



USING CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS TO "EXPAND AND DEEPEN" RELATIONSHIPS WITH NORTHERN COMMUNITIES: EXAMPLES FROM ALASKA AND AUSTRALIA







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Strong, Secure, Engaged (2017) and the government of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANPF, September 2019) highlight the importance of relationship building and engagement between the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and northern Indigenous peoples as the military leverages its new capabilities to "support broader Government of Canada priorities."1 Over the last decade, the CAF has strengthened community engagement during routine operations, exercises, and annual deployments to and in the Canadian North, and its ongoing relationships with communities through the Canadian Rangers and the Junior Canadian Ranger program provide vital connections with local stakeholders and rightsholders.² In committing the defence team to enhance its Arctic capabilities, Strong, Secure, Engaged explains that the CAF will continue to "work to expand and deepen our extensive relationships with these communities." this also invites new ways to "work with territorial governments and Indigenous communities to ensure [that] the North achieves its full potential both in terms of resource development and community capacity building."³

The CAF's public description of Operation NANOOK places particular emphasis on its relationships with the "Indigenous communities" that form "the heart of Canada's North," a region that it works to strengthen "through collaborative and continuous discourse throughout the

year."4 Since its first iteration in 2007, this joint operation has allowed the CAF to strengthen its northern capabilities while addressing security and safety challenges that accompany climate change and increased human activity in the region. Bolstering cooperation between the CAF, other federal agencies and departments, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments, Inuit associations and regional corporations, and Northern communities more generally, has solidified relationships and mutual understanding, enhanced interoperability and readiness, and reaffirmed why a CAF presence brings positive benefits in and for Canada's North. Rebranded in 2018 as a year-round initiative, NANOOK now encompasses various deployments including NUNALIVUT, NANUKPUT, TATIGIIT, and TUUGALIK.5

To strengthen its "continuous and collaborative discourse" with Northerners, and to help realize the federal government's broader ANPF objectives, the CAF might look for new models and approaches in the remote northern regions of two close allies: the United States and Australia. The Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) exercises carried out by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) in Alaska and the long-standing Australian Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (AACAP) offer examples of how the CAF might consider broadening its engagement with remote northern Indigenous communities.

¹ Please note that a shorter version of this paper is scheduled to appear as an article in *Canadian Military Journal* 21/4 (Autumn 2021).

These relatively small but mutually beneficial deployments directly contribute to community health, well-being, and resilience, while providing training experiences to a wide cross-section of military personnel. While CAF leadership might be hesitant to commit to a multi-month deployment into a small Northern Canadian community for fear of over-whelming or over-burdening the community (or the military),⁶ careful relationship-building and an emphasis on practical benefits could alleviate such concerns.⁷

"THIS ABSOLUTELY PREPARES THEM FOR A DEPLOYMENT": INNOVATIVE READINESS TRAINING MISSIONS IN ALASKA

DoD's IRT initiatives aim to "produce mission-ready forces through military training opportunities that provide key services to underserved communities throughout the U.S."8 Specific objectives include the provision of "hands-on, real-world training to improve readiness and survivability in contingency environments," the cultivation of civil-military partnerships with a "culturally complex population," and the development of innovative resource management by leveraging "military contributions and community resources to multiply value and cost savings for participants."9 Projects begin with applications from federal, state, local, or tribal governments, non-profit entities, or community organizations asking for military assistance for projects and laying out what local support, funding, resources, and partners they can contribute. Applications must also certify that the military's assistance is not "reasonably available" from a commercial entity or that the private sector "has agreed to the provision of such services by the Armed Forces."10 Under the guidance of the Director, Civil-Military Training Policy, in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Integration, military services then choose projects based on current training needs and value.11 The military assistance provided under the IRT program generally includes health care delivery, infrastructure support (including runways, roads, bridges, buildings, marine installations), cybersecurity, youth training programs, and veterinary services.

In executing IRT projects for communities that

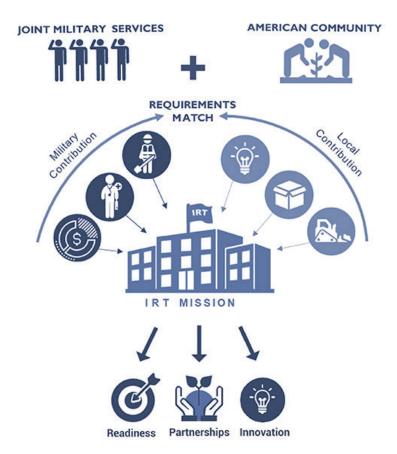


FIGURE 1: The framework, goals, and objectives of an Innovative Readiness Training mission. Infographic from the official DoD IRT website.

lack the resources to carry them out on their own, military units are given the chance to practice essential skills, including the organization and execution of complex engineering and construction tasks, the establishment of effective health services in new and challenging environments, and the provision of logistical, transportation, and communications support. 12 Most of these projects also involve a high degree of joint service cooperation, allowing units to practice their interoperability in a wide variety of settings, often for extended periods. 13 IRT initiatives usually demand a high degree of interagency, inter-governmental, and community coordination, and occasionally include multi-national partners, providing service members with experience "integrat[ing] as a joint and whole-ofsociety team to serve American citizens."14 DoD highlights that these projects are designed to increase deployment readiness and foster civil-military relations, while "enhancing morale



and contributing to military recruitment and retention." During times when budget constraints cut into military training opportunities, IRT is a "win-win" practice that provides the military with skill-building and communities with essential services. 16

IRT missions in Alaska provide soldiers with key training opportunities and experience in civil-military relations, joint service interoperability, engineering and construction skill-building, health care delivery, logistics, and transport. Personnel receive extensive, "real-world" training



FIGURE 2: The framework, goals, and objectives of an innovative readiness training mission. Infographic from the official <u>DoD IRT website</u>

on the equipment they will use and practices that they will employ when deployed on operations abroad.¹⁷ Reports on Alaskan IRT missions often highlight their role in boosting morale and encouraging personnel retention. These projects also provide the chance to work with international partners, including CAF members and other Canadian health professionals.¹⁸ In short, these experiences improve deployment readiness-the ultimate objective of the IRT program.

Conducted on an annual basis since 1995, Operation ARCTIC CARE is the longest running IRT initiative in Alaska and has become one of the largest recurring joint military medical and logistics training exercises in the U.S.¹⁹ The operation is designed to provide service members with experience deploying a range of medical capabilities to remote and underserviced communities in an austere northern environment, while providing required care to Alaskans who might not receive it otherwise or would have to travel long distances to acquire it.²⁰

ARCTIC CARE generally involves the two-week deployment of between 100 and 300 service personnel from the Reserve, National Guard, and active components of the Army, Navy, Air



FIGURE 3: Senior Airman Samantha Reed, an optometry technician at McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas, prepares for an eye examination at a health clinic in Kwethluk, Alaska, during Operation ARCTIC CARE 2009. That year the IRT mission focused on 11 villages in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



FIGURE 4: Veterinary care provides during Operation ARCTIC CARE 2014. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Force, Maine Corps, and Coast Guard, to multiple Alaskan villages. Each year, the initiative rotates to a different region, including the Northwest Arctic Borough, Kodiak Island Borough, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and Little Diomede Island. Service personnel offer a "blitz of services" in these communities, including medical, dental, and optometry care, on-site production of eyeglass prescriptions, pharmacy access, physical therapy, educational courses in CPR, First Aid, nutrition, and other health related topics, as well as veterinarian check-ups, spaying, and neutering.²¹ In ARCTIC CARE 2018, for instance, 140 practitioners deployed to 12 villages in the Maniilag Service Area of the Northwest Arctic Borough between 13 and 27 April treated over 2000 patients and, notably, offered cancer screenings and a surgery clinic to perform colonoscopies.²²These deployments depend on relationship building and are rooted in partnerships with an array of Native Corporations and Associations, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, the Alaska Area Native Health Services, state and local governments, and the communities.

Other IRT projects have focused on community-level infrastructure development. Since 2009, several initiatives have supported the relocation of the Yupik village of Newtok nine miles upriver to escape coastal erosion and flooding. The military's initial involvement established a footprint at the relocation site at Mertarvik, including a 13,272-square foot billeting pad using Dura-base matting. In 2010, resulted in the construction of a forward operating base and a 1500-foot access road, providing a link to the barge landing site, whence the bulk of construction supplies would flow. The next three years saw the construction of underground utilities for the community evacuation center, storage buildings, the establishment of a rock quarry, and other preparatory work that paved the way for the arrival of civilian contractors.²³ In summer 2019, the IRT program re-engaged with the relocation effort; military personnel deployed to Mertarvik to build roads, a landfill, heavy equipment shop, and thirteen

homes, which allowed for the first wave of residents to move into the new village.²⁴ Since 2012, another multi-year IRT mission focused on the small community of Old Harbor on Kodiak. The remote village is highly dependent on the fishing industry and desired to expand its operation by constructing a new cannery and hydro-electric plant.²⁵ Between 2012 and 2018, the program also successfully completed a 2000-foot runway extension requested by the community and has initiated work on the construction of a one-mile access road to the site for the proposed Old Harbor Hydroelectric Powerhouse and new Fish Hatchery Facility.²⁶

Operation ALASKAN ROAD is representative of the challenges and benefits associated with these joint task force projects. From 1997-2007, this operation involved the construction of a fourteen-mile road to connect the fly-in community of Metlakatla to a planned ferry terminal on Alaska's Inside Passage, which would provide







FIGURES 5, 6 (TOP AND SIDE): Some of the heavy equipment brought in by the military to support Innovative Readiness Training Old Harbor, Alaska. Photos from official website of the U.S. Marines

FIGURE 7 (BOTTOM): A C-130 lands on the extended runway con-

structed during Innovative Readiness Training Old Harbor, Alaska, 6 August 2018. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Tessa D. Watts. access to Ketchikan (the state's fifth most populous city). The federal government had first promised to build such a road six decades earlier, and community members insisted it would improve the medical, educational, and commercial opportunities available to the community.²⁷ Construction had to manage challenging geographical conditions, including dense muskeg (sometimes 25 feet deep), mountainous terrain (the project demanded blasting and moving 1.5 million cubic yards of rock), and heavy annual rainfall.²⁸ While these factors complicated the project, the experience enhanced training value - particularly the rock, given that U.S. military engineers usually work primarily with dirt.²⁹ To support the project, the military established Camp Wy Wuh, including administrative offices, barracks, warehouses, tool rooms, a water treatment plant, and wastewater treatment plant.³⁰ Every construction season approximately 12,000 personnel from units across the U.S., serving on two- to three-week rotations, slowly extended the road, overcoming environmental challenges, equipment malfunctions, and exhausting work days. The inclement weather, short construction season, design modifications, and the training needs of deployed personnel stretched the project over a decade,31 but a completed road was handed over to the community in August 2007.

Alaskan IRT initiatives offer different challenges and opportunities than those encountered in the lower 48 states, providing service personnel with experience operating in austere and often harsh northern environments. One reporter who interviewed personnel working on Operation ALASKAN ROAD noted:

A visitor looks at this rocky, chilly, mountainous, densely forested terrain and thinks: Alaska, America's last frontier. The Marine Corps looks at the same rugged landscape and thinks: the Korean Peninsula, a potential international hot spot. For the Marine Corps, Operation Alaskan Road is a priceless opportunity to get realistic training in building a combat-ready road through one of the most hostile, forbidding natural environments on Earth, such as the one they might face in Korea.³²



FIGURE 8: Camp Wy Wuh on Annette Island in southeast Alaska established in support of Operation ALASKAN ROAD. <u>U.S. Department of Defense Photo Essay</u>



FIGURE 9: Operation ALASKAN ROAD was executed in an austere environment that presented many engineering and construction challenges. <u>U.S. Department of Defense Photo Essay.</u>

The rugged environmental conditions, weather-related challenges, lack of infrastructure, and remoteness demand greater attention to planning and organization, require heightened operational adaptability, and test leadership.³³ In particular, operating in remote Alaskan villages provides an array of unique logistical and transportation challenges. If something goes wrong or equipment breaks, service personnel have to problem solve and self-generate on the spot because assistance and resupply is usually hundreds of miles away.34 The IRT team at Mertarvik, for example, was 600 miles away from the closest supplies, requiring them to use or re-purpose all of their materials wherever possible.³⁵ These deployments also offer significant opportunities for cross-cultural engagement, with personnel living full-time in Indigenous communities and participating in community life.36

Consequently, participants highlighted the value of these missions to them for deployments into challenging operating environments around the world. Those involved in Operation ARCTIC CARE stressed its value for simulating military-civilian humanitarian operations and health care delivery in times of crisis, conflict or disaster.³⁷ Alaska Army National Guard brigade engineer operations sergeant Seth Gordon, who deployed on the Old Harbor IRT mission over three seasons, echoed this sentiment: "It's a win-win situation; we get to travel to a remote location, operate out of a small camp much like a forward operating base and get training on equipment that is needed to complete this project."38 Electrician Chief Sqt. Philip Ankney with two deployments to Afghanistan, noted its similarity to "living on a FOB, being in the field and just working. My Marines that haven't deployed were exposed to a different culture and a different way of living. This absolutely prepares them for a deployment when they get the opportunity."39

Alaskan communities benefit from access to health care, new infrastructure, and enhanced relationships with the U.S. military. Cynthia Berns, the vice president of community and external affairs with Old Harbor Native







FIGURE 10-12 (ABOVE): Operation ALASKAN ROAD. <u>U.S. Department of Defense Photo Essay</u>



Corporation, explained how her community "built a wonderful friendship with so many service members that have come to help in our community. We will forever be thankful to the Marine Corps for coming to our village. They have truly made a lasting impact." Such accolades might serve to inspire Canadian officials, given the desire for CAF operations and training to have positive, "enduring effects" on socio-economic life in northern communities. 11

extended (although re-scaled owing to overstretched Army engineering assets). Lt. Colonel Noel Beutel, who was responsible for the AACAP missions in 2006-2007, explained that the program tapped into "Army's ability to holistically deliver a range of services not normally available in any single project, and thereby maximise the benefits provided to a community." While AACAP had started with up to four deployments to multiple communities each year, after 2008 it

"A GREAT VEHICLE FOR US TO SUPPORT THE NATION": AUSTRALIA'S ARMY ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Australian Army combines multiple IRT type initiatives into a more comprehensive approach through its Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (also called Exercise SAUNDERS recognition of Reg Saunders, the first Indigenous Australian to be commissioned as an officer in the Australian Army).42 In 1996, Prime Minister John Howard and the Ministers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs, Defence, and Health and Family Services launched the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Army Community Assistance Program to address

concerns around Indigenous health and well-being raised by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.⁴³ The government provided the Army with \$11.7 million in program funding between 1997-2000 to provide housing and other infrastructure improvements in eight communities across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, and South Australia.⁴⁴

This successful program was subsequently



FIGURE 13: Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program Missions. Map from Captain Holly Godwin, "Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (AACAP) 2018 – Yalata, South Australia."

focused on one (or two if they were geographically close) with an annual budget of \$6 million. 46 Currently the program provides \$7 million each financial year through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) Indigenous Affairs Group, with the Army providing a similar value of in-kind support to the program. 47

AACAP allows the Australian Army to fulfill

several key objectives. A 2017 evaluation highlighted the immense training value that it brings to Army. "The delivery of an AACAP project requires the generation, preparation, deployment and sustainment of a military contingent to remote locations in Australia for extended durations," it noted, "and exercises the full range of the Defence supporting capabilities required. Through AACAP, Army aims to train and test selected capabilities against the themes of 'population support' and 'Indigenous capacity building."'48 By focusing on community engagement and capacity building, AACAP also supports the Army's Indigenous Strategy, which commits to a whole of government approach to building relationships and "contribut[ing] to the development of Indigenous communities."49 Likewise, the program has become a key pillar of the Australian Defence Force's Defence Reconciliation Action Plan, which calls for "building respectful relations with Indigenous people, communities and organisations" and "the development of a consistent Defence approach to building relationships" with these communities.50 AACAP also represents a military contribution to the

Australian government's Closing the Gap initiative aimed at improving Indigenous life expectancy and overall health, education, and employment outcomes.⁵¹ Contincommander aent Major Henry Stimson highlighted this latter role when he explained that "from Army's perspective AACAP is a mechanism for our own training benefit, but also it's a great vehicle for us to support the nation by assisting in the ongodevelopment ing these remote communities."52

While the first AACAP initiatives were primarily directed towards infrastructure support, each mission now involves three key components: construction, health, and training.⁵³ The construction component focuses on "critical infrastructure to improve the wellbeing of marginalized communities" including airfields, improved roads and causeways, health clinics and administration buildings, water and waste treatment plants, housing and subdivisions, education facilities, child care facilities, telecommunications, and projects that directly support economic growth.⁵⁴ Under the health component, personnel deploy to the communities to provide medical, dental, and veterinary services, accredited and non-accredited health training (e.g. first aid, nutrition), and physical training and education programs.⁵⁵ Finally, the training component provides structured programming for "community members in a range of areas (e.g. construction, welding, small engine maintenance, hospitality, business skills) to enhance job readiness and employment opportunities." A training development officer assigned to each mission works with the community to determine



FIGURE 14: Aerial view of the remote East Pilbara community of Jigalong in Western Australia. Official AACAP Facebook Page.



FIGURE 15 (ABOVE) 16 (BELOW): The health component of a AACAP mission consists of medical, dental, and veterinary services, as well as various training and educational programs. Official AACAP Facebook Page.



what kind of training and educational experiences to provide. When possible, service members also take on "tasks of opportunity" that deliver additional benefits beyond the planned project components, including minor construction and repair work using "residual capacity" that does "not incur an ongoing maintenance liability" (such as improving football fields and other recreational facilities). Finally, each AACAP mission involves an array of community engagement activities including sports and recreation, youth engagement, entertainment, and cultural events. ⁵⁶

A typical AACAP mission runs for three years. The process to choose a community site begins roughly 24 months before deployment to ensure sufficient time to secure resources and undertake extensive community engagement and relationship-building through the project feasibility, planning, and design stages. Missions begin with a list of potential communities provided by the PM&C in consultation with state and territorial governments, followed by Feasibility Reconnaissance Visits to examine community suitability and needs. For communities to make it onto the short list, they must meet the following basic criteria:

- be remote;
- require works that align with [the Council of

Australian Governments'] Closing the Gap initiative;

- provide a sufficient training opportunity for Army;
- be supportive of AACAP;
- have suitable land-tenure arrangements for identified capital works;
- have limited policies and programmes that overlap with AACAP; and
- have not received AACAP previously.⁵⁷

Sites are chosen based on community need and the training value of the proposed mission. The Minister of Indigenous Affairs makes the final decision after extensive consultation with key government stakeholders and with the community itself.⁵⁸ Once a community is selected, the Army undertakes scoping reconnaissance to verify initial observations and ideas and then develops a preliminary program of work with the community. Objectives are set only after extensive "culturally sensitive consultation" and community approval. During the development stage, the Army, PM&C staff, community members, and other stakeholders devise a detailed "scope of works package" that incorporates all three main program components. Finally, in the delivery stage of the program, between 150-200 personnel deploy for three to six months, with a further 150-300 cycling through on shorter rotations. Following completion of an AACAP mission, engagement continues with at least two more community visits in a twelve-month period to ensure that all built elements are still functioning properly.⁵⁹

Over the last two decades, AACAP has improved the ability to integrate missions with other governmental programs, ensuring that Army's efforts support the priorities of state, territorial, and local governments. "When we deploy we try to coordinate with any existing programmes that are going on in a particular community, it's not a set template so we have to treat each community on a case by case basis," Army Force Engineer Colonel Steve Gliddon explained in December 2014. "One of the things that we do look at when we plan is what else is going on, who else is operating there and what other programmes are being rolled out, so we capitalise on existing efficiencies and synergies." The Army also looks for long term program partners that will take over ownership and maintenance responsibilities for whatever they build.⁶⁰ Lt. Colonel Beutel captured the complexity of each deployment, explaining that they involve a

nexus of stakeholders, enablers, relationships, methods of interaction and at times, all with very different values, norms and practices. In order to understand and then align this complex environment towards the achievement of project goals, a 'project delivery model' has been developed that maps the various stakeholders and enablers and then, through a combination of memorandums of understanding, shared responsibility agreements, operation orders, and commercial agreements and contracts, establishes the subsequent roles and responsibilities, lines of communication and methods of interaction required for project delivery. This is not a simple task, particularly given the gap (or some may say chasm) that must be overcome in bringing the various elements of army, the three levels of government, civilian consultants and contractors, and the community itself to a mutual understanding, agreement and collaboration in what can be achieved and how best to achieve it.⁶¹

While building relationships and working with a complex group of stakeholders can be difficult and time-consuming, frequent interactions both improve project outcomes and increases the training value for the Army.

"With engineers, training team, logistics support and various health elements," one report highlighted, "the Army is able to deliver a unique range of services not normally delivered by a single organisation." On a typical AACAP deployment, 70% of the force is made up of engineers, while 30% consists of support (e.g. signals, logistics, and training) and medical personnel. Construction components are spearheaded by the 19th Chief Engineer Works, which includes engineering officers, engineering supervisors, draftsmen, and surveyors experienced in design and project management. Most of the personnel



FIGURES 17-22: Construction and training activities carried out as part of AACAP 2017, which involved a six month deployment of 200 personnel to Toomelah on the Queensland-New South Wales border. The mission focused on the construction of a new community centre. Official AACAP Facebook Page.

who deploy to the communities for construction are from the 6th Engineer Support Regiment, often supplemented by other Royal Australian Engineers and tradespeople from the Air Force and Navy. Medical personnel are drawn from the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (which includes veterinary services) and the Royal Australian Army Dental Corps. Reservists, including construction engineers and medical personnel, also deploy on AACAP missions in two- to three-week stints. Whenever possible, AACAP missions also include local Indigenous personnel from the Army's Regional Force Surveillance Units (RFSUs), North-West Mobile Force (NORFORCE), and Pilbara Regiment, 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment. These personnel assist with community engagement and communications, and serve as mentors to community members who participate in the training. On occasion, multinational personnel are brought in from East Timor, Tonga, and Papua New Guinea to interoperate with ADF personnel, as are civilian contractors when required."63

AACAP missions rely on extensive logistical and transport support from across the Australian Defence Force. Deployments to these remote and isolated communities often involve the transport of heavy equipment and supplies thousands of kilometres over rugged terrain by the Royal Australian Corps of Transport. AACAP 2019, for example, deployed to Jigalong in Western Australia, and involved a 10,000 km round trip for the equipment of the 6th Engineer Support Regiment (from Amberley in Queensland). When roads are unsuitable or non-existent the Air Force and Navy must assist. AACAP 2008, for instance, deployed to Kalumburu,



FIGURE 23,24: Transport support provided to AACAP 2019, which deployed to Jigalong in Western Australia. Official AACAP Facebook Page.



Western Australia, a region with only intermittent seasonal road access, which demanded significant naval and air lift support.⁶⁴



AUSTRALIA'S ARMY ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

Since 1997, 45 AACAP projects have been delivered in 43 communities across Australia. The following list charts all of the AACAP projects since 2007, noting the infrastructure programs completed, unique training applications and community engagement initiatives. Each mission involved a similar health component, consisting of medical, dental, and veterinary services, accredited and non-accredited health training, physical training and education programs.

- AACAP 2007 deployed to the Doomadgee in Queensland and provided four 3-bedroom houses (with an additional eight built by local contractors) a community amenities block, a 10-block fully serviced subdivision with sealed roads; and a 12-week employability training program in welding for 20 community members. The operation continued the initial experiment in community-based skills employability training (AACAP 2006) teaming Army tradespeople with Indigenous members of the Far North Queensland Regiment (Regional Force Surveillance unit) to provide close mentorship to selected community members. The mentoring approach was "resource intensive" but had a success rate of over 90%. An added benefit arose when fifteen out of the twenty community trainees enlisted in the Far North Queensland Regiment.⁶⁵
- AACAP 2008 deployed to Kalumburu, Western Australia, and demolished an existing health clinic
 and built a new one, constructed a new barge landing, and upgraded an access road and the
 community's airfield.
- AACAP 2009 deployed to the Mapoon on western Cape York in Far North Queensland. The program built three three-bedroom houses, constructed 6 km of roads, performed septic system maintenance, and performed a wide range of tasks of opportunity. The training program worked with Technical and Further Education Queensland to provide a 12-week course in Certificate 1 Engineering to eight community trainees.⁶⁶
- AACAP 2010 deployed to Pukatja in South Australia and focused on a large-scale construction project – a 14 km water pipeline – to provide water access for the community and road maintenance.⁶⁷
- AACAP 2011 deployed to Joy Springs and Bayulu in the Kimberly region of Western Australia. Personnel built residential housing units, performed home repair, and constructed a second potable drinking water source for Joy Springs, along with gravity fed sewage ponds.⁶⁸
- AACAP 2012 deployed to the Dampier Peninsula in Western Australia, where personnel worked
 in the small communities of Fitzroy Crossing, Djarindjin, Lombadina, and Ardyaloon. The program built a child-care centre, a house, and cleared land for a new sub-division. In the community
 of Djarindjin, personnel built storm water drains because heavy rainfall threatened to flood the
 community and wash all the roads away. The training program focused on small engine repair
 and the trainees worked on the community's machinery.⁶⁹
- AACAP 2013 deployed to Fregon in South Australia and constructed a Children and Family Centre, four new homes, upgraded the community water supply, constructed service providers' accommodations, refurbished the community church, and a training program sought to improve the self-reliance of community members with courses in small engine repair, basic construction, and home repairs.⁷⁰
- AACAP 2014 deployed to Canteen Creek and Wutunugurra in the Northern Territory, where service members built a new sealed road to reduce dust and increase accessibility in the wet season, a new workshop and community centre, and a large playground. The training program offered community members a Certificate in Basic Fabrication and Welding and taught them how to manufacture bed frames and furniture for the new houses. Army also brought in multi-media specialists to assist the Barkley Women's Art Group in developing a business website, complete with catalogue production.⁷¹
- AACAP 2015 focused on the small town of Titjkala (pop. 200) in the Northern Territory for a fourmonth deployment to build a complex, large-scale waste management system, two duplex houses, and a change room for the football field. The program also offered training in welding

- and cooking. According to training mentor and army reservist Gary Keegan, "Mines use [our training] as a probation period. They take some of the lads who've finished into a trainee program. If you can get one person qualified, you've done your job. We learn from them, they learn from us. It's win-win."⁷²
- In 2016, AACAP celebrated its twentieth anniversary with a deployment to Laura in Far North Queensland. Over the course of five months, the program "constructed a waste water disposal system, a multi-purpose facility, a roof over the local basketball court and new footpaths." Army teamed up with a registered training organization, Training Connections Australia, to deliver nationally-accredited courses in construction and hospitality. It also "worked with the Indigenous capacity-building organisation, Many Rivers, to provide businss aend administration training specifically tailored to the needs of the local Aboriginal corporation, Ang-Gnarra." A popular part of program brought in members of the National Rugby League to conduct accredited referee and coaching courses. During the deployment a community elder and his son died and Army personnel assisted with transport and supplies for the funeral, including catering for the wake, which highlighted the relationship developed with the community.⁷³
- AACAP 2017 involved a six-month deployment of 200 soldiers to Toomelah on the Queensland-New South Wales border. Army personnel refurbished and rebuilt an old community hall into a new community centre, built a sustainable community garden, ripped out and replaced underground waterlines and stormwater drainage, and tore up and resealed most of the community's roads. The mission's training program included Certificate II in hospitality and catering, workshops in soapmaking and basic computer skills, courses international games coaching, math, and painting, construction pathways, partial qualifications in business administration, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.⁷⁴
- AACAP 2018 deployed to the community of Yalata on South Australia's West Coast, where service members focused on rebuilding the area's tourism economy. The project involved an upgrade to the community's trailer park, improvements to the airfield, the construction of an art gallery and café, and maintenance and hospitality training for community members who wished to work in the new facilities. This program represents a core principal of AACAP training components providing training that is directly linked to local employability that the community deems suitable and relevant. As an example of the kind of entertainment and outreach events that AACAP missions often employ, this iteration brought in the Indigenous Hip Hop Project (IHHP), a team of performers in hip hop, media, entertainment and the performing arts who work in Indigenous communities throughout Australia. The
- AACAP 2019 was held in the remote East Pilbara community of Jigalong in Western Australia. The mission involved 150 Australian Defence Force personnel, along with teams from Tonga and Papua New Guinea. The construction program included two all-weather creek crossings, a public amenities block, a new BBQ area (to serve as central gathering area), a youth and family centre (including multimedia room, infant play area, teaching area, laundry facility, art area, and community kitchen). The training program yeilded four new paid positions in the local construction industry, one position in the local school, and tourism qualifications were awarded to three community members. Members of the Pilbara Regiment provided community liaison and engagement support.⁷⁷

AACAP is a recognized-name in Indigenous communities across Australia for the positive socio-economic and infrastructure contributions made under its auspices. Indigenous respondents to the 2017 AACAP review highlighted new infrastructure and housing, improved living conditions, clean water, effective sanitation systems, educational opportunities, and the short-term access to round-the-clock health care provided by the program. "AACAP in its current form is widely regarded by communities as a successful programme that is very effective in meeting its intended objectives," the review concluded. "The Programme positively contributes to practical reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians; with communities reporting an improved understanding of, and enhanced respect for Army; and Army reporting increased understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture."

Cultural awareness, relationship building, and stakeholder engagement in each AACAP mission bring broader operational benefits for the Australian Defence Force – and boost the morale of service members. Lt. Colonel Renée Kidson, currently the CO of 5th Engineer Regiment, argues that:

AACAP is about more than infrastructure. The real value in these projects are the relationships we have forged with Indigenous communities along the way. Through mentoring and coaching, part-time Sappers build

FIGURES 25-30: Construction, training, and community engagement activities during AACAP 2019 in Jigalong, Western Australia. Official AACAP Facebook Page.











more than leave-behind infrastructure: they contribute to Indigenous Engagement and Development through trade skills transfer, empowering communities to build brighter futures for themselves. And there is more. AACAP speaks to the heart of one of Army's values: Respect. Sappers return from AACAP culturally enriched, benefiting from deep immersion in Indigenous communities who are generous in sharing knowledge, custom and tradition. These experiences build mutual respect and renewed appreciation of Indigenous communities.

At the June 2019 Royal Australian Engineer Corps Conference, Brigadier John Shanahan, discussed his experience in Afghanistan, noting "that the relationship-winning edge of Australian Sappers was their 'patience, skills and temperamental inclination' towards mentoring and coaching." Shanahan explained that "in this operating environment, small capability bricks of skilled Sappers are able to achieve big results in local relationship-building: the classic engagement 'multiplier effect' that the ADF relentlessly seeks."80AACAP experiences have helped the Army prepare for population support activities during past deployments, such as Timor-Leste in 1999 and 2006, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in Australia and the surrounding region.81

AACAP also benefits service members by providing opportunities to deploy to isolated areas for extended periods, testing their ability to generate, prepare, and sustain operations and maintain complex lines of communication. Effective planning and organization are vital. The distances involved and the type of work involved also demand an increased maintenance schedule to prevent equipment breakdowns.⁸² The adaptability and flexibility demanded in these missions make them an appropriate training ground for junior leaders before they deploy overseas.⁸³ Colonel Steve Gliddon, for example, highlighted the value to Army Engineers in Afghanistan:

The sorts of things we're doing in AACAP, building things in remote locations, having to engage with different cultures, is perfect training for operations. If I reflect in particular on Operation Slipper where we were in Afghanistan for a number of years building infrastructure in remote locations, engaging with different cultures, dealing with people who are non-English speakers, training Afghans to build their capacity through a trade training school, there are many parallels with AACAP. To go out to a remote Indigenous community and have your junior non-commissioned officers put in charge of a particular task, and then have to complete that task, is perfect training. What we're doing in AACAP directly mirrored what we were doing on operations. One of the reasons that we were able to adapt quickly and perform well in Afghanistan, was the grounding we had given many of our soldiers in things like AACAP.84

Accordingly, units embrace AACAP missions as a useful "training run before we go and do it in real time overseas somewhere," with "personnel who have performed well on AACAP [having] a good chance of being able to deploy next year."

MODELS OF INSPIRATION FOR THE CAF?

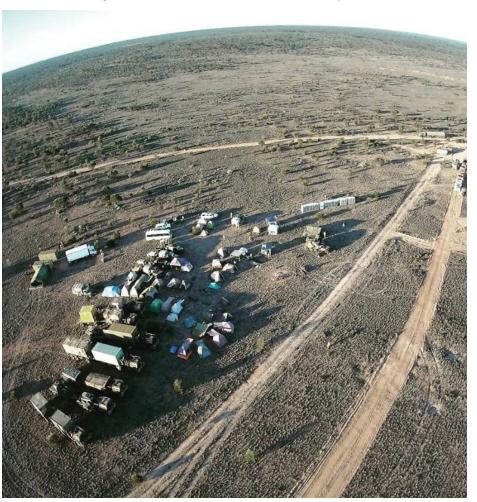
While the geographical and cultural characteristics of the Canadian North give it a "unique nature" as a theatre of operations,87 we embrace the benefits that might come from learning from our allies' experiences in their remote northern regions. The Alaskan IRT initiatives and Australian AACAP projects represent models or approaches that might yield insights for CAF as it discerns ways to deliver on pledges to enhance its ability to project and sustain forces in the Arctic, deepen partnerships, and improve readiness through activities that leave enduring, positive legacies for Indigenous communities. These operations conducted by our allies fit with priorities articulated in the federal Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, particularly on closing infrastructure gaps and creating conditions so that "Canadian Arctic and northern Indigenous peoples are resilient and healthy."88

Budgetary and personnel constraints, increasing demands of domestic operations, existing health care services (which may leave little space for an ARCTIC CARE type exercise or the AACAP's health component), and potential encroachments on



FIGURE 31 (ABOVE): Environmental conditions tested the AACAP 2017 camp in Toomelah. Official AACAP Facebook Page.

FIGURE 32 (BELOW): Aerial view of Camp Birt set up outside of the community of Yalata during AACAP 2018. Official AACAP Facebook Page.



private industry and civilian employment (although AACAP missions have shown that military construction can actually create new opportunities for civilian contractors) may reduce the direct applicability of these models to Canadian contexts. 89 Would an AACAPstyle infrastructure support operation take jobs away from Northern Indigenous Peoples? ⁹⁰ Could this issue be mitigated by the adoption of a training component similar to the one used by the Australians? Further, Canada's universal health care system differs markedly from the U.S. and even from Australia's hybrid public-private system, perhaps leaving less space for an ARCTIC CARE type exercise or the AACAP's health component.

IRT or AACAP style missions find some precedent in the CAF's long history in the North. Community and nation-building activities started with the Northwest Territories and Yukon Radio System established by the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals during the interwar years. 91 Following the construction of the Alaska Highway in the Second World War, the Department of National Defence maintained and expanded the road network until 1964. In the 1970s, CAF personnel constructed airfields, bridges, roads, and other vital infrastructure across Canada's North. For example, the 3rd Field Squadron, Royal Canadian Engineers constructed the 360-foot steel Ogilvie River Bridge for the Department of Indian Affair and Northern Development at mile 123 of the Dempster Highway. Multiple engineer units participated in the Remote Airfield Construction Program (a partnership between DND and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development), which saw the extension of airfields in communities like Chesterfield Inlet (Igluligaarjuk), Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik), Whale Cove (Tikiraqjuaq), and Cape Dorset (Kinngait), or the full construction of new air fields, such as the 2600 foot-long runway finished at Pangnirtung. While carrying out these construction projects, the CAF often hired local labour and even helped train Northern Indigenous people in certain trades. In 1974, the Department of National Defence could



rightfully claim that it "continues to participate in programs designed to alleviate the social and economic problems of Canadians living north of the 60th parallel." 92

While modern northern deployments have not involved similar material efforts at addressing the socio-economic challenges facing the North, community engagement continues to play an important role. Over the past 13 years, Operation NANOOK has simulated major oil spills, a petrochemical leak, ships in distress, air disasters, mass rescue operations, epidemics, earthquakes, wildfires, and evacuations – many of these exercises have included significant amounts of community participation. 93 When deployed to the North for exercises or survival training, CAF personnel usually engage with Northerners at a more direct and personal level during community days or recreational programming. While deployed for Arctic survival training in Cambridge Bay and Resolute during Operation NUNALIVUT 2018, for example, CAF personnel took part in over 40 "community relations activities, including reading buddy programs and sports."94 An example of even more extensive community outreach occurred during NANOOK 2011, when a CAF dental team went to the High Arctic for the first time to provide support to the 500-plus service members deployed to Resolute Bay. Every afternoon for the two weeks it was deployed, the team also worked on a dental outreach initiative with Health Canada and the Government of Nunavut that provided treatment to Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program eligible residents in the community.95 Finally, the Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers contribute to the resilience of Northern communities on an ongoing basis.96

Furthermore, the CAF currently performs exercises similar to IRT and AACAP missions in southern Canada – most notably Exercise NIHLO (Latin for "the creation of something out of nothing") SAPPER, an annual training event led by 4 Engineer Support Regiment from 5 Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown. The exercise started off as an annual event at the Gagetown Range and Training Area geared towards the practice of general and close support engineering tasks, such as camp construction, road construction, bridge construction, and building renovation.

The exercise often draws service members from the other branches and serves as an opportunity for Engineer Officer Candidates from the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering to hone their leadership skills. In November 2015, the exercise was held in St. John, New Brunswick, to give the soldiers a chance to interact with "real civilians in a real 'foreign' environment." Service members put up a 500-person camp, built a bridge in a local park, and built a house for a local non-governmental organization (NGO), as well as forging positive relationships with the community." The new setting expanded the "scope of tasks...leading to more diverse training opportunities" for the unit, the opportunity to apply "familiar skills" to an "unfamiliar setting," and offered the chance to "positively affect real civilians."97 In subsequent years, the exercise focused on Bathurst, New Brunswick; Cape Breton Island;98 and Prince Edward Island, and completed a range of projects, including bridges and trails, a renovated lodge, a restored church, the renovation of Summerside's Boys and Girls Club, and construction of a new wheelchair accessible walkway at Montague's Royal Canadian Legion. As Captain Jamie Tobin explained during NIHLO SAPPER 18, the exercise is reliant on "community partnership. Whether it be a local not-for-profit, or a government department we're working with, they provide the financial and material requirements. What the army offers is skilled labour in the forms of troops and expertise."99

The CAF is also developing the capacity to provide the transportation required to make this kind of civil-military operation easier to accomplish in the North. Rear-Admiral David Gardam, a former commander of Maritime Forces Atlantic, once described the Harry deWolf-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol vessel (AOPS) as "a big empty ship" that can "embark doctors, dentists, scientists, marine biologists, police and fisheries officers, environmentalists and many other personnel with an interest in, or a mandate for, the development and sustainment of Canada's north."100 They could also transport the engineering units and materials required to undertake an AACAP-style mission in the North. Participation in this manner of community engagement would be a great way for the AOPS to operationalize the official affiliations they will be given to various parts of Inuit Nunangat.

Would northern communities welcome an exercise like NIHLO SAPPER - or a broader AACAPtype initiative? While the response would differ from community to community, there are indications that a warm welcome would be received - particularly if the CAF were to adopt the multiyear partnership building approach embraced by AACAP missions. In 2010, Charlie Evalik, the President of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, described the military as a "cornerstone for Inuit development." For Inuit, "an active military presence in the High Arctic is very desirable provided that the strong partnerships that have been forged over specific projects and initiatives can continue into the future."101 Mary Simon's 2016 Interim Report on the Shared Arctic Leadership Model emphasized the need to close the infrastructure gap in the North, mitigate the damage climate change is doing to existing infrastructure, and address the "public health emergency" caused by the lack of housing. 102 CAF support might be welcomed by Northern Indigenous leadership if it helped to alleviate these long-lasting issues as part of its operational training and readiness activities in the Canadian North.



FIGURE: Combat Engineers from 4 Engineer Support Regiment's 42 Horizontal Construction Squadron build a non-standard bridge on the Lennox Island First Nation trail system during Exercise NIHILO SAPPER 2018. Photo: 5th Canadian Division Public Affairs

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