

Cyber bootcamp aims to match tech-savvy veterans with their next employer

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Published June 17, 2026



Royal Canadian Air Force veteran Daniel Shang, shown at the Coding for Veterans office in Toronto, signed up for the organization's cybersecurity bootcamp to test his skills and network with corporations. Gabriel Hutchinson

On Thursday, about 20 students are gathering in-person for the first time in a computer lab at Toronto's George Brown Polytechnic to test their cybersecurity skills in a simulated attack.

But unlike your average hackathon, where fledgling undergraduate computer whizzes attempt to break through a wall of online job applications by wooing corporate sponsors in attendance, these students aren't looking for their first adult jobs.

The students in this class just finished serving their country in the military. Now, they're wondering what's next.

“After releasing to civilian life, it takes quite a bit of time to transition to what I want to do next, because there’s way too many careers out there,” said Daniel Shang, a Royal Canadian Air Force veteran, who retired from the military in 2023.

Luckily, Mr. Shang says, he came across Coding for Veterans, the organization hosting this week’s cybersecurity event. The Canadian non-profit runs several programs to help veterans retrain once they leave the military. The classes work toward university and industry certifications to support them landing jobs in the global tech industry.

The courses are open to veterans, reservists, currently serving Armed Forces members and their families. They’re held fully online through the University of Ottawa and can be completed within 12 months through full-time or part-time study.

Jeff Musson, founder and executive director of Coding for Veterans, said his organization started with five students in 2019. In January, he enrolled its 1,000th student.

[With fewer barriers to entry, military enlistment is on the rise](#)

Engagement and interest in its programs are growing, he said, in tandem with Ottawa’s Defence Industrial Strategy highlighting digital systems as a priority and a growing number of new recruits in the Canadian Armed Forces as the country attempts to bolster its troops.

Mr. Shang just enrolled in his second Coding for Veterans course. After learning how to detect and respond to cybersecurity incidents, he’s now starting to study generative artificial intelligence to improve his chances of landing work.

Veterans such as Mr. Shang are ideal candidates for jobs in Canada’s information technology sector, Mr. Musson said.