

## **Sergeant Christopher Anderson**

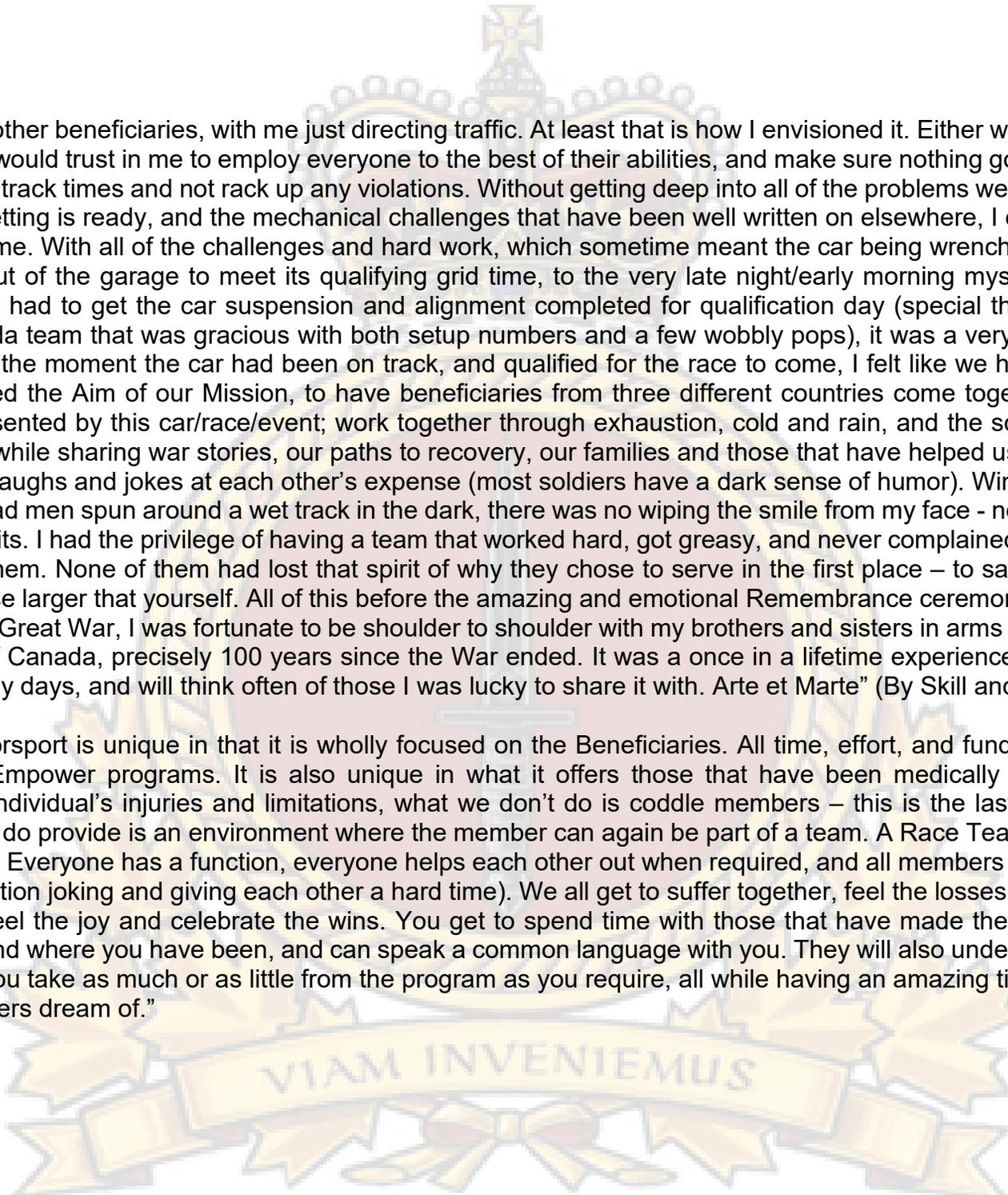
Sergeant Christopher Anderson, Canadian Special Forces, has completed several Operation Motorsport 'Engage' events and has made the transition from beneficiary to Recovery Programs Manager.

Christopher joined the CAF (Canadian Air Force) in 1997 as Infantry. He later transferred to the RCEME (Royal Canadian Electrical Mechanical Engineers) Branch as a Vehicle Technician. Chris later transferred within the branch to Electro-Optics Technician (formerly Fire Control Systems). After suffering an OSI (Operational Stress Injury), which resulted in severe OCD reaction to normal stress, Chris was successfully treated with two rounds of CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) and medications treating depression and anxiety. Post treatment, he went on to successfully pass selection for the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR Unit within the CANSOFCOM Branch), later transferring to his current position with CJIRU (Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit). Chris has had various deployments overseas including Israel, Syria, Africa, Jordan and Iraq. He now acts as a mentor and facilitator within SOMA (Special Ops Mental Agility) Program. The program helps members gain the tools and techniques to deal with daily and combat stress, to raise awareness and reduce the stigma related to mental health and open the door for others to share their experiences with mental health issues and/or seek help.

Christopher speaks about his experiences with Operation Motorsport, "My first 24-hour race I really felt that I was integral to the team. As the day turned to night, I knew that if I didn't do my part and shoulder the load the team would falter. You don't tire when you are part of a team. I was surprised at how naturally we all found our places within the professional teams. As some of the pros were ex-military, we had a common language. We really bonded and I got to do a whole season's worth of pit stops in one weekend."

At the Pirelli World Challenge Series in Watkins Glen, Chris made the transition from beneficiary to beneficiary ambassador/volunteer. His duties included making his way between participating teams to speak with other beneficiaries, team members and partners in hopes of understanding some of the team and beneficiary challenges with a goal of improving the experience. Chris finished the season at the Race of Remembrance in Wales and then spend the off season assisting with the development and implementation of a 2019 program participation and infrastructure growth plan.

Christopher on ROR 2018 – "Race of Remembrance 2018 in Whales, UK, is an event hard to describe, and I believe others have spoken better to it, so I will speak only to my experience and perspective. I was nominated to act as the Pit Crew Chief on the Operation Motorsport race car (a Mazda World Cup spec car). This means that all the truly hard and dirty work would



be done by the other beneficiaries, with me just directing traffic. At least that is how I envisioned it. Either way it was a great honor that they would trust in me to employ everyone to the best of their abilities, and make sure nothing got missed, so we would make our track times and not rack up any violations. Without getting deep into all of the problems we had with getting the car there, getting it ready, and the mechanical challenges that have been well written on elsewhere, I can speak to the effect it had on me. With all of the challenges and hard work, which sometime meant the car being wrenched on still as it's being backed out of the garage to meet its qualifying grid time, to the very late night/early morning myself and my race engineer (Theo) had to get the car suspension and alignment completed for qualification day (special thanks to another competing Mazda team that was gracious with both setup numbers and a few wobbly pops), it was a very exhausting few days. However, the moment the car had been on track, and qualified for the race to come, I felt like we had already won. We had achieved the Aim of our Mission, to have beneficiaries from three different countries come together around the camp fire represented by this car/race/event; work together through exhaustion, cold and rain, and the scars and injuries we all carry, all while sharing war stories, our paths to recovery, our families and those that have helped us survive, and of course a ton of laughs and jokes at each other's expense (most soldiers have a dark sense of humor). Win or lose on race day, as other mad men spun around a wet track in the dark, there was no wiping the smile from my face - nothing that could dampen my spirits. I had the privilege of having a team that worked hard, got greasy, and never complained no matter what was thrown at them. None of them had lost that spirit of why they chose to serve in the first place – to sacrifice for others and for a purpose larger than yourself. All of this before the amazing and emotional Remembrance ceremony, where on the Armistice of the Great War, I was fortunate to be shoulder to shoulder with my brothers and sisters in arms as a wreath was laid on behalf of Canada, precisely 100 years since the War ended. It was a once in a lifetime experience I will carry with me the rest of my days, and will think often of those I was lucky to share it with. Arte et Marte” (By Skill and By Fighting)

“Operation Motorsport is unique in that it is wholly focused on the Beneficiaries. All time, effort, and funds go toward the Excite/Engage/Empower programs. It is also unique in what it offers those that have been medically released. While accounting for individual's injuries and limitations, what we don't do is coddle members – this is the last thing a Soldier wants. What we do provide is an environment where the member can again be part of a team. A Race Team is very similar to a Military Det. Everyone has a function, everyone helps each other out when required, and all members have a common goal (not to mention joking and giving each other a hard time). We all get to suffer together, feel the losses and challenges, and of course feel the joy and celebrate the wins. You get to spend time with those that have made the same choice to serve, understand where you have been, and can speak a common language with you. They will also understand if you say nothing at all. You take as much or as little from the program as you require, all while having an amazing time in areas and experiences others dream of.”