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Class of RMC cadets commissions painting

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The graduating cadets at Royal Military College have decided to leave behind more than their sweat- and ink- stained desks.

Yesterday the graduating class of 1993 presented to the college a painting it had commissioned by Toronto artist Allan Harding McKay.

The piece of art is the first in what is hoped to a series of depicting life at RMC. The artist has captured an informal moment at the graduation ceremonies. One of the two main figures is a female cadet, reflecting the change made at the College in 1980 when women began to be admitted.

The idea for the gift was that of the graduation ball committee. "Each year the graduating class presents a gift to the college and this year's class thought a piece of art would be a good idea," says faculty adviser Lubimir Luciuk. "I saw a piece about Allan McKay, who had just come back as Canada's war Artist in Somalia, and I thought he might make a good choice. We hope to give a piece of art each year which will represent some aspect of life at RMC."

McKay has spent most of his career as an administrator of galleries such as the Power Plant in Toronto, the Mendel in Saskatoon and the Southern Alberta Art Gallery.

When he decided to paint full time he checked out the war-artist program. "It just so happened they were looking for someone to go to Somalia," he says. "And I was looking for some degree of adventure and an environment I had never experienced before.

"In Mogadishu there was obviously a war zone but I was in the north where things were much quieter. I came back last March." As a war artist, McKay was commissioned to do four paintings. To do the RMC painting, McKay came down and observed the graduation ceremonies.

"The painting is representational of the ceremonies," he says. "I'm not that familiar with the military and I put a woman into it because I thought that was interesting."

Work for the 1994 gift begins today. Gananoque sculptor John Boxtel will be checking out the annual obstacle course race, to prepare for the life-sized sculpture of it he will be making, to be presented next year.

