

Information Letter

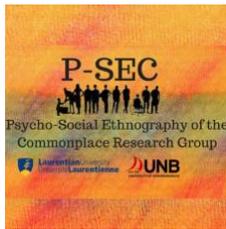
2SLGBTQIA+ in the Canadian Military: 25 years post anti-homosexuality policy

Although the Canadian Parliament decriminalized same-sex relations in 1969, the parallel discriminatory military policy remained in effect until 1992. The Canadian Forces Administrative Order (CFAO)19-20, declared homosexuality a sexual abnormality. As such, homosexuality was grounds for releasing members from the military (Park, 1994). Over the years, the Special Investigation Unit (SIU), a branch of the Military Police, investigated, interrogated, and recommended the release of many military members for homosexuality. However, despite the military's attempts to eliminate homosexuality from its ranks, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community demonstrated resilience and continued to serve in this institution back then as they do today.

In 1991, Michelle Douglas filed a wrongful discrimination suit against the military after she was released as a homosexual. The Federal Court of Canada then declared that the Canadian Force's policy concerning homosexuality was contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Park, 1994). Finally in 1992, the Canadian military officially announced that joining or serving in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) would no longer be restricted on the basis of sexual orientation (News Release/ Communiqué, 1992). This change in military policy, however, did not prevent continued discrimination against same-sex couples (e.g., no access to the social benefits given to heterosexual couples).

In 1996, influenced by cases in the civil courts (e.g., Egan v. Canada), the military announced that spousal benefits would be available to its members in same-sex relationships (CANFORGEN 094/96, 1996). Despite such policy changes regarding homosexuality (e.g., Belkin & McNichol, 2000; Gouliquer, 2000), the reality faced by current 2SLGBTQIA+ soldiers and their partners since the end of CFAO 19-20 remains largely unexamined. Much of our previous research focused on the experience of having lived through the pre-1992 era and its immediate aftermath (e.g., Gouliquer, 2000; Gouliquer & Poulin, 2005; Gouliquer, Poulin, & Moore, 2017; Poulin, 2001; Poulin & Gouliquer, 2012; Poulin, Gouliquer, & McCutcheon, *in press*; Poulin, Gouliquer, & Moore, 2009). However, little is known regarding the impact of the policy changes that occurred in the 90s, or the present cultural climate of the military institution in general on the lives of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals currently serving in the CAF. The present study aims to address this knowledge gap.

As of late, attention has re-emerged in the press regarding the pre-1992 mistreatment, marginalisation, discrimination, and dismissals of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals who served in the CAF (Tasker, 2017; Murphy, 2017; Ibbitson, 2017). In late 2017, Prime Minister Trudeau publicly apologised for these past discriminatory policies and actions. Furthermore, a class action lawsuit against the federal government on behalf of individuals who were affected by the pre-1992 LGBT purge (Ross, Roy, & Satalic v. R., 2017) was settled in 2018 (Government of Canada, 2019). The success of this lawsuit represents an important step in the continuing effort



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towards reconciliation and compensation for those who were harmed as a result of (dis)honourable discharges, interrogations, and/or humiliations.

Most soldiers who lived through the years prior to 1992 are now retired, but there are many 2SLGBTQIA+ soldiers serving in the CAF today. We are now interested in documenting this “new reality.” We also hope to document the current realities of transgender, non-binary, intersex, and two-spirited soldiers. There is relatively little data available on the military experience of these individuals, as many identities were generally unacknowledged and/or simply labeled as homosexuality at the time of our initial study.

More than twenty-five years have passed since the CFAO 19-20 was revoked, allowing 2SLGBTQIA+ soldiers to serve without fear of being interrogated and losing their career. If you are an 2SLGBTQIA+ service member or a partner of an 2SLGBTQIA+ service member, and you are willing to help us with our research, you can do so in two different ways. You can agree to take part in an interview and share your experience as an 2SLGBTQIA+ person involved with the Canadian military, and/or you can help us by sharing this information with others who might be interested in completing an interview with us. We are committed to protecting everyone’s anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy. We will not publish material that will lead to anyone’s identification. We are particularly interested in the patterns that emerge in terms of the types of shared experiences that 2SLGBTQIA+ service members and/or their partners encounter.

How will we protect your anonymity? How will we keep your story confidential?

Only Carmen Poulin and/or Lynne Gouliquer (the researchers; or on rare occasion, one of them with a research-assistant) will conduct the interview and it will be at a place and time that are acceptable and convenient for you. The general topic of discussion will be your life experience as it relates to your involvement with the military. In any oral or written presentation of the results of this study (e.g., a book), your anonymity will be protected. In other words, your personal identity will not be traceable or recognisable through any oral presentation or written material produced out of this research



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If you decide to take part in the study, you may withdraw at any time. Furthermore, at any point during the interview, you can choose not to answer any specific question, or you can ask that any notes or materials taken during the interview all be destroyed at any time during or following the interview up until the publication of results. If your data is used in any way prior to the withdrawal request (e.g., publications or presentations according to the consent given), those cannot be retracted, but future use of your data will be stopped.

How to contact us.

You can leave your name and a way to contact you (telephone or email) with the person who gave you this information and they will contact us. We will then contact you, answer any questions that you may have, and if you agree, set up a time and date for an interview. Alternatively, you can contact us directly and we would be more than happy to discuss the study with you or arrange for an interview (see below). Please do not hesitate to contact us. We welcome all calls whether to chat, to enquire about the project, or to do an interview.

This project has been reviewed by the University of New Brunswick Research Ethics Board and is on file as REB # 2019-176. This project has been reviewed by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board and is on file as REB # 6020692.

To discuss this study with someone who is not directly involved, you can contact Research Ethics Officer, Laurentian University Research Office, 705-675-1151 ext. 3213, 2436 or toll free at 1-800-461-4030 or email ethics@laurentian.ca. Alternatively, you can contact Dr. Ryan Hamilton, rhamilto@unb.ca, Chair of the Ethics Committee in the Psychology Department at UNB, or the Chair of the UNB Research Ethics Board, Dr. David Coleman, ethics@unb.ca.

Our kindest regards,

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