

Annual Report

2025-2026



1658 Bedford Hwy Unit 290, Bedford



Included in the Report

- Our Vision & Mission
- Messages from our ED and Chair
- Community Reach & Support
- Programs, Education & Training Sessions
- A Thank You to our Board of Directors & Supporters

ATTACHED TO THIS REPORT:

- 2025-26 AGM Agenda
- Minutes from 2024-25 AGM
- Full Financial Statements

A Brief Story About Who We Are

Founded in 1987 as the Head Injury Support Group, the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia (BIANS) was established by Kevin Hall and Jacqueline Warlow. It remained volunteer-led until hiring its first Executive Director in 1993. Responding to community needs, Brain Injury NS launched its Chapter program in 1994, beginning in the Valley, followed by Bridgewater, Halifax, and Truro over the next three years.

Today, BIANS is the only organized voice for Nova Scotians affected by brain injury. As a registered Canadian charity since 1989, we continue to provide vital programs, education, advocacy, and support for survivors and their families across the province.



Vision

No one in Nova Scotia navigates brain injury alone.

Mission

We strengthen connection, support and understanding for people with brain injuries and their caregivers, while helping communities and systems respond more effectively.

Values

- **People First:** We centre the voices, experiences and needs of people with brain injuries and their caregivers in everything we do.
- **Connection and Belonging:** We create welcoming spaces where people feel seen, supported and part of a community.
- **Equity and Access:** We are committed to ensuring people in Nova Scotia can access support regardless of where they live, and to reducing barriers to connection, support and participation for historically excluded communities.
- **Collaboration and Action:** We work with partners, communities and systems to strengthen support, expand impact and move ideas into action.
- **Learning and Adaptation:** We listen, learn and evolve, relying on lived experience, research and feedback to guide our work.
- **Focus and Stewardship:** We make thoughtful choices about where to focus and how to use our resources to achieve the greatest impact.
- **Trust and Accountability:** We build trust through transparency, consistency and follow through.



Message from Executive Director

This year marked a period of significant growth and momentum for the organization. Stepping into the role of Executive Director, I've had the privilege of seeing firsthand the strength of this community and the impact of the work being done every day.

Over the past year, we've been able to strengthen our foundation as an organization while continuing to focus on what matters most—people. We expanded our programs significantly, creating more opportunities for survivors and caregivers to connect, learn, and support one another. From peer support groups to skill-building and wellness programs, participation has been strong across the province.

I'm especially proud of the progress we've made in increasing access. We've begun expanding our reach across the province, including into more rural communities, and have strengthened our hybrid programming to better support accessibility. At the same time, we know there is still more work to be done in the year ahead to further expand this reach, as many individuals continue to face barriers in accessing the support they need.

We've also seen incredible growth in awareness and engagement. Brain Injury Awareness Month highlighted our theme "Survivor's Voices", bringing people together across Nova Scotia and helping to spark important conversations. Our partnerships have continued to grow as well, strengthening our ability to connect individuals and families to the supports they need.

What stands out most to me is the impact. We continue to hear that people feel less alone, more connected, and more confident navigating life after brain injury. It's also been inspiring to see participants step into leadership roles and support others.

At the same time, demand for our programs continues to grow, particularly for peer support and caregiver services. This reinforces the importance of our work, while also highlighting areas where more support is needed, including earlier connection after diagnosis, expanded programming for children and youth, and continued capacity to grow sustainably.

Overall, this year reflects a strong and growing community. I want to sincerely thank our participants, caregivers, volunteers, partners, and supporters—this work would not be possible without you. I look forward to continuing to build on this momentum together in the year ahead.

With appreciation,
Emma Folkins

Chair Report

**On behalf of the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia Board of Directors,
I present this report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.**

This past year has been one of strengthening foundations for the organization. I stepped into the role of Board Chair in August, following Patrick O'Connell's departure as he pursued his Master's degree, and it has been a privilege to work alongside our new Executive Director and an engaged, committed Board.

I have been impressed by the Board's dedication over the past year, particularly through the development of a new Strategic Plan launched in May 2026 and the strengthening of key governance structures. This work has helped position the organization for greater clarity, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

We are also proud of the leadership demonstrated across our staff team, including the important work of team members such as Marlee in her navigation role. Their contributions continue to have a meaningful impact on the individuals and families we serve and reflect the strength of our organization.

As we enter a new fiscal year, I am pleased to report that we have achieved a stable financial position, including a modest year-end surplus. This provides important flexibility as we reinvest in priority areas to strengthen long-term programming and impact. We have also secured funding through our agreement with the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care through to March 2027, providing continued stability as we grow and evolve.

It has also been a valuable time for the Board to connect more directly with the community through organization-led events such as the Holiday Gathering, BIANs Summer Bash, and the annual Pathway to Peers event. These opportunities have strengthened our understanding of the community we serve and the importance of our shared work.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Board members who are stepping down this year. We acknowledge the contributions of Barry Bowser, Brent Decoste, Elizabeth Outhit, Jomir Tibayan, and Josh Sampson and wish them all the best as they move forward.

Overall, this year has laid a strong foundation for stability and growth. I am grateful to our Board, staff, volunteers, and community partners for their ongoing commitment, and I look forward to the year ahead as we continue building on this momentum together.

Regards,
Michelle Lahey

Building Foundations for Impact

This year marked significant organizational growth and transformation. With a new Executive Director and the implementation of a CRM system, BIANs strengthened service delivery, impact tracking, and planning.

A volunteer program was launched, engaging 28 volunteers and strengthening both capacity and community connection.

A community needs assessment engaged 80 participants and directly informed strategic planning and program development.

166.6K
social media views

1,579
subscribers

3,000+
resources distributed

200+
partnerships

Strategic Growth in Programs & Services

Program delivery more than doubled this year, expanding to 13 total programs (7 new), with 279 sessions delivered and 1,758 participants engaged.

New and expanded programming included:

- Peer support groups
- Caregiver-specific programming
- Therapeutic recreation (art, music, yoga, breathwork)
- Skill-building and organizational supports

There was a strong emphasis on accessibility and inclusion, with expanded hybrid delivery and increased rural outreach.

“BIANS bridges the gap between clinical care and real life.”

Deepening Community Impact and Connection

Beyond program growth, this year's impact is most clearly reflected in the experiences of the individuals and families we support. BIANs continues to serve as a connector, navigator, and source of ongoing community support.

Direct Support & Navigation

BIANS provided consistent one-on-one support and navigation, including:

- Approximately 360–375 emails responded to
- 200–215 phone calls supported
- 18 one-on-one support sessions
- 10–15 office visits

Referrals continued to be made to external supports including mental health services, housing supports, legal resources, and caregiver services.

Key Community Outcomes

Through ongoing feedback and engagement, several key outcomes were identified:

- Reduced isolation and stigma → increased belonging and acceptance
- Improved access to information → greater confidence and coping skills
- Stronger community support systems → reduced fragmentation in care
- Renewed identity and confidence → increased purpose, agency, leadership



“Rehab is not a defined period of time. It can be lifelong. BIANs provides lifelong community connections for survivors and their caregivers.”

Volunteers & Board of Directors

We want to take a moment to sincerely thank all of our incredible volunteers over the past year. Your time, energy, and dedication have made a real and lasting difference for the brain injury community in Nova Scotia. We are truly grateful for everything you contribute—our work simply wouldn't be possible without you.

To our 2025–2026 Board of Directors, thank you for the leadership, insight, and commitment you have brought to BIANs. We deeply appreciate your contributions and are pleased that many of you will continue to stay involved with the 2026–2027 Board and in other roles moving forward.

First-voice representation is important to us, and 1/3 of our Directors are brain injury survivors.

- Michelle Lahey – Chair
- Ashley Downing - Vice-Chair
- Logan Toth – Treasurer
- Allison Conway - Secretary
- Dani Squires – Provincial Survivor Rep
- Allison Harris
- Elizabeth Outhit
- Erica Bergstrom
- Gillian Reid
- Grace Landry
- Dr. Halina Bruce
- Joan Lareza
- Laith AlHadeed



Our Supporters

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of our partners, supporters, and donors. Your generosity and commitment make it possible for us to deliver essential programs and services to an underserved community across Nova Scotia.

We are truly grateful for your support—this work would not be possible without you.

Canada

NOVA SCOTIA





Thank you.

As we close this year's report, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been part of our journey. Whether you are a donor, volunteer, supporter, or someone who has accessed our programs, your contribution has helped create meaningful change for individuals and families affected by brain injury.

Together, we continue to make progress in improving lives, raising awareness, and strengthening the supports needed for recovery and resilience. We are excited to move forward alongside you as we work toward a future where everyone impacted by brain injury has access to the resources, understanding, and community they need.

Thank you for your ongoing support, compassion, and commitment. We look forward to another year of shared growth and impact.



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