

# “The Greatest Man-Catcher of All”: The First Female Mounties, the Media, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

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## Article abstract

The arrival of the first female Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers disrupted the highly masculinized image of a police force that was closely connected to ideal Canadian manhood and the formation of the nation. The absence of women from the historical record allowed the figure of the manly and heroic male Mountie to continue its dominance in official, academic, and popular histories of the police force. Both the print and broadcast media were complicit in disseminating these representations. When the first female Mounties were hired in 1974, editorial cartoonists and journalists frequently portrayed them in highly gendered terms that reflected understandings of femininity in operation in broader Canadian society at the time. The RCMP also articulated the arrival of the first female RCMP officers in gendered terms, reinforcing beliefs about manliness and masculinity as essential attributes for police officers. In contrast to these depictions, the oral histories of female RCMP officers present an alternative perspective that challenged and contested these gendered assumptions, establishing female Mounties as equal participants in the policing activities, and the history, of the RCMP on their own terms.

# “The Greatest Man-Catcher of All”: The First Female Mounties, the Media, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police<sup>1</sup>

BONNIE REILLY SCHMIDT

## *Abstract*

*The arrival of the first female Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers disrupted the highly masculinized image of a police force that was closely connected to ideal Canadian manhood and the formation of the nation. The absence of women from the historical record allowed the figure of the manly and heroic male Mountie to continue its dominance in official, academic, and popular histories of the police force. Both the print and broadcast media were complicit in disseminating these representations. When the first female Mounties were hired in 1974, editorial cartoonists and journalists frequently portrayed them in highly gendered terms that reflected understandings of femininity in operation in broader Canadian society at the time. The RCMP also articulated the arrival of the first female RCMP officers in gendered terms, reinforcing beliefs about manliness and masculinity as essential attributes for police officers. In contrast to these depictions, the oral histories of female RCMP officers present an alternative perspective that challenged and contested these gendered assumptions, establishing female Mounties as equal participants in the policing activities, and the history, of the RCMP on their own terms.*

## *Résumé*

*L'arrivée des premières femmes au sein de la Gendarmerie royale du Canada (GRC) a déstabilisé l'image éminemment masculine des forces policières, qui était alors influencée par l'idéal de la masculinité et liée de près au processus de formation de l'État. L'absence de femmes dans les documents officiels a permis à l'image du policier viril et héroïque de s'imposer dans les histoires officielles, scientifiques et populaires de la*

*Gendarmerie. Les médias écrits et audio-visuels ont aussi contribué à la diffusion et la perpétuation de ces représentations. Dans ce contexte, les premières femmes embauchées par la GRC en 1974 ont souvent été représentées de manière très stéréotypée par les journalistes et les caricaturistes, reflétant la vision de la féminité existant alors au sein de la société canadienne. La GRC a par ailleurs aussi présenté l'arrivée des premières femmes dans des termes très « genrés », renforçant l'idée générale que la masculinité et la virilité étaient des attributs essentiels pour les policiers. Allant à l'encontre de ces discours, les histoires racontées par les premières policières de la GRC offrent une interprétation alternative qui conteste les préjugés basés sur le genre. Elles représentent plutôt les policières comme des participantes autonomes et à part entière dans les activités policières et dans l'histoire de la GRC.*

On 17 May 1958, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) aired a 30 minute television special titled “Scarlet Guardians.” The program showcased “modern” Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) recruits undergoing training at the RCMP’s academy in Regina, Saskatchewan, to illustrate how the “average Mountie was made.” The program’s narrator colourfully described the police officers as big, rugged men, “giants,” who were trained in “modern methods of committing mayhem on the human carcass.” These heroic descriptions were accompanied by visual representations staged for the camera. Recruits were featured firing revolvers, boxing, practicing Jujitsu, jogging, and performing calisthenics. When the RCMP recruits were filmed entering the chapel at the academy for Sunday church services, the narrator blended the physical attributes of the recruits with notions of manly respectability, commenting that the RCMP’s training program was designed to establish “a high and common level of values among the minds and muscles of a constant stream of Canadian manhood.” This Cold War-era broadcast assured Canadians that Mounties, as RCMP officers are colloquially known, were God-fearing men, solid citizens with a deep respect for the people they were sworn to protect, and “a special breed of men.”<sup>2</sup>

The CBC’s broadcast followed similar portrayals of Mounties found in official and popular histories written throughout the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> In these highly favourable accounts, concepts of ideal mas-

culinity found expression in the figure of the mounted police officer. The Mountie was often portrayed in heroic terms, as a well-bred gentleman whose actions were tempered by restraint, fairness, morality, loyalty, and pride in his reputation, all of which demanded respect for his authority.<sup>4</sup> The contributions of women as actors in the history of the police force have been overshadowed by this dominant image, despite their participation in the law enforcement activities of the RCMP since the nineteenth century. In the 1890s, women were hired as police matrons by the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP)<sup>5</sup> in response to pressure applied to the federal government by a number of social reform groups, such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, to provide moral protection for women and children incarcerated by the police. But the social and protective custody work performed by middle-class police matrons was considered an extension of women’s private sphere. As a result, their work was not considered “real” police work by male police officers who were focused on investigative work and fighting crime. However, the brief participation of matrons in the policing activities of the NWMP makes them important historical actors during a time when women’s involvement in policing in Canada was perceived to be non-existent. Little archival information about NWMP matrons is accessible to the public, if it exists at all, and there is no evidence to indicate their numbers or where they were posted.<sup>6</sup> We do know, however, that by 1904, the RNWMP determined that matrons would no longer be taken on as part of the police force.<sup>7</sup>

In general, there is minimal historical literature on women in policing in Canada, although a substantial literature exists on women in policing in the United States and Britain.<sup>8</sup> These sources reveal a history complicated by the variety of roles women were initially hired to perform, which varied between police departments and countries. Early in the twentieth century, women’s policing duties were viewed as an extension of women’s traditional role as caregivers and their work as moral reformers. As a result, the social service function performed by women in policing was not considered a threat to the professional work performed by male police officers.<sup>9</sup> Different practices developed regarding whether or not women patrolled city streets, were armed, carried a badge, testified in court, or had powers of arrest, and these

differences make it difficult to ascertain with certainty where and when the first women began police duties. For example, in the United States, matrons worked in jails and some also had powers of arrest and patrolled city streets. Alternatively, some matrons focused solely on the custodial care of women and children. Others were trained social workers who had police powers and made court appearances. Adding to the confusion was the appearance of the “policewoman” during the first decade of the twentieth century, whose work often complemented and sometimes replicated the work of matrons. For instance, the first policewoman in New York City, Mary E. Hamilton, not only concentrated on social work and protective services for women and children, but also on crime prevention.<sup>10</sup> In Britain, women entered policing at the time of World War I, as a result of the moral purity and social hygiene movements. According to Brown and Heidensohn, the “major difference between British and American pioneer women was their attitudes toward uniform with the latter resisting this until the 1960s.”<sup>11</sup> Dorothy Moses Schulz clarifies this discussion by making the distinction that in the United States, while “matrons served an important custodial function, policewomen were viewed as able to prevent crime through social service intervention.”<sup>12</sup> Although the social and protective custody work performed by matrons and policewomen differentiated them from the female police constables who followed later in the century, they nonetheless made a significant contribution to the history of women in policing.

These sources can also be gleaned for information about the history of women in policing in Canada. According to Schulz, by 1915, four Canadian cities had “regular policewomen” who conducted “outside work,” in contrast to the custodial function of matrons.<sup>13</sup> In 1925, Chloe Owings included Canadian statistics in her record of the movement for policewomen in North America. Owings cited Vancouver, British Columbia, as the first Canadian city to hire a woman as a police matron in 1912. By 1925, there were three “women police” in addition to one matron working in the Vancouver police department.<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that Owings does not include the hiring of matrons by the NWMP in the 1890s as part of the movement towards policewomen, a curious omission since she worked to portray matrons as forerunners to illustrate the advances women were

making in the occupation. Perhaps Owings discounted the recently renamed RCMP because they no longer hired women at the time of she wrote in 1925. It is also possible the police force refused to supply her with statistics. Whatever the reason for this omission, the work of the early NWMP matron was disappearing from the historical record. What is clear is that the duties assigned to women in policing relied on gendered understandings of women's role in society rather than definitions of professionalism commonly associated with the real police work performed by male police officers.

While women were making some occupational gains in municipal police departments, the RCMP remained an all-male institution. This is not to say that women were not involved in its policing activities following the termination of the position of matron. Until the 1970s, the Mountie wife filled many of the roles women performed in municipal departments as matrons, policewomen, and civilian support staff. The wives were colloquially referred to as the “unpaid Mountie” or the “second man” because of the work they did for the RCMP, particularly in remote postings and in small detachments. Their work included feeding prisoners, cleaning detachment offices and cells (which were usually attached to their living quarters), transporting female prisoners, matron duties, administering driver's licenses, taking telephone messages, and monitoring transmissions on the police radio. Mounties' wives were expected by their husbands' commanding officers to voluntarily perform these duties with little or no pay. This unwritten rule helped the RCMP to police vast expanses of territory at a minimal cost throughout much of the twentieth century. Sergeant B.F. Nowell, writing in the *RCMP Quarterly* in 1975, acknowledged that Mounties' wives “contribution to our history, and often to our success, is greatly underestimated — and to a large segment of society, unknown.”<sup>15</sup> Several Mounties' wives, however, published books about their RCMP experiences.<sup>16</sup> Although these memoirs and biographical materials are largely anecdotal, they fill a significant gap in the history of women's involvement with the policing activities of the RCMP.<sup>17</sup> The absence of the “unpaid Mountie” from almost all official and academic histories, like that of the matron, relegated her to the margins of RCMP history, allowing the image of the heroic Mountie and his masculinity to dominate.

The highly masculinized image of the RCMP found in popular, academic, and official histories, and the absence of women from many of these accounts, situates policing as a highly gendered occupation. Conducting oral history fieldwork was one solution to the dearth of information about women in policing in Canada, in general, and in the RCMP, in particular, and to the problem of the inaccessibility of RCMP records to researchers. The women interviewed for this research were eager to tell their history and recognized that Canadians, generally, were unaware of the contributions women have made to the occupation. From a research perspective, their oral histories were essential in identifying and understanding if and how women resisted or contested any barriers to their work. As Pamela Sugiman illustrates in her work on silence and telling in oral history, their shared experiences moved from a “silence of the past” to “outspoken activity and the public preservation of stories through the written and officially spoken word.”<sup>18</sup> The active telling of the untold stories of the women of the RCMP is both an individual and collective response to the absence of women as historical actors in the history of the police force. Once word of this research project spread, additional names of women (and men) who joined or worked in the RCMP between 1974 and 1990, the years under study, surfaced.

The interviews were conducted between 2007 and 2011 and represent policing in every province and territory across Canada except Prince Edward Island. In total, 42 individuals participated in the study.<sup>19</sup> Twenty interviews were conducted with female Mounties (serving and retired), six of whom served in the first troop of women hired in 1974. Each of the interviewees was provided with the same set of questions in advance of the interview, which was recorded and later transcribed. Questions about their training, their perceptions of policing, the image of the RCMP, instances of harassment and discrimination (if any), physical and emotional stress, fear, promotion, family background, maternity leave, the receptivity of the public, the communities they policed, and what they enjoyed most about the work formed the basis of the interviews. All interviews were open-ended and participants were given the opportunity to deviate from the questions at any time and explore themes they wished to emphasize. The advantage of this approach is outlined in Valerie Yow’s

analysis of oral history methodology. Yow maintains that the advantage of using qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) methodology is that the historian is “open to observing the informants’ choice of topics. In this way the researcher learns new things not in the original hypothesis ... of finding something outside the researcher’s thinking.”<sup>20</sup> In the case of this research, the comments made by the female police officers revealed that women were interested in defining themselves as police officers on their own terms. As will be seen, they resisted being confined to masculine definitions of effective policing, a finding not part of the original thesis.

The personal testimonies of the women and men interviewed for this study form one part of the historical narrative about the RCMP and should be read in conjunction with existing histories and media sources. Occasionally, these two facets coalesced during the course of research. For example, some of the newspaper articles examined in this study were uncovered as a result of the oral history interviews. In particular, two of the first women to join the RCMP in 1974 kept scrapbooks of newspaper clippings featuring the media’s coverage of their hiring and training. Many media sources explored here, however, were located as a result of archival research and were selected based on the way they represented gender.<sup>21</sup> The editorial cartoons discussed below were chosen not only for their focus on female Mounties, but also because they conveyed ideas of appropriate femininity. Given that all social relations are gendered,<sup>22</sup> and that masculinity and femininity “acquire meaning in relation to one another,”<sup>23</sup> and given that the Mountie was a national icon, the female Mountie represented a disruption to notions of ideal femininity and masculinity in Canadian society. The print and broadcast media, also a highly gendered occupation in the 1970s, actively resisted the shifts in power relations between men and women that were taking place. As purveyors of gendered ideals to the Canadian public, the media’s editorial and journalistic coverage influenced the public’s understanding of female Mounties long before the women left the training academy. Ideas of a universal, fixed, and biological identity for all women conveyed by the media were contested by the women in the RCMP who challenged the gendered nature of police authority. As a result, the introduction of women into the ranks of the



mounted police in 1974 met with considerable resistance both inside and outside the police force.

Gendered discourses, and their reliance on notions of biological difference, are contested by what the women themselves remember of their experiences. That women were largely absent from historical accounts of the police force allowed for the creation of an interpretative space that was subsequently shaped by the journalistic record and the RCMP itself, institutions that relied on dominant perceptions of gender when articulating women's role as police officers. Heroic discourses of masculinity that linked the police force with ideal Canadian manhood and the founding of the nation were disrupted by the presence of female Mounties, who quickly came to represent the challenge being posed in broader Canadian society as gendered norms were being contested. Interviewing the first female cohort of Mounties complicates the narrative recorded in popular print, allowing for the emergence of an alternative perspective of women as police officers. Comparing the two reveals that once female RCMP officers began work in the field their success as police officers called into question the validity of the idea of manliness and physicality as absolute necessities for effective policing. In the process, female Mounties began re-negotiating a definition of police officer as other than the narrow identity conveyed by the media and by the RCMP itself.

Canadian policing has had a long relationship with the media. Months after the NWMP was formed in 1873, its first commissioner George Arthur French made strategic use of the media to cultivate positive public opinion about the new force. French invited journalist Henri Julien from *The Canadian Illustrated News* to accompany the NWMP on their march west.<sup>24</sup> French was cognizant of the fact that the "parsimonious prime minister," Alexander Mackenzie, was interested in disbanding the body that had been the brainchild of his Conservative predecessor, Sir John A. Macdonald, who had only recently resigned.<sup>25</sup> French's tactic proved successful; Julien's articles and illustrations of the NWMP's arduous journey to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains quickly captured the imagination of the public.

Journalists, intent on capitalizing on growing public interest in the police force, began to write stories about the adventures of the

NWMP. As Rob Mawby argues in his study of police and the media in Britain, the media has always played a role in mystifying the police service and investing it with a “symbolic status” based on history and tradition.<sup>26</sup> This was particularly true of the nineteenth-century Mountie, who quickly assumed a central role in discourses that linked the NWMP with the settlement of the Canadian West. American journalist John Healey, the editor of the *Fort Benton Record*, reported in 1877 that a squad of Mounties had crossed the American border to arrest a band of ruthless whiskey traders in Montana. He noted that they were “worse than bloodhounds when they scent the track of a smuggler and they fetch their men every time.”<sup>27</sup> Healey’s idea that Mounties always get their man invested them with heroic attributes that elevated their exploits to legendary status. By 1897, the image of the Mountie who always gets his man had so captured public imagination that when a small contingent of NWMP officers made their international debut in London, England, for Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations, they created a sensation among the crowds viewing the procession. Riding on horseback and dressed in red serge tunics, white gauntlets, knee-high boots, and the new Stetson hat, they symbolized the romance, dash, and adventure of the queen’s empire according to one official RCMP history.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century, this image attracted movie producers, novelists, and manufacturers who also capitalized on the public’s interest in the police force.<sup>29</sup> The popular appeal of the Mountie is evidenced by the production of more than 250 Hollywood movies where the hero on horseback appeared as the central character.<sup>30</sup> Historical accuracy was often compromised and fact was often blurred with fiction in the interests of generating broad commercial appeal. It was the commodification of the RCMP’s image by the Northwest Paper Company in Minnesota, however, that best illustrates the gendered and racialized nature of these representations. Michael Dawson points out that since the inception of the police force in 1873, the Mountie image “has been used by Canadians and non-Canadians alike” for commercial purposes.<sup>31</sup> Long before the Disney corporation in America gained the rights to the Mountie image in 1995, the Northwest Paper Company used the image to sell its paper products. Between 1931 and 1970, the company hired commercial

artists to create a series of Mountie illustrations for use in advertisements. The paintings of Arnold Friberg in particular, who worked on the project for 33 years, depicted Mounties in conventionally masculine spaces out of doors and engaged in overcoming the barren landscape. Friberg's Mounties were white, square-jawed, tall, broad-shouldered, and ruggedly handsome, and were often portrayed as solitary and self-sufficient men. They solved crime and forged peaceful relationships with the native population. They were usually in the company of a dog or a horse, and were never depicted with a white woman.<sup>32</sup> Friberg's artwork positioned the RCMP as a site where definitions of white masculinity were reinforced and reproduced, a site where the absence of women in the settlement of the Canadian West was presumed.<sup>33</sup> They also illustrated how the commodification of the heroic image of the Mountie positioned the RCMP officer as the living embodiment of a state that was manly, white, and authoritative. These values remained an integral part of RCMP culture at the time the first women were hired in 1974. Indeed, the RCMP's centennial celebrations in 1973 were designed to bridge the past to the present by conveying "elements of the old myth — honour, manliness, duty — without the storybook romanticism or the imperial fervor that had once given those images an anti-modern meaning."<sup>34</sup>

Despite changes to the RCMP's official hiring policies and the federal government's employment equity legislation, police culture was not easily changed. Beliefs about the necessity of physical height and strength persisted as the normative standard for all police officers. Physicality and the threat of physical violence, conveyed by the size of the male police body, were considered essential elements of effective policing.<sup>35</sup> The RCMP was not alone in its highly masculinized approach to policing and it was characteristic of many, if not all, police agencies in western liberal democratic societies.<sup>36</sup> In numerous studies of female police officers in North America and Europe conducted by a number of researchers across a variety of disciplines since the 1970s, a lack of physical size and strength was consistently cited by male police officers as the primary reason why women should be excluded from the occupation.<sup>37</sup>

Arguments about the necessity for physical strength were used to justify the exclusion of women from a number of male-dominated

occupations in Canada in the 1970s. The research of Meg Luxton and June Corman, in particular, illustrates how employers attempted to exclude women based on their perceived inability to meet the physical requirements of the job. In 1979, the United Steelworkers of America Local 1005 supported five women who filed a discrimination complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission against the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco) located in Hamilton, Ontario. The women cited discriminatory hiring practices by the employer who had denied jobs to women applying for production work at the company's Hilton Works plant. The women won their human rights challenge and Stelco was forced to hire them for industrial production jobs.<sup>38</sup>

In a retaliatory effort to force the women to resign, Stelco assigned the women to some of the roughest jobs in the plant, such as the coke ovens and the blast furnaces. It was a strategy that was based on the belief that women were unable to perform physically demanding work, despite the fact that women worked in these positions at the plant during World War II.<sup>39</sup> As Luxton and Corman explain, “It was impossible for the women simply to be workers. They were always women first, women working in a male workplace.”<sup>40</sup> The ideology of the male as a sole breadwinner privileged the male worker and justified the division of labour at the plant. The steel manufacturing industry was not the only male-dominated occupation to resist the entrance of women. The automobile industry and many construction trades resisted integrating women in the 1970s, many resorting to harassment and some to violence against women workers to force them out of the occupation.<sup>41</sup>

The Canadian armed forces also resisted the full integration of women into its rank-and-file in the postwar period. Although the Canadian media appeared to support the recruitment of women into the armed forces during World War II, there was, according to Ruth Roach Pierson, a “deep ambivalence toward women's joining the armed forces” underlying these accounts. Women's work in war industries was viewed as a temporary measure and the media frequently commented that “joining the forces changed nothing in women's nature and place in Canadian society.”<sup>42</sup> In the decades that followed, women were barred from access to all occupations within the

military. Their exclusion from combat duties, in particular, was based on the argument that women posed a threat to the safety of their fellow soldiers because of their inability to meet the physical demands of combat. This perceived lack of physical strength was a threat to the cohesion of combat units on the battlefield, a highly gendered space considered the heart of military activity and a soldier's masculine identity.<sup>43</sup>

The RCMP's resistance to hiring women was complicated by a number of internal and external pressures being exerted on the police force to reform its exclusionary hiring practices. Internally, there was considerable pressure to meet its contractual obligations with several provinces. At the same time, there was a shortage of police officers to "fulfill growing demands on the force to provide police service to more municipalities."<sup>44</sup> As well, a number of allegations about illicit RCMP activities against Canadian citizens emerged throughout the 1970s, leading to several public enquiries and royal commissions that tarnished the police force's image which it was anxious to repair.<sup>45</sup> There was also a considerable amount of labour unrest. In the spring of 1974, thousands of RCMP officers met in major centres across the country to discuss the possibility of forming a union, even though the members of the RCMP were governed by Order-in-Council PC 2213 (7 October 1918) that prohibited them from forming or joining a union.<sup>46</sup> Despite the prohibition, the rank-and-file continued to agitate for change. Transfer policies, discipline, poor pay, a paramilitary system of operation, and no compensation for overtime worked were the key issues. The fight for unionization, as shall be seen, played an important role in the RCMP's decision to hire women.

Additionally, the RCMP experienced external pressure as municipal police departments began to hire women as constables on an equal basis with male officers.<sup>47</sup> Like many of their American and British counterparts, several municipal departments began to experiment with assigning women to traffic and patrol duties in the 1960s, a significant departure from the protective custody and social work performed by matrons and policewomen. When the move proved to be successful many transitioned their serving policewomen to the rank of police constable, phasing out the rank of policewoman entirely. In the United States, an active movement to expand the role

of women in policing began in the 1950s. The movement was aided in 1972 by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which began enforcing laws against government institutions whose hiring policies discriminated against women and minorities.<sup>48</sup> In Canada, Saanich, British Columbia, was the first community to hire a woman as a constable. Claudia Winter Morrison was hired in 1973, replacing a policewoman who chose to resign rather than transition.<sup>49</sup> Morrison performed the exact duties as male police officers, received the same pay and benefits, and joined the police union. In Saint John, New Brunswick, Bernadette Zigante was hired as a policewoman in 1962, but she, along with three other policewomen, transitioned to the rank of constable when the police department hired its first female constables from the Atlantic Police Academy in 1974.<sup>50</sup>

In the 1960s, the federal government in Canada faced pressure from a number of groups and individuals to enact legislation aimed at ensuring gender equality in Canadian society. The government faced growing criticism for its failure to reform hiring policies within its own institutions, such as the RCMP and the armed forces, to meet its UN obligations concerning the rights of women.<sup>51</sup> Canada's reluctance to honour its international commitments led to growing demands for a royal commission to investigate the status of women in Canada. By the late 1960s, a number of Canadian women and their organizations became acutely “disturbed and concerned by the increasing prejudices found in every facet of our society against women's full participation in the political, economic and professional life of this country.”<sup>52</sup> On 3 February 1967, the prime minister announced in Parliament that the government had decided to establish the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (RCSW) to investigate the status of women in Canadian society.<sup>53</sup>

In 1968, the seven commissioners visited 14 cities across Canada where they held a number of public hearings, received 468 briefs, 1,000 letters, and heard from 890 witnesses.<sup>54</sup> In their final report published in 1970, the commissioners made 167 recommendations.<sup>55</sup> Six of these recommendations specifically applied to the Canadian military, including the opening up of all trades to women, the enlistment of married women, and the admittance of women to the military college.<sup>56</sup> In response, the Canadian Forces Defense

Council opened up all military roles to women except primary combat roles. Real change in the military came slowly, however. By 1978, women were employed in just 81 of 127 classifications and trades, but combat positions remained a male preserve.<sup>57</sup> It was not until 1988, following a discrimination complaint, that a Canadian Human Rights tribunal ordered the armed forces to fully integrate women into regular and reserve forces, including in combat roles. The following year, Private Heather Erxleben became Canada's first regular force infantry soldier.<sup>58</sup>

In response to the publication of the commission's final report, John Collins published an editorial cartoon in *The Gazette* (Montréal) in December 1970. The cartoon, titled "Sorry Gals — Here's One Time You Don't Have the Last Word," was a collage of figures including a female RCMP officer and a female member of the armed forces in a tank. The RCMP officer wears boots and a miniskirt along with her Stetson, and comments, "Boots are the in thing" in a balloon caption. The armed forces officer pokes her head outside the tank's hatch and applies lipstick. She wears a helmet with flowers attached to it. The tank is decorated with flowers and a sign announcing "Woman Driver" hangs from the gun barrel. The collage includes several comments about women's changing role in Canadian society and is depicted as the dream of a male law-maker who has fallen asleep while reading the RCSW's report. This representation conveyed the idea that women were incapable of assuming professional roles deemed masculine due to limitations inherent to them being women.<sup>59</sup> According to Collins, and by corollary *The Gazette*, professionalism was more than the acquisition of specific skills. His drawing also implied that masculinity was the normative standard that women were unable to live up to, especially when defending the country or enforcing its laws.

Although the response to this specific cartoon by the media is not known, it is known from the "Final Report" of the RCSW that some Canadians objected to the media's portrayals of women. The commission received 30 briefs protesting against the stereotypes of women perpetuated by the mass media. These briefs objected to the "degrading, moronic picture of woman ... being shown as fragile, without depth or reality, and obsessed by her desire to please mascu-

“THE GREATEST MAN-CATCHER OF ALL”: THE FIRST FEMALE MOUNTIES,  
THE MEDIA, AND THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE



“SORRY GALS - HERE’S ONE TIME YOU DON’T HAVE THE LAST WORD.”

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line hero-figures as artificial as herself.” Further, a study commissioned by the RCSW revealed that 89 percent of women depicted in newspapers and magazines were under 35 years of age and were “hardly ever associated with intelligence, sincerity, culture, originality



or talent.”<sup>60</sup> We also know that members of the RCMP participated in portraying women in hyper-sexualized and stereotypical ways through cartoons, as the example of Frank Spalding, below, illustrates.

The commission’s final report singled out the RCMP in two of its recommendations. The first concerned the RCMP’s pension fund: “We recommend that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act be amended so that its provisions will be the same for both female and male contributors.” The second concerned the employment of women as police officers: “We recommend that enlistment in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police be open to women.”<sup>61</sup> The commissioners noted that although women were “common in municipal police forces,” the RCMP “remained strictly a male preserve,”<sup>62</sup> an indication that pressure was being exerted on the RCMP by the municipal example. However, when questioned later by journalists about the impetus behind the RCMP’s decision to hire women as police officers, commanding officers insisted that the RCMP did not bow to external pressure. Superintendent William MacRae, the training officer at the RCMP’s academy in Regina, stated that he was “gratified no one pressured the RCMP into recruiting women. It was a timely thing and the RCMP simply realized there is a definite place for women within the force.”<sup>63</sup> He maintained, “[T]he initiation of women into the force is no bow to the age we live in and no fulfillment of any stereotype ... it is simply an evolutionary process.”<sup>64</sup> MacRae’s refusal to acknowledge external influences suggests that the RCMP was intent on defining the inclusion of women on their own terms, demonstrating that men remained firmly in control of the police force despite employment equity legislation.

MacRae was not alone among his fellow officers in fielding journalists’ queries on the subject. In an interview with the *Vancouver Sun*, Inspector J. Poirier maintained that the RCMP “changed the regulations because it was leaving out a large segment of the population that would make excellent recruits,” suggesting that the shortage of manpower was a concern.<sup>65</sup> One high-ranking senior officer, interviewed decades later for this research, maintained that discussions concerning the hiring of women were neither the result of the findings of the RCSW nor due to political pressure faced by the force

from the federal government. Rather, he remembered the decision to hire female Mounties as being made in conjunction with broader discussions concerning internal problems within the force at the time.<sup>66</sup>

Contrary to his position, some of the first women who were hired certainly were of the belief, in hindsight, that the findings of RCSW influenced the RCMP's decision. The difference in perceptions regarding the impact of external pressures on the RCMP suggests that the police force wished to reinforce its position as an independent agency that was above political interference. However, the findings of the RCSW and political pressure were not the only influences on the RCMP's final decision to hire women. Issues such as the rank-and-file's fight for unionization, along with a desire to improve the image of the force, must also be considered as contributing factors. Following the release of the commission's final report, resistance to the idea of women joining a paramilitary organization like the RCMP intensified in the press. The idea of a permanent hiring policy that would see women as RCMP officers with full police powers threatened gendered understandings of a woman's supposed proper role in society. Consequently, the RCSW emerged as a site of resistance in debates over women's rights and the media played a central role in challenging its findings and recommendations.<sup>67</sup> As Barbara Freeman explains:

The media are among the main transmitters of information about what is allowable behavior for women. In the case of the Commission, the hearings were the result of female pressure on a gendered political system that was dominated by male politicians and civil servants. The witnesses to that struggle were journalists, who operated within a media culture which was also gendered. That is, male journalists and their views predominated in most newspapers, magazines and broadcast media.<sup>68</sup>

Proposed changes in women's status in society were contested by editorial cartoonists who sometimes relied on the trope of the female Mountie to express their resistance. In the United States decades earlier, editorial cartoonists rendered female police officers comic substitutes for male officers by depicting them as butch — physically

large, unattractive, muscular, and dressed in unfeminine clothing.<sup>69</sup> Such representations, as Brown and Heidensohn point out, worked to “defeminize policewomen in order to justify their exclusion from policing.”<sup>70</sup> By the 1970s, however, Canadian editorial cartoonists did the opposite — focusing on a hyper-sexualized female police body to question the ability of women to function effectively as police officers. In several drawings from the period, female Mounties were depicted as highly sexual, overtly buxom, curvaceous, and usually wearing a tight uniform that could not contain their bodies. These graphic codes of shaming, as Bruce Retallack refers to them, were rooted in real cultural practices and were often applied to representations of gender.<sup>71</sup> Further, hyper-sexual renderings reminded viewers that female sexuality and aggression were a moral threat to heterosexual men and needed regulation.<sup>72</sup> Ironically, it was the belief that female sexuality need to be controlled that resulted in the hiring of the first matrons and policewomen in Britain, Canada, and the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>73</sup>

In 1970, editorial cartoonist Edd Uluschak of the *Edmonton Journal* offered a highly sexualized portrayal of a female Mountie to critique the recommendations of the RCSW, specifically the recommendation that the enlistment of the RCMP be open to women. In the drawing, three female Mounties are standing before a desk sergeant who is reading a newspaper with the headline “Equality for Women in Every Field of Public and Private Life.” The buxom women are dressed in tight and ill-fitting RCMP uniforms. A button on one woman’s tunic is popping off. A male officer standing nearby remarks to the sergeant, “With a motto like ‘We always get our man’ recruiting is no problem!” In the background another male officer is thinking “The Musical Ride — side-saddle!”<sup>74</sup> Uluschak uses the famous saying about the Mounties as double or triple entendre to suggest that the sexual attractiveness of female Mounties would facilitate the easy recruitment of men. It could also be interpreted to mean that women would join the police force in order to find a Mountie husband. The perceived inability of women’s bodies to be contained in the RCMP’s traditional red serge uniform, signified by the popping button, suggested that they were unable to fill the iconic

role of Mountie by virtue of their biology. Uluschak’s sexualized portrayals of female Mounties contrasted sharply with Friberg’s images of the male Mountie as strong, heroic, physically imposing, and in control of his sexuality. The sexually suggestive nature of Uluschak’s cartoon is indicative of the degree to which some male journalists equated biological difference with inequality, and therefore subordination, in discourses about women in the RCMP.

References to the idea of a woman riding side-saddle in the Musical Ride, the police force’s internationally-known equestrian display, threatened the historical and masculine foundations of the police force. Given the RCMP’s new employment equity policy, the idea that women could apply to become members of the Musical Ride was a real possibility.<sup>75</sup> In fact, when one member of the first female troop was asked by a journalist if she would consider joining the Musical Ride, she enthusiastically responded, “Oh, yes! We’d try anything, even if we get all sorts of jokes about having to ride side-saddle.”<sup>76</sup> The first two women to be posted to the RCMP’s Musical Ride in 1981, Chris Mackie and Joan Merk, found it to be no joking matter. The women were in no way prepared for the level of resentment they experienced. One member of the public called the presence of the women on the Ride “a disgrace” during a performance, according to one journalist, commenting that the RCMP should not have let women “in.”<sup>77</sup> Male members of the ride also resented the participation of female colleagues. Their resistance often took the form of criticism and innuendo. For example, Joan Merk’s riding ability, the way she wore her uniform, and the way she carried out her stable duties were frequently criticized. According to Mackie, “the men were constantly testing us. We had to prove ourselves over and over again.”<sup>78</sup> Policing was not the only male-dominated occupation where women were tested. Other occupations, notably the military, resisted the full integration of women through harassment, the use of profanity, or hazing rituals.<sup>79</sup>

Uluschak used a caricature of a female Mountie in a second cartoon following the swearing in of the first female RCMP officers. On 26 September 1974, the *Edmonton Journal* published a drawing of a bank robber being apprehended by a female Mountie. Caught in the act, the bank robber quips, “What’s a nice girl like you doing in a

place like this?” Again, the woman is curvaceous, buxom, and dressed in a tight uniform that barely contains her body. Her hands are on her hips and she looks angrily at the bank robber. She wears spurs on her boots and a worm on the sidewalk thinks: “Cookie-cutters?” as it examines the spurs. In a nearby police cruiser, with “RCMPersons” painted on the side, a second female officer applies lipstick in the rear-view mirror.<sup>80</sup> By associating female Mounties with conventionally feminine props, such as lipstick and cookie cutters, even in the midst of fighting crime, Uluschak’s gendered portrayals expressed his considerable anxiety over the disruption to women’s conventional roles in society. By exaggerating the physical characteristics of female police officers, Uluschak conveyed the belief that women were unsuited to police work.

Within the RCMP, skepticism about the hiring of women and their ability to effectively perform police duties was widespread. Caricatures of female Mounties similar to those of Collins and Uluschak also focused on biological difference as an expression of male resistance to the possibility of women as constables. In 1972, two years prior to the change in its hiring policy, retired assistant commissioner Frank Spalding published a book of cartoons about life in the RCMP. Two cartoons featured female Mounties who were, yet again, buxom, curvaceous, and wearing tight uniforms — particularly short miniskirts that barely covered their hips. The first depicted two male Mounties eyeing a female officer who looks flirtatiously back at them. The caption is a conversation between the sergeant and the young male constable:

Sergeant: “Holy Walrus tusks — now I’d say that Ottawa has *really* produced a first class government issue.”

Young Constable: “Take it easy Sarge, she might be a member of *Women’s Lib* — anyway you’ve just re-mustered for three *more* years of northern service!”

Spalding introduced this drawing, titled “Sex and the Single Mountie?,” with the following commentary:

As far back as twenty years ago, the concept of a uniformed Women’s Division of the Force was discussed. So it is not new in spite of recent press reports. Here I have dreamed up what might be considered a really snappy uniform for the future Royal Canadian Mounted Women. In this dream, we see a veteran sergeant getting his first look at the new “rookie” while visiting the barracks square in Regina.<sup>81</sup>

Spalding’s cartoon and his accompanying comments reduced female police officers to biological formulations and his depictions were similar to those of the editorial cartoonists discussed above. This similarity lends credence to the objections expressed to the RCSW regarding the media’s portrayals of women as moronic. Clearly, these portrayals were very much a part of the broader discourse taking place about women’s rights in Canada at the time. The caution that the woman in the cartoon “might be a member of *Women’s Lib*” signified the uneasiness with which some Canadian men approached the shifts in understandings of gender that were taking place. The focus on the disruption to the masculine image of the RCMP, symbolized by the apparent necessity of developing an alternative uniform to contain a highly sexualized female body, reflects the importance of this iconic Canadian symbol to members of the police force. More importantly, Spalding’s drawing tellingly reveals that some senior officers conceived of female Mounties in sexual ways rather than as full equals. Carole Pateman argues that the female body is part of the sexual contract in liberal western societies, a contract that privileges male demands that “women’s bodies in the flesh and in representation should be publicly available to them.”<sup>82</sup> Spalding’s representations, as well as those of Uluschak and Collins, underscore how understandings of the female body remained closely tied to assumptions of sexual availability to men, assumptions that were invoked as a reminder of women’s subordinate role in society even as they prepared to be hired by the police force.

In contrast to these representations, the oral histories collected for this study reveal that women were more than able to meet the physical demands of police work. Several of the women credited the RCMP’s self-defense training as giving them the confidence to effectively subdue and restrain suspects, especially men. Louise Ferguson

was fresh out of the academy in Regina and posted to a small detachment in British Columbia when she responded to a call about a fight in town. The male suspect, intoxicated and fighting with a number of people, was highly combative. Ferguson remembered that her training in arrest methods immediately took over and she easily arrested the man by subduing him with a choke hold. By the time her back-up arrived, she was “putting the cuffs on him and putting him in the car.” Word soon spread around the detachment and the town that she had been in a huge fight and had single-handedly arrested “a big logger.”<sup>83</sup>

Margaret Watson, who “didn’t shy away from fights,” remembered being called to assist in the transfer of a mentally ill woman to a local institution. The woman ripped Watson’s shirt off and dragged her down a flight of stairs before Watson was able to physically restrain her.<sup>84</sup> Shelly Evans recalled attempting to arrest an impaired driver outside a bar in a small prairie town one night. The young man, in an effort to resist arrest and flee the scene, engaged Evans in a struggle and attempted to strangle her on the side of the road. Fearing for her life and unable to reach her revolver during the scuffle, Evans managed to contain the man and prevent him from strangling her until her back-up arrived to help her with the arrest. Evans suffered a broken hand during the altercation which required surgery and a hospital stay.<sup>85</sup> These events were still years in the future and gendered discourses about appropriate femininity and assumptions about female weakness persisted in the print media as reasons to exclude women from the RCMP.

When Commissioner Maurice Nadon announced on 24 May 1974 that the RCMP would accept applications from women for the first time, few Canadians, including members of the RCMP, could envision women as Mounties. Nevertheless, the RCMP turned to the mass media to convey the news to Canadians about the changes to its hiring policy.<sup>86</sup> Many of the first applicants heard the news through media reports. Twenty-three year old Louise Ferguson, a recent graduate of teacher’s college, was driving to work at 8:30 in the morning when she heard the announcement on her car radio. She immediately drove to the nearest detachment where she asked a young constable at the desk for an application form. Unaware of the RCMP’s announce-

ment, the constable asked his sergeant if it was true and what should he do? The sergeant, having also just heard the news on the radio said, “Give her an application.” Ferguson’s recollection that both men were “dumbfounded” by her request,<sup>87</sup> suggests that the rank-and-file learned of the policy change along with the general public.

On 16 September 1974, 32 women from every province in Canada (except Prince Edward Island) were sworn in as the first female members of the RCMP. They were collectively known as Troop 17. The commissioner directed that the swearing-in ceremonies take place at exactly the same time across the country. It was a special consideration not normally afforded male recruits. The RCMP emphasized to the media that their intention was to transfer the pressure of being the “first” onto a group of women rather than an individual.<sup>88</sup> Commanding officers who were interviewed for this research maintained that their intent was to protect the women and ensure their success.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, it was a paternalistic approach that reflected the way gender was understood in Canadian society in the 1970s.

Such tight control indicates how keen the force was to dictate the terms of the media’s coverage of the swearing-in ceremonies. Police departments have always been actively engaged in constructing their image and in producing the social meanings of policing through representations in the media.<sup>90</sup> High-ranking officers presided over each swearing-in ceremony, an uncommon occurrence that marked the arrival of women as a special occasion. Although it can be argued that the presence of high-ranking officers was not unusual given the paramilitary structure of the RCMP, their presence does suggest that the police force was cognizant of the positive public relations value the engagement of women represented. In Toronto, the CBC broadcast the ceremony live from the RCMP’s divisional headquarters under the watchful eye of assistant commissioner E.R. Lysyk. The opening segment of the recording captured a soft-spoken and nervous Heather-Ann Mary Phyllis stumbling over the words of the oath. Reporter Bob Johnstone covered the event for radio listeners:

Maybe from now on, Sergeant Preston will have more companionship than just a half-dozen dogs when he’s out on patrol. The



Royal Canadian Mounted Police today took a big step, one that will certainly change the image of the force. The force that always gets its man now has women — thirty-two of them. In simultaneous swearing-in ceremonies all across Canada, the first women joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police today .... At least on paper, the women Mounties are the same as the men. They'll wear roughly the same uniform except they'll have their choice of slacks or skirt. They'll get the same pay and be subject to the same regulations. The principle difference is that they'll carry their revolvers in shoulder-strap handbags instead of holsters.<sup>91</sup>

Johnstone's invocation of the solitary sergeant patrolling with his dogs was not only reminiscent of a Friberg painting, but his reworking of Healey's famous motto reminded listeners of nineteenth-century heroic images long associated with the police force. His allusion to Sergeant Preston of the Yukon (a Mountie comic book hero from the 1950s) suggested that a female police officer would likely fill the role of companion to the lonely male Mountie rather than serve as a figure of civic authority. The idea that female Mounties were the same as men "at least on paper," implied that although they received the same pay as men, women were not truly equal, as evidenced by their need for a handbag for their revolver. In this case, the purse, as a symbol of femininity, signified difference from the RCMP's normative male standard.

Other journalists relied on Healey's motto to illustrate the disruption to the image of the police force. *The Toronto Star* announced, "It's taken more than 100 years, but the Mounties have finally got their women."<sup>92</sup> In March 1975, Colleen Slater-Smith of the *Regina Leader-Post* wrote, "After 102 years of successfully catching their man, the RCMP have burst into a new century by hiring the greatest man-catcher of all — and during International Women's Year no less."<sup>93</sup> Slater-Smith's comment in particular, leads to questions about how female members of the media reported on the first women in the RCMP. As her reference to man-catchers suggests, female journalists were not unlike their male counterparts in focusing on conventional meanings of masculinity and femininity in their analysis of what the arrival of women meant to the image of the RCMP.

Media coverage of the women being sworn in across the country was extensive. In Alberta, Carol Franklin was sworn in with two other women. They were required to perform the signing ceremony three times for photographers eager to capture the moment, suggesting the degree to which the RCMP accommodated the media. However, Franklin’s oral history offers an alternative perspective not found in the journalistic record or official RCMP histories. At the time of the swearing-in, Franklin did not realize that she was enlisting for five years. She recalled:

Nobody told us we were signing up for five years. I recall the shock, my God, five years, that’s a long time. Nobody had prewarned us, or if they had we weren’t listening. And you’ve got media there, and they’re setting it up, the swearing-in, so that the media can capture it .... And then signing on that dotted line and seeing that you’re swearing for five years and whatever, and my troop mate and I we still laugh about it ... her and I were feeling we’re not going to sign this for five years but the media was there. How can we not sign? So it was a bit of a shock for five years.<sup>94</sup>

Franklin had serious misgivings about the length of time but assumed she was not allowed to question the requirement in front of the media. Her oral history reveals that she was both intimidated by the presence of journalists and naïve about her commitment on that day.

As the RCMP prepared for the arrival of the women at the training academy, or Depot as the academy was also known, several journalists toured the barracks to report on the renovations taking place there. They documented the removal of urinals and group showers, the addition of bathtubs, a hand dryer for drying hair, and laundry facilities to accommodate the women. These details had a sexually suggestive element to them, invoking images of the women bathing and drying their hair in a predominantly male space. They were also meant to reassure Canadians that the women still required feminized spaces where they could engage in conventional feminine activities.<sup>95</sup> The feminization of the male dormitory counteracted the perceived threat to the masculine foundations of the RCMP and to

social order in Canadian society during a period when many women were agitating for increased rights.

The RCMP mirrored the media's approach by depicting in their own publications the women recruits engaged in what were considered to be feminine pursuits in the barracks. Commanding officers enlisted a female civilian member to create an official photographic record of Troop 17. Unlike the media, this photographer was given full access to the women in their barracks. In 1975, the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette* published an article about Troop 17, which included a series of photographs taken by the RCMP photographer of the women doing laundry, ironing, and washing their hair, in addition to their regular training activities.<sup>96</sup> While male recruits also undertook the same activities, they were never photographed performing them until the mid-1980s.<sup>97</sup> The *Gazette* further explained that the "new facilities were to provide a lounge area, ironing/laundry rooms, full length mirrors, hair-dressing services and everything a girl might need for personal comfort."<sup>98</sup> The author's observations reassured readers that female Mounties continued to be governed by their feminine nature, reinforcing the power relations that positioned female Mounties as the subordinate sex.

The oral histories demonstrate the extent of media interest after the women began their training in September 1974. Louise Ferguson recalled that there was "little that went on there without somebody from some media somewhere, either Canadian or around the world [interviewing and photographing us]."<sup>99</sup> Although members of the media were barred from entering the women's barracks, the restriction was circumvented when reporters contacted female recruits directly on the dormitory pay telephone. Carol Franklin received calls from two radio stations in her hometown requesting interviews. For Franklin, it seemed as though the media had full access to the troop and there was little escape for the women from the media's watchful eye.<sup>100</sup> Media access to the female recruits at Depot was not unconditional, however, as Liz Primeau, a journalist with *The Vancouver Sun*, discovered. Primeau succinctly summarized the relationship between the RCMP and the media at the time. She wrote, "The days I spent at training headquarters were an exercise in gentle persuasion

and friendly frustration. The administration was anxious to show the force's best face and eager, insistent even, that I understand the true spirit behind the RCMP. It became a grand public-relations tour.”<sup>101</sup> Primeau's experience illustrates how the RCMP worked to maintain the “spirit” of its heroic and masculine image despite the arrival of female recruits, while attempting to manage journalists' perceptions of the police force as it underwent changes.

The media coverage allowed a national and international audience to observe the female Mounties throughout the six months of their training. Criminologist Thomas Mathieson argues that Michel Foucault's discussion of the panopticon neglects the opposite process whereby the mass media contribute to the synopticon, a system that enables the many to see the few.<sup>102</sup> This was certainly true of the first female Mounties who felt they were under a microscope. Several of the women cited the media's interest in them as the thing they liked the least about their time at the academy. Allison Palmer commented that the media coverage was “almost immediate because we would be walking from point A to point B and there would be a pile of photographers that were following us around and we would go into the mess hall and try to eat ... [there were] cameras over our shoulders and we're trying to shovel food in [within the twenty minutes allotted for meals].”<sup>103</sup> Trish O'Brien, who described the media attention as “horrible,” recalled:

I guess it was all such a big event, bigger than what we even thought. We were just there to do our thing and excited about joining and we didn't even want the media there. But they were everywhere. Filming us eating, doing our weights, running ... after a while it really got annoying.”<sup>104</sup>

Eventually, the women complained that they no longer wanted to be interviewed by the media. Subsequently, two spokespersons were selected to represent the troop and respond to media requests. Some staff members grew weary of the attention as well. Cameron Montgomery, a senior officer at Depot in 1974, remembered with some exasperation that journalists asked questions that were a “thinly veiled suggestion that women can't hack” the physical demands of the

RCMP's recruit training program.<sup>105</sup> Carol Hill, a clerk-typist working at Depot at the time, remembered that the arrival of the women was "very high profile" and that they were followed and photographed; everything they did was scrutinized.<sup>106</sup> As a reporter in the *Gazette* wrote:

[T]he sound of a photographer's movie or still camera became commonplace. Public relations is important to any organization which requires public support and cooperation. Despite the added pressure of being constantly on view, members of the Troop proved to be adept in handling interviews and taking the limelight in stride to bring favourable publicity to the Force.<sup>107</sup>

The intrusive tactics of the media set the women apart as different and the attention generated by their presence at the academy reinforced their subordinate position within the police force.

Journalists frequently focused on physical difference to reinforce masculinity as the normative standard for police officers in their accounts. The male-dominated media in the 1970s was fascinated with the seemingly "deviant" side of the feminine as a potential threat to social order.<sup>108</sup> Accordingly, at the centre of many media reports was the female police body. In December 1974, *The Globe and Mail* was not the only newspaper to report that "after weeks of strenuous physical training, the women report weight gains of up to 20 pounds. Cheryl Joyce, a 29-year-old recruit from Saskatoon, says she has gained weight but, like the others, has lost inches on her waist and hips," a thinly veiled suggestion that Joyce was becoming more manly in appearance as she lost inches on her hips.<sup>109</sup> A series of photographs published in *The Toronto Star* featured the women performing foot drill, firing revolvers, and playing a game of water polo. One photograph captured Heather-Ann Mary Phyllis lifting weights. The caption underneath read, "Staying in shape, Miss Phyllis works out with weights in the gymnasium."<sup>110</sup> Colleen Slater-Smith wrote about the recruits' embarrassment over their bathing suits. She explained that the force-issued swimsuits were cut low under the armpits and the women were nervous about "fall-out" of their breasts during rigorous swimming manoeuvres.<sup>111</sup> One journalist noted that

a “consulting gynecologist was hired” by the RCMP, and that the women, at their request, added an iron supplement to their diet.<sup>112</sup>

The attention paid to the physical changes to the women’s bodies was grounded in conventional notions about women and sport. Patricia Vertinsky has shown how in the nineteenth century, strenuous physical activity was thought to wear out a woman’s body making her unfit for maternal duties.<sup>113</sup> Fears regarding the decline of the white race, combined with notions about female frailty, persisted throughout much of the twentieth century and women were actively discouraged from participating in sporting activities. Complicit in reinforcing the idea of the physical inferiority of women was the mass media who “helped to reproduce and perpetuate traditional definitions of gender” in their coverage of sporting events, especially during the Olympic Games later in the century.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, despite socially constructed beliefs about the inferiority of the female body, women in the 1920s and the 1970s in particular, engaged in competitive sports in increasing numbers.<sup>115</sup>

Not surprisingly, instructors at the academy were unsure whether the women would be able to meet the physical demands of the RCMP’s training program, considered one of the most rigorous in the world at the time. The *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette* reported that instructors initially speculated that “[t]he first item of kit to be issued [to the women] ... should be 32 large white handkerchiefs to wipe the tears away.”<sup>116</sup> However, the oral histories indicate the women not only met but, in some cases, exceeded the physical requirements. In fact, five were asked by academy staff to consider returning to Depot as instructors after they completed their first five years of service in the field.<sup>117</sup> Despite their success, journalists’ reports intimated that the women were sacrificing their femininity as a result of the physical training. Journalists sought to construct a gendered discourse about female Mounties that reinforced strenuous physical activity along with muscular strength and physical size as a male preserve and the only normative standard for RCMP officers.

The graduation ceremonies for Troop 17 were held at the academy on 3 March 1975. The ever-present media covered the occasion and reports of the graduation made national headlines. As one final

indication of the RCMP's interest in using the media to foster positive public relations, a number of dignitaries, including Commissioner Maurice Nadon, Canada's Solicitor-General Warren Allmand, Saskatchewan's Minister of Social Services Alex Taylor, and Helen Hunley, the solicitor-general for Alberta, made speeches.<sup>118</sup> Warren Allmand later confessed in an interview that he "choked up" while watching the "various demonstrations of swimming, self-defense and drill given by Canada's first female RCMP." Allmand commented that he was "moved and enthused. I felt I was observing an historical event in a force that has so much history."<sup>119</sup> Constable Janet Graham delivered the troop's valedictory address. She acknowledged that "many eyes will be upon us — some critical, some encouraging — watching to see if we will pass the test. It will be up to us to prove our worth."<sup>120</sup>

By the time the women arrived at their first postings, the Canadian public had received two distinct but conflicting messages about women in the RCMP from the media: female Mounties were both manly in appearance and objects of sexual desire. According to Marianne Robson, when she reported for duty at her first detachment she glimpsed several office staff peeking around a door, straining to see what she looked like.<sup>121</sup> A secretary at Allison Palmer's first detachment told her that the staff had heard that the women graduating from Depot "were six axe handles wide."<sup>122</sup> Both characterizations objectified the women and reduced them to biological formulations rather than the figures of civic authority they were trained to be. Although male Mounties and their bodies were, as noted above, objectified by the media and commercial interests for profit, their image was represented in heroic and authoritative terms. In contrast, the first women were discussed in biological terms that subordinated them to male police officers, reinforcing the privileged position of power male police officers enjoyed. These representations, as Brown and Heidensohn point out, made it "impossible for policewomen to succeed because their strengths are neutralized by an opposition."<sup>123</sup> Female Mounties were somehow different from other women, but at the same time their biology made them the same, therefore unable to measure up to male standards as police officers.

As time went on, female Mounties not only met the physical demands of the job but they also offered an alternative perspective of policing not depicted by the media or anticipated by the RCMP. All of the female police officers interviewed for this research, without exception, cited one significant difference that distinguished their work from that of their male colleagues: women relied on negotiation rather than confrontation. Physicality and the threat of physical violence were not the most effective means of solving conflict or preventing crime for RCMP officers. Margaret Watson learned during her first months as a Mountie that her male peers did not want women backing them up in a bar fight because they lacked physical size and strength. She noticed, however, that the “men would go in and it would escalate ... whereas I would go in and it would de-escalate ... female members have more developed verbal skills and communication skills and dispute resolution skills, crisis intervention skills. We would talk and listen [whereas] male members would go in [and say] ‘okay, you’re out of here,’ grab them around the neck, choke them out, drag them out to the [police] car.”<sup>124</sup>

While it is true that female police officers were perceived differently than male police officers by the public, particularly in the early years of their employment, some members of the public nevertheless chose to test the women in much the same way their male colleagues did. Negotiation did not always work and physical force sometimes became necessary. In these instances, assumptions about the physical inferiority of women were a distinct advantage when subduing a combative male who was often taken by surprise by the ability of a female police officer. But, as Carol Franklin commented, if she took a few extra minutes to resolve a situation through discussion rather than physical force, the outcome was more positive and injuries were minimized.<sup>125</sup> Alternative methods adopted by female Mounties contested conventional discourses that positioned concepts of masculinity and physicality as absolute necessities in police work. While women were physically capable of handling violence on the street, they more often than not relied on negotiation tactics to achieve a peaceful result.

Ironically, many of the women interviewed stated that they often capitalized on prevailing notions of femininity and masculin-



ity to achieve a positive outcome during arrest situations. According to Watson, “in the 1970s, no man wanted to sucker punch a woman,” a code of conduct which generally worked to the advantage of female police officers during conflicts.<sup>126</sup> In cases where men decided to ignore this code, women often negotiated a peaceful resolution by advising the suspect of the likelihood that she would win a physical altercation. The claim was more than bravado because the women had gained confidence in their ability to defend themselves and physically subdue adversaries through their training at Depot. The mere threat of a physical altercation with a woman, and the possibility of losing a fight to one, was often enough to change the dynamics of a potentially violent situation. Many suspects chose to be placed under arrest and walk peacefully to the police cruiser rather than chance being bested by a female Mountie in a fight. Marianne Robson illustrated this point well when she recounted how one male suspect she placed under arrest “escaped out of the back of the police car, so I chased him down and caught him and the rumor [around town] was that he got caught by the female Mountie. He left town, he was so embarrassed.”<sup>127</sup> In this case, the suspect’s masculinity was called into question when he attempted, and failed, to outrun a woman.

By comparing the journalistic record and official and popular histories of the RCMP with the oral histories of the first female Mounties, an alternative perspective of women as police officers emerges. The media’s resistance to the idea of a female Mountie, evident in highly gendered portrayals of them in the 1970s, relied on notions of biological difference and understandings of femininity that positioned women as the weaker sex and masculinity as normative. The RCMP, in their dealings with the media, also defined the women from a gendered perspective rather than as fully equal to male police officers. Their approach to the women revealed the unease with which the iconic institution grappled with integrating the first female recruits. But female RCMP officers challenged these discourses by adopting alternative approaches to policing, rather than emulating or attempting to live up to the male standard. Their reliance on negotiation rather than confrontation critiqued the veracity of the idea of physical size and strength as essential for law enforcement work.

Female Mounties defied gendered discourses that called into question their full participation as figures of civic authority in Canadian society. In the process, they began a long journey toward establishing themselves as fully equal on their own terms.

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### Endnotes:

- 1 This paper draws from a larger body of research undertaken as part of my Ph.D. dissertation titled “Women in Red Serge: Female Police Bodies and the Disruption of the Image of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.” I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in carrying out this research. Special thanks to the anonymous reviewers of the *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* for their helpful comments and suggestions.
- 2 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (hereafter CBC), *Here and There*, “The Scarlet Guardians,” 17 May 1958, <[http://archives.cbc.ca/society/crime\\_justice/clips/16877/.htm](http://archives.cbc.ca/society/crime_justice/clips/16877/.htm)>, (viewed 3 May 2010).

- 3 For early histories and memoirs that contributed to the mythic image of the police force, see John G. Donkin, *Trooper and Redskin in the Far North West* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1889); Charles P. Dwight, *Life in the North West Mounted Police and Other Sketches* (Toronto: National Publishing, 1892); Samuel B. Steele, *Forty Years in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild, and Stewart, 1915); and A.L. Haydon, *The Riders of the Plains: Record of the Royal North-West Mounted Police of Canada, 1873–1918* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1919). Favourable representations published later in the twentieth century include John Peter Turner, *The North-West Mounted Police, 1873–1893* (Ottawa: E. Cloutier, King's Printer, 1950); S.W. Horrall, *The Pictorial History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1973); David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *The Great Adventure: How the Mounties Conquered the West* (Toronto: Viking, 1996); and Dale Sheehan and Redd Oosten, *Behind the Badge: History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police "Depot" Division* (Regina, Sask.: Centax Books, 2006).
- 4 For a detailed discussion on ideas of gentlemanly codes of conduct within the police force, see R.C. Macleod, *The NWMP and Law Enforcement, 1873–1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 73–80.
- 5 The RCMP has undergone three name changes since its inception in 1873. The North-West Mounted Police was in existence from 1873–1904 and its name reflected its original mandate to police the North-West Territories. The status of "Royal" was added in 1904 by King Edward VII in recognition of the military contributions made by members of the police force during the Anglo-South Africa War (1899–1902). The name changed again in 1919 to its current form following the amalgamation of the RNWMP with the Dominion Police into one centralized, federal police force.
- 6 One exception was "Klondike Kate" Ryan, a matron and gold inspector for the NWMP during the Yukon gold rush. Information about Ryan's life and work with the NWMP is limited, but can be found in early print media reports, such as William Lewis Edmunds, "The Woman Called Klondike Kate," *Maclean's* 35, 24 (15 December 1922): 64. For a recent biography, see T. Ann Brennan, *The Real Klondike Kate* (Fredericton, N.B.: Goose Lane Editions, 1990).
- 7 "Women employed as matrons – not to be taken on strength of the Force," Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), RG 18-A-1, vol. 290, 702-04. The RCMP's official website provides little historical information about its matrons. See <<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/hist/hnudnhut/women-femmes-eng.htm>>, (viewed 15 May 2010).
- 8 For an early history of women in policing in Britain and the British colonies, see Chloe Owings, *Women Police: A Study of the Development and Status of the Women Police Movement* (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1925 & 1969), 1–63. For more recent studies, see Philippa Levine,

- “Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should’: Women Police in World War I,” *The Journal of Modern History* 66, 1 (March 1994): 34–78; Sandra Jones, *Policewomen and Equality: Formal Police v. Informal Practice?* (Basingstoke, UK: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1986); Jennifer Brown, “Discriminatory Experiences of Women Police: A Comparison of Officers Serving in England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 28 (2000): 91–111; Jennifer Brown and Frances Heidensohn, *Gender and Policing: Comparative Perspectives* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000); Louise A. Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).
- 9 Susan Kakar, “Gender and Police Officers’ Perceptions of Their Job Performance: An Analysis of the Relationship between Gender and Perceptions of Job Performance,” *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 13, 3 (September 2002): 238–56.
  - 10 Mary E. Hamilton, *The Policewoman: Her Service and Ideals* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1924), 5.
  - 11 Brown and Heidensohn, 8–9.
  - 12 Dorothy Moses Schulz, *From Social Worker to Crimefighter: Women in United States Municipal Policing* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 17.
  - 13 *Ibid.*, 28.
  - 14 Owings, 9; 62.
  - 15 B.F. Nowell, “Salute to the Wives,” *RCMP Quarterly* 40, 4 (October 1975): 13.
  - 16 Luta Munday, *A Mounty’s Wife: Being the Life Story of One Attached to the Force But Not of It* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1930); Joy Duncan, ed. *Red Serge Wives* (Edmonton, AB: Centennial Book Committee, 1974); Dorothy Standish Paull, *Scarlet Fever: A Story of Early Years in Banff and My Life as a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman’s Wife, 1914–1956*, Lural Chvojka, ed. (self-published, 1993); Nora Hickson Kelly, *My Mountie and Me: A True Story* (Regina, Sask.: Centax Books, 1999); Ruth Lee-Knight, *When the Second Man Was a Woman*, Heather A. Punshon, ed. (Saskatoon, Sask.: Imagine Publishing, 2004).
  - 17 There have been two autobiographies written by female RCMP officers since 1974. See Jane Hall, *The Red Wall: A Woman in the RCMP* (Renfrew, Ont.: General Store Publishing, 2007); and Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk, *Women Not Wanted: One RCMP Officer and Her Journey for Justice* (Winnipeg, Man.: Hignell Book Printing, 2007).
  - 18 Pamela Sugiman, “Memories of Internment: Narrating Japanese Canadian Women’s Life Stories,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 29, 3 (2004): 363.
  - 19 These include serving and retired male and female RCMP officers, one female municipal police officer, one female Canadian armed forces officer, two female provincial police officers, civilian members, public servants,

- and spouses and children of RCMP officers. Pseudonyms, except in cases where identities are a matter of public record, are used in this article. The location of detachments are altered or omitted to protect the identity of interview participants, their family members, peers, and supervisors. Also in the interest of anonymity, the locations of all interviews are omitted from the footnotes.
- 20 Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* 2nd ed. (Toronto: Alta Mira Press, 2005), 6.
  - 21 The work of Barbara Freeman and her study of the media's response to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada was particularly influential in shaping my thinking about media representations of women in the RCMP. It was in *The Satellite Sex: The Media and Women's Issues in English Canada, 1966–1971*, where I first encountered Edd Uluschak's cartoon (1970) of female Mounties. Thanks to Anne Toews for bringing Freeman's work, and this cartoon, to my attention.
  - 22 Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), xx.
  - 23 Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds. "Introduction," *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1996), 1.
  - 24 "Henri Julien," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, <<http://www.biogrphi.ca/htm>> (viewed 10 April 2011). Examples of Julien's illustrations of the march west can be seen in Horrall, 43–9; 52. LAC also houses the Henri Julien Collection, a variety of mixed-media images produced by Julien between 1874 and 1916.
  - 25 David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *The Great Adventure: How the Mounties Conquered the West* (Toronto: Viking, 1996), 11; 23–31. Also Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 35.
  - 26 Rob C. Mawby, *Policing Images: Policing, Communication and Legitimacy* (Portland, OR: Willan Publishing, 2002), 37.
  - 27 Quoted in Robert Thacker, "The Mountie as Metaphor (Review Article)," *The Dalhousie Review* 59, 3 (Autumn 1979): 553. Also Paul Palango, *The Last Guardians: The Crisis in the RCMP — and Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1998), n1, 297; and Dale Sheehan and Redd Oosten, *Behind the Badge: History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police "Depot" Division* (Regina, Sask.: Centax Books, 2006), 344.
  - 28 Horrall, 107. The romance of the frontier, as it was known in the nineteenth century, permeated imperial discourses. The explorers and hunters of Africa, drovers and bushmen of Australia, settlers and trappers of Northwest Canada, colonial police forces engaged in the Anglo-South Africa War, particularly the NWMP and the South African Constabulary, were thought to promote patriotism and masculine values, such as hardiness and self-sufficiency, particularly in boys. See Robert H. MacDonald,

- Son of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 8–9; 17.
- 29 For a detailed discussion on the commodification of the image of the RCMP, see Michael Dawson, *The Mountie: From Dime Novel to Disney* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1998); and Christopher Gittings, “Imagining Canada: The Singing Mountie and Other Commodifications of Nation,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 23, 4 (Autumn 1998): 507–22.
- 30 Dawson, 44. For more about Hollywood’s interest in the Mountie, see Michael Dawson, “‘That Nice Red Coat Goes to My Head Like Champagne’: Gender, Antimodernism and the Mountie Image, 1880–1960,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 3 (Fall 1997): 119–39; Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema, 1895–1939* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978); Pierre Berton, *Hollywood’s Canada: The Americanization of our National Image* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975); Robert S. Birchard, *Cecil B. DeMille’s Hollywood* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004).
- 31 Dawson, *The Mountie*, 3.
- 32 Homoerotic connotations were present in many heroic discourses of manliness from the period. See Graham Dawson, “The Blond Bedouin: Lawrence of Arabia, Imperial Adventure and the Imagining of English-British Masculinity,” in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), 113–44; Sarah Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Desire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Paul R. Deslandes, “Curing Mind and Body in the Heart of the Canadian Rockies: Empire, Sexual Scandal and the Reclamation of Masculinity, 1880s–1920s,” *Gender and History* 21, 2 (August 2009): 358–79; Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2008).
- 33 Karal Ann Marling, *Looking North: Royal Canadian Mounted Police Illustrations: The Potlatch Collection* (Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society, 2003), 34. The paintings of the Northwest Paper Division of Potlatch Corporation are housed at the Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth.
- 34 Dawson, *The Mountie*, 95–8.
- 35 Steve Hewitt, “The Masculine Mountie: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police as a Male Institution, 1914–1939,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7, 1 (1996): 154–5, 168.
- 36 Levine, 35–6; Brown and Heidensohn, 1–23.
- 37 Daniel J. Bell, “Policewomen: Myths and Reality,” *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 10, 1 (1982): 112–20; E. Marlies Ott, “Effects of the Male-Female Ratio at Work: Policewomen and Male Nurses,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 13, 1 (1989): 41–57; Curt R. Bartol et al., “Women in

- Small-Town Policing: Job Performance and Stress,” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 19 (1992): 240–59; Steve Herbert, “‘Hard Charger’ or ‘Station Queen’?: Policing and the Masculinist State,” *Gender, Place & Culture, A Journal of Feminist Geography* 8, 1 (2001): 55–71; Vanessa Garcia, “‘Difference’ in the Police Department: Women, Policing, and ‘Doing Gender’,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 19 (2003): 330–44; and Dr. R. Loo, “Interim Report: Stressors for Women in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,” June 1984, access to information file GA-3951-3-03134/08 (14 July 2008).
- 38 Meg Luxton and June Corman, “Getting to Work: The Challenge of the ‘Women Back Into Stelco’ Campaign,” *Labour/Le Travail* 28 (Fall 1991): 149–85.
- 39 During World War II, women were employed by Stelco to replace male workers serving in the armed forces. Following the war, almost all of the women were fired. By 1978, there were just 28 women working for Stelco in the tin mill. Men made up the majority of the workforce in the plant and numbered 13,000. Luxton and Corman, 154, 157.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 41 Kate Braid, *Covering Rough Ground* (Vancouver: Polestar Publishers, 1991); Pamela Sugiman, *Labour’s Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937–1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Susan Eisenberg, “Caution: Women at Work,” *The Progressive* (September 2011): 26–9.
- 42 Ruth Roach Pierson, *They’re Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), 132–3. See also Thelma Lecocq, “Woman Power,” *Maclean’s Magazine* (15 June 1942): 10–11, 40; and Lotta Dempsey, “They’re Still Feminine,” *Maclean’s Magazine* (1 January 1943): 7–8, for assurances that women remained feminine despite their work in heavy industry.
- 43 Donna Winslow and Jason Dunn, “Women in the Canadian Forces: Between Legal and Social Integration,” *Current Sociology* 50 (2002): 651.
- 44 Inspector G.R. Crosse quoted in Ruth Warwick, “Women Join Ranks,” *Regina Leader-Post* (20 September 1974). Faced with a shortage of funds, the RCMP in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, for example, were actively engaged in establishing a program to recruit and train male auxiliary police officers to work on a volunteer basis. See Jill Rafuse, “RCMP Program to Recruit Men to Act as Volunteer Policemen,” *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* (14 September 1974).
- 45 Francis, 50.
- 46 “RCMP Union Membership Illegal Under 1918 Rule,” *The Vancouver Sun* (1 May 1974). Steve Hewitt provides a comprehensive analysis of the Order-in-Council, which, he argues, transformed the RNWMP into Canada’s “permanent militia,” particularly during the strikes and labour

- unrest of 1918 and 1919. See Steve Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue: The Transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 23–4.
- 47 *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (hereafter “RCSW Final Report”) (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970), 133.
- 48 Dorothy Moses Schulz, “Policewomen in the 1950s: Paving the Way for Patrol,” in *Women Police*, ed. Mangai Natarajan (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 6–7.
- 49 Liz Davies, interview with author, 17 July 2008.
- 50 Gerald F. Wallace, William Higgins, and Peter McGahan, *The Saint John Police Story: The Van Wart Years, 1858–1965* (Fredericton, N.B.: New Ireland Press, 1996), 70. Thank you to Greg Marquis for this reference.
- 51 LAC, MG-28-I-196, vol. 21, no. 21-1, Mrs. M.J. Sabia to The Honourable Judy LaMarsh, 11 July 1966; Rick Linden and Candice Minch, “Women in Policing: A Review” (Winnipeg: Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Manitoba, 1982); Cerise Morris, “‘Determination and Thoroughness’: The Movement for a Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada,” *Atlantis* 5, 2 (Spring 1980): 1–21; Dominique Clement, “‘I Believe in Human Rights, Not Women’s Rights’: Women and the Human Rights State, 1969–1984,” *Radical History Review* 101 (Spring 2008): 107–29.
- 52 LAC, MG-28-I-196, vol. 21, no. 21-1, Mrs. M.J. Sabia to The Honourable Judy LaMarsh, 11 July 1966.
- 53 House of Commons, *Debates*, 12613, Right Hon. L.B. Pearson, “Announcement of Establishment of Royal Commission to Study Status,” 3 February 1967.
- 54 “RCSW Final Report,” ix-x.
- 55 While the commissioners concluded that the federal government was observing its commitments to the rights of women, “except perhaps in relation to paid maternity leave, superannuation protection and some insurance plans,” it also found that women did not have equal opportunity “to enter and advance in Government Service,” and that “attitudes and practices seem to be at fault” for occupational segregation by sex which was being perpetuated. “RCSW Final Report,” 138.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 136–8.
- 57 Winslow and Dunn, 655.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 663. See also the history of women in combat roles on the Canadian Forces website at <<http://www.forces.ca/en/page/women-92.htm>> (viewed 15 December 2011). In 2003, an all-female Canadian armed forces team demolished arguments about the limitations of female strength and stamina in combat when they entered the Nijmegen March in the Netherlands. Military units from around the world compete in the annual event. Armed forces participants must wear their uniforms while marching 40 kilometers



- a day for four days and carrying a minimum ten kilogram backpack. The all-female Canadian contingent completed the march carrying the same weight as the male teams. See CBC, *CBC National News*, “Women in the Canadian Military: A History of Firsts,” (30 May 2006) <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/cdnmilitary/women-cdnmilitary.htm>> (viewed 20 December 2011).
- 59 LAC, John Collins Fonds, C-107232, “Sorry Gals – Here’s One Time You Don’t Have the Last Word.”
- 60 “RCSW Final Report,” 14–15.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 402.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 133.
- 63 “Women RCMP Officers Inevitable: MacRae,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* (8 November 1974).
- 64 Liz Primeau, “They Always Get Their Person,” *The Vancouver Sun Weekend Magazine* 25, 11 (15 March 1975).
- 65 “RCMP to Accept Women,” *The Vancouver Sun* (24 May 1974).
- 66 Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.
- 67 For example, see “Women in Bunches,” *The Ottawa Journal* (4 February 1967); “Most in Ottawa Think Probe Will Accomplish Nothing,” *The Ottawa Journal* (4 February 1967).
- 68 Freeman, 13. Also Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 233–68.
- 69 Bell, 112.
- 70 Brown and Heidensohn, 162.
- 71 Bruce G. Retallack, “Drawing the Lines: Gender, Class, Race and Nation in Canadian Editorial Cartoons, 1840–1926,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2006).
- 72 Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Carter.
- 73 Levine, 43.
- 74 Edd Uluschak, “With a Motto Like ‘We Always Get Our Man’ Recruiting is No Problem,” *The Edmonton Journal* (9 December 1970), reprinted in Freeman, 231.
- 75 In official histories, the musical ride is considered one of the “last links with the Force’s early history and traditions.” Horrall, 159.
- 76 Martin O’Malley, “Women Mounties Fitting In,” *The Woman’s Globe and Mail* (5 December 1974). Edd Uluschak also used the Musical Ride in his cartoons. See Uluschak, “I Realize Allowing Women on the Force Would Necessitate Some Adjustments — But the Musical Ride ... Side-Saddle?,” *The Edmonton Journal* (4 June 1974).
- 77 Charlotte Gray, “Musical Riders: It Wasn’t Easy Being the First Women on

- the RCMP Musical Ride,” *Flare Magazine* (July 1982): 41.
- 78 Ibid., 41–4.
- 79 Donna Winslow and Jason Dunn, “Women in the Canadian Forces: Between Legal and Social Integration,” *Current Sociology* 50, 5 (2002): 641–67; Merry Morash and Robin N. Haarr, “Gender, Workplace Problems, and Stress in Policing,” *Justice Quarterly* 12, 1 (March 1995): 113–40.
- 80 Edd Uluschak, “What’s a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?,” *The Edmonton Journal* reprinted in *The Telegraph Journal*, Saint John, N.B., (26 September 1974).
- 81 Frank Spalding, *100 Years in the RCMP Saddle Or, Stop the Musical Ride I Want Off!* (Victoria, B.C.: Morriss Printing Company Ltd., 1972), 110.
- 82 Carole Pateman quoted in Patricia Holland, “The Politics of the Smile: ‘Soft News’ and the Sexulaisation of the Popular Press,” in *News, Gender and Power*, eds. Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston, and Stuart Allan (London: Routledge, 1998), 27.
- 83 Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.
- 84 Margaret Watson, interview with author, 25 February 2008.
- 85 Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.
- 86 See “RCMP to Accept Women,” *The Vancouver Sun* (24 May 1974).
- 87 Ferguson interview.
- 88 “Women RCMP Officers Inevitable: MacRae,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* (8 November 1974).
- 89 Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.
- 90 Mawby, 1–2.
- 91 CBC Radio, *The World at Six*, “RCMP Welcomes First Female Officers,” (16 September 1974), <<http://archives.cbc.ca/society/celebrations/clips/1643/.htm>>, (viewed 19 October 2010).
- 92 “Mounties Get Their First Women,” *The Toronto Star* (28 December 1974).
- 93 Colleen Slater-Smith, “Troop 17 Graduates,” *The Leader-Post*, Regina, Sask., (3 March 1975).
- 94 Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010. Media coverage of the swearing-in ceremony also extended to the second group of women sworn in. See “New Brunswick Women Join RCMP,” *The Telegraph-Journal* (13 March 1975).
- 95 See “The RCMP Rookies: Mounties Get Their First Women,” *The Toronto Star* (28 December 1974); Ruth Warrick, “Basic Training Program Same for Fairer Sex,” *The Leader-Post* (20 September 1974); and O’Malley.
- 96 “Women, Why Not?,” *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette* 37, 7–8 (1975), 4.
- 97 In 1985, *Equinox* published a feature article on the academy’s training program. A photograph of a male Mountie ironing his uniform appears on page 47. Tony Leighton, “Red Serge and High Spirits: Blood, Sweat and

- Fears: Life in the RCMP Training Depot," *Equinox* 22 (1985): 38–55.
- 98 "Women, Why Not?", 6.
- 99 Ferguson interview.
- 100 Franklin interview.
- 101 See Primeau.
- 102 Thomas Mathiesen quoted in Mawby, 36.
- 103 Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.
- 104 Trish O'Brien, interview with author, 13 November 2008.
- 105 Montgomery interview.
- 106 Carol Hill, interview with author, 28 April 2008.
- 107 D.E. Toole, "A View From the Sidelines," *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette* 37, 7–8 (1975): 8.
- 108 Freeman, 76.
- 109 See O'Malley; Marsha Erb, "I Feel Like a Pioneer in a Way," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* (8 November 1974).
- 110 "The RCMP Rookies," *The Toronto Star* (28 December 1974). Weight training was the only area where women were not required to meet the exact standards as men. The amount of weight female recruits were required to lift was adjusted to meet equivalency standards based on their weight and height. Montgomery interview.
- 111 See Slater-Smith.
- 112 See Primeau.
- 113 Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 22–3.
- 114 Judy Lee, "Media Portrayals of Male and Female Olympic Athletes: Analyses of Newspaper Accounts of the 1984 and 1988 Summer Games," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 27, 3 (1992): 198.
- 115 Bruce Kidd, "Sports and Masculinity," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change*, ed. Michael Kaufman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 254.
- 116 "Women, Why Not?," 10.
- 117 Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008. The personnel records of the first female Mounties are sealed by the RCMP under the Access to Information Act. A request for information about their performance and grades during training was denied. Access to information file GA-3951-3-03134/08 (14 July 2008).
- 118 Hunley was present at the swearing-in ceremony in Calgary, Alberta, six months earlier. She was invited by Troop 17 to address their class at their graduation ceremony and during the evening banquet. Hunley served with the Canadian Women's Army Corps during World War II and was later appointed the first female Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta in 1985. Thanks to Rhonda Semple for this information.

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- 119 “Allmand’s Message to New Mounties is Look Forward,” *Regina Leader-Post* (4 March 1975).
- 120 RCMP Heritage Collection Unit Archives, J.L. Graham, “Valedictory Address,” (3 March 1975).
- 121 Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.
- 122 Palmer interview.
- 123 Brown and Heidensohn, 162.
- 124 Watson interview.
- 125 Franklin interview.
- 126 Watson interview.
- 127 Robson interview.