# AN EXPLORATION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING PROCESS AS A MEANS OF MOVING THE CANADIAN MILITARY POLICE TOWARD BECOMING A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

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Abstract

This research project considers the benefits of introducing a cooperative learning process into the staff of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal and was implemented as a catalyst for moving the organization toward becoming a learning organization.

Constructs influencing this research include Senge's learning organization and Wilber's three strands of knowing: instrumental injunction, direct apprehension, and communal verification. In this project, the instrumental injunction became the introduction of a team learning process. The direct apprehension included recording reactions via surveys, journaling, and observed discussion. Open dialogue concerning the theoretical and practical application of team learning in this context provided communal verification.

An analysis of the data yielded five learning themes: approach, content, relationships, transferability, and time and space. The study concludes the introduction of the cooperative learning process produced several benefits: deeper work relationships, improved information flow, and a renewed sense of belonging and heightened morale within the research group.

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# CHAPTER 1 – STUDY BACKGROUND

## Background

In recent years, many people within the federal government and the Department of National Defence (DND) have begun to talk about learning organizations. During the speech from the throne on October 12, 1999, the Government of Canada made clear that the Canadian Public Service was to actively work toward becoming a learning organization (Canadian Centre for Management Development [CCMD], 2001a). This aim was reaffirmed in a speech delivered less than 6 months later, on April 26, 2000, by the president of the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD), Jocelyne Bourgon (CCMD, 2001b). This speech expanded on the federal government's plan to develop into a learning organization, explaining, "A learning organization is built around people, teams and networks. It is expected to innovate, to find new and better ways to fulfill its mission. It brings value added through knowledge, insight and know-how" (CCMD, 2001b, ¶ 1). Bourgon went on to state that learning organizations learn from experience; they create new knowledge by innovating and experimenting and by drawing from both their own experience and the experience of others. Finally, she said that learning organizations facilitate the exchange of information, encourage networks, and commit time and resources to learning initiatives.

By early 2001, the Canadian Forces (CF) published one of the most important documents in recent CF history, "Canadian Officership in the 21st Century: Detailed Analysis and Strategy for Launching Implementation (Officership 2020)" (Department of National Defence [DND], 2001). This strategic plan was intended to chart a course for the professional development of CF officers over the next two decades. One of eight strategic objectives identified in "Officership 2020" was to establish the CF as a learning organization. The strategic plan also highlighted a

need to "create the policies and conditions that will transform the CF into a true learning organization" and added, "The CF must be skilled at acquiring and transferring knowledge and at encouraging behaviour that reflects new knowledge and insights. The CF must promote and support learning, learn from experience, embrace diversity, and focus on serving its membership" (DND, 2001, p. 7). Clearly, many of the ideals expressed by the CCMD were identified in the DND strategy.

In a news release in May of that same year, Minister of National Defence Art Eggleton was quoted as saying, "Our aim is to transform the Canadian Forces into a learning organization; [*sic*] one that strikes a balance between four pillars, education, training, self-development, and job experience" (Director General Public Affairs [DGPA], 2001, ¶ 5). He went on to say, "Officership 2020 builds on the premise that the Canadian Forces will create a learning culture to encourage open communication and teamwork and to promote a climate for innovation, debate and critical thinking to ensure the profession is dynamic, open to change and willing to change" (¶ 7). Unfortunately, however, the news release did not explain exactly what the minister meant by a learning organization in the specific context of DND or the CF.

By January 2002, at the opening ceremony of the National Security Studies Course held at the Canadian Forces College (CFC) in Toronto, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), General Raymond Henault, was fully on board. He remarked, "We want to create a learning culture within the Canadian Forces. We want to develop creative, motivated personnel and we want to give them a stimulating work environment" (Chief of the Defence Staff, 2002b, ¶. 4). In April 2002, General Henault issued a Canadian Forces General (CANFORGEN) message – a type of communication used to ensure receipt by every member of the CF. In this CANFORGEN, he echoed the ideals he and the minister articulated above: "Both the minister and I noted the

importance of intellectual development, critical thinking, and the transformation of the CF into a learning organization as part of our response to the ambiguous, unpredictable, and dangerous challenges of future military operations" (Chief of the Defence Staff, 2002a, p. 1). Again, a vision, strategy, or process for the creation of a CF learning organization was lacking. What was evident by now, however, was that DND as a whole, and the CF in particular, were expected to get on with the work of becoming learning organizations.

The overall context in which this project found its genesis, therefore, is as follows. In 1999, the Canadian government as a whole was directed in the 1999 speech from the throne to actively pursue strategies to become a learning organization. Shortly thereafter, the Minister of National Defence, responsible for one of the many federal government departments, committed his department, including the CF, to the pursuit of a learning culture and the creation of a learning organization. Finally, the CDS issued directions to the CF to begin transforming the CF into a learning organization. At no point, however, were the definition, attributes, or process necessary to become a learning organization well articulated at any of these levels. The learning organization needed to be better defined before steps could be taken to begin the task at hand.

## The Opportunity

Given the direction by the government and the obvious commitment by DND and the CF to the pursuit of the learning organization, one could reasonably expect the general membership of the CF to have at least a cursory familiarity with learning organization theory and an understanding of how it was to be implemented within the organization. This was not the case. I have been a member of the Military Police (MP) branch of the CF for most of my adult life and, despite having developed some understanding of learning organization theory as a result of my

ongoing graduate studies, I had little understanding of what this pronouncement meant for the institution. Motivated more by a curiosity separate from my academic pursuits than any desire to find a research project, I began speaking with friends and colleagues, subordinates and superiors about what being a learning organization meant to them. It seems I was not alone. I found a general lack of understanding of the importance or potential impact of this commitment.

Based on my personal view of the CF in general, and my own branch in particular, and concerned by my ignorance of any learning organization strategy and that of the others to whom I spoke, I believed that we were not living up to that particular mandate. I began to consider ways that an organization can work toward this goal. Although I did not yet understand the process by which ordinary organizations become learning organizations, my studies had led me to a belief that the learning organization is more accurately described as a philosophy or process to be exercised continuously, as opposed to a goal. Either way, I saw no evidence.

## The Research Question

In light of the foregoing, this project was envisioned to explore the idea of using a cooperative learning strategy as one method of assisting the MP branch in its mandated move toward becoming a learning organization. The selection of a cooperative learning process as the starting point in the evolution of this learning organization is discussed in chapter 2

The primary research question on which this project was based is: What benefits will be realized through the application of a cooperative learning process in an effort to move the MP branch toward becoming a learning organization? This question pre-supposes that it is possible to implement such a process and that the branch will be receptive to that process. Certain sub-questions, therefore, must be examined, as they will provide an understanding of some of the

organizational characteristics influencing such change. Sub-questions that will help develop that understanding are:

- Can cooperative learning be effectively introduced into the MP branch structure?
- What characteristics of the MP branch will support this process, and how can they be leveraged for success?
- What characteristics will resist such a move, and how can they be minimized?
- How, if at all, will the existing organizational cultures need to change in order to adapt to learning organization practices?

### *Significance of the Opportunity*

It has been my experience that the military police function within an increasingly fast-paced, accountability-based, and technology-driven environment. One of the ongoing struggles of this organization is the need to find ways to do things more efficiently, effectively, and professionally by learning from the past. The CF, however, does not have an enviable record of managing change and learning from the past.

Indeed, Haycock (2001) found that in a comparison of two reports concerning the state of the officer corps filed with the Department of National Defence in 1969 and 1995 respectively, 26 years apart, many of the same deficiencies were noted. In the forward to the 1969 report, then Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jean V. Allard cautioned, "Without a properly educated, effectively trained, professional officer corps, the Forces would in the future be doomed to, at the best mediocrity, at the worst disaster" (Haycock, 2001, p. 5). This point was further emphasized at a retreat in 2001. During the retreat in which the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (DCDS) of the day, Lieutenant-General Raymond Henault, met with a group of advisors to discuss

command-and-control issues in the CF, he remarked that many of the initiatives proposed by the retreat participants had been put forth in the past (Sharpe & English, 2002, p. vii). Wenek (2002) further condemned the CF as having a history of making change based on reaction and response to media, as opposed to reasoning, debate, and agreement of need.

Moran (1999) has told us, "The degree that an organization learns determines its capability to transform itself to meet demands for fast, fundamental change" (p. 21). The MP branch, and indeed all of the CF, cannot afford the luxury of having to re-learn lessons. This is especially true when those lessons have been learned through trial and error or loss of life, or as a result of negative public scrutiny. An acknowledgement of these facts translates directly into a need for the organization to learn better and faster. This project, therefore, represents an opportunity to improve organizational capabilities by converting energies presently used to re-learn lessons into continuous forward momentum.

The potential impact of learning ways to effectively access the collective knowledge of the membership of the MP branch is remarkable. With personnel employed in diverse roles, in a wide variety of physical and geo-political environments, and with all learning from their unique circumstances, the experience capital that could be tapped into is staggering. Perhaps Einstein said it best when he stated, "The only true source of knowledge is experience." Through the sharing of this experience and knowledge, the MP branch may develop an improved ability to carry out its functions, understand and relate to its clients, and provide a range of services in keeping with the needs of the CF.

The alternative to seizing the opportunity is that the MP branch will fail to meet its explicitly stated mandate to become a learning organization. Any such failure could potentially alienate it from the remaining branches of the CF. Militaries are synergistic by nature. They are

also functional examples of the proverbial chain being only as strong as its weakest link. If any link in the military chain is weakened, the integrity of the entire chain is at risk. This metaphor demonstrates the importance of the MP branch becoming the most efficient and effective team possible. Cooperative learning processes offer that potential. Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, and Smith (1994) stated, "Learning in organizations means the continuous testing of experience, and the transformation of that experience into knowledge – accessible to the whole organization, and relevant to its core purpose" (p. 49). The development of the experiences of the MP branch into knowledge, the exchange of that knowledge with others, and the implementation of tangible new processes and practices as a result of that exchange offer the possibility of strengthening not just the MP link, but all the links in the chain.

> Organizations are products of the ways that people in them think and interact. To change organizations for the better, you must give people the opportunity to change the ways they think and interact. . . . The practice of organizational learning involves developing tangible activities . . . and tools for changing the way people conduct their work. . . . The process will pay back the organization with far greater levels of diversity, commitment, innovation, and talent. (Senge et al., 1999, p. 33)

### *Factors Contributing to the Opportunity*

In the *Canadian Forces Provost Marshal Annual Report 2000* (Canadian Forces Provost Marshal [CFPM], 2000) is a long list of recent changes made to the selection, training, professional development, and employment of MP personnel, in an effort to improve the quality and professional delivery of the services they provide. This report acknowledges a commitment to continuous improvement and then states that the MP branch has developed a Strategic Plan

that is intended to parallel the CF strategy for 2020. In essence, the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal (CFPM) has committed to a process of development of the MP branch to parallel the reforms of the CF.

Extended periods of competition for ever-diminishing resources often create chasms between specialized sub-components within any organization. In the case of the CF MP branch, these sub-organizations include units focused on general administrative functions, domestic policing duties within CF bases across Canada, specialized investigative duties such as those performed by the National Investigation Service, and operational field policing duties in support of NATO or United Nations missions around the world. This variety of employment, coupled with the routine transfer of personnel to various positions, creates an opportunity for subject matter experts from one domain to share knowledge and experience within other domains. It is this form of sharing that will allow the expansion of knowledge and skills and the sharing of critical thought necessary to human and organizational development. Wheatley (1999) reminded us, "Thinking has been acknowledged as a critical skill, and not just at higher levels of management. It is now recognized that many more workers need to be able to interpret complex information" (p. 110)

In recent years, the federal government has taken steps toward adopting a learning organization approach. The Canadian Public Service has developed and issued strategies to execute this plan. DND and the CF have also released documents indicating a desire and intention to move toward a more open, cooperative, shared learning environment (DND, 2001). Finally, in the latest iteration of the MP branch strategic plan, the CFPM (2002) has challenged all military police units to "strive for constantly improved technical capabilities," "aggressively seek and exploit new technologies," and "foster increased co-operation and interoperability

across environmental affiliations" (p. 7). These initiatives create an environment in which cooperative learning strategies may provide the means to realize a number of organizational goals.

## The Organization

One of the difficulties encountered in preparing for this project was that of determining the research group. With a total strength of approximately 1,300, the MP branch is one of the smallest branches of the Canadian military; however, CF MP are employed in all three services (army, navy, and air force), and are found in virtually every country where CF personnel are deployed around the globe. In addition, the mandates of the various sub-organizations vary widely; however, all are responsible for the provision of operational support, law enforcement, and security functions to the remainder of the CF and within DND (CFPM, 2002).

As the scope and duration of this project precluded any reasonable attempt at providing voice to all the various sub-groups within the branch, the project focused on the single largest collection of branch-employed personnel in the CF, the staff of the CFPM and Deputy Provost Marshals (DPMs) at National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa. This staff is responsible, in one way or another, for the direct command, technical oversight, or support of every member of the branch, and because the branch personnel are frequently rotated between jobs, it assured a good mix of age, rank, training and, most importantly, experience. This headquarters also included a large proportion of civilians and administrative support staff that are employed within the branch but are not badge-carrying military police personnel. Although the project originally envisioned something grander, something inclusive of the entire branch, reality has necessitated the restriction of this research to the organization described above.

The CFPM staff consists of approximately 90 personnel. The organization is a typical

military hierarchy nested within the greater hierarchy of the CF. The senior position is that of CFPM. There are six subordinate DPMs responsible for operations, policing, professional standards, resource management, security, and the National Investigative Service. Their subordinate staffs vary in size and, function but are all, in some way, reflective of the greater population of the CF MP branch. All are headquartered within NDHQ in Ottawa, Ontario, with most of them located on the same floor in a relatively modern, fully networked, electronically dependent open-office setup in an older public service building. All provide some form of support function for the remainder of the MP branch at large.

With the organizational microcosm now selected, the work of this project turns to a review of the relevant literature to learn more about the learning organization, as well as the cooperative learning process. In an effort to understand some of the organizational factors influencing any movement toward becoming a learning organization, a look at organizational culture is also necessary. These subjects are the major areas of focus in chapter 2.

# CHAPTER TWO – INFORMATION REVIEW

## Review of Organizational Documents

### *DND and CF Documents*

In looking outside the branch, I found many references to developing DND and the CF into learning organizations. Several recently published strategic documents specifically identify the need to create a learning culture and a learning organization (Chief of the Defence Staff [CDS], 2002a, 2002b, 2003; DND, 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). A number of departmental intranet sites also discuss the importance of organizational learning, the desirability of becoming a learning organization, and the departmental commitment to these ideals. Unfortunately, had I not been prompted by this project to perform intranet searches encompassing these terms, I would never have known these sites existed.

Even now, no common definition of exactly what a learning organization is or how it is to be achieved exists within the department. Indeed, most of the documents reviewed did not even attempt to define the concept, but rather, appeared to assume the term to be common knowledge. For example, in one Canadian Forces Staff College paper, Colonel Patricia Brennan (1999) discussed, in some detail, the need for CF to create a learning environment but never defined what she meant by that term.

In a United States Army War College research paper, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Gerras (2002) admitted that the US army still sees a learning organization quite simply as one in which people learn. He pointed out that becoming a learning organization requires a great deal more than individuals learning. And although he acknowledged the organization may be making progress in the right direction, Gerras also conceded, "At the end of the day the Army is not a

learning organization, and more importantly, doesn't know what one looks like or how to get there" (p. iii).

Similarly, Kasurak (as cited in Wenek, 2002), in a paper presented to the Canadian Air Force Officers' Advisory Group in 1999, indicated that in his view, DND and the CF had thus far failed to become learning organizations and listed a number of reasons for the failure. On my first reading of the paper, this failure suggested either a lack of understanding of the learning organization or an inability to put learning organization theory into practice, or both. This interpretation may reflect reality. Equally probable, however, in light of the foregoing, is that Kasurak's concept of the learning organization was not necessarily identical to any that may have been in use by DND and the CF.

This problem is not unique to the military. Several civilian researchers have also commented on the lack of consensus on definitions (Dodgson, 1993; Garvin, 1993; Kim, 1993; Lucas, 2003). After a review of the dominant literature on the subject of learning organizations, Fenwick (1996) commented that important questions remain unasked concerning the learning organization. These questions included fundamentals such as what a learning organization is, what it values, what assumptions it makes about learning and the nature of knowledge, and what it looks like in practice.

The foregoing suggests that what a learning organization is and how one goes about creating it are poorly understood. This lack of clarity exists both external to the department – i.e., within the academic and business communities that seek to understand the learning organization – and within the many levels of the Canadian defense community. That point notwithstanding, the direction remains. DND, the CF, and by extension, the Canadian Military Police branch have been directed to get on with the work of the learning organization.

Interestingly, in a news release pre-empting all of the statements in the previous chapter concerning commitment to the idea of developing DND and the CF as learning organizations, the Provost Marshal of the day, Colonel Patricia Samson (as cited in DND, 1998), asserted, "The military police group is a learning organization and as such, we grow and change constantly" (¶ 9). Although apparently in line with the soon-to-be-expressed aims of the Canadian government, DND, and the CF, the Provost Marshal, like those who would follow, unfortunately failed to articulate what, in her view, a learning organization was or how it was to be achieved.

Despite the lack of a clearly articulated and agreed-on definition of the learning organization, there is good news. A review of key documents internal to the branch revealed that while learning organization theory and practice are not explicitly recognized by name, the MP branch does have in place some ideas and processes that are in line with organizational learning theory and the definition of the learning organization that is presented later in this chapter.

### *Military Police Documents*

In the cornerstone document of the long-term MP branch plan, *Serving You: The Canadian Forces Military Police Strategic Plan 2002-2006* (CFPM, 2002), several guiding principles and strategic priorities imply a potential shift toward the evolution of the branch into a learning organization. Guiding principles include increased communications, both within the branch and with the larger organizations and systems in which it operates. Also included is the desire to foster interoperability and cooperation with others in the DND community, as well as to develop human resource management practices to allow for the enhanced professional development of all branch members. Strategic priorities include a commitment to promote cooperation and teamwork across environmental divisions, regardless of rank or position. Further

recognized is the need to develop best practices, exploit technology to improve communications, and focus on the ongoing development, training, and professional education of all members. The goals are appropriate and admirable; however, without some discussion of how to bring them about and make them a permanent part of the daily operations, the organization may simply default, after some time, to traditional ways of doing business (Brache, 2002; Drucker, 1992; Senge et al., 1999).

This desire to improve capabilities and performance, despite a lack of strategy for how to become a learning organization, is understandable given the challenging times in which the branch functions. Executives have long understood the value of knowledge and learning. Lesser, Fontaine, and Slusher (2000) believed that "these concerns have come to the fore with talk of a new economy, knowledge based organizations, and learning as the ultimate competitive advantage" (p. 3). If the MP branch is to retain its position as an important link in the military chain, it will need to exploit this advantage.

## Review of Supporting Literature

### *The Learning Organization*

"A learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" (Garvin, 1993, p. 80).

Although the idea of learning organizations is not new, there is by no means consensus on exactly what is meant by the term and, therefore, not surprisingly, there is even less agreement on how to create one (Kim, 1993). Although a few far-sighted executives and many researchers have begun to stir up a genuine interest in, and demand for, learning organizations, the actual

understanding of these ideas remains murky, confused, and difficult to penetrate (Garvin, 1993). Adding to the problem are the many new definitions being created, often without reference to the work of others that have gone before, by those who hope to better understand the learning organization. A complicating factor in my understanding, therefore, has been that of defining the learning organization. A review of widely cited literature on learning organizations provides some insight into the extent of the complexity and the difficulty of arriving at a common definition (Fenwick, 1996; Garvin, 1993; Kim, 1993; Moran, 1999; Popper & Lipschitz, 2000, Senge, 1990b; Senge et al., 1994; Senge et al., 1999; Starkey, 1998; Stata, 1989).

In reviewing the literature, however, I was struck with one consistency: the name Peter Senge. Although Senge himself has made no claim to originating the idea of a learning organization, his clear, well-articulated explanation of his particular understanding appears to be cited more often than any other and, for me, has lent some clarity to the confusion surrounding learning organization theory. Senge (1990b) identified a learning organization as one in which people "continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3). This definition appears to directly correspond with the principles and priorities extracted from the MP strategic plan above.

Senge (1990b) outlined five main disciplines that contribute to the foundation of a learning organization: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. *Systems thinking* is the practice of seeing the big picture, understanding internal and external influences simultaneously. *Personal mastery* encompasses efforts to understand oneself more deeply and develop greater capacities to focus energies and see reality objectively. The concept of *mental models* suggests a need for individuals and groups to critically examine

and, where necessary, overturn deeply held personal beliefs. A *shared vision*, in Senge's view, is the building of a common dream shared by everyone in the organization and used to guide thought and action. Finally, *team learning* suggests the capacity of individuals to suspend assumptions and think collectively in a way that will allow the team to create knowledge and develop insights that would not be possible by any of the team's individual members.

Dodgson (1993) is at least partially aligned with the definition originally articulated by Senge. He suggested that the essence of a learning organization is one that purposefully pursues structures and strategies that will enhance and maximize the potential organizational learning. He also believed, much like Senge, that a key element in maximizing corporate potential is individuals learning from one another. In Dodgson's view of the learning organization, a firm's learning is more than a simple sum of the parts of the employees' learning. Shared norms and values are indicative of a level of learning beyond the individual. For this reason, In Dodgson's view, creating a shared vision is dependent upon individuals first engaging in a cooperative process in which they gain an understanding of one another's values.

Easterby-Smith (1997) took a similar approach, suggesting that a learning organization is committed to the achievement of a specific, desirable, communally accepted end state. The learning organization is any organization "geared toward creating an ideal type, an organization in which learning is maximized" (p. 1086). The question then becomes one of how organizations maximize learning. Implicit in the idea of maximizing learning within a group setting is some form of cooperative process whereby learning is shared or collectively created.

Wang, Hjelmervik, and Bremdal (2001) had a slightly different emphasis. They saw a learning organization as any organization that stresses the internalization of learning through experience and action, and the generation of new knowledge, but they focused particularly on

knowledge generated through person-to-person interaction. They suggested that learning is not enough. It is the sharing of knowledge through personal interaction that begins to generate value to the learning organization.

In all of these definitions of the learning organization lies the belief that learning, at least in the organizational context, is fundamentally a cooperative venture. It extends beyond the individual to take in teams, groups, or collectives of some form.

In contrast to the foregoing, Wheatley (1999) implied that any process of making better use of information and learning to deal effectively with the vast amounts of information made available by technology describes the learning organization. Although I agree with her recognition of the need to handle information better, as one element necessary to the development of a learning organization, she also suggested that the term Learning Organization encompasses information management in the same way that Business Literacy, Intellectual Capital, and Knowledge Management do.

Although many concepts are shared and these ideas may appear similar at first glance, I have found the distinctions important and believe each of these areas of discussion attempts to focus on different ideas. I will therefore focus this discussion specifically on the learning organization and in particular the idea of cooperative learning.

A common element within the learning organization definitions found within the literature appears to be some cooperative form of understanding and knowledge creation. Senge (1990b; Senge et al., 1994; Senge et al., 1999) referred to team learning, which Easterby-Smith (1997) told us "involves maximizing on the insights of individuals through dialogue and awareness" (p. 4). Dodgson (1993) stressed that the organization benefits from a sharing of ideas only when the learning that takes place becomes greater than the sum of the employees' learning.

Finally, Wang et al. (2001) spoke of generating new knowledge through interaction. Wheatley (1999), too, acknowledged the power of sharing thoughts and ideas, pointing out that individuals at all levels in an organization must be capable of interpreting and using complex information.

In the literature surrounding the topic, it is evident that cooperative learning is a key element of the learning organization. But what is being said within the CF itself? In *Officership 2020* (DND, 2001), a learning organization is not specifically defined; however, the following is said about becoming a learning organization: "The CF must be skilled at acquiring and transferring knowledge and at encouraging behaviour that reflects new knowledge and insights. The CF must promote and support learning, learn from experience, embrace diversity, and focus on serving its membership" (p. 7).

In another commentary, Goodspeed, (2002) stated that learning organizations embrace a commitment to lifelong learning; improve the organization's ability to identify and internalize sound new ideas, and strive to improve all aspects of corporate intellect. This definition captures the essence of individuals sharing their learning to create new knowledge and this knowledge leading to organizational improvement as necessary in the development of a learning organization; the definition is also in general accord with the views of the researchers discussed above. The idea of creating a new future through the development and expansion of ideas and the collection and sharing of knowledge among individuals will, therefore, remain fundamental to the definition of a learning organization relied on for this major project.

As a result of the foregoing, I have included several elements in my working definition of a learning organization. My understanding includes a desire to increase, improve, and refine knowledge possessed both individually and collectively. It encompasses a cooperative group approach to problem solving based on person-to-person interaction. Values and ideas are

challenged and discussed openly and continually. Organization members desire to work together to improve the individuals, the group, and the organization to which they belong. Members are willing participants who benefit from the process, as well as contribute to it. Finally, the development of a learning organization is an ever-expanding, ongoing process that continues to refine its results and expand its influence. Through this process, the organization works toward common understandings, goals, and aspirations for the future.

Nuances of definition aside, I have come to believe in the importance of developing a learning organization, however defined. As Preskill and Torres (1999) so aptly put it, "When individuals inquire into a problematic situation on the organization's behalf and retain, crystallize, or embed new practices, values, or understandings, the organization learns" (p. 132). It is the creation of this type of learning, founded on individual and group inquiry and the development of shared meaning and understanding, and with the aim of solving problems on behalf of the organization, with which this project is concerned. "The learning organization provides an opportunity to breathe life into the CF to propel people, purpose and performance" (Walsh & Cox, 2002, p. 19).

At this point, we know that information must be shared and knowledge collectively created for the act to amount to more than individual learning. It must become accessible to, and useful for, the organization. This necessity drives the requirement for some method of team or cooperative learning to take place. It is this realization that takes individual and group learning and begins to transform it into organizational learning. Before any discussion of how groups learn, however, it is important to understand how individuals learn.

*Adult Learning*

> Authoritative teaching, examinations which preclude original thinking, rigid pedagogical formulae – all these have no place in adult education. Small groups of aspiring adults who desire to keep their minds fresh and vigorous, who begin to learn by confronting pertinent situations, who dig down into the reservoirs of their experience before resorting to texts and secondary facts . . . this constitutes the setting for adult education. (Lindeman, as cited in Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998, pp. 37-38)

Fundamental to any discussion of cooperative learning is an understanding of how individuals, in this case specifically adult individuals, learn. Adult learning is best perceived as a process of mental inquiry as opposed to one of passive reception of transmitted material. Learning is not simply the transmission of explicit, abstract knowledge from the head of someone who knows to the head of someone who doesn't, but rather, involves the intentional engagement of the learner (Forestell, 2003; Knowles et al., 1998). By becoming actively involved in the process of learning, the participants become learners, not simply being the passive recipients of thoughts and ideas created and communicated by someone claiming greater knowledge in a particular subject area.

The potential in adult education lies in building connections, making links, and creating understanding based on what is already known through education or experience. Adult learning focuses primarily on modifying, transforming, and reintegrating knowledge and skills as opposed to the formation and accumulation of them as in childhood (MacKeracher, 1996; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). The teacher and the specific details of instruction become secondary to the student deriving meaning from their life experience as it relates to the subject under discussion.

The single most important resource in adult education, therefore, is the learner's past experience (Knowles et al., 1998). Experience is key.

The military is beginning to recognize the value of experience in learning. In *Duty with Honour* (CDS, 2003), experience is recognized as a key contributor to learning. "[CF] members possess a systematic and specialized body of knowledge and skills acquired through education, training and experience" (p. 10). As I discussed in chapter 1, within this body of experience lies significant untapped potential for learning within the MP branch.

If experience is so important to individual adult learning, is it possible that it may also have some role to play at the organizational level? "Individuals make sense of life based on personal experience. But that's not easy in an organization where 'experience' has been dispersed among all the employees" (Senge et al., 1999, p. 440). Different understanding and perspectives can be brought to bear on an issue only through deliberate dialogue. People bring to the dialogue the experiences they have collected, their ideas, perceptions, and understandings, as well as conclusions drawn from their lives. But this experience is not readily shared without the appropriate environment first being established.

MacKeracher (1996) is unequivocal about the necessity of having a supportive learning environment for adult learning to be effective. Adults tend to learn best in comfortable, informal, non-threatening environments. Once that environment has been created, the sharing of information, ideas, and knowledge begins to change the workplace. "Knowledge critical to business success is often created and shared by informal groups of individuals with common work practices and interests" (Lesser et al., 2000, p. vii).

It is from this starting point that new knowledge is built. The traditional military view of learning, however, is not necessarily in line with this approach. Wenek (2002) stated, "If

commanders are accountable for the performance of individuals and units under their control, then it follows that they are responsible for ensuring their troops 'have the knowledge, skills, outlook and attitudes necessary to meet the challenges that will be faced in theatre'" (p. 5). Inherent in this statement lies the implication that individuals can be compelled by an authority to learn something, that a commander can be made responsible for the learning of another person. Although a strong argument can easily be made for the commander's responsibility to ensure his or her troops are well trained, Stringer (1999) cautioned, "When we try to get people to do anything, insist that they must or should do something . . . we are working from an authoritative position that is likely to generate resistance" (p. 47). Knowles et al. (1998) have been in solid agreement with this position, suggesting that adult learners are precisely those whose intellectual aspirations are least likely to be aroused by the rigid, uncompromising requirements of authoritative, conventionalized institutions of learning. Although people can be taught a great many things, what they really know and understand appears to be more a function of what they choose to learn than what they are required to learn.

Lesser et al. (2000) argued that individuals require sufficient opportunities to interact with one another in joint activities, to build relationships, trust, and personal identities. This ongoing mutual engagement makes the community real as an experience and weaves the social fabric necessary to support joint learning. Therefore, a simple yet extremely powerful social dynamic takes place within learning organizations. There is a cumulative effect realized from the creation of learning, which leads to the sharing of ideas and knowledge, which strengthens the desire to learn, leading to more complete sharing, and so on. As trust and sharing continue, they build on one another.

This growth does not happen automatically, though:

> People start discussing the "undiscussable" subjects only when they develop the reflection and inquiry skills that enable them to talk openly about complex, conflictive issues without invoking defensiveness. People start seeing and dealing with interdependencies and deeper causes of problems only as they develop the skills of systems thinking. If basic learning capabilities like these are deficient, then they represent a fundamental limit to sustaining change. (Senge et al., 1999, p. 9)

The military police have been directed, along with the rest of DND and the CF, to find ways to work toward becoming a learning organization. Inherent in the idea of a learning organization is the requirement to learn. Individual learning, however, is only part of the equation. The real value is in finding ways to experience our learning together and to share our learning.

> An organization cannot learn if individuals or groups within act only on their own conclusions informed only by their own knowledge and perspectives. For an organization to learn requires the knowledge and perspectives of others to enter the decision making process. The people who take action need to observe, capture, and reflect upon the results of those actions. By developing an infrastructure to measure results, capture lessons learned, and share this information with others, organizational learning begins to occur. (Senge et al., 1999, pp. 442-443)

In the above quote, Senge et al. (1999) made it clear that organizational learning involves more than individual learning. It includes the sharing of knowledge and perspectives, the intentional capturing of lessons, and the synthesizing of these lessons into a form that the organization can make use of. Within the MP branch, we have a formal process in place for the capturing, recording, and transmitting of lessons learned. It is known as the After Action Report

process. As we have seen above, however, an informal process may also be a powerful method of sharing important knowledge.

Having determined that one of the common factors in the concept of the learning organization is that of some form of community learning strategy, I will now briefly look at team learning and consider communities of practice as one well-known example of cooperative learning that relies on cooperation, trust, and the sharing of knowledge and experience as its foundation. Through this discussion, I hope to identify some elements that may support the development of a cooperative learning strategy that could be implemented in an effort to aid the CF MP branch in its quest toward becoming a learning organization.

Teams are united by a common purpose. They strive together, relying on one another and themselves to achieve a collective goal. Secretan (1997) defined a team as "a group of people working together in a coordinated effort" and reminded us "they share harmony, trust, truth-telling, respect, support, courage, chemistry, shared vision, goals, and values" (p. 204). Given this definition of a team, any team learning process must rely on more than simply gathering a group together and calling them a team. It must include a personal commitment on the part of each and every member to not only be a team by name, but be a team in spirit as well.

It has long been understood that teams possess a synergistic potential that extends well beyond the simple sum of the capacities of the individuals involved (Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 1997; Senge et al., 1994). Recently, researchers have begun to consider how this idea applies to learning. The creation of increased potential is the core principle underlying the entire field of organizational learning theory. Walsh and Cox (2002) have been clear in their commitment to the idea of teams. "Team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations. Unless teams can learn, the organization

cannot learn. They work together or whither [*sic*] together" (p. 21). They went on to suggest that team learning begins with the discipline of dialogue, which allows for the suspension of assumptions and the ability to truly think together, enabling the transfer of knowledge between and among individuals. This act holds the potential to create new ideas and meanings, develop concepts and solutions, and discover insights that would not be attainable individually. I have experienced this synergy within a group of trusted colleagues and can attest to its power and effect. For this reason, any team learning process employed by the MP branch will require, as its foundation, a commitment to the discipline of dialogue.

Senge (1990a, 1990b) articulated that his vision of the learning organization involves the development of people who learn to see systems, who take responsibility for the development of their personal mastery, and who learn how to identify, dissect, and re-create mental models collaboratively. What Senge saw is a form of team learning that extends to incorporate and overlap several teams, expanding the synergy of individual teams exponentially to the point where it encompasses all the individuals of an organization and beyond. This position is very much in line with Secretan (1997), who envisioned a changed world through individual growth. "Creating opportunities for learning individuals leads to the development of the learning organization, and this, in turn, leads to a critically important learning goal – the learning society" (p. 190). Our team, therefore, will also require personal commitment, by each of its members, to the extension of their learning beyond themselves.

The entire concept of the learning organization hinges on the idea of learning and creating a desired future together. If we are to learn together, however, we must first establish the conditions necessary for learning together. It is in the building of communities that such conditions may be created.

*Communities of Practice*

A community is composed of a group of people interacting on a regular basis around common issues, interests, or needs, and striving for common understanding. Communities forge new connections and relationships through members' sharing of themselves and of their work practices, and through fostering a sense of belonging within the organization. Communities of practice specifically share the capacity to create and use organizational knowledge in new and powerful ways, through informal learning and person-to-person and group engagement. As the modern workplace transforms to include individuals working more and more with people they do not see on a daily basis, communities begin to fill an important void. They help people make connections that are critical to learning new skills. Further, they help make sense of the greater system in which the individual exists and provide a mechanism for sharing knowledge throughout the organization (Lesser et al., 2000).

Communities of practice, as defined by Pratt (1998), are a very specific form of knowledge sharing. They are structured communities to which one typically subscribes and agrees to participate in on a regular and sustained basis. Communities of practice have an informal membership that is often fluid and self-organizing. They need not be constrained by geography, corporate structures, or functional boundaries, but rather, are created through the recognition of common tasks, issues, contexts, and work interests. They extend beyond the simple exchange of knowledge and attempt to arrive at shared experience (Lesser et al., 2000). Being a member of a community of practice includes both the exchange of information necessary to the activities of the practice, and the sharing of stories about difficult situations of practice in order to foster a deeper understanding of common issues among practice members.

In communities of practice, novices enter dialogue with the more senior and experienced members of the community and, through developing relationships, begin a process of enculturation. The novices are inculcated with the norms, the values, the ideals, and, to a certain extent, the ideas of the more senior members. Once fully engaged in the community of practice, the more junior members may then begin to influence the ideas and thinking of the more senior members through sharing and teaching. This reciprocal exchange is the essence of a community of practice (Lesser et al., 2000).

Wenger (1998), who has often been credited with coining the term "communities of practice," stated that communities of practice are "fundamentally self-organizing systems" (p.2), but argued they "must be acknowledged, supported, and fully integrated into the operation of organizations; and all this without disrupting the informality, collegiality, self-organization, and internal leadership that are critical to their ability to steward an area of expertise effectively" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 5). He further emphasized that any group coming together to share understanding and knowledge of common interest may represent a community of practice. "Such communities do not take knowledge in their specialty to be an object; it is a living part of their practice, even when they document it" (p. 4).

The key element in communities of practice is that they are formed to share information, knowledge, and relationships. "Communities of practice contribute to the development of intuitive knowledge (i.e. knowing) through the on-going mutual engagement in practice that is an essential feature of a knowledge-creating environment" (Forestell, 2003, p. 26). Communities of practice may be spontaneous or intentional, large or small, local or international, face-to-face or virtual, homogeneous or heterogeneous. Organizational or institutional hierarchies do not bind them. "By definition, communities of practice are not defined. They have no names, no formal

memberships, and no status. But they move information" (Senge et al., 1999, p. 478).

Wenger et al. (2002) defined communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). Lesser et al. (2000) expanded on Wenger's definition to include the idea of a community as a group of people who not only learn together, but also build important relationships as they learn. Over time, in the process of this cooperative learning and the creation of knowledge and understanding together, the members of this community develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment. Communities of practice, it has been suggested, are the natural social structure for the creation, refinement, and sharing of knowledge, and that they have existed for all of human history (Lesser et al., 2000; Wenger et al., 2002).

Despite the foregoing utopian view of learning through relationships, sharing, openness, and community building, knowledge, in reality, has a tendency to remain in specialized areas unless there is a conscious effort to move it across organizational lines. "Most organizations are not designed to encourage boundary interactions. People are often rewarded for focusing on their own area" (Senge et al., 1999, p. 436). Despite recognizing this reality, Senge et al. were convinced of the need to expand beyond this type of thinking. They argued that it is equally necessary to be aware of the boundaries of communities of practice as it is to focus on their core. The idea, they believed, is to make sure there is sufficient activity at the boundaries to prevent fragmentation of knowledge and to renew learning.

If such communities of practice were in existence within the CF, ideas and information could be expected to flow more freely to the benefit of all services. In discussing one area of constant interest to the military the world over, leadership development, in a paper prepared for

the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, Walsh and Cox (2002) commented, "What is required is a transference of knowledge across the organizational silos that will allow for the harnessing of intellectual capital and the leveraging of leadership competence as a strategic capability" (p. 5).

In order to achieve genuine learning through a sharing of organizational knowledge, however, a culture of openness and trust must exist. To achieve such a culture requires the breaking down of the boundaries discussed by Senge et al. (1999) and the silos to which Walsh and Cox (2002) referred. These artificial barriers exist in virtually every organization and must be considered in the creation of the learning organization.

Much like the individual adult learner, who learns little without a desire to learn and a commitment to seeking knowledge, and like the teams that do not learn without every member committing to the learning process, Forestell (2003) suggested that communities of practice also require commitment.

> It is not the subject matter of the particular topic, subject area or enterprise that determines whether a community of practice will form, it is the commitment to, and interest in, the domain that determines whether people come together to share their knowledge, experience, best practices, and discuss pertinent issues within the domain. (p. 9)

Lesser et al. (2000) agreed, stating, "Without personal engagement and passion for the topic, communities of practice will not thrive" (p. 8).

Although there are many definitions of communities of practice, and many subtle variations on the practice itself, all maintain an emphasis on people coming together to share knowledge, experience, and interest in an issue or field. Communities of practice are neither established nor constrained by the organization, and they provide a place for mutual

understanding, values exchange, and the creation of the environment where "patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 1990b, p. 3). In order for such communities to exist, however, a proper culture in which such learning is encouraged will also be necessary.

## *Organizational Culture*

> A culture is a set of basic tacit assumptions about how the world is and ought to be that a group of people share and that determines their perceptions, thoughts, feeling, and to some degree, their overt behaviour. Culture manifests itself at three levels: the level of deep tacit assumptions that are the essence of the culture, the level of espoused values that often reflect what a group wishes ideally to be and the way it wants to present itself publicly, and the day-to-day behaviour that represents a complex compromise among the espoused values, the deeper assumptions, and the immediate requirements of the situation. (Schein, 1996, p. 11)

Schein's (1996) definition of culture may provide some insight into what is happening in the MP branch. DND, of which the MP branch is an integral component, is a conservative bureaucracy. The deep tacit assumptions of the organization have traditionally been centred on a status quo of formal structured training. So deeply ingrained is this cultural norm that in one of the last meetings with the research participants for this project, one of the attendants remarked that throughout our group process, several members of the research team had defaulted to a standard, rigid, military training structure for what was supposed to be relaxed, informal, and cooperative learning sessions.

As previously discussed, the department has publicly committed to the development of a learning culture and learning organization. These commitments reflect the espoused and ideal values of the organization. Learning culture and learning organization theory, however, suggest that rigid pedagogical formulae and structured training, such as those to which military personnel may have a tendency to default, are not effective at maximizing learning potential. In light of recent initiatives within DND in general and the MP branch in particular, current reality may lie somewhere between the traditional and the ideal, reflecting the complex compromise to which Schein (1996) referred.

As with learning organization theory, organizational culture has been defined, explained, and articulated in many ways. Brache (2002) described culture as the "values, rules, practices, rituals and norms through which you conduct business. Simply, it is the way you do things" (p. 102). Wheatley (1999) viewed organizational culture as "eerily similar behaviours exhibited by people in an organization" (p. 128). Senge et al. (1999) saw it as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that have been learned by the members of a particular group" (p. 336). Schein (1992) believed culture is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems . . . that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 12). Culture then, is not about absolutes but comprises common ideas and ideals, individual and group habits of thought, feeling and action, and beliefs about the accepted ways of doing or being. But what are the effects of culture, however defined, on the organization and its members?

The effects of a culture on its members can often be subtle. Sometimes, cultures within which we exist are the most difficult ones to recognize because of our perspective.

"Institutionalized practices – those commonly accepted as 'the way things are done' – seem so pervasive and normal that we often cannot envisage other ways of working, even when those practices are ineffective or, in some cases, detrimental to our purposes" (Stringer, 1999, p. 189). Hofstede (1997) amplified this point, in recent years referring to culture as software of the mind and suggesting that it drives behaviour while operating unnoticed in the background, much the same way that software on a computer functions without the conscious thought of the operator. But there is by no means consensus on the precise metric of a culture.

The CF MP branch has a wide variety of cultural influences. The members of the branch are citizens of Canada and, therefore, have been subjected to the cultural influences prevalent in this country, as well as in the province, community, and family in which they were raised. DND has a strong conservative, bureaucratic culture similar to that found in many federal government departments. The CF has a culture largely influenced by its professional, Western, military nature. In addition, the MP branch has its own cultural influences. For instance, MPs are influenced by the police culture in Canada. The branch also comprises several sub-divisions responsible for different functions of policing, security, and support to military operations. To a greater or lesser extent, each of these sub-components is influenced by its own emerging culture.

Hofstede (1997) suggested that an individual may be subjected to six or more levels of culture at a given time. Forestell (2003) believed that in large organizations, although there may be some degree of commonality in the overall organizational culture, the cultures that are most salient to individuals are more likely those that are at the local level and in the particular workplace. It is difficult to know which element or level of one's culture will exert the greatest influence at any given time. What is common, however, is the belief that change is possible. Culture is not a static thing. It is subject to pressures and changes over time (English, 2001;

Hofstede, 1997; Schein, 1993). It is because of this fact that any cultural change necessitated by the efforts to become a learning organization is possible for all elements of the branch. Believing that change is possible, the focus shifts to how this task is accomplished.

Like the definition of culture, there is little agreement concerning how cultures are changed. Senge et al. (1999), for instance, believed that cultures cannot be readily changed but must be allowed to evolve over an extended period:

> People who try to change organizations often run up against attitudes that seem unchangeable . . . . You cannot create a new culture. You can immerse yourself in studying a culture (your own, or someone else's) until you understand it. Then you can propose new values, introduce new ways of doing things, and articulate new governing ideas. Over time, these actions will set the stage for new behaviour. If people who adopt that new behaviour feel that it helps them to do better, they may try it again, and after many trials, taking as long as five or ten years, the organizational culture may embody a different set of assumptions, and a different way of looking at things, than it did before. Even then, you haven't changed the culture; you've set the stage for the culture to evolve. (p. 335)

Schein (1993) took a slightly different approach, suggesting that cultures can be changed, although he too believed the process happens slowly and underscored the role of leaders in creating and reinforcing culture. But regardless of our ability to directly influence the direction or speed of cultural modification, there does appear to be consensus that cultural change cannot be forced. It must happen over time, with understanding and patience. Attempting to force cultural change leads to fear, resistance, and frustration (Duck, 2001; Hofstede, 1997; Schein, 1993). And failed attempts to force cultural transformation only increase the challenge. In looking at the

implications of not dealing appropriately with organizational culture, specifically in attempting to create a learning organization, Schein (1993) said, "The problem of organizational learning and transformation is to overcome the negative effects of past carrots and sticks, especially sticks" (p. 91).

Despite this apparently gloomy outlook for cultural change, there is hope. Several practitioners have found that success lies as much in the approach to change and the leadership example provided as it does in the target of the change process (Brache, 2002; Duck, 2001; Goleman, 1995; Knowles, 2002; O'Toole, 1996; Senge et al., 1999). They suggest that regardless of the desired end state of a cultural change strategy, the process may appear less daunting if the organization simply begins to behave as if it had already achieved the aim. "Demand that people do things a certain way and you'll get relatively meager results. Create a culture in which it is taken for granted that they're done that way, and you'll get nearly universal results" (Kline & Saunders, 1998, p. 23). In this sense, cultural change may be largely a matter of organizational members following the example set by others within the organization. "Organizational cultures and their leaders are reflections of each other. Building a culture that will embrace learning means building senior level support for that culture" (Walsh & Cox, 2002, p. 23).

Having acknowledged the power of leadership example in cultural change, I consider it unwise, however, to view the practice as simple. Hofstede (1997) believed that once certain patterns of thought, feeling, and action have been established, they must be unlearned before they can be replaced with something different. This unlearning process is much more difficult than learning the first time. It is equally important to recognize that resistance, whether intentional or subconscious, will be a critical element to overcome in changing a culture (Duck, 2001; Schein, 1993). This resistance is completely understandable:

> Cultural assumptions provide meaning to daily events for people inside a group; they make life predictable, and therefore reduce anxiety. They are taught (in both explicit and tacit ways) to new group members as the "correct" way to perceive, think, and feel about all aspects of daily life. To change a culture is thus to change the basic attitudes that members have developed over the years of their career. That's why cultures resist change. (Senge et al., 1999, p. 336)

Major General Penney (2003), Chief of Review Services for the Canadian Forces, offered some suggestions to overcome such resistance. In speaking of change, he stated, "What you have to do is create an environment in which people feel comfortable sharing their ideas" (p. 6). He also believed that the simple act of requesting input from members of the organization and genuinely listening to them begins the process of cultural change. This is not such a strange idea. According to Senge et al. (1999), "if people saw that business leaders listened to, and implemented, their ideas, they would behave differently" (p. 76). Essentially, if leaders demonstrate a learning desire, a true value of learning, other people will follow. Change becomes easier once it has been demonstrated. But Penney (2003) cautioned that the practice cannot be a temporary one designed to achieve the aim within a specific timeline. It must be fully incorporated into the norms of the organization over the long run if it is to survive. Sharpe and English (2002) agreed, stating, "In order to make organizational change a permanent feature of the CF, it will need to be accepted as necessary" (p. xiv).

Changing a culture through reform, adopting change strategies, and fixing perceived or real problems may be met with cynicism, resistance, and skepticism. And unfortunately, the Canadian Forces have a poor track record in change (Brennan, 1999; Charters & Iverson, 1998; Wenek, 2002). After extensive research into CF culture, English (2001) concluded that the

Canadian Forces possessed "some of the characteristics of a dysfunctional, non-adaptive culture…resistant to change" (p. i.).

> The organizational culture of the Canadian Forces is unique amongst the militaries that we work with, and indeed amongst other government departments and Canadian businesses. Most failures in . . . organizational changes can be traced to failures to modify the culture to accept the changes. (Sharpe & English, 2002, p. xvi)

"Even though the importance of organizational culture is recognized in a number of DND documents and in the management literature, it has been largely overlooked in most of the change initiatives in the CF since 1964" (Sharpe & English, 2002, p. xiii).

Major General Penney (2003) further warned us that even if culture is influenced in the desired direction there is no guarantee of success.

> Existing culture can actually kill a good idea before it gets a chance to germinate or take hold. They always say that if you don't know history, you're doomed to repeat it. I say, if you don't understand your culture, then any change initiative is doomed to fail. (p. 6)

This idea is reinforced by Knowles (2002), who suggested new ideas or teams can be "killed off by the existing culture like white blood cells surrounding an infection" (p. LIX).

One of the struggles of leadership has long been to identify how to influence or change culture. Several researchers see the responsibility for building an organization's culture and shaping its evolution as an essential function of leadership (Schein, 1992; Stroup, 1996; Yukl, 2002). Walsh and Cox (2002) agreed, acknowledging that the leaders must first believe in the necessity for change before the entire organization can share in that vision. "In a military culture based on command and control it will require a strategic learning process to manage the leadership paradigm shift" (p. 3).

In keeping with centuries of military tradition, the CF appears to have acknowledged leadership by example as the key to successful change within the organization. To ensure the success of *Officership 2020* (DND, 2001), the senior leaders have been directed to set the example, promote and demonstrate learning and continuous improvement, and "institutionalize" professional development changes. English (2001) would agree with this approach, arguing that one of the functions of the officer corps is the creation and modification of the organizational culture. As an organization, the Canadian Forces have made the success of a fundamental cultural change the responsibility of the leadership and expect that they will succeed. Stringer (1999) cautioned, however, that the challenge is to institutionalize the desire to change, the recognition of the necessity for change, to such a degree that it is part of the organization, as opposed to an edict passed down from above. "My experience suggests that programs and projects begun on the basis of the decisions and definitions of authority figures have a high probability of failure" (p. 47).

I undertook this important project in part in recognition of the need to ensure that the learning organization is both seen as a necessity and created from within the ranks of the MP branch.

# CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a learner in the Royal Roads University (RRU) Master of Arts in Leadership and Training (MALT) program in the summer of 2002, I was introduced to a process referred to as *learner-led* learning sessions. Learner-led gatherings involved RRU learners sharing their knowledge in a particular area with others. In addition to simply imparting information, these learners also recounted their own learning experience and their passion or interest in the topic. The opportunity to learn from someone who shared not only their knowledge of a subject, but also a part of themselves in the form of personal stories proved a powerful learning combination for me. Although I was new to the concept, I immediately found this process to be far more meaningful, enjoyable, and memorable than I have experienced with more traditional forms of teaching, plus it led to greater retention and recall of the material presented. In essence, I learned more and I learned more deeply. I was immediately convinced of the potential of this form of learning.

Returning to my workplace after residence, I shared my excitement about this process with my co-workers. Several seemed genuinely interested and immediately began to relay stories of their own learning. Many of them indicated their most memorable learning experiences were ones in which the material presented was mixed with stories of personal experience and the sharing of a passion. An area of study for this MALT major research paper was realized that day.

Based on my own view of this method, supported by other learners I spoke to, and on my deepening appreciation for learning organization theory, I believed that a similar process might be one tool the MP branch could employ in its efforts to become a learning organization.

## Research Methods

I chose an action research approach to assist the MP branch with its transformation because of the potential it offered to effect real change in the organization. Because of its cyclical nature, the action research process also allowed for the revisiting of ideas and concepts as new information and understanding were gained. This inherent characteristic of action research allowed for learning while doing, something I considered important as a developing academic researcher. As with the literature surrounding learning organizations, however, there is no absolute agreement on the process of action research.

Dick (1993) supplied a description of the action research process founded on a four-step model of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Hamilton, Lafleur, and MacFadden (1998) suggested that one must plan, act, and study. Finally, Stringer (1999) saw it as involving cycles of observation, action, and reflection. Regardless of the specific model followed and steps applied, Stringer said that, at its core, action research is "a collaborative approach to *inquiry* or *investigation* that provides people with the means to take systematic *action* to resolve specific problems" (p. 17). Action research implies that some form of action is both an ongoing result of the process and a final outcome. It is this means of taking action to create change and resolve problems that made this process appropriate to my project. I found Stringer's explanations of action research theory and process to be clear, easy to understand, and very intuitive. As a result, I relied heavily on his work as a guide throughout.

The problem outlined in chapter 1 was concerned with seeking ways to assist the MP branch in moving toward becoming a learning organization. One possible tool to assist in the resolution of that problem, a cooperative learning process, was selected and tested on a limited scale and is discussed below. Action research allowed for this tool to be introduced, tried,

modified, and tried again. Each attempt at its use was a learning catalyst for the next attempt. Change was already occurring while both the learning and the trial were ongoing.

Since beginning a career with the MP branch 15 years ago, I have witnessed efforts to implement Total Quality Management practices, re-engineering, and multiple line diagram restructuring, all in an effort to make the branch a more efficient, effective, and higher-performing entity. We have been living in what Vaill (1996) referred to as a state of permanent whitewater conditions. As a result of these conditions, and reflecting on my experience as a branch member, I do not believe that we are presently functioning as a learning organization. I also wonder if one of the reasons that prior attempts at change have been less than completely effective is a lack of ownership and participation on the part of the branch members. Stringer (1999) observed, "Active participation is the key to feelings of ownership that motivate people to invest their time and energy" (p. 35).

I desired to make a genuine, enduring difference through the process of my research. Tangible action, anchored in the involvement and ownership of those who will be affected by any resulting change, is the primary strength of action research and made it appropriate in this instance.

I know many people in the organization who have experienced frustration and alienation stemming from decision processes, policy changes, and unidirectional communications in which they believe they had insufficient input and have been afforded limited consideration. At the same time, I have noted a frequently stated need for greater integration of the ideas, opinions, and expertise of all of the members, to the benefit of the whole organization. It is because of this incongruity that I wished to explore opportunities to tap into the wealth of knowledge and experience within the MP ranks.

Action research appeared to be the appropriate methodology for me personally. Stringer (1999) stated that action research "seeks not only to enrich professional practice but also to enhance the lives of those involved" (p. 3). I found this approach appealed to me in that it offered the potential for significant organizational change while maintaining a focus on the needs and expectations of organization, researcher, and participants. In short, action research promised the possibility of maintaining the human element as a paramount consideration in any change process. In this instance, Palys (1997) has succinctly captured the essence of my desire to see the branch transformed from within: "The topics you choose to investigate, the way you investigate them, and the nature of the relations between researcher and participants should mirror the values you'd like to see incorporated into the world" (p. 82).

## Project Participants

The office of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal (CFPM), located in Ottawa, was chosen as the test bed for my research. I selected this sub-component of the MP branch from which to solicit volunteers in an effort to encompass a broad range of individual experience and exposure. This staff was the largest collection of Canadian military police personnel in a single geographic location anywhere in the world. Because of constant rotation of personnel throughout the MP branch, including the office of the CFPM, the office represented a single-source microcosm of personnel, representing the interests of virtually all possible military police sub-groups. This characteristic of the staff meant that it was relatively easy for me to seek input from various sub-groups within the branch without extensive travel. The office also allowed for a reasonable representative mix of gender, environmental uniforms, ranks, and professional experience within the one location.

The staff of the office of the CFPM is made up of approximately 100 military and civilian personnel. A total of 17 people attended two information sessions I presented over 2 consecutive days. Of this group, 4 volunteered immediately following the session they attended and one volunteered the following day. Several others who attended the information sessions, as well as a few who learned of my research by word of mouth, also expressed interest in participating but ultimately chose not to, largely citing the time commitment as too onerous. I had requested volunteers to commit 16 hours of their personal time over a 2-month period. Most of these people thought the commitment was more than they could manage. By the time the planned learning injunctions, in the form of cooperative learning sessions, were to begin, a total of 6 volunteers had agreed to the requested level of commitment and chose to participate in this action research process.

Representative samples, according to Kirby and McKenna (1989), are not necessarily a prerequisite to good action research: "In determining who has the information you are looking for, remember that you are looking for information, not for representatives of a specific sample population" (p. 97). Stringer (1999), on the other hand, encouraged research facilitators to conduct a social analysis to ensure that all relevant groups are included in the research process. The aim of such analysis, he suggested, is to identify the groups that have a stake in the problem being considered, so that men and women from all potential interest groups can have a voice in the proceedings. Giving a voice to those who are to be led should be one of the fundamental responsibilities of peacetime military officers. "You are what you do. When designing research, make what you do a conscious reflection of who you are and what you believe is important" (Palys, 1997, p. 83). I wished to be as fair as possible in creating the conditions for various voices to be heard; I chose to attempt, as much as possible, to find a representative sample.

I was comforted to have a reasonable representation of the various levels and interests within the group of research participants. This group included one senior officer, three junior officers, and one each of senior and junior non-commissioned members. Two of the research participants were also non-badge-carrying support staff members. If this process proved useful, my intention was to attempt to introduce it on a much broader scale to all members of the branch. Palys (1997) reminded us "we cannot remain aloof from the implications of our work – if we take our work seriously, and hope that others will, too, we must not ignore the possible effects of putting our ideas into practice" (p. 82). If my ideas are to be put into practice I required reasonable representation to achieve credibility in the eyes of various organizational sub-groups.

In preparing for my first trip to Ottawa, I distributed an e-mail that included a request for any members who thought they might be interested in participating in the research to contact me in advance, so I could send them some background information before my arrival. I had planned to run one information session and solicit volunteers. Because few people attended the first session, I ran a second one the following day. After the information sessions, attendees were invited to stay for a more in-depth discussion of the specific details of my research question if they wished and to sign up if they desired further involvement. The attendance at the information sessions was somewhat disappointing. From a staff of almost 100 people, only 17 attended. The response from the attendees, on the other hand, was encouraging with almost 30% of attendees volunteering.

I recognized the MP branch as fitting into the much larger systems of the CF and DND, however, I kept the research participants restricted to those within the branch itself. Although others may have contributed a different perspective, the process of learning within the organization was in question and anyone external to the organization would not be speaking from

a position of first-hand knowledge. Furthermore, in keeping with the idea that action research should be a catalyst for change, I felt confident in restricting my focus to members of the branch. By doing this I was able to keep the project small enough to be manageable with the knowledge that a successful research process may spur the participants on as catalysts for change beyond the branch.

## Data-Gathering Tools

> Organizations are products of the ways that people in them think and interact. To change organizations for the better, you must give people the opportunity to change the ways they think and interact. . . . The practice of organizational learning involves developing tangible activities . . . and new management methods and tools for changing the way people conduct their work. . . . The process will pay back the organization with far greater levels of diversity, commitment, innovation, and talent. (Senge et al., 1999, p. 33)

This quote spoke volumes to me. If the MP branch was to learn better, it first had to change the way its members thought and acted. In my mind, my project had to be about changing thoughts and incorporating new actions.

I have recently been intrigued by the work of Ken Wilber (1998), who posited that all valid knowing has three strands:

1. Instrumental injunction. This is an actual practice, an exemplar, a paradigm, an experiment, or an ordinance. It is always of the form "If you want to know this, do this."
2. Direct apprehension. This is an immediate experience of the domain brought forth by the injunction; that is a direct experience or apprehension of data. . . . William James

pointed out that one of the meanings of "data" is direct and immediate experience, and science anchors all of its concrete assertions in such data.

3. Communal confirmation (or rejection). This is a checking of the results – the data, the evidence – with others who have adequately completed the injunctive and apprehensive strands. (pp. 155-156)

Wilber believes that for anyone to truly understand something, he or she needs to receive input through each of the three strands.

With the work of Wilber in mind, data gathering and analysis were executed through several methods:

- First, I created an injunction for members of the research group in the form of a cooperative learning process modeled after the RRU learner-led sessions discussed at the start of this chapter. I anticipated holding one such session for each of the research participants.
- Second, the participants reported on the direct apprehensions through dialogue with and brief, open-ended surveys completed soon after the injunction. We also carried out follow-on discussions prior to subsequent sessions as an additional means of reporting on the direct apprehensions, as well as providing a mechanism by which the participants could validate my tentative findings along the way.
- Finally, I achieved communal confirmation through the participants' verification of their experiences with one another during the informal, relaxed conversations prior to and following each injunction, as well as through a meta-analysis of the surveys and research and journal notes I had been keeping; the meta-analysis was returned to the participants for comment.

By these means, I believe that I was able to accurately capture and report on the essence of the experience for the participants, while also incorporating my own experience.

As part of the data collection process, I kept a journal as both a researcher and a learner within the group. I also invited the others to journal their thoughts and feelings about the process or content of the learning sessions. My desire to journal arose from a powerful personal experience during the 2002 MALT summer residency in which I was challenged by a faculty member to journal and found the experience yielded information and observations about myself and the situations around me that I had previously not consciously noticed. Unfortunately, none of the other participants chose to journal. In contrast, I used my journal relatively extensively, both before and after the sessions.

Another reason for keeping a journal emanated from several research authors whose words resonated with me. Kirby and McKenna (1989) referred to a "thought cloth" and described it as a collection of ideas relevant to the research woven together over time. I found my journal to be the loom on which my thought cloth was primarily woven over the course of this project. Stringer (1999) commented on the value of observation, converted at the earliest possible moment to notes, from which accurate accounts of events may later be recalled. As I was often an active participant in the learning injunctions from which my data was derived, I relied extensively on journal notes created immediately following each session, as opposed to notes taken throughout the actual process. Finally, Palys (1997) spoke of field notes as a diary that allows the researcher to capture and return to details of the process and data relevant to its outcome.

My journal also alleviated my concerns about the particular observation skills and note-taking practices I have developed as a trained police officer. I was aware that taking notes during

the learning injunctions could result in a set of factually sterile observations that, though accurate, might fail to capture the element of the process I was most concerned with – the reactions of the participants, myself included, to this particular learning approach. I therefore decided to focus my journaling on the essence of my experience and my perception of the participants' experiences beyond the standard police objectives of who, what, where, when, why, and how.

The actual learning injunctions were intended to be informal cooperative learning sessions in which each of the six volunteer research participants were given absolute latitude on topic, format, venue, and all other details. What occurred were six sessions of approximately one hour, all of which were held in the CFPM conference room located near the participants' offices. The topics were widely varied and included subjects of both professional and personal interest. In each of the six sessions, the individual who had volunteered to present a topic delivered subject information, some description of his or her personal or professional connection to the material, and personal stories related to the subject. All of the sessions included some participatory element. They began with discussion of the prior learning intervention and concluded with dialogue and comment on the topic at hand.

Following the first cooperative learning injunction – the first learning session – the data collected appeared at first glance to be relatively shallow in terms of the thoughts and feelings of the participants. I reviewed the questions carefully and discussed them with several people, including my project sponsor, my faculty supervisor, and the research participants. I concluded that the questions were appropriately open-ended to allow for more in-depth answers, but the answers were largely tempered, possibly even restrained, by participants' willingness to be open and their level of comfort in being open.

I brought what I considered were the common responses from the first session to the second session for brief discussion. When I quickly reviewed the responses with the participants, there was general consensus that the data I had recorded reflected what they felt as a group. In their opinion, the process was both appropriate and interesting. They indicated that it held potential, but some barriers would need to be overcome before it could be effectively used in the entire branch. For example, the participants expressed concern about finding time in already overloaded schedules. Some members also expressed a minor initial discomfort at the informality of the process but added that it was quickly relieved once they began to actively learn. In addition, the participants found some of the questions difficult to respond to, and a useful discussion ensued concerning challenges experienced with the survey. These comments were incorporated in revisions to the original survey before bringing it with me to the third learning session.

At the beginning of the third cooperative learning session I discussed the changes with the participants in hopes that they would understand that I sought more personal, visceral responses. I wanted to determine if the process felt right to them. Past attempts at change within the branch may have appeared academically sound but ran up against resistance because members felt threatened, excluded, marginalized, or uncomfortable. I believed that for this cooperative learning process to create real change, it had to be something members of the organization believed in, enjoyed, and had a desire to see continue.

Each subsequent learning session was preceded by similar discussion about the nature of the responses on the previous survey, to ensure all participants felt both affirmed for their honesty and encouraged to continue to consider carefully the value of the process and the content of the subject session before completing the next survey. As Wilber (1998) reminded us, "new

injunctions disclose new data" (p. 158). Because of statement, I adjusted the survey questions slightly after each session and chose not to rely exclusively on the surveys but also included informal one-on-one conversations, often over coffee, with several of the research participants and others in the organization who expressed an interest in my work but could not commit to being a participant throughout.

### *Qualitative vs. Quantitative Data*

When I considered the fit of a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed approach to information gathering and analysis, my personal orientation fit most closely with a primarily qualitative approach because of its acceptance of informed opinion and the value it places on personal experience (Kirby & McKenna, 1998). The hope, after all, was to determine if this process would fit with the needs and expectations of the participants as one possible means of working toward the learning organization goal. However, I was reluctant to discount the necessity of some element of quantitative investigation as well.

I am a member of the organization my research looks at. The MP branch is primarily composed of police officers who focus daily on concrete facts and the pursuit of objective, irrefutable truths. Prior to my involvement in the MALT program, I believed that quantitative data was the only empirically valid data. Informal discussions with colleagues revealed a similar bent. These factors suggested to me that there was likely a positivist nature to the branch as a whole. This fact implies that its members might respond better to quantitative rather than exclusively qualitative data. I was therefore not completely confident that a purely qualitative approach would be regarded as sufficiently empirical, and I anticipated a need to offer reassurances that any recommendations resulting from my research were arrived at from tangible,

concrete facts, rather than on what might be perceived as emotion and anecdote. I sought ways to quantify at least a portion of the data in an effort to make it more audience appropriate.

### *Approaches to Validation and Rationale for those Choices*

Stringer (1999) argued that traditional criteria for evaluating the rigour of experimental and survey research such as objectivity, validity, and generalizability are less critical than such factors as credibility demonstrated through deep engagement with research participants, confirmability of data through rigorous notes, and dependability of data collection and analysis demonstrated through a research audit trail describing the what and why of the research process. Kirby and McKenna (1989) believed that reliability is a measure of the confidence the researcher has when speaking about his or her data, in terms of both how it is collected and how it is analyzed. Palys (1997) reminded us that scientifically valid research, whether qualitative or quantitative, relies on methods of gathering data that verify the validity and reliability of the data. As a result of the foregoing, I chose to continually cycle my interim thoughts, ideas, and findings back to the research participants to confirm what I believed to be their experience and understanding. Throughout this process, I maintained notes and kept a research log and journal to capture and retain thoughts, ideas, theories, agreements, disagreements, and new understandings.

One of the options I considered to meet the requirement of triangulation was that of source triangulation. I believed that gathering data was best done through a comparison of the ideas expressed by various levels within the military structure. Another look at the data from the perspectives of members of the MP community, including those in support positions, also served to validate research findings. Furthermore, individual thoughts and ideas on potentially effective strategies to assist the MP branch in moving toward becoming a learning organization were

viewed from the perspectives of the various sub-groups, to determine whether they would be appropriate to the entire MP branch.

Methodological triangulation also appealed to me. I therefore gathered data through a variety of methods. It was my intention to carry out the intervention (introduction of the cooperative learning processes) and have the participants journal their experiences. In an effort to ensure the data collected was readily synthesized, I was prepared to offer the participants some guiding questions. Their journal entries would have been compared and contrasted to the results of the surveys filled out after each learning injunction.

Finally, after a reasonable period in which the participants would likely have time to assimilate, practice, and demonstrate any new learning, I intended to have short questionnaires completed by supervisors, subordinates, and peers, to indicate any new knowledge, skills, abilities, or attitudes demonstrated by the participants. These questionnaires were never realized because of the limitations of time and the extreme workloads already being handled by many of these potential respondents. An appreciation for these pressures prompted me to reconsider these the use of these questionnaires.

## Ethical Considerations

Two sources of ethical policy required direct adherence in the completion of this research project. Both the CF and the RRU policies are congruent with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects* (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 2002) and reflect specific areas of consideration. All elements were carefully considered at each step of the research process, commencing with the approval processes required by both organizations.

Anonymity was a particular issue of concern given the departmental regulations requiring a copy of all research materials (including raw data) to be included in an archive once the research was complete. To protect the anonymity of the participants, I created a coding system in which they were each assigned a number. Their responses, quotes, thoughts, and ideas on which I had notes were attributed to the number, not the name. I then substituted pseudonyms for the numbers in completing the final report. Once the research was written up and completed, I filed all of the data and the report, minus the coding key, which I kept and which is meaningless without the raw data. Should any future question about the research data or process arise, I will be the only one who can match up data with a particular participant. By adhering to this procedure, I believe I have largely assured the anonymity of the research participants.

# CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

In this research project, I proposed to explore the idea of using a cooperative learning process as one method of assisting the Military Police branch in its mandated move toward becoming a learning organization. Because the entire branch was far too large and geographically diverse for a project of this scope, a segment of the organization was chosen as a research sample population. The office of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal was selected, as it represented a manageable microcosm of the larger organization. From within this group, the research participants were obtained. An invitation was extended to all the members of this staff to attend information sessions and then decide if they were interested in participating.

The primary research question on which this project was based is What benefits will be realized through the application of a cooperative learning process in an effort to move the MP branch toward becoming a learning organization? This question presupposed that it would be possible to implement such a process and that the branch would be receptive to that process. I also intended to respond to the following sub-questions:

- Can cooperative learning be effectively introduced into the MP branch structure?
- What characteristics of the MP branch will support this process, and how can they be leveraged for success?
- What characteristics will resist such a move, and how can they be minimized?
- How, if at all, will existing organizational cultures need to change in order to adapt to learning organization practices?

In the pages that follow, I discuss in more detail the process that took place, the data collected, and my interpretation of these data. I briefly summarize each of the six learning sessions in sequence and attempt to highlight the general learning themes derived from those

sessions. I then discuss the data in light of the primary research question and sub-questions above. As indicated in chapter 3, pseudonyms have been used in an effort to protect the confidentiality of the research participants.

### *First Cooperative Learning Session*

Gregory led the first of six cooperative learning sessions. Gregory chose a topic of personal interest. He guided the group through a theoretical discussion titled "The Mobius Paradox." In this session, he spoke about a long-time interest in theoretical astronomy, physics, and in particular, the paradox of the Mobius strip. He provided a brief personal story of being in university and being fascinated learning about the strip and some of its properties. He also briefly delved into a short description of its applicability to the field of theoretical astronomy.

Gregory followed his introductory and informational comments with a number of brief hands-on exercises in which he had the participants first build Mobius strips out of paper and then manipulate the strips by twisting and precisely cutting them according to his detailed directions. Each exercise revealed a new dimension of the strip previously unknown to the participants.

All 6 of the participants, as well as the project sponsor, were present and indicated they enjoyed this session. Each participant filled out a survey regarding their reactions to the process and content of the session, as well as their views on cooperative learning in general (see Appendix A).

### *Second Cooperative Learning Session*

Tony led the second of six cooperative learning sessions. Like Gregory, Tony chose a topic of personal interest as opposed to something work related. He elected to describe and

instruct on the playing of a particular card game widely played in the region in which he grew up. His session also began with stories about himself and his interest in the topic at hand.

Tony explained the rules of the game providing a synopsis of them on paper, played an open hand in which all players could see the others' cards, and then played a hand in which each player was responsible to play on his or her own. This session was punctuated with card-playing and relationship-building stories from Tony and one of the participants.

There were only 4 participants at this session. Two were unable to attend due to higher priority work commitments. One participant, a card player, reported enjoying the session; the remaining 2 participants, not being avid card-players, struggled to grasp the information being presented and appeared somewhat frustrated. Each attendee filled out a survey as described above.

*Third Cooperative Learning Session*

Michael led the third cooperative learning session. (Topic details of the third session have been specifically omitted to preserve confidentiality.) Michael chose a topic that was directly related to his function within the workplace. He also stated that the subject had personal appeal to him and confided that it was as much a hobby as it was a function of his employment. Similarly to those who preceded him, Michael began his session with some brief personal stories. He spoke of instances in which he was able to make use of his skills and abilities in this particular subject area, even before finding work in the field.

Michael outlined the particular steps involved in performing tasks specific to his function and ran two short exercise scenarios in which the participants were shown videotapes of individuals engaged in those tasks. Participants were asked to critique the performance and offer

suggestions for improvement. The group then discussed these suggestions. Michael's obvious passion for the topic at hand was evident throughout this session.

One participant was absent from this session because of higher priority work commitments. All but one attendee indicated an interest in and enjoyment of the material presented in this session. Each attendee completed a slightly modified survey aimed at eliciting more detailed responses about present work environments and process transferability (see Appendix B).

### *Fourth Cooperative Learning Session*

Anne led the fourth cooperative learning session. She selected a topic of personal interest and proposed to teach the other participants the basics of knitting. Anne deftly opened her discussion with reference to the history of knitting and the wide acceptance of knitting in historical societies as an exclusively male-dominated craft. This background information appeared to ease the apparent discomfort in several of the other participants. She also relayed a deeply personal story of charity in which she uses her knitting skills to provide garments for infants in a hospital in the region.

As the others had done earlier, Anne began with detailed instructions including printed reference material. She demonstrated the basics of beginning to knit, had participants attempt to mimic her actions, and then provided individual hands-on assistance where needed. Her instruction was peppered with stories of her childhood, her own struggles with learning to knit, and some of the knitted items she has been proud of in the past.

All of the research participants and the project sponsor attended at this session. With the agreement of the other participants, Anne also took the liberty of inviting another work colleague who had a particular interest in the lesson material. This step was important. It demonstrated a

willingness on the part of the other research participants to share their learning with others who indicate an interest in the group's knowledge – a characteristic of successful cooperative learning.

Only 3 participants completed the post-session survey. The survey had been adjusted from the previous version in an effort to elicit more individually specific responses (see Appendix C). As all participation in this research study was voluntary, only one prompter was sent, via electronic mail, to those who did not complete a survey. No additional surveys were received.

### *Fifth Cooperative Learning Session*

Dave led the fifth learning session. Dave's chosen topic was time management. Like Michael, Dave explained that although this particular subject was highly relevant to his workplace functions, he also considered it a personal interest. He approached his lesson from the perspective of his personal interest. Weaving in an additional personal interest in marathon running, Dave used a marathon-training schedule as a template from which to discuss time planning and management. He further included the use of a specific element of workplace software, commenting on and demonstrating its usefulness in his own time management practices.

Dave shared personal instances of time management successes and failures. He spoke briefly on the principles of time management, demonstrated a number of useful techniques, and explained the use of software available to each of them in the workplace to assist in time management.

All of the research participants attended. This learning session appeared to be extremely well received, although only 3 participants completed the post-training survey. This survey had

been modified to include an opportunity for individuals to express their views on learning processes within the MP branch and the CF (see Appendix D).

### *Sixth Cooperative Learning Session*

Brad led the sixth cooperative learning session, also choosing a topic of personal interest. He spoke to the other participants about his passion for the game of cricket and shared extensively from his personal experiences while stationed overseas. He told several humorous stories about his initial encounters with the game and also how he came to appreciate it. He brought along some game equipment for the other participants to see and touch.

As with the others before, Brad provided handouts containing much of the material he would present. He worked through the handouts first, explaining rules, etiquette, and elements of strategy. Throughout this presentation, his appreciation for the game was apparent.

All participants attended; however, once again, only 3 post-session surveys were completed. This survey included an opportunity for respondents to express their views on their own level of training and that of others in their workplace (see Appendix E).

## Study Findings

The study findings were based largely on a review of the surveys completed by the research participants. A total of six sessions were conducted. Each session allowed 5 participants to act as learners and one participant as presenter. In addition to the participants, the project sponsor sat in on two of the sessions and I was present at every session. Neither of us completed surveys for inclusion in the data analysis. Anne's work colleague, who was invited because of an interest in the topic of instruction more than in my research project, also did not complete a survey.

As each participant was requested to fill out surveys for every session, a total of 36 surveys could theoretically have been completed. All participants were reminded that participation in each session, as well as the completion of surveys, was voluntary at all times. The first session yielded all 6 surveys. The second session, in which 2 participants were absent, yielded all 4 possible surveys. The third session, in which one person was absent, yielded all 5 possible surveys. The fourth session, in which all participants were present, yielded only 3 surveys. The fifth and sixth sessions, held on the same day and in which all 6 participated, yielded 3 surveys each. Thus, out of a total of 33 possible surveys (allowing for 3 participant absences), 24 were completed, representing a survey completion rate of 72.7%. Most surveys were received 2-4 days post-session.

When prompted for missing surveys approximately one week after the session, 100% of non-respondents indicated the survey was forthcoming and that it had slipped their mind, had been set aside in favour of higher priority tasks, or similar. Following a reminder after the first three sessions, all outstanding surveys were received promptly. After the reminder following the final three sessions, no additional outstanding surveys were received.

One possible explanation for the lower rate of response from the later sessions is the role overload experienced by the staff of the CFPM office in recent years resulting from continual staff reductions with no corresponding reduction in tasks. In view of the first three sessions yielding 100% of the possible returns from attendees and the final three yielding only 50% each, another explanation is plausible. The final three sessions were held during my final 2 days in Ottawa. All participants were aware that I would leave Ottawa immediately following the sixth session and await the final surveys at home in Winnipeg. Since the sharp reduction in surveys received corresponds directly with my departure, I was left wondering if participants' sense of

accountability changed once the group was essentially dissolved. They were fully aware that all surveys were voluntary, and since there would be no further meetings of the group, they perhaps felt a reduced compulsion to participate.

Other sources of data contributing to the findings, conclusions, and recommendations were the informal dialogues held at the beginning and end of each of the learning sessions. During these discussions, we talked about upcoming sessions and reviewed some of the ideas expressed on previous surveys. We shared thoughts and feelings concerning cooperative learning, as well as learning organization theory and its possible applications to the MP branch, and spent time simply learning about one another. These sessions were not tape-recorded or preserved word for word but were captured in brief notes I took at the time, as well as in more detailed notes I recorded immediately following each of the learning sessions. Often, these verbal observations mirrored what individuals had said on the previous survey or would say on the following survey. These field notes reflected direct observation of events recorded at or shortly after the moment of observation (Kirby & McKenna 1989; Palys, 1997).

I also kept a journal throughout this research project. The journal included observations from the perspective of researcher for all of the sessions and discussions, and from the perspective of participant for those sessions in which I was invited to actively engage in the learning exercises. A sharp distinction can be made between my notes and my journal. Unlike my field notes, my journal was not tied in time or space to the events directly observed while actively engaged in the research process. It included random thoughts, musings, revelations, and reactions related to my research project, work, and home life, and provided an account of the context in which I was experiencing my research.

My journal entries were often recorded at odd times and in many forms. Some were notes on my personal digital assistant or computer, others were thoughts scrawled on restaurant napkins or cash register receipts while away from my research, some showed up in the margins of various books I was reading, and many began on a notepad I kept beside my bed for middle-of-the-night revelations. Eventually, all were transcribed into an electronic compilation on my laptop and, though not as formal as my field notes, held some important thoughts and ideas that I often brought back to group discussions and which influenced the aspects I looked at in my research.

Finally, as discussed in chapter 3, several informal meetings with individual participants outside the group setting offered data that occasionally appeared somewhat different from the reasoned, carefully articulated responses found on the surveys and shared with the group. Although the learning sessions and surveys created for gathering data were useful and provided the bulk of the data contributing to the findings, conclusions, and recommendations that follow, I was surprised at the amount of information gleaned from these impromptu discussions with participants before and after the scheduled sessions, over coffee, and away from the workplace.

In at least three specific instances, impressions about the cooperative learning process were shared that were more intimate, more personal, than what had been received through surveys or group dialogue. These remarks left me with a sense that they were more visceral and less cerebral than the comments that were more widely shared. Somehow in the experience, the remarks translated as more real to me. In these instances, I believed I was getting closest to the truth about the effect of this research on individuals.

As an aside to the formal and informal data collection processes in place for this research project described above, I also found that others within the organization who were not

participating in the learning sessions often had commentary to offer when they learned of my research. Many of these people expressed an interest in and provided their views on the MP branch as a learning organization during informal discussions, telephone conversations, and electronic mail. Although their comments have not directly surfaced in the body of this document, they did influence my research in subtle ways.

By speaking to staff other than the research participants, I was able to better understand the organizational context. I was given other, sometimes different, sometimes confirming, perspectives on the ideas expressed by the participants. I was also challenged to consider other perspectives and pursue avenues of discussion with the research group that I may not have discovered on my own. Time spent interacting with these individuals also allowed me to assess the organizational understanding of what the research participants and I were engaged in and what I was attempting to learn. Understanding these perspectives allowed me to better evaluate the recommendations provided near the end of this chapter.

*First Area of Findings – Learning Approach*

Each of the 6 volunteer research participants was given absolute latitude on topic, format, venue, and all other details. All of them chose the same location. Of the 6 participants, 5 chose to conduct their sessions over the lunch hour. The sixth participant's session was conducted in the early afternoon immediately following the fifth session. All of them attempted to create an informal, relaxed atmosphere, often injecting personal anecdote, humour, and a sense of their interest or passion in the topic at hand.

Overall, the learning approach was extremely well received. Every participant provided positive comments about the relaxed, informal nature of the cooperative learning process. I was also quite encouraged to hear that two of the research participants had previously engaged in

cooperative learning processes and believed it was a beneficial and positive experience. I personally found the process to be interesting and refreshing.

Anne commented that the ability to learn in an open and relaxed environment created a desire to learn. She contrasted this situation to a typical military learning environment that "forced you to learn" and added that the approach was something she wanted to share with others. "I enjoyed this so much! It was so much fun!" She also indicated that, in her opinion, this style of learning allowed individuals to better enjoy the learning process, suggesting they would be more likely to reflect on it later than they would if the learning atmosphere were more traditional.

Brad stated that he had participated in a similar process in the past and had found it to be "of great value." He also commented on the power of "drawing on the experience of others in a relaxed atmosphere." He further suggested that it is always easier to learn when you are relaxed and feel like you are "part of the process," arguing that an informal, open style of learning creates an environment in which individuals feel more relaxed and therefore desire to participate more.

Michael echoed Brad's sentiment by commenting that individuals learn better in a group setting in which they feel comfortable. Michael also commented, "This type of learning has good potential as [a] means of delivery for some instruction." He went on to suggest that a similar cooperative learning process could be a way to make more efficient use of military training. He proposed sending one person for training and then having him or her share the new knowledge with co-workers and peers via cooperative learning sessions.

Tony postulated, "A voluntary, participative and informal learning process has the potential to impart a lot more knowledge than the traditional form of 'memorize and regurgitate.'" He went on to state, "I enjoy this type of interaction and am always interested in

learning from others. . . . The voluntary, informal process means less pressure . . . and a more relaxed exchange of ideas." His endorsement of an informal atmosphere was clear: "The relaxed atmosphere enhances the learning process – you're there because you chose to be there – not because you were told to be there" and "truly voluntary attendance heightens the learning curve and attention span and lessens the drifting-off of one's attention." Tony also stated, "I feel that the interaction that is encouraged in cooperative learning is critical to an enhanced retention of the subject material."

Gregory suggested that the process of co-workers sharing knowledge with one another in a relaxed atmosphere was "positive and fun," stating, "I think it works well." He recalled, "This approach to learning has been, and is, useful in the military." More specifically, he commented, "I think this is of considerable value in a Branch such as the Military Police."

Dave pointed out, "The value in this learning lies in allowing it to be relaxed and informal," suggesting that the format was "very effective." He further articulated, "I believe this type of learning would be of benefit in any type of organization."

As a researcher and participant, I found the process of cooperative learning in an informal, relaxed setting improved my attention, information retention, sense of belonging, and level of enjoyment. An excerpt from my own journal after the first session concluded, "This style of learning simply feels right! Where was this when I was suffering through high school?"

Despite the overwhelmingly positive response to the informal, relaxed structure, some concerns were also expressed. These alternate points of view included cautions from Tony, who warned, "My limited experience has shown that if you relax the setting too much in military training, a certain percentage of students are going to take advantage of the perceived independence and . . . goof off." Gregory reminded the team that "different subject matter

requires different approaches to learning" and "the approach to teaching should probably be tailored to fit the material that is taught," suggesting that, although the cooperative learning sessions we shared were effective, training soldiers to jump out of airplanes requires a completely different approach. He further contended that a pervasive "more with less" approach driving the present military work environment might preclude such small-group interactions, as they could be perceived as "a little too extravagant." Michael expressed concern also, emphasizing that this style of learning "is more desirable for certain topics: those that involve hands-on, practical application" and suggesting that caution is necessary to ensure the practical limitations of cooperative learning are recognized. Dave supported this caution by asserting that while cooperative learning processes are generally more desirable, they are not capable of replacing other forms of training.

*Second Area of Findings – Learning Content*

Of the six topics presented, two were acknowledged as intrinsically work related, but also stemming from the personal interest of the presenters. The remaining four topics were of a purely personal nature. The reasons for these selections were not raised in the group setting; however, some of the participants confided they just were not interested in spending their lunch hour thinking about work-related topics. I suspected these cooperative learning sessions provided an escape – a break from the workday. They offered an opportunity to relax and share something of interest with others while getting to know co-workers on a different level.

Most of the topics of instruction were well received, with largely positive comments from the participants. Brad wrote in one of his surveys, "This was a very informative session and I will be able to use this on a daily basis." He also pointed out that what he had learned that day would be useful at home as well as at work.

Anne relayed that, as a result of attending one of the sessions, "I learned . . . that like life there is more to most things than first meets the eye." She included that this particular experience "helps me realize that members of the Military Police Branch have a great deal of information to impart (often from the most unlikely source)."

While Anne held a rather philosophical view of her learning, Michael was considering the applicability of the specific information presented during the session when he observed, "the teaching of this 'out-of-the-box' topic was interesting and will also be of value in my career generally." Gregory also had a pragmatic approach to the sessions, proclaiming, "I look forward to the next session because I hope to have the opportunity to learn something new or a different perspective on a familiar topic."

My perspective on the content was similar to that experienced by the participants. I found I could import some of the information gleaned from these sessions directly into my work or home life. Other information was interesting but offered no immediate applicability to anything in my life. That is not to suggest it was of no value, but rather that I have not yet discovered when and where I might find it useful.

Some subjects were less well received, with participants indicating a desire to get specific personal value for their time commitment. The participants essentially indicated they did not want to expend time learning about something they considered was of no value or interest to them. This feedback is typical of adult learners (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; MacKeracher, 1996; Merriam, 1993).

Anne commented on one of the sessions candidly, stating, "I think, like anything, people have opinions on some topics. I did not like this one." Dave similarly shared his views on two of

the learning subjects. He observed quite simply of one session that "the topic was not something I will pursue" and of another that "the topic was of nominal interest to me."

Michael was particularly pointed in his comments regarding one of the sessions. He wrote, "I found this lesson to be of little value to me professionally or otherwise, as my facial expressions likely showed!" He followed this critique with "there's nothing wrong with the process – the problem was the topic." Later on that same survey sheet, Michael seemed to summarize what many of the participants had expressed in one form or another. He stressed, "I don't have much patience for topics or activities that are not interesting to me."

As one possible solution to the problem of ending up sitting in an undesirable session, Tony suggested that posting an advance list of discussion topics would have been useful. In the next sentence, however, he lamented, "Having said that, I no doubt would have passed on the knitting session and would have missed that opportunity to interact [with the others in the group]."

It appeared that for some of the participants, despite not wanting to waste time on topics "of nominal interest," the desire to interact with others in the workplace in a relaxed, non-threatening, even collegial atmosphere is worth it. After one session, Dave reported, "The topic was of no interest to me, but the relationship building was useful."

### *Third Area of Findings – Learning Relationships*

All but one of the research participants ultimately commented on the positive effect this process had on their relationships with the other participants. Three participants were initially quite neutral on the subject of relationships within the workplace, but by the fourth learning session, all had observed an increased knowledge and understanding of the other participants as a result of taking part in this research. The importance of such knowledge, understanding, and

relationship building to successful adult learning must not be underestimated (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; MacKeracher, 1996; Merriam, 1993).

Gregory was initially somewhat circumspect, implying that it was reasonable to expect a positive outcome without actually acknowledging any effect on his relationships based on the early sessions. He intimated, "Any activity that allows one to better know his colleagues should tend to enhance the working environment" and "any interaction of this sort can only be a positive influence." By the fifth session, however, he asserted, "I think there is considerable value in interacting with colleagues. Not only is knowledge shared but a stronger working relationship is fostered."

Anne, on the other hand, was unequivocal from the outset in her assertions that the cooperative learning atmosphere had a positive effect on working relationships: "I loved this! It was great to meet more people in my work area" and "getting to know your surroundings (people) makes it easier to relate to them, talk to them, learn more from them in the work place." Brad expanded, "I think this is a great forum and being involved in a learning atmosphere with people you personally know and respect . . . makes it easier to learn and understand."

Tony was impressed at "the willingness of some pretty senior persons to be taught something by a junior non-commissioned officer and in a somewhat unorthodox manner," suggesting there was no evidence of a power differential in the relationship at that moment. He also appreciated that, after a few sessions, everyone in the group had the ability to laugh at themselves and one another in a non-threatening manner. He concluded this transformation was good for the work environment and implied that such change led to increased tolerance and empathy in the workplace. Dave also cited a direct, positive effect on the work environment, writing, "I gained a lot of insight into people that I don't normally interact with. Observing each

presentation and interacting in small groups has increased my knowledge of each participant and facilitated communication in the office."

I personally did not anticipate the significance of the effect this process would have on my relationships with the members of the group. I connected with several people on a completely different level than I had previously, noting in my journal, "Seldom have I felt such comfort in the presence of such a diverse group within the military. From Corporal to Colonel, clerk and cop alike, everyone laughed, everyone shared, and everyone was fully present. Perhaps this is the essence of being in the moment."

I also felt very much a part of the team and found it curious how deeply we had connected. After one of the later learning sessions in which I was treated more as researcher than participant, I wrote,

> I was a little disappointed when the practical exercises were being handed out that I was not invited to participate this time. I am not sure why I felt that way other than perhaps that I wanted to be a part of the team as much as they were. I also was very interested in the topic at hand and felt that I could use a little feedback on my response to the questions being asked. I am not sure why I wasn't asked to participate, other than perhaps that [the member] thought I was busy taking notes and didn't have time to . . . either way I was intrigued at my own response.

At this point, it became clear to me that the relationship dynamics I had been observing in the others were also affecting me. We had all become part of the team. We had all begun to connect in some way with those around us as we shared a common experience – learning together.

There were also a few cautionary notes concerning the effect this style of learning might have on workplace relationships. Michael considered one possible drawback, arguing that each session had the potential to either improve or harm personal relationships between participants depending on the nature of the interaction. However, he posited that, given a mature group, the cooperative learning process should "be beneficial and have a positive effect on those relationships." Tony added, "Of course it could be argued that sessions such as this might actually cause some individuals to have less tolerance of others if they just don't like them, but I believe this is a chance worth taking."

In both of these examples, there exists an implied assumption that individuals had no choice but to remain and continue in an uncomfortable situation. This perception immediately struck me as the product of military conditioning. If cooperative learning is to be effective, it must be fully voluntary. Learning processes cannot be separated from living. They are an integral part of life. And in life, individuals always have the choice to pursue activities that either strengthen relationships or damage relationships. We always have a choice. We can choose to ignore the perspective of another person, or we can choose to learn from it (Short, 1998).

### *Fourth Area of Findings – Learning Transferability*

Several of the research participants indicated they could transfer their learning from these learning sessions into their present workplace, other workplaces, or their personal lives. For me, this feedback was encouraging, as it suggested that tangible change was taking place as a result of the action research process (Stringer, 1999). Even if the office of the CFPM did not pursue cooperative learning as a method of working toward becoming a learning organization, a positive change would still have taken place in the lives of the participants.

I was intrigued by the matter-of-fact observation made by Tony, who commented,

> While it is apparent that the presentation on the mobius strip has nothing to do whatsoever with the Military Police profession, the process . . . has some professional value in that it reinforces the thinking outside the box concept, strengthens interpersonal skills etc. and therefore has some residual value.

Tony also indicated a particular excitement about sharing his new-found knowledge: "I can now show the mobius strip to others!" In addition to Tony's enthusiastic response, I directly observed Anne, within one hour of completing this session, sharing her newly acquired understanding of the Mobius strip with two other people in her workplace. Learning was taking place and, after only one session, had already begun to spill over the boundaries of the research participant group. This was the sort of enthusiasm I had hoped for when I first saw the potential of cooperative learning.

Observing Anne cemented in my mind the enormous potential of cooperative learning. I later recorded the following notes in my journal:

> We watched the movie "Pay it Forward" last night. In the movie a young boy decides that he is going to make a difference in the world by doing something wonderful for three people that they cannot do for themselves. There is a catch, though. They cannot repay his deed. Instead, they must pay it forward by doing something wonderful for three others. In so doing, he hopes to set up a chain of events that will make the world a better place by giving people a reason to be nicer to one another. He is repeatedly frustrated in his attempts to do his three good deeds and believes, in all three instances, that he has failed. The recipients of his work, however, are ultimately helped and go on to pay it forward. Near the end of the movie, the young boy is surprised to learn that the "movement" he started has traveled all across the US and has surfaced in other countries as well. It is this

sort of cascade that I hope will be realized through the introduction of a cooperative learning process into the MP branch. Even if the results are not immediately discernible, the possibility exists that the participants will ultimately take some part of the shared learning philosophy away with them and share it with others. It has the potential to grow exponentially.

When discussing another topic presented in one of the sessions, Brad observed, "I can use the things learned in my personal life and in dealing with my kids." He discussed this comment at our next session, articulating that the most valuable learning to him is something that is not restricted to a particular function or task, but rather, learning that affects many areas of his life, providing him with tools he can use whenever he needs.

Tony emphasized the same point, suggesting that even if the information from our learning sessions was not completely transferable to other aspects of his life, the process certainly was. He indicated that he would like to see similar processes in other settings within the military. Dave further proclaimed, " I believe this type of learning would be of benefit in any type of organization."

### *Fifth Area of Findings – Learning Time and Space*

One source of near unanimous discontent with the research participants, as well as with others in the workplace, was the choice of venue and scheduled timings. Despite expressing displeasure with location, every one of the participants chose the same place – the CFPM conference room. Because the conference room was selected by all of them, this decision appeared to be purely pragmatic in that it was the most convenient, immediately available, suitably sized, and appropriately equipped room at the disposal of every participant.

Despite the choice being theirs to make, many of the participants still expressed concern about the venue. This concern indicated to me that the participants were keenly aware of the effect they, and the cooperative research sessions, were having on others around them. Tony observed that the conference room doubles as a lunch room for others who work on that floor and confessed to feeling guilt at denying others its use. He also expressed frustration at the limited flexibility in extending timings, if necessary or desired, because the conference room is typically reserved during regular work hours. Michael suggested that while it may not be quite as convenient, "an off site location such as a comfy lounge might be even more conducive to a relaxed learning environment." He followed this statement with concerns about how "professional" such a choice might be, once again indicating an awareness of, and concern for, the perceptions of others.

Time was an issue that plagued this project and remained in the minds of the participants from the outset. It was a topic of discussion in almost every one of the meetings. The volunteers who agreed to participate in this research wanted to be involved in the project but all identified time as a concern.

Tony stated, "The feeling that time is precious because of the workload and that there isn't any time to spare to participate, is difficult to overcome. It may be impossible to overcome." He added, "With more and more demands, and fewer and fewer resources, even an hour at lunch (or whenever) is not insignificant." Gregory agreed: "Because of a substantial workload and conflicting activities . . . this approach to learning would be difficult to execute on a larger scale." In discussing the possibility of cooperative learning ventures beyond the scope of this project, Michael protested, "The process is certainly interesting and I would love to engage on a regular basis . . .[but] time commitments would preclude regular participation."

At the same time, however, some of the survey responses indicated a desire to spend more time in session. Gregory advocated the allocation of more time, noting that it was desirable "to properly present and confirm the material." Tony mentioned that "a bit more time for debrief and discussion might be useful." Dave, the participant who presented a session on time management and who initially expressed misgivings about the 16-hour commitment during the project, ultimately concluded, "The hour time limit allows enough time to present something meaningful without prohibiting people from attending because of a lack of time."

I was left with a strong impression that the participants found sufficient enjoyment and benefit in the sessions to desire longer sessions but already experienced significant time pressures in their present work environments. When I reflected on my own past response to opportunities for additional learning in the workplace, I was dismayed to realize that I have often responded the same way. Even though I may have enjoyed the opportunity or learned something of value, I was not always willing to take the required time out of an already busy schedule.

## Study Conclusions

This study has provided a glimpse into the potential of cooperative learning process as one tool available to assist the MP branch in its mandated move to become a learning organization. I have looked at the expressed thoughts and feelings of the volunteer participants, considered the ideas of others on the staff, and carefully reflected on my own thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Each of the emergent themes – approach, content, relationships, transferability, and time and space – that resulted from the review and analysis of these data has been identified above as an area of finding. My aim in doing this was to accurately capture and understand the collective impressions of the utility and practicality of informal cooperative learning in the staff

of the CFPM office.

I hoped to obtain these impressions without allowing my specific research questions to unduly influence the participants' thinking. I wanted to ensure they did not simply answer the questions, and I attempted to dig more deeply by keeping the discussion less direct and more free-flowing. The result of this approach led to the themes above. These data then had to be applied to the primary research question and the sub-questions I set out to answer.

The primary research question on which this project was based is as follows: What benefits will be realized through the application of a cooperative learning process in an effort to move the MP branch toward becoming a learning organization? This question presupposed that it would be possible to implement such a process and that the branch would be receptive to that process. I also intended to attempt to respond to the following sub-questions:

- Can cooperative learning be effectively introduced into the MP branch structure?
- What characteristics of the MP branch will support this process, and how can they be leveraged for success?
- What characteristics will resist such a move, and how can they be minimized?
- How, if at all, will the existing organizational cultures need to change in order to adapt to learning organization practices?

I deal with each of the sub-questions in turn, leaving the primary research question to the end.

*1. "Can cooperative learning be effectively introduced into the MP branch structure?"*

That the participants were able to meet informally, exchange views on topics of personal and professional nature, improve relationships, and feel a sense of accomplishment in what they were doing confirms that this process worked within this specific context. Participants reported

enjoying themselves, learning new things, strengthening existing relationships and building new ones, exporting new-found knowledge outside the immediate context, and being challenged to expand their thinking in terms of both content and process. All of these elements indicate success in my attempts to introduce cooperative learning to this group.

Stories shared throughout the learning sessions also indicated that some structured cooperative learning has already found its way into the branch in recent years. Recent changes in policy and organizational structure have led to cooperative learning processes becoming a fundamental supplement to more formal investigator training. Similarly, the recent introduction of a new military police information system and the limited training resources prompted significant, often-spontaneous cooperative learning initiatives throughout the branch.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the research participants were largely representative of the branch. The three services of the CF were considered in the participant sample. Both genders were represented. Senior and junior officers and non-commissioned members were included. Some participants had relatively short careers in the military, while others had more than 30 years of service. In all instances, as previously stated, the participants indicated the cooperative learning process worked effectively.

Stringer (1999) cautioned that the intent of action research is not to create blanket solutions to specific problems. He also acknowledged, however, that there exists the possibility of applying findings across settings if audiences are able to identify similarities between the research setting and their own context. In this case, potential audiences include other elements of the MP branch, outside the CFPM staff, where the issues of power relationships, hierarchical structures, lack of resources, time constraints, and other concerns expressed above are likely to resonate. For these reasons, I have concluded that the introduction of the cooperative learning

process was a success within the sample group. Moreover, if others within the branch find resonance in this report, I am confident some degree of transferability to the other elements of the branch may be possible.

*2. "What characteristics of the MP branch might support this process, and how can they be leveraged for success?"*

Several characteristics have surfaced as potentially supporting the cooperative learning process within the MP branch. They include experience, teamwork, resource limitations, and organizational structure.

The wealth of experience acquired by military members throughout their careers represents a database of knowledge that, if successfully tapped into, has the potential to improve individual and organizational understanding and performance. Brad specifically referred to this wealth of experience in one of his surveys, indicating he was grateful for the opportunity to access a portion of it.

Steps have already been taken in recent years within the MP branch to make better use of this experience. Newly trained MP patrol personnel and investigators are routinely engaged in a formalized mentoring process though assignment under the supervision of more experienced members. This process has proven particularly useful within the National Investigation Service, a sub-component of the MP branch.

Militaries rely heavily on teamwork. The MP branch uses teamwork extensively in fulfilling all of its mandated functions. It trains in teams and operates in teams. The cooperative learning process is simply another type of team process. This type of learning, therefore, lends itself well to an organization that already has strong team skills and works primarily in teams.

In addition to being well suited to existing team structures, reciprocally, the cooperative learning process has the potential to enhance the teams in which it is employed. It can promote a greater body of common knowledge through information sharing, it encourages the transference of specialist skills and knowledge by creating a venue for individuals to share their passions, and it creates the possibility for deeper relationships through interaction.

Resource limitations are a fact of life for modern military forces. As a component of the Canadian military, the CF MP branch faces these limitations daily. Like all other branches, it must find ways of dealing with the limitations. Cooperative learning processes may offer a partial solution. As Michael suggested in one session, efficiencies of both time and money may be realized by sending fewer people on expensive training courses that remove them from the workplace. The intent of this approach is to have them share their newly acquired knowledge and skills through cooperative learning once they return to their unit. Not only does cooperative learning provide a method for reducing training costs, but it also increases accountability for those attending courses to ensure they have a good grasp of the material taught. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for individuals to hone and demonstrate their interpersonal, communications, and leadership skills by transferring that material to others in the workplace.

Prior to beginning this research project, I had anticipated resistance to such an informal, relaxed process because of the rigid military hierarchy. Traditional military thinking suggests that it is the more senior who have the greater intellectual capacity, the broader education, and the responsibility to impart knowledge to the more junior. Cooperative learning suggests that, regardless of rank, the individual who possesses some knowledge or skill that is of interest to others will desire to share it in the hope of helping individuals and organizations expand their thinking.

Perhaps paradoxically, the organizational structures of the military that I anticipated would create resistance to my project could in fact be of benefit in initiating the process on a widespread and permanent basis. If those in positions of formal authority accept and encourage the cooperative learning process, they could choose to make time, space, and resources available. This type of support by the organization would lead to the freedom that provides others with the opportunity to share openly, resulting in more knowledgeable and skilled individuals and units. Tony posited, "If senior MP advisors were to actively encourage this type of learning process, I feel that it has the potential to catch on and increase the level of knowledge and professionalism [of the MP branch]."

*3. "What characteristics might resist such a move, and how can they be minimized?"*

As with the characteristics potentially contributing to cooperative learning, the potential impediments are many. Three significant factors came to mind in discussion with the participants and in the review of the data – hierarchy, tempo and manning, and resistance to change.

At the outset of this project, I believed the hierarchical structure might create tensions in this type of learning environment. There was some concern this particular characteristic of the organization might preclude, or at least hinder, the use of cooperative learning processes. Although the organizational structure, the hierarchy, has been identified above as a potential contributor to this process, the hierarchy does also remain a potential barrier. If leaders and supervisors are not well educated on the benefits of cooperative learning, do not support and encourage it in the workplace, and do not actively work toward removing barriers, cooperative learning may not survive as a strategy of the MP branch as a learning organization.

Some members of the group expressed concerns that, unless attitudes changed, the hierarchical structure of the branch might prevent successful implementation of cooperative

learning. Tony remarked,

> The basic impediment [to cooperative learning], I feel, is the attitude of personnel on the 14th floor (and I suspect), in the branch and the CF as a whole. . . . This can be alleviated in part, if current participants inform others of the benefits. Supervisors as well must encourage subordinates and co-workers to participate.

He went on to comment on a specific instance in which the potential of some members of the branch to influence the decision of others to participate is apparent:

> There were some thinly veiled wisecracks by some personnel . . . when they learned that one of the sessions was going to be knitting. While not in itself "non-supportive," I believe that it still highlights some of the historical barriers we have to overcome with resistance to change and a perception of what constitutes valuable learning.

Tony also spoke of attempts to introduce cooperative learning processes in a unit to which he used to belong. At first, this avenue of discussion encouraged me. My elation was dampened, however, when he stated that although attendance was allegedly voluntary, it was understood that each person would be there. Individuals were essentially directed to participate. This directive was not conducive to good learning.

The reality of the cooperative learning process is that it must be voluntary to be effective. It is a relationship in which one or more people offer to share a valuable gift – the gift of their knowledge and experience. Others may choose to honour that offer or not. If either giver or receiver is being forced, the process is corrupted and ceases to function at its potential. Individuals are agreeing to share not only their knowledge, but also their interests, their passions, their expertise, and themselves with those by whom they feel supported and encouraged.

While the voluntary nature is critical to the success of cooperative learning, so too is commitment. Individuals engaging in cooperative learning processes commit to work with others, learn from others, and honour the ideas and interests of others. In essence, although participation is voluntary, the group comes to depend on its members. As they spend time together, individuals replace a sense of obligation to attend with a desire to spend time with colleagues and friends. This shift of perspective is important, because it has the potential to make cooperative learning feel more like an opportunity than an obligation.

Over the duration of my career, I have noted a continual increase in organizational commitments and a seemingly inversely proportionate reduction in staffing – a "more with less" attitude is an undeniable characteristic of the MP branch. Resources are taken away, while the obligations and responsibilities are redoubled. Commanders and their staffs at every level are focused on the bottom line. When discussing the feasibility of continuing cooperative learning processes within the staff of the CPFM or introducing them elsewhere in the branch, Gregory lamented, "Training of any sort . . . requires time and probably would slow production with the negative result of added stress to the working environment. I really don't see how this situation can realistically be changed." Anne supported this lament, claiming "we all work in environments where we can't be spared." She added that learning is understood as critical to success but explained that it has become expected that individuals will find ways to do it on their own time, as opposed to taking productive time out of their work schedule.

People fear change (Duck, 2001). The idea that the MP branch is being mandated to become a learning organization may be an alarming development for some people. Individuals are threatened when a new idea or concept is introduced into their workplace and with which they are not familiar. Therefore, resistance can be expected as cooperative learning is introduced

to new sub-components of the branch. The way to minimize this reaction is to allow the process to happen in a non-threatening, non-directed manner that reflects the desire of individuals to see it occur. A few strategically placed sessions in which individuals are invited, on a genuinely voluntary basis, to learn more about cooperative learning, take part in a few sessions, and discuss how it might be implemented in their workplace could potentially provide fuel for a cooperative learning movement.

*4. "How, if at all, will the existing organizational cultures need to change in order to adapt to learning organization practices?"*

At the outset of my research, I anticipated a culture of resistance. Specifically, I thought that the hierarchical structure of the military might negatively influence this project by interfering with participants' willingness and ability to engage openly and freely in a process that required them to be on an equal footing as participants. To the contrary, I experienced no direct opposition to my research, and I found participants soon became completely comfortable with one another, functioning as equals in the learning process. I did not identify any specific cultural impediments to the implementation of cooperative learning practices.

Not all of the participants would agree with my assertion. Michael, for example, argued that the effective introduction of cooperative learning processes would require "a change in mindset of management and staff." However, when this comment was checked against survey questions regarding organizational support for their participation in this research project, all of the participants, Michael included, reported their immediate supervisors, peers, and subordinates were neutral at worst, with several reporting them to be quite supportive. Additionally, when asked about the level of support demonstrated by others in the organization, every participant furnished responses indicating they viewed others as either neutral or positive in their support.

If supervisors, peers, and subordinates are largely supportive and if the organization as a whole is perceived as neutral at worst, how much cultural change is necessary to enable cooperative learning processes to flourish? Cooperative learning depends on the willingness of its participants to share their experience and knowledge. As long as the organization is not creating specific barriers to that process, no change is required to allow cooperative learning ventures to succeed.

Despite having asserted that no cultural change is necessary to allow cooperative learning to occur, some cultural norms were observed that, if modified, might facilitate the practice. One issue that often arose during this project was that of time and the perceived lack of time people have to accomplish the many tasks already expected of them. At first, the solution to this problem appeared to be an organizational change necessitating more people or fewer tasks. On closer examination, however, it appears there may be a cultural element to this issue.

Gregory commented on the pervasive "do more with less" attitude prevalent in the organization. Anne argued that no one can be spared from the workplace for anything but more work. Tony believed that anything perceived to cut into an individual's productivity in meeting daily commitments is generally not well received. All of these comments suggest a sense that activity not producing immediate, measurable results toward organizational priorities is frowned on. But not every act of worth can be assessed from the perspective of its effect on today's work priorities.

Early in the research process, I had a discussion with a senior member of the branch who indicated a general acknowledgement among the staff of what she referred to as role-overload. She suggested people just simply have to prioritize ruthlessly to make the best use of available time, as "there will never be enough time to do it all so we do the best we can with what we've

got." Based on the results of this research project, if the position that individuals must prioritize activities to maximize benefit to the organization was embraced, it would be easy to conclude that time spent in cooperative learning processes was time well spent.

Also noted by the participants, and common to virtually every organization (Duck, 2001), was a sense of resistance to change. Cooperative learning was initially a relatively unfamiliar concept for most of the participants and many of the staff with whom I spoke. Tony lamented,

> I feel that if we can just break through the inherent barrier of "reluctance to participate" in a project of this type and expose more people to it, then the branch as a whole will benefit. People will get to know each other a little better which should enhance working relationships and we will perhaps get a better appreciation of the work done by others.

Tony also provided one possible solution to this particular problem, suggesting, "This can be alleviated in part, if current participants inform others of the benefits."

*5. The primary research question: "What benefits will be realized through the application of a cooperative learning process in an effort to move the MP branch toward becoming a learning organization?"*

The benefits appear to be several. I will comment on four of the most frequently noted benefits observed or discussed during this project: relationship building, information sharing, a sense of belonging and morale improvement, and the fulfillment of a mandate.

As previously discussed, these benefits were observed within the small research group in which I participated. It is imprudent to assume similar benefits will always be realized in every group attempting cooperative learning. However, it is reasonable to suggest that in other populations that share similar concerns, issues, and demographics with this group, similar benefits are at least possible, derived from attempts to work together honestly and openly in a

cooperative learning atmosphere.

Though not necessarily the first benefit to become obvious in the conduct of the project, relationship building was certainly one of the most often noted. In all human interaction, there is the potential for relationship building, including getting to know one another better, as well as building trust and confidence. I was most encouraged to listen to participants talk about knowing each other better, understanding one another, and feeling that they would approach others within the group differently in the future, having developed a greater sense of who the other person was as opposed to the position he or she filled. After one session, Dave stated simply, "It is clear that relationships are improving with these classes."

With deeper relationships come more understanding and trust. With understanding and trust comes improved communication. Better communication leads to more information being shared, which translates into more effective working relationships. The circle continually expands to include more and more rewards. The additional potential benefits derived from getting to know one another on a deeper level are too numerous to list in full. Some of the more important ones are increased respect, empathy, support, encouragement, cooperation, community, and teamwork.

Relationship development may be one of the most powerful benefits of the cooperative learning process within the group with which I worked. Several conversations with individuals outside the group setting confirmed to me that simply getting to know each other on a more personal level was not only of benefit to the individuals and the organization, but also something many people secretly longed for.

The second benefit widely observed through interactions with the research group was that of information sharing. The volunteers who participated in this research came from several sub-

sections within the CFPM staff. Each time we met as a group, we intended to share information and learning about a particular subject. However, human communication is far more complex than the simple transmission and reception of specific, single-purpose information.

Our exchanges were not unidirectional, with a teacher transmitting material and pupils receiving it in an emotionally sterile classroom environment. Each time the group came together, we spoke of more than the topic at hand, sharing stories and information about our work, our families, and ourselves. These meetings provided an informal atmosphere in which the cross-pollination of ideas occurred between individuals and staff sub-sections. Even as a relative outsider, having come from Winnipeg to Ottawa to do my research, I left feeling I had a better understanding of the workplace issues, challenges, and concerns facing specific individuals and their immediate colleagues, and that I, too, had shared similar information with them. I felt as if I understood what they needed to accomplish the tasks assigned to them. Although this exchange was not the primary purpose of the meetings, it was an extra benefit of coming together.

Linked to increased sharing of information – both personal and professional – and the growth of relationships is the third benefit of a sense of belonging and improved morale. The fun and laughter experienced by this group of volunteers, some of whom had little previous interaction with the others, was inspiring to observe. There was a real sense of belonging. When the research project was coming to an end, one participant confided a sense of loss at the impending "breakup of the family." I found this emotional response intriguing, because the group spent a total of less than 10 hours together between the first and last sessions, which were only 7 weeks apart.

On one survey, Gregory commented, "I look forward to these learning sessions for a number of reasons. One is that they seem to make the day more enjoyable." Anne exclaimed, "It

was so much fun!" And Michael indicated, "The process is certainly interesting, and I would love to engage on a regular basis." I was left with a sense that these brief sessions provided an opportunity for the participants to engage in what Secretan (1997) referred to as "soulful activities." These are activities that enrich lives and provide a sense of purpose.

The final observed benefit of engaging in a cooperative learning process is one that might appear self-evident in light of my primary research question. As stated in chapter 1 of this paper, the Military Police, along with the rest of the Canadian Forces, have had a long-standing mandate to work toward becoming a learning organization. To date, that mandate remains largely unfulfilled. Despite recent improvements in several areas of branch policy, training, communications, and operational practices, there has been no recognized, directed, and structured attempt at pursuing and monitoring learning organization practices.

The introduction of a cooperative learning process is only one small step that has now been taken on what is certain to be a long journey toward becoming a learning organization, but at least it has been taken. The focus must now turn toward what must be done next to continue this journey; as Ronald Short (1998) said, "When your goal is to learn, it isn't what you do or did – it's what you do *next*" (p. 93).

## Study Recommendations

A number of findings and conclusions have been discussed above. Academic understanding and knowledge without action, however, are of little value to an organization seeking to improve its capabilities and fulfill its mandate. A successful action research project will create tangible change (Stringer, 1999). This project sought tangible change. I strove not only to understand cooperative learning theory, but also to test that theory within a small portion

of the Military Police organization. The testing of the theory through an instrumental injunction (six cooperative learning sessions) and the direct apprehension of the experience (surveys, journals, and documents), as well as communal confirmation among research participants (group discussion and dialogue), has allowed me to make an assessment of the utility of this theory and its practice to this particular group. Now all that remains is to expand the injunction to the entire branch.

In the limited scope of this research project, a cooperative leaning process proved itself as an effective, enjoyable, and rewarding mechanism in pursuing the creation of a learning organization. Small seeds have been planted and a few more people now believe in the power of cooperative learning, but the remainder of the branch has yet to experience its potential. As a result, a number of recommendations follow in the hope that cooperative learning might be introduced beyond a few volunteers from the staff of the CFPM office to include members from across the CF MP branch.

*Recommendation One*

- A cooperative learning process should be maintained within the staff of the CFPM office.

The process has begun. Several members of the research team have indicated a desire to continue some form of cooperative learning process within their present work environment. Support and encouragement from the senior members of the staff would provide the appropriate climate for ongoing learning to take place. A potential exists in this small group for cooperative learning, with all of its benefits, to flourish. It should be nurtured.

*Recommendation Two*

- Cooperative learning as a technique for sharing information, developing workplace relationships, and improving morale should be introduced within other units of the MP branch.

The process was a success with the research group. It may hold potential for others. However, any potential can only be realized if other units know it exists and are introduced to the injunction. This information should be made available to others within the branch in the expectation that once introduced, it will continue to grow and develop, leading to greater learning for individuals and units.

*Recommendation Three*

- Additional cooperative learning processes should be investigated for introduction within the MP branch.

The cooperative learning process introduced to the staff of the CFPM office was modeled on a tool in use by Royal Roads University and known as a "learner-led session." It is only one possible method of cooperative learning. Many other possibilities exist, such as communities of practice, knowledge networks, professional debate forums, and speakers' corners. Other options might appeal to a wider branch audience. Any of these processes have the potential to encourage and support the sharing of knowledge and the ongoing development of the branch as a learning organization.

*Recommendation Four*

- Additional research, beyond cooperative learning, should be conducted on other techniques that may assist the MP branch in its mandate to become a learning organization.

As discussed in chapter 1, the cooperative learning process selected for this project was only one of several elements that comprise the learning organization. Its positive reception by the participants suggests that other learning organization processes might be well received also. Additional research into learning organization theory and possible applications within the MP branch should be supported and encouraged.

*Recommendation Five*

- Personnel and financial resources should be allocated to support MP branch efforts in become a learning organization.

Resources are in short supply and must be managed prudently. As discussed in the conclusions above, resources are often committed to the immediate fulfillment of tasks at the expense of long-term progress. The development of the branch into a learning organization represents a strategic commitment to future learning, effectiveness, and morale and therefore warrants additional investment of human and other resources.

# CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

One of the fundamental purposes of this project was to create the possibility of positive change in moving the Military Police branch of the Canadian Forces toward its mandated goal of becoming a learning organization. However, the problem with such a goal is that it is entirely subjective. To an extent, this positive change has already been accomplished. "When individuals inquire into a problematic situation on the organization's behalf and retain, crystallize, or embed new practices, values, or understandings, the organization learns" (Preskill & Torres, 1999, p. 43). As a member of the branch on which my research was based, I have gained knowledge, skills, and experience that I bring back into my workplace. Having participated in this project, several other branch members have also experienced new learning and understanding. They too will bring these newly acquired assets back into their workaday lives. Depending on our personal commitments to the process we shared, as well as our individual and group initiative, cooperative learning sessions may soon be occurring within our respective workplaces.

Alternatively, if this goal of positive change is to be fully realized, organizational leaders will need to carefully consider the recommendations in chapter 4. These recommendations were arrived at after the introduction of cooperative learning injunctions to the staff of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal. Surveys, group dialogues, one-on-one discussions, invited comments, and personal reflection were used to assess the value of this process to the CFPM staff. These actions led to five recommendations that were provided with a view to continuing cooperative learning in the office of the CFPM, expanding the introduction of cooperative learning processes to include other elements of the MP branch, and continuing to research and implement additional strategies in an effort to move toward becoming a learning organization.

## Organizational Implementation

Implementing the recommendations resulting from this research project is both relatively easy and quite difficult. In the first instance, implementation requires only that nature be allowed to take its course. Individuals who have found cooperative learning to be of value to them will want to share its potential with others around them. They can be expected to continue some form of cooperative learning as a direct result of recognizing its benefit to them personally, if not with the intent of improving the organization.

In the second instance, implementation in its fullest sense requires a tacit commitment on the part of the organizational leadership to re-create the MP branch as a learning organization. Accomplishing this goal will necessitate additional research into cooperative learning processes and other elements necessary to the development of a learning organization. It will also require a commitment to develop a positive, supportive learning environment. Finally, full implementation will require a resource commitment to see additional organizational learning initiatives researched, developed, and introduced throughout the branch.

The implementation of the recommendations included in this report may be broken into four distinct, though not necessarily chronological, steps:

1. Continue the work begun in the office of the CFPM.
2. Expand the horizons of cooperative learning within the Military Police branch.
3. Look beyond cooperative learning processes in building a learning organization.
4. Make a tangible commitment to change.

Each of these steps is discussed in sequence below.

1. *Continue the work begun in the office of the CFPM.*

At the conclusion of my research time with the volunteers from the CFPM staff, I was encouraged by the knowledge that at least two of the participants had expressed an interest in continuing the cooperative learning process beyond my involvement. This commitment is exactly what I had hoped for once I had realized the potential of cooperative learning. By encouraging those who wish to maintain the process now in place, the MP branch leadership will actively support the continuation of an organizational change process that has already begun.

This portion of the implementation involves paving the way for cooperative learning initiatives to occur within the office of the CFPM through fostering an environment in which learning, in its many forms, is honoured. By advocating a commitment to individual and group learning, information sharing, and relationship building in a climate of openness, honesty, and mutual support, the organization frees its members to engage in learning and teaching while doing. This approach suppresses any tendency to believe that time spent in learning must be extracted from time committed to daily task completion. On the contrary, it suggests that continually learning from one another represents a small investment that pays significant dividends over time by expanding problem-solving capabilities, generating flexibility, and building a more pleasant, cooperative work environment. The net result is a more productive, proactive, and knowledgeable organization whose members enjoy working together and strive efficiently toward common goals.

2. *Expand the horizons of cooperative learning within the Military Police branch.*

This phase of implementation includes the introduction of the cooperative learning process used in this research to other elements of the branch. It also includes seeking other cooperative learning processes and introducing them into existing branch structures, possibly

beginning the same way this research process did, with a few willing participants and one facilitator to start the ball rolling.

Exporting the knowledge and experience gained through this research project to other elements of the MP branch will increase the potential for creating similar new learning initiatives throughout the organization. This knowledge transference may be accomplished by several means. Individuals who have participated in cooperative learning and who understand and value its potential may be used to teach others both formally and informally. This instruction could be achieved through the assembly of small groups, similar to the one created for this research project, in which individuals from other units experience the process and are then encouraged to import it back to their work environments.

Alternatively, cooperative learning could be introduced through enmeshing it in the more formal training processes already in place within the branch. This strategy might include providing learners on formal MP courses the opportunity to present a relevant topic, one in which they have a particular interest or expertise, to others on the course. Cooperative learning processes could also be introduced to existing branch forums, be outlined in branch publications, or be described in detail on a common intranet site. Conversely, the employment of individuals dedicated to the development of organizational learning practices could be used to deliver information sessions and lead learning injunctions in various locations.

In addition to the expanded application of the unique process employed in this research project, the introduction of other forms of cooperative learning would provide diversity and choice to cooperative learning participants throughout the branch. By allowing potential learners to select the method of learning that most closely aligns with their personal preferences, the

branch can anticipate higher levels of participation as well as deeper, more meaningful learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; MacKeracher, 1996; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

In seeking additional forms of the cooperative learning process, the options and sources are many. Communities of practice, knowledge networks, information banks, best practices centres, and many other tools are being successfully employed by organizations as diverse as big business, government, not-for-profit organizations, churches, communities, and educational institutions. What is required is the careful evaluation of options, considering their potential applicability within the MP context, and their introduction to the organization in a setting of support and understanding in which participation is encouraged, not mandated.

*3. Look beyond cooperative learning processes in building a learning organization.*

As outlined in chapter 2, learning organization theory is a complex, multi-faceted approach to creating more efficient, effective, and capable organizations. The ways and means by which organizational improvement can be executed are several and are not necessarily agreed on by the many researchers, authors, and practitioners who design, create, implement, and study such theories.

Once again, detailed research into potential options, coupled with educated consideration of their applicability to the branch, will be the key to success. By encouraging individuals or groups to "continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire" (Senge, 1990b, p. 3), several learning organization change initiatives could be occurring simultaneously throughout the branch. These initiatives possess the potential to develop a momentum for change that, if carefully nurtured, may transform individual locations, and the branch as a whole, into a learning organization.

*4. Make a tangible commitment to change.*

Without some commitment on the part of the organization to continue the work that has begun, cooperative learning, and other learning organization initiatives, may ultimately whither. Although the learning spirit of individuals may sustain their personal drive to learn, without support and encouragement individuals grow weary, and the organization can be expected to return to the status quo in much the same way as has occurred with so many change initiatives in the past. Change is hard work. It requires commitment, perseverance, and a genuine desire to see conditions improve (Duck, 2001).

### *Implications for Those Affected*

The implications of continuing the cooperative learning process already in place in the office of the CFPM are widely evidenced in the words of the participants in the previous chapter. These implications include a more enjoyable work environment marked by trust, cooperation, and understanding. Opportunities for personal growth, an increased sense of belonging, improved morale, greater personal and team performance, and improved organizational functioning are also among the benefits identified by the participants. However, these rewards do not come without a cost.

Implementing the recommendations of this report also requires a commitment on the part of members within the organization to suspend assumptions and think collectively in a way that will allow them to create knowledge and develop insights that would not be possible by any of the individual members (Senge, 1990b). This commitment requires people to put the needs and concerns for the development of individuals and the organization above the daily pressures of task responsibilities.

Once the cooperative learning process and additional efforts in pursuit of organizational learning extend beyond the staff of the CFPM, those with whom these efforts come in contact may experience similar benefits and challenges. Any unit of the branch touched by processes associated with the development of the branch into a learning organization can expect the local benefits accrued to correspond directly with the level of commitment demonstrated within that unit. However, it is important to note that the commitment-benefit relationship does not necessarily extend all the way to the individual. Organizational learning is an inherently cooperative venture. Individuals attempting such ambitious change without the direct support of the local organization and its members will almost certainly experience frustration, alienation, and defeat.

Beyond the individuals and units within the MP branch, the implications for others external to the organization must not be forgotten. This project started because of a commitment by the federal government. Within the various government departments and the sub-divisions of those departments, the many services and branches of the CF included, degrees of success in meeting this commitment have varied widely. Some have led the way in learning organization initiatives, while others have lacked initiative or progress.

If the MP branch were to achieve significant success in meeting this important organizational commitment, other branches of the CF, and potentially other elements of the department or government, may benefit from that victory. These organizations would be able to seek the advice and expertise of the MP branch in meeting their learning organization goals. Similarly, other militaries around the world could draw on Canadian experience and initiative in developing their plans and strategies. Momentum created in the office of the CFPM could potentially continue throughout the remainder of the MP branch, into the larger system of the CF,

and beyond, in much the same way as the actions of one small boy affected countless people in the movie *Pay It Forward*. By being the first to make a commitment to change, this boy set the example that created an international movement.

Perhaps equally important, though seldom discussed in the literature on learning organizations, is the potential effect this theory has on individuals, families, and communities outside the workplace. By any definition, the building of learning organizations includes many admirable aspirations such as working toward common goals, communicating effectively, improving skills, sharing thoughts, feelings, and ideas, developing knowledge, and building strong relationships. It is hard to imagine a person, family, organization, business, or government – or indeed a world – that would not directly benefit from the pursuit of such noble aims. Even if the organizations fail to change, individuals will have gained new insights and grown richer as a result of having tried.

*Implications of Recommendations Not Being Implemented*

Any suggestion that a failure to implement the recommendations of this report would lead to anything but the continuation of the status quo for the MP branch would be untenable. The branch has continued to function from its inception until now without learning organization theory. The fact that the MP branch has not taken significant, controlled steps to become a learning organization appears to have all but gone unnoticed by the military hierarchy that directs it. The concern, therefore, is not one of regression, but rather, one of stasis.

Albert Einstein has been widely credited with stating "we can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." Learning organization theory suggests similarly that we have the capacity to change organizations for the better, but doing so requires that we be prepared to think about them differently and adjust our approach to people, to

work, and to outcomes accordingly. Failure to implement the recommendations therefore equates to an acknowledgement that the organization need not improve its ability to learn, grow, and improve through the application of learning organization theory.

## Future Research

Although I cannot claim much of what I have presented in this paper to be a radically new approach to learning organization theory, I do believe it to be of value to the body of literature that has gone before. The field of organizational learning has been studied extensively. Many researchers have considered the characteristics of learning organizations; some have built theoretical approaches to the application of that theory to various entities including schools, not-for-profit agencies, traditional businesses, and even governments. Some of these theoretical applications have even been tested, but few have looked at militaries, and none at military police, as possible organizational subjects on which to base their research.

Using the Canadian Military Police as an organizational subject, and influenced by the theories of Wilber (1998) concerning the three strands of valid knowledge, I created an "instrumental injunction," introduced it to a small segment of the organization, recorded the "direct apprehensions," and carried out "communal confirmation" of my findings. In so doing, I have captured a snapshot of how one aspect of learning organization theory – a cooperative learning process modeled on the Royal Roads University learner-led sessions – was received by and affected this particular organization. Additional research topics could include a similar process considering the application of other elements of learning organization theory to this branch. Coincidentally, implementation of the recommendations provided will create the environment necessary for such future research to be carried out.

What is largely unique about this research project is the application of the theory of organizational learning to the military context. Militaries are intrinsically good at teamwork and team building. This characteristic is critical to organizational learning and might imply a natural tendency of militaries to easily adapt. On the other hand, rigid hierarchical structures and poor communications between those hierarchical levels are also typical characteristics of militaries. These attributes might imply an inability of militaries to readily adapt to learning organization theory. One thing is certain, however; every organization is unique and each will respond to organizational learning in ways that reflect that uniqueness. As a result of this recognition of the uniqueness of organizations and their subsequent responses to stimuli, innumerable opportunities for future research in the domain of organizational learning remain.

# CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED

In considering the lessons learned during the conduct of this research project, I was immediately struck with the sense of a deep division between what I perceived as lessons pertaining to research and lessons pertaining to life. I suspect many researchers would be offended by this notion, suggesting there is no such separation between the two and arguing that the conduct of research is simply part of their life. I make no apologies, however, as this division is how I perceive my personal learning in this project. I am not suggesting that either category of learning is more or less significant or important than the other, but simply that they are, in my mind, very different. The lessons are discussed below in light of this division.

The research project that led to this report was the first formal, academic action research I had conducted. I had wrongly convinced myself that it was a complex, mystical process reserved only for those possessed of the greatest intellectual prowess. This mistake caused much unnecessary anxiety in the early stages of my research. Academic action research is not nearly the scary beast I thought it to be. It is a series of carefully planned, logically arranged, purposeful steps designed to guide the actions of the researcher in arriving at conclusions about certain events or phenomena.

Unfortunately, things do not always go as planned. In the Canadian military there is a well-known expression: the first casualty of war is always the plan. I feel like that expression applied to my research as well. It matters not how carefully planned and scheduled a project of this magnitude is, life gets in the way. From challenges in the workplace, to home life, to travel difficulties, some days it felt as if the world was conspiring against the completion of this research.

## Research Lessons

Before starting the actual research activities, I completed the requirements for ethical review with both Royal Roads University (RRU) and the Department of National Defence (DND). The RRU process was largely painless and simply required a few hours of thought and the filling-out of a few well-constructed forms. In contrast, the DND process was fraught with difficulty.

After spending several hours struggling with trying to make my research approach fit the forms provided in a Canadian Forces regulation concerning research involving human subjects, I finally called the appropriate office in the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) for guidance. I learned the regulation I had struggled to apply to my proposed research had been superceded by one that had not yet been officially published. I would require the new version to obtain research approval. I got copies of the regulation and the forms and began to work through the departmental requirements. In the early stages, making closer contact with humans having influence over the research, as opposed to dealing exclusively with policy, would have precluded much of this difficulty.

As might have been expected, the departmental forms were largely designed for traditional, quantitative, scientific research and did not lend themselves to the iterative, fluid approach of action research. I spent several more hours over a period of days trying to make these forms work with my action research approach. Finally, in desperation, I contacted a senior officer in NDHQ responsible for policy on research involving humans within DND. He was most helpful concerning the type of research I wanted to do. He informed me to simply adjust the forms as necessary to make them suit the purposes. I did. Once again, closer contact with regulatory agency representatives could have alleviated considerable frustration.

After several weeks of waiting for research approval from NDHQ, I booked my flight to Ottawa to begin my research, knowing my ethical approval process was incomplete. I was still waiting for approval that had not yet arrived when it was time to leave for Ottawa. Once in Ottawa, I contacted the research office in NDHQ and finally got the approval to do my research via e-mail about one half-hour before my first scheduled learning session. Again, a closer working relationship with individuals influencing my ability to conduct research would have been helpful.

The selection of my research methodology was completed in conjunction with the project sponsor. We agreed not only on an area of research, but also on methodology. However, once the research began and volunteers were found, I felt as if I had already breached an important protocol of action research by making decisions on behalf of the participants and in which their input might have been valuable. It would have been more beneficial to select the methodology after the team was assembled, reflecting a more cooperative approach to research decisions and allowing the participants a greater sense of participation early in the process.

I live in Winnipeg, and my research subjects were in Ottawa. Working from a distance made the generation of interest in, and support for, this project quite challenging. I sensed that I needed to communicate personally and face to face with potential participants, to garner support. In an effort to keep my budget as small as possible, however, I opted to forward initial information about the project, as well as invitations to attend scheduled information sessions, via electronic mail. This type of research is ideally taken on by someone locally or, at the very least, by someone who can be on site for the duration of the research project. This continued presence would allow for better development of relationships, increased coordination with the sponsor,

and greater opportunity to conduct research activities and data collection outside the normal work venue and timings.

Being a member of the military, I sent the information via the chain of command, through the military hierarchy. It was not until I arrived in Ottawa more than a week later that I learned that supervisors had either made an assessment that they and their subordinates could not participate owing to pressing daily commitments, or had not read the initial e-mail at all. One such officer confided in me that he read the subject line of the message and it "didn't come up on my radar as an incoming bomb," so, like all other non-essential information, it was simply deleted.

If I were to conduct such research again in the future, I would send information directly to each individual potential participant, instead of through supervisors who may make decisions for their subordinates. Of course, following this procedure without ruffling the feathers of senior personnel would have required close coordination with and the approval of a senior branch sponsor. Although that relationship was available, being a member of the organization I felt compelled to follow the regular chain of command. An outside researcher would likely not have felt obligated to do so and, as a result, probably would not have experienced the same difficulty.

Once the research was under way, and while describing the proposed research process to the volunteer participants, I indicated that we would conduct cooperative learning sessions, suggesting that they often take place over lunch hours in many organizations. By implying they hold sessions over the lunch hour, I may have partly sabotaged my own efforts. The first survey was completed immediately following the first learning session. Because of a quickly dwindling lunch hour, the first surveys that were filled out lacked both clarity and detail.

For the second and subsequent sessions, I needed to either extend the time we had together to permit more complete survey responses or allow the participants to fill out the surveys later, separated from the learning experience in both time and space. I had little flexibility over the lunch-hour timings, as we were in a frequently booked conference room. I therefore chose to have respondents fill out surveys on their own time, away from the group. This decision led to some surveys being completed several days or weeks after the session, and others not being completed at all. More careful consideration of time and place may have partially alleviated these problems.

Location was at least as critical as timing. We used a local conference room that doubled as a lunchroom. The conference room had a video news feed and was where many people enjoyed their regular lunch. By reserving this room over the lunch hour, we denied its use to other organization members and thus may have generated animosity toward the research group and its goals. The participants knew this situation existed, and it may have influenced their comfort level during learning sessions, their responses to certain survey questions, or the nature of our dialogue on cooperative learning. I would not use such a busy, highly valued room for future research.

My familiarity with and preconceptions about the organization may have influenced the way I perceived the people and events at both the centre and the periphery of this research project. Conducting research within an organization in which I have a vested interest, significant prior knowledge, and deeply ingrained mental models made the act of researching very difficult. Early in the negotiations for my educational subsidization, I recognized an unspoken expectation that the research would be focused on the organization paying for the education. In this case, that choice may not have best served either the organization or me as a learner. Despite attempts to

remain somewhat objective and keep an open perspective on what I saw, I found myself thinking that my work was futile; the organization was so over-taxed that people were unable to take time out of their schedules to participate in something they had acknowledged as important. These thoughts may stem from my earlier experiences within the organization as much as from my observations during the research.

Any time the origin of conclusions comes into question, an ethical researcher is forced to look deeply at the genesis of the conclusion before including it in a report such as this one. I found myself needing to go through this process many times. I had to be certain my conclusions were grounded in my research and not on my existing knowledge, assumptions, and prejudices about the organization and its functions. I was left wondering if a researcher from outside the organization, who would not have to consider as many complicating personal factors as I had to, would more readily recall the origins of their conclusions and therefore work more efficiently.

From the very first learning injunction, I was torn between my dual roles as researcher collecting data and participant dialoguing in the session. By allowing myself to participate fully in the learning sessions, I may have missed the opportunity to collect some interesting non-verbalized data. In some instances, the learning was very much hands-on. I was engrossed in what was going on and therefore was not fully aware of the body language and emotions of the others in the room. I am still unsure how to resolve this issue. If I chose not to participate and instead focused on data collection, I may have been perceived as the expert researcher exercising power over the team, as described by Kirby and McKenna (1989). If I were to have someone else collect the data while I participated, my findings would be largely based on events as perceived by that person and influenced by his or her past experiences. I tried to do both and question my

ability to do either very well as a result. Regardless of approach taken, the necessity to verify the data with the participants cannot be overstated.

Finally, I learned what Senge et al. (1999) have known all along: "Simple gatherings where people left their titles at the door, and related to each other as humans, were very effective because they took the hierarchy out of the relationships" (p. 479). Despite always harbouring a secret loathing for the artificial class structures, beyond the formal rank structure, in existence in the military, I realize now that I have contributed in the past to their sustainment. By not seeking every opportunity to knock down the barriers, build relationships, and intentionally place myself on the same social plane as my subordinates, I have failed to develop the conditions necessary for a learning organization to thrive.

In a project such as this one, the opportunities for learning abound. And while I have described several areas in which the process did not go as well as planned, many other areas went very well. By bringing into this research a genuine caring and concern for the organization, its people, and its future, I was able to invest deeply in my work, believing it to be important. My desire to see this project make a difference buoyed my spirits, providing determination, stamina, and perseverance when I felt like the race was longer than expected. I consciously chose flexibility and consensus seeking over direction and rigidity at many crossroads. I needed to demonstrate the compatibility of the leadership and learning environment that this research advocates with the present hierarchy.

The leadership lessons were many. I was challenged to suspend assumptions about leadership in a military context, put my faith in the desire of all human beings to enter into fellowship with one another in learning, and trust that the cooperative learning process was as powerful as I intuitively believed it to be. That trust, coupled with an inner need to make a

difference in the Canadian Forces Military Police, led me to reach deeply to extract certain leadership skills and ideas that I have long held dormant as a result of my perceptions of what the CF sees as a military leader. I have confirmed in my own mind that, regardless of the nature of the organization or its expectations, genuine leaders must look inward for their leadership model and not outward at those expressly endorsed by the organization. I chose to lead as I would wish to be led – with absolute honesty, openness, and caring.

Once I made the commitment to live my own model of leadership, unashamedly demonstrating my genuine interest in individuals and their lives, my natural curiosity about the true nature of leader-follower relationships, and an unabashed optimism about the potential we collectively held, I felt free to really engage in soulful leadership. I found the courage to be a leader true to myself and to what I think, know, and believe in my heart, and not necessarily modeled after the distant, aloof, almost impersonal leader that is often in vogue in the organization.

My role as a leader is not one of remaining detached and maintaining the status quo, but rather must include intellectually and publicly challenging all policies and practices that affect the lives of the people alongside whom I work. There is no excuse for failing to seek better ways to act, better ways to think, and better ways to be. As a learning leader, there is no excuse for accepting the status quo.

> Leaders who wish to instill wide-spread change need to first recognize that they're working against a paradox: Organizations thrive on routine and the status quo. Professionals in organizations rely on the established systems in order to carry out their jobs with minimal resistance and stress. As a result, most people in companies today have

> not challenged themselves to learn something really different for a long time. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002, p. 226)

By challenging myself to continue learning and growing, I can have a positive effect on the organization instead of being swept along in its current. By challenging others to do the same, I can have a positive effect on their lives as well.

## Life Lessons

I have found myself overwhelmed in recent years by the sense that in this life I have learned just enough to recognize that I really know very little. An excerpt from my personal journal, written while I was deep in the process of conducting research for my literature review, emphasizes this point:

> My frustration grows daily as each new idea only points out the countless things I do not understand and have yet to learn. I cannot help wondering how anyone could be anything but a specialist and feel they have a solid foundation of knowledge. As I walk between the stacks filled with knowledge, I feel both invigorated at the opportunities and yet, at the same time, insignificant. I am a single piece of flotsam awash in oceans of ideas, knowledge, and wisdom. Where will I find the courage to jump in resulting from the belief that I can remain afloat? Right now I fear drowning in the ideas of others.

Action research, in this instance, had far less to do with understanding the organization on which my project was based than it did with understanding myself. I needed to learn to stretch myself in directions I have not previously felt confident to stretch. I had to develop a belief in myself as a capable thinker. I had to learn to lean on others after a lifetime of attempting to build

self-sufficiency from other people. In short, the time had come in my life for some difficult lessons. I had to finally define and implement my own personal leadership philosophy.

Action research has taught me that the ideas of others, no matter how highly regarded or widely published, are not necessarily the answers I seek in my life; they only provide fuel for my own thinking. I have learned to ultimately look inward for answers, tempered by what I read and learn from others, but based primarily on my own moral compass and my own commitment to the important things of this life. Action research is action learning. While I am engaged in research, I must remain both a questioner and an observer, of myself and of others, if I am to reach deeper levels of understanding.

A significant re-learning for me over the course of this project was that priorities and deadlines often have nothing to do with one another. Although academic deadlines often loomed, the necessity to carefully consider the ramifications of giving them priority over the more permanent things in my life – family, friends, and health – was a powerful reminder to daily consider where my heart is and what truly matters in this world.

Passion drives all meaningful human existence, and the extent to which my passions are identified, understood, and held up for close observation is the extent to which my actions are meaningful to me and those around me. "The act of observing and reflecting on our own practices can be an enlightening experience, enabling us to see ourselves more clearly and to formulate ways of working that are more effective and that enhance the lives of the people with whom we work" (Stringer, 1999, p. 189).

Stringer got it almost right. My approach has become decidedly more holistic. What is missing from his quote is the need to not only formulate more effective ways of working to enhance the lives of those with whom we work, but also develop more effective ways of being

with all individuals with whom we come in contact. I no longer have a use for learning a particular something that is applicable to a particular task; I want now to continue to learn how to be.

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> Of all the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul which have been restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this – that you are the master of your thought, the molder of your character, and the maker and shaper of condition, environment and destiny.
>
> – James Allen, as cited in Secretan, 1997, p. 190

# REFERENCES

**Note**: Several of the references contained within this list were found on the Department of National Defence intranet (primarily those URLs without a www prefix). Although not classified or designated protected information, these documents are not directly accessible to the public. Readers wishing to obtain copies of DND exclusive documents found in this reference list may do so by contacting the office of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal, National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, Ontario and referring to this thesis.

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Appendix A

# Cooperative Learning Process Survey

Participant:

The data collected during this research project will be used only for the purposes of this research project and is subject to both Department of National Defence and Royal Roads University ethical guidelines to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Your responses will not be seen or used by anyone other than the principle researcher during this research project. They will be collected in confidence and secured in a personal filing cabinet or on a password protected computer until they are included in the final report.

Once responses have been collected and collated for inclusion in the final report, you will be given an opportunity to comment on my findings before they are included in the final submission. Under no circumstances will your name or personal information be linked to your answers within the final report. If you have any concerns that specific data may be used to identify you, and you wish to have the report adjusted to ensure anonymity, I will discuss options with you to ensure such identification is no longer possible.

I will not directly quote you, nor will I intentionally present your views in such a way that you can be identified without your specific approval. If you have any questions or concerns about data security, personal anonymity, or the collection of demographic or personal data, please contact me at any time, or Dr. Jim Force, Royal Roads University Faculty Advisor, during regular office hours.

Departmental regulations concerning research conducted within DND require a final copy of all documentation related to this project to be forwarded to DHRRE for retention. DHRRE will protect the confidentiality of your responses to the extent permissible under Canadian Law.

You should be aware that under the Access to Information Act, Canadian citizens are entitled to obtain copies of research reports and research data (including the database pertaining to this project) held in federal government files. Similarly, under the Privacy Act, Canadian citizens are entitled to copies of all information concerning them that is held in federal government files including research databases. Prior to releasing requested information, the Directorate of Access to Information and Privacy (DAIP) screens the data to ensure that individual identities are not disclosed.

To further safeguard your anonymity and privacy, you should not write your name or service number anywhere on this questionnaire. Second, you should ensure that any written comments you may offer are sufficiently general that you cannot be identified as the author.

The purpose of this short survey is to determine the value of cooperative learning processes as one mechanism for increasing individual and group knowledge, improving individual and group skills and abilities, and contributing to relationships within the workplace. It will provide you with an opportunity to comment on the value of the cooperative learning process you have recently participated in and its usefulness as a learning mechanism.

Prior to completing this form you are reminded that you are under no obligation to participate in this research project. You may choose to discontinue your participation at any time with no negative consequences resulting from your decision. Your participation, however, is appreciated and your personal information will be treated with the utmost of confidentiality, seen only by the principle researcher, and afforded every protection possible.

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information as well as to be a participant in this research project.

Date:____________________

1. This cooperative learning process was of value to me professionally.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

2. This cooperative learning process was of value to me personally.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

3. As a result of participating in this process, I learned…

4. I would be interested in participating in a similar process (i.e. where co-workers share knowledge with one another in a relaxed atmosphere), again.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Why or why not?:

5. What changes to this cooperative learning process would you recommend to make it more valuable?

Please explain:

6. My present work environment would be supportive of this type of learning?

☐ Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Agree

Strongly Somewhat Somewhat Strongly

Please explain:

7. This type of learning is more desirable than some other, more traditional, learning processes (i.e. formal classroom instruction, online courses, individual study)

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

8. This process has had some effect on my relationships with the other participants in this group.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

9. Please provide any additional comments about any aspect of learning within the workplace that you feel would be useful in assessing the value of continuing this type of cooperative learning process.

Appendix B

# Cooperative Learning Process Survey

Participant:

The data collected during this research project will be used only for the purposes of this research project and is subject to both Department of National Defence and Royal Roads University ethical guidelines to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Your responses will not be seen or used by anyone other than the principle researcher during this research project. They will be collected in confidence and secured in a personal filing cabinet or on a password protected computer until they are included in the final report.

Once responses have been collected and collated for inclusion in the final report, you will be given an opportunity to comment on my findings before they are included in the final submission. Under no circumstances will your name or personal information be linked to your answers within the final report. If you have any concerns that specific data may be used to identify you, and you wish to have the report adjusted to ensure anonymity, I will discuss options with you to ensure such identification is no longer possible.

I will not directly quote you, nor will I intentionally present your views in such a way that you can be identified without your specific approval. If you have any questions or concerns about data security, personal anonymity, or the collection of demographic or personal data, please contact me at any time, or Dr. Jim Force, Royal Roads University Faculty Advisor, during regular office hours.

Departmental regulations concerning research conducted within DND require a final copy of all documentation related to this project to be forwarded to DHRRE for retention. DHRRE will protect the confidentiality of your responses to the extent permissible under Canadian Law.

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To further safeguard your anonymity and privacy, you should not write your name or service number anywhere on this questionnaire. Second, you should ensure that any written comments you may offer are sufficiently general that you cannot be identified as the author.

The purpose of this short survey is to determine the value of cooperative learning processes as one mechanism for increasing individual and group knowledge, improving individual and group skills and abilities, and contributing to relationships within the workplace.

It will provide you with an opportunity to comment on the value of the cooperative learning process you have recently participated in and its usefulness as a learning mechanism.

Prior to completing this form you are reminded that you are under no obligation to participate in this research project. You may choose to discontinue your participation at any time with no negative consequences resulting from your decision. Your participation, however, is appreciated and your personal information will be treated with the utmost of confidentiality, seen only by the principle researcher, and afforded every protection possible.

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information as well as to be a participant in this research project.

Date:____________________

1. This cooperative learning session was of value to me professionally.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

2. This cooperative learning session was of value to me personally.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

3. As a result of participating in this session, I learned…

4. I would be interested in participating in a similar sessions (i.e. where co-workers share knowledge with one another in a relaxed atmosphere), again.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Why or why not?:

5. What changes to this cooperative learning process would you recommend to make it more valuable?

Please explain:

6. My present work environment would be supportive of this type of learning?

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

6a. My present work environment could be easily adapted to this type of learning?

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain how your workplace (structures, relationships, attitudes etc.) would need to change, if at all, to facilitate this type of learning.

6b. This type of learning could be applicable to my work experiences outside of the CFPM staff.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please describe other work environments (past, present, or anticipated) where you believe this process might work/might have worked for you personally. Why?

7. This type of learning is more desirable than some other, more traditional, learning processes (i.e. formal classroom instruction, online courses, individual study)

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

8. This process has had some effect on my relationships with the other participants in this group.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

9. Please provide any additional comments about any aspect of learning within the workplace that you feel would be useful in assessing the value of continuing this type of cooperative learning process.

Appendix C

# Cooperative Learning Process Survey

Participant:

The data collected during this research project will be used only for the purposes of this research project and is subject to both Department of National Defence and Royal Roads University ethical guidelines to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Your responses will not be seen or used by anyone other than the principle researcher during this research project. They will be collected in confidence and secured in a personal filing cabinet or on a password protected computer until they are included in the final report.

Once responses have been collected and collated for inclusion in the final report, you will be given an opportunity to comment on my findings before they are included in the final submission. Under no circumstances will your name or personal information be linked to your answers within the final report. If you have any concerns that specific data may be used to identify you, and you wish to have the report adjusted to ensure anonymity, I will discuss options with you to ensure such identification is no longer possible.

I will not directly quote you, nor will I intentionally present your views in such a way that you can be identified without your specific approval. If you have any questions or concerns about data security, personal anonymity, or the collection of demographic or personal data, please contact me at any time, or Dr. Jim Force, Royal Roads University Faculty Advisor, during regular office hours.

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To further safeguard your anonymity and privacy, you should not write your name or service number anywhere on this questionnaire. Second, you should ensure that any written comments you may offer are sufficiently general that you cannot be identified as the author.

The purpose of this short survey is to determine the value of cooperative learning processes as one mechanism for increasing individual and group knowledge, improving individual and group skills and abilities, and contributing to relationships within the workplace. It will provide you with an opportunity to comment on the value of the cooperative learning process you have recently participated in and its usefulness as a learning mechanism.

Prior to completing this form you are reminded that you are under no obligation to participate in this research project. You may choose to discontinue your participation at any time with no negative consequences resulting from your decision. Your participation, however, is appreciated and your personal information will be treated with the utmost of confidentiality, seen only by the principle researcher, and afforded every protection possible.

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information as well as to be a participant in this research project.

Date:____________________

1a. This cooperative learning session was of interest or value to me professionally.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

2b. This cooperative learning session was of interest or value to me personally.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

3. As a result of participating in this session, I learned…

4a. In future sessions of this nature (i.e. where co-workers share knowledge with one another in a relaxed atmosphere) I would like to see some changes in the way it is done.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Why or why not?:

5a. What changes to this cooperative learning process would you recommend to make it more valuable to you specifically?

Please explain:

6a. My immediate peer(s)/superior(s)/subordinate(s) have been supportive of my participation in this learning process.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

6a(2). The organization as a whole (staff of the CFPM and DPMs) has been supportive of this learning process?

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

6b. This type of learning could be applicable to my work or life experiences outside of the CFPM staff.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please describe other work or life environments (past, present, or anticipated) where you believe this process might work/might have worked for you personally. Why?

7a. For me personally, this type of learning is more desirable than other, more traditional, learning processes (i.e. formal classroom instruction, online courses, individual study)

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

8a. This process has had some effect on my knowledge and understanding of other participants in this group.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

9a. Please provide any additional comments about any aspect of learning within the workplace that you feel would be useful in assessing the value of continuing, and potentially expanding to other areas of the branch, this type of cooperative learning process.

Appendix D

# Cooperative Learning Process Survey

Participant:

The data collected during this research project will be used only for the purposes of this research project and is subject to both Department of National Defence and Royal Roads University ethical guidelines to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Your responses will not be seen or used by anyone other than the principle researcher during this research project. They will be collected in confidence and secured in a personal filing cabinet or on a password protected computer until they are included in the final report.

Once responses have been collected and collated for inclusion in the final report, you will be given an opportunity to comment on my findings before they are included in the final submission. Under no circumstances will your name or personal information be linked to your answers within the final report. If you have any concerns that specific data may be used to identify you, and you wish to have the report adjusted to ensure anonymity, I will discuss options with you to ensure such identification is no longer possible.

I will not directly quote you, nor will I intentionally present your views in such a way that you can be identified without your specific approval. If you have any questions or concerns about data security, personal anonymity, or the collection of demographic or personal data, please contact me at any time, or Dr. Jim Force, Royal Roads University Faculty Advisor, during regular office hours.

Departmental regulations concerning research conducted within DND require a final copy of all documentation related to this project to be forwarded to DHRRE for retention. DHRRE will protect the confidentiality of your responses to the extent permissible under Canadian Law.

You should be aware that under the Access to Information Act, Canadian citizens are entitled to obtain copies of research reports and research data (including the database pertaining to this project) held in federal government files. Similarly, under the Privacy Act, Canadian citizens are entitled to copies of all information concerning them that is held in federal government files including research databases. Prior to releasing requested information, the Directorate of Access to Information and Privacy (DAIP) screens the data to ensure that individual identities are not disclosed.

To further safeguard your anonymity and privacy, you should not write your name or service number anywhere on this questionnaire. Second, you should ensure that any written comments you may offer are sufficiently general that you cannot be identified as the author.

The purpose of this short survey is to determine the value of cooperative learning processes as one mechanism for increasing individual and group knowledge, improving

individual and group skills and abilities, and contributing to relationships within the workplace. It will provide you with an opportunity to comment on the value of the cooperative learning process you have recently participated in and its usefulness as a learning mechanism.

Prior to completing this form you are reminded that you are under no obligation to participate in this research project. You may choose to discontinue your participation at any time with no negative consequences resulting from your decision. Your participation, however, is appreciated and your personal information will be treated with the utmost of confidentiality, seen only by the principle researcher, and afforded every protection possible.

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information as well as to be a participant in this research project.

Date:____________________

1a. This cooperative learning session was of interest or value to me professionally.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

2b. This cooperative learning session was of interest or value to me personally.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

3. As a result of participating in this session, I learned…

4a. In future sessions of this nature (i.e. where co-workers share knowledge with one another in a relaxed atmosphere) I would like to see some changes in the way it is done.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Why or why not?:

5a. What changes to this cooperative learning process would you recommend to make it more valuable to you specifically?

Please explain:

6a. My immediate peer(s)/superior(s)/subordinate(s) have been supportive of my participation in this learning process.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

6a(2). The organization as a whole (staff of the CFPM and DPMs) has been supportive of this learning process?

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

7a. For me personally, this type of learning is more desirable than other, more traditional, learning processes (i.e. formal classroom instruction, online courses, individual study)

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

8b. This process has had some effect on my relationships with others in the workplace.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

9b. When I think about learning within the Canadian Forces Military Police Branch I am concerned about…

9c. When I think about learning within the Canadian Forces Military Police Branch I appreciate…

Appendix E

# Cooperative Learning Process Survey

Participant:

The data collected during this research project will be used only for the purposes of this research project and is subject to both Department of National Defence and Royal Roads University ethical guidelines to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Your responses will not be seen or used by anyone other than the principle researcher during this research project. They will be collected in confidence and secured in a personal filing cabinet or on a password protected computer until they are included in the final report.

Once responses have been collected and collated for inclusion in the final report, you will be given an opportunity to comment on my findings before they are included in the final submission. Under no circumstances will your name or personal information be linked to your answers within the final report. If you have any concerns that specific data may be used to identify you, and you wish to have the report adjusted to ensure anonymity, I will discuss options with you to ensure such identification is no longer possible.

I will not directly quote you, nor will I intentionally present your views in such a way that you can be identified without your specific approval. If you have any questions or concerns about data security, personal anonymity, or the collection of demographic or personal data, please contact me at any time, or Dr. Jim Force, Royal Roads University Faculty Advisor, during regular office hours.

Departmental regulations concerning research conducted within DND require a final copy of all documentation related to this project to be forwarded to DHRRE for retention. DHRRE will protect the confidentiality of your responses to the extent permissible under Canadian Law.

You should be aware that under the Access to Information Act, Canadian citizens are entitled to obtain copies of research reports and research data (including the database pertaining to this project) held in federal government files. Similarly, under the Privacy Act, Canadian citizens are entitled to copies of all information concerning them that is held in federal government files including research databases. Prior to releasing requested information, the Directorate of Access to Information and Privacy (DAIP) screens the data to ensure that individual identities are not disclosed.

To further safeguard your anonymity and privacy, you should not write your name or service number anywhere on this questionnaire. Second, you should ensure that any written comments you may offer are sufficiently general that you cannot be identified as the author.

The purpose of this short survey is to determine the value of cooperative learning processes as one mechanism for increasing individual and group knowledge, improving

individual and group skills and abilities, and contributing to relationships within the workplace. It will provide you with an opportunity to comment on the value of the cooperative learning process you have recently participated in and its usefulness as a learning mechanism.

Prior to completing this form you are reminded that you are under no obligation to participate in this research project. You may choose to discontinue your participation at any time with no negative consequences resulting from your decision. Your participation, however, is appreciated and your personal information will be treated with the utmost of confidentiality, seen only by the principle researcher, and afforded every protection possible.

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information as well as to be a participant in this research project.

Date:____________________

1a. This cooperative learning session was of interest or value to me professionally.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

2b. This cooperative learning session was of interest or value to me personally.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

3. As a result of participating in this session, I learned…

4a. In future sessions of this nature (i.e. where co-workers share knowledge with one another in a relaxed atmosphere) I would like to see some changes in the way it is done.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Why or why not?:

5a. What changes to this cooperative learning process would you recommend to make it more valuable to you specifically?

Please explain:

6a. My immediate peer(s)/superior(s)/subordinate(s) have been supportive of my participation in this learning process.

☐Disagree Strongly ☐Disagree Somewhat ☐Neutral ☐Agree Somewhat ☐Agree Strongly

Please explain:

6a(2). The organization as a whole (staff of the CFPM and DPMs) has been supportive of this learning process?

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

7a. For me personally, this type of learning is more desirable than other, more traditional, learning processes (i.e. formal classroom instruction, online courses, individual study)

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

8b. This process has had some effect on my relationships with others in the workplace.

☐ Disagree Strongly ☐ Disagree Somewhat ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Somewhat ☐ Agree Strongly

Please explain:

9b. When I think about my personal level of knowledge, skills, and abilities I am concerned about…

9c. When I think about the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities of others in the workplace I am concerned about…