

# MEDALS AND MEMORIES

## Character Education

### Character Education

- Explore the role positive activities play in character development
- Examine youthful role models
- Consider different ways to create a character development plan

### Facts

- The Cadet program which includes Army, Navy and Air Cadets as well as Junior Rangers is the largest federally funded youth program in Canada
- There are more than 50,000 Cadets in Canada, including approximately 15,000 in Ontario; there are 3,400 Junior Rangers in 119 patrols in all provinces and territories across Canada's north
- Cadet and Ranger programs, promote citizenship, leadership, physical fitness, a whole range of transferable skills and a positive sense of identity; they are open to all youth 12–18

### Before the Reading

- Cadets and Junior rangers offer positive power; gangs offer negative power. Discuss why some young people turn to negative rather than positive power
- What does the expression *idle hands are the devil's workshop/tools/playground* mean? Provide some examples that show the truth of this saying
- There is a saying that you are the choices you made. Make two lists—one of positive choices you've made and one of negative choices. Which choices have affected your character most and why?

### Reading

#### You Owe Your Country a Positive Character

Whether you are a new Canadian or your family has a heritage in Canada going back centuries, as a young Canadian citizen or citizen-to-be, you are the beneficiary of brave men and women who served and died when democracy was challenged by powerful tyrannies. As the veterans from World War II dwindle in numbers, it is up to you to take up their torch of remembrance. Consider what Canadian citizenship meant to them when you determine what it means to you now.

As you explore the sacrifices of the past, consider how you may create your own plan for what you need to do to contribute to your society. The title of this reading, "You owe Canada a positive character", may seem presumptive in a country where you have many freedoms, including the right to be of bad character, but, if Canada is to continue to flourish, as your forebears wished when they sacrificed their lives, each young person should strive to make positive contributions.

The young people featured in this reading light your way. They are, or were, participants in Canada's Cadets and Junior rangers, programs. There are many positive community-based programs that are character building as well as Cadets and Junior rangers. Participation in any positive activities from sports, arts, Guides, Scouts and Junior rangers to Cadets provides building blocks for a better society.

One of the most recent national awards in the cadet



movement is the Walsh Memorial Sword. It was awarded for the first time in 2005 to **Cadet Chief Warrant Officer Shannon Potvin** of Ottawa in recognition of her performance as an Army cadet, her community service and her academic accomplishments.

In 2006, Shannon joined **Christine Robidoux**, Canada's top Sea Cadet and top Air Cadet, **Danilo Jankovic**, to lay a wreath at the national Remembrance Day ceremony in Ottawa. Shannon's proud mother, Marilyn Fortin, stated in *On Target* that at first she didn't understand why her 12 year-old wanted to join Army Cadets. Ms. Fortin, mistakenly believed that cadets were geared to boys—not an unrealistic belief when one considers it took young women over 100 years to be made part of the 'school drilling practices' that started in Canada in the 1860s." Fortunately, teenagers can be stubborn and after constant pleading, I relented," said Ms Fortin. "It did not take me long before I realized that the Army Cadets provided training in life skills that our children will use throughout their lives."

Shannon Potvin had a great role model in the Governor General's Foot Guards in Ottawa. Her previous commanding officer, **She-Ming Lau-Chapdelaine**, described as being one of the most decorated cadets ever, had earned the ANAVET medal, the Royal Canadian Legion Medal of Excellence, the Lord Strathcona Medal, the Major General Howard Medal and the Five Year Army Cadet League Service Medal by 2005. While away on an international cadet expedition as one of Canada's top 16 cadets of 2006, he was notified he had won the top Ontario Cadet Award called the Walsh Memorial Award. She-Ming, known for his high ideals and integrity, was also the 2006 runner-up for the Walsh Memorial Sword Award.



Cadet Paul Benner  
Photo: armycadethistory.com

**Cadet Paul Benner**, the Regimental Sergeant-Major of the 15th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery Cadet Corps in B.C. is the only Canadian cadet ever to have earned The Star of Courage for an act of conspicuous courage in circumstances of great peril. On a cool November night in 1996 when he and his classmate Samantha had missed their bus, they decided to walk

home along the railroad tracks. Unfortunately, they did not hear the train whistle until it was too late. Without a moment's hesitation, Paul pushed Samantha off the tracks

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*"Cadets taught me how to fly. I never knew how high it would take me."  
Chris Hadfield, Canadian astronaut*



Air Cdt. WO2 Alex Harmsen  
Photo: Sabrina Byrnes, Northumberland News

July 8, 2009, as the city of Oshawa lay beneath him, Air Cadet Warrant Officer second class, **Alex Harmsen**

of Cobourg, could see into his future. He had just logged his first solo flight in a Cessna 172 as part of a flying scholarship he had earned. One of 82 Air Cadets selected from across Ontario, Alex will log enough hours during the summer course to qualify for his Transport Canada Private Pilot Licence and his Royal Canadian Air Cadet wings. Alex has another year of school at Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East, where he scored an 97% average in the grade 11 International Baccalaureate program. Last year Alex earned his glider licence at Loyalist College and in April 2009 he spent 12 days with the Canadian Network for the Detection of Atmospheric Change in that organization's Northern Experience program. He earned his arctic berth as Ontario's representative in a nationwide application. Having scored first in Ontario in the national University of British Columbia Science Challenge, probably helped. Alex Harmsen's recent experiences have taught him about Canada's Armed Forces, Arctic history, culture and climate change, navigation, meteorology and airmanship. He told a reporter recently that he's interested in pretty much everything. With his solid character building background and his eyes set on becoming an aerospace engineer so that he may be in the forefront of designing new space flight technologies—the sky's the limit for Alex Harmsen.

saving her life but losing his own. Paul's self-sacrificing death brought family, friends and fellow cadets to tears. After more than a decade, elements of Paul's life still stand out as lessons in tenacity. In spite of having to take a two hour bus ride to attend cadet meetings at the Bessborough Armoury in Vancouver, Paul always arrived each time with polished boots and pressed uniform. He refused to quit at anything he tried earning top marks in the "Gold Star" testing—on his third try. He achieved the highest rank in his corps by the time he was 17. Paul's father felt that his son had a strong spirit. The disciplined, compassionate and courageous RSM Paul William McComb Benner had all the characteristics of a great Canadian cadet.



RCSCC Cadet Andrew Scott  
Photo: Ron Pietroniro,  
Metroland

At 16 years of age, Whitby cadet **Andrew Scott** already has seven years of character building as a Sea Cadet. His dedication paid off when Andrew was one of only five cadets selected from 10,000 Canadian applicants to participate

in one of the few international exchange programs in Britain this summer. Currently second-in-command of his 35 member Sea Cadet group and a gunnery instructor, Andrew speaks highly of the travel, teamwork and confidence-building of his cadet experiences. "It's really neat seeing how all the different cadet groups work and now I have friends all the way from British Columbia to Newfoundland .... It's rewarding to see cadets come in at age 12 who are really shy and after their first year, you notice such a difference in how comfortable they are in expressing their opinions or volunteering for leadership roles."

Ontario's top Sea Cadets for 2009 face the challenge of a lifetime in the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet National Regatta that takes place in the waters off Fort Henry and the Royal Military College in Kingston in August 2009. Each year, top teams from each province test their teamwork, seamanship, sailing strategies and physical endurance in Pirate class sailboats with a spinnaker and trapeze. Five two person teams: **Taylor Marsh** of North Bay and **Josh Clarke** of Sarnia; **Konrad Davy** of Brampton and **Mary Clouston** of Kingston, **William Glatt** of London and **Devon MacDiarmid** of Cornwall, **Paul Karigan** of London and **Thomas Flake** of Sudbury and **Matthew White** of Manitoulin and **Crestienne Benoit** of Manitoulin face their toughest challenge yet as they use their skills to harness the wind, tides and currents. Naturally, all of them are winners as they already had to demonstrate teamwork

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WO2 Lorraine Rigden  
Photo: Christina Bernardo, Midland Free Press

### The Wind Beneath Her Wings

**Lorraine Rigden**, studying in a concurrent Bachelor of Music and Education pro-

gram at McGill, retired as a Warrant Officer second class from the Silver Star Air Cadet Squadron of Unionville after an exceptional cadet career. She had received the Lord Strathcona Medal, Royal Canadian Legion Medal of Excellence, ANAVETS medal, Air Cadet Service Medal, the Doug Whitley Trophy and the Virginia Mitchell Award for Top National Female Air Cadet Power Pilot. She earned her Glider Pilot wings in 2006, her Power wings in 2007 and she was the first recipient of the Alfred Wong Memorial Scholarship in 2008. The medals tell only part of the tale. Lorraine was on her school's Nordic ski team, played with the concert and Jazz bands and was a member of the silver medalist OFSAA volleyball team. She played ice and ball hockey—and the saxophone, the latter frequently at retirement homes, for benefit concerts and during church services. She attained marks in the 90s in 12 of her 27 high school credits, with no mark dipping below 82%. When she wasn't working on Grade IX saxophone, Grade II Theory and Grade III Harmony and History, she was participating in a variety of major music festivals.



WO2 Alfred Wong  
Alfred Wong Memorial  
Scholarship

If they had met, **WO2 Alfred Wong** and **WO2 Lorraine Rigden** would have liked one another for their shared love of cadets and music. Alfred Wong died in a bicycle accident on his 18th birthday.

skills, self-discipline and confidence to emerge victorious at the provincial level.

The Junior Ranger program which is considerably younger than the Cadet programs, celebrated its first decade of official operations in 2008. As Junior Ranger groups are spread thinly across Canada's north, camps and training opportunities to bring young people together were a high priority from the beginning. Camp Loon, operated by the Canadian Junior Rangers and the Canadian Forces outside Geraldton encourages youth to become active in and learn safety rules for activities such as riding ATVs, canoeing, boating, off-road biking, archery and shooting rifles. With a 10 year history, Camp Loon has been able to develop leadership among Junior Rangers—now providing a two week advanced training camp.

Community service has been an active component of the Junior Ranger program from the start. In 2004 Junior Rangers **Justin Nakogee, Phillip Nakogee, Joey Louttit, Julius Koostachin** and **Chad Hookimaw**, received letters of commendation from Ontario's Lieutenant Governor for their exemplary voluntary service during the emergency evacuation of their community. The young men put in eight hour shifts answering phones and radios in English and Cree at the emergency operations centre. They kept the kitchen and emergency centre clean and secure. The principal of the young Ranger's school stated that the letters from the Lieutenant Governor boosted the boys' spirits by honouring their talents and leadership abilities.

In 2006 eight Junior Rangers who helped their community during a tainted water crisis were honoured with the Keewaywin Award, one of the most prestigious awards of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation—a nation that covers most of the upper half of Ontario. Without being asked, the Junior Rangers put on their uniforms and went to the assistance of the Canadian Rangers who were playing a key role in their community's evacuation. They distributed drinking water and helped the elderly and mothers with children to the evacuation planes. The Band's executive director stated that the young men saw their responsibility—even at their young age.



*Junior Ranger Louisa Tookalak receiving her Duke of Edinburgh award from Brigadier General Barabé  
Photo: Isabelle Dubois, Nunatsiaq News*

**Junior Ranger Louisa Tookalak** of Puvirnituq received a Duke of Edinburgh award at the 2007 Okpiapik Camp near Kuujjuaq. As part of the Young Canadians' Challenge, Louisa

has helped elders in her community, cleaned the local co-op store, improved her sewing and hunting skills and played sports to increase her physical endurance. Camp Okpiapik, dedicated to developing good citizens, challenges youth to overcome obstacles and develop leadership skills. The campers, who represent, Cree, Inuit, Montagnais, Napaski and European ethnic backgrounds, build self-confidence in an environment of cultural exchange.

Brigadier-General Christian Barabé encouraged participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards during the 2005 camp so that the young people in his Joint Task Force East could excel individually and shine in their community. His faith in the youth was rewarded as the 11 award recipients in 2006 increased to 51 Duke of Edinburgh Award recipients in 2007. In its 10 years of operations, the Junior Ranger Program has bolstered pride in heritage and helped develop traditional and transferable skills. It is a powerful character education tool.

The 2004 essay written by **Air Cadet Sergeant Laura Clark** of the Sudbury Irish, demonstrates the link between character education and Canadian veterans. Laura talked about her grandfather's WWII service, her mother's cadet experiences and her own interactions with veterans as part of her cadet community work. "Most young Canadians would not understand what these brave men and women speak of, but being a Cadet has opened my eyes. Cadets is closely linked to the Armed Forces, and because of this, I feel that I better understand. It makes me proud to hear the Veterans say Thank-You to the Cadets for coming out and marching in the Remembrance Day parade. They know, that through us, and through the people that serve in any branch of the Armed Forces, we will not let anyone forget what they so easily gave, that keeps us all free today."

The Queen's York Junior rangers Army Cadet Corps of Aurora also demonstrated the character-building provided by cadet training. In November 2007 Corps members lit three candles for soldiers who fell in Afghanistan and

stood on guard all night at the Aurora cenotaph in their honour. **Master Warrant Officer David Casper**, who organized the ceremony said, "It's a pretty big deal to show respect to these soldiers. It is just as important to remember World War veterans as well as those who have recently fallen, he added. Not only is it important to the families of the fallen, but also to the family of soldiers serving overseas."

The actions of all the cadets and junior rangers in this reading model the actions of youth developing the values for which veterans served and died.

Look at the positive role models of your peers in this Reading and in the Medal Minutes to develop your own plan to provide Canada with YOUR positive character. As the saying goes, "Everyone can't do everything, but, everyone can do something." What choices will you make to do something to build a positive character?

## After the Reading

- Discuss the title, "You Owe Your Country a Positive Character"
- There are approximately ten young people featured in this reading. Whose story touched you and why?
- List the top ten things you feel build positive character

## Extensions

- Research where the Air, Sea, Army Cadets squadrons are in your area and make a chart of where and when they meet
- Write a short essay about the link between character education and Remembrance Day
- Find successful Canadians, like astronaut Chris Hadfield, who were either Cadets or Junior rangers

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*There are many Air, Sea and Army Cadet Awards and many Ontario recipients.*

**The Major General Howard Medal** which looks at the results of the National Star Certification Exam and selects from the top three to four candidates in each province, honoured Michael Clarry and Robert Berkowski of Thunder Bay, Jade Hopkins of Ottawa, Roberta Busch from Thunder Bay, Kevin Lee of Toronto and Scott King of Mississauga in 2006 and 2007.

**The Royal Canadian Legion Cadet Medal of Excellence** in 2007 and 2008 went to Tim Doering of Lindsay, Alicia Hartsgrove of Simcoe, Phillip McMillan of Fort Erie, Ashley Pare of St. Catherines, Dylan Longpre of Pembroke, Justin Stark of Grimsby, Samantha Hibbs of Norwell and Tom Shipway of Lindsay.

The **ANAVETS** award to promote excellence in Cadet Training Centres awarded medals to Mohamad Iskandarini of North York, Zach Lanou of Mississauga, Crystal Rose of Leamington, Wesley Pratt of Ottawa and Chantal Galati of Creemore in 2007. 2007 and 2008 Master Cadets were Jesse Kean of Brampton, Adam Di Simine of St. Catherines, William Irving and Caitlin Yaki of Fort Erie.

**Ontario Strathcona Medal** recipients for 2008, 2007 and 2006 were Kyle Morton of Lindsay, Adam Di Simini of St. Catherines, Graham Robertson of Toronto, Shawn Bowen of Lindsay, Courtney Schinkel of Fort Erie, Kim Nicholson of Grimsby and Tom Gledhill of Lindsay.