



Gentlemen,

You are receiving this email because I believe you are all former cadets of Robert Land Academy (RLA) and, as such, are therefore members of our Alumni. I am writing because I wish to introduce myself to you as the recently appointed Headmaster of the Academy. My name is Ryan Smid and I am a former member of the Canadian Armed Forces having served for 28 years in both the Regular Force and the Reserves. My full biography will be posted to our website soon. I am excited to be a member of the Robert Land Academy Family and have been very impressed thus far with the quality of the staff employed here and the enthusiasm of the cadets who are currently in residence. We have facilities that support our program and we are geographically ideally located. There are a lot of positives! However, it has become clear to me that Robert Land Academy has not done a tremendous job at developing and maintaining a strong relationship with our alumni. I want that to change starting today.

I believe that our alumni should be one of the most important and strongest pillars of the RLA Family. I believe it is my responsibility to provide you the opportunity to return to the campus throughout the year so that you can participate in activities that are designed solely for you but also participate in activities with our current cadets so that they have role-models and can see the future through you. Obviously as alumni, you have a legitimacy that those who have never been students here do not possess. I believe it is my responsibility to communicate with you and to provide you information about the Academy in terms of its day-to-day activities (much of which would be similar to when you were here but we continue to positively evolve); the maintenance of long-held traditions (such as the Fall Exercise); and discussions about our future as an institution. I believe it is my responsibility to create an environment where you are proud to be a member of the RLA Family.

How am I going to do this? You will be invited back to the Academy to participate in some of our keystone events. For example, if it weren't for COVID 19, it had been my intention to invite Alumni to participate in the third day of the Fall Exercise. My vision was that the Alumni would march from Fort George to the Brock monument as a formed group (with transportation allowances made for those who can no longer march 12 km!) and then participate in the parade (again as a formed group). My intention was to match you up with a cadet who was completing the march for the first time and have you give that cadet his Baker Badge. I was planning to have a BBQ at Brock monument where cadets and alumni could mingle. The old generation mixing with the new generation. Obviously something like this takes some planning and hard work but I think that you are worth it.

Tomorrow, as members of the RLA Family, you will all be receiving a monthly e-newsletter called *The Loyalist*. It will contain articles written by the cadets, some commentary by staff, and will feature a different alumnus every month. The intent is for it to keep you apprised of what your alma mater is doing. I hope that it brings back some good memories for you. I hope that seeing one of your own in the paper each month will motivate you to reach out to some of your former classmates. We

will be reinvigorating our RLA Alumni Facebook page as well where you will be able to find this letter as well as a link to the e-newsletter.

I am grateful that one of your own has volunteered some of his time to work with me in a committee to advance Alumni issues. My personal thanks to Mr Chris MacLeod (1988-91) for volunteering and based on some of the ideas he has already provided me I am confident that the future will be bright. By having a committee consisting of members of both the staff of RLA and Alumni, you will be able to help shape our engagements moving forward. Of course, I very much value informal committees or groups of alumni wherever they may form and hope that they do so that you can enjoy the camaraderie of your fellow alumni. Those are yours to run with and I hope you will reach out to let me know how they are doing and maybe even write an article for our paper!

For any relationship to be successful, it must be a two-way relationship. I outlined my responsibilities above but you have some too. First of all, if you made it this far then you must be a little bit interested! If not, then feel free to unsubscribe and I will certainly understand. Not everyone's experience at RLA was a positive one. For those that wish to remain on this distribution list, I would ask that you help me to grow it. Simple math tells me that we should have literally a few thousand alumnus but there are only about 150 email addresses in this distribution list. I need your help in spreading the message and growing our distribution list of alumnus one name at a time. If you are willing to assist me in this then I would ask that you contact me directly with any other alumni contacts that you have. Yes, it is that important to me that you contact me directly. I will then have the new names added to the distribution list and hopefully over time we can more accurately reflect our true membership.

Finally, I invite you to email me directly at rsmid@rla.ca at any time with your comments and ideas on how we can improve this relationship. If you would like to volunteer to be a member of our Alumni committee I would be very pleased. There are no dumb ideas so please don't hesitate to let me know what you are thinking. I appreciate your time and I look forward to hearing from you and meeting you in person post-COVID 19!

All the best,

Ryan

R.D. (Ryan) Smid MMM, MB, CD
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