

To Lead the Guns: The Need for Leadership Training on Officer Developmental Phase Courses.

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Leadership is paramount in the Canadian military, especially in the artillery. Without leaders, the Royal Regimental of Canadian Artillery (RCA) would have failed to meet the many challenges across its history. Without leaders, the critical fire support displayed by our Gunners on the muddy fields of France, the hedgerows of Normandy, the hills of Korea, and the deserts of Afghanistan would have failed. Leaders also have an essential role to play off the battlefield. As the CDS, General Eyre, has recently pointed out in *Trusted to Serve*, “Leaders have the most significant impact on CAF culture and cohesion.”¹ Within the military hierarchy, the all-important leadership skills are especially critical to the junior leader and their success. Former US Army LCol James McDonough stated that “the most compelling leadership position in our Army and probably anybody’s army for that matter, falls to the lieutenant,” because they bear the burden of the “two responsibilities of mission and soldiers.”² Given the importance of leadership for the new officer, one would think that the RCA would extensively train its officers in the art of leadership. Yet, the RCA does not conduct leadership training on the officer developmental phase (DP) courses. According to the training plans (and personal experience), on both the DP 1.1 and 1.2 courses, the candidate is assessed on leadership under a training annex called the *Leadership Aide Memoire*³. Nevertheless, this aide does not tie into any formal training on leadership that has been conducted and is just a list of things a leader should be and do. The bottom line is that because these courses do not provide meaningful and adequate leadership training, the Corps needs to do more to prepare its junior leaders for success. The issue becomes more pressing when, as former US Army LCol James McDonough has pointed out, “leadership

¹ General W.D. Eyre quoted in Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), *Canadian Armed Forces Ethos: Trusted to Serve* (A-PA-005-000/Ap-138), 3.

² James McDonough, “Leadership for the new Lieutenant,” *Military Review* (November 1988): 63.

³ Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre (CADTC), *DP1 Artillery Troop Commander – Mod 1/PRES DP1 mod 1 to mod 5*, A-P1-002-A10/PH-B01 (2023), D9-1-3/3, and CACTC, *DP1 Artillery Troop Commander- Mod 2 PRES DP1 Mod 6 (supplemental)*, A-P1-002-A10/PH-B01 (2023), D1- 1-2/2.

is what we expect from [junior leaders] ... It is leadership that will differentiate the winners and losers, the quick from the dead.”⁴ Without officers who can apply leadership, the Artillery Corps courts failure if, and likely when, the ultimate test of combat presents itself. As such, this short essay argues that the Corps should adopt leadership training on officer developmental courses while offering solutions to rectify the deficiency. Therefore, the RCA should institute leadership training on its developmental courses because leadership has always been essential to success in the profession of arms and leadership training meets the intent of *Trusted to Serve* and the recent RCA Modernization Narrative. Applying such training would be easy to achieve as the Corps could approach leadership training through formal or informal packages tied into courses that benefit new officers and strengthen instructor tools that enable the best-prepared officer to enter the Regiment.

Firstly, incorporating leadership training into Artillery officer courses is vital as leadership has always been essential for success within the profession of arms. Yet, this trait is sometimes too complex to draw from history books. Typically, great leaders do not acknowledge that they have acted as leaders. Instead, the facet of leadership is identified by those around them. Such is the case with the Earl of St. Vincent, Admiral Horatio Nelson's mentor during the Napoleonic Wars. Although he did not call Nelson a leader, the Earl noted that Nelson "possessed the magic art of infusing his own spirit into others."⁵ Another example of this is with General Dwight Eisenhower. Field Marshal Alan Brooke, not initially a fan of Eisenhower, commented that he was “Just a coordinator, a good mixer, [and] a champion of inter-allied cooperation...”⁶ Although it aimed to be an insult, there is no denying that Eisenhower's

⁴ McDonough, “Leadership for the new Lieutenant,” 63.

⁵ Andrew Roberts, *Leadership in War: Essential Lessons from Those Who Made History* (New York: Viking, 2019), 39.

⁶ Roberts, *Leadership in War: Essential Lessons from Those Who Made History*, 158.

leadership carried a large, allied force onto the beaches of mainland Europe in June 1944. These represent two cases among many in which an observer identifies leadership and its importance for the success of military leaders. In other cases, leaders within the profession of arms are recognizable as a result of their achievements rather than by a bystander or the individual themselves. One cannot deny that Hannibal required leadership to drive his army across the Alps into Roman territory. Although a more modern and obscure example, one would not refuse leadership accolades to Field Marshal Slim, who went forward from his headquarters on May 10th, 1943, to oversee the evacuation of his Army in Burma.⁷ In any case, the traits acknowledged or assessed to be present as part of a leader's actions provide vast arcs for research. Nelson and his “magic art” was a different type of leadership displayed than that of Eisenhower’s international team making with the allies in WWII. Hannibal’s ability to motivate an army thousands of miles from home to cross the mountains into the Roman heartland required a different type of leadership than Slim's steel will in ensuring his army was safe to the best of his ability. Ultimately, it matters not how the great military leaders of history are identified or what they do to achieve the title of leader. What matters is that leadership was always there in some form or another in each of these examples and all the examples of successful battlefield exploits. Its inability to pinpoint what exactly made these people leaders should not detract from continued research into them. Further, it should not detract from the Corps' desire to draw the lessons from those great leaders of history and attempt to hoist them onto their new officers. Doing so will leave the junior leader in a closer state to those leaders they may wish to imitate for the better.

⁷ William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2009), 115-18.

Second, the inclusion of leadership training on developmental phase courses for officers should be considered because it meets the intent of the Canadian Armed Forces *Trusted to Serve* doctrine and the recently released RCA Modernization Narrative. Released in 2022, *Trusted To Serve* has become the go-to document for what the forces expect of its soldier ethos. The CDS has even called *Trusted to Serve* “the most essential doctrine in the Canadian Armed Forces.”⁸ As such, it bears weight in discussion on the topic of building the RCA’s Gunners. The book covers three ethical principles, six military values, and eight professional expectations. All the principles could be tied to the necessity of leadership in some way. One of the expectations is aptly named “Leadership” and mentions that there is an expectation that the CAF will continue to develop its leaders and that “resilient leadership is critical to mission success.”⁹ As this document bears much weight, is relevant, and has been recently produced, it is clear that more leadership training meets the higher CAF intent of building resilient warriors. Similarly, in the RCA Modernization Narrative signed in November 2023, Director of Artillery Colonel Bouckaert speaks to the threats within the Royal Regiment that include the CAF’s “inability to evolve its culture,” along with the plague of other harmful activities like sexual misconduct, and hateful conduct.¹⁰ The Colonel’s solution presented near the end of the piece is “to necessitate continuous RCA leadership focus” and acknowledges the mentorship program, the Regimental Leaders Course, and a leadership symposium as keys to building the leadership capacity within the Regiment.¹¹ As the Colonel has acknowledged an issue within the Corps and has targeted leadership as necessary to rectify the problem, a proposal to provide a leadership package as part of developmental training for the future leaders of the Corps undoubtedly meets the Director's

⁸ CAF, *Canadian Armed Forces Ethos: Trusted to Serve*, 2.

⁹ *Ibid*, 36.

¹⁰ Krista Bouckaert, *Modernization Narrative: The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery* (November 22, 2023), 8-9.

¹¹ Bouckaert, *Modernization Narrative*, 9.

intent in focusing on leadership. Thus, the inclusion of leadership meets both the higher intent of the CAF's *Trusted to Serve* doctrine and the Artillery Corps' intent of building leadership capacity to deal with not only current problems but also problems of the future.

Given its importance, as mentioned above, there are two approaches the Corps could use to include this leadership training within the Artillery Officer developmental phase training. The first option is a formal program melded into the existing courses and training plans, and the second is an informal program that changes based on the planning and input of the tasked Course Officer. The first and arguably best option is a formal program that would add up to five days to the DP1.1 and DP1.2 courses to teach leadership techniques and stress their importance to new officers. These packages would be standardized and conducted before the tactical instruction of the course, in which students learn through various lectures, readings, focus groups, and guest lectures. Formal training guided by a rigid training plan would allow the Corps to produce leaders with similar leadership backgrounds and knowledge on which to draw. In turn, a program of this nature enables the Corps to participate in a valuable corrective feedback loop in which identified leadership failings at the unit level can be addressed in future training packages. In addition, given that Artillery officer training occurs over two courses, separate formal leadership packages present the ability to tailor training to different levels of leadership. For example, a DP1.1 leadership package could focus on different types of leadership, the application of professional expectations mentioned in *Trusted To Serve*¹², as well as guided discussions on problems that leaders deal with at the troop level. In comparison, a DP1.2 leadership package would take a step up and focus on developing an individual's leadership style concerning an environment in which hardship is present. This package could include the readings of memoirs

¹² CAF, *Canadian Armed Forces Ethos: Trusted to Serve*, 33-46.

focused on combat by individuals like Farley Mowat and George Blackburn. This package's guided discussions and guest lectures could deal with command and combat-related leadership dilemmas. In both cases, the expected result is a leader that, although their own, has the requisite exposure to leadership training and the application of leadership to aid them in their goal of guiding soldiers through the gauntlet of combat.

The second approach places the burden of leader training upon the tasked Course Officer. In this case, rather than formal training objectives, the Course Officer for the developmental phase course would instead draft a plan for leadership training while the course is in effect. The plan would still include lectures, readings, focus groups, and guest lectures but would be driven by the Course Officer with approval from the Commanding Officer rather than a rigid training plan. The downside of this method is two-fold. First, a program of this nature would rely on the Course Officer to be very engaged, and its content would be linked to the personality of the Course O. Second, it would likely have to be conducted outside the hours of regular training. As these courses are intensive, the prospect of training after hours may increase the candidates' stress. The benefits, however, are enticing. There would be no requirement to implement profound changes to training plans through standards and no need to add training days to a course, which, for anyone who has experienced it, appears to be the great bane of all training establishments. Instead, a potential course officer is provided with the intent to achieve and tackles it no different than any other task in day-to-day duties. A program developed in this way can achieve flexibility that the first type of program can not in that articles, lectures, and working groups can be done at reasonable times rather than in a formal scheduled setting.

Either of the above options presents a viable solution to the issue of the need for leadership training identified in this paper. Either choice also complements the existing DP1.1

and DP1.2 training plans. As mentioned above, both courses utilize the same Leadership Aide Memoire instructors use to assess candidates. The Aide Memoire chart includes four aspects of army ethos, nine principles of leadership, and eight traits of a leader.¹³ The chart assesses candidate leadership potential while on course but notes that “evaluating leadership is initially subjective, but can clearly become objective through painting a picture through trends and sound counselling.”¹⁴ This tool can be effective in tracking leadership failings while on course. However, as noted, leadership assessment is a subjective endeavour, and it is difficult for the instructor to assess something for which no standard has been taught. As such, presenting formal or informal classes on leadership to candidates initiates a standard against which to evaluate the candidates. With formal instruction, the instructor knows what was taught and can better initiate the proper warning should the student fail to meet expectations. This addition will strengthen the tools already available for instructors and ensure that students are held to a standard approved by the school rather than the whims of what an instructor believes or does not believe is leadership. Nevertheless, any elevated leadership training during the developmental phase training is better than that currently written in the training plan.

Upon considering the argument presented in this paper, one may suggest that leadership training can be conducted at the unit level to further the development of junior leaders once they complete training. Although this may alleviate the school’s responsibility to provide adequate training and provide a commander with the latitude to develop and implement their program, unit-led training may prove more challenging and less effective than school-led training for two reasons. The first reason is the tempo in many of the regular force units. Officers are a limited

¹³ CADTC, *DP1 Artillery Troop Commander – Mod 1/PRES DP1 mod 1 to mod 5*, D9-1-3/3, and CADTC, *DP1 Artillery Troop Commander- Mod 2 PRES DP1 Mod 6 (supplemental)*, D1- 1-2/2.

¹⁴ CADTC, *DP1 Artillery Troop Commander – Mod 1/PRES DP1 mod 1 to mod 5*, D9-1-3/3.

commodity and are regularly tasked to manage their troops, run courses, and plan or execute unit events and training. As a result, unit-directed leadership training, at its best, runs the risk of leaving out a significant amount of the junior officers within the Regiment who are otherwise engaged, and at its worst, takes the leader away from their most important job: providing leadership within and for the troop they lead. The second reason leadership training may prove burdensome and ineffectual at the unit level is that the period to develop the soldier into the leader the Corps wants has already passed. Once the junior officer is posted to a Regiment, they are thrown directly into the daunting trial of leading our nation's soldiers. The once ever-present eye of a dedicated course staff is no longer available to guide and correct the new leaders' actions. As a result, the decisions they make and the leadership they display are done so with little to no oversight. In this environment, the newly appointed officer will succeed or fail. For the new officer, a leadership training program at the unit level comes too late to rectify the faults they may already be projecting to their troops. Should the leader fail, there may be no level of training provided at the unit level that could mend the view of the leader within the eyes of their troops. As such, it behooves the Corps to mould the leader within the forge of developmental training rather than in the crucible of Regimental life where minor mistakes fuel the soldiers' gripes and major ones carry the possibility of loss of life.

In conclusion, the RCA should implement leadership training for its officers in its developmental phase courses. Leadership training is necessary because it is an inarguable historical reality that soldiers from every period are led to success by leaders in war and peace. Leadership training within the Corps also meets the higher intent of *Trusted to Serve* and the RCA Modernization Narrative. Acknowledging the need for leadership training produces the options detailed in this paper of a formal or informal leadership package that aims to benefit the

new officer by providing them with the tools to take charge and lead successfully in their new unit. An adopted training package, in both cases, only serves to strengthen the tools already available and ensure that the Corps is producing the best leaders that can be offered to the Gunners. Some of Canada's finest soldiers ply their trade in service to the guns. Leading them is not to be taken lightly and never for granted. The responsibility hoisted upon the junior officer from the day they enter their new Regiment is a large one; it's the Corps's responsibility to do its best to ensure they are ready to the fullest, and leadership training will place the Corps upon that path.

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