



The Future Begins Now

## **BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE**

2017

Report To Government  
& Community Stakeholders



BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE

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WE HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE, AND IT IS NOW

Greetings,

My name is Dr. Henry Harder. I am a Professor and Research Chair in the School of Health Sciences at the University of Northern British Columbia, and President of British Columbia's Brain Injury Alliance board of directors. I've worked with people living with brain injuries and their supporters for over 30 years, and for decades witnessed firsthand how benefits and services for persons with brain injuries have been chronically underfunded in British Columbia.

The Brain Injury Alliance was formed 2014 to make government aware of the plight of non-profit community brain injury associations, and to provide a fair and equitable entity to distribute fiscal assistance to community based non-profit brain injury societies in order to maintain and enhance the scope of programs and services available to survivors and their families. In 2015, Government entrusted the Alliance with \$3 million to be distributed over 3 years. In 2017, the Alliance gratefully received another \$3 million (much less than requested) with the same distribution stipulation.

In the last two years, \$1,913,251.00 of the first \$3 million has been distributed by the Alliance to member organizations. The funds have made a huge difference to the lives of vulnerable British Columbians, but have only gone a small way toward addressing the current and increasing service needs.

Through teamwork and collaboration, wonders can be achieved. I, and the Brain Injury Alliance, look forward to working with Government to help build a better British Columbia for us all. I submit to you the Brain Injury Alliance 2017 Report To Government.

Dr. Henry Harder, PhD





People living with brain injury are often the most complex and difficult to serve.\*<sup>3</sup>



Community brain injury associations share just \$1 million a year from government to provide program and services to all of British Columbia.

Once injured, individuals are three times more likely to sustain another concussion while recovering from a concussion.\*<sup>5</sup>

Concussions are the most common form of brain injury, yet they are often under-reported and under-treated due to a lack of public awareness, knowledge among medical professionals, and limited availability of data.



Traditional service strategies, based on motivational or behavioural management, are ineffective for people with cognitive challenges from an acquired brain injury.\*<sup>3</sup>



The specific and complex needs of brain injury survivors cannot adequately be met by the limited abilities offered by generic programs and case management services. Trained brain injury staff are a critical part of a comprehensive long term care strategy.\*<sup>3</sup>

# THE ISSUE

*The public health burden of acquired brain injury in British Columbia is estimated at \$2,974,755,200 per year\*<sup>1</sup>*

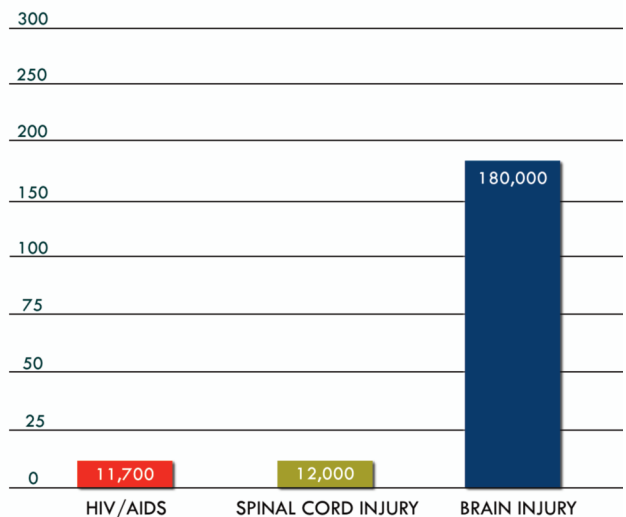
## FOR HEALTH CARE

The public health burden of acquired brain injury in British Columbia is estimated to be \$2,974,755,200 per year\*<sup>1</sup>, the third largest in Canada. The social impact directly and indirectly affects the lives of hundreds of thousands of British Columbians.

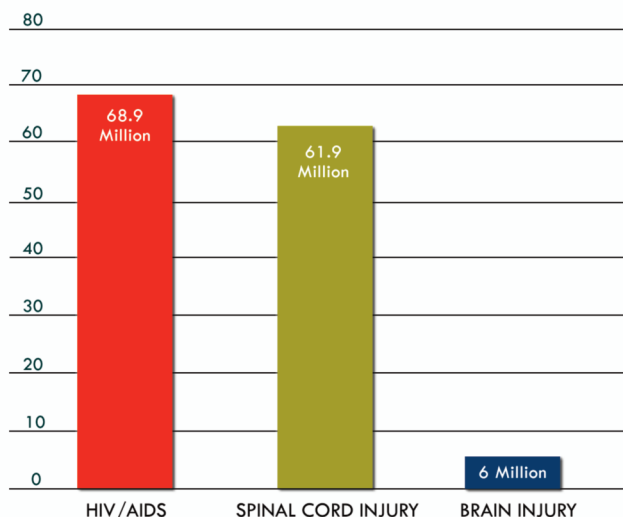
In addition to direct and indirect costs, there are additional costs often associated with brain injuries. These costs are difficult to quantify, and cause much distress to the lives of brain injured persons and their families. A few of those issues are additional financial burdens, pain, suffering, social isolation, loss of income and economic dependence.

Excluding recent overdoses, there are an estimated 22,000 new brain injuries reported each year. The annual rate of acquired brain injury is 44 times that of multiple sclerosis and spinal cord injury, 30 times that of breast cancer, and 400 times that of HIV/AIDS. Currently, brain injury occurs at a rate greater than that of all known cases of multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, HIV/AIDS and breast cancer per year combined.\*<sup>2</sup>

Estimated Number Of Persons Per Issue In BC



Millions Of Dollars In Funding Per Issue 1997 - 2017





**Children and teenagers convicted of crime are more likely to have had an untreated pre-crime acquired brain injury.\*<sup>10</sup>**

**Homelessness has been found to be related to both brain injury and prior imprisonment.\*<sup>12</sup>**

**Prisoners with brain injuries may present mental health issues like severe depression and anxiety, anger, suicidal thoughts, and/or attempts.\*<sup>13</sup>**

**Brain Injury acts as a gateway for the development of many psychiatric disorders.\*<sup>11</sup>**

**The Brain Injury Alliance and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognize brain injury in correction facilities as an important public health problem.**



**Funding from the Brain Injury Alliance helped the Prince George Brain Injured Group launch the first correction facility based brain injury education program in Canada here in BC. Thanks to BC Corrections, this award winning program is now expanding across the province.**

**The first information video produced in North America to help police deal specifically with persons living with brain injury was also created in BC by the Northern Brain Injury Association with Alliance funding.**

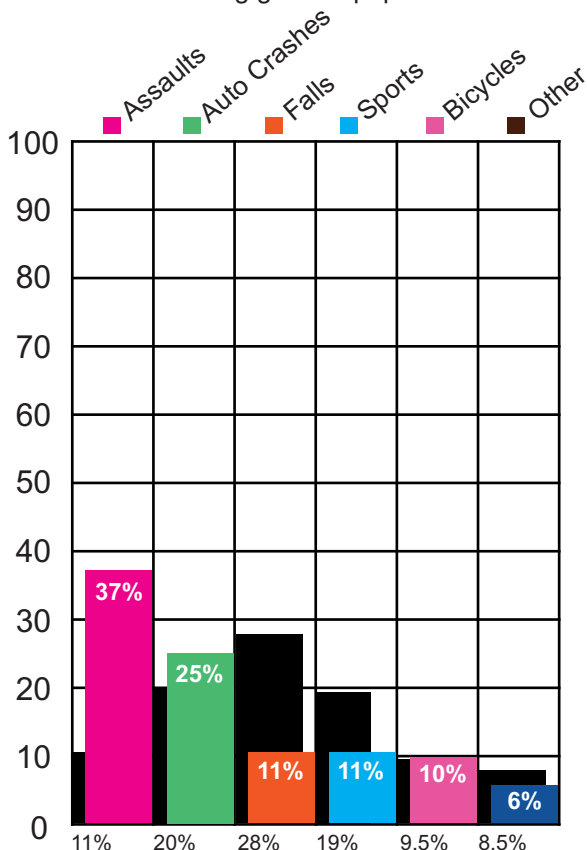
# THE ISSUE

*A history of brain injury is common among inmates, including women, estimated to affect up to 87% of jail and prison populations.*

Screening inmates for brain injury, and networking with local brain injury associations, helps to develop a superior Integrated Offender Management program.

**Causes Of Brain Injury Among Prisoners**

■ Rate among general population



## FOR JUSTICE

Studies suggest that a history of brain injury is common among inmates, including females, and it is estimated to affect up to 87% of jail and prison populations.

According to Statistics Canada, the average yearly cost of male inmate incarceration is \$106,583 per year. \$203,061 for females (Public Safety Canada, 2010). Aboriginal people made up 26% of total custodial admissions in 2013/2014.\*6

Surveys indicate that up to 80% of all inmates have suffered at least one brain injury, as compared to 8.5% of the general population.\*7 Of those who self identify, none reported receiving education about brain injury, or help to rehabilitate and cope with the effects of their injury.

In a recent study of TBI among federal prison inmates, a high percentage of women reported a history of TBI, especially multiple concussions, often totaling 10 or more, and these were usually associated with interpersonal violence.\*9



Increasing access to care, and improving the effectiveness of brain injury rehabilitation services at all levels, is the key to improving the overall quality of life for those living with brain injury and their loved ones, while decreasing costs to government.

To further reduce the negative health effects of acquired brain injury, it is imperative that healthcare ‘silos’ be discarded, and integrated services be developed. Justice, public health and research will benefit tremendously by working collaboratively with community brain injury associations to design, implement, and evaluate effective community based rehabilitation strategies.

A study\*<sup>20</sup> conducted in British Columbia discovered that province’s homeless population currently costs the public system \$55,000 per person per year, and if every homeless person were instead provided with adequate housing and supports (for just \$37,000) — it would save the province \$211 million every year.



53% of homeless individuals live with brain injury. The vast majority (77%) were injured prior to becoming homeless.\*<sup>21</sup>

Up to 10% of children have an undiagnosed brain injury that, without help, will affect their learning abilities life long.\*<sup>3</sup>



20% of children diagnosed with emotional disabilities, and 30% classified as ‘Learning Disabled’, have brain injuries.\*<sup>3</sup>



# THE ISSUE







*Brain injury of any kind is frightening and confusing. Once injured, it can be very difficult to navigate and cope with the complex issues of life.*

## FOR INDIVIDUALS

As expressed by persons with a brain injury, the most challenging issues they face are:

- Stigma (public perception and misunderstanding)
- Poverty (lack of help to access financial supports, such as assistance with where to go, what to do, communicating needs, filling out forms, etc.)
- Homelessness (lack of safe, affordable housing)
- Mental health and addiction (service often denied or underserved by mental health services)
- Behavioral management (anger management, emotional support, self-advocacy, etc.)
- Life skills (shopping, cooking, managing money, etc.)
- Communication (problems articulating their needs, and understanding what is being said to them)
- Medical management (physical & mental healthcare)
- Social isolation (loss of friends and family, loss of mobility, financial hardship, etc.)
- Transportation (loss of license, money, vehicle, etc.)
- Employment (obtaining, retaining, and accessing re-training, etc.)
- Legal (involvement with the justice system)

## AVERAGE HOUSING COST TO TAXPAYERS PER MONTH<sup>2014,15</sup>

	hospital bed	\$10,900
	homeless	\$4,427
	correctional facility	\$4,333
	long-term care	\$3,240
	shelter	\$1,932
	subsidized housing	\$701

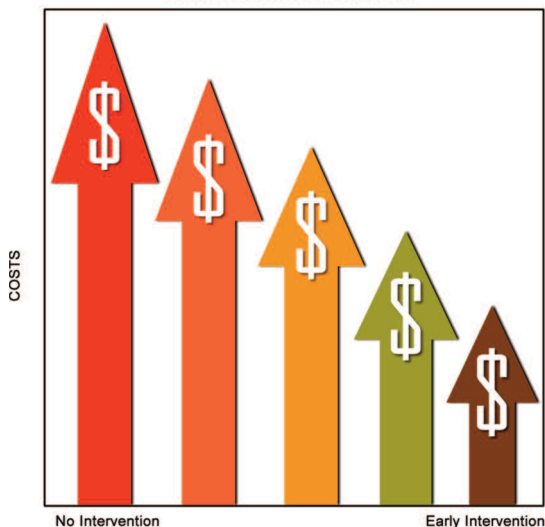
## AVERAGE ANNUAL SINGLE INCOME ASSISTANCE AND CURRENT HOUSING RATES<sup>2016,17,18,19</sup>

Single person "Low Income Cut Off" (LICO) from Government of Canada (formerly known as the 'poverty line')	<b>\$24,600</b>
Income Assistance for a single person - no disability	<b>\$7,320</b> - \$17,280 LICO
Income Assistance for a single person with Persistent Multiple Barriers	<b>\$7,895</b> - \$16,705 LICO
Income Assistance for a single person - Disability Assistance	<b>\$11,777</b> - \$12,823 LICO
Average one bedroom apartment rental in Prince George per year	<b>\$9,924</b>
Average one bedroom apartment rental in Vancouver per year	<b>\$25,080</b>

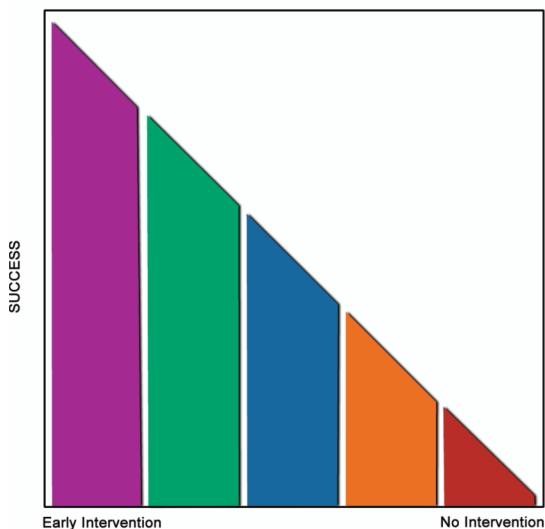
# THE ISSUE

*Government spends about \$1.5 billion per year to fund mental health and substance use programs and services, plus another \$500 million to cope with mental health and substance use concerns.*

**COST OF INTERVENTION**



**RATE OF SUCCESS**



## FOR MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION

- There is a strong correlation between substance abuse with survivors of brain injury.\*<sup>22</sup>
- Substance abuse significantly increases the risk of sustaining another brain injury.\*<sup>22</sup>

Brain Injured persons are:

- 28% more likely to be diagnosed as bipolar.\*<sup>23</sup>
- 40% of brain injury victims suffer from two or more psychiatric disorders\*<sup>26</sup>
- 59% more likely to develop depression\*<sup>23</sup>
- 65% more likely to be diagnosed as schizophrenic\*<sup>23</sup>
- 439% more likely to develop organic mental disorders.\*<sup>23</sup>
- Brain injury presents challenges to recovery from substance abuse\*<sup>22</sup>
- Survivors have significantly higher occurrences of suicide attempts\*<sup>25</sup>
- Symptoms similar to psychosis and dementia may manifest, increasing the likelihood of misdiagnosis\*<sup>24</sup>
- Life for those struggling with a brain injury and mental health concerns is often a matter of simply surviving each day with minimal to no support.\*<sup>24</sup>

# The Response



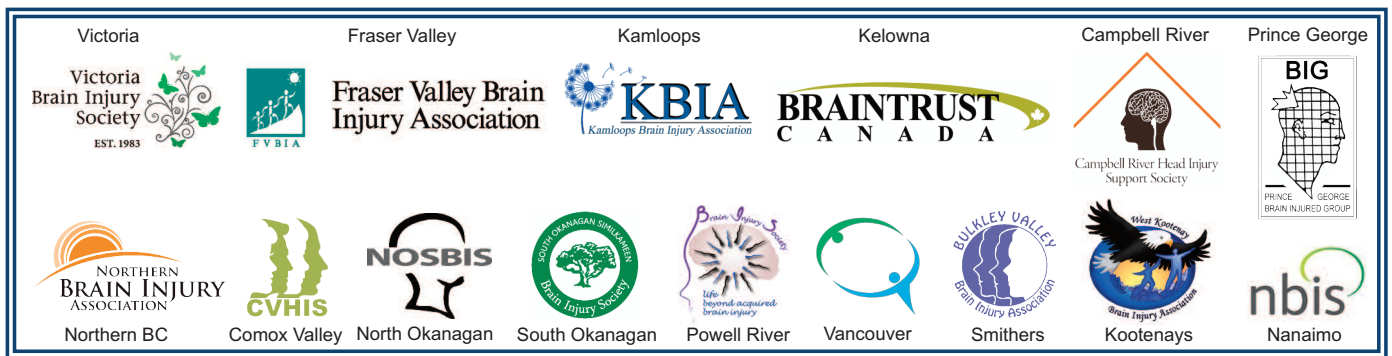
## BRAIN INJURY: A PERSONAL CHALLENGE - A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The Brain Injury Alliance (Alliance) was created in 2014 to address serious funding disparities that saw charitable non-profit brain injury associations go from 45 in 2001, to only 15 in 2017. This despite brain injury numbers increasing by at least 22,000 new reported brain injuries every year, excluding the new brain injuries from fentanyl overdose.

The Brain Injury Alliance is a province wide organization in British Columbia composed of brain injury organizations working together to improve the quality of life for persons living with a brain injury, their families, and their communities. The Alliance’s function is to acquire and fairly distribute critically important supplemental service and program funding. The funding is provided to help charitable non-profit community brain injury associations and agencies meet the ever increasing need for professional brain injury programs and services.

In 2015, the Alliance requested \$5 million per year to meet the needs for community brain injury programs and services which was recommended by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (Committee). The Government provided the Alliance with \$3 million dollars to be distributed over three years. The Alliance appealed to government in 2016 asking for \$4 million per year, with recommendation by the Committee to increase the amount provided. Government instead provided an additional \$3 million, again to be distributed at only \$1 million per year.

The Alliance is well aware of the tremendous fiscal demands for funding, but asks government to prioritize brain injury, and provide the Alliance with sufficient annual funding of \$4 million per year, added as a budgetary line item, to ensure the continuity and expansion of the most innovative and acclaimed community brain injury rehabilitation strategies and services in North America.



## THE GOAL OF COMMUNITY BRAIN INJURY REHABILITATION

is to improve the quality of life of persons living with a brain injury by assisting them to live and function as independently as possible, while discovering purpose, personal worth, engaging friends and family, and participating in their community.

Community brain injury associations (CBIA) are the front line workers in the emerging field of brain injury, and they significantly impact lives in positive and demonstrable ways. They know the success of community rehabilitation lies in programs and services individualized to each person. CBIA also collect invaluable data rarely sought by the health care sector when prioritizing public health strategy.

CBIA know too well how often a brain injured person is excluded from activities and events due to social-environmental factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, income, social support, caregiver and family functioning). CBIA witness firsthand the negative effect that exclusion has on outcomes post injury, and do all they can to transform exclusion to inclusion.

Community rehabilitation goals are structured to improve self-worth, social functioning, quality of life, and community reintegration. They typically focus on education, assisting communication, helping cope with challenges, liaison with professionals, assist with completing forms, and accessing social services.

The positive health effects, multiple social benefits, and reduction of harm all demonstrate the incredible value of community rehabilitative programs and services provided by non-profit brain injury associations.

However, post acute care rehabilitation is adversely impacted by a lack of specialty providers, particularly in rural and remote areas, and is compounded greatly by a lack of financial resources available to persons struggling to live with the challenges of brain injury.

The Brain Injury Alliance is both proud and honoured to serve government by distributing critical program and services funding to these amazing organizations struggling to serve existing needs, and the needs of rapidly increasing numbers of new persons who need their assistance.

**Persons living with a brain injury are not 'loafers', 'slackers' or 'fakers'. They are hurt, and need help to heal as they adjust to life after injury.**





# The Result

MEDICINE IS NOT ONLY A SCIENCE; IT IS ALSO AN ART. IT DOES NOT CONSIST OF COMPOUNDING PILLS AND PLASTERS; IT DEALS WITH THE VERY PROCESSES OF LIFE, WHICH MUST BE UNDERSTOOD BEFORE THEY MAY BE GUIDED. ~ PARACELSUS ~

Government’s investment in community brain injury programs and services has resulted in incredible dividends, a yield that has surpassed all projections. Lives of quiet desperation have transitioned from sad and lonely, to happy and socially involved. Isolation has been replaced by integration and participation, and thousands of lives have taken dramatic turns for the better.

Investing in community non-profit brain injury services is a win-win. From border to border, and even beyond, lives are improving because of creative, innovative, and compassionate leadership at the very highest levels of government. Support of the Alliance aligns public funding with social values, and helps to ensure that all British Columbians are receiving the level of care that they deserve.

Dollar for dollar, non-profit community brain injury associations are an incredible value and asset. They cost so little, and yet provide so much. It is also important to give credit where credit is due, so we thank Government and our community stakeholders for the trust extended to the Alliance, and the vision to provide us with the opportunity to show what can be done when we all work together. We look forward to continue helping those who help others, because people helping people is incredibly powerful.

Now we’d like to share a few stories about some of the good made possible by funding provided to the Alliance. As you’ll read, your belief has provided welcomed relief, your giving has improved how injured persons are living, and doors of possibility once closed, are now open and waiting. Their future is bright, their hearts are filled with hope, and their days are filled with purpose. Thank you so very much!

Government’s investment in community brain injury programs and services has resulted in incredible dividends, a yield that has surpassed all projections.



The night of her birthday in 2009, Toni's life changed forever. She had just moved into a new house and was looking forward to looking after her son, hanging out with him at the park, and taking care of him. She laid down in bed with a huge headache. After getting into bed, she doesn't remember what happened for the next few months.

Toni had an aneurysm in the brain stem. Unable to breathe for herself, Toni was put on a ventilator and her wife was told to prepare for the worst. Luckily for everyone who knows Toni, she is a fighter – her vital signs began to improve, and after extensive surgery and time in ICU, Toni began to recover. After her surgeries Toni had to relearn everything again. She describes it as like being a baby, she had to learn to walk, talk and eat again.

The first couple of years after her surgery Toni had to try to find her way, and figure out who she was. She describes how there "was a lot of work trying to survive". Her doctor suggested that she come to the Victoria Brain Injury Society, where she was able to meet with a Case Manager who helped her understand and make sense of what she was going through. She began to take courses with VBIS and attended the peer support group.

She is now volunteering with Victoria Brain Injury Society, helping support other brain injury survivors to figure out their way and adapt to their new life. Toni says she hopes to be able to "impact someone's life the way VBIS has impacted mine, because yeah, we have a brain injury, but that doesn't mean we can't feel good."



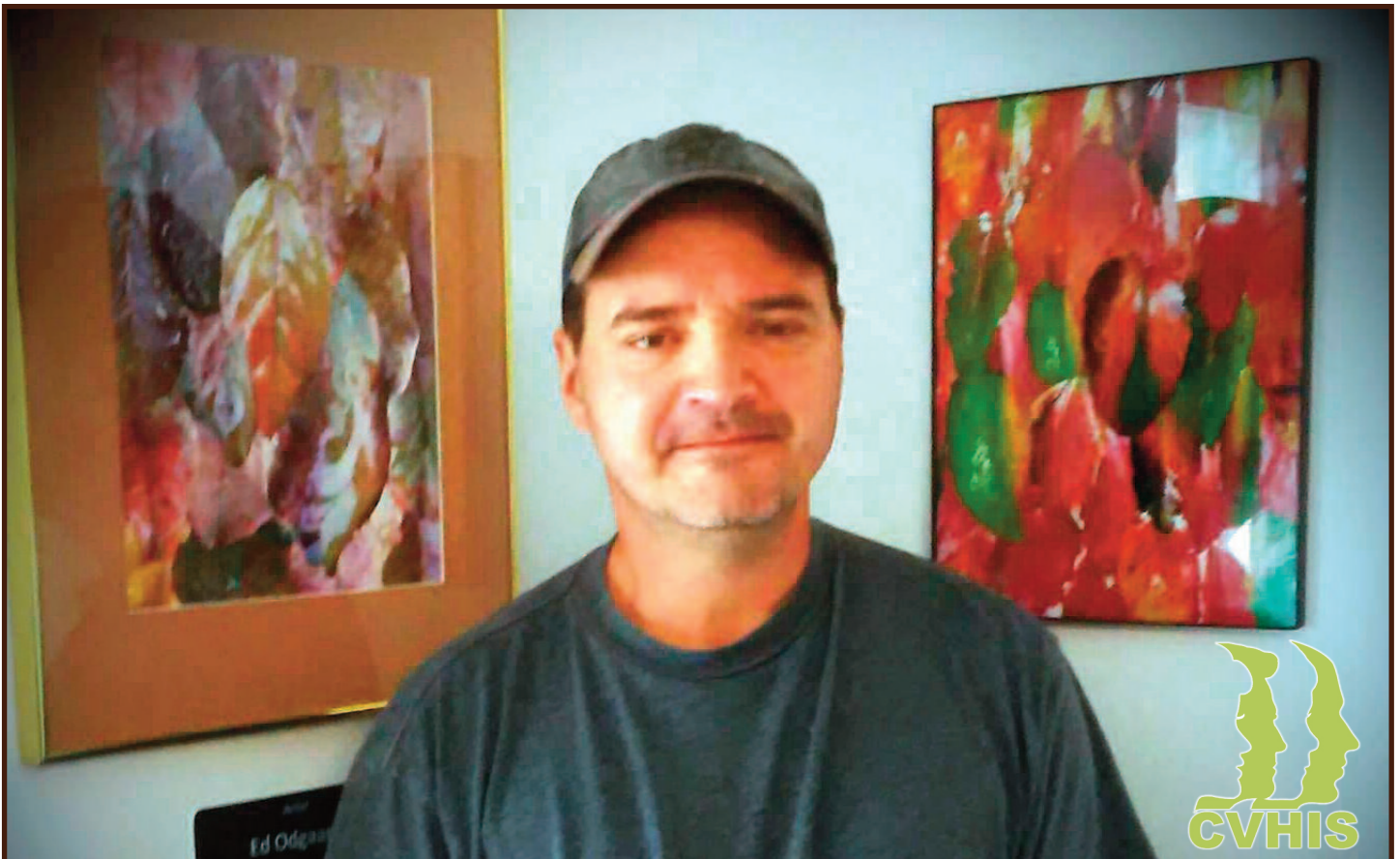
For the second year in a row, the “Brain Lady” made a series of appearances in Bulkley Valley school classrooms. She celebrated brain health, and worked with students in activities to raise awareness about brain injury and concussion prevention.

Students learned a ton in the helmet fitting and risk/responsibility lessons, and at the end, the Brain Lady got a big surprise! Everybody asked her to sign their Stormtrooper “Always Wear A Helmet” T-shirts!

As these students proudly wear their shirts around our community, they help to create ripples of awareness that will help everyone think and learn about their brains, and brain injury.

Thanks Brain Injury Alliance for creating a space for more fun to happen!





Art Therapy at the Comox Valley Head Injury Society, (CVHIS) has been a big success for many of our program participants. There are several that stand out, but one in particular is Ed Odgaard, who has benefited from the Art Therapy program, and has now begun a journey related to that success.

Ed is a long-time program participant with CVHIS. He has been an active participant in our Wellness, Gardening, Cooking Program, and our Art Therapy Program. One of his passions is photography, and since beginning the Art Therapy Program at CVHIS, he has been able to participate in Elevate the Arts, a local festival showcasing art and encouraging community wide participation. It all started in June of 2016, when Ed's photography was highlighted in an Art Gallery inspired by the art of the CVHIS Art Therapy participants. The gallery was a huge success, we had more than a hundred people visit, and the feedback was tremendous. We set up a gallery again this June, and it once again had an immediate and lasting impact for those who participated as an artist, and as attendees.

As with many of our survivors, Ed's level of confidence has been a barrier to him pursuing his dreams. One of these dreams is to bring his nature collages to people living in other parts of the world, where the things he photographs do not exist, places like Dubai and Egypt. Ed takes beautiful photos of everyday things we see, but do not really see. One of his studies is of leaves. A simple leaf in its current state of growth or death, magnified and duplicated in a collage. His work is stunning, and unique. Some of Ed's work is usually hanging on our walls and it is common for people to stop and comment as they take note of the colours, patterns and unusual perspective.

We believe that Ed is onto something. He now believes he is too, and we're supporting him to pursue this dream. We're very happy to assist his growth, and help him to build his confidence through the programs and services funded by the Brain Injury Alliance. I expect by this time next year Ed's success will have developed into a story featuring a successful entrepreneurial artist!





## Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association



One day, your life is heading down one path, and the next day that path can completely change due to an acquired brain injury. That day was November 7, 2007 for a woman who is now changing the lives of others around her.

Vicki Gilberg was a traffic flagger looking at possibly investing or buying into the business she worked for. On the way home from work she rear-ended a bobcat at 60 km/hour. She lost consciousness and was taken to the hospital.

After seeing thirteen doctors, Vicki was diagnosed with a brain injury, and her family doctor referred her to the Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association (FVBIA).

She became involved in one of FVBIA's most popular programs, "In the Now", part of the "Pay it Forward: Healthy Lifestyles for ABI" program, partly funded by the Brain Injury Alliance.

In the Now is a curriculum based support group that focuses on skills that people with brain injuries need to function well in life, rather than focusing on the past. "In the Now is my toolshed," says Vicki. "It gives me the tools I need to get through life. I just need to pick the ones I need."

Vicki has also completed First Aid and Food Safe classes made possible by Brain Injury Alliance funding. The skills she has gained by taking this training enables her to volunteer at FVBIA's drop in program.

Vicki comes to the drop in centre early to help set up, does meal prep work and cleans up afterward. She welcomes people, and provides reassurance that things will be okay.

"I don't want the younger ones (with brain injuries) to suffer," says Vicki. "I want them to know that even through I'm broken, I'm okay, and it's going to be okay for them too. When I was hurt, people didn't understand me. Here, there's no judgement. Tragedies happen to people. We need to be more loving to each other."

Her friend Audrey adds, "I like my new life. Accepting the new me is key. These programs have empowered me, and give me the strength to excel. Thank you!"



Al taught at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) most of his adult life, instructing the students in Computers and Electronics. He retired in 2006, but continued his volunteer work with the Scouts and the World Skills Organization. In 2014, he had a stroke.

This left him paralyzed on the left side of his body, limited his speech and took away his ability to do many basic physical tasks.

He had to give up volunteer work with youth, which he'd done his entire life, and went from being "an active guy for 75, in good shape for my age", to someone who "watched far too much TV".

Al was not very hopeful, and was doing very little with his time. He described everything as "slow and frustrating".

Being over 65 years old, Al didn't qualify for support from provincial health programs. Fortunately, the

Brain Injury Alliance advocates for this group, and there were support groups running at the Kamloops Brain Injury Association (KBIA).

Al met up with KBIA during one of their community outreach efforts and started attending group activities. He took part in a Stroke Injury Information session KBIA put on in partnership with the Nursing school at TRU. After years of teaching at TRU, Al was now learning from TRU students. He was also interacting with people with similar challenges to those he faced.

Al says he gets a lot of inspiration and comfort from listening to other survivors talk about their lives. He is particularly moved by the people who had injuries when they were young. "I realize how lucky I was to get 75 years of active life."

Realizing how much potential there is in survivors, Al decided to get back into volunteering. He has requested a criminal record check, and once that clears, he will be helping at The Mission, a local center for street involved people.

"I can't do everything, but I can do something, something to help. So I'm going to get involved again."  
~ Al

My name is Vanessa Kift. I got a brain injury in November of 2014. I was a promising designer crossing the street in downtown Vancouver when an RV struck me. It took a few days for the doctors to diagnose a brain injury. I was lost. I didn't know who I was anymore. I looked in the mirror and didn't recognize the face staring back. I wandered kind of aimlessly and hopelessly until I ended up in Powell River, and found the Powell River Brain Injury Society (PRBIS), where I met my new found family.

I was lost in emotion, living inside a self I no longer knew. PRBIS offered me a job working in the garden that's partially funded by the Brain Injury Alliance. What a life changing experience for me! I had always loved the look of an herb garden, and asked if I could use a garden bed to build one.

I was given a budget for seeds and plants, and the freedom to express myself. And then something happened that I was not expecting. My creativity came back! So much that I began to hope other areas of creativity would reawaken, and they did!

We had been given some old, broken and faded garden gnomes, so I worked on them, and now they look so good and I get so many compliments! There is a sign post in our garden, so now I'm making signs for it, and they really turn out nice.

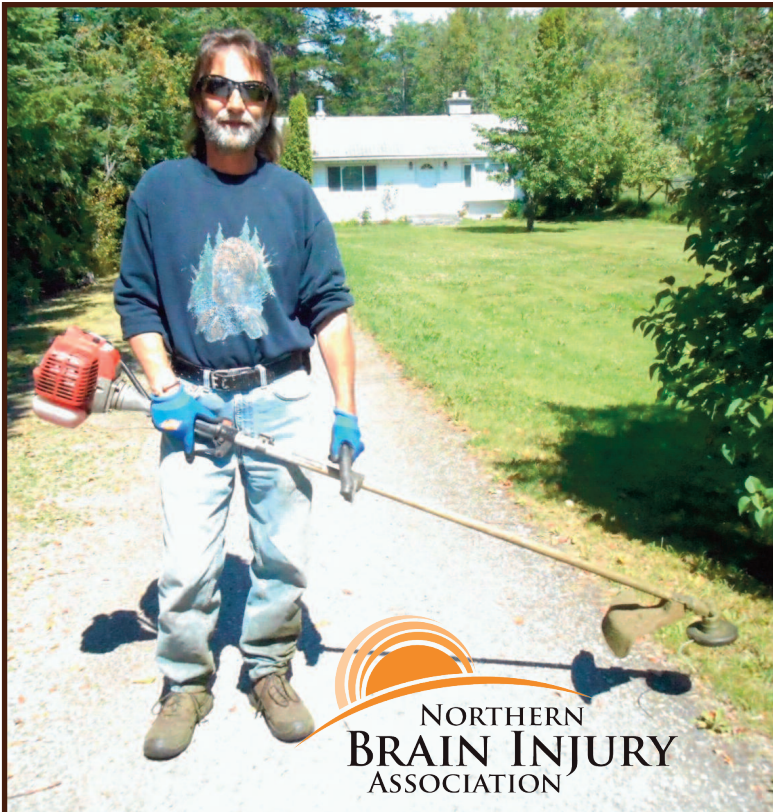
Funding from the Brain Injury Alliance was also used to create a business plan designed to help get us back to work. I was asked to help. While doing some of the research, I thought maybe I could get back into designing, and you know what? I did!

I stumbled and fell a lot, thinking that it all had to be perfect and I had to do it all myself, but the support and guidance I received was amazing. I'm now on the journey to be the lead designer of leather purses, bags and accessories for the PRBIS business program "Alternatives to Traditional Employment".

I can really see the potential of that woman in the mirror now. She's getting her strength back, she can now "see" herself. Living with a brain injury was not anything I could've ever imagined. But now I can see that the future is not going to be a bleak wandering of lost emotional confusion.

This wouldn't have happened without government support and the brain injury community helping people to succeed. The support, funding, and all the wonderful people who really do care, have made such a difference in my life. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Together we can do it!





My name's Kelly. I fell off a motorcycle in 1988. I went home instead of to the hospital, blacked out, and fell down the stairs. There was blood coming out of my nose and ears when a friend found me. I was taken to the hospital where I stayed for several months. I had to learn how to talk, walk, and eat again before I went home.

As a result of my brain injury, I lost my hearing in one ear, and have nerve damage on my right side that causes continuous pain and numbness in my leg. My memory is completely shot, and the flooding and fatigue keeps me away from social events - and people in general. I can go from zero to sixty with my temper instantly now, which doesn't help things much either, but the people who know me don't take it personally.

I found a career that worked for me, and was a greenskeeper for a golf course for 10 years until I just couldn't take how it was aggravating my brain injury effects. I went on a permanent disability pension, but still worked part time mowing and weed-whacking privately on Vancouver Island. I moved to Terrace to be close to my elderly mom after my dad passed away. I live quite a ways out of town, where it's quiet and no people around, and drive into town when I need to.

I hadn't worked since I got to Terrace, so I relied heavily on my pension to pay the bills. At a visit to the doctor, I could have sworn I heard him say that he didn't think I needed to be on my pension anymore. That knocked me for a loop! The doctor connected me to the Northern Brain Injury Association (NBIA) in Terrace, and I told the case manager my problem. If they cut me off, I thought, I won't be able to survive, so I may as well pack it in.

I wasn't sleeping or eating. I was really stressed out, and anxious about getting cut off, not knowing why. However, with the NBIA's help I was able to help get it all straightened out. My brain sometimes plays tricks on me, where what I think I hear isn't what was really said at all. After getting help, I could relax and think about working again.

I hate sitting around the house doing nothing, and I really needed money. So, the NBIA helped me with a plan to start mowing and weed whacking again. I was connected with another agency that does yard maintenance for seniors, and put out some flyers and calling cards around town. I'm getting regular customers now. It keeps me busy and productive, and the extra money helps too.

I go to the NBIA Survivor Support Group in Terrace to get me out and around people who understand brain injury. I've experienced a lot of loss because of my injury, but I'm doing the best I can with what I have, and take it one day at a time. The NBIA has really been a great help so far, and I'm glad that help was made possible with funding from the Brain Injury Alliance, which helps support the NBIA's many regional services.



My name is Les. I want to share some of the events that led to me sharing my story. I was born in northern Alberta, in a tiny village along the shores of a lake. I was raised by my grandparents, and considered them my parents. They taught me the old ways to prepare me for the days when they would not be there to help.

I almost drowned when I was six years old and had problems learning after. When at school, I felt like some stuff was too hard to learn, so I didn't learn much because I couldn't keep the stuff being taught in my head.

Despite the love of my grandparents, my uncle used to beat me up on a regular basis, and I took it, because I felt it was better for him to take his anger out on me, than on my parents. However, I lost my grandparents when I was only 11 years old. Heartbroken by their loss, and determined to find a better life, I hitchhiked to Edmonton soon after, and lived on the street for just over two years.

At 14 years old, while trying to protect a friend from a group of guys, one came up behind me and hit me really hard with a baseball bat. This caused a major brain injury, which meant I had to learn to walk and talk all over again. After I was released from the hospital, I went back home. There was a nurse in our village who had respected and loved my father, and she realized what had happened to me. She helped me lots to talk again. However, I did not stay home for long.

After the bat injury, my life really started spiralling out of control. I didn't realize what was happening to me, and became very angry. I began not to care about anything, or anyone, which is not how I was raised. So I returned to the streets for 20+ years. I was hurt by a lot of people, and I hurt many people too. Alcohol and drugs was just part of the lifestyle. I'm ashamed of much of what I did, but I had to survive. I began to believe that was just how people were, and that's just the way life was.

I didn't know I had a brain injury until someone suggested that I go check it out. Finally getting up the courage, I went to the Prince George Brain Injured Group (PG BIG). Walking through those doors was the hardest thing I've ever done, and the best thing I've ever done. Wow, they have helped me to learn and grow so much! I've since learned that many of the challenges I have today were the result of my brain injuries, and best of all, I'm learning how to live with my issues and overcome some of those challenges.

If anyone that you know suffers from some of the challenges of a brain injury, please urge them to get help, because it will make their life so much better. I was lost, desperate and alone. Now I have self-esteem, restored my relationship with my family, I have friends, a home, and purpose. I'm so grateful that organizations like PG BIG are there, and that the Brain Injury Alliance provides funding to make it possible for them to help those like me - those who have nothing, no one, and no where to go. Thank you with all my heart.

Gerry had a career as a maintenance and repair technician before his brain injury. He was a natural leader who was able to interpret blueprints, perform all aspects of maintenance and yard care, and had a successful business of his own.

After his brain injury in 2015, he found that self-employment was very difficult. Symptoms like fatigue and memory issues were taking over his abilities. Today, with the support of South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society (SOSBIS), Gerry is learning how to cope with the fatigue which once reduced processing time, and caused troubles with problem solving, storing, and retrieving information.

He is learning how important it is to listen to his body if he's really tired in the afternoon. Allowing himself more time to rest and recover each time the fatigue becomes overwhelming has helped him so much. He now knows that planning and pacing himself are key components in preventing fatigue from happening.

We asked Gerry to talk a bit about himself, and the Vocation Employment Program that the Brain Injury Alliance funds.



### **How does your brain injury affect your health?**

In the last year and a half I have had several epileptic seizures that resulted in a brain injury with symptoms including memory loss and fatigue.

### **How did the brain injury change your life?**

It changed every aspect of my life. I had my own business as a maintenance worker, fixing all kind of things in and around people's houses. Since my brain injury, I have memory problems; remembering things and executing tasks takes me much longer. Before I was able to do most things automatically, but now I have to think about each step that needs done. It has really affected my self-confidence.

### **Can you tell us a little bit more about the brain injury employment program you're involved in?**

My case manager told me about the employment program as an opportunity to get back into the work process. I was very excited about it, and I recently started painting some suites. In one way it feels like starting all over again, but when I'm painting, I experience that I'm still able to do the work. And, because there is no pressure or stress, I have time to bring back my skills and qualities.

### **How does the program benefit you?**

Despite my brain injury, I still want to be the same person as I was before, and being able to work again helps me to draw back that old Gerry. With the help of SOSBIS my mood has improved, I'm building up my self-worth, and I'm gaining confidence that one day I will have my own maintenance business again. I sincerely thank SOSBIS, the Alliance, and government for making this program available.



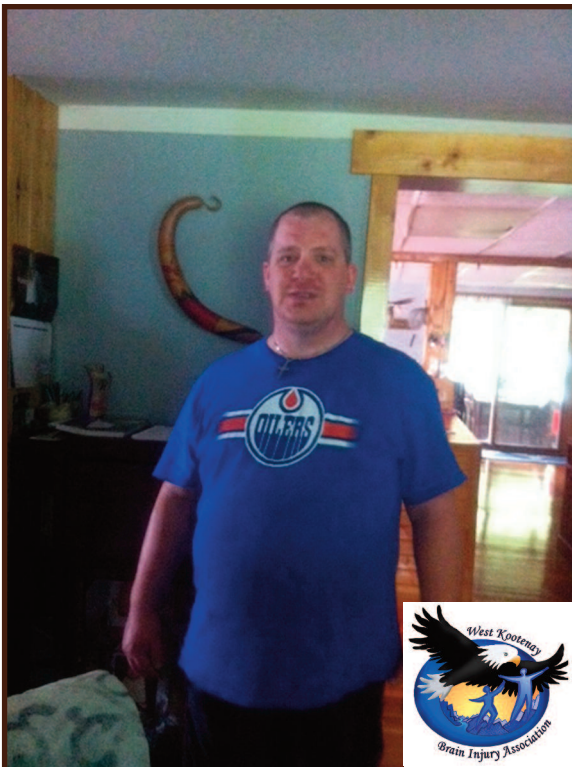
The best success story for me to date, is that the Campbell River Head Injury Support Society (CRHISS) was able to assist a gentleman who had basically been left to decline in health, and end up in a care facility. The gentleman was very shaky when he walked - if he walked. He could not cook for himself, fell down a lot, was sleeping 18 hours a day, and was both paranoid and introverted.

He had to have home care come in to assist him, as he would not leave his apartment because of intense anxiety. He also had many medical conditions that complicated his life in addition to his brain injury. Then he came in through our doors.

The same person has now moved into a semi independent living place, and within a year has seen a new doctor, got his medications changed, now walks to the grocery store, buys his own food, cooks, and has had his art displayed (and for sale) in a local cafe. He's also happy to have overcome liver ailments, medication challenges, and a hernia!

However, the best part of all for him, was that he was actually able to go to an Elton John concert, and he told us that he had the best time of his life - all while wearing a coat of many colors that he and his sister made! The improvement to his life, and the savings to taxpayers has been incredible. He sincerely thanks Government for the funding provided to CRHISS through the Brain Injury Alliance.

~ Shelley



My name is Matt. I have been living with my brain injury for the past three years. My parents were my main support through my recovery. Here is what happened to me.

I was a passenger in a work truck heading to the oil patch for another round of work. I was a well tester in training. The driver went through an intersection without looking or stopping, and a truck hit us on the passenger side, totaling the truck. I was flown to the hospital. I suffered a broken femur, major head injury, cracked hip, broken knee, and had many other issues. I was transferred to Edmonton hospital, then Calgary Foothills hospital for brain injury rehabilitation. From there I was sent to WCB rehab.

All in all, many lawyers were called, but nothing seemed to fall into place as the driver of this truck did not have a drivers license, and they could not sue WCB.

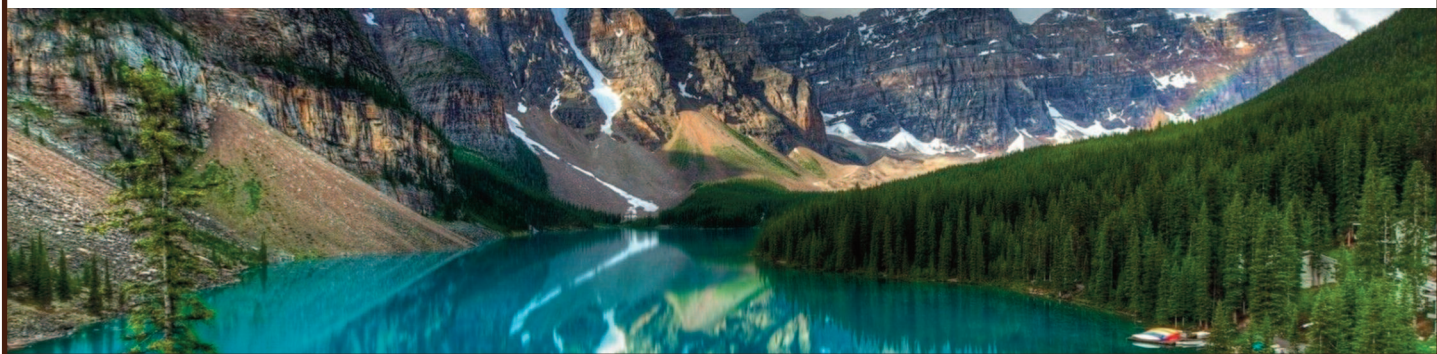
Frustration built, and with no money when I was released from the hospital, I began to spiral out of control. I worked at many different jobs but could not do the work, which resulted in me becoming homeless. After years of struggling, I turned to drugs and alcohol. When I hit rock bottom I returned home to live with my parents.

This was when I was introduced to the West Kootenay Brain Injury Association (WKBIA). I met with the outreach worker, who then supported me with making a plan for my life. I began attending AA meetings, got mental health counseling, found a family doctor, attended brain injury support groups, and I get continued support with memory strategies to help with my activities throughout the day.

Among so many other ways of helping, my outreach worker assisted me to get my WCB claim reopened, which never would have happened without this funding.

I am now planning a move to Cranbrook, and am on the waiting list for low income housing. My outreach worker in Golden has connected me with the WKBIA outreach worker in Cranbrook, and because of their continued support, I feel confident that this move will be successful.

Knowing that I have the support and guidance to help me with my recovery has made my life worth living again. Now I can continue moving forward in a positive way. My whole outlook on life is so much better. Life is good, even with brain injury. I may not be perfect, but today I make a good community member, I do have value, and I do fit in! Thank you!!!





Mary Jane is a sixty-four year old registered nurse. In the early morning of September 27th, 2016, she was driving home from her night shift when she fell asleep at the wheel and ended up in a single-car collision, totaling her vehicle and leaving her in shock, but with no apparent injuries. Later that day, Mary Jane visited a walk-in clinic where she had a neck x-ray, and was prescribed both a muscle relaxant and analgesic for whiplash, then was sent home.

At a follow-up appointment with her general practitioner 10 days later, Mary Jane was quickly diagnosed with a severe concussion, something 'missed' by the clinic's doctor. She was referred to an occupational therapist, but her status as a casual employee didn't entitle her to extended healthcare benefits, and she couldn't afford them on her own. Mary Jane quickly became overwhelmed with protocols, paperwork, and all the financial stresses that accompanied her diagnosis.

Due to her work and living situation, Mary Jane fell through the cracks for social support programs, including Employment Insurance and the BC Medical Services Plan (her wages were deemed too high to qualify for temporary premium assistance which would have paid for the extended healthcare she required). In addition, her application for recognition as a Person With Disability was denied. Mary Jane was surviving on just \$610.00 a month in CPP and social assistance benefits. With rent at \$750.00 per month, Mary Jane's cost of living far surpassed her financial means, and she began living on credit. The lasting effects of Mary Jane's concussion left her in emotional turmoil and a severe mental fog. She sought mental health services for anxiety and depression. She remains on their wait list.

Mary Jane then followed her doctor's suggestion to contact Kelowna Community Resources, and through them, became connected to BrainTrust Canada, where her story took a positive turn. Because of funding from the Brain Injury Alliance, we were able to provide her with much-needed support.

Mary Jane worked with a BrainTrust Canada Community Support Coordinator to implement strategies for managing her post-concussion symptoms and revise applications for financial support. Our Director of Client Services provided a letter of support, and her previously denied application was reconsidered and accepted! Working with other community partners, BrainTrust Canada was able to assist Mary Jane to access funding to help offset the cost of rent, and enable her to work toward greater financial stability. She was also assisted in applying for low-income seniors' housing.

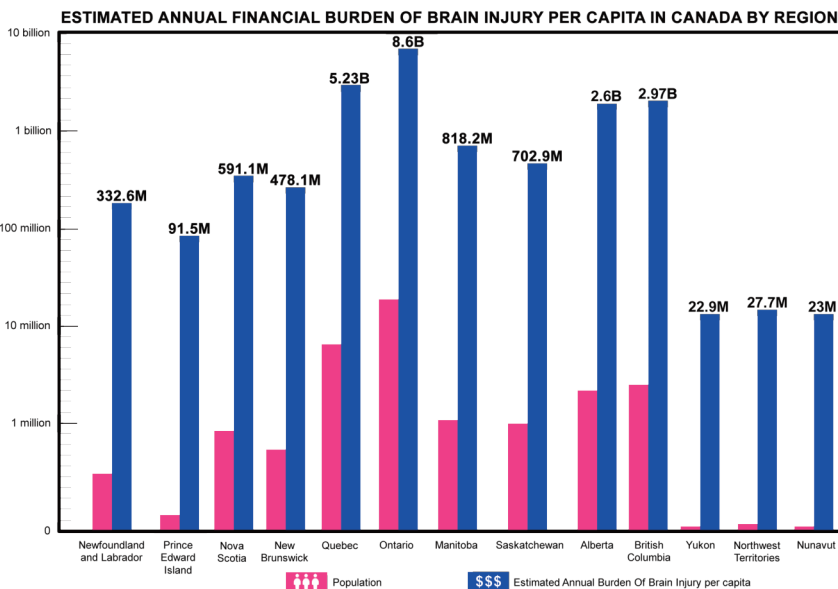
"Emotionally, my life changed dramatically for the better when I found Brain Trust. They provided 'the calm in the middle of the storm'. I am so thankful for the dedicated staff who never hesitate to go the extra mile in assisting their clients to cope with the challenges of daily living."

~ Sincerely, Mary Jane



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The estimated burden of brain injury in Canada was calculated by using an average cost of \$15,000 per brain injured person, per year. There are an estimated 1.5 million people currently living with a brain injury (source: Brain Injury Canada). That equals a burden of \$22.5 billion per year, which when divided by the population of Canada (35,151,728 - (source: Statistics Canada) is \$640.00 per capita. The estimated economic burden to each province and territory was then calculated by multiplying the respective population by \$640.00.

# The Future

**Whereas** of all types of injury around the world, injuries to the brain are among the most likely to result in death, or, permanent disability;

**Whereas** brain injury is the number one cause of seizures in the world;

**Whereas** brain injury in British Columbia occurs at a rate greater than that of all known cases of Multiple Sclerosis, Spinal Cord Injury, HIV/AIDS and Breast Cancer per year combined;

**Whereas** brain injury is the leading cause of death and disability among children, with 50 per cent of all fatalities the result of injury to the brain;

**Whereas** motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of brain injury in British Columbia;

**Whereas** violence against persons is a major cause of brain injury in British Columbia;

**Whereas** sport accidents, strokes, surgery, disease and tumors are a major cause of brain injury in British Columbia;

**Whereas** addressing the complex needs of brain injury survivors and their families is fundamental to the future of British Columbia;

**Whereas** a fair, non-partisan and equitable provincial brain injury funding and distribution mechanism has been established to meet the complex needs of brain injury survivors and their families;

**Whereas** there is great need for comprehensive, coordinated, post-medical rehabilitative and case management services for brain injury survivors and their families;

**Whereas** the development of innovative research, brain injury educational materials and rehabilitative programs are restoring British Columbia as a world leader in brain injury research, treatment and services;

**Whereas** the British Columbia Neurotrauma Contribution Funding Act is non-specific and poorly worded;

**Whereas** community brain injury associations and societies do not share in the funding provided by the British Columbia Neurotrauma Contribution Funding Act;

**The Brain Injury Alliance respectfully requests the government of British Columbia provide \$4 million per year to the Brain Injury Alliance as a budgetary line item to ensure sufficient financial resources necessary to meet the complex needs of brain injury survivors and their families today, and into the future.**

The \$4 million will be utilized in the following ways:

1. \$2 million will be used annually to continue the work the Brain Injury Alliance began in 2015, and for expansion to areas of the province not currently served by brain injury organizations.
2. \$2 million will be used annually to address emerging brain injury issues, such as; domestic violence, battlefield injuries, housing supports, family resources, services for children, services for seniors, assessments and education.



**WE HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE, AND IT IS NOW**



**BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE**

**BRAIN INJURY: A PERSONAL CHALLENGE - A COMMUNITY RESPONSE**

We gratefully acknowledge financial assistance from the Province Of British Columbia