

Transforming the relationship between the Canadian military and Indigenous People: evidence from the traditional and social media

Jean-François Savard, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, ENAP

Mathieu Landriault, Ph.D.
Lecturer, University of Ottawa

The current Canadian government has for central objective to foster reconciliation with Indigenous people. This effort means among other measures to adopt more inclusive policies designed at ensuring proper representation of Indigenous people in key Canadian institutions. The Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are among these institutions as the 2017 Defence Policy included diversity as one of its pillars. In this sense, representativeness was postulated as impacting performance: “the continued operational excellence of our military also requires that it reflect Canada in all its diversity” (Sajjan, 2017).

Of course, the necessity to turn the Canadian Forces into a force reflecting Canada’s diversity highlights that there have been obstacles in integrating specific groups (Indigenous, women, visible minorities) into the organization. Hence, we know that obstacles exist, preventing Indigenous people from joining the CAF in great numbers. Perceptions by Indigenous people that DND or the CAF would not be welcoming of them could act as a possible obstacle for recruitment.

The emergence of social media possesses the potential to fundamentally transform these perceptions. Social media entail that organizations, such as DND and CAF, now has a firmer control on the messages reaching Canadians and can directly reach them. On the other hand, the multiplicity of accounts controlled by the CAF also means that the uniformity over communications is harder to achieve.

This paper presents an exploratory research that has two objectives. First, we will analyze how defence institutions in Canada have incorporated social media tools in their overall communication strategy. This first objective will be pursued by studying the content of social media communication issued by key officials at DND and CAF on indigenous issues.

A second objective will be to figure out the reception that these messages received in the public. An analysis of the popularity of DND and CAF tweets will help us zero in on the messages that connect with the Canadian populace. We will then contrast social media communication of these two institutions with the media treatment of such issues in traditional media (in this case, newspapers).

To conduct our research, we first identified the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence's accounts. We were able to identify seven accounts that we present below. We also set our analysis timeframe to the period of November 7, 2017, to April 1, 2019. The choice of this period is not insignificant. November 7, 2017, marks the date on which Twitter changed from 140-character messages to 280-character messages. As this alone could affect our research results, we preferred to limit ourselves to messages of 280 characters. April 1, 2019, is simply the date on which we began our analyses. Then we used the rtweet package of the R language to extract and collect directly from the Twitter API the data we needed. We were able to collect 16,820 tweets from the seven accounts studied. The rtweet package extracts the data from the Twitter API, then integrates them into a data frame containing 88 variables. We then analyzed these data using the R language. We conducted textual analyses (frequency analysis, thematic analysis, association analysis), social networks analyses (using the igraph package) and descriptive analyses.

As this is an exploratory study, the data collected were extracted from Twitter's free API. This access has obvious advantages, but also many limitations that should be highlighted. Thus, Twitter allows to only extract the most recent 3200 tweets for each user and the number of followers and friends is blocked at 5000. It is neither not permitted to extract information for more than 90,000 tweets, regardless of the author (a figure that seems huge but can quickly become an obstacle depending on what we study). For a keyword search, Twitter does not allow to obtain more than 18,000 tweets published in the last 7 to 10 days. There are other more subtle limitations, which we will ignore for the moment, because they apply only in specific contexts.

The limitations of the API did not affect the access to the data we needed. In fact, none of the accounts studied had published more than 3200 tweets during the period we were interested in. So, we were able to collect all the necessary data. However, we had to resign ourselves to not conducting some more in-depth analyses that would have allowed us to achieve other research

objectives, because of these limitations. This did not prevent us from conducting the necessary analyses to achieve our two research objectives.

Indigenous People and the Canadian Forces

The history of relations between the Canadian Armed Forces and Indigenous peoples in Canada is particularly turbulent. During colonization, European nations quickly forged military alliances with indigenous nations either to gain access to their resources or to defend themselves against other indigenous nations, but above all to help them transpose the wars raging in Europe to the Americas. However, these alliances fell rapidly around the 1760s, as the population of European origin gradually became the majority and European military forces found their pacts with indigenous nations less and less useful. As early as the nineteenth century, the Armed Forces became, for the British colonies and then for the Canadian government, the main tool for assimilating Indigenous nations.

The outbreak of the First World War did not make much difference. McGowan argues that this world war was rather an opportunity for the federal government to strengthen the authority of the Indian Act by the Department of Indian Affairs, wanting to force Indigenous men to enlist. However, the Tsimshian Indigenous people of Port Simpson and Nisga'a in British Columbia strongly opposed it, wanting instead to obtain a specific status so that they would not be subject to conscription. They claimed that they had never participated in the formulation of Canadian laws and, consequently, they were not required to go and fight for the Dominion. After a long administrative battle, on January 17, 1918, the federal government issued a decree exempting Indigenous people from mandatory military service. Paradoxically, only Indigenous people with Indian status under the Indian Act could benefit from this exemption, leaving considerable flexibility for the Department of Indian Affairs officers to make completely arbitrary decisions about who was exempted and who was not (McGowan, 2011).

Since the First World War, Indigenous recruitment in Canada has always been subject to uncertainty, contradiction and even opposition. Thus, many recruiters in the early days of the war asked themselves the question in complete confusion: could they recruit Indigenous men (Sheffield, 2007)? Their integration into the Canadian Armed Forces was therefore mainly based on a survival logic. This explains why Indigenous people received a cold or mixed reception when they indicated their intention to join the Armed Forces.

During the Second World War, the Government of Canada introduced a family allowance system to support Indigenous families whose fathers had been enrolled. Administered by the Dependant's Allowance Board and the Department of Defence, this program served, in an insidious way, to try to acculturate Indigenous communities. Indeed, since the State controlled the administration of benefits, it introduced a model of women's dependence on men (male breadwinner), which was often alien to the social organization of these communities. This was an attempt to force indigenous communities to adopt a European family economic structure (McGowan, 2011). Similarly, children attending residential schools were excluded from the application of the law. Officers of the Department of Indian Affairs were also given a great deal of discretion, deciding on their own on the accessibility of the allocation program for Indigenous people. In addition, they had no recourse to the superiors of the Dependant's Allowance Board and were excluded from the Veterans Assistance Organization.

It should also be noted that during the Second World War, access to education in indigenous communities suffered as a result of state decisions, since the funds normally earmarked for it were drained into the war effort. As a result, First Nations education was suffering not only from a massive decline in funding, but also from a severe lack of human resources (Toomey, 2006).

Despite the strong opposition of Indigenous nations to forced recruitment, many men from these communities served in the Canadian Forces, often with great pride (Lackenbauer, Moses, Sheffield, Gohier, 2018), during the First and Second World Wars. But the return to civilian life has been particularly brutal for indigenous men. Indeed, they were deprived of many of the benefits to which veterans were entitled. For example, the Veteran's Land Act did not recognize Indigenous veterans as beneficiaries (Canada, 1996), denying them the same rights as other Canadian veterans (Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, 2014).

The land surrender to which the Veteran's Land Act gave entitlement also created strong tensions between Indigenous veterans and their communities. Gordon Ahenakew points out that: "I was given some land, but the reserve people were very jealous. The people were very jealous of us veterans. Since that time I have had an impression that the reserve people did not want me, they resented me, still today it had not changed. The conditions then and now have not improved" (Innes, 2000, p. 28). This reality led many veterans to leave their communities (Innes, 2000).

Relations between the Canadian Armed Forces and Indigenous nations in the Arctic have not been any rosier. Indeed, based on its strategic interests, Canada has asserted its sovereignty in Canada's Far North through military activities in that region, ignoring their negative impacts on the environment and consequently on Indigenous people's traditional way of life. One example is the NATO low-level flights that have affected the entire Innu community in Ungava (Goldman, 1989). As well, the construction of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line during the Cold War had a lasting impact on the social, economic and environmental reality of Inuit communities in northern Canada (Hird, 2016). This forced integration of Inuit into the Canadian state organization has forced them to gradually abandon their traditional way of life, which has led to significant social problems (Shackleton, 2012). In this regard, Abele argues that the impact of military activities on Indigenous communities in northern Canada is that: "sovereignty and security policy decisions, in their immediate impact, have been and continue to be disproportionately costly to northern indigenous peoples [...]" (Abele, 1989, p. 189).

In addition, the discourse of Canada's political elites on Arctic was forged at a time when elements of colonization, nation building and indigenous self-determination were intertwined (Hird, 2016). The federal government has invested these sites to control this territory, once considered a waste land (Hird, 2016; Shackleton, 2012). Samantha Arnold explores how Canada has come to add an indigenous character to its vision of northernism, particularly with the creation of the territory of Nunavut, and how this change in identity has altered its interaction with other actors in the circumpolar world. The author argues that while the reframing of relations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government has been guided by domestic policy considerations, international concerns about Arctic sovereignty must not be lost of sight (Arnold, 2010). Thus, policies formally promoting self-determination are often only a pretext for introducing a form of paternalism aimed at reorienting social life, cultural values and individual behaviours in a way that promotes acceptance of Canadian norms by members of these indigenous communities (Trnka and Trundle, 2014).

In this sense, Williams argues that the formation of a post-national circumpolar identity, which even transcends the boundaries of the state, is largely used to legitimize the natural resource exploitation enterprise in this remote region, as well as to support its sovereign claims. Resource development thus becomes an integral part of nation building and national identity formation (Williams, 2011). Ruhl agrees, stating that the use of the inukshuk as a synonym for diversity and

hospitality, as well as its notable use at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games, underlies a pedagogy of neoliberal nationalism where the unbridled privatization of the state coexists with the settlement of the “new Canada” by consumer citizens (Ruhl, 2008). Arnold explains that the Canadian government showed some usurpation of indigenous identity in 2008, projecting the image of a besieged North where Canada was asserting its right to the Arctic without consideration for the indigenous peoples living there. This state-centric discourse provoked a strong reaction from the Inuit, who claimed that the federal government’s decentralization process required it to include them in its claims (Arnold, 2010).

Some authors argue that the relationship between the Canadian Armed Forces and Indigenous peoples has not only had negative impacts. Thus, military service (especially abroad) would have made it possible for Indigenous people to become aware of the fate of their people. Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek argues that “veterans’ experience and increased political awareness did not lead to the overall rejection of Indian culture and traditions, but rather to the first attempts to organize themselves in order to fight for political and social rights” (Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, 2014, p. 397). According to Innes, this identity affirmation was first preceded by a transitional phase during which Indigenous veterans experienced a period of lethargy (Innes, 2000). It was not until 1950 that they became a rising force by gradually advocating for an improvement in their social and political rights, both in the provincial and federal spheres (Innes, 2000).

Similarly, Eyre argues that the exercise of sovereignty by the Armed Forces in Canada’s North has resulted in the construction of considerable infrastructure that is now used by the civilian sector. This is a synergistic effect of a civil-military cooperation policy (Eyre, 1987). This synergy is also reflected in the way in which the Rangers contribute to promoting Canada’s Indigenous and Inuit peoples both nationally and internationally (Schwab, 2006).

Today, the Canadian Armed Forces are much more concerned about the impact of their relationships with Indigenous peoples. In this regard, the new Defence Policy insists that the Armed Forces increase the number of Indigenous members in their ranks and integrate them better. In addition, the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence have two programs in place to support the development of Indigenous communities while promoting the recruitment and integration of Indigenous youth into the Canadian Armed Forces: the Junior Canadian Rangers Program (in the North) and the Carcajou Program (in the South). After more

than two centuries of troubled relations, the Canadian Armed Forces are now trying to redefine their relationship with Indigenous nations.

The Digital Shift to Social Media

The media landscape has been transformed in recent years by the advent of social media. Online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have represented popular sources of information-gathering and sharing in Canada and abroad (Small, 2011; Grudz and Roy, 2014; O'Connor, 2017). For example, use of the Internet to follow news and current affairs steadily increased in recent years, becoming the second source most used by Canadians. There also seems to be a generational effect as younger generations heavily rely on online platforms to be informed (Statistics Canada, 2016). Furthermore, social media was believed to hold the potential of democratizing access and production of information as the producer/audience dichotomy was altered. The audience now had the chance to become active participants rather than passive actors.

This opened the door for civil society actors, whether individuals such as commentators or grassroots movements, to more easily and broadly diffuse their opinions and raise awareness (Dubois and Gaffney, 2014; Himelboim *et al.*, 2013).

Of course, social media are not just limited to individuals and civil society; public institutions have joined the movement and assured a social media presence. Likewise, this change has the potential to redefine how public institutions communicate with the population, share information and spread their messages; journalists are no longer unavoidable intermediaries.

The use of social media by public institutions has been studied in the past few years, informing on the type of use and nature of their online communications. Initial research on this matter had found that institutions displayed low levels of interaction on social media with their audience, preferring to deliver services to the population (Small, 2012) or transmit information about their activities (Etter, 2013). Public institutions did not partake in meaningful interactions with users and did not contribute to furthering democratic deliberations.

This pattern continues to be true for many public institutions, including governmental agencies and higher education institutions; tweets were mono-directional and the online platform was used as a broadcast tool diffusing information to the audience (Waters and Williams, 2011;

Riarh and Roy, 2014; Kimmons et al., 2017). Government departments are more reluctant to engage in more interactive behaviours as mistakes and erroneous information might “erode the public’s confidence in the said department” (Wukich and Mergel, 2016; p. 310)

On the other hand, other studies have shown that the online behaviours of public institutions can be more diverse than first suspected. Looking at police forces departments in Canada, O’Connor had found that their twitter accounts were not solely devoted to sharing information. Rather, police departments are also using social media to build a sense of community by “having conversations online with the public, inviting the public to attend community events, mentioning community partners and events, and the police noting their own participation in community events and support for causes” (O’Connor, 2017; 908–909).

A similar observation was made by Bélanger, Bali and Longden (2014) while looking at Canadian universities. Information-sharing and branding practices were present alongside attempts at fostering a community spirit by engaging with students.

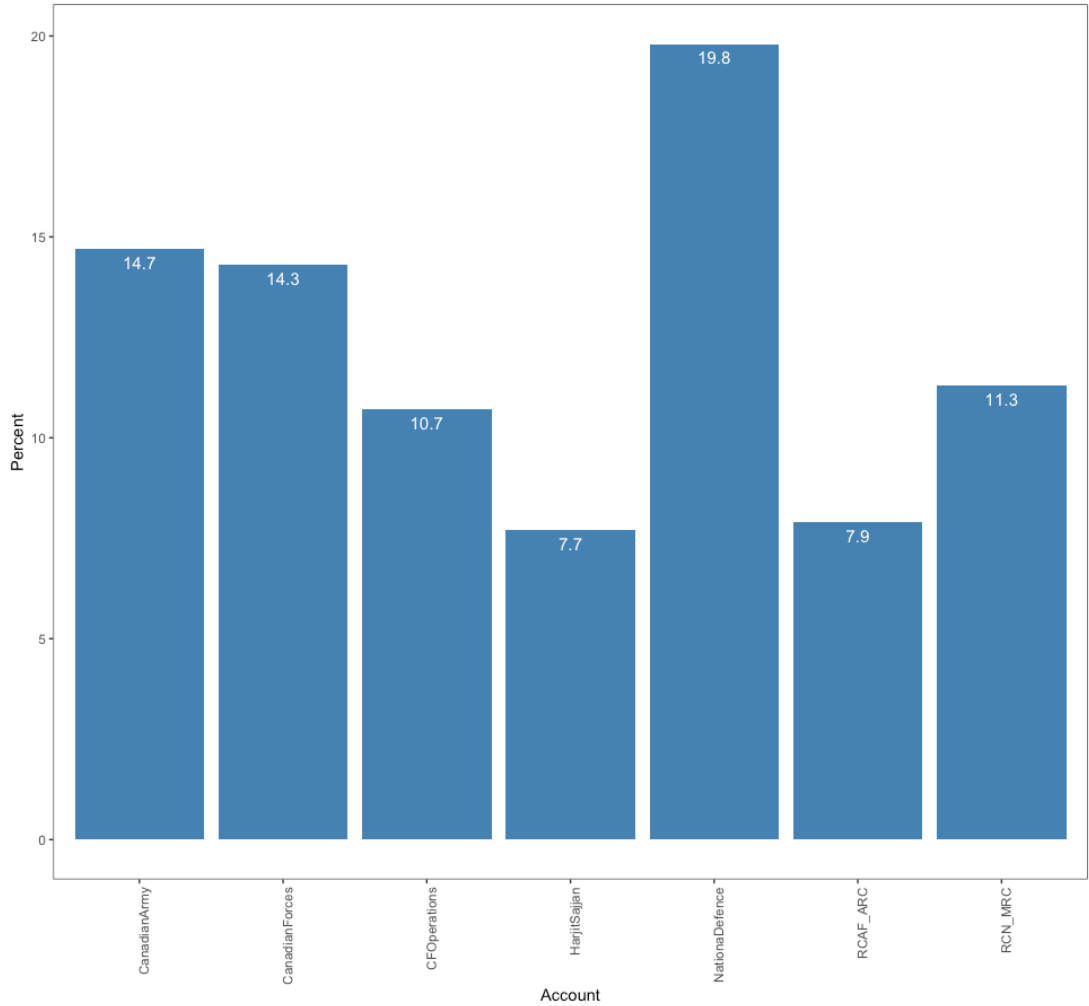
Message consistency is also a potential source for concern for public institutions. Social media offers the possibility of deploying numerous accounts for a single institution. Guidelines and policies must be implemented in organizations to regulate the use of these communication tools. These multiple channels of communication can send different types of messages to the audience and highlight different priorities in their posts. Such dynamics have been observed in regard to political parties (Adi *et al.*, 2014), governments (Sharif *et al.*, 2015) and universities (Bélanger *et al.*, 2014). In Canada, while the federal government has a very centralized approach to regulate social media use by its departments and agencies, “individual ministries have a great degree of autonomy in designing and implementing social media policies” (Mickoleit, 2014; p. 54). For our purpose, the multiplicity of social media accounts by the Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence represents a challenge to message consistency.

Canadian Forces and Indigenous People: Social Media Practises

First, we asked ourselves what proportion of the tweets published by the Canadian Armed Forces accounts dealt with themes related to Indigenous issues. This observation can help us understand if Indigenous people inclusion is a consistent priority across the defence-related

accounts. We found that, on average, the Armed Forces devote approximately 12% of their tweets to these issues, the Army publishing the most at 14.7% and the Royal Canadian Air Force publishing the least at 7.9%. These figures are interesting because they approximate the number of Indigenous personnel in each of the Canadian Armed Forces. As for the Department of National Defence, the proportion of tweets published on Indigenous themes is much higher at 19.8%, while the Minister’s account published only 7.7% of his tweets on this theme during the same period. Since the Minister’s account is linked to his political interests, more than to the interests of the department, this could explain the 12-percentage point difference we see between the two accounts, knowing that the Minister’s concern for Aboriginal communities is also expressed through the Department’s account.

Figure 1—Percentage of tweets regarding Indigenous matter for each account



With respect to the themes covered in these tweets, our analysis reveals very little difference in the topics covered by the tweets in the different accounts. The recurring themes remain the same: the promotion of military operations or exercises; the promotion of Indigenous programs; and the celebration of International Women's Day (what Indigenous women bring to the Armed Forces). It is also interesting to note that in this regard, the departmental account and the minister's account address essentially the same themes. We were also interested in analyzing the hashtags of tweets on Indigenous themes. These keywords, which are found in many tweets on twitter, reveal the themes that interest the author of the tweet. Our analysis of these keywords simply confirmed what we observed in the thematic analysis.

We wanted to know if the themes covered in the other tweets than those on Indigenous issues were different. The thematic analysis reveals that there is no significant difference between the themes of the general tweets and those of the indigenous specific tweets. The most frequent themes are the same: exercises, military operations, promotion of programs to promote recruitment. The difference is that when the accounts address one of these themes, say military exercises, in general tweets they will address exercises held in a region of Canada or the world, while in Indigenous specific content tweets they will present exercises done by Indigenous units (e. g. Rangers or Carcajou's youth). However, two different themes stand out, although they remain less important than those previously mentioned: mental health and sexual behaviour in the Armed Forces. It is not surprising that these themes stand out, since the Armed Forces have been heavily criticized by the opposition in Parliament and in the media on this subject in recent years and these themes are priorities in the new Defence policy. However, it should be noted that these themes do not appear in the tweets with specific indigenous content.

Here again, we were interested in the hashtags of tweets that are not specific to indigenous content. Again, in general, our analyses confirm the thematic analysis. However, when we compare these hashtags between tweets with indigenous specific content and other tweets, we find some differences between these two categories of tweets. First, in the first category, NATO operations and the contribution of women stand out much more than in the second category, which is surprising, but which could also simply be explained by the considerable difference in the number of tweets between the two categories. For this reason, we carried out an inverted frequency analysis, the objective of which is to highlight words (in this case hashtags) that could otherwise be masked due to an over-representation of other words in the same corpus. This analysis shows

that the differences noted above are much more tenuous and confirm what we observed in our thematic analyses, namely that the themes addressed in the tweets—whether for specifically indigenous content or not—are ultimately always similar. The difference is always in presenting a theme with an Aboriginal element (e. g. highlighting a woman’s outstanding career on International Women’s Day for one and highlighting the contribution of Aboriginal women on the same day for the other category of tweets).

We have already noted that the theme to mark International Women’s Day is important for both tweets with specific indigenous content and others. This suggests that the Armed Forces pay equal attention to indigenous people and women. In fact, since the new Defence Policy emphasizes the importance of including four equity groups (people with disabilities, Aboriginal people, members of the LGBTQ community and women), we hypothesized that these four groups are most likely represented approximately equally in the tweets of the Armed Forces’ accounts. However, this is not the case. On the contrary, there are in fact significant differences in treatment between these groups over the period studied. In fact, tweets about people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ community each account for 0.1% of Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence tweets, those about Indigenous people, those about women’s issues account for 5% of these tweets, while, as we have seen, tweets with indigenous specific content account for approximately 12% of the forces’ tweets. There is therefore a wide disparity in the representation of these groups in the tweets sent on Twitter by the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence.

We must therefore conclude that the Armed Forces provide different representations to each of the equity groups referred to in the Defence Policy. However, this does not mean that the most represented groups necessarily receive more public attention than other equity groups. To verify the extent of attention given to each group, we looked at two specific indicators: the number of likes of a tweet and the number of retweets. Thus, the higher the number of each other, the more attention is paid to tweets. We can make two observations. First, the gaps in the representation of each of the equity groups in the Armed Forces and departmental accounts are much larger than the gaps that can be noted between the attention paid to each group. Second, although the Indigenous group is twice as represented in tweets as women, the latter group attracts more public attention than the indigenous group. Users following these defence accounts tended to retweet more frequently defence tweets, magnifying the diffusion of these tweets. However, the attention paid to other groups (disabled and LGBTQ) follows the trend observed in the representation of these

groups, although the attention paid is much greater in proportion to their representation and the gaps with the two most popular groups are still smaller. Table 1 illustrates the situation well.

Table 1—Average number of likes and retweets for each marginalized social group

	Average # of Likes	Average # of Retweets
Disabled people	25.6	5.6
LGBTQ	39.5	16.6
Women	100.2	30
Indigenous people	72.6	23.16

Figure 2 illustrates the attention given to each equity group based on the number of likes and retweets each tweet obtained for each analyzed account. It is quickly noticed that most tweets are all concentrated in the same area, which is not surprising considering the results in Table 1. It should also be noted that the most popular tweets correspond to women’s and Indigenous groups, with women’s tweets being much more popular than Indigenous tweets, which confirms our previous observations.

The attention paid to tweets clearly shows the public interest in Armed Forces and departmental accounts’ messages. We therefore wanted to focus our attention on the dynamics between the accounts studied and other accounts with respect to indigenous themes. Our first focus was on the number of retweets, not tweets from the Canadian Forces and Department of National Defence accounts, but the number of retweets that these accounts make from other accounts. We can then figure out if the defence accounts engage with their policy community in a meaningful way or if, on the other hand, they share information in a mono-directional fashion.

Figure 3 shows the number of original tweets and the number of retweets during the period studied, for all accounts. It can be seen that these accounts published a little more original tweets than retweets, but the difference is small, and, in fact, the Armed Forces published about as many original tweets as retweet (51% original tweets versus 49% retweets). It should also be noted that nearly 92% of the original tweets in the Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence accounts were retweeted at least once. This retweets dynamic seems to indicate that an important dialogue is taking place between the Armed Forces accounts and other accounts. We therefore wanted to know with whom this dialogue is being set up.

Figure 2—Favourite and Retweet Count by equity groups and Account

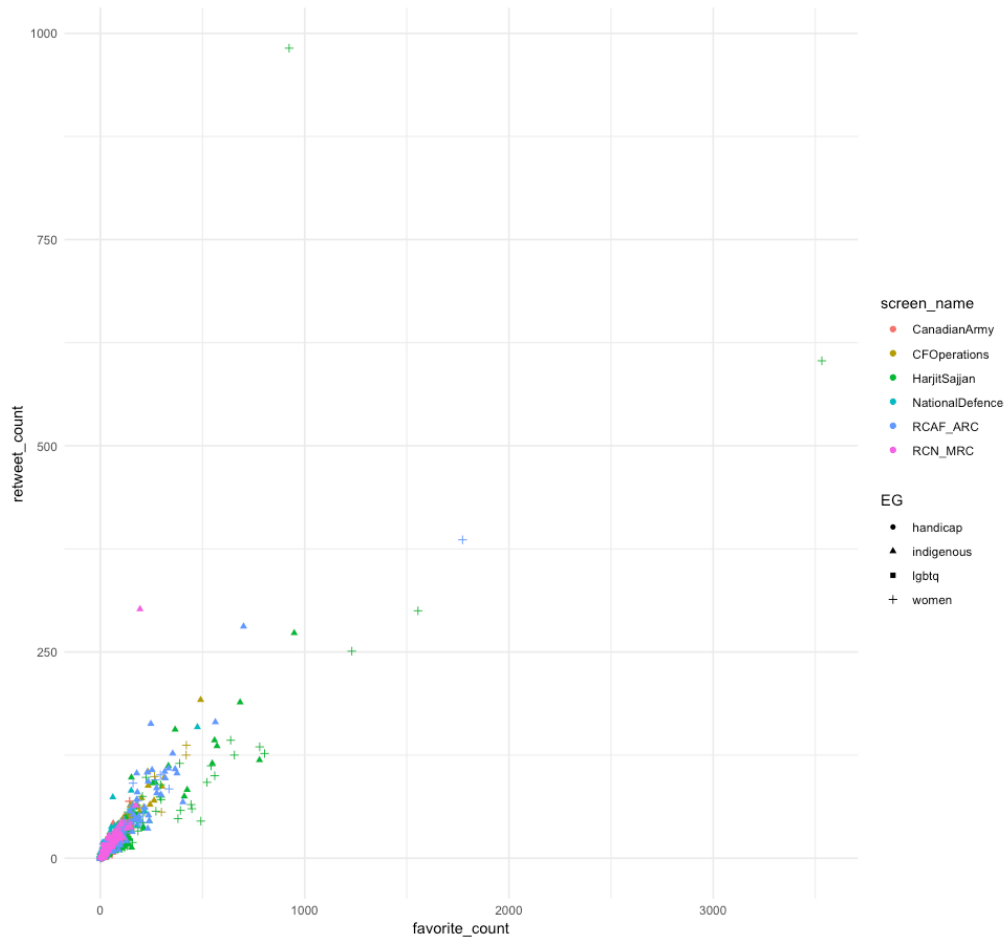
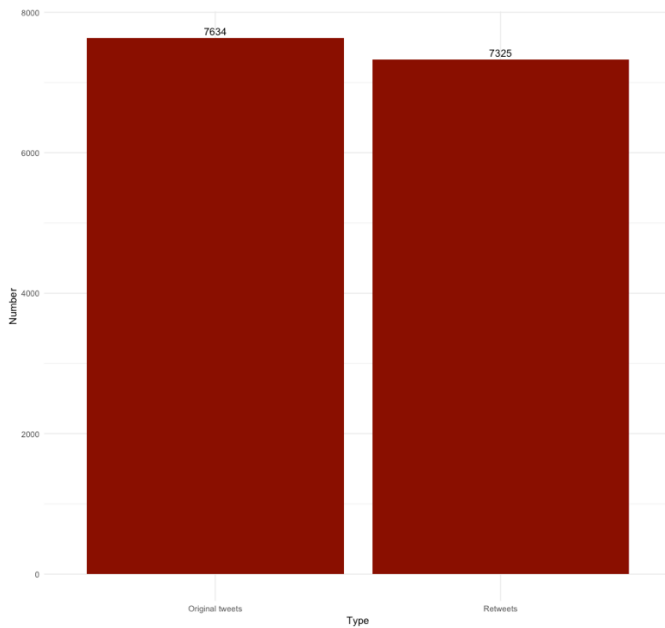
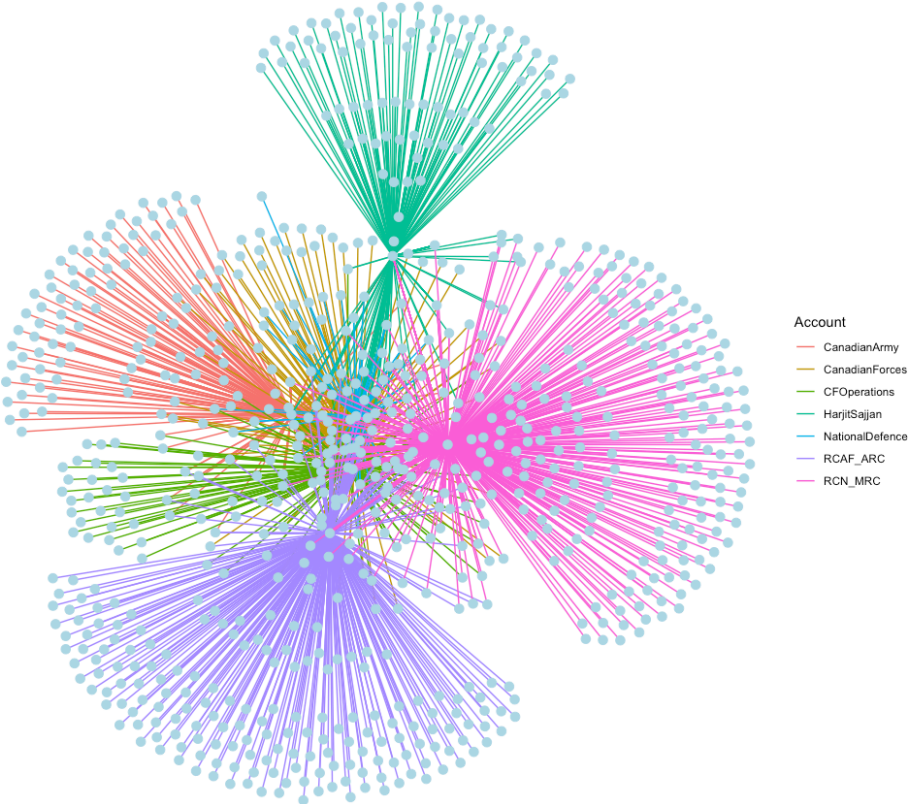


Figure 3—Number of Tweets vs Number of Retweets



To do this, we created a network graph (Figure 4) that shows the connections between the Canadian Armed Forces accounts and the accounts they retweeted. Once again, two observations are in order. First the large number of accounts retweeted (more than 780) and then the dispersion of these accounts in the graph. It should be noted that there is little centrality, which generally means that each of the Armed Forces' accounts will be retweeted from different accounts. To fully understand this low centrality, we have further analyzed and found that of the total retweeted accounts, 587 are retweeted by only one Canadian Armed Forces account, 110 by two accounts, 32 by 3 accounts, 18 by 4 accounts, 16 by 5 accounts and only 12 by 6 accounts. In short, 1.5% of the retweeted accounts are retweeted by all the accounts of the Armed Forces and the Ministry. Message consistency is then low as different branches of the Canadian Forces are for the most part relaying different messages.

Figure 4—Relations between CAF and DND accounts and retweeted accounts



We also wanted to determine the intensity of these relationships by taking into account the number of retweets per account. In other words, the more accounts that are retweeted several times, the more intense the relationship becomes. We have set the minimum intensity threshold at 5 retweets. Below 5 retweets, intensity is absent from the relationship. Figure 5 shows that while there is a significant number of retweeted accounts, 83% of them are retweeted 5 times or fewer. Only 17% have a relative intensity and if we focus on a high intensity (i.e. more than 100 retweets) we find that only 1.4% of accounts fit into this category. What is all the more interesting is that we found that the most retweeted accounts are in fact those of the Armed Forces or other departments and agencies. No non-governmental or non-military accounts fall into the category of 100 retweets or more. It is only in the category of 11 to 20 retweets that such accounts can be seen. In addition, no accounts belonging to an Indigenous organization were retweeted more than once during the period studied. This analysis therefore suggests that the Armed Forces' accounts maintain very low connection with Indigenous People groups and external organizations. On the other hand, these accounts are exchanging frequently with one another and supporting the diffusion of their own communications. This is not surprising as public institutions typically have to assess the credibility of the accounts and the information relayed; other agencies and departments have an informal credibility pre-clearance that their messages are to be trusted.

The data collected in Twitter allows us to verify this conclusion in two ways: by looking at the mentions in the Armed Forces tweets and by emphasizing the friendship relationships between the accounts. A mention is when in a tweet the author mentions the name of another account. This name is preceded by the character “@”. We were able to extract the mentions of each of the tweets from each of the Armed Forces accounts and determine how many times one of these accounts mentions the name of another account. It is on this basis that we were able to measure in another way the intensity of the relationship between the accounts. Figure 6 illustrates our analysis. We can see the links between the different accounts and the intensity of a link according to the transparency of the line. The more opaque the line between two accounts, the more intense the link is.

Figure 5—Number of Retweets' Frequency

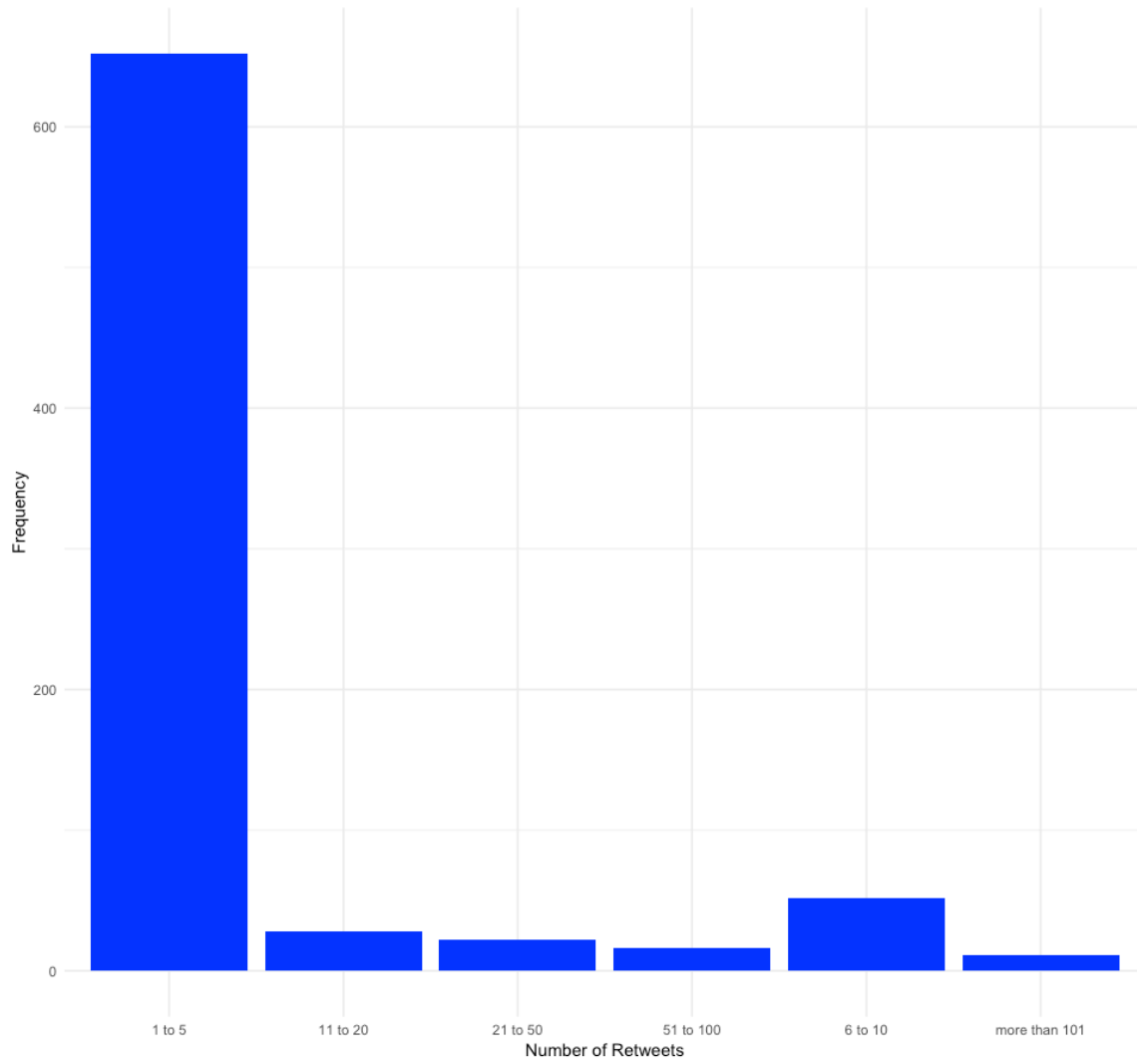
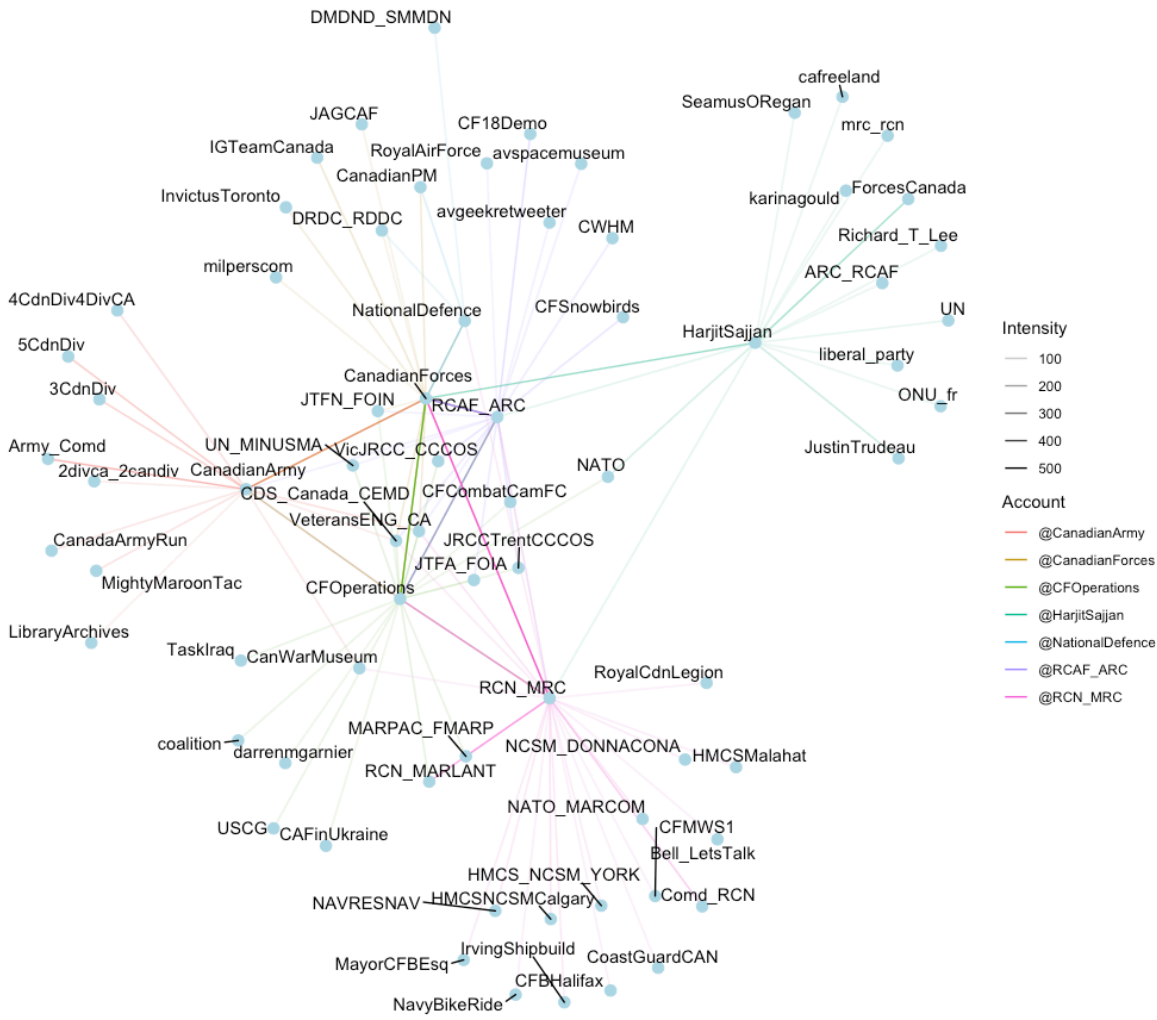


Figure 6—Relation Intensity Based on Mentions



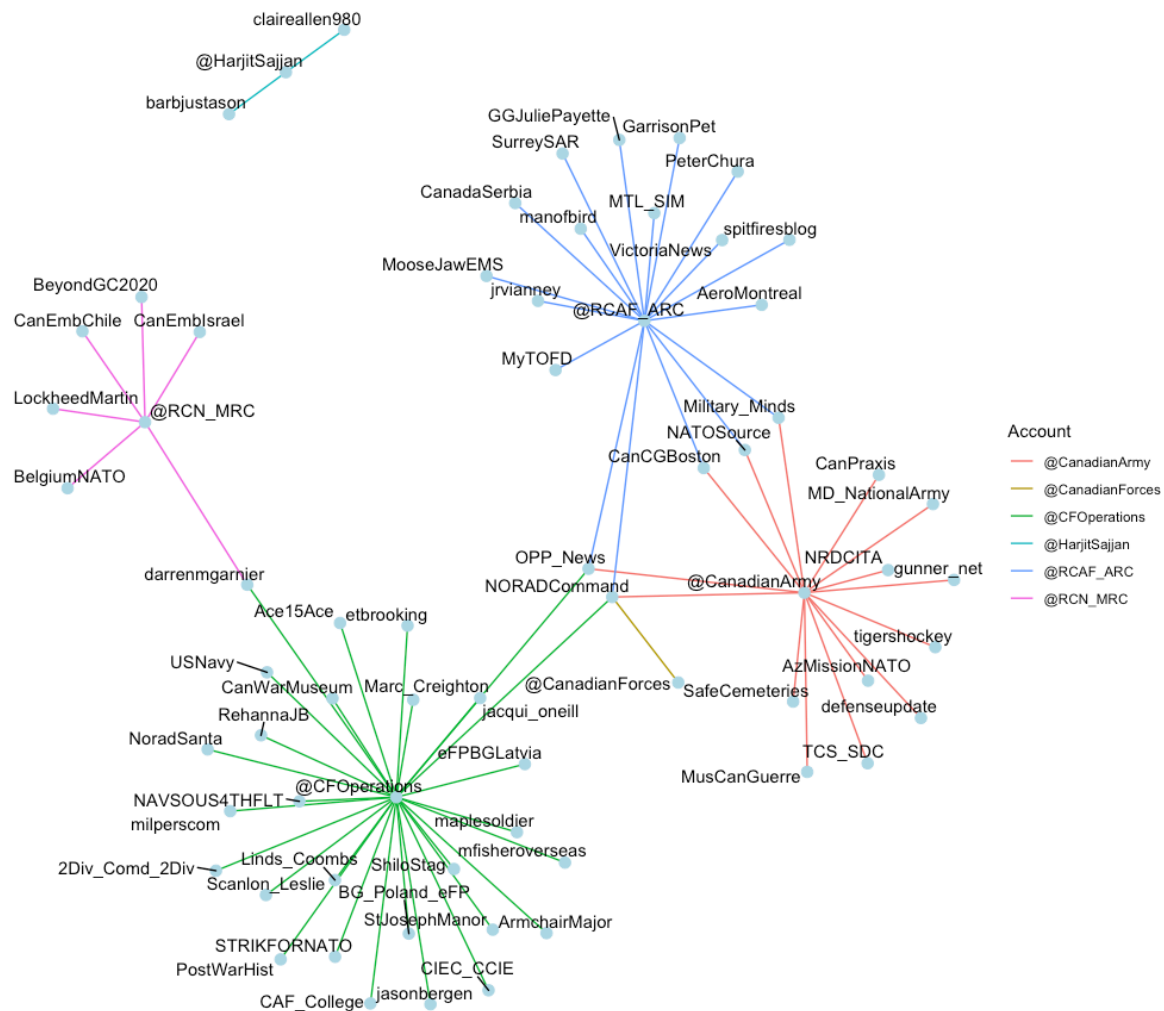
We quickly notice here the triangle that is clearly emerging between the Canadian Forces, the Navy and the Army accounts. We also see how the military operations account is linked midway and that the aviation account forms another triangle with the military operations account and the Canadian Forces account. The centrality of these two triangles should also be noted. All other accounts that are linked to the accounts under study have much less intense links and it is interesting to note that virtually all the accounts shown in the figure belong either to the Canadian Forces or to a department or an agency. Very few other accounts are represented. This therefore confirms the conclusion that the Canadian Forces accounts are mainly closely interrelated, with few or no strong connection with external, non-governmental stakeholders.

Twitter users can subscribe to another account by becoming a follower or can count on a number of people who will follow their account. We used this data for the accounts we studied. However, the mere fact of being followed by someone or following someone remains a passive act and we continued our analysis based on the assumption that a relationship is established from the moment an Armed Forces account is followed by an account that it follows in return. So, a relation is based on mutual following.

Figure 7 illustrates the mutual relationships between the accounts. What strikes first is, of course, the limited number of accounts. There are few mutual relationships. Secondly, there is a relative independence between the accounts studied, despite a very intense relationship between them when we consider the number of retweets and mentions. In fact, our figure shows that these accounts are followed by interposed common accounts. For example, the @CFOperations account and the @CanadianArmy account follow each other through the NoradCommand and OPP_News accounts. We therefore see that centrality exists, but that this dynamic is not because the Canadian Forces' accounts following each other intentionally, but because they receive each other's messages through interposed accounts. So, everyone stays within their sphere of interest, they intertwine because some accounts of these spheres cause a connection between them. Moreover, Figure 7 confirms once again that it is with institutional accounts that the Armed Forces' accounts have relationships and very little (if any) with private or social accounts.

In this section we have examined the Canadian Forces' social media practises with respect to Indigenous peoples. We found that Indigenous themes are poorly represented in Canadian Forces tweets (less than 15%, depending on the accounts) and in departmental tweets (less than 20%) and that although they are better represented than women's topics, it is the latter equity group's tweets that attract more attention, with Indigenous topics still coming as second best. We then wanted to see if the Armed Forces had any relations with indigenous communities in the Twittersphere. By looking at the Canadian Forces' account relationships from different perspectives, we must conclude that they have virtually no relationship with Aboriginal communities in the digital world and that in fact the Forces primarily maintain relationships between their own accounts and government accounts. In the next section, we will examine whether we observe a different dynamic between the social media of the Canadian Armed Forces and the traditional media.

Figure 7—Mutual Relation Between Twitter Accounts



Social and traditional media: convergent and divergent elements

To understand the relationship between Canadian Armed Forces social media and traditional media, we conducted a penetration analysis. The idea is to observe to what extent Canadian Forces tweets on indigenous-specific themes are picked up by the traditional media. It also entails the extent to which the Canadian Armed Forces' Twitter accounts reflect traditional media news. The first thing that came to light was the extraordinarily low number of stories on Indigenous topics and the Canadian Armed Forces in the traditional media. We identified only twenty-four news items that matched our search criteria (Indigenous subjects related to the Canadian Forces) during the period under review, in 11 Canadian newspapers. The thematic analysis reveals that traditional

media coverage generally reflects the content of Armed Forces tweets. Indeed, the themes that stand out most are those associated with trainings and operations. The Proud Boys scandal in Halifax Cornwallis was also covered by the media, but it was a one-time event, with only occasional coverage, and although it captured the imagination of Canadians, particularly in the Maritimes, it remains marginal.

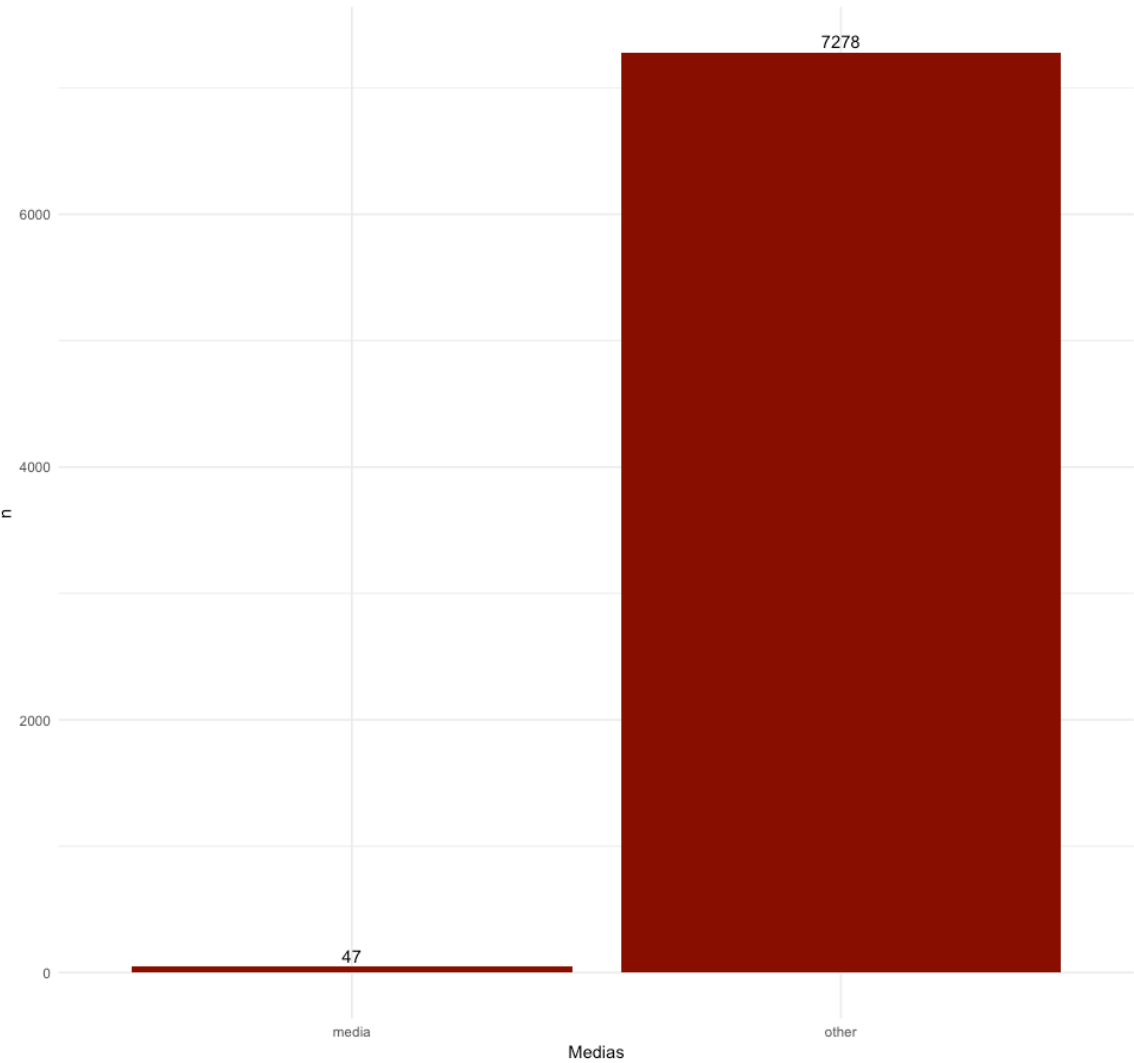
The other interesting thing to note when analyzing traditional media coverage is that it is concentrated around November 11. As such, Indigenous veterans represented the most popular angle covered in these traditional media articles. Typically, these stories were focussing on tales of bravery as well as the trials and tribulations faced by Indigenous soldiers in a distant past. Such framing allowed to evacuate contemporary issues (recruitment for example) and enclosed in a specific time period the reflection on Indigenous contribution to the country. It also represents a punctual interest as the Indigenous veterans are deemed important to talk about around Remembrance Day but not at other times during the year.

Another important element to note is the absence of the Junior Rangers and Carcajou programs that the Armed Forces are promoting in their tweets. Similarly, we noted in the previous section that several tweets are published in March by the Canadian Forces to highlight the contribution of Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women in the ranks. However, these elements are never included in traditional media. It therefore seems that the Armed Forces' promotion of their programs or personnel never finds its way into the traditional media.

Figure 8 provides some explanations for this lack of coverage of the themes promoted by the Armed Forces' social media accounts in traditional media. We compare the number of retweets that the Canadian Forces have made of traditional media news, with retweets from other sources. There is clearly an almost complete indifference of the Armed Forces towards traditional media, with only 0.6% of all retweets published in these accounts coming from traditional media. One can therefore hypothesize that this indifference is mutual.

If we deepen our analysis, we see that of all the messages retweeted by the Armed Forces, only 34 are tweets associated with traditional media, which represents about 4% of all retweeted messages. This reflects a lack of intensity in the relationship between the accounts of traditional media and those of the Armed Forces, confirming the latter's indifference towards traditional media.

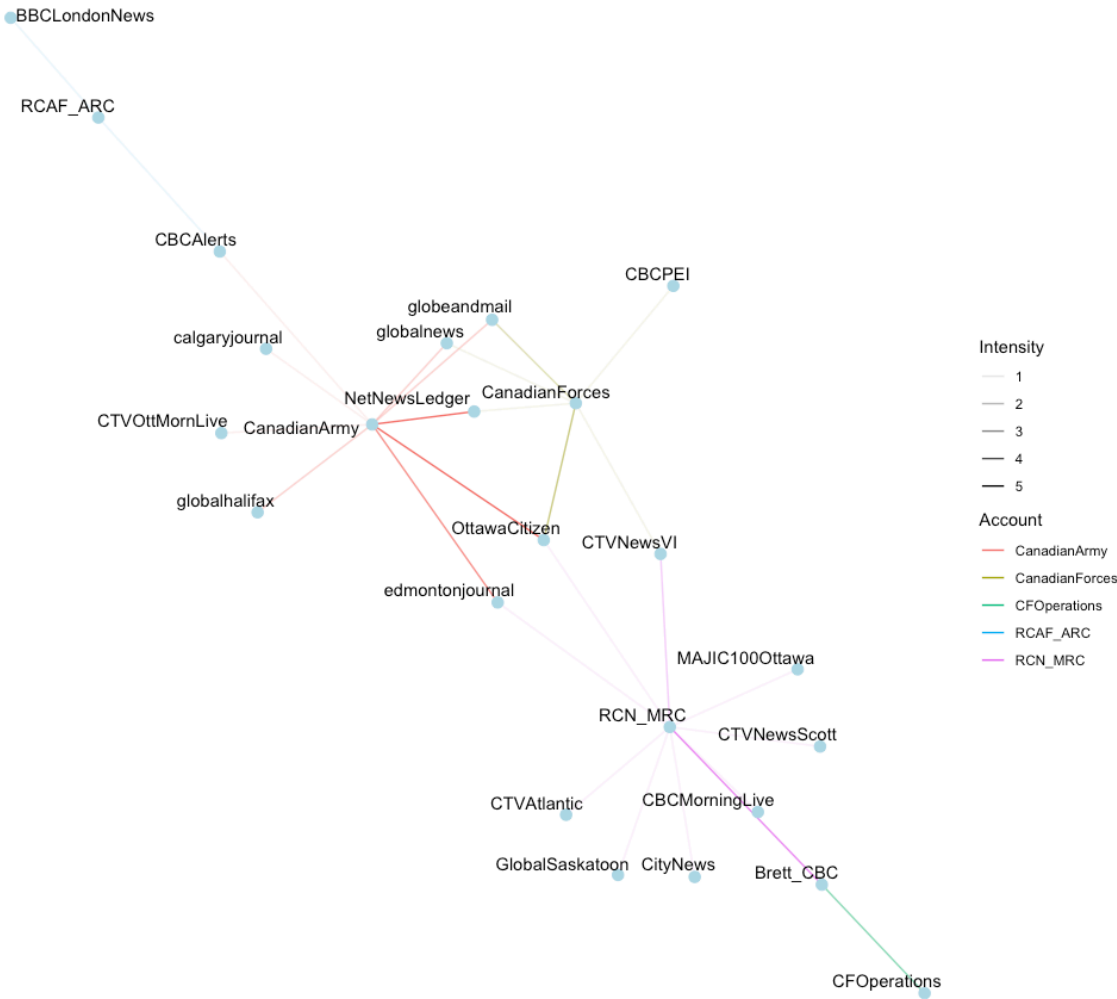
Figure 8—Comparison between retweets from traditional media and from other sources



We also looked at the mentions to traditional media in the tweets of the Armed Forces accounts (Figure 9), so that, as we mentioned in the previous section, we can determine the intensity of the relationships between traditional media accounts and Armed Forces accounts. First, we note that only 20 traditional media accounts are mentioned in Canadian Forces tweets. Moreover, the intensity of the relationships never exceeds 5 mentions, which is very low compared to what we saw in the previous section. The figure also reveals a kind of media preference, with only 6 traditional media accounts mentioned by two Canadian Forces accounts and none of the media accounts mentioned by 3 or more Canadian Forces accounts. The low level of intensity in relationships and the phenomenon of preference (probably linked to a very low number of

mentions, more than to a real preference) once again confirms the indifference of the Canadian Forces accounts towards the accounts of traditional media.

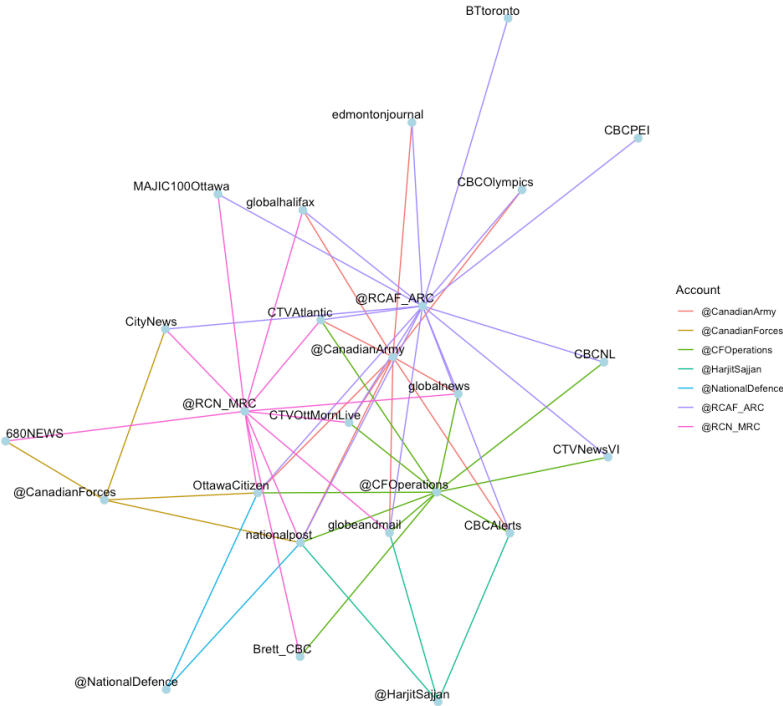
Figure 9—Relation intensity with traditional media based on mentions



We completed the analysis of mention-based relationships by developing a network graph based on mutual followers, as we did in the previous section, but with a focus on traditional media accounts. This analysis presents a very different situation compared to what we have seen so far. Figure 10 paints a picture of much more intertwined relationship between traditional media accounts and Armed Forces accounts. Moreover, the accounts of the traditional media mentioned

in the Armed Forces' tweets are all mutually linked to the Armed Forces' accounts. It is interesting to see such a high convergence between mentions and mutual relations, while the number of retweets and the number of mentions remain very low. This gives the impression that a small number of traditional media follow what the Armed Forces publish and that the Armed Forces follow what some traditional media publish, without either of them finding it interesting to mention or republish the news of those they follow. Again, this confirms the Canadian Armed Forces indifference towards the traditional media. On the other hand, traditional media keeps a healthy distance from public institutions, including the military, as they do not want to perceive as being the mouthpiece of these institutions. Finally, the figure again shows a lack of direct relationships between the Canadian Forces accounts. It seems, once again, that they are linked more through traditional media accounts than directly linked. Despite this indirect connection, we can still observe the centrality of the Canadian Forces' accounts, which was not included in the analysis of the statements. It should be noted that this lack of centrality is most likely due to the very small number mentions for the period studied and does not necessarily reflect a reality. A more detailed analysis of the latter phenomenon will be necessary.

Figure 10—Mutual Relation Between Twitter CAF and traditional media's Accounts



Conclusion

After two centuries of troubled relations with Indigenous nations, the Canadian Armed Forces must now renew its relationship with these communities by promoting Indigenous recruitment and integration in an inclusive and diverse environment (as stated in the new Defence Policy). Far from being the only solution, this renewal still requires a change of discourse and a commitment to Indigenous communities. In this regard, we have already highlighted the contribution of the Junior Ranger and Carcajou programs. Beyond these programs, the digital communications environment also offers new ways of being and acting that can also foster this reconciliation and renewal of relationships between the Canadian Armed Forces and Indigenous peoples. In this research we examined the presence of the Armed Forces in digital space and their media practises, in order to understand whether this was an avenue well used by the Forces to establish links and engage with indigenous communities.

In this regard, by focusing on the practices of the Canadian Forces on the Twitter platform, our exploratory research had two objectives: First, we analyzed how Defence institutions in Canada have incorporated social media tools in their overall communication strategy. Second, we aimed at figuring out the reception these messages received in the public. We mentioned at the beginning that the public is no longer a passive actor who receives the news. On the contrary, new digital media now allow the public to be as much a consumer as a content producer. We argued that this new reality opens the door for government institutions to new practices for engaging and interacting with the public. In other words, new social media platforms, such as Twitter, now offer government institutions the opportunity to engage in dialogue with civil society, rather than in a monologue.

To this end, we reported that the literature on the use of Twitter by government institutions proposes two opposing visions. Initial research (Small, 2012; Etter, 2013) on the subject has shown that government institutions have mainly used Twitter in a one-way relation that simply serves as a means of providing services or transmitting information. These studies were subsequently confirmed, showing that government institutions are reluctant to interact with civil society through Twitter (Wukich and Mergel, 2016) and prefer to use it as another channel to disseminate information to an audience (Waters and Williams, 2011; Riarh and Roy, 2014; Kimmons et al., 2017). However, other authors (O'Connor, 2017; Bélanger, Bali and Longden, 2004) have shown

that, on the contrary, several government institutions were able to establish a dialogue with citizens.

To meet our first objective, we analyzed the tweets from all Canadian Armed Forces Accounts and found that less than 15% of them focus on themes that are Indigenous content-specific. We also found that these tweets are generally related to military exercises or operations. They could also be used to promote programs or military personnel. We also saw that Indigenous communities are the most represented equity group in the tweets of the Canadian Forces' accounts, but that women's tweets received more attention from the public.

Our study then demonstrated, by analyzing several indicators, that in practice, the Armed Forces have few links with other Twitter users and that, on the contrary, these accounts seem to maintain relations between them. The idea that these accounts were established to enter into dialogue with the public must therefore be questioned. They are mainly used to inform the public. We must therefore conclude that the Canadian Armed Forces' practices in Twitter are more a monologue than a dialogue with the communities. This is all the more true with indigenous communities, since our analysis clearly showed their almost complete absence in retweets, mentions and mutual relations links. The approach of Small, Etter, Wukich and Mergel, Waters and Williams, as well as Riarh and Roy, better describes the reality we observe than the approach of O'Connor, Bélanger, Bali and Longden.

The second objective was to understand how these messages were received by the public. We looked at this question from two angles. First, by examining the popularity of Armed Forces tweets by considering their number of likes and retweets. In general, the popularity of these tweets remains modest, although some have become viral. But it should be noted that 13 tweets exceeded the 500 retweets mark during the period under review and 6 exceeded the 3000 likes mark, which is impressive figures for institutional accounts. The popular themes were mostly varied, but women's tweets were very popular, while the Aboriginal tweets were slightly more popular than the average (still the second most popular theme in the Canadian Armed Forces accounts).

Next, we focused on the dialogue between the Canadian Armed Forces' Twitter accounts and traditional media. We have seen complete indifference from both media. More specifically, we found that some traditional media followed the content of the Canadian Armed Forces accounts

and that in turn the Canadian Forces did the same with these accounts of traditional media. But paradoxically, messages of both do not get through to both.

In the introduction we focused on the limitations imposed by the use of data collected using the Twitter API. This did not prevent us from conducting our research and achieving our two objectives. But, as also mentioned in the introduction, this was an exploratory analysis. The observations we have made and the conclusions we draw raise as many questions as they provide answers. Far from being an end in itself, this study opens doors to new research avenues.

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