



## **Veteran finds success in civilian career**

I grew up in Eastern Canada, and like most 19-year-olds really had no clear direction on what to do with my life. So in February 1986 I joined the Canadian Armed Forces and was sent to Cornwallis for basic training. My first posting was in Calgary, where I spent several years. Serving truly became a passion, and I enjoyed and felt fulfilled by what I was doing. Eventually I made my way to Gaagetown, New Brunswick, and joined the Royal Canadian Regiment. The unit became my family; this is where I felt I belonged.

While serving with the Royal Canadian Regiment, I did several exchanges, joint exercises and operations with some foreign national units, including Dutch and British as well as the American 3rd Marine Expedition Force, to name a few. I served in a variety of places throughout Africa and Europe. My career ended with a series of personal losses and injuries. The act of serving has its toll, and I had reached my limit. I stand humbled, however, as my story pales in comparison to some of the great men and women of the Armed Forces. Some sacrifices are in the name of humanity, not a country, and many gave far more than me.

After release from the service, I moved back to Alberta. I went through various jobs, and it became clear that fitting in was becoming more and more difficult. Eventually life collapsed around me; I was losing everything and down to sleeping in a truck. I finally ended up on the doorstep of the Legion. With their selfless commitment, I was put in contact with Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), and sheltered and care for. I eventually tried to re-enter the workforce, but an accident left me injured and bedridden for almost a year. It was time to really change my life and take control of my future.

For over a year I received treatment for my post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and I worked with a physiotherapist to repair the physical injuries. I was then put in the re-education program with VAC, operated by Canadian Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation Services (CVVRS). CVVRS did an excellent job in school selection and following through with support throughout the course. Going to college as a 47-year-old man with a diverse history is not an easy task. However, while in school, I received support, both financial and emotional, from VAC, CVVRS and Bow Valley College. I have never been much of an academic, and it was a hard endeavour, but I finally had support. My wife stood beside me while I recovered from my injuries and attended school. VAC covered all costs associated with my education and provided a modest salary that allowed me to focus on school. They supported my marriage and helped me through all the personal ups and downs I faced while attending school. Bow Valley College treated me with respect and dignity. I am proud to say I attended that institution, and I will support it any way I can for the rest of my life. My professors are now friends. I was picked up by Freedom 55 and currently work as a financial advisor, a job that allows me to reach out and help others to be protected from life's ups and downs. The job gave me the opportunity to serve once again.

My life still has bumps and bruises, but it is “normal” now that I have travelled a road that came from serving this country I love so dearly.

I had the pleasure while sitting in a doctor's office one day of chatting with a lady from Bihać, Bosnia. I was stationed in that little town while serving in the Armed Forces. She had lost her family, and described her nephew's demise and her sister's disappearance. She described crimes no person should endure. She eventually broke down crying and thanked me for serving. She now lives in Canada with her husband and is able to sleep at night without fear of persecution because Canada had "boots on the ground" and was involved in fighting for those who couldn't protect themselves.

Thank you to my military family; we do make a difference.

Thank you to VAC, who provided the tools to recover and change my life.

Thank you to CVVRS for the support I received during in the re-education process.

Thank you to Bow Valley College for providing the skills I needed to be a contributing member of the workforce.

Thank you to the Legion for direction and support that allowed me to climb the ladder of recovery.

Thank you to the Royal Alberta United Services Institute for allowing me to be in contact with my military family once again.

And thank you to Rod McLeod and his support for PTSD research.

#### For more information:

Visit [cvvrs.com](http://cvvrs.com) to learn more about how Canadian Veterans Vocational Services can help you transfer your skills and education to a rewarding civilian career.