



[www.braininjuryalliance.ca](http://www.braininjuryalliance.ca)

# Annual Report 2022

For Services Delivered  
August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022

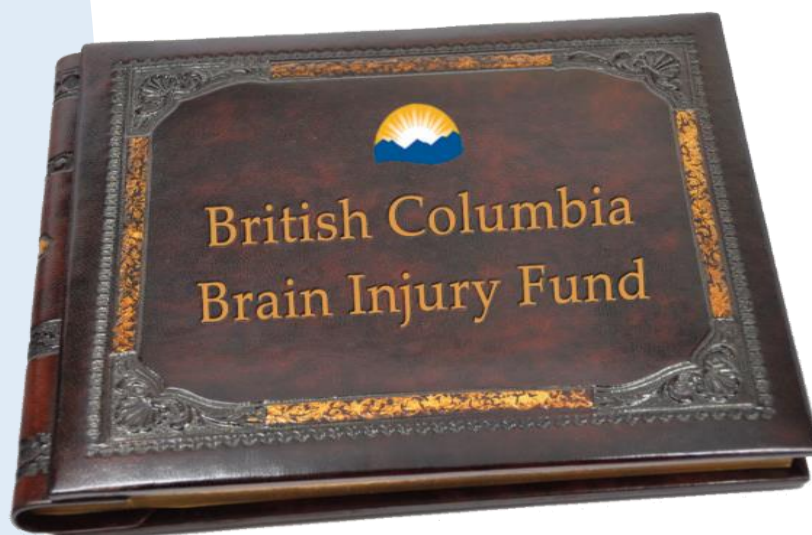


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## President's Message to Alliance Members

Despite the pandemic, 2021-2022 was a good year for brain injury societies in British Columbia. In spring 2021, the Brain Injury Alliance received a two-year funding commitment from the provincial government. This commitment was most welcome and has allowed our member societies to develop and maintain urgently required community services for persons with brain injury and their families.

However, the real need is for annualized funding for community brain injury services in BC. To plan, develop and maintain on going services, societies require long term funding commitments from the government. Basically, it is difficult to recruit and retain staff when funding is not predictable beyond two years.

Accordingly, the Alliance presented to the Standing Committee on Finance in June 2022 and the Committee's report, published this past August, recommended that government:

- Provide the Brain Injury Alliance with a secure, annualized, and ongoing funding agreement to offer more stability and opportunities for growth to address emerging issues in the brain injury sector, and
- Provide funding and support, including mental health supports, for survivors of brain injury resulting from intimate partner violence.

While the Standing Committee has previously included funding for brain injury in their reports, this year the recommendations were much more direct and concrete. We are hopeful that these recommendations will result in much needed annualized funding for community brain injury societies in BC.

The board of the Brain Injury Alliance is proud to share this report that outlines some of the impressive accomplishments of the 2021-2022 year with our members, government and with other stakeholders. The innovation and professionalism exhibited by brain injury societies is something that we should all be proud of.

Additionally, the external experts who reviewed the 2022-2023 program proposals have asked me to pass on their regards and their compliments for the innovative programs being offered by brain injury societies across British Columbia. This year's proposals were excellent and will provide considerable support for people living with brain injury and their families in British Columbia.

Dr. John Higenbottam  
President  
Brain Injury Alliance



## About The Brain Injury Fund

Between May 2015 to June 2022, the Brain Injury Alliance has addressed the funding disparity to non-profit, charitable brain injury service agencies with the assistance of three grants from the Province of BC. These three grants, totaling \$8 million, established the Brain Injury Fund (BIF) to help support brain injury societies across the province.

**In 2021-2022, the Alliance funded 41 programs operated by 12 brain injury societies, which served 69 BC communities.**

To date, the Alliance has distributed more than \$7 million dollars to these agencies for programs and services.

The Alliance provides funding to charitable brain injury societies for:

- One to one service (comprehensive case management, life skills, community access, outreach, etc.)
- Service to groups of individuals with brain injury (brain injury education, facilitated support groups, drop-in supports, social events, etc.)
- Service to support family members and associates of persons with a brain injury
- Education programs to increase knowledge & awareness of brain injury among generic services providers, educators, students, employer's and the community as a whole
- Injury prevention programs and community event services

## Dr. Gur Singh Memorial Education Fund

In addition to direct funding of brain injury societies, the Alliance administers the Dr. Gur Singh Memorial Education Fund established by the Government of BC in 2015 with a \$1 million endowment.

This funding is available to those individuals with an acquired brain injury who want to upgrade their education and/or job readiness and are sponsored by a local brain injury society. It also provides funding for employment/training programs specifically geared to people with acquired brain injuries.

In 2021-2022, the Alliance contributed to the education/training of 3 survivors of brain injury. These individuals received funding support for small business training, FoodSafe as a prerequisite to a new employment position and support with an undergraduate degree. COVID-19 presented quite a challenge for individuals wanting to participate in the workforce and education due to layoffs and schools moving towards online classes, so there were only a few applications during this report period.



## What are the Social Impacts of Alliance Funding?

*“The ability to support the clients who are desperately seeking supports has no words I can write down. They are so grateful for the support with any needs. We have more clients than usual who really needed support in organizing their finances in order to keep their housing and afford to eat.”*

*Kootenay Brain Injury Association*

**In 2021-2022, over forty-four hundred (4423) people with acquired brain injury accessed programs funded in part by the Brain Injury Alliance.**

Overall, 6027 people with ABI received support from the 12 community brain injury societies that are members of the Alliance.

These programs are geared to the development and retention of skills designed to assist the individual to build a life after an injury to the brain. Brain injury societies:

- Improved lives
- Increased employment
- Reduced impact on the medical system
- Reduced impact on the justice system

Families and friends of people with brain injuries also participate directly or indirectly in programming and benefit as participants become more self-aware and stable.

Social Impacts of Alliance Funding (# of Client/Incidents) 2021-2022			
Reduced Client Involvement with Medical/ Hospital Services	Reduced Client Involvement with Justice System	Obtained Employment	Maintained Employment
1293	364	148	77





## Alliance Funding Reduces the Use of Generic Services

*“Case Managers logged over 4500 hours of 1:1 services. The majority of services were assisting individuals with financial stability, housing needs, and health related needs.”*

*Prince George Brain Injured Group*

### **Interventions provided by brain injury societies in 2021-2022 prevented at least 1293 interactions with the primary care system.<sup>1</sup>**

Services provided by brain injury societies reduce the use of generic services such as primary health care systems (physicians, hospitals, allied professionals etc.) and justice systems (police, the courts, probation and parole services, corrections facilities etc.), thereby reducing costs and other direct impacts on these public systems.

Brain injury societies are able to accomplish these benefits by:

- Assisting clients to research health related issues and/or prepare for appointments,
- Accompanying clients to appointments when appropriate in order to take notes for later discussions etc.,
- Providing the health or justice worker with relevant information about the individual's areas of strength and weakness and about brain injury in general,
- Providing case management and/or counselling services to clients,
- Intervening when a client is experiencing a personal crisis without resorting to police or other community crisis service.

## Alliance Funding Assists with Return to the Workforce

Some brain injury societies provide a broad range of targeted employment services. All societies provide direct and indirect support to their clients who are experiencing challenges in finding or maintaining employment.

*“In total, peer volunteers offered 335 hours of service that included hours spent in related volunteer training sessions including emergency response (due to increasing mental health issues coming up in peer support groups), and facilitation training. Complex cases and mental health challenges continue to be prevalent.”*

*Nanaimo Brain Injury Society*

<sup>1</sup> The Alliance does not have a standardized system to count this statistic. As a result, this figure likely represents only a fraction of these incidences.



**Almost 150 people with brain injury secured employment and 77 maintained their employment in whole or in part due to their involvement with a brain injury society in 2021-2022.**

*“We provided support and opportunities for 21 survivors (of ABI) through the employment program.”*

*Comox Head Injury Society*

Brain injury societies continued to provide pre-employment skills development, assistance with job searches and ongoing employment support.

Agencies provided support and funding for people with brain injuries to obtain training in First Aid and/or Food Safe which can be very beneficial for securing jobs in a variety of fields.

Brain Injury societies partnered with employers, WorkSafe BC, WorkBC, Ministry of Advanced Education, colleges and other service providers to enable their clients to return to work following their brain injury.

Volunteering is an essential stepping stone for returning to work. Several agencies support participants as volunteers within the organization or in the community.

## Employment Supports

- Pre-employment services supported 32 individuals
- Supportive employment positions were maintained for 17 individuals
- Competitive employment supports were provided for 51 individuals
- College of New Caledonia Trades Exploration program for people with brain injury hosted 16 participants
- 17 individuals were assisted with volunteer positions

Prince George Brain Injured Group

***“Giving back by being a peer supporter, empowers brain injury survivors to utilize their inherent knowledge and skill base.”***

***Campbell River Brain Injury Society***





## Alliance Funding Supports People at Risk for Justice System Involvement

**Brain Injury Societies responded that they were involved in at least 364 instances where they supported individuals at risk of involvement with the justice system.**

According to the 2016 study, “Association between traumatic brain injury and Incarceration: A Population-based Cohort Study”, having a history of traumatic brain injury increases the risk of involvement with the criminal justice system by 2.5x.<sup>2</sup>

A 2015 study showed that in 95% of cases, including both male and female populations, brain injury pre-existed criminal behavior. The study went on to recommend that reduction of the rate of brain injury should be a major public health imperative, with benefits realized in terms of reducing costs, injuries, and crime<sup>3</sup>.

The Pandemic had a negative impact on several agencies providing services directly to inmates in corrections facilities as staff were unable to see inmates in person due to COVID-19 restrictions.

However, a cooperative venture between the Prince George Brain Injured Group (PG BIG) and the Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association (FVBIA) ensured brain injury services and education could continue through pandemic restrictions.

FVBIA staff were trained to implement the on-line training modules developed by PG BIG for use in their own corrections programming and as a result, FVBIA was able to ensure ongoing brain injury services and education for inmates of the Fraser Regional Correctional Centre through 2022.

*“FVBIA was able to present the Brain Injury Educational program within the Fraser Valley Regional Correctional Centre via zoom for 7 education modules.”*

*Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association*

<sup>2</sup> Kathryn E. McIsaac, Andrea Moser, Rahim Moineddin, Leslie Anne Keown, Geoff Wilton, Lynn A. Stewart, Angela Colantonio, Avery B. Nathens, and Flora I. Matheson, Association between traumatic brain injury and incarceration: a population-based cohort study, *cmajo* 4:E746-E753; published online December 8, 2016, doi:10.9778/cmajo.20160072

<sup>3</sup> Kathryn E. McIsaac, Andrea Moser, Rahim Moineddin, Leslie Anne Keown, Geoff Wilton, Lynn A. Stewart, Angela Colantonio, Avery B. Nathens, and Flora I. Matheson, Association between traumatic brain injury and incarceration: a population-based cohort study, *cmajo* 4:E746-E753; published online December 8, 2016, doi:10.9778/cmajo.20160072

## Alliance Membership Eligibility

In order to be eligible to access grants through the Brain Injury Alliance service providers must:

- be a non-profit society registered in British Columbia
- be a Registered Canadian charity
- be led by a board of directors that reside in the communities served by the society
- have an organizational focus of service to people living with an acquired brain injury
- accept as clients all persons living with a brain injury (exceptions based on the skills of staff and/or safety concerns are accepted)
- provide a range of services to people living with brain injury and their families. This range of services must include one to one services, educational and life skills programs that serve groups of individuals and services to the community at large (typically injury prevention and community education)
- provide service at no cost to the individual
- Alliance grants cannot be used to subsidize fee-for-service programs that are being offered by the society, including those that are contracted through health authorities



## Brain Injury Fund Grant Distributions 2021 - 2022

**Grants to brain injury societies in 2021-2022 totalled \$949,000.**

Grants are based on a variety of factors including:

- the total population living in the communities being served
- the number of clients receiving services
- the availability of other services for people with brain injury in these communities
- the range of services provided by the brain injury society
- evidence that the society accesses a range of sources for funding
- the capacity of the society to provide the services proposed
- the agreement of the society to provide the Alliance with program and financial reporting as requested

Grants are determined by a committee made up of Alliance directors and a minimum of 2 'external evaluators' with experience in assessing grant proposals and services for people living with challenges.



## Community brain injury organizations provide cost effective services.

**In 2021-2022, the Alliance funding cost per client served, was \$181.64 per client per year.**

The Alliance recognizes the need to build flexibility into brain injury services. Member agencies may apply for funds to support up to four programs, but grants are provided as a 'lump sum'. Member agencies are enabled to amend program budgets within approved programs.

This encourages member agencies to apply for external grants and to adapt their plans to meet client needs. Instead of continuing a program that is less popular, the agency can quickly move funding to support clients with new and emerging issues.

*"Like all Alliance funded services, we find the flexibility of the funding to be of great value to our ever-changing population which often needs adaptations as we grow to align with new and best practices within the field."*

*BrainTrust*

This practice has proven to be invaluable as brain injury societies have adapted their services during the COVID-19 pandemic and as they transition back to more in-person opportunities for participants.

### Alliance Quick Facts 2021-2022

**12**

Agencies funded

**\$181.64**

Spent per client served

**\$949,000**

Distributed to deliver programs and services in 2021-2022

**>4423**

Brain Injury Survivors supported

**41**

Programs and services delivered

**>22,777**

Community Members Reached for Injury Prevention & Community Education



*“A surprise was the number of survivors who chose to stay on Zoom or phone, even after the office was fully open. As that setting was most comfortable for them, we continued and are doing roughly 75% of the work remotely.”*

*Kamloops Brain Injury Association*

## Impact of COVID-19

Though restrictions eased during 2021-2022, COVID-19 continued to impact services for people with a brain injury. Member agencies were tasked with reintroducing services in a face-to-face format, only to discover that many clients had come to prefer remote services.

***A client of the Comox Head Injury Society expressed the following: “Thanks for the opportunity to attend in person or through Zoom for everyone to access”***

Agencies are now assessing how to provide services both in-person and remotely for those that prefer zoom or phone, emails, messaging etc.

This has resulted in the need for brain injury societies to decide which format to use when offering each program or whether they have the financial and human resources to provide the same service in two distinct formats.

In addition, the stresses experienced by the duration of the pandemic resulted in an increased need even as restrictions eased. For clients living with immune deficiency challenges the easing of restrictions added an additional physical and emotional burden.

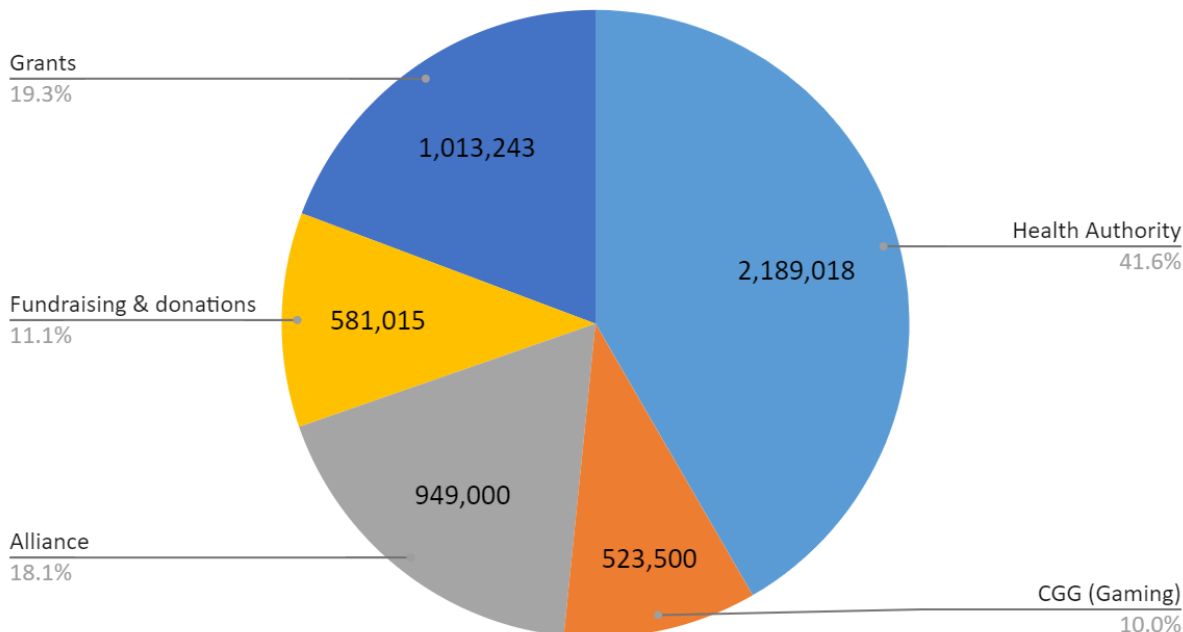
***“We have received an increase in counselling referrals as a result of COVID-19 and because brain injuries co-occur with mental health issues resulting from post-injury depression, anxiety, loss of sense of self, social isolation, personality changes, and PTSD”.***

***BrainTrust***

## Overall Funding for Brain Injury Programs

British Columbia community brain injury agencies are currently funded through donations, grants, fees for services, Health Authorities, charitable gaming, fundraising and from 2015 to 2022, through the Brain Injury Alliance.

Brain Injury Society Funding Sources 2021-2022



The Alliance funding has increased the stability of community brain injury organizations and supports the growth of programs and services by the leveraging of other grants, and fundraising dollars. Data collected from brain injury organizations illustrate the importance of the Brain Injury Fund to the provision of services to individuals with acquired brain injuries throughout BC.

**The Brain Injury Alliance funding is 18% of overall community brain injury organization funding (not including fee-for service).**

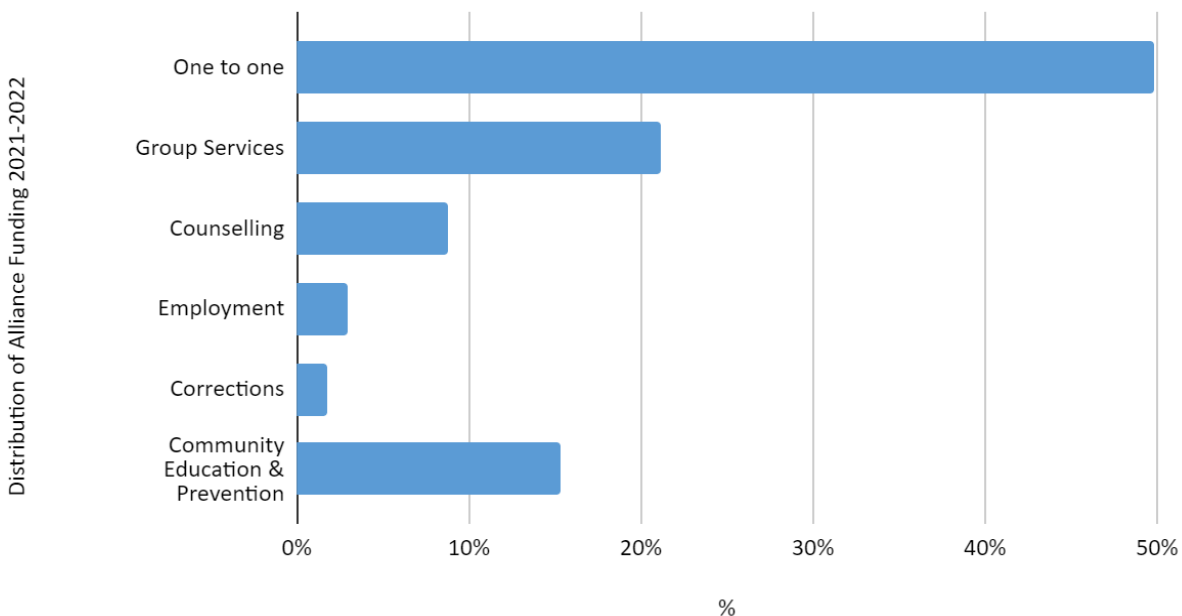
The bulk of Alliance funding that agencies use is for wages and benefits (80%). The balance of funding was used for administration, facility costs and program supplies.



## Breakdown of Service Domains Funded by the Alliance

The majority of Alliance funding was used for One-to-One Services (50%), Group Services (21%), Employment (3%), Counseling (9%), Corrections (2%) and Community Education and Prevention (15%).<sup>4</sup>

Distribution of Alliance Funding 2021-2022



*“Alliance funding is being used only for the Community Outreach Program and for the Counselling Program this year. The more pressing need for services is for individuals who are not eligible for IHA (Interior Health Authority) funding/services and also for those requiring the counselling program, both of which have kept families out of crisis.”*

*Kootenay Brain Injury Association*

<sup>4</sup> figures extrapolated from data received from the Alliance September 2022 Final Program Reports



## One to One Services

**One to one programming is the primary service model used by societies, utilizing 50% of all Alliance funding in 2021 to 2022.**

One to one includes life skills one to one, counselling and case management/navigation programs for a total of \$473,153 or \$234.12 per client per year.

These types of services provide more intensive support, usually for a shorter period of time than group services.

Several brain injury organizations reported that there was an increase in demand for one-to-one support during 2021-2022 due to COVID-19 as many other agencies were shut down or unable to provide that much-needed level of support.

Many individuals are also unable to access services remotely in groups due to limited financial resources for technology or they are unable to use technology without extensive one to one training, so the ability of agencies to provide individualized services is essential.

### One to One Services

Nanaimo Brain Injury Society: "Providing case management is a critically important service in our community particularly due to other agencies shutting down in Nanaimo."

***"In the past two and a half years, we have seen a 41% increase in the number of people contacting VBIS, and a 28% increase in the number of new clients. In fact, the number of people who access VBIS services annually has increased by 50% since 2019, which is pre-COVID. That means more brain injury survivors are getting the much-needed support, advocacy, and education that they need... There has been an increase in new client intake by 34% and the average median length of time between a client first contacting VBIS and being seen by intake is 8 days."***

***Victoria Brain Injury Society***





## Case Management/Navigation

*“Staff continue to make outreach visits to Texada Island. Clients required assistance with tax preparation, applications for Person with Disability designation, assistance with dentist appointments, help with mobile phone issues and information on dealing with perseveration after brain injury.”*

*Powell River Brain Injury Society*

Case Management/Navigation is an essential component of service provision as individuals with brain injuries struggle to navigate a complex system in order to access basic necessities such as housing, income and food. Brain injury societies offer case management or navigation as a core service.

***“Over the past 6+ months there has been an increase in clients requiring help for PWD and a few disability (Federal) applications. We are pleased to report our success rate in assisting clients is 100% for both.”***

***Nanaimo Brain Injury Society***

*“Support is offered in a variety of areas such as education, loss, compensatory strategies, access and coordination of medical and support services, support around financial changes, relationship building, basic needs such as housing and food, emotional support, social integration and community connections...”*

*Connecting clients with community and health authority services has been challenging due to health authority & other agencies staffing shortages and long wait times. This led to increased frustration and need for support for those whose needs weren't met.”*

*South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society*

## Counselling

Counseling through brain injury organizations may be offered internally or contracted externally. Brain injury societies have not traditionally provided professional counselling to clients, primarily due to the high cost of this service. When it was apparent to case managers that this service was required, brain injury case managers would search for a counsellor who was able to provide the service at a reduced rate and the client would have to pay for the service independently.

Brain injury societies did not have the funds to pay for these services. In 2017, one brain injury society applied to the Alliance to fund a very limited counselling service. The following year there were three societies that followed their lead. By 2021, there were five societies receiving Alliance funding for limited counselling services.

Brain injury changes people's lives and receiving professional counselling can be a life saver following these changes. In addition, many people sustained their brain injury in a car crash, through an assault or other trauma, sometimes leading to post traumatic stress disorder.

The practical and supportive services provided universally by brain injury societies are sometimes inadequate to address these psychologically damaging events. Despite this need and the additional funding available through the Alliance, the majority of brain injury societies have not been able to afford to provide this expensive service.

*"This program provided 1-1 counseling sessions with 2 registered clinical counselors and support groups to increase mental health and wellness. This decreased isolation, depression, and helped with coping skills. Sessions were offered by Zoom, in-person or over the phone for the most part of the year so everyone could access support."*

*Comox Head Injury Society*

*"Anxiety issues were more prominent than previously, probably exacerbated by COVID-19. Several cases of anxiety around medical issues, leaving the house and vaccinations were successfully addressed. Relationships with caregivers were also an active area and conversation plans had remarkable success."*

*Kamloops Brain Injury Association*



Counseling offered through brain injury organizations is always at a fee rate that is less than the counsellor typically earns, group sessions are often provided as a cost saving measure as well as a valuable therapeutic strategy, and clients must meet a range of criteria to even be considered to access this service.

These restrictions in a sector that is based on a 'service to all' philosophy can result in some challenging decisions for society staff.

For Alliance funding and this report, counseling is defined as "Services provided by a Masters Level Clinical Counselor. This can be an employee or a contractor."

***"One client provided feedback on how the ongoing mindfulness training has lowered his blood pressure, another said "I would never have done that activity if it was not provided through the society, 'I learned something new that I never thought I would be able to do!'"***

***Comox Valley Head Injury Society***

***“Participants report improved mental well-being, increased physical health and understanding of nutrition/regular meal planning and preparations.”***

***Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association***

## Group Services

Group programs include:

- Group Life Skills
- Peer Supports
- ABI education programs for survivors
- Education & support for family members

In 2021-2022 brain injury societies provided services in a group format to:

- 1889 people living with acquired brain injury
- 1287 family members
- 16 ‘others’

Group programs enable member agencies to connect with individuals with brain injuries more frequently and support the development of natural support networks.

*“Coping Strategies - 82 brain injury survivors participated in weekly classes to learn techniques to improve their coping skills. This year we started a new program, Carrying on With Coping, which is a bi-weekly drop in for brain injury survivors who have completed the Coping Skills program and would like to continue to meet in a supportive environment with a like-minded cohort and continue to learn new skills.”*

*Victoria Brain Injury Society*

## Group Program Cost per Client

- Brain injury societies spent \$201,082 of Alliance funding to provide group services for an average Alliance funding cost per person of \$62.99.
- Brain injury societies also used fundraising dollars and applied for additional grants to support these invaluable services.
- In total, brain injury societies spent \$560,970 on services provided to groups of people.
- This expenditure served 3192 individuals at a total per person cost of \$175.74.

Group services are also considerably less expensive to provide than one to one services.



## Brain Injury Prevention & Community Education Programs

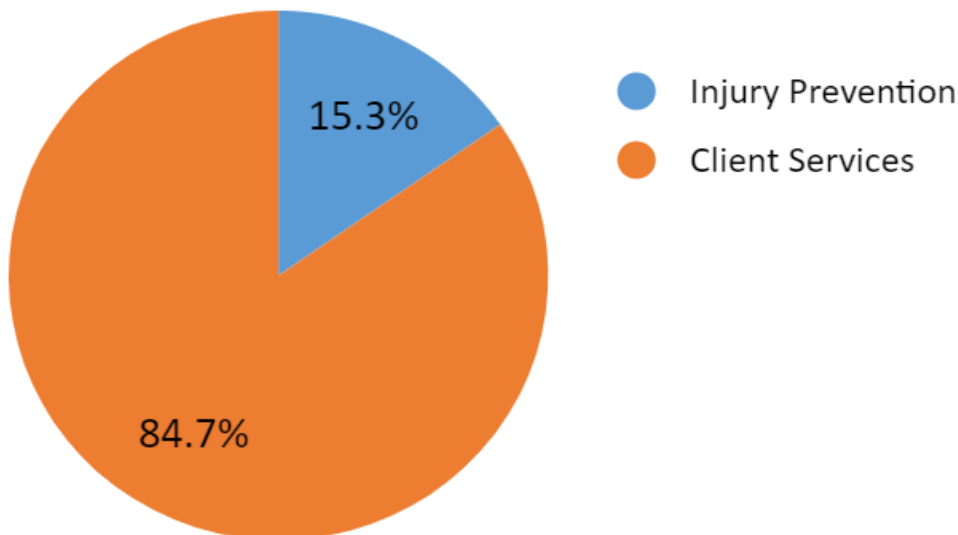
The report published by the Public Health Agency of Canada *“Injury in Review: Spotlight on Traumatic Injuries Across the Life Course (2020)”*<sup>5</sup> outlined several causal areas where traumatic brain injuries had decreased over time and where that decrease could be attributed to prevention initiatives. Understanding causation and implementing prevention measures such as education/awareness along with other initiatives are essential in order to continue to reap the benefits to the individual and to the community of the reduction in the incidence of brain injuries.

*“NBIA Bike rodeos were completed in 11 communities; several were completed with other community partners such as the RCMP, First Nations Communities, and local school districts.”*

*Northern Brain Injury Association*

**Alliance grants for Community Education and Injury Prevention programs accounted for 15% of Alliance grant distribution.**

### Alliance Funding Allocation 2021-2022



Brain injury prevention and community education programs also provide opportunities for brain injury organizations to collaborate with other groups such as schools, Safer Cities programs, fire departments, ICBC, First Nations communities, law enforcement etc.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/injury-prevention/canadian-hospitals-injury-reporting-prevention-program/injury-reports/2020-spotlight-traumatic-brain-injuries-life-course.html#a1>



Community Education & Injury Prevention	
# Community Members	Alliance Funded Cost/Participant
22,777	\$ 6.39

**Injury Prevention and Community Education Programs facilitated by brain injury societies impacted more than 22,777 participants at a cost of \$6.39 per participant in 2021-2022.**

Brain Injury Societies are able to be creative in order to meet the particular needs of their regions. The pandemic changed the way that organizations offered brain injury prevention and awareness activities but they appear to be returning to some pre-COVID activities.

***“We have seen a steady increase in schools and community outreach from the previous year, but have not returned to pre Covid levels. Later in the Alliance year, large scale public gatherings resumed and we were able to make contact with more adults than we have in the last couple of years.”***

***Kamloops Brain Injury Association***

*“The Colouring Contest for Brain Injury Awareness Month had wide distribution through the local newspapers to over 111,000 households, resulting in 55 contest entries and over 250 people engaged through facebook alone according to the newspaper's statistics.”*

*Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association*

*“23 presentations were given at 10 schools in Sooke, Saanich & Gulf Island School districts. We were able to reach more students than expected and look forward to expanding this program.”*

*Victoria Brain Injury Society*

*PG BIG facilitated 5 injury prevention events for seniors, 15 bike rodeo and injury prevention events for youth and 4 events at major community events. We facilitated brain injury education at events organized by the PG Crisis Line, University of Northern BC, CNC, Canadian Mental Health, WorkSafe BC, Rotary Prince George, CBC and CFIS. Our Bike Tag Campaign and our Safety Counts Campaign were extremely successful with over 500 bikes tagged and many more vehicles, small wheel ‘vehicles’ and pedestrians counted.*

*Prince George Brain Injured Group*



## Recommendations

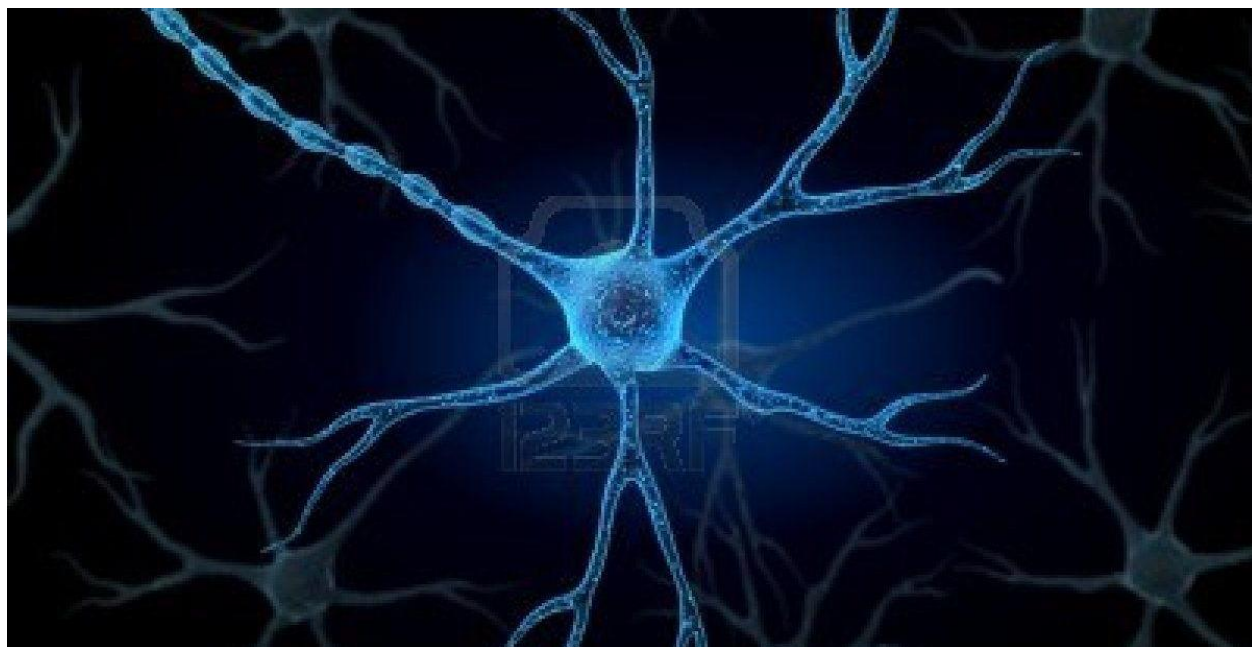
### Recommendations of the BC Government Standing Committee on Finance

2023 Consultations, Presented August 2022

- **Recommendation 119:** “Provide the Brain Injury Alliance with a secure, annualized, and ongoing funding agreement to offer more stability and opportunities for growth to address emerging issues in the brain injury sector.”
- **Recommendation 182:** “Provide funding and support, including mental health supports, for survivors of brain injury resulting from intimate partner violence. Brain Injury Alliance and the Brain Injury Fund.”

### Recommendations of the Brain Injury Alliance

- **The Brain Injury Fund continues to be managed by the Brain Injury Alliance.** The Brain Injury Alliance has a 7-year track record of distributing funding to brain injury societies. We recommend that the Alliance continues to work on behalf of the brain injury societies in BC.
- **Brain Injury Societies be included in any changes to current systems** We recommend that community-led brain injury societies be part of any plan for ongoing services.



## Appendix A: Benefits of Community Brain Injury Societies

The Brain Injury Alliance works to support brain injury societies and brain injury societies work to support the individual. Here are some of their stories:

### Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association



Seven years ago, 26-year-old Rachel was working as a nurse and instructor at Sprott-Shaw College. One evening at work, a heavy metal mechanism fell from a door and hit her head. Little did she know that at that moment, her life and future as she knew it would be forever changed.

A WorkSafe BC claim was opened and she received 3 months of Short-term Disability (STD) and a graduated-return-to-work (GRTW). Sadly, the effects of the traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) were significant enough that the GRTW failed and the battle to “prove” she was injured began. Within 4 months of injury, STD was over and she had no income or resources.

She became homeless and lived the next 3 years in her truck with her beautiful dog. To give you an idea of the complexity of her situation, during this time, she was also the passenger in a taxi that was involved in an accident.

Now, in addition to WorkSafe, the Nurses Union and EI, she was also attempting to manage a claim with ICBC along with dealing with denied applications for Income Assistance (PWD). Imagine, if you can, attempting self-advocacy from the back of your truck with 5 organizations that all wanted someone else to pay.

Rachel was frequently deemed “non-compliant” as she was unable to return calls and get to mandatory meetings and would get cut off benefits. What the various organizations didn't seem to understand is that she was homeless! She could not afford cell phone data, internet access, gas or food. She had no clean clothing as she could not afford laundry.

Fortunately, Rachel's mom attended the AgriFair in Abbotsford, where there was a Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association booth with ABI awareness and prevention information. Rachel initiated contact with FVBIA and was assigned a case manager. The next two years were extremely challenging, but Rachel and her case manager persevered.





## Comox Valley Head Injury Society

“Through the society, I've gained friendships and confidence. I'm now doing things that I never thought I'd be able to do!” - Aline

Aline Jensen is a brain injury survivor.

Her journey started during childhood with an abusive mother, as she sustained multiple injuries including two diagnosed concussions, later followed by a major concussion from falling out of a truck.

Aline remembers the pain starting at 8 years of age which pretty much continued until she was finally diagnosed much later in life with having a tumor on the right side of her head, between her skull and brain.

She was also diagnosed with PTSD due to the trauma she had sustained during childhood. Due to these injuries, she could no longer continue with her profession as a trained chef.

After surgery, Aline was very determined to survive and improve her skills and through some difficult times and a lot of hard work, she obtained a degree in horticulture. She would look into starting a new career and things were looking up, but as happens to many survivors, Aline was taken advantage of and was scammed in a housing situation which landed her at an emergency shelter.

Aline was finding life and getting by difficult without being able to work full time and was trying to obtain PWD (persons on disability benefits). After her application was denied, it was suggested by another community organization that she come to Comox Valley Head Injury Society (CVHIS) for help.

Through our Case Coordinator's assistance, she was finally able to obtain a PWD designation in 2012 which would give her at least some minimal funding to survive.

Now almost 10 years later, she's still a client of CVHIS and shares that she's not sure what she would have done without us and realizes how important funding is to provide our services.



Aline has become a volunteer with us through our employment program, receiving a modest stipend for hours worked, which enables her to use some of her culinary skills as she assists and has become a valuable volunteer with our weekly lunch program. She has also started taking part in our group wellness activities and has recently been participating in dragon boating with us.

In her words: “Through the society, I've gained friendships and confidence. I'm now doing things that I never thought I'd be able to do!”

## South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society

Feeling lost after he suffered from a stroke in September 2019, Garry was happy to learn about the programs and services offered at the South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society (SOSBIS) in Penticton, BC.

Motivated to work on his recovery, he started weekly speech practice sessions and joined the HeadsUp stroke support group.

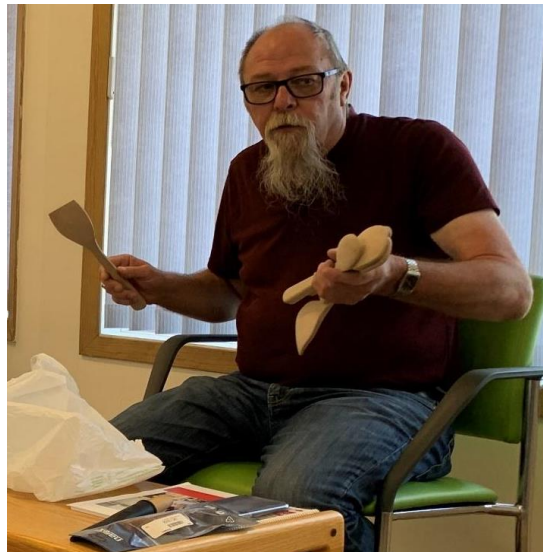
Talking about his stroke brings back memories of the losses he faced, so instead of looking back Garry chooses to focus on the present.

As a carpenter by trade, Garry came up with the idea of carving spoons out of wood (see photo on the left) and impressed by his handiwork, his family and friends started putting in orders.

Despite feeling uncertain about his speech, Garry took the opportunity to do a little demonstration of his craftsmanship during one of the stroke support group meetings.

After his stroke, Garry did not return back to work but being at retirement age doesn't stop him from being active.

He recently started a yard maintenance job at SOSBIS's seniors housing building, work that he has done before and that he enjoys doing.



With support from the Brain Injury Society, Garry is finding a new balance in his life and despite the challenges he encounters on that path, he is proud of the steps he has made on his road of recovery.

*“Clients have expressed that the program helps to encourage deep thinking processes, express themselves (through writing and speech), focus and attention and with social interaction.”*

*South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society*





## BrainTrust

Susan Hopps (Armstrong), sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) at the age of 20 when a train hit the vehicle she was driving. Susan was in a coma for 3 weeks and needed to relearn many basic skills. After the accident, Susan struggled with the impacts of her TBI and was supported by BrainTrust Canada through the Interior Health ABI program for many years.

At the age of 65, Susan was no longer eligible for the program despite still suffering from the impacts of her TBI, including emotional dysregulation, depression, difficulties with executive functioning (impulsivity, awareness, judgment), as well as mental health and substance use. Susan felt rejected, as she knew the aging process was only enhancing her TBI outcomes.

On April 28th, 2020, Susan lost her son fueling her journey into substance use. During that time, Susan dug deeper into financial difficulties, loss of relationships and housing, and social isolation. After finding sobriety in December of 2021 and stable housing, Susan reached out to BrainTrust Canada in July of 2022.

Because of the Alliance contract, we have been able to support Susan on furthering her journey towards wellness and stability. Through our group programs, Susan attends a once weekly peer group to help her combat the feelings of social isolation that have been prevalent in her life as a direct result of grief and the global pandemic. Susan receives one to one support in working through the 'Managing Your Emotions' program, helping her to identify and take control over her emotions. She was connected to Kasper Denture Clinic to receive options around affordable dentures which will contribute immensely to increasing her confidence.

Through the sessions with her coordinator, they have been able to identify gaps in financial support allowing her to take the right steps towards increasing her financial security. And lastly, in order to support with the grief around the loss of her son, she was connected to The Compassionate Friends peer support group - a once monthly peer led support group for grieving parents. Susan continually walks into our office with a smile on her face and an eagerness to walk forward. Susan has expressed that her support through BrainTrust Canada feels like "the beginning of having a life" and that it has allowed her the "simplicity of taking charge."

## Campbell River Head Injury Support Society

The Alliance funding has allowed us to take more individuals off our waitlist in our What's Next Peer Support Program. This program focuses on creating strong friendships and helping individuals expand their comfort zone.

The program started with cooking together to help achieve these goals and gives food for individuals to take home. The cooking class helps with the financial restraints of individuals and also allows them to eat more nutritious meals.



## Kamloops Brain Injury Association

Larry lived with his family for over 17 years, but when his mom moved to assisted living, he needed to find a place of his own. He really didn't want to move, but circumstances forced him into a challenging financial and housing situation. With the BC housing market incredibly tight, he needed help to find something he could afford. Working alongside the KBIA team, Larry received support to not only locate something close to affordable, but he was also able to negotiate help from his old union, local city council and a local realtor. Discussion with BC Housing and their system can be tough when you don't know the system, so he needed information and help with calls and faxes to them. The Alliance support empowered Larry to make things happen and to make the move successfully.

And once he got a parking ticket at the new place, KBIA was able to get him onto the path of a disability parking pass. The new apartment is a good short-term solution, but longer-term affordability remains a challenge. With the help of the Alliance, Larry and KBIA will keep working to find a solution to this challenge.

## Northern Brain Injury Association:

Last week, one of our clients was having difficulty navigating the provincial and federal disability pension systems (PWD and CPP-D) on his own. In particular, he had difficulty comprehending the request letter that came from PWD regarding his CPP-D application. His attempt to get help at the BC Access Centre did not go well because his symptoms were being triggered and the representative had little knowledge or understanding about assisting someone with an acquired brain injury. His inability to respond to the requests in time resulted in having his monthly disability cheque being withheld.

Part of our roles as Case Managers with NBIA is to provide support to clients with navigating bureaucratic systems and assist with forms, applications, and so on. So, I and my colleague, Josiah, helped our client to gather the requested documents, and fill out the requested forms. Then, I accompanied our client to the BC Access Centre to get all of the documents submitted and answer my client's questions. I liaised with a different representative to get it all sorted out and our client was issued his monthly cheque right there.

The other success that resulted from this visit to the Access Centre that will benefit other people with acquired brain injuries who go to the Access Centre for help, is that the Government Agent for the Terrace and Kitimat offices is eager to have some sensitivity presentations from NBIA to learn how their staff can better serve individuals with acquired brain injury.

## Powell River Brain Injury Society

The garden is doing what it was built to do; bring people together in a healthy and safe environment. The cooking is doing what it was designed to do; show our clients, (who live at or below the poverty level) how to stretch a dollar with healthy recipes, and the nutritional component is hopefully preventing clients from eating too much processed food.



## Prince George Brain Injured Group

C.H. is a 27-year-old with a brain injury. He lives with his parents, and has never lived on his own. He hasn't had a 'real' job except for a few paid hours on casual projects. He completed an intake with PG BIG and an assessment with the Employment Facilitator. They discussed his challenges, strengths and interests, worked closely on creating a new and updated resume, tailoring it for a specific job (video game store assistant). C.H. applied and was asked to interview almost immediately, which he found very uplifting and it boosted his confidence.

Through this process, the Employment Facilitator discovered that C.H. loves being outdoors and had growing indoor plants, so they discussed possible landscaping/greenhouse work as it was springtime in Prince George. The Employment Facilitator created a post on Facebook gardening group, asking if anyone could share information/names on local greenhouse owners, explaining that they were assisting a young individual looking for employment in the Hart area as transportation abilities were limited.

Several FB group members replied and gave great suggestions, so the Employment Facilitator and C.H. sat down and looked at them together, discussing possibilities, interest as well as potential requirements. A local businesswoman messaged the Employment Facilitator and offered to possibly hire C.H.

The Employment Facilitator and C.H. sat down and worked on coping strategies to assist C.H. with calling the potential new employer (writing down information, rehearsing, having questions already written out as well as a pen and paper ready). The Employment Facilitator gave the contact information to C.H. and he was confident enough to contact the potential employer directly and he was hired almost immediately.

The week before his first day of work, C.H. interacted with the Employment Facilitator quite frequently regarding employment skills, coping strategies for flooding, memory, information processing and the need to take breaks. The position was seasonal and has since ended, but C.H. stated his former employer offered to give him a positive reference. The Employment Facilitator and C.H. will continue to work together towards his employment goals.

## Nanaimo Brain Injury Society

Mike\* had been unable to get treatment for his brain injury as he was not connected with a General Medical Practitioner. Due to sensory sensitivity related to his brain injury, he needed support to set up and access virtual healthcare. The NBIS Community Navigator worked with Mike to get him connected with a doctor through the virtual service, TELUS Health.

With support he was able to download the TELUS Health application and create an account allowing Mike to schedule an appointment with a doctor and he was then referred to a specialist and able to start treatment and assessment of his brain injury.

\*Name changed for privacy

## Victoria Brain Injury Society

### Caitlin's Story

I came home from work on December 21, 2018, with a bad headache. Lying on bed watching TV, suddenly half of the TV went blank. I asked my husband if the TV looked weird to him. Suddenly I was rolling on the floor in pain. I had a neuropsychoma – it was not cancerous, but a-typical cells could turn into cancer.

I was 28 and I was told I probably wouldn't walk again. It was surreal. I think I was in shock and went into process mode. I didn't think of the consequences, I just wanted the tumor out. I had an 8-hour surgery and thought I'd be home in a week. I ended up needing eight surgeries and was in the hospital for four months.

In rehab, I'd forget everything I learned as soon as I walked away. I had no short-term memory. No peripheral vision. Everything was like learning it over. I'd get really overwhelmed. People stand around your hospital bed and look at you like you're dying.

The Victoria Brain Injury Society's help has been huge. It's helped me the most. Whenever I come here, I always feel at ease and welcome. They speak the same language and people really understand. The other clients. You don't have to say anything, people just get it.

Things happen for a reason. I look at the path that has opened in front of me; I've met the society, met new people, I'm out promoting the society. I feel like it gives me purpose again.







## Appendix B: History of the Alliance

### Brain Injury: A Personal Challenge – A Community Response

The Brain Injury Alliance is a non-profit organization formed in 2014 as a collaboration between four community brain injury associations to address the funding challenges faced by non-profit brain injury service agencies in the province.

In 2013-2014 alone, 3 brain injury societies in BC closed their doors permanently due to lack of funding, leaving wide gaps in services.

The Brain Injury Alliance is currently comprised of 12 charitable brain injury societies in British Columbia

In 2015, the Province of BC provided the Alliance with a grant of \$3 million for community based, direct services for people with brain injuries. In 2017, the province provided a further \$3 million and replenished the Brain Injury Fund (BIF) in 2021 with an additional \$2 million.

With the assistance of these grants from the Government of BC, the Brain Injury Fund (BIF) was established to help support brain injury societies across the province for 1 million dollars/year over 8 years, all of which is supplemental funding, not to replace existing funding sources. The Alliance has a strong track record of providing this funding effectively and efficiently over 7 funding cycles. As of 2022, the Alliance has distributed/allocated over \$7 million to these agencies.

In addition to direct funding of brain injury societies, the Alliance administers the Dr. Gur Singh Memorial Education Fund established by the province in 2015 with a \$1 million endowment. This fund is available to those individuals with an acquired brain injury who want to upgrade their education and job readiness and are sponsored by a local brain injury society.

Programs and services delivered with the aid of Brain Injury Fund monies have had a significant impact on the wellness of survivors and their families and are delivered at no charge.

The Alliance is only able to fund about 50% of the service and program needs applied for by member organizations.

The Brain Injury Fund is making a positive difference in the lives of British Columbians. Increased funding will provide additional supportive programs and services to meet the complex needs and concerns of the injured, assisting people to reach their full potential for decades to come.

*“This investment is part of the government’s commitment to delivering the services people count on, particularly improving and strengthening health services for seniors, those with mental health and substance use issues, and other adults who have complex-care needs. Ensuring both short- and long-term services are available at no cost to adults in B.C. who have had their lives altered by an injury to the brain is essential to meeting this government objective.”*

*Government of BC, 2021*

## Appendix C: What You Should Know about TBI/ABI

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** arises from traumatic insults to the brain and head (vehicle collisions, falls, sports injuries, assaults, electrocution).

**Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)** includes TBI plus non-traumatic causes (stroke, aneurysm, arterial venous malformation, tumors, anoxic events, surgical mishaps, infections).

- TBI is estimated to occur at an annual rate of 5 per 1000 persons<sup>6</sup>
- Statistically, TBI occurs at a rate 100 times that of spinal cord injury<sup>7</sup>
- When ABI and TBI are included together, estimates suggest up to 1 in 25 persons in Canada may be living with some level of ongoing disability from a brain injury<sup>8</sup>
- While awareness and diagnosis of TBI is improving, missed cases, misdiagnosis and misattribution are commonly reported in the relevant clinic literature<sup>9</sup>
- Post ABI, persons are seven times more likely to develop symptoms of mental illness<sup>10</sup>
- The effect of brain injury is not limited to the health consequences for the victim. For example:
  - Youth convicted of a crime are more likely to have suffered a pre-crime brain injury<sup>11</sup>
  - It has been estimated that over 85% of incarcerated individuals have a brain injury<sup>12</sup>;
  - A survey of Vancouver's homeless population found that 66% reported a brain injury and of those 77% were injured prior to becoming homeless<sup>13</sup>
  - Estimates put the brain injury rate among indigenous persons at 4-5 times the rate in the non-indigenous population<sup>14</sup>;

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<sup>6</sup> Langois JA, Rutland-Brown W, Thomas KE, *Traumatic Brain Injury in the United States, Emergency Department Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths*. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Won Hyung A. Ryu, Anthony Feinstein, Angela Colantonio, David L. Streiner, Deirdre R. Dawson, *Early Identification and Incidence of Mild TBI in Ontario*, *The Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences*, Volume 36, Number 4, 429 - 435, July 2009.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.vistacentre.ca/\\_files/statistics.pdf](http://www.vistacentre.ca/_files/statistics.pdf) (4% figure); see also *Brain Disorders in Ontario: Prevalence, Incidence and Costs from Health Administrative Data*, Ontario Brain Institute July 2015 at 148 (incidence of TBI alone approaching 2% of population in Ontario in April 2010 assessment).

<sup>9</sup> Silver, McAllister and Arcienegas, *Textbook of Traumatic Brain Injury*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2019; see also Zasler and Katz, *Brain Injury Medicine: Principles and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey M. Rogers; Christina A. Read; *Psychiatric comorbidity following traumatic brain injury*. *Brain Injury*, Volume 21, Issue 13 & 14 December, pages 1321 - 1333, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Silver, McAllister and Arcienegas, *Textbook of Traumatic Brain Injury*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2019; see also Zasler and Katz, *Brain Injury Medicine: Principles and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Jeffrey M. Rogers; Christina A. Read; *Psychiatric comorbidity following traumatic brain injury*. *Brain Injury*, Volume 21, Issue 13 & 14 December, pages 1321 - 1333, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Williams WH, Chitsabesan P, Fazel S, et al. *Traumatic brain injury: a potential cause of violent crime? [Published correction appears in Lancet Psychiatry. 2018 Jul 17;]. Lancet Psychiatry. 2018;5(10):836-844. doi:10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30062-2.*

<sup>14</sup> Slaughter B, Fann JR, Ehde D. *Traumatic brain injury in a county jail population: prevalence, neuropsychological functioning and psychiatric disorders*. *Brain Injury* 2003;17(9):731-41.



## Appendix D: Brain Injury Alliance Member Organizations

### BrainTrust Canada

Campbell Valley Head Injury Society

Comox Valley Head Injury Society

Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association

Kamloops Brain Injury Association

Kootenay Brain Injury Association

South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society

Nanaimo Brain Injury Society

Northern Brain Injury Association

Powell River Brain Injury Society

Prince George Brain Injured Group

Victoria Brain Injury Society

“Brain injury is forever. In order to ensure cost-effective and efficacious, evidence-based and outcome-driven services, and considering the complex needs of persons with brain injury, a variety of sources for services and supports must exist at the local level. This will require integrated planning, and establishing and sustaining broader partnerships with other partners in the community.”

Government of British Columbia, 2002