



2023 UPEI Inspiring Young Alumni Award

Tyler Coady (BA 2013)

In 2007, Tyler Coady was a 22-year-old military reservist in Afghanistan where he was seriously injured by roadside bombs. Tyler suffered traumatic brain injury, nerve damage, cervical strain, hearing loss and eventually was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Thankfully, most Canadians will never experience anything like that, but for military personnel and other service veterans, what happened to Tyler is all too familiar. For Tyler and other PEI veterans at the time, it was and remains difficult to access resources and supports that are more readily available for military members and their families who lived on or near base.

Tyler's recovery has been long and difficult. His PTSD has at times been debilitating and isolating. Crowds, loud noises, and burning smells can trigger PTSD symptoms and increase avoidance of family, friends, and social supports. Eventually, Tyler found some comfort in a peer support group called Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS) among other veterans who also struggled with reintegration. He also found many benefits from reconnecting with nature.

The trauma he suffered fighting a war and the struggles he faces long after were the motivation Tyler needed to get involved and to make a difference for others. He became an advocate for better access to resources in PEI. He ran the OSISS group for other veterans in PEI and was named a founding board member and eventual board chair of the Prince Edward Island Military Family Resource Centre.

Tyler's desire to understand the impacts of PTSD on himself and those closest to him led him to pursue a BA in psychology at UPEI and an MA in Military Psychology from Adler University. As a crisis negotiator, Tyler helped veterans through their worst moments. This helped develop his research for publications with the Canadian Institute of Military and Veteran Health Research and helped to inform policy decisions for veteran's health initiatives.

Tyler has a unique combination of lived experience, academic expertise, and experience working with other veterans, including helping other veterans to reconnect with nature. That's why it was a natural decision for him to donate 10 hectares of hardwood forest to the Island Nature Trust and to develop private forest walking trails for veterans and military families.

Tyler was honoured by the City of Charlottetown at the 2008 and 2021 Veterans Recognition Awards. He has served on the board of the Island Nature Trust, and he continues to inspire others to seek support and reconnect with nature as part of their recovery from traumatic events.

In recognition of his many achievements and tireless work supporting veterans in PEI and abroad, the UPEI Alumni Association is proud to present Tyler Coady, BA 2013, with a 2023 Inspiring Young Alumni Award.