Kids, Skidoos and Caribou: The Junior Canadian Ranger Program as a Model for Re-engaging Indigenous Australian Youth in Remote Areas

R.G. Schwab

CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC POLICY RESEARCH

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KIDS, SKIDOOS AND CARIBOU: THE JUNIOR CANADIAN RANGER PROGRAM AS A MODEL FOR RE-ENGAGING INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN YOUTH IN REMOTE AREAS

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANU	The Australian National University
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BAC	**Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation**
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CDEP	Community Development and Employment Program
CRPG	Canadian Ranger Patrol Group
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
GPS	global positioning systems
JCR	Junior Canadian Ranger (program)
NLC	Northern Land Council
NORFORCE	Northwest Mobile Force
NTDEET	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education & Training
PHASE	Preventing Harassment and Abuse through Successful Education (program)
SRA	Shared Responsibility Agreement

ABSTRACT

The social and educational disengagement of Indigenous youth, who see education and training as irrelevant to their lives and experiences, is a looming crisis for many Indigenous communities in remote Australia. This paper is an exploration of a youth program in Canada, the Junior Canadian Rangers (JCRs), that addresses a similar crisis in that country. The Canadian program is of national importance to Canada in the context of not only community stability and capacity development but also border security, marine management in coastal areas and in search and rescue services. While Australia has an Defence Force Cadet program that operates in a limited number of Indigenous communities, it is a more traditional and much smaller cadet program. This paper suggests there is value in adapting some of the components of the Canadian program in Australia.

The paper begins with an analysis of the educational disengagement of young Indigenous people in remote Australia. Then, as background for a description of the JCR program, the paper provides a brief comparison of Australia and Canada, outlining a few of the cultural, historical and geographic similarities. The paper goes on to provide a detailed overview of the JCR program, its aims, history, structure and pedagogical underpinnings. The paper closes with some discussion of the value of the program for Canada, the potential value of some version of the program or its elements for Australia and some insights for Australia from the Canadian experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Australia and Canada are remarkably similar in many ways and both countries have knowledge and experience of value to each other. This paper explores a youth program in Canada, the Junior Canadian Rangers (JCRs), and suggests there is value in adapting some of the components of the Canadian program in Australia. As will be discussed later, the ranger program is of national importance to Canada in the context of not only community stability and capacity development but also border security, marine management in coastal areas and in search and rescue services.

While Australia has an Defence Force Cadet program that operates in a limited number of Indigenous communities, it is a more traditional and much smaller cadet program. Indeed, while the Canadian program has over 3,000 participants, it appears that at the present time there are fewer than 100 Indigenous Australian cadets in remote areas (Australian Defence Force 2004). The Australian Defence Force is currently engaged in evaluating its Indigenous Cadet Program and looking for ways to develop, extend and sustain participation. Some of the policy issues identified in this paper align with some of what is emerging in those ongoing evaluations; it is hoped this paper will complement those evaluations and provide some new ideas and possibilities that will be useful for readers within the Australian Defence Force as well as others concerned with wider issues relating to Indigenous youth.

The paper begins by tracing out what is widely acknowledged to be a crisis for Indigenous communities in remote Australia: the social and educational disengagement of young people who see education and training as irrelevant. As background for a description of the Canadian Junior Ranger program it then provides a brief comparison of Australia and Canada, outlining a few of the cultural, historical and geographic similarities. The paper then provides a detailed overview of the JCR program, its aims, history, structure and pedagogical underpinnings. The paper closes with some discussion of the value of the program for Canada, the potential value of some version of the program or its elements for Australia and some insights for Australia from the Canadian experience.

INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN REMOTE AUSTRALIA: THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Against the backdrop of a period of rapid economic growth in Australia, the relative economic position of Indigenous Australians has stagnated at best and declined at worst (Altman & Hunter 2003). While there have been some gains for Indigenous Australians in education and training outcomes, those gains have not kept pace with advances of other Australians (Hunter & Schwab 2003). This continuing relative educational disadvantage of Indigenous people is most pronounced in remote parts of the country where the likelihood of students speaking languages other than English is highest and the availability of education and training services and infrastructure is lower than in rural and urban areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004).

In many remote parts of Australian there is a history of low engagement with school among Indigenous families and communities. While preschool attendance is often high where such programs exist, school

enrolments begin to decline over the course of primary school and attendance is often sporadic. English literacy and numeracy levels are typically low in comparison to other Australian students. For example, only about 25 per cent of Indigenous children in remote communities in the Northern Territory attain the national reading benchmark (Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education & Training (NTDEET) 2004).

Enrolments and retention of Indigenous students at the secondary level are extremely low in remote areas. One of the key measures of educational attainment and participation among Indigenous students in Australia is the 'apparent retention rate' (Schwab 1999).[1] Nationally, the apparent retention rate for Indigenous Year 12 students in 2003 was about 39 per cent; by comparison, about 77 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians were retained to Year 12 (Commonwealth of Australia 2005). In the Northern Territory, those figures are 25 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively. Yet these statistics are even more troubling than they first appear; more than 20 per cent of the secondary school age cohort of Indigenous students in the Northern Territory are not enrolled in school (NTDEET 2004). One element of the explanation for this pattern is that few Indigenous students in the remote far north of the country have secondary schools in their communities (Schwab & Sutherland 2005). Not surprisingly, distance to a secondary school has a strong effect on the attendance and completion of studies by individuals. Yet there are other cultural factors affecting decisions to attend, derived from the needs and aspirations of young people that are not always met by schools. In the rush to attain literacy and numeracy benchmarks, educators and policy makers seldom recognise the degree to which Indigenous people are disappointed in the failure of western education to conserve and reaffirm elements of traditional culture (Schwab 2001). Making education locally and culturally relevant is one of the key challenges for the future of Indigenous education.

It is well documented that Indigenous students struggle with the transition from school to work (Long, Frigo & Batten 1999), particularly in remote areas where there are relatively few employment opportunities. Policy makers at the State, Territory and national levels are currently searching for programs and approaches to alleviate the difficulties faced by Indigenous students in negotiating transition points within school, particularly from the primary to secondary levels, and into the adult world of work (Mellor & Corrigan 2004: 14). Policies and programs to assist and manage such transitions and to provide multiple pathways for Indigenous students are now commonly accepted as essential components of broad strategies to achieve greater social, political and economic improvements for Indigenous communities.

A national evaluation of programs created to address the problem of transition from school to work found that while there have been some promising gains, many young people in Indigenous communities are continuing to disconnect from an educational system they perceive as both irrelevant and hostile to their culture (Powers & Associates 2003). This is particularly true in remote regions where school retention is lowest and social and educational disengagement is highest. This is a serious cause for concern in the Northern Territory, for example, where nearly 40 per cent of the Indigenous population is 15 years of age or younger and where the number of young people in that age category is growing (Hunter, Kinfu & Taylor 2003). While it is difficult to identify causal relationships, the social cost to Indigenous communities of the

decision by young people to leave school may be high. Mental health problems, criminal activity, drug abuse and other social welfare issues are increasing among this group both in the Northern Territory and the rest of the nation (Ogilvie & Van Zyl 2001; Walker & McDonald 1995).

Clearly, there is a need for policy and program options that will re-engage this growing population of young people. An independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory (Collins 1999) and the report *Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory* (NTDEET 2004) each identified an urgent need to address the transitions from school to adulthood for Indigenous youth. These reviews recognise the seemingly intractable problem of early school leaving among Indigenous youth in remote areas, and both cited the need for new options and career pathways that better fit the needs and aspirations of young people and their communities. In some communities, early school leaving is simply a consequence of the fact that secondary studies are not locally available, but in many others it is because young people believe education and training are meaningless to both their future lives and current experiences.

Early school leaving in remote communities takes place in the context of a relative absence of a labour market and a lack of employment opportunities for Indigenous youth. A recent national study of vocational education among Indigenous Australians showed that employment opportunities continue to be severely limited in remote areas, and so training programs need to relate more closely to the conditions and opportunities that arise in such places (Gelade & Stehlik 2004). The study also found that family and community responsibilities combine with connection to land to prevent learners in such places from re-locating to urban settings where more employment options exist. One alternative for remote area students who have left or who are at-risk of leaving school is to develop curricula or non-school based transition programs that build on community activities and the deep cultural connection to land.

There are important unexplored opportunities in many parts of remote Australia. In the Northern Territory, an estimated 72 per cent of the Indigenous population reside on Indigenous land, and land and resource management needs and opportunities are of growing importance. A number of Indigenous -community-based land and resource management programs have been developed in remote areas of the Northern Territory where people are living on country. There are currently about 35 Indigenous ranger programs coordinated by the Northern Land Council (NLC) that provide paid work for about 300 people. These are part of a larger NLC 'Caring for Country' land and sea management program with additional support from government agencies and some non-government organisations. Combining Indigenous customary and western science-based knowledge and practice, Indigenous rangers engage in a wide range of land resource management activities. For example, ranger programs involve the control and eradication of weeds and feral animals, fire management, the sustainable harvesting of wildlife and plant materials, and the protection of sacred sites on traditional lands (Cochrane 2005). Some ranger programs focus on explorations of the commercial utilisation of plants and wildlife, while others involve the more public development of tourism ventures. Many of these activities are essential services that Indigenous rangers currently perform or could provide to their regions—and to the nation—and they are increasingly important for ecological protection, repair and sustainability.[2]

Such programs provide sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities for adult rangers, both men and women, and serve conservation and economic development ends in communities remote from the mainstream labour market (Altman & Whitehead 2003). Where Indigenous ranger programs exist, there is invariably interest by young people in pursuing such activity as a career that melds meaningful culturally-based work with both customary and western-based knowledge and skills. Some limited activity in the form of 'junior ranger' programs for young people in two or three Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory show promise. These initiatives are exciting because employment opportunities are extremely rare in remote areas and many, if not most, Indigenous people in such areas have shown themselves to be uninterested in the largely unrealistic prospect of leaving their homes, families and traditional country to seek employment in metropolitan regions. Ultimately, as Boughton and Durnan have suggested, these sorts of programs are critical for building a skill base for regional economic development (Boughton & Durnan 2004).

There are significant recent changes to Indigenous affairs in Australia that might be used to address some of these issues. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was a national body with an elected Board of Commissioners representing their Indigenous constituents around the country. In 2005, the Australian Parliament dissolved ATSIC and replaced that elected body with the government's hand-picked National Indigenous Council, which was charged with advising the government on Indigenous issues. In addition, the government moved to 'mainstream' Indigenous-specific programs to increase efficiency and to enable the government to deal 'directly' with Indigenous communities (ostensibly impossible through the democratically elected body). Part of this approach involves the negotiation of 'Shared Responsibility Agreements' (SRAs) wherein local communities, regions, families or individuals can negotiate directly with government for the provision of some agreed upon goods and/or services (e.g. petrol bowsers or a public swimming pool). Officially, these goods and services are paid for from funds that government says would normally be received by individuals as 'supplementary benefits', not citizenship entitlements, though some have been critical of decisions to fund what many consider normal public infrastructure (e.g. petrol bowsers). In return, and in the context of what is commonly referred to as the doctrine of 'mutual obligation', Indigenous communities, families and/or individuals agree to 'share responsibility' by negotiating what their contribution to the Agreement will be. This can include behaviour change initiatives such as, for example, ensuring children are bathed and made to attend school. While there has been some considerable hostility to this approach, some communities are taking advantage of these 'new arrangements' and entering into SRAs to secure goods and services they would have difficulty obtaining otherwise. These 'new arrangements' may open up a range of opportunities for new types of partnerships and community-based programs to employ and re-engage young people in their communities.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, REMOTE AUSTRALIA AND CANADA: CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC SIMILARITIES

Before detailing some of the features of the JCR program and exploring how features of that program might be adapted to address some of the critical problems faced by Indigenous youth in remote Australia, it is useful to draw some basic comparisons between Canada and Australia. At the national level, there are some surprising similarities between the two countries. Both are among the largest countries in the world. Canada is the world's second largest country with a land mass of about 26 million hectares, while Australia is the world's fourth largest with a land mass of about 20 million hectares. Both countries include vast expanses of lightly populated land remote from the population concentrations centred about the major capital cities. In Canada, the major clusters of population among the country's 30 million citizens are along the more temperate southern border; similarly, most of Australia's population of 20 million is concentrated along the more hospitable south eastern coastline. Economically, both countries are similar in terms of per capita Gross Domestic Product: Canada's is US$31,500 and Australia's is US$30,700.

Both countries are home to Aboriginal populations, many but not all of whom were displaced from their traditional lands during the process of colonisation. It is appropriate to acknowledge that there are clearly important differences between the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the two countries. For example, given the earlier colonisation of Canada, Indigenous people there have had several generations more time to adjust and adapt themselves and their societies to the previously unimaginable changes colonisation brought with it. Perhaps one result of that differing history is that a much higher proportion of native people in Canada (known there as First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples) today hold educational qualifications and move more easily within the dominant society than do their Indigenous Australian counterparts. In addition, many—though not all—Indigenous peoples of Canada hold treaties with the Canadian government which provide them with a range of substantial property and other economic interests; in Australia there has never been a treaty between the Crown and any of Australia's Indigenous peoples. Indeed, the Australian High Court took until 1992 to reject the doctrine of *terra nullius*—the legal fiction that, when claimed by Britain in 1788, Australia was 'empty land' belonging to no one.

The Aboriginal peoples in both countries today are culturally diverse, with many different languages and differing histories of contact; these original peoples comprise about 3 per cent of the total population in both countries. Significant proportions of those populations live in remote areas, on traditional lands where labour markets are limited or non-existent. Indeed, in both places Indigenous people are often the only residents in sensitive border areas far away from the population concentrated in urban areas. Engagement with the customary economy is variable with some groups still actively involved in hunting, fishing and other traditional activities involving care for local lands and resources. While there are certainly exceptions, Indigenous people in both countries are the most economically and socially disadvantaged peoples of their respective countries. Their populations are young in comparison to the non-Indigenous population and they are growing in size. Compared to non-Indigenous peoples, both suffer higher levels of poverty, lower rates

of engagement and completion of education and lower rates of employment. Both groups of Indigenous people suffer higher rates of disease, substance abuse and suicide, particularly among the young. In addition, both have suffered relatively recent social traumas at the hands of the governments of the day.[3]

THE CANADIAN RANGERS

The Canadian Rangers were established in 1947 as part-time reservists resident in remote, isolated and coastal First Nations or Inuit communities. They were preceded by the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, a lightly armed irregular force of citizens who provided a home defence force during World War II. That force was disbanded in 1947 after the surrender of Japan. The Canadian Rangers were established to provide a military presence in remote areas that were not easily accessible for regular military patrol yet were populated by Indigenous citizens, some of whom had served in the Canadian Defence Forces. Today in Canada there are 4,000 Canadian Rangers in 165 communities who provide local expertise, guidance and advice to regular defence force personnel. They also undertake coast watch and regional surveillance, and report on unusual activities such as unauthorised fishing or illegal immigration. The Rangers have become particularly important in maintaining Canadian claims of sovereignty in distant regions where borders remain in dispute. The Canadian Rangers also provide assistance with search and rescue activities and are often the first on the scene to organise and provide assistance and relief from natural or other disasters. Many of the Aboriginal Rangers are also community leaders and act as role models for young people in their communities. In that capacity, the Canadian Rangers provide support for the JCR program.

THE JUNIOR CANADIAN RANGERS (JCRS)

Canada has had some form of military cadet program since the 1860s. Focused primarily on drill training, physical fitness and the instillation of leadership skills, such programs are intended to foster interest in military service among young people. Most of the contemporary cadet programs operate in the more densely populated southern regions of the country. Today there are about 55,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who participate as Royal Canadian Air, Sea and Army Cadets.

In 1996, a new program was established to serve the needs of young people in communities where isolation and cultural differences meant that existing military cadet programs were not viable. The JCR program is a community-based joint venture by the Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces in conjunction with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. In communities where the program has been established, it is linked directly to existing Canadian Ranger patrols and grew out of an interest on the part of young people to participate in a youth program modelled on the adult Ranger activities. Canadian Rangers and local community volunteers run the program with assistance from Ranger Instructors who visit patrols at least three times each year. JCR patrols comprise boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18. The size of the patrol varies, but average about 30 young people. Patrols are located in remote, isolated and costal

Fig. 1. JCRs at summer camp

Source: Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces, Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Coordinating Cell, Ottawa.

communities, with 40 per cent located north of the 60th parallel. Consequently, the composition of the patrols is predominantly Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit or Métis). In 2005 there were 3,014 Junior Rangers in 104 patrols in all provinces and territories except Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; the program will expand to 3,900 Junior Rangers by 2008.

The vision of the Canadian Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces for the JCR Program is stated as follows:

> In a dynamic and learning partnership, the Junior Canadian Rangers Programme strives to strengthen remote and isolated Canadian communities through an altruistic, responsible and practical youth programme that embraces culture, tradition, promotes healthy living and positive self-image, and reflects the proud military legacy of the Canadian Rangers (Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces 2005).

Fig. 2. Location of Canadian Ranger and JCR Patrols, May 2005
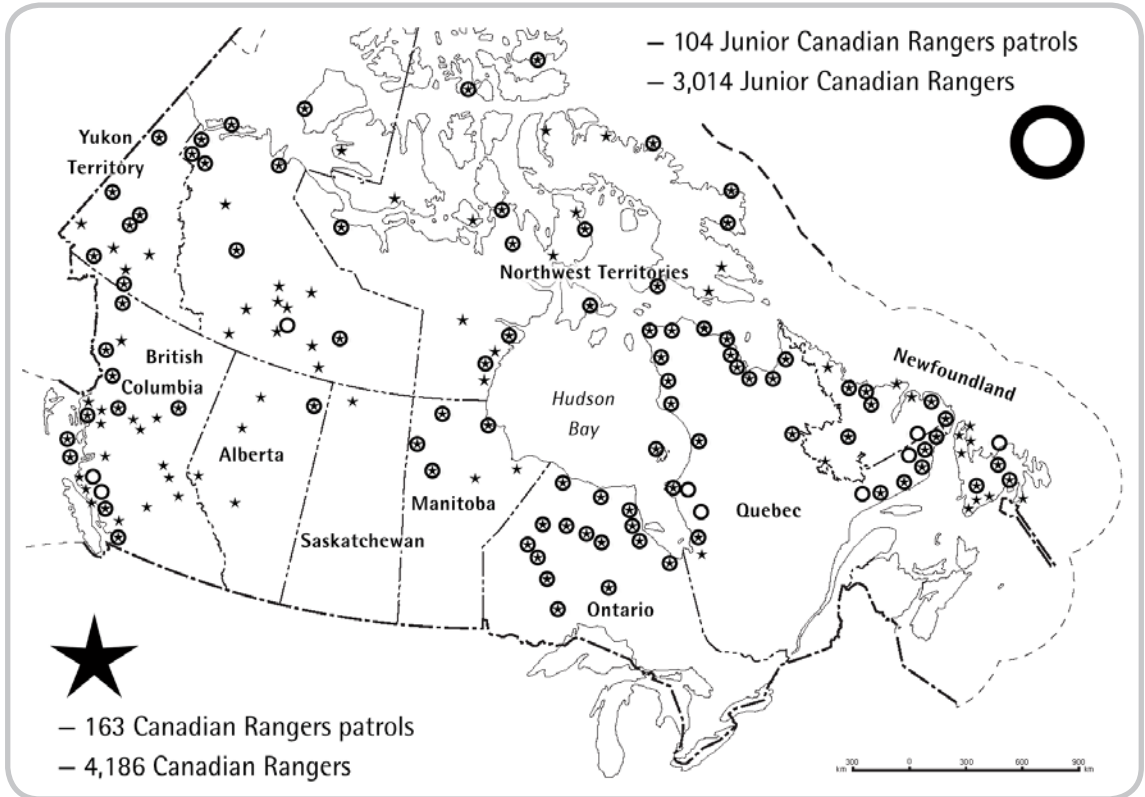
Note: A JCR patrol must have a Canadian Ranger patrol to support.
Source: Adopted from Canadian Department of National Defence, Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Coordinating Cell, Ottawa.

The Canadian Forces describe the JCR program as primarily 'altruistic'. Official documentation and publicity clearly articulates the view that the military invests in the program out of a sense of national responsibility for the well-being and future health of Canadian Aboriginal youth and their communities. While there is certainly a strong theme of capacity development that runs through the program, and while training activities are decidedly purposeful and practical, the program is clearly structured to enhance positive self-image and to strengthen communities.

One of the important features of the program, in comparison to mainstream cadet programs, is the emphasis on and integration of the program with traditional cultures and lifestyles. That emphasis is reflected in the objectives of the program which are to impart traditional skills, life skills and ranger skills. The traditional skills component of the training is determined by each local community and so will differ from patrol to patrol and from region to region. For example, most JCR patrols will include training on living off the land but where an arctic community may include a skill such as ice fishing, a community in a subarctic region

Fig. 3. The JCR 'three circles of skills': Ranger, Traditional and Life

might include caribou hunting. Traditional sports and traditional arts, for example would also take different forms in different locations while most communities across the country would incorporate some activity based around respect for and interaction with elders. Ranger skills are developed out of a set curriculum determined by the Canadian Forces and include training involving in safe firearms use, marching and drill, first aid, building an emergency shelter, navigation, teamwork and the like. The third component of the training, life skills, focuses on skills for leadership and individual and community health. For example, Junior Rangers work to explore and develop knowledge and skills in public speaking, spirituality, recreation, substance abuse prevention, health and fitness. Fig. 3 depicts the interrelationship of those three circles of skills.

The JCR program is designed to be flexible, enabling adaptation of a nationally consistent training framework to the unique features and varying needs of remote and isolated communities. About 40 per cent of the program content is mandated by Canadian Forces, while the remaining 60 per cent is determined in

Fig. 4. JCRs practicing ranger (marksmanship) skills

Source: Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces, Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Coordinating Cell, Ottawa.

consultation with individual communities. The national training model that underpins all Junior Canadian Training comprises three thematic learning units: community service and being a good role model; outdoor safety, first aid and group dynamic; and being competent on the land.

The pedagogical foundation of the JCR program is well developed yet flexible. Fig. 5 illustrates the hybrid nature of the curricular and learning theories that underpin program activities. While many of the learning activities are experience-based, where young people learn new skills by carrying out tasks or activities, they are shaped so that many have a vocational component. In this way acquired skills often have relevance for future employment. Learning in the program is fundamentally a social activity and the patrol is effectively a community of practice where the acquisition of new skills and knowledge coincide with changes of identity and status. Many of the patrol activities are framed to make learning challenging; they are 'brain-based' or problem-based with concrete outcomes clearly identified as within reach of the young participants. The

Fig. 5. The JCR curriculum hybrid
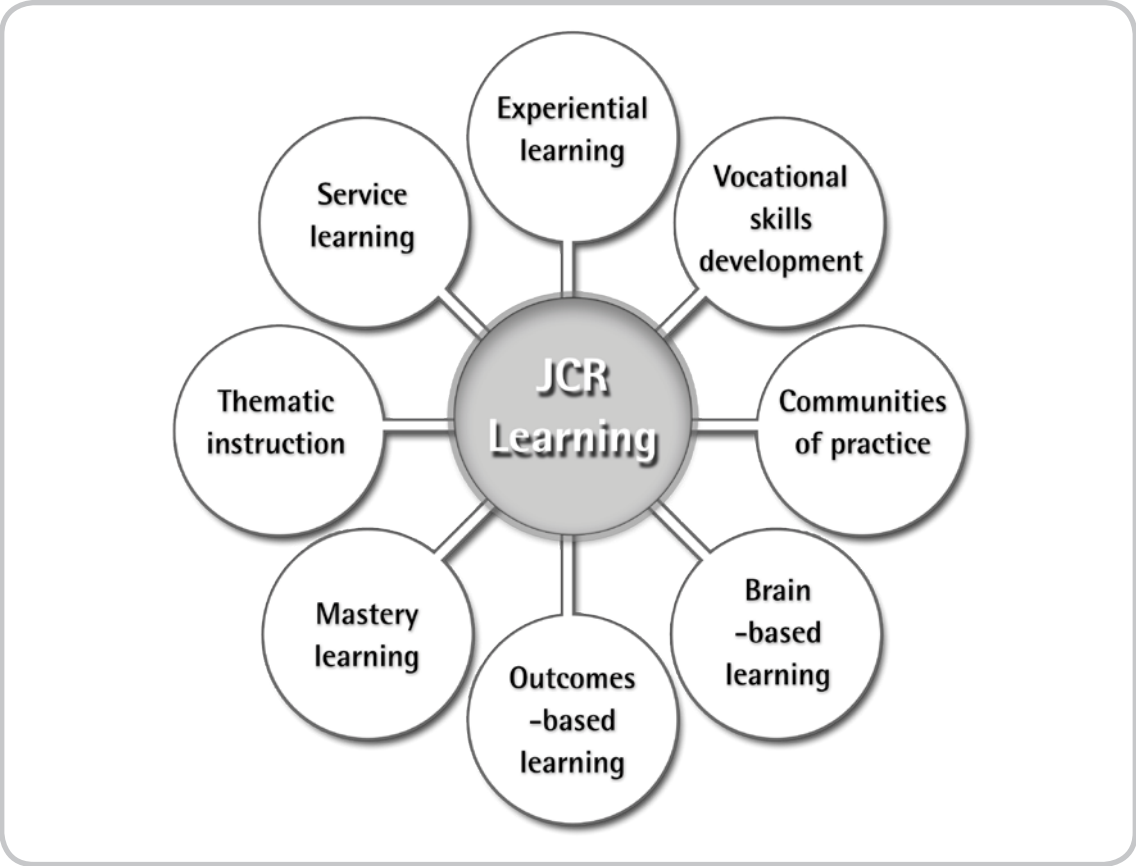
focus on learning is mastery, not content, and Junior Rangers work through and revisit tasks and challenges in order to build skill and confidence. As mentioned above, learning is organised around a set of themes that are at once broad but distinct. Finally, much of the learning undertaken by the young people is linked to the needs of the community so that the practical skill and knowledge gained is of immediate and future value to the wider community. Learning, in this sense, has a service focus involving the practical application of knowledge in service to the community rather than the accumulation of abstract concepts or skills that might at some point be of value solely to the individual.

Learning is activity-based for the most part and is structured over an annual cycle. Ideally, patrols meet weekly for training, with occasional full day sessions. Training is provided by Canadian Rangers and volunteers from the community with occasional assistance from visiting Canadian Ranger Instructors who are full-time soldiers working with various Ranger and Junior Ranger patrols within a defined region.

**Fig. 6. A JCR patrol travelling by skidoo on a field training exercise**

Source: Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces, Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Coordinating Cell, Ottawa.

Community activities take place when opportunities arise. For example, JCR patrols, dressed in uniforms of green caps and jumpers, are often called upon to assist with community events. Field training exercises, involving at minimum two days and one night on the land, are organised at least three times a year. The year culminates with a ten day summer training camp for selected JCRs. Chosen by the local adult committee, ten Junior Rangers from each patrol attend a summer camp involving joint training with other Junior Rangers from other patrols from the region. The site changes each year and is selected to provide a diverse set of experiences for the participants.

Training is staged and seasonal so that young people acquire knowledge, develop and then ultimately put into practice their skills in real-life situations. For example, in the context of field training exercises, the end goal for JCR patrols is to acquire the skills and capacity to 'be able to move efficiently and effectively 6-8 hours across land or water and stay overnight in improvised shelters, being instructed, supervised and led

Fig. 7. JCRs practicing traditional skills (ice fishing)

Source: Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces, Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Coordinating Cell, Ottawa.

in part by JCRs' (Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces 2005: 89). In the middle of winter, where temperatures can drop to -45 degrees Celsius, this is an enormous challenge for young people but one that many routinely accomplish.

Progress of the Junior Rangers through the training activities is constantly monitored and recorded but unlike some other youth programs (e.g. Canadian Forces Cadet programs, Scouts Canada) there is no rank or insignia of competence in particular skills. Instead, skill and competence are assessed and gauged in terms of three development periods: basic, advanced and leader. The first two of these periods involve stages where Junior Rangers are gaining new skills through instruction and practice. Activities are carefully structured and progress measured through check lists of competency. The third stage is more advanced and involves a greater degree of theoretical knowledge and mentoring, coaching and leading of basic and advanced period Junior Rangers. The Development Periods are designed to frame the experience of young people over time and to align with their social and cognitive abilities and status. Fig. 8 illustrates the interrelationship of

the three development periods. Typically, a young person would enter the program at 12 years of age as a novice or beginner, with few skills and limited or no competence in Junior Ranger activities. By the time that Junior Ranger has reached the age of 14 or 15 he or she has accumulated a range of skills and can operate with little supervision. By the time that same Junior Ranger has reached the age of 16 he or she may have progressed to the point where a leadership role can be assumed and younger members of the patrol can be supervised and instructed by that young person.

Within the training structure are dozens of skills and competencies that are expected of JCRs at the various development periods. For example, a JCR at the basic development period would be expected to be able to describe the history or story of the JCRs. He or she would also be expected to be able to orient and set up a tent, follow camp routines, build and light a fire, discuss fire safety, demonstrate small-engine maintenance and demonstrate knowledge of and competency with a wide range of other skills.

As an advanced level JCR, a young person would be expected to have developed some facility as a peer coach who can teach a skill. He or she would also be expected to show a wide range of skills and knowledge. For example, an advanced level JCR would be able to operate a radio, make water safe for drinking, demonstrate repairs on a vehicle, explain how to react to nuisance and hazardous animals, and navigate with a map across terrain.

At the leader level, a JCR is essentially that: he or she must demonstrate an ability to plan and manage a range of activities and show problem-solving skills and good judgement. Skills and knowledge at this level are more abstract and involve more responsibility for other members of the patrol. Among the skills at this level are planning and supervision of field training exercises, management of an emergency, assessing risk, assigning roles in a crisis plan, and the instruction of basic and advanced period JCRs.

A recent addition to the life skills component of the JCR training model is a program intended to provide harassment and abuse education and prevention. Titled PHASE (Preventing Harassment and Abuse through Successful Education) the program comprises a series of training modules led by a trained facilitator and includes videos, stories, activities, and games. The videos, incorporating real-life scenarios involving young actors as JCRs, show how to recognise harassment and cover four kinds of abuse: emotional, physical, sexual and neglect. The videos are used to open up discussion among JCRs and to provide a backdrop for handling actual cases if they arise. It is arguably the most controversial of all the elements of the JCR program in that it both acknowledges a difficult and painful reality in many communities and provides information that effectively empowers young people who have been victims of abuse and harassment. Prior to introduction of the training activities, each community received a presentation of the materials and had an opportunity to ask questions of the specially trained PHASE coordinator/instructor. Each community was asked to give permission for the program to be incorporated and so far no community has refused.

Annual program funds support five geographic CRPG (Canadian Ranger Patrol Group) Regions and cover personnel costs and program implementation. Personnel costs include pay for staff at each of the CRPG headquarters and 42 days pay each for Canadian Ranger Corporals who reside in the communities where

Fig. 8. JCR Development Periods

Development Period		Factors (related to social and cognitive abilities and status)
Basic	1.	Can perform under direct supervision, listens to and follows direction, trial and error social interaction, can express feelings;
	2.	Professes no ability or experience in skill, cannot perform complex skill, can perform simple skill in isolation;
	3.	12-13 years old; and
	4.	Peers view as beginner, novice.
Advanced	1.	Can perform with little supervision, cooperates with peers, can express thoughts and ideas;
	2.	Professes ability and experience in skill, can perform complex skill when given direction and assistance, can use simple skill in concert with other related skills;
	3.	14-15 years old; and
	4.	Peers align with as team member to accomplish activity.
Leader	1.	Can supervise or perform with no supervision, reaches out to others, can interpret others intentions, listens;
	2.	Can teach or lead skill activity, can perform complex skill when given direction, understands theory and can improvise simple skills and adapt to change;
	3.	16+ years old; and
	4.	Peers look to for guidance, leadership or example.

Source: Adapted from the JCR Draft National Training Guidance, Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces 2005.

JCR patrols have been established. Program implementation funds are allocated to each patrol, taking into account the varying costs of funding three field training exercises each year in remote or extremely remote areas. The program funds cover Instructor travel (the largest portion of the funds), and field exercise expenses (food, fuel, equipment: rifles, shirts, caps, stoves, global positioning systems (GPS) etc.) In Quebec, for example, there are 28 JCR patrols. Existing patrols are costed at CAN$14,600 per year for program delivery; new patrols receive a higher initial allocation to cover establishment and outfitting costs of equipment that remains in the community, locked in a container. In the Quebec region Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (2CRPG) there is a budget for each patrol of about $3,000 a year for ongoing operation of the program. Additional costs are expected to be covered by the community and sometimes by sponsors (e.g. Air Inuit).

Fig. 9. JCR developing life skills (leadership)

Source: Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces, Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Coordinating Cell, Ottawa.

THE JCR PROGRAM: WHAT IS ITS VALUE TO CANADA?

The JCR program is designed to achieve a number of specific outcomes. At the level of individual Junior Rangers, the program aims to produce individuals who are competent living on the land. Through staged, practical training the program develops individual survival skills so that individuals are able to secure food, water and shelter. It promotes knowledge of navigation and communication technologies such GPS, radio, and a range of different types of transport and construction machinery and tools. It also aims to provide individuals with a capacity to plan and manage activities on the land and to cope with emergencies. These various skills are essential in remote and often harsh environments where the transmission of traditional cultural knowledge has been disrupted or lost. The program also aims to promote among Junior Rangers a sense of service to the community, to assist in developing young people who are actively engaged rather

Fig. 10. Canadian Rangers teaching knot tying skills to JCRs

than withdrawn from life in the community, who are assets rather than liabilities. Ultimately the program is about cultivating capacity, confidence, leadership and a healthy environment. A major evaluation of the JCR program is about to commence. The evaluation will include an assessment of how well the program has achieved its aims.

The JCR program involves an enormous commitment of resources on the part of the Canadian Forces, and it may not be immediately clear why the Department of Defence should be involved in a domestic social program such as this. Indeed, the same question should be asked in Australia. Interestingly, some of the Canadian policy and program documentation states that altruism is behind the program. The Command of the Canadian Forces have taken up what could be argued to be a governmental moral imperative, a duty of care for citizens, especially for the most disadvantaged in society. Certainly, some remote Indigenous communities in Canada are in crisis: meaningful work is limited or non-existent, health is in decline, social

and family dysfunction on the rise and a sense of hopelessness all pervasive. The program contributes to remote Indigenous community reinvigoration, stability and ultimately survival in providing young people with real skills that contribute to social capital; it is a program that also aims to develop the next generation of leaders.

While one could argue about whether or not moral imperatives underpin the program, the JCR program yields some very practical political and social benefits for the Canadian nation. Like Australia, most of Canada is remote and isolated from the main population centres in the more temperate south, yet Indigenous people know the country well and continue by choice and spiritual connection to remain on their traditional lands. The existence of trained and equipped patrols of young people is of enormous potential benefit to the nation. Search and rescue and disaster relief are examples of needs where Ranger skills come immediately into play. Yet the program has some very practical political value as well. Again, like Australia, the remote, lightly populated regions of the Canadian north are continually subject to illegal fishing, smuggling and other activities that threaten Canadian sovereignty. The coast watch program that arose during the World War II continues to this day. Some remote areas in the north are still politically contested and uniformed, equipped patrols provide an important political presence in the region. The JCR program, though never officially presented as such, is clearly an avenue for the development of future Canadian Rangers.

THE JCRs: WHAT LESSONS FOR AUSTRALIA?

The challenges for Australia in meeting the needs of young Indigenous people and in assisting in developing leadership and community health and well being are surprisingly similar to those facing Canada, and there are some insights and experiences from Canada that could be easily translated into the Australian context. The Australian Defence Forces have an established tradition of involvement with Indigenous people in remote regions going back to the formation of the 2/1 North Australia Observer Unit (2/1 NAOU) in 1942. The Regional Force Surveillance Units, Northwest Mobile Force (NORFORCE), the 51st Battalion Far North Queensland Regiment (51FNQR) and the Pilbara Regiment (Pilbara Regt) are all involved in surveillance and reconnaissance in the most remote regions of Australia, and all engage with Indigenous people in the region to some degree. In recent years the Australian Defence Forces have also played an active though limited role in some infrastructure development in remote regions. As a result, there remains enormous good will among Indigenous communities, and opportunities exist for further development of programs beyond the limited cadet programs for Indigenous youth. Some reflections on the JCR which may have value for Australian policy challenges and options are presented below.

Build new traditions

While tradition is a powerful integrative force within the military, in some contexts it is necessary to adapt old traditions or build new ones. The Canadian Junior Ranger program grew out of the realisation that traditional cadet programs could not easily accommodate the cultural differences and extreme isolation of many remote Indigenous communities. With a focus on deep engagement of the local community in both

the design and delivery of program content, the Canadian program has been an overwhelming success. In its desire to more effectively draw young people into its programs the Australian Defence Forces may wish to review more fully the degree to which new forms of programs would be appropriate in remote Australia.

Consult and engage the community

Successful program development hinges on comprehensive community consultation, at both the development and implementation stages. One of the measures of the health of the Canadian program in any community is the degree of involvement from adults in the community and that involvement needs to be cultivated over the life of the program. Indeed, the Canadian experience suggests that community engagement drives the program.

Focus on what matters to young people

One of the lessons from the Canadian experience is the importance of building programs around meaningful activity. In both Australia and Canada, the disaffection of youth accelerates in the teenage years, a time when they perceive education to be increasingly irrelevant to their lives. The mix of ranger, life and traditional skills appears to be a very effective way to increase perceptions of relevance. The inclusion of training experiences that promote individual skill development and pride in traditional culture appears to be one of the keys to the success of the Canadian program.

Understand how learning occurs

Knowledge is most effectively gained when the mechanism for learning is appropriate to the material used and the outcome desired. The Canadian program is highly successful in large part because it is well grounded in learning theory. In working with Indigenous Australian youth who are often disaffected with education and training and disengaged from their communities, it is particularly important that appropriate pedagogy is employed.

Deploy the positive power of political will

One of the long recognised strengths of the military as an organisation is the structure of command. While there is certainly a need for consultation, there is great advantage to working through a structure where decisions can be made and implemented quickly and efficiently. In both Canada and Australia, the capacity of the military to deploy personnel and materials and to focus energies without lengthy deliberation provides a unique opportunity to develop and implement new approaches to old problems. In addition, in the context of Australia's 'new arrangements' in Indigenous affairs, there are opportunities for direct collaborations with communities that have never before been considered. Indeed, the current political climate is such that new ideas have currency they may not have had in the past.

Develop opportunities of partnerships

One of the features of the Canadian Junior Rangers program is flexibility and the ability to connect locally or regionally with other parts of the community: schools may open their doors to allow patrol meetings, regional airlines might sponsor travel by patrol members, police might volunteer equipment or staff to assist with training. While the military might have access to key resources and the facility to deploy them quickly, the Canadian program is firmly embedded in the community. In Australia, particularly in the context of the 'new arrangements' in Indigenous affairs, there may be some important opportunities for partnerships with other government departments and agencies, local communities and non-government organisations that could assist in developing some version of a Junior Ranger program.

Exchange personnel

An exchange of personnel between Australia and Canada would be sensible and valuable first step toward developing a new—or enhancing existing—military-based youth programs in Australia. For example, one of the key components of the JCR program is the Ranger Instructor, a full-time staff member who visits the local patrols in their region several times a year to work with adults and Junior Rangers; an opportunity for Australian personnel to work with a Canadian Ranger Instructor either in Canada or in Australia would be invaluable. Similarly, a Canadian Ranger Instructor could gain valuable new insights from an opportunity to work with staff from the Australian Defence Force Cadets program.

Exchange program and curriculum materials

The Canadian program has been carefully and exhaustively developed and there is a wealth of written material that could be adopted or adapted in the Australian context. Policy documents, procedures and activity plans would no doubt be of interest and value to Australian personnel. Similarly, the Canadian counterparts are continually refining and extending the JCR program and have expressed interest in exchanging program and curriculum materials.

NOTES

1.   The apparent retention rate is one of a group of outcome measures useful for gauging student progress through school. It is a term used to describe the progress of a cohort of full-time students through secondary school in a particular year. The Year 12 apparent retention rate for 2003, for example, is calculated by dividing the number of students who are enrolled in Year 12 in 2003 by the number of students who started Year 7/8 in 1998 or 1999 (students in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT enter secondary school in Year 7, while the others become secondary students in Year 8). Calculated in this way, retention rates cannot track individual students, rather they measure changes in numbers within a cohort over time. Consequently they provide an 'apparent' rather than actual retention rate and are more correctly referred to as such.

2.   In late 2005, Indigenous Djelk Sea Rangers employed by the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) apprehended an illegal foreign fishing vessel on the central Arnhem Land coast and held its crew until Commonwealth Coastwatch officers arrived to take possession of the boat and remand the fishermen into custody. Though the capture of the vessel and crew by Indigenous rangers was unusual, sightings and reportings of illegal fishermen by the rangers are an increasingly common occurrence. Ranger operations are funded through two sources: the Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) scheme—a Commonwealth program unique to Indigenous Australian communities wherein individuals pool welfare benefits and then work part-time on community projects to earn those entitlements—and a small wage top-up from BAC. The equipment to undertake aerial and marine surveillance is also provided by BAC. The equity of this situation has been called into question in the sense that national security is being monitored by para-professionals who only receive limited public support under the work-for-the-dole CDEP scheme. The Australian government has rejected proposals (to date) to more formally employ such Indigenous rangers in the national interest. This situation has had some political ramifications for the Australian government as it illustrates the inadequacy of current 'remote sensing' efforts to provide border security and marine management in Australia's sparsely populated and vast North.

3.   Attempting a resolution of 'the Indian problem', mostly church-run, government-funded residential schools for native children were established to prepare Canadian Aboriginal children for life in white society. There were as many as 100 such institutions across the country through which about 100,000 individuals passed. In a form of forced assimilation, thousands of Indian children were subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. In 1998 the Canadian federal government acknowledged and apologised for its role in this episode of Canadian history and the government has established a national resolution framework, a key principle of which is restitution payments to former students of the residential schools.

Australia's Indigenous people, on the other hand, suffered through what is commonly referred to as the trauma of 'the stolen generation' wherein mixed-descent children were removed, often forcibly, from their families and placed in orphanages or foster homes. A national enquiry, established in 1995, found that while it is nearly impossible to accurately determine the number of children removed, it is estimated that between one in three and one in ten children were taken from their families. Virtually all Indigenous families in Australia have been affected. As in Canada, the experiences of children placed in institutions were often harsh and long-lasting. Physical punishment was common and the risk and incidence of sexual abuse high. Unlike Canada, the Australian government has refused a formal apology, providing instead a statement 'deep and sincere regret that Indigenous Australians suffered injustices under the practices of past generations, and for the hurt and trauma that many Indigenous people continue to feel as a consequence of those practices' (Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 26 August 1999, p. 9,206). Where the Canadian government has committed to financial restitution, the Australian government has consistently refused and resisted such action.

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