

# BRAINTRUST CANADA

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022



# Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully and humbly acknowledge the Syilx Okanagan Nation and their Peoples, in whose traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory we are located on.

Brain injuries can affect anyone, anytime, anywhere. However, colonial systems and attitudes lead to unequal health and social outcomes. By uplifting Indigenous peoples and committing to decolonization and anti-racism through action, we can create communities that are inclusive, just, and accessible for all.

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# Message From The Executive Director

Your brain is the single most important organ in your entire body, and yet brain injury remains misunderstood, underfunded, and overlooked. Brain injuries don't discriminate: they can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time. Yet, identities like ability, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and language often affect access to supports for individuals living with brain injury in our society. In addition to the extreme difficulty of navigating systems when the brain doesn't work as it used to, the COVID-19 pandemic hit our population hard. The isolation, fear, and lack of human connection was detrimental for our people and pointed to a need for healing, innovation, and community.

Brene Brown once said, "I don't have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness—it's right in front of me if I'm paying attention and practicing gratitude." As 2022 comes to an end, I am honoured to take a moment to reflect on the millions of mini moments of magic that take place within these walls and in our community each year. From laughter in support groups, feeling understood in counselling sessions, the sense of security that comes with a food hamper, and reflecting on progress with delight and determination, these are the magic moments that happen every day at BrainTrust.

Through building changes, leadership changes, and just about every other change you can think of, our staff and board were resilient. We educated, supported, and advocated. We were guided by a belief in a cause greater than us and a common goal that started back in 1986 to create a place of understanding, safety, and community for people lacking just that. We see this belief reflected in our community. By putting our resources in one pot and gathering expertise, we can work in partnership to meet all the needs our clients and maximize their potential.

I am often asked why I have dedicated my life to supporting those with brain injury. My answer is simple: They are the strongest and most compassionate human beings I have ever met. They are the professors of my world. I am honoured to guide my team through this work, and I hope you feel honoured learning about it too.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### President

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### Directors

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Mia Liu

Laurie Lundman

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A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Amanda McFarlane".

**Amanda McFarlane**  
Executive Director

# Who We Are

BrainTrust Canada began in 1986 as a small group who saw a need for greater support and resources for those with acquired brain injury.

Today, we are a community guided by our values and mission to support individuals affected by brain injury in the North and Central Okanagan, with a variety of programs and services.

## Common causes of Acquired Brain Injury

- Motor vehicle collision
- Workplace injury
- Sports-related injury
- Physical altercation
- Slip or fall
- Infections (e.g., encephalitis)
- Stroke
- Strangulation
- Non-fatal overdose
- Brain tumours

**Our Mission:** To bring the issue of brain injury to the forefront, reduce preventable brain injuries, and maximize the potential of those who have been affected by brain injury through programs and advocacy.

**Our Mandate:** To provide brain injury prevention, education, and rehabilitation programs and services.

**Our Vision:** To be a key leader and collaborative partner in our community, meeting the unique needs of people affected by acquired brain injury by providing evidence-based and innovative approaches to rehabilitation and recovery that lead to meaningful outcomes.



# New Beginnings

After residing in our office for over 17 years, BrainTrust Canada moved to a new office in the heart of downtown Kelowna in September 2022.

The space was redesigned to be more supportive of BrainTrust's therapeutic services. With two separate entrances, we can maintain the privacy and confidentiality of clients, whether they are coming in for occupational therapy, trauma counselling, or group programs.

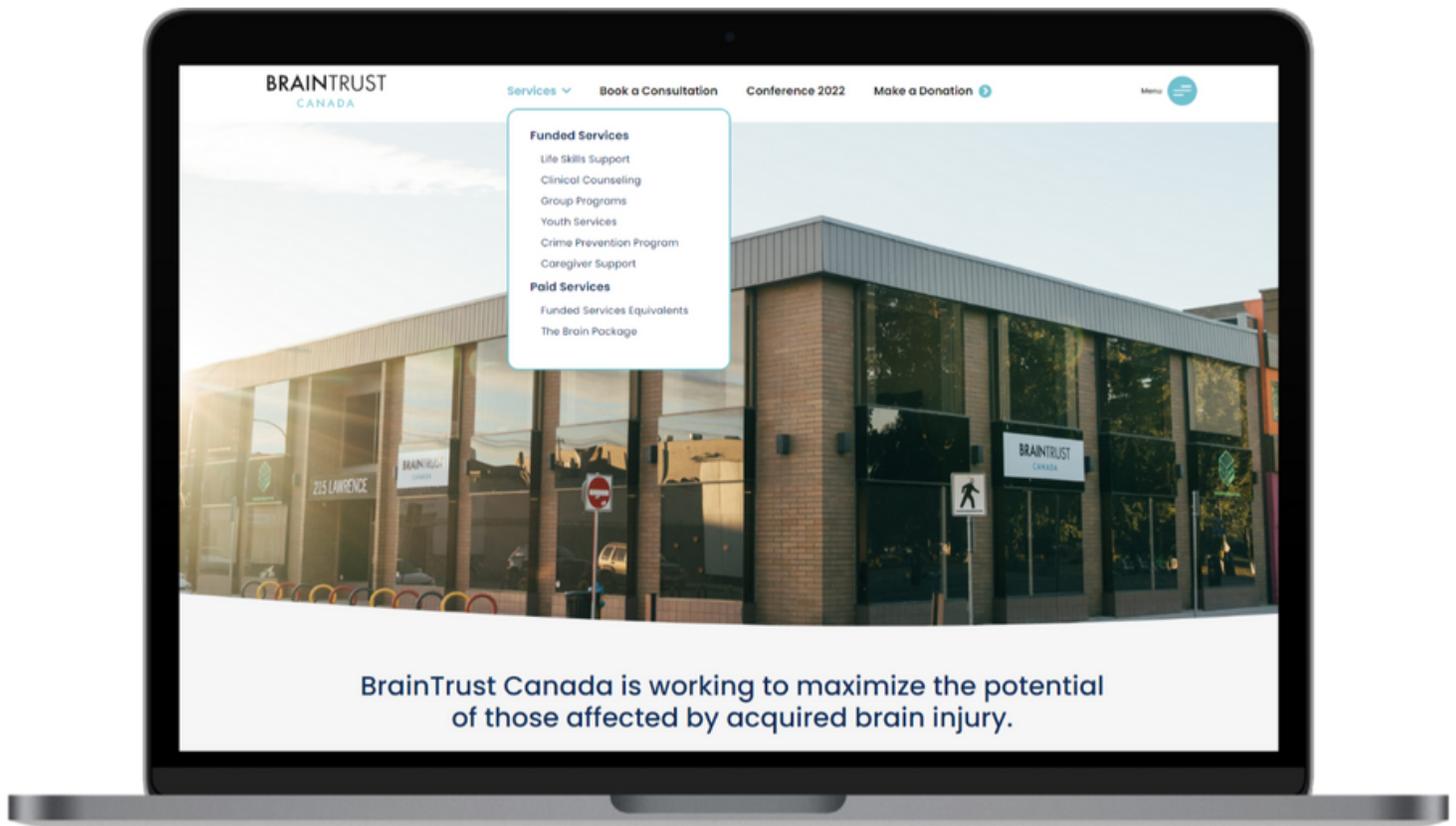
To welcome the community to our new space, we held an Open House in October 2022. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held by the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce and funds were raised through a Silent Auction. We are excited to continue to deliver innovative and accessible programs in our new office and provide brain injury screening, support, and awareness to those who need it most.



100-215 Lawrence Avenue

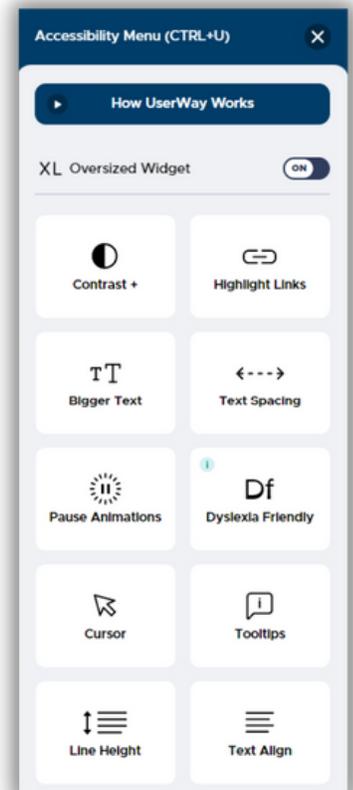


# New Website



We launched a new and improved website in May 2022.

- **Accessibility Menu**
  - To ensure those with brain injury can find information and navigate services, our Accessibility Menu provides accommodations for visual impairments, sensory issues, and more!
- **Built-in Book a Consultation form**
  - Potential clients can book a consultation directly through our website to start the intake process and learn about the services we offer.
- **Updated Services pages**
  - Our website reflects the innovative array of programs we offer, with details and eligibility criteria for each service.
- **\*UPCOMING\* Online Resource Centre**
  - We are working on an online resource centre to share resources developed by our team of brain injury experts.





# Life Skills Support

**300** clients living with brain injury

**8000+** hours of 1:1 support

Our Life Skills Support Program is our most frequently accessed program.

Clients receive individualized supports for things like medical coordination, accessing food hampers, financial management, applying for income assistance, obtaining employment or volunteer opportunities, relationship-building, and more!

Every brain injury is different and we believe supports should be tailored to each individual's needs.

This year we:

- Supported over 300 clients and provided over 8000 hours of 1:1 support
- Helped clients obtain 400+ food hampers
- Discharged approximately 2 clients per month after helping them reach multiple short- and long-term goals in their recovery
- Worked with community partners to help clients access supports to meet all their needs



**1/4** clients access >1 service

“ After receiving support for my brain injury, my confidence has gone up and so has my empathy. ”



# Group Programs

“  
 First of all, [the group] makes you feel not alone.  
 Second, you meet other people with the same problems you have.  
 Third, some of those people have figured out how to solve those problems.”

13 group programs

500+ hours

65 clients

## 2022 Group Programs

- Anger Management
- Anxiety & Depression
- Art Group
- Caregiver Support
- Cognitive and Social Enhancement (CASE)
- Communication Group
- Finding Meaning and Hope
- Healthy Relationships
- Peer Support
- Return to Balance
- Walking Group

Group programs are offered virtually and in-person in Kelowna and Vernon.

BrainTrust's Group Programs form a community of individuals recovering from and supporting one another through brain injury. Groups are offered based on availability, interest, and need.

In 2022, we began offering clinical group programs led by our in-house clinical counsellors. Group environments help clients practice skills, connect their experiences to others, and reduce feelings of loneliness.

# Clinical Counselling

**100** clients living with brain injury

After brain injury, there are many changes to adjust to as well as an increased risk of developing a mental health disorder. [BrainTrust's Clinical Counselling Program](#) provides funded mental health therapy for individuals with brain injury, as well as caregivers.

Our team of clinical counsellors have expertise in brain injury and are knowledgeable in adapting therapeutic approaches for brain injury to maximize the benefits of counselling for all clients.

**750** counselling sessions

In 2022, we launched our Rapid Access Counselling (RAC) Program to respond to a need for drop-in, solution-focused counselling sessions. RAC sessions are designed to make a difference with the most pressing issue for the client in the moment and employ positive psychology principles and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.

This year we delivered 750+ counselling sessions, including 81 Rapid Access Counselling sessions

## Matt's Story

One moment in time can have lifelong impacts, especially when brain injury is involved. 6-year-old Matt was skating with his mom just before the start of the holiday season when he fell and hit his head on the ice. He was not wearing a helmet. Over the course of Matt's childhood, he sustained additional brain injuries. What followed was trauma and a cumulative build-up of persistent symptoms, including headaches, dizziness, fatigue, and difficulties

with attention, memory, and organization, that Matt didn't know how to deal with.

Without education about brain injury impacts, Matt explains, "as a kid you assume it's you."

Matt first met BrainTrust after his most recent brain injury. In his words, "I was homeless and meth addiction and meth psychosis and suicidal and I tried to end my own life with drugs and luckily someone found me, but I was gone for a bit." Anoxic brain injury can occur when the brain is deprived of oxygen for as little as 2 minutes.

Fortunately, Matt was referred to BrainTrust after medical records confirmed anoxic brain injury; despite anoxic brain injury being common after overdose, many individuals do not receive a brain injury diagnosis nor adequate support.

At BrainTrust, Matt accesses Clinical Counselling program and Life Skills Support. BrainTrust's collaborative, case management approach means his support worker can provide added support to help him carry out the goals he sets in counselling back in the community. Matt says, **"having a clinical counsellor is amazing at this point."**

Over the years, Matt has participated in therapy with other counsellors, but having a counsellor who understands his brain injury has, **"more impact than [he] knows."** Brain injury has physical, cognitive, emotional, and social impacts. For individuals who live with brain injury, it can be hard for them (and others) to recognize and understand why certain behaviours are happening. Matt explains, **"it's weird because the things I would just label as negative traits, there's a reason, right?"** Counselling has helped Matt better understand how his brain injury impacts his daily life and has given him, **"the courage to break through all the lies I've told myself."**

“

**Now I have a reference point of what it feels like to be more well-adjusted. I never had that before. So now things are making more sense.**

”

Matt is currently living in a community house. He attributes stable housing and clinical counselling to finding, **"artistic purpose,"** for the first time in his life. Recently, he started doing photography, walked into an art gallery after a piece caught his eye, and has, **"picked up the guitar again and really went at it."** He explains, **"I'm not in crisis and that's why things like that are happening."** Having accessible and effective counselling has allowed Matt to be, **"in a state of transcendence."**

For individuals like Matt who have experienced brain injury, substance misuse, and homelessness, finding stability in both their physical and mental health needs can be life changing.

**[You can donate to BrainTrust's Clinical Counselling program by clicking here.](#)**

# Prevention

When it comes to brain injury, we look at the entire story.

There are over 200,000 concussions annually in Canada, most of which are preventable for children and youth. We provide prevention information to our community and run our Helmet Safety Program, to provide helmets to children and youth in financial need.



450

bike helmets for  
children in need

This year we:

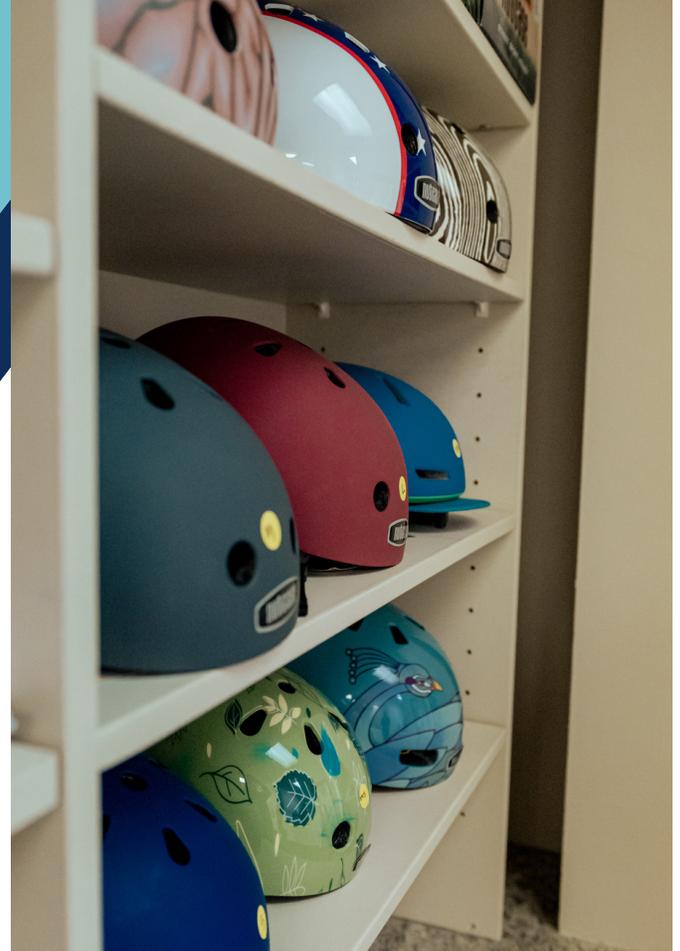
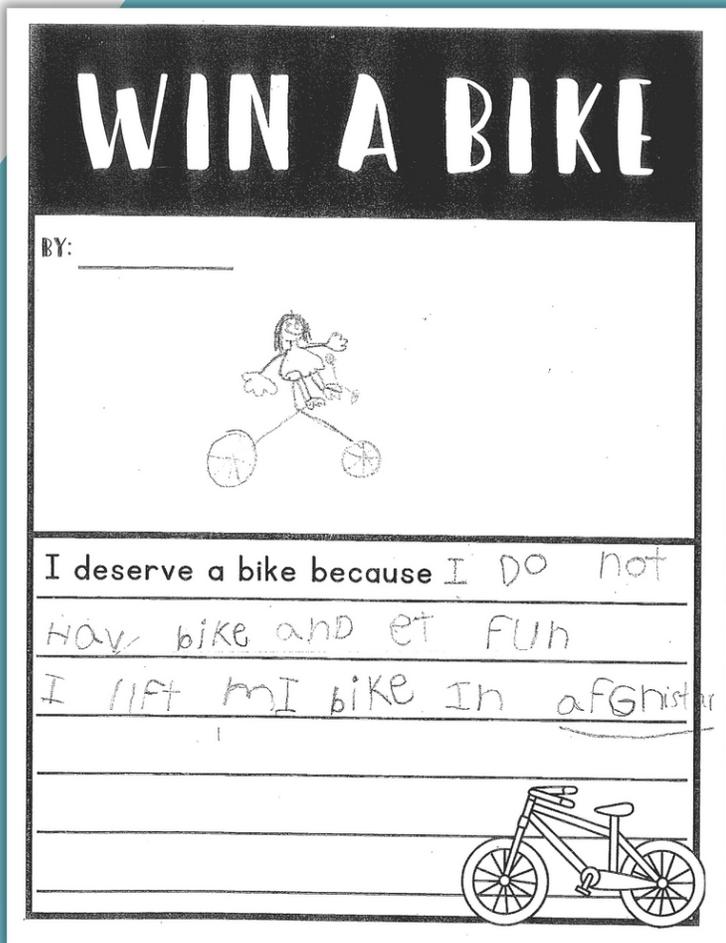
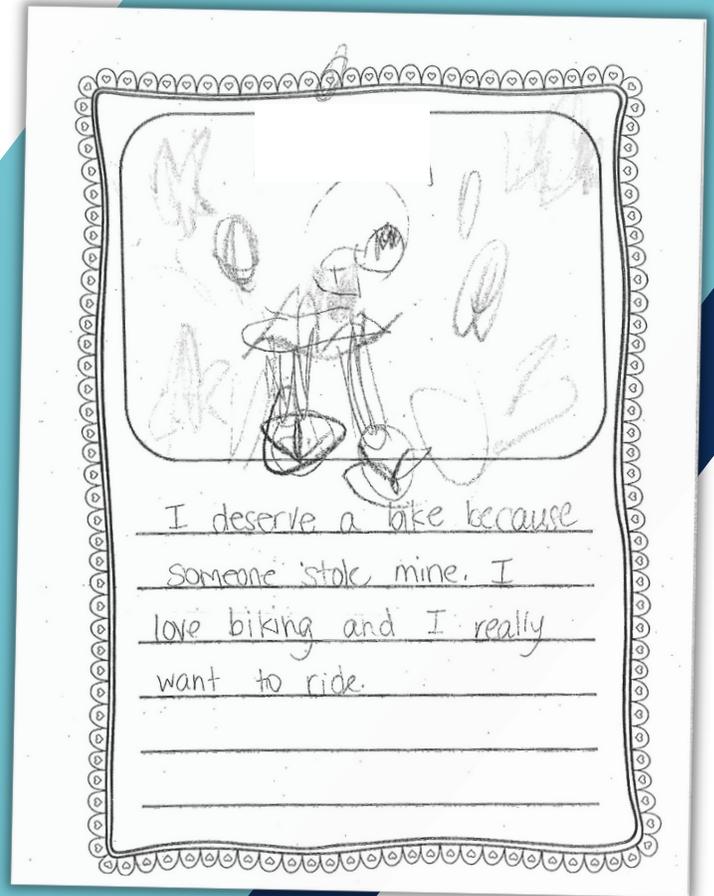
- Led assemblies for >600 elementary school students for Bike to School week
- Partnered with Elevation Outdoors and Smith Creek Cycle on their holiday Bikes for All campaign
- Advocated for prevention of brain injuries as part of the BC Injury Prevention Alliance
- Hosted bike rodeos with Cops for Kids and the NOW Society
- Gave helmets and activity books to kids in the community over Spring Break





Students at Pearson Road Elementary nominated themselves for a free bike.

We partnered with the school to ensure that every kid who received a bike also received a helmet.





# Education

**36** customized training presentations

The first step in making our communities more inclusive, understanding, and compassionate is education. BrainTrust provides education to community partners/organizations, students, and individuals and families affected by brain injury.

Highlights of the year:

- Neuroscientist Dr. Gordon Binsted joined BrainTrust as our Scientific Advisor
- Engaged with the community at nearly 20 community events
- Shared resources at Kelowna General Hospital for Interior Health's Trauma Awareness week
- Trained >200 soccer players, coaches, and parents on sports concussion
- Participated in a Canada-wide campaign for Brain Injury Awareness month and lit up the sails in Downtown Kelowna

**4500+** followers reached on social media

Every Spring, we provide education in schools through our Skullwise program. This year, we spoke to high school students about brain injury prevention, symptoms, and recovery, as well as social issues in the context of brain injury.

**skullwise**  
NO BRAIN. NO GAME.

What did students like most?

- "How relatable it was as an athlete"
- "Behaviours can be due to physical brain injury, not just mental illness"
- "The amount of facts and statistics"
- "Learning about groups of people who are more susceptible to brain damage"
- "Made me feel like I wasn't stupid and realized it could be past brain trauma"

# West Coast Brain Injury Conference

1  
day

7  
speakers

200+  
attendees

In June 2022, we held the Pushor Mitchell LLP West Coast Brain Injury Conference (WCBIC; formerly BrainX) at the University of British Columbia Okanagan campus. The day of learning included speaker talks, a criminal justice professionals workshop, a wine and cheese reception, and exhibitor hall.

Our amazing lineup of speakers spoke about brain injury in the criminal justice system, decolonization, psychological flexibility, advocacy, substance misuse, and more.

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## Changing the Narrative on Brain Injury

The theme of this year's conference was "Changing the Narrative on Brain Injury" with a focus on targeting the root of chronic social and systemic issues and shifting away from the "one practice fits all" mandate.

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New this year:

- *Hybrid conference.* Both virtual and in-person viewing options were available, with this year's event being our first in-person conference since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic
- *Pre-conference dinner.* To spark conversations about how we can improve our community, we invited brain injury experts and local changemakers for a night of food, drinks, and discussion.



# Youth Services

Recognizing a lack of supports for youth with brain injury in our community, BrainTrust launched our Youth Services in 2022 to support youth aged 12-29 with brain injury. Youth are more vulnerable to concussion and take longer to recover than adults. After TBI, about 30% of youth experience symptoms lasting 3 months or longer.

The BrainTrust Youth Voices Committee, a group of youth with lived experience of brain injury, co-developed youth resources and programming.

**30** youth with brain injury supported

  
**7**  
youth

  
**7**  
meetings

  
**10+**  
resources

Supports offered to youth include:

- Life Skills Support
- Clinical Counselling (including Rapid Access Counselling)
- Education

Issues important to youth were:

- Support navigating services
- Mental health education & support
- Managing persisting symptoms
- Finding new interests & hobbies
- Hearing positive stories from peers

“ For me, I was chasing hockey and, you know, you get to a high level, you’ve been doing it your whole life, and it’s easy to make that who you are and your whole personality. And then something like a brain injury happens and it would’ve been nice to know that there’s other things out there for me. ”

“

And what I really always have to remind myself is that there's a reason that I survived because I have so much more good to give to the world and I know that every brain injury survivor has so much good to still bring and something unique that nobody else can bring.

”



# Caregiver Support



caregivers

Our Caregiver Support Program helps caregivers navigate through times of stress and uncertainty, accept change, recognize personal growth, and prevent burnout through 1:1 support, education, clinical counselling, and peer support groups.

In 2022, 37% of our caregivers attended clinical counselling.

## SPOTLIGHT: LORI KLINE, CAREGIVER

Lori never expected to receive a phone call that her teenage daughter had suffered a sudden cardiac arrest. And she couldn't have prepared for the journey of grief and gratitude that would follow.

Lori shared her story at the 2022 West Coast Brain Injury Conference in her talk "Traumas and Triumphs: My Experience as a Caregiver"



“

I encourage my fellow caregivers to join a support group. [My husband] and I are part of a wonderful support group for parents of adult children living with brain injury.

Although we are the veterans of the group, we all continuously learn from each other, by sharing our experiences. We certainly openly discuss gritty topics, but we also laugh a lot, too. Who knew?

”



# Crime Prevention & Reduction

As one of the first in Canada to develop a program to offer support and rehabilitation for persons with brain injury in contact with the justice system, BrainTrust's Crime Prevention and Reduction Program assesses the impact of brain injury on daily functioning, identifies areas of support required, and offers corresponding services.

This year we:

- Supported 30+ clients through our Crime Prevention & Reduction program, including advocating for clients in Kelowna's Integrated Court
- Delivered brain injury training to ~300 RCMP officers
- Conducted brain injury screening in shelters to tackle the issue of under-diagnosis in homeless and precariously housed persons
- Held the first annual Men's Winter Clothing Drive to collect winter clothing & personal hygiene items for individuals being released from the Oliver Correctional Centre
- Received additional funding to pilot our Youth Crime Prevention Program, as well as a 7-week social media campaign to raise awareness about youth, brain injury, and the criminal justice system
- Hosted Dr. Kim Gorgens as the keynote speaker at WCBIC 2022 where she also led a workshop for criminal justice professionals



## SPOTLIGHT:

### DR. KIM GORGENS

As the keynote speaker at the 2022 West Coast Brain Injury Conference, Dr. Gorgens spoke about "The Colorado Brain Injury Model: Lessons from the US about Brain Injuries in Criminal Justice"

She believes that we must assess for brain injury history *and* impairments in order to understand the client's needs.



# Jose's Story



What's going on? Why is my sister crying? Those are the questions 7-year-old Jose asked himself after being struck by a cyclist. The man riding the bike never stopped. Jose woke up from a coma three days later with a fractured jaw, cracked skull, and a brain injury that went untreated. He explains, **"Nothing seemed to be too badly off until years down the road."** Jose and his family immigrated to Canada a few years later.

After a skiing accident as a young adult, Jose was prescribed opioids which led to substance misuse and addiction. He sustained additional brain injuries during this period of his life. Jose was ultimately incarcerated multiple times for drug-related charges. Caught up in the cycle of addiction and incarceration, he was never treated for brain injury. He recalls, **"I had been losing time from my days. I had been losing days from my weeks."**

Jose was released two years early from his last sentence with the intent to change his life for the better. He began receiving support through BrainTrust's Crime Prevention & Reduction Program. BrainTrust staff worked with Jose's probation officer to help Jose identify and learn to use strategies to compensate for his difficulties with memory, organization, and task completion.

“  
If you don't  
look at the  
root problem,  
you're not  
going to work  
out the end  
result.

”

When Jose suffered a recent loss, he was able to see a counsellor within a few days through BrainTrust's Rapid Access Counselling (RAC) program. RAC is designed for clients, like Jose, who have difficulties with memory and executive functioning and trouble applying coping skills in times of emotional distress. With a smile on his face, Jose says, "Places like BrainTrust are a must."

Today, Jose is motivated to help others and bring awareness to brain injury. He is completing his community service hours with BrainTrust and told his story to students participating in brain injury training. For nearly 3 years, Jose has been free of substances. He explains, "Maintenance is just as important as the accomplishment." Jose now lives a life with purpose and says, "Now more than ever, I can be of help to my family." And if Jose ever finds himself needing extra support, he knows BrainTrust is there for him.

When Jose thinks about the man on the bike that caused his brain injury as a child, he states, "I hold nothing against him for [riding away] because he must have panicked." Jose extends his love, kindness, and empathy to everyone around him and is grateful for the work Braintrust has put towards helping him find his way.

## The Brain Package

In 2022, we launched the [Brain Package](#), a comprehensive, in-house rehabilitation program designed to clients get the most out of brain injury recovery.

Developed in consultation with our Scientific Advisor, the Brain Package consists of a multidisciplinary team of expert clinicians, including a clinical counsellor, neuropsychologist, occupational therapist, and clinical exercise physiologist, to address all areas of health and well-being.

Clients are paired with a knowledgeable Program Coach to alter health behaviours for long-term benefits and to ensure that recovery efforts don't end upon program completion. Research shows that small, consistent changes can lead to tremendous improvements in a person's injury recovery and overall health.

We piloted the Brain Package this year and look forward to expanding the program in 2023!

# Thank you

BrainTrust is immensely grateful for our supporters and donors who help us reduce preventable brain injuries and maximize the potential of those living with brain injury. Your generosity is immeasurable and deserves the utmost appreciation.



**BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE**

Brain } A Personal Challenge  
Injury } A Community Response



Ministry of  
Municipal Affairs  
and Housing



**PUSHOR MITCHELL** LLP  
LAWYERS



Ministry of  
Public Safety and  
Solicitor General



**KGH FOUNDATION**  
Giving Changes Everything.



**Kiwanis**  
CENTRAL OKANAGAN



**United Way**  
British Columbia

Working with communities in BC's  
Interior, Lower Mainland, Central  
& Northern Vancouver Island



**KELOWNA**



**TOYOTA**

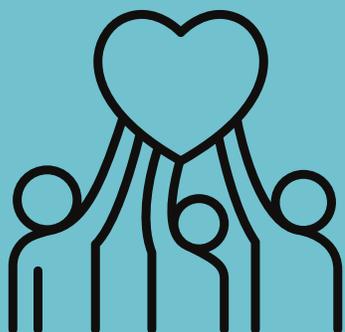
**TRIAL  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION**  
of BC



**WORK SAFE BC**

# Thank you

- 2 Burley Men Moving
- ACT/UCT Kelowna West
- Anita Hardy
- Arrowleaf Winery
- Awaken Health
- Bad Tattoo
- Bank of Montreal
- Barn Owl Brewing
- Bay Avenue Shelter
- BC Housing
- BC Place
- Beat Patisserie
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Black Mountain Golf Club
- Bliss Bakery
- Boys & Girls Clubs of the Okanagan
- Brain Injury Canada
- Brickhouse Beauty
- Brock & Brett Aynsley
- Burnett's Florist & Gifts
- Canada Helps
- Capri Insurance
- Central Okanagan Community Food Bank
- Central Okanagan Foundation
- Chin-Wen Chong
- Creative Therapy Consultants
- Chaibaba
- Chances
- City of Kelowna
- City of Lake Country
- CMHA Kelowna
- CMHA Vernon
- Commissionaires
- Connect Telephone
- Cops for Kids
- Cornerstone Shelter
- Cruising the Okanagan
- Cycle Path
- Dairy Queen
- Doggytopia
- Dominos
- Evangel Church Kelowna
- Elevation Outdoors
- First United Church
- Funktional
- Gary Wong
- Dr. Gordon Binsted
- Grizzli Winery
- Guy Few
- Hanalei Studios
- Hands in Service
- Intrigue Winery
- James Alton Films
- Jay McKay
- John Howard Society
- Kasper Denture Clinic
- The Keg
- Keith Pinder
- Kelly O'Bryan's
- Kelowna Beer Institute
- Kelowna Chamber of Commerce
- Kelowna Elks Lodge #52
- Kelowna General Hospital
- Kelowna Gospel Mission
- Kelowna Law Courts
- Kelowna Medical Aesthetics
- Kelowna Now
- Kelowna Probation
- Kelowna RCMP
- Kelowna Women's Shelter
- Kelowna Women's Shelter Thrift Store
- Kettle River Brewing
- KF Aerospace
- Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society
- Dr. Kim Gorgens
- Leopold's Tavern
- Judge Lisa Wyatt
- Living Positive Resource Centre
- Mallory Treddenick/Administrative Crown Counsel
- Maple & Manchester
- Marble Slab Creamery
- March of Dimes
- Dr. Maya Libben
- McDonald's
- Melissa Panza
- Metro Communities
- Michael Peterson
- Montana's
- Motherlove Kombucha
- Mount Boucherie Estate Winery
- Natalie Reichert
- Nature's Fare
- Northern Computer
- Okanagan Lifestyle
- Okanagan Regional Library
- Olive Us
- Oliver Correctional Centre
- Okanagan College
- Okanagan Regional Library Orchestra
- Ozanam
- People Place Vernon
- Pro Sign
- Public Guardian & Trustee Office
- Red Bird Brewing
- Richter Street Shelter
- Room & Pillar Spa
- Rotary Club of Kelowna Ogoogo
- Safeway
- Salty Caramel Kitchen
- Salvation Army
- School District #23
- SHARE Society
- Smith Creek Cycle
- Smithson Employment Law Corporation
- Spirit of the Lake Native Boutique
- Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
- Starbucks
- Sun City Physiotherapy
- SunRype
- Switch Research
- Tim Hortons
- Train Station Pub
- Tripke Bakery
- Triumph Coffee
- TWP Fitness
- UBCO Department of Psychology
- UBCO School of Education
- University of Regina
- Unlocking the Gates
- Urban Matters
- Valley Floral Wholesale
- Valley Lifestyle
- Venture Commercial
- Vernon Jubilee Hospital
- Volcanic Hills Estate Winery
- Westbank First Nation
- Westcorp Kelowna Office



## It takes a community to heal.

Join our community and support brain injury survivors. Whether you make a donation, volunteer your time, or help us spread the word about our programs and events, your support makes a difference for those affected by brain injury.

**DONATE**  
**TODAY**



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