



Retaining new recruits

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Invite new recruits to Remembrance Day services, or other services in which your cadets are taking part, even if they don't have uniforms.

Our corps and squadrons have chains of command and ranks to provide proper placement for duties and responsibilities. For new recruits, this can be confusing as they try to figure out their place in their corps/squadron. One key to retention is providing new recruits with a sense of belonging. Here are some tips that may make it easier for your new recruits to find their place and develop that sense of belonging.

CREATE A SEPARATE FLIGHT/PLATOON/DIVISION FOR NEW RECRUITS.

This works for corps/squadrons that receive a large influx of new recruits in the fall. Placing new recruits in a separate flight, with a side view of the parade square and all the action, allows them to see what is going on and what they can aspire to. It also offers them a chance to learn drill together—fostering a sense of teamwork and reminding them that they are all in this together.

PLACE A SENIOR AND JUNIOR CADET LEADER IN CHARGE OF THE NEW RECRUITS.

This gives two cadet leaders the opportunity to practise leadership and instruct drill with the new recruits. As peers, they can also act as the primary points of communication, getting messages to them, encouraging them to attend upcoming events and addressing any concerns.

Uniform or no uniform, invite and encourage new recruits to attend events!

HOLD A SPECIAL RECRUIT TRAINING DAY.

This is a Saturday activity giving the recruits an opportunity to practise drill, catch up on General Cadet Knowledge classes missed and focus on aspects such as uniform preparation, boot shining, paying of compliments and the chain of command. They can also practise lesson plan preparation, instruction and be evaluated on this day.

INVITE AND ENCOURAGE NEW RECRUITS TO ATTEND EVENTS!

If you are attending an external function where uniforms are to be worn, such as a Battle of Britain Parade or Remembrance Day, invite the new recruits whether they have a uniform or not. Ask them to dress up, wearing shirt and tie and dress pants, or a dress. Whether to have them parade and do drill is your call, but the point is, they are at the event, they get to see the other cadets in action, and will be inspired to do that next year too.

HAVE AN OFFICIAL WELCOME NIGHT.

Any time between mid-November and the end of January, the corps/squadron should officially welcome the new recruits. All new recruits should have a uniform by this time. Invite a reviewing officer, a provincial league representative and parents for the event. This would be the evening when your recruits take the Oath of Allegiance, be assigned to their permanent flight/platoon/

Initiatives that develop a sense of belonging:

810 Air Cadet Squadron in Edmonton holds a recruit graduation parade during the commanding officer's parade in December, with a dignitary as reviewing officer. Recruits are sworn in, assigned to flights and presented with certificates welcoming them to the squadron. A multi-cultural "Taste of 810" potluck supper is held. Organized by the squadron's official sponsor and prepared by parents, the supper includes multi-cultural dishes to represent the diversity of heritage and culture at the squadron. The cadets are able to sample foods from India, Sri Lanka, Korea, Germany, Ukraine, Russia and of course, Canada. The evening concludes with an information session on summer courses.

504 Air Cadet Squadron in Edmonton holds a "Loyal Order of the Chinthe" parade in January. The chinthe is a mythical half-lion half-dog from Burmese and Buddhist mythology and is the squadron's mascot—the same mascot as the squadron's affiliated Regular Force unit, 435 Transport and Rescue Squadron. After cadets have completed two years of service with 504 Squadron, they receive a coin, emblazoned with the chinthe, the squadron's name and number and the coin's number on the back. By holding the coin, the cadet becomes a member of the "Loyal Order of the Chinthe" and pledges to uphold a charter, a set of rules and conditions.

division, receive new contact information for their new commanders and receive a token of recognition for being made an official member. The recruit flight/platoon/division is then disbanded until the next training year. Any new recruits who join after this date would be automatically placed in a permanent flight/platoon/division and assigned a cadet leader to bring them up to speed.

One key to retention is providing new recruits with a sense of belonging.

By having the recruits work together, dedicating peers as points of contact, providing them with information in a timely manner, encouraging them to come to events and holding a special parade in their honour, you can ensure your new recruits feel welcome and develop a sense of



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Air Cadet Daniel Schenker receives a squadron membership certificate from 2Lt Kyla Ewasiuk, assistant training officer in charge of new recruits at 810 Air Cadet Squadron.

belonging. They will know that they matter to their corps/squadron. They will have found their places and begun to develop friendships—key to their retention. *

Lt Jackson is the administration officer at 810 Air Cadet Squadron in Edmonton.

LAC Donavin Kavich and new recruit Connor Oranchuk give a thumbs up to the food served during the multi-cultural "Taste of 810" potluck supper—an event that helps make new recruits feel welcome.

