

Royal Roads says its final farewell

■ Military College closes gates

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Lookout staff

After 50 years of service to the Armed Forces, Royal Roads Military College (RRMC) has closed its gates as a military institution. Saturday, May 27, marked the college's official closure. It was an emotional experience for all who attended.

"The weekend was full of pride and sadness," said Capt (N) Dave Bindernagel, RRMC's Commandant. "Pride, because of the tremendous contribution Royal Roads has made to Canada and sadness, because of the college's closure. Royal Roads has been a great college since it came into existence. The college has developed an excellence in leadership that we've seen in our grads for the past 55 years."

When the college was first established in 1940, it was known as the HMCS Royal Roads. The facility was used to train naval officers and reservists for service in the Second World War. It was in 1968 that the college became officially known as RRMC.

Eventually, RRMC established itself as more of a university where cadets were given the opportunity to pursue degrees in the arts, sciences and engineering. Over the years, many cadets have established cadet appointments and posi-

tions ranging from Cadet Section Commander to Cadet Wing Commander. One recent graduate agrees it's a shame the college has been closed.

"The closure of college is very unfortunate," says 2Lt Miles Selby. "Especially since, in many people's eyes, it's the best military college in Canada."

One military member who attended RRMC from 1952 to 1954 agrees. He was so impressed with RRMC, that he came all the way from Ottawa to attend the closing ceremony.

"When I attended the college, only two-year courses were offered," says Colonel Commandant M.C. Johnston (CD), of the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering branch (EME). "The program has changed over the years because the college became a degree-granting institution. It is very sad to see the college close."

But RRMC is not the only Canadian military college to close. College Militaire Royal based in St-Jean, Quebec is also shutting down. The decision to shut both colleges developed as a result of a federal government budget announcement in February 1994 when defence spending was cut by \$2.8 billion over a

four-year period.

Because of the budget cuts, future military courses will only be conducted at the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, which will become a fully bilingual institution.

Now that RRMC has shut down, new plans are in the works. Beginning in September,

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the defunct military college will operate as a civilian university.

Skills Training Minister Dan Miller announced last week that RRMC will open as a public university, in partnership with Camosun College and the University of Victoria with room for about 200 students.

"I think most people are optimistic about the role the province is playing in developing this post-secondary institution," says Mr. Miller.

"There is a great deal of work to do, but I think it'll be great in the long run."

Mr. Miller said when the decision was made to close the college, an advisory panel complete with University of British Columbia and Northwest Community College representatives formed to sort out Royal Road's future.

"I asked them to give me a vision of what could become of the institution," he said. "And in early March, I accepted the vision and put the wheels in motion."

Mr. Miller said the new university won't be like any other. He said the institution will offer courses ranging from environmental management to international business rather than typical university courses

like political science and psychology. As well, students will be assessed for admissions on grounds other than academic standards.

"This university won't have a tenured faculty nor will it have a senate," Mr. Miller said. "We want to offer post-graduate programs to people who are already experienced who would like to get a post-graduate degree."

Eventually, he said the university will likely offer undergraduate courses.

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