



About the Exhibition

Photojournalist Stephen J. Thorne's striking black-and-white portraits of 18 Canadian veterans of the war in Afghanistan illustrate stories of loss, rehabilitation and hope. Some of the featured men and women knew instantly that their lives would be forever changed, while others realized it only long after the fact. All carry scars — some visible, others invisible. This moving exhibition takes an unflinching look at the struggles and hopes of Canadian veterans wounded during military service.

Sixteen of the portraits were previously presented as part of a 2017 series published by *Legion Magazine*. The two new stories and portraits are marked with an asterisk.

An exhibition developed by the Canadian War Museum in partnership with Legion Magazine. Photography and stories by Stephen J. Thorne.

Stories From The Wounded

Sergeant Étienne Aubé – “The Real Challenge Begins Now”

Sergeant Étienne Aubé stepped on a pressure plate connected to dozens of bombs. The blast launched him into the air, claimed two of his fingers and his right foot, and mangled his left leg. His family's support kept him going through five surgeries, post-traumatic stress disorder and struggles with addiction.

Corporal Gorden Boivin – “It Was Tough to Say ‘I Need Help’”

A rocket-propelled grenade stripped Corporal Gorden Boivin's left arm of flesh from shoulder to wrist. Metal fragments were embedded in his body — at least 10 of which remain to this day. Counselling brought him back from the brink of depression and addiction.

Captain Justin Brunelle – “It Comes With the Territory”

“I've never met a cook who hasn't been burned in the kitchen,” Captain Justin Brunelle says. “It could always have been worse.” But it was still bad enough. Repairing Brunelle's injuries required 20 operations, 400 staples, and 2,000 stitches. He returned to work three months after his injury.

Major Mark Campbell – “It Crushed Me”

Losing his legs to a Taliban bomb was not the toughest part for Major Mark Campbell. It was the fact that he could no longer be a soldier. With his sense of purpose gone, he fell into a deep depression, made worse by phantom limb pain and a lack of support.

Lieutenant Fred Caron – Besieged

“[My military career] was all I wanted to do in my life. But I knew... my time was up.” A Taliban ambush pinned down Lieutenant Fred Caron and his team for 10 hours before they could be evacuated. The incident took a toll: impatience, anxiety and nightmares plagued the 25-year veteran. After seven deployments, he was medically discharged for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Sergeant Steve Daniel – The Jump That Changed Everything

Sergeant Steve Daniel's 160th parachute jump went well... until it didn't. A veteran of Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, Daniel made a freefall jump over Trenton, Ontario. He landed hard, paralyzing his legs and ending his military career. He went back to school to study medicine, opening a medical practice in 2017. Daniel believes that his injury improves his ability to empathize with patients.

Master Corporal Natacha Dupuis – “I Was Inspired by the Other Injured”

During a routine clearing operation, the vehicle behind Master Corporal Natacha Dupuis struck a roadside bomb. Dupuis and her soldiers treated the wounded and collected the dead. Afterwards, she suffered panic attacks and flashbacks. As part of her recovery, she competed and medalled at the Invictus Games in 2016 and 2017.

Master Corporal Paul Franklin – “You Can't Regret Life”

“You can't regret life,” Master Corporal Paul Franklin says, adding with characteristic humour, “that should be in Latin; it would sound better.” After a suicide bomb destroyed Franklin's legs, doctors worked to repair the damage. Thirty surgeries later, Franklin made a tough call, telling doctors to remove his remaining leg. Using a wheelchair and suffering from phantom limb pain, Franklin tries to maintain a positive attitude.

Master Corporal André Girard – Miraculous Survival

Master Corporal André Girard's helmet stopped an enemy bullet from killing him, but fragments pierced his brain. Doctors had to remove 30 per cent of his skull, replacing it with a 3D-printed acrylic shell. Accepting what had happened to him that day took years of rehabilitation and counselling.

Tracy Kerr and Corporal Billy Kerr – Healing With Horses

Corporal Billy Kerr lost both legs and his left forearm to a Taliban bomb. His wife Tracy's war began the day Billy's ended. She supported his recovery, suppressing her own trauma until she needed care as well. Riding horses helped. Physical therapy, combined with their emotional connection to the animals, allowed them to heal. Today, they open their ranch to others in need.

Corporal Andrew Knisley and Second Lieutenant Erin Moore – “Soldiers Have a Way of Motivating Each Other”

In 2008, a roadside bomb destroyed Corporal Andrew Knisley's right leg. While he recovered in the hospital, the camaraderie of other wounded soldiers helped him learn to walk again. At home, his fiancée Erin Moore buoyed his spirits as he negotiated the

frustrating process of securing benefits. Knisley retired from the army in 2017, just as Moore enlisted.

***Sergeant Macha Khoudja-Poirier – “If You Don’t Ask for Help, Nobody Will Come Looking for You”**

Sergeant Macha Khoudja-Poirier served in a medical unit on her second deployment to Afghanistan, in 2009. She was confronted with traumatic injuries almost daily. Exhausted, she slept through a rocket attack that hit her sleeping quarters. For years, she did not address the post-traumatic stress disorder caused by her experiences in Afghanistan and quake-stricken Haiti. She was released from the Canadian Forces on medical grounds in 2017.

***Captain H el ene LeScelleur – “That Night I Was Not Afraid to Die”**

It was a long, dark night for Captain H el ene LeScelleur. In October 2007, a roadside bomb broke her pelvic bone and wounded everyone in her vehicle. Cut off from the rest of their convoy, she carried a wounded man 200 metres to safety, then stood guard all night, anticipating a Taliban attack. She suffered panic attacks and considered suicide before she was medically released. She now studies social work, hoping to improve services for veterans struggling with psychological trauma.

Captain Christian Maranda – “I Never Quit”

Captain Christian Maranda was watching combat engineers defuse a roadside bomb when the Taliban detonated the device, killing the engineers and launching him 17 metres away. He sustained serious injuries to his face, arms and legs. His heart stopped twice on the operating table. Maranda considers himself lucky to be alive after 60 surgeries and an agonizing rehabilitation.

Sergeant Nic Meunier – “What’s a Life Worth?”

“What’s a life worth?” Nic Meunier asks. Meunier burned his lungs inhaling battery acid during a shipwreck rescue, and was later diagnosed with lung cancer. After his medical retirement from the armed forces, Meunier struggled with post-traumatic stress. To find peace, he thinks of the people he saved.

Master Corporal Jody Mitic and Joanne Fisher-Mitic – In the Public Eye

“Mom, I’ve been hurt but it’s nothing serious.” Jody Mitic said these words after he stepped on an explosive device, knowing he had already lost his right leg and was heading into surgery to remove his left foot. Post-injury, his life has been led largely in the public eye, as a public speaker, author, Ottawa city councillor, and contestant on *The Amazing Race Canada*.

Corporal Martin Renaud and Master Warrant Officer Andr e Renaud – Father and Son

“A part of us is still over there,” Andr e Renaud says. “There” is Afghanistan; “us” is himself and his son, Martin. Father and son served in Afghanistan simultaneously. When Martin’s vehicle hit an improvised bomb, his father heard it, 15 kilometres away. The explosion broke Martin’s spine, and doctors amputated his right foot and his left leg. Martin’s recovery involved his whole family.

Leah Cuffe and Master Corporal Mike Trauner – “She’s Seen Me at My Worst”

An explosion had severed both of Master Corporal Mike Trauner’s legs, and shredded his left arm. His fiancée Leah Cuffe says, “I didn’t miss a beat. It was ‘What’s next?’” Cuffe and Trauner supported each other through 18 surgeries; today, they offer counselling to couples facing similar challenges.

Resources for Recovery

The stories featured in this exhibition describe serious physical injuries and psychological trauma. They also show the toll rehabilitation can take on individuals and their loved ones. If you are reading this, and are suffering, you are not alone. Help is available.

Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service
1-800-268-7708

Operational Stress Injury Social Support
1-800-883-6094

Canada Suicide Prevention Service
1-833-456-4566

This exhibition includes graphic accounts of physical injury and emotional trauma, which some visitors may find disturbing.

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