



THE BLACK WATCH OF CANADA FOUNDATION

THE HONOURABLE PAUL BYCHOK



Justice Bychok wearing his robe made of seal skin.



Paul Bychok as a soldier in 1972.

Little did I know that early Saturday morning in October 1970 that my life's path would forever change.

The October Crisis was in full swing. A good friend from Scouts called me to say that 2 Van Doos were guarding our MNA's home, and "we gotta go see them." While we were watching a group of giggling teenage girls swooning over the awkward young soldiers, my friend started to tell me about the Black Watch Cadets which he had also joined. I was intrigued by what he told me and excited about the summer training camps he had attended. I was sold, and I joined up as soon as I could.

I came from a challenging working class background, and many years later my father told me he expected me to follow his footsteps to work in a factory. Despite my circumstances I felt ambitious, but I couldn't see how I could escape my parents' situation. That's where the Black Watch came in.

Over the next five years in the Cadets and as a subaltern in the 3rd Bn., I gained the self confidence which I had been lacking. The unit challenged me to strive for and achieve goals which at times I thought were impossible. For example, I had always had a debilitating fear of heights; yet there I was at the Banff cadet camp repelling off the side of a high cliff. My training pushed me beyond limits I thought were possible. On day four of a five day exercise with only five or six hours of sleep, I found the strength to lead my training platoon on an arduous overnight march. As we crested the final hill around six in the morning, with the course officers waiting, I heard my platoon sergeant drawl: "Well done sir."

I felt a surge of pride that morning, not in what I had done, but that I had not let the Black Watch down. Along with increased self discipline and leadership and organisational skills, this was perhaps the greatest gift I received from the Regiment. The Black Watch taught me to honour the service and sacrifice of those brave souls who had preceded me in the defence of freedom – which is decidedly not free. The Black Watch taught me the virtues of service to one's community and country. And the Black Watch taught me the inestimable worth of history and tradition without which a society loses its very *raison d'être*.

May God bless the Black Watch.

God Save the King