

ANNUAL REPORT 2020–2021



Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Allan Boss	Past President	April 1, 2020 - January 14, 2021
Dymphny Dronyk	Acting President	January 21, 2021 - present
Terry Avramenko	Acting Vice President	January 21, 2021 - present
Dymphny Dronyk	Vice President	June 12, 2020 - January 21, 2021
Terry Avramenko	Director	June 12, 2020 - January 21, 2021
Ahmed Mushtaq	Treasurer	
Rebecca Stares	Secretary	
Kimber Pipella	Director	
Harvey Olsen	Director	
Meghan Maiani	Director	
Josh Naud	Director	

SABIS STAFF

Natasha Brzoza	Executive Director
Annalise Harris	Program Manager
Michelle Bowers	Community Engagement Coordinator
Ethan Rikstad	Service Coordinator
Haley Christensen	Service Coordinator



A Message from the Executive Director

The past year has certainly been one of many ups and downs. In the midst of COVID we have faced challenges we never thought we would have to experience in our lifetime. Even though through these challenges, there were many who came together to continue to provide supports and services to the community at a deeper level. It's truly remarkable how in times of uncertainty, frustration, and exhaustion, we can look at each other and still smile. We can smile because we know that we are in this together. I am so proud to not only be a part of a community serving individuals with brain injuries, but I am also proud of the staff for ensuring that everyone was taken care of, in receiving the supports they need. Without them, this would not have been possible.

During the year, we have learned technology in a new way, and through the many platforms, we were able to provide many of our groups online, and YouTube. We have also been able to have one-one client meetings. We recognize the many challenges that come with being online for the population we are serving and to ensure that clients were engaged, it was important for us to continue to meet with them in person. Clients and their families are the most important part of SABIS. Their determination and desire to see personal growth is to be admired.

Over the past year we saw a decline in donations. This decline has not only impacted SABIS, but many others in the community. We were very fortunate to receive a \$75,000 grant from Alberta Culture and Tourism's Community Initiatives Program (CIP) for operations funding. We also received a \$5,000 COVID-19 Community Response Fund Stewardship Group grant from United Way to purchase food for our clients in need. With the COVID restrictions easing in our city, we hope to have a fundraising event in the near future.

As I transition out of my position, I want to say thank you! Thank you for allowing me to be a part of a wonderful team of people. Thank you for the many lessons I have learned and thank you for believing in me. I have never met a group of people so dedicated and devoted to providing supports as I have seen with SABIS. The past nine years have been a blessing in my life, and I am excited for what the future holds for all of you.

Sincerely,
Natasha

A Message from the President

As Natasha wrote so powerfully, the past year has put our world, our communities, our first responders and essential workers, our critical infrastructure, and every individual through enormous changes and challenges. We have been asked to be patient, to step up, to adapt, over and over again, and this has shown us, in visceral ways, how essential it is to have communities, large or small, that we can rely on. SABIS is one such community.

Because of the commitment and creativity of our incredibly kind and dedicated staff our organization has survived this challenging time and adapted so that we can provide as many of our services as possible, despite the restrictions and intense requirements of safety and of social distancing.

I have been deeply moved by the dedication and energy of our staff – Natasha, Annalise, Michelle, Haley, and Ethan during this time, and cannot find words that adequately reflect how grateful we are.

I am also thankful for my fellow board members who have stepped up and stepped into new roles during a tumultuous year of change and renewal.

As many of you will know, Natasha, our long-serving Executive Director, gave her notice this winter, and we are in the process of recruiting a new ED who will be able to serve SABIS and support our staff with as much loyalty and grace and compassion as Natasha. Although we have had almost five months to find someone, it has proven to be surprisingly hard. Stay tuned for an update! In the meantime, Natasha is serving as our Acting ED, to ensure our staff and programs continue to be supported. Thank you, Natasha!

Our board has also weathered some abrupt changes and challenges. Former President, Allan Boss, resigned partway through the year, and as a result, I was appointed as President, and Terry Avramenko, as Vice President. Allan is unable to serve as Vice President, leaving that position unfilled at this time.

As a governance board we continue to focus our attention on ensuring that the policy and procedures documents that guide our services reflect our evolving organization, and we support the staff in every way we can. Due to the ongoing pandemic, it has not been a year for new fundraisers or other public-facing initiatives, however, we are dreaming of the time ahead when we can once again engage with our SABIS supporters, friends, and funders.

This year SABIS will be recruiting new board members, as strong board continuity and succession planning are critical aspects of managing a vibrant organization. If you or anyone you know who cares about SABIS are interested, please do consider joining us.

To find out more, or to email expressions of interest, please contact: dymphny@gmail.com

Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society (SABIS) welcomes prospective board members from all lived experiences, inviting and embracing perspectives from all cultural identities, sexual orientations, gender identities, religious beliefs, disabilities, ages, and levels of education and experience.

SABIS is dedicated to helping adults with acquired brain injuries obtain the supports and services they need to live as independently as possible in the community.

We acknowledge that to truly fulfill that commitment, we must have a board that can represent and work with community and for community, in all its diversity. We do not require board members to have experienced brain injury, or to be experts in brain injury or support programs, however, we do seek people who endorse our values of respect, support, inclusiveness, learning and encouragement.

Expectations

Board Members:

- are supportive and enthusiastic about support and services for adults with acquired brain injuries and their families;
- support the SABIS Vision, Mission and Values;
- work collaboratively with other board members and the Executive Director;
- will attend quarterly board meetings;
- work to support at least one of the board's annual initiatives.

Skills:

- All skills are welcome.
- Knowledge or experience of brain injury and programs, fostering community, fundraising, accounting, and/or volunteering are all definitely welcome!
- Previous board experience is an asset but not necessary.

Stay well and be safe!

Dymphny Dronyk, Q.Med., President



A Message from the Program Manager

When SABIS closed our doors on March 16th, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, none of us imagined that we would still be facing the challenges of a global pandemic over a year later. 2020/21 has taught us many lessons about community, adaptability, and resiliency. With the ever-changing restrictions, SABIS staff and clients were forced to change the way we communicate and meet. Our community was no longer able to meet in person with hugs, high fives, and coffee, and we had to adapt quickly.

When we could no longer safely meet in person, we wanted to ensure our clients knew we were still here to support them. Isolation is a concern for many SABIS clients, we continue to strive to ensure clients know SABIS was/is here for them. We continued offering peer support groups via Zoom which came with its own set of challenges including access to equipment, ability to participate, and willingness to participate. Staff quickly become technical support and began researching resources to get clients access to equipment, dropping off art supplies, and finding alternative ways to keep clients engaged. Several clients (and staff!) expressed they were “zoomed out,” leading SABIS to the learning opportunity that was creating YouTube videos clients could access as they wished.

While we are sure to check in with clients under “normal” circumstances, we increased check in phone/zoom calls to ensure our clients were getting the emotional support they needed or were connected a more appropriate resource if their needs were beyond what SABIS was able to provide. The Calgary Foundation provided SABIS with a food grant to help clients struggling to meet their food needs with SABIS staff stepping up to deliver food hampers, as necessary. Staff members spent hours assisting clients with navigating government assistance programs that became available including CERB and CRB.

As we move forward in 2021, we are excited to welcome clients back to the office and to continue providing a safe space for clients to build friendships, relationships, teach, and learn. SABIS was started by families and to this day remains one big family, the SABIS Family. We have faced many challenges over the past year but have remained connected, resilient, and strong.

Anna Harris
Program Manager

Mission

- SABIS offers lifelong support and services for adults with acquired brain injury and their families.

Vision

- SABIS promotes open and inclusive communities for all persons, regardless of the severity of their brain injury.

Values

- Respect
- Support
- Inclusion
- Learning
- Encouragement

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

We and our clients are so thankful to Darryl Allen for his continued dedication in facilitating our Men's Group.

DONORS

Anonymous

Deborah Adesegun

Brenda and Brian Barrett

Brian Beck

Hawthorn Blossom

Allan Boss

Bridge City Chrysler

Frances Butler

Robbin Colbens

Kimberley Gardner

Alan Glover

Yash Kai

Elaine Marshall

Donna Morris

Brandon Novak

Donald Page

Pipella Law

Anthony Reimer

Milena Roberts

Aftab Sabir

Shelley Sapiuha

Lou Schiavon

Kevin Schwaiger

Teresa Stauff

Mona Stickle

United Way Donor Choice, Calgary
Foundation

April Valeroso

Tanya Yeomans

GRANT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



We are grateful to have received an Operating Grant and Organizational Development Funding from Alberta Culture and Tourism's Community Initiatives Program (CIP)



COVID-19 Community Response Fund Stewardship Group grant from the United Way.



SOUTHERN ALBERTA BRAIN INJURY SOCIETY
STATEMENT OF REVENUES and EXPENSES and
CHANGES in NET ASSETS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31 , 2021

	2021	2020
REVENUES		
Alberta Minister of Human Services (Note 5)	\$ 272,083	\$ 362,246
Donations and fundraising	24,182	32,598
Grants (Note 6)	17,279	-
Government COVID assistance	7,431	-
Casino funds	-	53,018
Memberships and other	50	345
	321,025	448,207
EXPENSES		
Direct program costs	271,865	324,797
Rent (Note 7)	67,928	64,152
Office and administrative	44,002	55,762
Fundraising	2,270	7,725
Amortization	4,679	4,763
Office relocation (Note 7)	-	3,825
	390,744	461,024
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES before the following	(69,719)	(12,817)
LOSS ON DEPOSIT (Note 3)	10,250	-
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	(79,969)	(12,817)
NET ASSETS , beginning of year	127,327	140,144
NET ASSETS , end of year	\$ 47,358	\$ 127,327

SOUTHERN ALBERTA BRAIN INJURY SOCIETY
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT MARCH 31 , 2021

	2021	2020
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	\$ 128,591	\$ 125,977
Donations and fundraising revenues receivable	7,491	400
Employee advances receivable	-	488
Casino proceeds receivable	-	53,413
Goods and services tax recoverable	1,234	1,465
Prepaid expenses and deposits (Notes 3 and 9)	13,252	35,591
	150,568	217,334
CAPITAL ASSETS (Notes 4 and 7)	17,981	8,535
	\$ 168,549	\$ 225,869
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 11,513	\$ 9,586
Government remittances payable	6,047	7,404
Advances from the Alberta Minister of Human Services (Note 5)	45,910	6,552
Deferred revenue (Notes 6 and 9)	57,721	75,000
	121,191	98,542
NET ASSETS		
UNRESTRICTED	47,358	127,327
	\$ 168,549	\$ 225,869

APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD:

Meghan's Story

While playing rugby for Canada in 2008, a tackle in a game against England knocked me unconscious for 11 minutes. I was removed by stretcher and a subsequent MRI showed a bleed in my brain leaving me with a permanent and severe TBI in my right frontal lobe. I was instantly and forever changed but I spent the next 13 years of my life trying desperately to hide the TBI's effects from others and, truthfully, I never fully accepted or understood it myself either. I tried so hard to be a normal achieving person, still managing some incredible experiences, but the symptoms never went away and began to worsen over the years, making it impossible to hide that something was wrong. The gap between what I was doing and how I was doing was cavernous. I lost jobs, friendships, any sense of purpose or self.

An MRI in October 2020 showed the same brain damage but also revealed I have developed scattered lesions throughout the white matter in my brain indicating a neurodegenerative disease. This is a result of the multiple concussions (>20) and cumulative sub-concussive hits I sustained in rugby and other sports growing up. Something to consider here for young athletes and their parents.

What should have been a devastating diagnosis to receive was actually a relief. I finally knew more about what was going on for me, and my world has changed in learning to live differently. It gave me permission to slow down and reevaluate everything.

Trying to keep pace with everyone else and meet others' expectations for me almost killed me.

I found SABIS during a desperate google search about my general decline. I immediately knew I had found my people, and with their guidance, humour and support, and introduction into the TBI community, the gap has a bridge. But wrapping a broken brain around having a broken brain is tricky; I am so grateful for the ongoing role SABIS plays for me as I figure things out.

Recovery from a brain injury is not a moment in time. I actually don't like the word recovery because there is no 'back to normal'. We're different now. TBI survivors and their loved ones are witness to this. Resiliency is a better word than recovery: it's about coming to terms with a changed life, and learning how to create a meaningful life.

I'm in a unique position in that I am affected and challenged by my condition daily *and* I still have the awareness, functioning level and communication skills to exist mostly undetected in the regular world. I have also experienced the vast difference in quality of life between keeping my TBI hidden versus beginning to understand and accept it, and adapting appropriately. Basically, life with a brain injury before and after SABIS. I cannot possibly sum up what those 13 years were like for me, and I still bump into my brain hourly, but I am so much better equipped with SABIS and its resources as an anchor. SABIS provides both individualized support for TBIs and their loved ones through strong relationships with caseworkers, and community support by being a platform for a variety of weekly support groups.

Brain injuries are as unique as the individual who has one. My experience does not directly translate to other TBIs (what I've started to call us) but SABIS introduced me to their weekly support groups, and here is the community I never knew existed. Listening to others' stories and struggles, observing the

impossible range of symptoms and challenges created by a broken brain, exchanging helpful life adaptations and coping strategies, talking about life and nothing at all brain-related without having to explain anything, and seeing and employing the sense of humour that seems to accompany life in the trenches... all of this contributes to perspective, compassion and hope.

As different as we each are, there are some commonalities in navigating the challenges of having a TBI. There are two frontiers: within the individual, and then how that TBler relates to everyone else in their world.

Coming to terms with and learning a new self is a lifelong personal journey physiologically, cognitively, psychologically and emotionally. This learning process is clunky, undulating and sometimes evolves so slowly it can take years to cement a seemingly simple fact. (The number of times I've had "epiphanies" about my situation and abilities is laughable)

While this battle wages on internally, we also have to contend with how we interact with and are perceived by the outside world. After a TBI, there needs to be a grieving process allowed both for the TBler and for their loved ones. The person who existed before a brain injury is different now, and they are in for a long road as they slowly realize this, and they will need a wide berth of love, patience and support. This sudden change can be just as hard on the TBler's loved ones, and here is another way that SABIS offers a life raft by offering a support group for caregivers affected by brain injury. Anecdotally, I have heard from both sides of a TBI how this group has saved marriages and changed lives.

On both frontiers of a brain injury, most of the challenges are invisible, evolving, and lifelong. This is the kind reminder to us TBler's and our loved ones that it is not about recovery, it is about resiliency: how can we all adapt and create a different but meaningful life?



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