



THE BRAIN TRAIN

Get on board with BIAC

Published by the Brain Injury Association of Canada.

Editor – Barb Butler

Graphic Designer – Merle McIntosh

Communications Chair – Barb Butler

BIAC Communications Committee:

Barb Butler, Sarah Briggs, Melanie Cameron, Evelyn Jollimore, Don Matheson, Yvan Teasdale

In A Nutshell

by Barb Butler

Winter is most definitely upon us with places like BC getting snow that they are not used to. Luckily for them it will go away. We all wish brain injury was like that but we all know that once you have a brain injury it is something you deal with forever. Of course survivors learn to adapt and life is good again and they experience the joy of survival. May all of you experience joy and peace wherever you find yourself this Christmas. Remember that life is short, take time for one another, and stay warm.

A Word from the President

by Mireille Provost

It seems that time goes by so fast. We think that we just started something and it has been going on for a few months, a few years. Being so busy with our volunteer work makes us unaware of time. As you will see by the newsletter, we keep very busy and things are moving along, Richard Kinar will represent us at the 20th Pacific Coast Brain Injury Conference; Madeleine Welton is working very hard for the 3rd Hawaiian Oyster Odyssey to take place in Toronto in February. Jane has made studying and volunteering a life time goal that not many of us could follow. On behalf of the Brain Injury Association of Canada, I want to wish all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Play safe, drive carefully and rest.

Happy New Year!
from all of us at BIAC

Support for Proposed Head Protection for Recreational Sport—Helmets and Awareness Project

by Richard Kinar

I have been a lobbyist for the use of helmets for the past four years pushing for Canadian standards for helmets to make sure that we have safe helmets to be made and sold in Canada. I join BIAC-ACLC in July 2004 to work with the organization on this important issue of helmets. Here is a summary on what is happening.

On March 10th, 2005, Andre Picard from the Globe and Mail wrote, “In the past month alone at least seven people have died in skiing incidents across the country: four in Quebec, two in British Columbia, one in Alberta. All the fatalities involved serious head trauma and, in most cases, skiers were not wearing helmets. While the number of deaths is shocking, it is just the tip of the iceberg, masking a large number of severe head and spinal injuries.”

Andre went on to write about a quote from SKI CANADA December 2002, “Some helmets sold in Canada don’t provide any more protection than wearing a milk bag on your head. While this statement is hyperbolic, it does underscore that without standards, anything goes. Most consumers probably do not realize this is the current reality in Canada.”

Unintentional injuries place a tremendous economic burden on this country conservatively estimated at \$14.7 billion dollars annually in direct and indirect costs. Most of these injuries are predictable and preventable.

It is the goal of the Federal Government to raise physical activity in Canada by 10 percent for the 2010 Olympics. It is the goal of the Government of British Columbia to raise physical activity in B.C. by 20 percent for the 2010 Olympics.

It follows that safe participation is paramount to ensuring health, social and economic outcomes associated with sport, physical activity and podium success. It is important to do what we can to invest in interventions that will help ensure safer participation and achievement. I thank the Government of British Columbia and the Honourable John Les, Minister of Small Business and Economic Development, for the investment of \$50,000 in March 2005 towards standards and a public education program.

The Government of B.C. agreed the cost of doing nothing is too high. By investing in this standards development and public education initiative, the Government of Canada can demonstrate that it is proactively protecting the health of Canadian citizens and better managing health care resources by reducing health care costs associated with preventable injuries.

BIAC is asking the Federal Government for a buy in of \$650,000 to help achieve these goals; a National Education Program, new Canadian standards for sport helmets, and the use of the Federal Hazardous Product Act.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

The Canadian Standards Association in partnership with Smart Risk, a leading not-for-profit injury prevention organization, would launch a national public education campaign to help reduce the risk associated with head injuries from skiing, snowboarding, in-line skating, skateboarding and push-scooters.

HAZARDOUS PRODUCT ACT

BIAC also ask the Federal Government to use the same Hazardous Product Act that is administered by Health Canada. It has safety requirements for certain consumer products, many of which are intended for use by children. Under this law you cannot import, sell or distribute products that do not meet the requirements of the Hazardous Product Act. A partial list of products that must meet safety requirements under the act are: baby gates, car seats, children's' sleepwear, cribs, playpens, strollers, lawn darts and hockey helmets. Visit Health Canada – Consumer Product Safety – Legislation http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/legislation/index_e.html

This act will insure that the same success that has been achieved with hockey helmets will occur with these new helmets. A sport helmet reduces the risk of head injury from 50 to 88 percent. For every dollar spent on a sport helmet there is a \$29.00 health care saving. The average acute care cost of an acquired brain injury is \$2,867.59 per day.

Helmets are proven to be a low cost solution to preventing life-long injury or even death.

13 percent of recreational sport activities lead to head injuries. The cost of recreational injuries in Ontario is \$655 Million per year (Ontario Economic Burden of Injury Report 2006). Therefore, the cost in Ontario from head injuries resulting from recreational sport is \$85.5 million per year and the cost across Canada is more than \$100 million per year.

In summary, the lack of Canadian safety standards for recreational sporting helmets is contributing to increased rates of preventable injury, creating an additional burden on the health care system and causing confusion in manufacturing, retail and consumer sectors of the Canadian economy.

This proposed project for Recreational Sport Helmet Standards and Awareness Project will benefit Canada in establishing an adequate level of safety for recreational sporting helmets retailed in Canada.

- Reduce the economic burden of preventable injury.
- Create a level playing field for the recreational helmet industry.
- Promote consumer confidence.
- Provide standards that can be referenced in legislation, policy documents or codes of conduct.
- Promote greater helmet safety awareness for consumers.
- Encouraging an increase in helmet use in targeted recreational activities.

STAKE HOLDER SUPPORT

In addition to the BC Government, Industry Canada, and Health Canada, a number of prominent public and private organizations have demonstrated their support for the proposed National Helmet Standards and Education Program:

- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- The Canadian Snowboarding Federation
- Alpine Canada
- Disabled Skiers Association of B.C.
- Sport B.C.
- Canada Ski West Operators Association
- Quebec Ski Area Association
- Ontario Ski Area Association
- Ski Instructors Alliance of Canada
- Canadian Standards Association

BIAC is a member on a sub-committee whose mandate is to establish Canadian standards for the making, selling and use of sport helmets in Canada. The standards are meant to ensure that you have a safe equipment that will protect your head. As SKI CANADA was saying in December 2002, "Some helmets sold in Canada don't provide any more protection than wearing a milk bag on your head.

Rest assured that with the help of BIAC and our stakeholders, I will continue to work hard to make this happen.





Board Member Biography **MADELEINE WELTON**

Madeleine Welton is a director of BIAC. She is a member of the fundraising committee and the 2007 AGM Committee. She will have helped with three Hawaiian Oyster Odysseys, which is the total number to date!

Madeleine is currently working on a contract basis, either selling new homes, or just doing the colour selections for them. This allows her to push for her new passion, selling upgrades to make more “GREEN” homes.

Prior to Madeleine’s injury, the mother of two baby boys stayed at home with them. They were 10 months and 24 months at the time of the accident, and were spared injury from good car seats. Side airbags would have prevented Madeleine’s head from hitting the side window.

Madeleine’s education was eclectic with a little of everything adding up to a broad smorgasbord of interests. There was a BA in Psychology, a Diploma in Business, and a mish-mash of studies in Interior Design, Cooking, Marketing, CPR training, scuba diving, and ski instructor.

After her injury, Madeleine tried to focus on a few therapeutic interests. She played bridge for her left-brain development, and attended a lot of music concerts for her right brain development. Social interaction also encouraged the development of the right side.

Also, being a soccer co-coordinator for 3 years really enabled her to train her frontal lobes in organizational planning. This activity caused a lot of headaches and frustration at the time, however, Madeleine would not be nearly as capable today if she hadn’t fought through that window of opportunity.

She continued with her physical training which had always been a large part of her life. Only after the accident Madeleine was paralyzed on her left side. Then everything still had to be re-learned and re-taught. The paralysis is mostly gone but certain movements, especially when tired reveal such weaknesses.

Continuing to ‘FOCUS’ (which is highly characteristic of Head Injured People), she obtained the certification to be a personnel trainer. She also joined the Green Party of Canada as a response to a “clearer” vision of what life is ALL about.

The boys are now 14 and 15 years of age, and are very athletically oriented. Madeleine and her husband Dan live in Mississauga, Ontario but spend a great deal of time in the town of Collingwood, where the boys can ski race.

Stories of Courage- Survivor Story

My Life’s Journey *by Jane Warren*

The car accident was in December, just after Christmas exams. Icy roads sent my brother and me skidding into the path of an oncoming truck.

Having spent five years in England, I woke up in a strange, but vaguely familiar place, where everyone spoke with funny accents and used different slang than what I was accustomed to. Translating the ‘foreign’ conversation mentally, required long delays before I answered anyone. Quite often I’d forget the question or the topic of conversation while playing with comparisons. For example: a sidewalk in England is referred to as pavement, so what is pavement in Canada?

I had been in a coma for two weeks, and suffered 12 broken bones in the accident itself. Number thirteen occurred while in hospital—trying to get out of bed to go to the washroom. I didn’t have the strength to lower the sides of the bed so I tried to climb over. They had tied me down in bed, as befits those in or recently out of a coma, but the nurse had left the knots within my reach. People just out of comas aren’t expected to be able to untie them. That fall—from sitting atop the bed railing onto my nose—no doubt aggravated the Traumatic Brain Injury (T.B.I.) I had already suffered.

As a result, I didn’t, and don’t, remember much about my just completed first term of business courses. After I was out of the hospital, some months later, a man came up to me in a restaurant and asked how I was. I had noted his approach, thinking he looked vaguely

continued on page 4



Brain Injury Association of Canada

Brain Injury Association of Canada

28 Caron St.,
Gatineau, Quebec J8Y 1Y7

1-866-977-2492

(613) 777-2492

web site: www.biac-aclc.ca

Email: biac-aclc@hotmail.com

Executive

Provost, Mireille—President—QC

Teasdale, Yvan—Past President—QC

Johnson, Shirley—Vice President
(Operations)—BC

Lyon, Meloni—Vice President
(External Affairs)—AB

Stevenson, Howard—Treasurer—ON

Butler, Barb—Secretary—SK

Provincial Representatives

Johnson, Shirley—BC

Lyon, Meloni—AL

Butler, Barb—SK

Lush, Tom—NL & LA

Mossey, Marie—PE

Hart, Barb—NS

Directors

Kinar, Richard—British Columbia

Carlson, Larry—Saskatchewan

Stevenson, Howard—Ontario

Welton, Madeleine—Ontario

Brown, Howard—Ontario

Matheson, Don—British Columbia

Staff

Renaud, Nadine

Volunteers

It would be impossible to accomplish as much without the help of many dedicated volunteers who are doing translation, preparing and editing this newsletter, building the website and much more.

Stories of Courage- Survivor Story (continued)

familiar. He was too well-dressed (in a suit) to be a farmer and it was the middle of the afternoon so he didn't have a job. He had to introduce himself as a professor from whom I had just taken four months of classes!

I sat out the next year of school—officially anyway. A friend of mine who was finishing a classics degree suggested I audit the world religions course she was taking. We could therefore 'visit' twice a week, and it would give both my mother and me a break from each other. The lack of brain injury rehabilitation in Nova Scotia (then and now) meant that she was saddled 24/7, and my father to a lesser extent as he was away at work during the day is not something I would wish on anyone.

That was just about the end of any breaks I got at that particular university. When I started taking courses for real the next year, one professor went to great lengths to point out that I was readmitted to the Business School as a "special case". At that time the university did not normally allow part-time students in its Business School, for any reason. (This policy has since changed.)

So there I was for the next ten years, taking a part-time course load, as I regained the use of my senses (from a post-accident recorded IQ of 84). One or one-and-a-half courses a year was all I could handle because of my decreased reading speed and lower energy levels, which combined to reduce any immediate comprehension of the subject material.

My final years at that university were also constrained financially. Although I felt I could successfully attempt more than one-and-a-half courses a year, a student assistantship would only pay for that number. There was no way to earn, or "win", more money. All of the above problems were in addition to the "normal" student trials and tribulations of too many midterms and papers due in too short a time span, of ill-prepared professors, etc., etc., etc. Normal student extra-curricular and socializing activities, i.e. hanging out with others, suffered as well since I did not have the time or energy to participate in either. This led to a sense of aloneness, and occasional paranoia.

Graduation brought a sense of relief that I was finished. Finally. In the face of the unknown however, a job search was too daunting. I couldn't face competing with the number of younger, healthier, graduates also seeking employment in the then depressed job market...

Since I was still not capable of a 40-hour work week, carrying on in school was my only alternative to sitting at home doing nothing. It's a waste to watch the apartment walls all day, but volunteerism also resulted in provincial assistance being cut off.

I started studying for an MBA degree at a different university. The rules and regulations of the new place were different and in some ways "easier" than the other institution. During my previous degree, it had been suggested (by someone not associated with the university) that instead of writing a three-hour exam in one stretch I should ask for two one-and-a-half hour stints, with time off for rest in between. That was after I had described the result of writing of an economics exam which so exhausted me that I "forgot" how to walk - I had to consciously think about shifting my weight to the left, swinging my right leg forward, then shifting my weight to the right, swinging my left leg forward ...

After some thought, I had decided it was not my place to propose such an arrangement. The mind-set of the first university was such that I feared a proposal of that sort would be thought of as cheating. Indeed, I concluded if such an idea was possible it would have been

continued on page 5



Stories of Courage- Survivor Story (continued)

broached already by someone in authority there. My second university had that very policy in place as an alternative for disabled students. There is a Centre for Disabled Students which arranges for extended exam time, large print, computer aids, etc. for exam writing by disabled students, in addition to other services, like note takers in class. One still had to study and learn the material however - which refuted my previous conditioning that the “easier” way was cheating.

In the first term of the Master’s program I did well, winning both the Prince of Wales Scholarship (a Canadian Legion Scholarship for disabled students pursuing post graduate education), and a Graduate Student Award for placing among the top ten master’s students in marks. Those two monetary “gifts” did a great deal toward easing my financial worries in the beginning - as did the other awards and scholarships I earned later at this university. I graduated with my MBA, although it took a few more years than usual, writing a case study of the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia as my thesis.

I got married just over a year later - to a fellow whom I’d met while at the first university. Turned out he had suffered a severe brain injury many years before, but he didn’t realize there was any help to be had - for what he thought were just “his” problems. He has become an ardent activist for brain injury support after he attended his first brain injury conference in Halifax and is currently the president of the Annapolis Valley Chapter of the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia (BIANS).

Our wedding ceremony was held at the annual general meeting of BIANS—because most of my friends were survivors. It was an amazing turn-out—nearly 200 people—for an AGM! The reception, held in a town a hundred kilometers away, was mainly attended by everyone else—another 130 people.

Unfortunately, the after-effects of my brain injuries (mainly fatigue, poor short-term memory) as well as incidental illnesses along the way still combine to make it tough to reconcile what I’ve lost. That I am now able to perform work, mental or physical, seven hours a day, four days a week before lapsing into a semi-incoherent state is depressing when compared to my own pre-accident energy level or to others my own age. A comparison with my ability a year post-accident—ten minutes a day—is more heartening (two years post-accident it was 20 minutes a day.) But I have not, even yet, mentally adjusted to the fact that I am not able to keep up a “normal” pace all day, all week. The regular process of aging will soon no doubt come to be more of a factor, in addition to medical forecasts of increased disability due to the other injuries I suffered in that long-ago car accident.

I have never been able to find paid work, aside from occasional short-term contracts. But I am now very involved± time and energy-wise—in volunteering, mostly with the disabled community. From being chair of the provincial Survivors Advisory committee, I am now the interim president of BIANS—the first survivor to be president, interim or otherwise.

In recent years, I have branched out from being active with only the brain injured. I am a member of the Disabled Persons Commission of Nova Scotia, which liases between the disabled community and the government and its programs. I am also a member of Women for Wellness, a local group which puts on monthly health-related workshops in Wolfville. And I am a member of FemJEPP, Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy, which is a provincial coalition of equality-seeking women’s groups and individuals whose overall purpose is to enable the social and economic well-being of all women in Nova Scotia. Earlier this year I became the Nova Scotia representative of DAWN Canada (the Disabled Women’s Network of Canada) as they try to revitalize themselves, in light of the anti-disability actions of the current federal government.

To be totally honest, I don’t have the time to cash a paycheque!

Wish I could say: “Graduated. Unable to find paid employment. Got married—which ended the provincial disability assistance—and lived happily ever after.”



The Synapse

A synapse is a junction between two nerve cells, where the club-shaped tip of a nerve fiber almost touches another cell in order to transmit signals. This column can be seen as a link between us all and will let you know what is happening in other parts of Canada.

February — The 20th Pacific Coast Brain Injury Conference is taking place in Vancouver February 15 to February 17. The pre-conference days have been dedicated to Prevention and Richard Kinar will join the keynote speakers on an injury prevention panel at the end of the day. Barb Butler and Larry Carlson from Saskatchewan will also be speaking in one of the sessions. The conference has been designed for the survivors, family members, service providers, medical research, lawyers and fee payers. Please visit the website and join us in Vancouver.

May— Come to Your Senses Conference – May 23-27 in Toronto. Papers and reports cover all areas related to the sensory field including the effective use of Sensory work with special populations (ASD, dual diagnosis, Down's syndrome etc.) focusing on programs, innovations, clinical practices and areas of research. Visit the website www.sensoryconference.ca

News from Newfoundland—The NLBIA (Newfoundland and Labrador Brain Injury Association) has two dinner theatres happening in our area. All proceeds go to the organization for program development and expansion.

We are in the process of developing an inclusive Employment Services Program for survivors of Brain Injury. This program will include services such as vocational assessment, job coaching and continued follow along and case management to ensure the individuals success. We hope to have this up and running by the New Year.

Ten Hawaiian Oyster Odysseys will be held in 2007:

Here they are:

Gatineau, PQ - February 6

Toronto, ON - February 26

Edmonton, AB - March 1

Saskatoon, SK - March 23

Fredricton, NB - April 1

St. John's, NF - April 20

Vancouver, BC - May 24

Charlottetown, PE - June 2

Montreal, PQ - July 13

Winnipeg, MN - October 30



NOTE:

If you received this newsletter by mistake please contact BIAC at biac-aclc@hotmail.com

