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**New Zealand's wilderness teaches cadet valuable lessons**

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TRURO – Francis Castein has an appreciation for her legs.

The chief warrant officer with 2928 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps in Truro recently returned from a two-week leadership and wilderness expedition in New Zealand.

“I thought my legs were going to fall off,” said Manganese Mines’ Castein, 17, recalling the tremendous effort it took to hike and climb mountainsides, including Mount Brewster.

“It was harder than I thought and I was ready to give up in two hours. I had to keep self motivated,” by insisting she could accomplish the task.

Not that it was easy. One of the hikes – a three-day hike up Mount Brewster, while carrying a backpack weighing about 20 pounds, expended more energy than Castein anticipated. She estimates Mount Brewster’s height would have equalled four buildings in Truro piled on top of each other.

“Some of the steps up were half my body height and I had to get my friends to help me because my legs aren’t long enough.”

Castein said the experience, which also included sea kayaking and other outdoor events, taught her unique aspects of leadership.

“I learned, especially with hiking, that it’s not necessarily good to get things done fast and over with but to pace yourself to conserve energy and be more help to others,” Castein said. “I learned you always have to be on your game because others rely on you.”

Castein earned the trip by being the top army cadet in the province. She has been with the local army cadet corps for five years. Twenty-one people from throughout Canada went on the trip, including four officers.

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