowledge about what this fire or this flood might do based on their indigenous knowledge and their local knowledge. They usually know everyone in the community. They know who can do what and when. If you need some jerry cans or you need some generators, they know who to call. They infuse all of that information into our broader emergency response systems and make it much more effective.

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

Ms. Scoppio, can you speak to the gap between consistent enrolment in indigenous programs and the persistently low retention rates that follow?

Grazia Scoppio: One of the things we should be recommending is an analysis of the programs in terms of how they're performing and what the gaps are, to identify better ways for retention—past the programs. We should increase recruitment for the programs so that all of the positions are filled. These are good opportunities for youth. In theory, they should all be filled—or most of the time—and then there's the retention piece.

We spoke about some of the challenges that indigenous members have faced in the past—the recent past, not the historical past. It's amazing to think that they were actually not allowed to join, but it's even more recent. That's why the CAF has apologized. These are real experiences. These are real-life experiences.

Despite the apology—the apology is a very good step—there's casual racism, if you want to call it that, and members have, during our research, unveiled these kinds of instances. It could be something like diminishing the experience of the residential school system and the impacts it has had on the indigenous population in the attempts of the colonial powers to erase their culture and their languages. That's just one example.

Sometimes there's tokenism, so not really understanding why inclusion is important but doing it as tokenism. Other members have represented to us that the expectation in the CAF is that it's up to the indigenous members to do the work of reconciliation. Well, no, it's not. They can facilitate. They can advise leadership, but they're not to do the work of reconciliation.

Once a young person does these programs—completes a program that can be for just a few weeks, like the summer programs, or for a full year, like the ILOY program at RMC—they're going to have experiences similar to members who are serving in the regular forces and they're probably not going to join. CAF is not really presenting itself as an employer of choice.

These things are all good for stats. Having indigenous advisers is amazing. They're advising leadership. Having these programs is great. Having days when we are recognizing indigenous people is great. It's the deeper organizational culture that hasn't really changed.

I hope that answers the question.

● (1135)

The Chair: Thank you. You'll have many more opportunities to elaborate.

Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, we'll go over to you for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here.

This is good timing, Ms. Scoppio. I wanted to speak to you. In fact, would you like to finish the point you raised earlier, in one or two sentences, before I ask you my first question?

Grazia Scoppio: Indeed, these are good questions you're asking. Sometimes it isn't easy to give you an answer, especially if we don't really have all the data.

Without a report on the reasons why there isn't enough recruitment or retention, it's really hard to answer your questions. I can share a few issues that we discovered during our research, but I don't always have the answer for the reason I just mentioned.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: We do have data, and that's what I wanted to ask you about.

According to the figures I have in front of me, we know, for example, that the proportion of indigenous people is lower in the Royal Canadian Air Force. It's 2.6% compared with 3.2% in the army and 3.0% in the navy. You may say that's not much of a difference, but it's still a smaller percentage. Do you have any idea why it's lower in that particular branch?

Grazia Scoppio: Yes, that's a very good question.

Did you know that the Royal Canadian Air Force is the only force that doesn't have an indigenous program? Ask their leaders why there isn't one.

The army has programs for indigenous people. Bold Eagle was the first program. The army is really the leader, if you will. There's the Raven program in the Royal Canadian Navy, but there's no program for the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Is there a reason for that? I don't know, but as researchers, we certainly ask ourselves that question. Why is there no program in the air force? I don't have the answer, sir.

● (1140)

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: It's very interesting to know that it's the only branch without one. In fact, if I extrapolate from your previous comment, I take it that you think the Royal Canadian Air Force should also have its own program.

Grazia Scoppio: Yes.

Let me add to that.

My colleagues also talked a lot about the Rangers. That's obviously an army program. I would also like to point out that approximately 30% of the Rangers members are indigenous. Mr. Lackenbauer can correct me if I'm wrong. Again, the statistics aren't always accurate. It's definitely a large percentage, which will, in fact, increase the percentage of indigenous people in the army compared with the navy and the air force.

I don't know if that answers your question.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you.

You also said that certain programs were underutilized. Just as there are some that don't have a program, like the Royal Canadian Air Force, there are also some that have programs but underutilize them.

Could you talk a bit more about that underutilization?

Grazia Scoppio: We know that the Canadian Armed Forces have a recruitment problem. They're in the process of making changes. There's a whole program to make the recruitment process faster and more flexible, but it's going to take time. It has only just been put in place.

There's a general recruitment program. The Canadian Armed Forces haven't been meeting their recruitment targets, not just this year but for years. That's a problem. That will affect every program. If the armed forces don't recruit enough people in general, then they won't recruit enough women, indigenous people, permanent residents and so on. The forces are failing to meet the targets in general, which includes programs for indigenous people.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Currently, the target representation rate is 3.5%. The Canadian Armed Forces retention strategy from 2022 had set this target for March 31, 2026. As it turns out, they're far off the mark.

Is that basically due to the shortcomings you're telling us about?

Grazia Scoppio: Roughly over 50% of people who apply to join the Canadian Armed Forces withdraw from the process because it takes too long.

Let me be clear: The Canadian Armed Forces doesn't have an issue attracting people. There are enough people in the Canadian population, women, indigenous people, recent immigrants with permanent residency, racialized people and so on. The issue isn't attracting people. The issue is recruitment.

It has now just been announced that there will be changes. Like other researchers and staff members, I'm very pleased with these changes. We'll see whether the Canadian Armed Forces will be able to meet its recruitment targets once the system is modernized.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Pierre Paul-Hus, I appreciate your being here. I know you come with some knowledge of this matter. It's over to you for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

Ms. Teillet, in your research, you often discuss the warrior culture of indigenous peoples. In your opinion, during the First World War and the Second World War, indigenous people enlisted en masse to take part in Canada's war effort because it was part of their nature to be warriors.

What has changed in recent decades to make young indigenous people less inclined to join the Canadian Armed Forces?

● (1145)

[*English*]

Danielle Teillet: As a historian, I need to point to the history and legacy aspects. There was a point just made about the air force having the lowest number of indigenous members. The air force was probably the most difficult arm for indigenous people to get into during the Second World War, for example, because of, as I stated in my opening remarks, the “of pure European descent and of the white race” thing, and because of the educational requirements and the legacy of residential schools. It had higher educational requirements than the other arms of the military. Even if an indigenous recruit was not ruled out based on race, they might be ruled out based on educational attainment. There are so many different elements that have restricted indigenous enlistment.

We have to remember that these are generational challenges as well. People who served in the Second World War had fathers who wanted to serve in the First World War, potentially, and children who may have served after the Second World War. We have generational impacts from so many things, like the residential school system. I've spoken to numerous people who have been told by family members, “Don't enlist. They're not going to take care of you. They're not going to look after you.”

That has been the legacy of the armed forces for generations. Even though this has shifted significantly, there are many families and communities in which that reputation has not shifted.

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you for that.

You mentioned treatment. I can make a certain comparison with francophone service members from Quebec. I served in the Canadian Forces for 22 years. Things were certainly much easier when we worked in a purely francophone environment in Quebec. However, from the moment we had to work elsewhere in Canada or abroad, under a more English-speaking command, it created a lot of tension. For example, I saw courses have to be cancelled completely because of conflict. Francophones then had to be sent to training elsewhere. I experienced it.

Let us get back to command and control. I did my first courses with Brigadier-General Jocelyn Paul. We were 18 years old. Mr. Paul later became the commander of the Canadian Army.

I also had indigenous people under my command when I was a unit commander. Everything always went well as soon as we were integrated, in the sense that everyone was working toward the same goal. When motivations are a bit divided, that's definitely when conflicts arise. Our primary motivation was to accomplish our mission.

Earlier, we talked about the Canadian Rangers and their mission. I see that 30% of them are indigenous, but I thought there were many more indigenous people involved.

Let us look at the current security environment in the Arctic. Is there a command and control issue in the Rangers' mission? Do indigenous rangers feel a bit like people who are just there with a weapon to walk around and report information, or do they really feel like an integral part of an effective military operations unit? I know that Lieutenant-General Erick Simoneau recently told the committee that there was a lack of equipment and resources. Do you think the people there feel important, or is there a lack there?

[*English*]

Danielle Teillet: I think questions regarding current issues with the rangers would probably be better focused at my colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus: Yes, the question could be for Mr. Lackenbauer or Mr. Kikkert.

[*English*]

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: That's a great question.

It may in a sense be a command and control problem from the army side, but I think there's also an issue of making sure that rangers are validated in the contributions they're making. We don't do enough celebration of the Canadian Rangers.

I believe the statistics that Dr. Scoppio was referencing a couple of times are Canadian Army statistics that often exclude the Canadian Rangers, as a recent census of Canada did, saying, “Please identify if you serve or have served in the Canadian Forces, except with the Canadian Rangers.” What message are we sending when we exclude indigenous people who are choosing to serve our country by staying in their communities and sharing their expertise and knowledge in a differentiated form of service?

From the army standpoint, at least in the 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, where I have very close relations, I hear repeatedly not that they need more equipment or a change in their overall role, mission and tasks, but that they need more opportunities to go out on the land. They need faster processing of their pay and their damage claims. They want more opportunities to put on their ranger hoodie, their ranger ball cap and whatever appropriate clothing they have for the environmental conditions at that time of year in their part of Canada, and to go out and do more things.

This goes back to Ms. Gallant's question at the beginning: How do we increase enrolment? Partly, it's celebrating the rangers and drawing more attention to their value within the Canadian Armed Forces system and how their role as force enablers and force multipliers is valued, is key to Canadian security. It has a deterrence effect as well, because it enables us to economically, with a utility of force, defend our homeland.

At the same time, we can also reduce some of the burdens associated with the onboarding of recruits. What Dr. Scoppio was referring to for the regular force and primary reserves also exists for the rangers. What's crushing a lot of the process of bringing in new rangers is the sheer volume of paperwork that's been introduced over the last 15 years.

One of the downsides, to get back to your question, Mr. Paul-Hus, is that we sometimes associate increasing command and control with more accountability and more administrative burden. In the case of the rangers, as long as we're building in the right mechanisms to, of course, refine command and control.... At the same time, we must make sure that for the rangers, at the end of the day, we're providing them with more opportunities to do what they've been doing for more than 75 years, to get on the land even more and to showcase to Canadians and our friends and adversaries around the world what they bring to the table in terms of defending our country.

● (1150)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Thank you, Monsieur Paul-Hus.

I am now going over to Monsieur Chris Malette for five minutes.

Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

My question is for Ms. Teillet, Professor Scoppio and Dr. Lackenbauer, but if Professor Kikkert cares to chime in, feel free.

As the member of Parliament for Bay of Quinte—home to 8 Wing CFB Trenton, as I like to proudly point out here every chance I get—I represent a community that plays a critical operational role in supporting Canadian Forces Station Alert in Nunavut.

Given that some bases like mine are located in predominantly anglophone communities, what concrete steps would you say the CAF can take to better educate and prepare personnel and the surrounding civilian communities to understand and respect indigenous cultures and languages and the lived realities of the regions, particularly in the north? Are we doing enough in that regard?

We'll lead off, I guess, with you, Ms. Teillet.

Danielle Teillet: My purview is further back into history than current issues. I can't really speak to the contemporary challenges. However, I can say—historically speaking, of course—that on the point you're making, as well as the previous point about the integration of indigenous people and, let's say, white settler Canadians, a huge part of that is about working together and having the experience of integrating.

For example, historically speaking, there were no segregated indigenous-only units raised in either world war. There were some during the First World War. A couple of battalions that were raised, one of them near the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve and one of them in Winnipeg, had a lot more indigenous enlistment. It was likely just because of the location they were recruiting from, but I think from an indigenous perspective, that's part of what led to feelings of equality for the first time.

When you live in a very discriminatory and restrictive environment, to be treated the same as your peers once you join the military can be very empowering. It gave a lot of service people an opportunity to see what was possible so that when they came back, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, there were pushes to lobby for more supports and more rights.

I can't really speak to the current events.

● (1155)

Chris Malette: Perhaps I'll ask Professor Scoppio the same question, if I may.

Grazia Scoppio: Can you rephrase the question?

Chris Malette: What steps can the CAF take to better educate and prepare personnel in the surrounding communities, particularly in the south, where they don't really have a grasp of the indigenous cultures and contributions and lived realities in the north? What can we do better there?

Grazia Scoppio: I spoke before about a fairly recent initiative, a mandatory course on indigenous cultures that every member of the Canadian Armed Forces has to complete. However, from conversations I had with indigenous members in the CAF, it turns out that the course, which is delivered only via DL, ends up being a check in a box and a page-turner. There's not a lot of deep learning happening.

One of my recommendations would be to make it an in-person course. Maybe it could be partly in person, depending on the length, but with advice from indigenous elders or indigenous advisers in the Canadian Armed Forces, we would transform it to become an in-person course.

There are other things. For example, we can learn a lot from the New Zealand Defence Force. New Zealand has integrated a lot more of the Maori culture in particular into army events, including into operations of the military. I want to preface that by saying that New Zealand is a bicultural country of the non-Maori and the Maori. That is very different from Canadian society. We're a multicultural country. Within our indigenous population, there's a lot more diversity, whereas in their indigenous population, they're all Maori. Within those differences, we can still implement certain changes to integrate indigenous culture into certain events, certain instances, so that it's not just a stand-alone indigenous program, as we mentioned.

I want to clarify a comment that was made earlier by my good colleague Dr. Lackenbauer. The statistics I was referring to are probably about a year old. It's about 27%.... Again, that percentage is fluctuating. Recruiting fluctuates every single day. About 30% of Canadian Rangers self-identify as indigenous. It is possible, as we know, that members of the rangers and members of the Canadian Armed Forces are indigenous but select to not self-identify. The reasons are many. We can explore that in a subsequent conversation.

I hope that answers your question.

The Chair: Thank you both.

Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, it's over to you for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Scoppio, we obviously heard your views on the programs and proactive measures that make it possible to improve representation. However, there's also the reactive side of things. There have to be adequate reporting mechanisms for cases of racism or discrimination. Are those mechanisms sufficient right now?

Grazia Scoppio: Are you asking me whether there are sufficient mechanisms to respond to racism and discrimination?

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: In fact, if a case is observed or, at the very least, if a case is felt by a member of the forces, there's currently a mechanism for that member to report that they believe they have been subjected to racism or discrimination. Is that done well? Is it effective? Is it being properly implemented?

Grazia Scoppio: I don't think that was the case in the past. However, now that General Carignan and the forces in general have apologized for the discrimination and racism experienced by members and veterans, I think things are going to change. They need to change. We have no choice but to change them. Will it be more effective right away? As we know, there are always delays between the intention to implement a policy and the implementation of that policy. That means it's going to take time.

However, we already know that, since the Heyder and Beattie case, there's no longer any tolerance for violence and harassment against women. That means that while cases may have slipped under the radar in the past, that's no longer the case. Leadership has to be alert: If a member reports a case of racism, there's no choice but to act immediately.

What has happened in history can explain why we're here. However, actions in the present constitute change. The forces have to change and will change.

● (1200)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, it's over to you for five minutes.

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Thank you very much.

I want to start by recognizing some people in my riding who fought in the war. We have a reserve OKIB, Okanagan Indian Band, and they have a proud history of fighting in wars.

William Smith was a tank gunner who was killed in France in 1944. Gunner Robert Sheffield, 19, died in the war. Flight sergeant Leslie Sparkes of the Royal Canadian Air Force died in 1942. Edward James Tronson went to war with four of his brothers, who all came home. Unfortunately, their mother, Louisa Tronson, died before any of them got home. I wanted to mention that.

I want to set the stage for the next question. It's an interesting one.

The modern battlefield in a symmetrical war is something we're seeing right now in Ukraine. There are two tactical scenarios for communication. One is the frontline cities. For instance, Kramatorsk is about 15 kilometres from the Russians. There is surveillance from satellites or high-level drones. There is medium-level and low-level surveillance. There are electronic listening devices and electronic scrambling devices. The GPS is foiled. Every time we try to use it there, it tries to direct us into the river. Listening devices are everywhere, and there is AI and advanced signals intelligence. At the zero line, which is a little closer to the Russians, in Kupiansk, electronic comms are simply shut down. There's nothing there.

This brings up a question I had about the code talkers from World War II. It seems odd in this highly technological environment to talk about something that was in World War II, but in the immediate tactical battlefield when communications have to be done, what about something like the code talkers? You would think that in a modern battlefield, you would just whip out your cellphone and use a translator device. Can any of the academics here tell me how many indigenous languages are actually on translation devices?

I've looked around, and I cannot find anything there at all. We have 80,000 Cree speakers in Canada. We have 40,000 Inuktitut speakers. In a modern symmetrical battlefield where electronic devices don't work—and this is a serious question—is this a possibility? Is this something that should be explored?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: It's a very interesting question looking at Canadian code talkers. I think a lot of us are drawn to the windspeaker American examples—the Navajo, for example—but we did have Canadians, Cree and Anishinabe, who contributed during both world wars in a similar function.

I'm not going to comment on operations overseas and whether or not we have the ability to force-generate and force-employ that kind of capacity in enough numbers to have the function and utility you're talking about on the battlefield. When it comes to domestic operating environments, however, that we think about being contested here in Canada in remote regions, the ability to have northern indigenous people speak in their languages is, once again, another competitive advantage. I'm more familiar with Inuktitut speakers, and often when they're translating things, they're inventing terms and descriptions on the fly. It would be almost impossible, even in this day and age, for AI to know what they were talking about unless the AI was a member of that community.

Domestically, it certainly has a utility, and in fact I would suggest it happens all the time. When the rangers are out on operations, they're often speaking with one another in the language of their community. From that standpoint, we should consider thinking about how Canada as a whole can leverage that depth of expertise and the vibrancy of the indigenous languages that we have in our country as a way to think about how we're competing effectively in the 21st century.

● (1205)

Scott Anderson: Speaking of the leverage that you just mentioned, how would that translate into...? We've heard a lot about casual racism and a sense of racism within the forces. How would that translate into an almost special forces cachet that would actually attract indigenous folks to the CAF?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: I think that's interesting. A former public affairs ranger for the 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, Peter Moon, used to say that the Americans have their special forces while we have our rangers, who are very special forces. He spoke about a visit of indigenous rangers from northern Ontario to Fort Knox and how much attention they gathered.

If I think once again about promoting the rangers, being that they are force-generated by the Canadian Army but force-employed as a Canadian Armed Forces capability means they have also participated in training and operations with Canadian special forces, such as in the balloon incident.

It's also important to see that elevating the rangers' profile and recognizing and celebrating their skills contributes to special forces and shows that they have a distinct and therefore very elite special skill set to operate in environments familiar to them.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Ms. Romanado, you're up for five minutes.

Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you, I'd like to welcome the witnesses for being here today. What an incredible panel of witnesses for us.

I want to start with some updates.

This morning, we had a press conference with respect to the recruitment numbers. I want to let members of the committee know that we have actually surpassed our recruitment targets this year. While we are happy with that, we still have a lot more work to do in terms of the numbers we are seeing. There is a huge interest from Canadians in joining the Canadian Armed Forces, and we are incredibly happy about that. I wanted to flag that.

One of the areas to note is that 3.3% of members of the Canadian Armed Forces are indigenous. We're not where we need to be, but again, we are making strides in our recruitment numbers.

Ms. Teillet, your testimony here has been incredibly powerful. In 2017, I headed a delegation for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele. During that trip, we were able to visit the gravesite of Alex Decoteau. In fact, Mr. Paul-Hus was on the delegation with us, and we took part in the Alex Decoteau run. He was a very famous indigenous runner and represented Canada at the Olympics. He served during the Battle of Passchendaele and lost his life.

We had the opportunity to visit his grave and participate in the Alex Decoteau run, and it was a fond memory for me. I think we need to talk more about the work indigenous veterans have done in representing Canada and about their sacrifices for Canada. I'm looking forward to coming to the War Museum and perhaps talking some more about indigenous veterans and their recognition.

You mentioned recognition. Can you elaborate a bit more on how we could improve the recognition of indigenous veterans and make sure they're honoured and their stories are told?

● (1210)

Danielle Teillet: Thank you so much for the kind comments and the question.

As I said fairly explicitly in my opening remarks, recognition has been lacking for a long time. Some of the hard work that has been done in that regard has largely been done by indigenous veterans. It was not something that was necessarily a given through, let's say, Veterans Affairs or CAF. Those veterans have done work to achieve this.

Of course, after the First World War, the government and society were not interested in that story. In fact, we saw amendments to the Indian Act that prevented status Indians from hiring lawyers or gathering politically to try to lobby for some of these rights. We saw a tightening of those restrictions. That's why it's all the more important, as you said, that we're recognizing this now.

As far as recognition in the present day goes, every November 8 at the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument, there is a ceremony to recognize Indigenous Veterans Day. We have also done programming at the War Museum. We're still figuring out what this year's program will look like.

From my perspective, the work I do is also about increasing that diversity of perspectives in not only our temporary exhibitions but also our permanent spaces, because that's something we get comments about: “How come there isn't more here? This is important history.” We're a bureaucracy. It's the public service, and things move slowly, but we are working on it.

There's still a lot more that could be done. I'm hoping to grow the profile of not only Indigenous Veterans Day but also indigenous military service in general. We need more visibility. We need to see it, and we need people to understand this history so they're not asking why we even have Indigenous Veterans Day: “Why do we need a day specific to indigenous veterans?” That goes back to the entire history I spoke about.

Thank you so much for the question.

Sherry Romanado: My next question is for Professor Lackenbauer.

You focused a lot on the rangers. I'm sure you heard that we recently announced significant investments to establish a network of northern operational support hubs, or NOSHes. We announced $2.67 billion over 20 years to establish them in the north. The hubs will be located in Iqaluit, Inuvik and Yellowknife.

Can you talk to us about how these investments in the Arctic and the north can help make sure critical infrastructure is in place so the Canadian Rangers and others can continue to work in the north and also defend Canada? As you said, they are our eyes and ears, and they're often the first line of defence in an emergency response. Can you elaborate on how we could use this to assist in that regard?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: That's a fantastic question.

We're definitely very much welcoming the investments in these northern operational support hubs and nodes. They will allow for more agile and effective deployment of southern assets to northern locations. I love that you're focusing on the benefits they also bring to people residing in the north.

One of the first steps, I would imagine, in establishing this infrastructure is figuring out what can be dual-use or multi-use, meaning what pieces of that infrastructure might also have benefits for the communities themselves. Here, there's been a real effort to develop genuine partnerships in order to find out from communities and indigenous rights holders what their priorities look like and what their needs are, and then to try to find alignments with these military investments.

In the specific case of the rangers, I imagine there are opportunities for particular buildings to be established as part of these hubs and nodes that could perhaps accommodate them and their equipment and provide rangers with a place to train or gather—those from not only that community but also nearby communities. They could also perhaps have a parade square for the Junior Canadian Ranger program and potentially serve as a hub for a lot of the other first responder organizations Dr. Kikkert mentioned earlier. They could function as a public safety space within the community.

I am really excited about this. I think the way these announcements are building upon previous governments' commitments to highlight the importance of Canada taking action in the north is to be welcomed. Now we're at a moment for action and for making sure that action is aligned with northern priorities and agendas.

● (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Thank you, Ms. Romanado.

Mr. Kibble, I'll turn the floor over to you for five minutes.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses today.

I have really appreciated the questions. I came with a list of prepared questions; however, I have taken so many notes that I hope I can get through them. The testimony has been excellent.

In no particular order, I'll start with Dr. Kikkert.

I liked your comment that “We are the people to call when things go sideways”. I really appreciated that. I hope that people who are listening today, online and in the room here, take that to heart. It's a great quote.

You mentioned facing barriers. You talked about them being the first resort. You mentioned your three pillars, and making things easier to use and making them the first resort. Do you have any suggestions that we could take to heart on how to make our indigenous units easier to use and a first resort?

Peter Kikkert: That's a great question.

Number one is explaining to civilian agencies what the rangers can do, how they can be activated and what the process is for that. That's going to help speed up their activation during these emergency situations. That's what I hear from rangers a lot: that something is happening and they want to help out, but there are all of these hoops they have to go through before they can actually be activated and be used.

It's very unclear. I think that's a major issue.

Jeff Kibble: That leads to my second question. You mentioned streamlining activation. Are there any specific recommendations to streamline that? I can see that being a huge frustration, but it would also limit the capability to force-multiply.

Peter Kikkert: Search and rescue is a good example for this. Clarify when the rangers can be used for a search and rescue operation. Right now, what's often left to the commander's discretion is what “life and limb” is. That's when they can be activated immediately, but it's unclear what “life and limb” means for a lot of rangers.

There's a memorandum of understanding between the 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group in northern Ontario and the Ontario Provincial Police that lays out a foundation for how to use rangers quickly and effectively for search and rescue. That is a model that could be built upon for other jurisdictions. However, again, it's about working with civilian partners to better understand how they can use the rangers for a lot of these different kinds of incidents. That is going to help out the entire process as well.

Jeff Kibble: Joint rescue coordination centres are often the ones that activate them. Do you feel there needs to be better communication and understanding between JRCCs and the ranger groups?

Peter Kikkert: That's a great question.

JRCCs can activate the Canadian Rangers to support aircraft crashes really easily and sometimes even marine incidents. They can potentially utilize the rangers as secondary search and rescue resources. That's pretty clear, actually. Issues are more with civilian partners, like emergency management organizations or provincial police departments, where there's a bit more confusion over how they can be used for things like ground search and rescue.

I will say—and this actually answers a question that came up about Trenton in particular—that Joint Rescue Coordination Centre Trenton and the 424 Squadron in Trenton have been doing really important work over the last few years in building the kinds of relationships with the rangers that you're talking about there. That's going to make them much more operationally effective.

I work with them frequently on something called the Arctic search and rescue exchange, which brings rangers down to JRCC Trenton to learn about how the JRCC works and how the squadron works. That kind of face-to-face relationship building to see what makes this process work better is absolutely the best bang for your buck. Get people together in the same room to work through these things to better understand one another. It's working really well.

Kudos to JRCC Trenton. JRCC Halifax has also being doing this on its side. These are really good models to build off of.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Teillet.

I appreciate the military history background. It's very important to have those stories in the more modern military. You said that attitudes have shifted significantly, and I'm glad to hear that. I think that probably more work needs to be done.

You gave an excellent example of two indigenous members who came back from Afghanistan. You said that they were “well looked after”. I'm very happy to hear that. That, to me, is the type of story that should be spread among people to support recruiting.

What improvements would you recommend, such as those types of stories being shared, and what methods? Would they be more traditional methods of sharing that information or more modern methods for getting that positive information out as we continue to improve culture and try to recruit more indigenous members to these units?

● (1220)

Danielle Teillet: I'm just looking for clarification. Are you asking about basically utilizing these examples to boost recruitment?

Jeff Kibble: Yes. We're looking at ways to improve so that indigenous people want to join. If we look at the more modern stories, are those a tool that we could use so things are more positive as we continue to improve culture?

Danielle Teillet: Thank you for the question.

If there's one thing I've learned from interviewing veterans and watching or reading interviews with a variety of different veterans, it's that experiences can be very individual. One experience, obviously, can't represent an entire group. One person can't represent an entire group. However, as you mentioned and as I said, there are success stories. One of the veterans I spoke with about the Afghanistan war was especially speaking about being cared for medically for injuries after his service.

At the Canadian War Museum, a colleague of mine, Dr. Michael Petrou, has been collecting oral histories from veterans—and not just indigenous veterans but all sorts of different veterans, including francophone and indigenous veterans—that speak to their experiences not only about service but about what life was like after the uniform came off and they became a veteran. That project is called “In Their Own Voices”. A really big part of that is letting those veterans speak for themselves in a lot of cases. At the museum, we have an oral history project, and we're collecting oral histories so we can have first-hand accounts.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you. I'd need another 30 to 40 minutes for all of my questions.

The Chair: I know. We're going to have another round, so we'll be able to get back to you.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Watchorn, we'll go over to you for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. The discussions today were very interesting. I think we have focused quite a bit on the Canadian Rangers.

I'd like to mention something as an ex-mayor. When a municipality requests assistance, the request is normally forwarded to the province. The province can then turn to the federal government for assistance from the Canadian Armed Forces. That makes it important to maintain relationships with partners with that in mind.

Mr. Kikkert, I'd like to follow up on the questions that my colleague Mr. Kibble asked.

I think that training in the north could be done bidirectionally. We can train the Canadian Rangers and the people on site, but indigenous communities could also train people who are unfamiliar with working in the north on how to do it effectively. Can you tell us how the training could work bidirectionally?

[*English*]

Peter Kikkert: That is a great question. That's something my colleague Professor Lackenbauer has written a lot about.

From a training perspective, acknowledging the skill set that the rangers bring to the table, as they train southern-based military units on how to move and function in northern terrain, a role they've been playing for decades, and a critical one.... When the military is on exercises, when they're doing their training in Resolute or wherever it's going to be, often rangers are teaching them how to move and how to not just survive but thrive on the land. That training is ongoing.

From a bidirectional perspective, what the CAF can do to facilitate training opportunities for the rangers is highlight some of their specific skill sets—things like how to most effectively evacuate a community and how to participate in wellness checks. In particular, things like wilderness first aid and advanced first aid are very difficult skills for a lot of northerners to get trained on. The opportunities are few and far between. Very few organizations are bringing consistent training and these kinds of higher-level emergency response skills. That may not always be done through the CAF, but the CAF could certainly facilitate more of that kind of training, which will directly benefit the rangers and also their broader communities.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Tim Watchorn: Professor Lackenbauer, you have written about this. Can you share your perspective?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Thank you, Mr. Watchorn.

[*English*]

Yes, gladly.

As Dr. Kikkert just said, there is some of this going on already. First of all, it starts with a shift in mindset for southern-based units. Conducting cold weather operation training is not the same as preparing for northern operations. The Arctic is a geographic region. Inuit Nunangat is a homeland. You can prepare on southern bases to learn how to fire up your Coleman and set up your army tent, but at the end of the day, you need to be learning ideally from people from the area in which you're going to be operating, so more opportunities for Canadian Rangers to be provided a trip south to do the work-up training in support of the southern units that are going to be deployed in the north would be very much welcomed. Rangers certainly embrace these roles when these opportunities are provided.

At the end of the day, nothing replaces experience on the ground, and for this multidirectional learning to go on, it means increasing not necessarily the scale or size but the frequency and predictability of northern operations and training activities across the Canadian Armed Forces. At the end of the day, you're going to learn more, and the multidirectional learning is going to occur through and be facilitated by relationship building and more familiarity.

Historically, we have a very episodic interest in Arctic sovereignty and security issues, which leads us to do a surge of activity and then to let that fall off. What I hope we're going to be investing in going forward is more continuous relationship building and more opportunities for, as you said, that sharing.

I've certainly heard from many rangers, particularly elders, over the years that over time, they miss some of the challenging training they were being provided by ranger instructors, say, 15 or 20 years ago. They value the opportunity to be learning from these combat arms, the non-commissioned officers coming up as instructors. As much as they teach the instructors, they're also learning from them. The more opportunities we get for this face-to-face interaction, the better off we all are.

[*Translation*]

Tim Watchorn: Thank you very much.

I think I mentioned last week that we heard from members of the Canadian Armed Forces who had appeared at one of our previous meetings and who told us that the technical specifications of the equipment we buy are often set by people who don't have experience in the north.

Do you think that people with truly substantial experience with northern operations can influence the equipment or its technical specifications?

[*English*]

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: It's another fantastic question.

I've been fortunate over the last couple of months to be involved in Operation Nanook-Nunalivut on three different stretches of what has been an epic Canadian Armed Forces operation led by rangers, going from Inuvik in the western Arctic across the Arctic Ocean coast, then turning, doing a pivot, and going down the Kivalliq coast and western Hudson Bay, and ending up in Churchill. Along the way, rangers were very much involved in identifying equipment that would be fit to purpose for this particular activity. They've derived a lot of lessons observed that hopefully will be translated into lessons learned about how to conduct agile operations by a small group.

When I was in Cambridge Bay, Ikaluktutiak, in the Kitikmeot region, I was very pleased to see university professors and people from Defence Research and Development Canada, DRDC, testing some new systems, testing different types of equipment and bringing them to the north, working with rangers to ground truth whether they are actually appropriate.

I definitely see opportunities going forward for the rangers and other northern experts based in the north to be more heavily involved in the process of identifying what is needed and of testing and trialling the different proposed solutions.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor. I appreciate your enthusiasm and passion, and those of all witnesses, with regard to what's happening here today.

Thank you, Mr. Watchorn.

Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, we'll go over to you for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Scoppio, can you talk a bit about the summer programs for indigenous people? You have already said that they aren't very well administered, or at least not as well administered as the Bold Eagle program, which you think should serve as a kind of model in this area. Could you tell us a bit more about that?

● (1230)

Grazia Scoppio: As I said before, it's important to first admit that these are good programs, which also serve to attract indigenous youth to the Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF.

The programs are successful just because they already exist. However, there are challenges. One of those challenges, which is the same for all the various programs, is the inability to fill all the positions available for each program. There's also difficulty retaining participants once they have completed the programs.

We talked about the fact that indigenous people who are in the CAF are also experiencing certain challenges. I think that the young people who complete these programs face the same challenges. In particular, there are cultural problems that persist, which creates barriers for young people who want to continue in the CAF.

I think a study should really be conducted to examine all the programs and look at the successes, challenges, gaps and areas for improvement for each program.

As I said earlier, there's a program missing for the Royal Canadian Air Force. Adding such a program would be a way to attract people, because some participants will join the CAF after completing their programs. That's for sure.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: As you have already mentioned, why is the Bold Eagle program a model in this regard, one whose operations other programs should emulate?

Grazia Scoppio: Bold Eagle was the first program, and it's also the most well known. That means it did serve as a model for the other programs created afterward. That's why I brought it up.

As we have already discussed, we wondered whether we were doing enough to make indigenous youth in the communities aware of these programs. Certainly, if a program has been around for years, it's more well known. People might say, for example, that one of their uncles took part in it. That means people will be familiar with that program for life.

I should also point out that not all indigenous people live in indigenous communities. In addition, because of the effects of colonialism, many indigenous young people have lost their culture and language. That raises the question of whether the armed forces could be agents of reconciliation in this regard.

Rather than having separate programs—and that's still a very good thing that should continue and even expand—perhaps more elements related to indigenous youth culture should be incorporated so that indigenous youth feel safe and included.

I would like to add something else, which isn't really part of your question.

When we talk about the north, we have to understand that the situation there is still unique and that there are growing interests, such as those of China or Russia. The strength of the Rangers should be increased, in the knowledge that not all of them are indigenous. There's still a significant indigenous presence. It's also important for Canada's security in the north.

I think we have touched on that. However, I think that, in general, having a greater presence of indigenous people in the CAF would be very important for the CAF, but also for Canada.

● (1235)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'm going now to Ms. Gallant.

You have whatever time you want, it seems. Five minutes is the preferable amount, though.

Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, but I won't take it all.

Dr. Lackenbauer, is there an American equivalent of the rangers?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Thanks, Ms. Gallant. That's an excellent question.

No, there is not. Historically, one can look to examples where there were forms of differentiated military service for Alaskans, which resembled the rangers. What the Americans did, beginning in the 1950s and early 1960s, was move towards a model where their "Tundra Army", as they were called—their Alaskan rangers, to draw that connection—was modelled after the National Guard, like our primary reserves. Some of them then retooled to be what is equivalent to our regular force unit.

For the last 15 or 20 years, I've been approached by various Alaskan defence experts, and even by Senator Murkowski herself, to provide briefings on what a ranger model might look like, in order to inspire something similar in Alaska among the Alaskan native communities. We've also had overtures in Canada from Greenland, the Kingdom of Denmark, and the Sami, who are looking at the Canadian Rangers as a potential model to inspire things in their countries, because they don't have a form of service similar to what we have here.

It will never be a cut-and-paste solution, but it is one that I think speaks volumes to the international recognition and respect the rangers have earned.

Cheryl Gallant: Is there any other country—even Russia—that has a similar reserve unit?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Russia definitely does not. There are others. There is nothing quite the same. I use the word "unique" in a very literal sense. I think this is a one-of-a-kind Canadian solution.

You could look at NORFORCE, in Australia, which in some respects resembles the rangers. It puts a priority on incorporating the indigenous populations of Australia.

There is nothing quite like the rangers out there. I know it sounds like I'm being overly nationalistic in celebrating this great Canadian story, but in this case I think it really is.

Cheryl Gallant: Are rangers ever deployed with army regiments when there's an exercise or a mission in the Arctic region outside Canada?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: No. That's outside of the rangers' role, missions and tasks.

In the case of a general war, the Minister of National Defence, the Crown, could activate different forms of service, but certainly the intention for the rangers is to be serving within their homeland and within Canada. They are definitely considered a defence-of-Canada capability.

Cheryl Gallant: The reason I ask is that there was a fairly recent Arctic exercise. I believe it was Global Resolve. There were 60 soldiers affected, but 30 suffered severe cold injuries. There was no one—no rangers and no American version of the rangers—to guide them when they got off the plane and had to trek through the Arctic for the first time.

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Ms. Gallant, that's what my contacts are saying as well. I think that's a very poignant observation.

Cheryl Gallant: Would the rangers be interested in deploying?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: I think that's not a conversation that has been had with the rangers. It would definitely require a pretty fundamental rescoping of their role and mission to be thinking of them for missions outside of Canada.

There's always a conversation worth having around whether that's an identified need from the CAF and whether that's a deficiency the rangers could potentially fill, the key part being that they would not be there to provide kinetic effects. They wouldn't be there conducting the combat operations, but I can't emphasize enough that this would be a real rescoping of what the expectations are of them.

● (1240)

Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Scoppio, there are several key indigenous summer programs that I was not aware of until you mentioned them. I looked them up in order to see what you mentioned. There are Bold Eagle in western Canada, Black Bear in New Brunswick, Raven in British Columbia, Carcajou in Quebec and Grey Wolf in Ontario. Youths have to be 17 years and older, and in some of the programs they get paid.

The deadline to apply is the end of April for this summer. Some people are only hearing about this for the very first time today. How can we communicate to youth, who are sometimes in very out-of-the-way places, that this is going on and is an opportunity they can apply for?

Grazia Scoppio: This is a great question.

I just want to clarify that most of these programs, except Raven, are army programs, which goes to the question we had before: How come we have a much greater indigenous presence in the army as a percentage? Clearly, the army is a large service, so we are always going to have a greater number there, but I am speaking in terms of proportions.

That said, I agree with you that if some of you on this committee have only heard about these programs for the first time today, then we clearly are not doing a good enough job of promoting the programs. Could this be done through better community engagements in indigenous communities? Yes, but as was mentioned and we all know, not all indigenous youth live in indigenous communities. Some have been removed from their indigenous cultures and from their indigenous language. Promoting these programs through high schools could be another option. There's so much more we can do in promoting these programs to indigenous youth.

We talked about the ILOY as well, which is a bit separate from the indigenous programs. There's also another program that is a bit shorter. It's almost like a “try before you buy”. That's also part of the indigenous programs.

The efforts are there and the programs are there, but clearly there is an issue with the promotion of these programs. That's why not all positions are filled.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gallant.

Ms. Idlout, you have up to five minutes on behalf of the Liberal benches.

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, Lib.): *Qujannamiik, Iksivautaq*.

Thank you, Chair, and thank you to all of the witnesses for such great testimony all morning. I give a special thank you to Dr. Kikkert and Professor Whitney Lackenbauer for all of the great work you do to highlight the importance of the Canadian Rangers.

I want to ask each of you to respond—and maybe the chair can give you equal time—to this one question. If you could, I would love it if you could amplify the voice of any Canadian Ranger you've worked with to tell us what they've said about what is so great about being a Canadian Ranger, and what they have recommended to make sure there's more interest in increasing the number of Canadian Rangers.

Maybe we could start with you, Peter.

Peter Kikkert: That is an awesome but difficult question.

Rangers are very passionate, so a lot have spoken on this. I'll highlight one of my good friends. Calvin Pederson comes from a family of four generations of Canadian Rangers who have consistently volunteered their services to support everything that rangers do. Something that Calvin often amplifies is what we've heard at this committee already: telling the story more. When rangers do something that is pretty amazing, broadcast it; talk about it more. Why is the story of four rangers from Naujaat who won the Medal of Bravery not being spread wider throughout the north and the rest of the country?

I can answer your question fairly quickly. Tell the story not just in the north, but in the south as well, so people understand what the rangers bring to the communities, to the Canadian Armed Forces and to Canada.

● (1245)

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: What a wonderful question. I don't know that I'll be able to pull out specific quotes from individuals, but to put a few names out there and some ideas, Peter Kuniliusee, a now-deceased ranger from Clyde River, was the individual who said that we are not just the eyes and ears but also the voice of the north in the Canadian Armed Forces and, as many rangers have said, of the Canadian Armed Forces in the north. That's something to never take for granted.

I think of Sergeant Titus Allooloo, from Mittimatalik, Pond Inlet, and the act of remembrance speech that he delivered in Inuktitut at the National War Museum during the national act of remembrance last year. He spoke about the pride of service in the Canadian Rangers, again thinking of the national platform to tell a story that is sometimes left to the north. We hear a lot about the understanding of the rangers—about how well the rangers are understood for their service, about their importance in their communities and about how much pride communities have in the rangers in the north. That's something that northern members of the rangers need to be supported in talking about.

I also want to mention Tony Kunuk, from Igloolik, your home community, Ms. Idlout, who was just on Operation Nanook-Nunalivut, as well as Julia Elanik, from Aklavik, and Chris Aitaok, from Cambridge Bay. All of them emphasize the incredible nature of the skills that this diverse group of Canadians brings to the table when it's time to conduct operations.

There's a real sense of unity they all spoke about. They can come from different parts of the north, but there's a common love for the land that I've heard from coast to coast to coast from rangers, who say that it's the unifying element that binds them all together. How you engage with the land and how you are part of the land will differ depending upon your background and depending upon where you're from, but there's a common touchstone that we all share as Canadians, and that's something the rangers do a marvellous job of encouraging.

We heard before about the importance of the transgenerational transfer of knowledge, of language, of culture and of confidence to go out on the land, and how important that is to hand down to youth. It also needs to be handed down to young adults, who maybe haven't had experiences on the land. I've often heard from rangers throughout the north of the importance not just of the Junior Canadian Ranger program but also of the rangers' encouraging, incentivizing and enabling people to go out on the land and really improve and share those skills.

Ms. Idlout, I don't feel that I did justice to all the richness of the stories and guidance that I've been given over the years from the rangers, but you can hear from what I said that I've become their biggest fan over the last 30 years.

Lori Idlout: That's excellent. I could argue that I'm probably an even bigger fan.

The Government of Canada in general, the whole bureaucracy, can learn from the Canadian Rangers. What the Canadian Rangers have shown is that when you use the strengths of the people of their homeland, you'll have success. If more governments used the strengths and skills that exist in those communities, we would have stronger governments, I believe.

I thank all of you for helping to exemplify the work the Canadian Armed Forces does, and specifically the Canadian Rangers program.

Qujannamiik. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

I wasn't sure if the other witnesses had anything more to add, Ms. Teillet or Ms. Scoppio, before we go over to Mr. Kibble, who will be next.

Mr. Kibble, it's over to you.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for Dr. Scoppio.

You said that you agree it's not a problem of attracting; it's rather about recruiting and retention. I like that comment. I couldn't agree more. We've seen some significant issues with recruiting at the schools right now, but I appreciate that you also gave a very specific recommendation—we've been speaking in broad terms—and I would like to explore that a bit.

You said that guidelines for family members of indigenous members are not inclusive. How could that be corrected? This was in reference to supports for returning to funerals and other medical emergencies. Could you expand on that a bit so we can learn and have more information about it to potentially make it more inclusive? I think that's a very positive suggestion.

● (1250)

Grazia Scoppio: The example that was given to us is that sometimes an indigenous CAF member might have an auntie who is a very intrinsic part of their family, but they may not be allowed to go to her funeral under the current policy of the CAF. These are the kinds of things that were brought to our attention during our research. Currently, the guidelines are there, but they're not really thinking out of the box to accommodate indigenous members whose family ties might not be what the mainstream Canadian would consider.

That's one thing that was brought to our attention. The other thing—

Jeff Kibble: What—

Grazia Scoppio: Sorry, go ahead.

Jeff Kibble: I was going to say that if you had other out-of-the-box suggestions that would help alleviate differences between culture, that would support improved recruiting. Maybe you could submit some written suggestions to the committee that would be actual, tangible items. You've given one. I know that for a family, normally it's considered for “immediate family members”, but there are provisions to allow it if you can prove that somebody, like an aunt, is a primary family member.

I would like to move on to your comment about permanent residents. We said we were at 3.3% indigenous members in the forces. You said we needed more permanent residents. Could you speak to that in terms of a percentage that you think would be reasonable?

Grazia Scoppio: I looked at the statistics, but I don't have them in front of me.

Another area of my research is immigrant participation in the military. Since the CAF just very recently opened recruiting to permanent residents, they have all come to knock on the CAF's door—or many have anyway—but very few have actually gone through the doors. The statistics are out there and you can see that there's a problem.

Jeff Kibble: Off the top of your head, do you have a recommendation? Do you think we should be at 100% permanent residents in the military, or 5% or 2%?

Grazia Scoppio: We should definitely be a lot higher than where we are now. If we're talking about how only, say, 5% or 10% get in, just for sake of conversation, then we clearly have a problem.

There are so many occupations in the CAF. I get that not everybody qualifies as a fighter pilot—that is a red occupation right now—but there are so many occupations in between in all services.

Jeff Kibble: I can tell you that right now we're at about 20% of permanent residents at the recruiting schools.

Grazia Scoppio: Is that in comparison to how many have applied or how many—

Jeff Kibble: Right now in the recruiting schools, on course, they're at about 20% permanent residents.

Grazia Scoppio: Well, the numbers are going up, which is great. It's a very recent policy. The CAF just recently started recruiting permanent residents—

Jeff Kibble: Thank you. I didn't hear a recommendation.

Grazia Scoppio: —which is very different from the American military. It's completely different.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you for your discussion on this.

I'd like to move to Dr. Lackenbauer.

I appreciate your enthusiasm for the rangers. It's a little overwhelming. I've worked with the rangers. They certainly are an inspiring group, and they're well respected within the military.

Can you expand a bit on your comment about how they can be part of the reconciliation process within a community? How could they help with that?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: It's a great question.

In a way, the rangers represented aspects of reconciliation even before that was a common political concept that we were thinking about as Canadians. What I mean by that is that it's predicated on respect. When things don't work as expected, people take ownership of it. You find ways to work together and build forward together. There are some topics that are understood to be sensitive, and because there are such great personal relationships in place, you have an interface between the rest of the military and the rangers in the form of these ranger instructors, who have the relationships to be able to navigate those topics in a very human way. That's one level to engage in.

On the other hand, it's about recognizing the amount of trust that's vested in the Canadian Armed Forces through the ranger organization. The fact that northern indigenous communities are willing to send their young people down to enhanced summer camps in places like Whitehorse.... These are people in communities that have been ravaged by the traumas associated with residential schools and by all the colonial violence that's been inflicted. Thinking about the trust that exists to be giving the rangers that responsibility—because they are trusted and respected—and knowing that if you send your kids there, the same respect will be shown to them as to anyone else, are really key.

● (1255)

Jeff Kibble: I'm from south Vancouver Island. I live very close to the 4th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group headquarters. I've worked with rangers. I've worked with the Raven program. We have a large first nations population where I'm from.

I'd love to see expanded ranger units on Vancouver Island. Are there steps the communities could take with the Canadian Forces or others to encourage expanding ranger units locally?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: That often comes through mayors and councils, first nations' chiefs, Métis councils or Inuit leadership.

Definitely, the process would be to indicate an interest. Again, there are comments or questions that underlie this about the scope of the rangers. When we look at the growth of the organization and the expansion of the number of ranger patrols, this is often authorized at a high political level on the grounds of Arctic sovereignty and security.

I would encourage you to ask questions about where the growth has taken place over the last 20 years. You'll find that just about all the growth in the number of ranger patrols has occurred in the provincial north and therefore not in Inuit Nunangat. Just about every community in Inuit Nunangat that can sustain a patrol has had one for many decades at this point in time.

Certainly, there are opportunities to discuss the rangers or a ranger-type model. Opening up more opportunities for service in southern Canada is warranted, but I think there's a bigger discussion to be had around that.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you.

No one is saying that—

The Chair: Mr. Kibble, we're out of time.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I appreciate your enthusiasm in asking questions.

To all the witnesses, it was a very vibrant discussion today, and I appreciate your involvement and engagement and that of members who were asking questions.

Our next meeting is going to be on Wednesday. We will have four witnesses, all of whom are francophone. One is a professor, and three are veterans of the CAF. We'll continue this discussion at that time.

Is the committee in agreement to adjourn the meeting?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.