Billy Bishop Museum's 2026 Honouring Our Local Veterans

Captain Steven Christopher Grabowski
The Royal Canadian Regiment

Family Life

Steven Christopher Grabowski was born August 1, 1968, to Donna and John Grabowski. He grew up in Woodstock, Ontario, where he attended Eastdale Public School and College Avenue Secondary School. After high school Steven attended Loyalist College, with the hope to pursue policing. However, he was too young to attend police cadet school, which lead him to enlist with the military instead.

Steven married Tracey (née Deer) in December 2006. The couple have five children, Jonathan, Jessica, Aurora, James, and Mercedes.

After retiring from the military, Steven accepted a position with Bruce Power, from which he retired in June 2020. Steven still regularly attends gatherings with other veterans and enjoys being involved in the community. He and a friend host workshops for veterans hoping to learn blacksmithing techniques.

Military Service

Steven Christopher Grabowski enlisted in 1988, seeking the adventure he had heard about from friends already in the military. His family has a tradition of military service, as his paternal grandfather served with the Polish Second Corps and his maternal grandfather and great-uncles served with various Ontario regiments during the Second World War.

His attended a 10 week basic training course at Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, learning winter survival techniques, marksmanship, bivouac set ups, and other infanteer skills.

After completing his initial training in Cornwallis, he was transferred to Petawawa for sixteen weeks of Battle School, being assigned to the Royal Canadian Regiment. Here, Steven furthered his infantry trade skills.

Decorations

- NATO Medal for Former Yugoslavia (NATO-FY)
- Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal
- Canadian Forces' Decoration and Bar

Military Service

As a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment, Steven served in the reconnaissance and pioneer platoons. He completed the basic parachute qualification, which made him eligible for the Canadian Airborne Regiment. With the Canadian Airborne Regiment, he acquired knowledge of how to organize airborne attacks, mountain operations, war fighting in hostile environments and how to detect and decommission mines.

Steven was deployed overseas three times to Bosnia-Herzegovina. His first tour was from November 1992 to May 1993 with the UNPROFOR, as a Master Corporal and Section 2IC. Their main tasks were patrolling UN designated demilitarized zones and medical evacuation sites, conducting presence patrols, and escorting UNHDR convoys. Steve was with one of the first units into Srebrenica and witnessed evidence of the horrible atrocities that had been committed.

His second tour was from July 1998 to February 1999, as part of the NATO operation based in Camp Maple Leaf. The main tasks for this tour were disrupting movement of materials from containment sites, patrolling and monitoring roads for with illegal immigration through Bosnia, and presence patrols. One task on this tour was apprehending and removing Croatian military police who had encroached across the approved border zones in Dvar.

His final tour was from May to February 2001 in Croatia. He notes this was more of a "peaceful tour" where he was conducting area patrols and providing humanitarian aid. However, a general strike raised tensions. His unit was responsible for providing support for Italian special forces who extracted hard documents from the Tomislavgrad Bank to look for organized corruption. He was on a day pass to Spilt, Croatia, when the events of September 11, 2001 occurred and witnessed the increased military tension in the area. During this tour, he was approached about taking a commission.

From 2004 to 2008, Steven was stationed at the Land Forces Central Training Centre, Meaford, as an Operations Officer and Adjutant. Captain Grabowski retired from the Canadian Armed Forces in April 2008.

Since retiring from the Canadian Armed Forces, Steven has become an advocate for veterans, including promoting the treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other related Operational Stress Injuries. To Steven, the most important lessons learned from his experience centre around four words: "Duty, Honour, Integrity and Comradeship."