

Building Consensus: How Shared Vision Drives Real Change in Brain Injury Support

By Janelle Breese Biagioni, CEO, CGB Centre for Traumatic Life Losses & Community Lead, National Strategy on Brain Injury

When it comes to brain injury, the needs are complex, the systems are fragmented, and the silence is deafening. For decades, survivors and families have carried the burden of navigating care that is inconsistent, underfunded, and often invisible within major health and social service systems. That's why real change won't come from any one organization, discipline, or level of government. It will come from **building consensus**—and acting on it.

Consensus is not about everyone agreeing on every detail. It's about aligning around a **shared vision**, listening deeply to those with lived experience, and moving forward together with purpose. And in the brain injury community, this work is not only possible—it's already happening.

Why Consensus Matters

Brain injury intersects with so many critical issues in our society: mental health, substance use, homelessness, corrections, intimate partner violence, youth in care, and more. But because it's often an “invisible” disability, it gets left out of strategic plans and policy conversations where it belongs.

That's why consensus is essential. It gives us:

- **A united voice** across sectors and systems
- **Shared language** to communicate the urgency and reality of brain injury
- **Collaborative direction** so that governments, communities, and service providers aren't working in silos
- **Legitimacy**—because when survivors, families, clinicians, policymakers, and frontline workers say the same thing, it becomes harder to ignore

Consensus transforms advocacy into action.

The BC Consensus on Brain Injury, Mental Health, and Addictions

In British Columbia, we put this into practice.

In 2023, the CGB Centre for Traumatic Life Losses brought together a cross-section of people affected by brain injury—including survivors, caregivers, community advocates, service providers, researchers, and leaders from Indigenous and rural communities. What emerged was a **consensus statement** that reflects our collective understanding of the barriers people face—and what must change.

It wasn't about getting everyone to think the same way. It was about centring lived experience, finding common ground, and identifying **shared priorities** like:

- Access to timely diagnosis and rehabilitation

- Housing and supports that recognize brain injury
- Cross-sector education and workforce development
- System navigation and care coordination
- Trauma-informed and culturally safe services
- Inclusion of brain injury in mental health and addictions strategies

The BC Consensus became a blueprint—not just for local change, but for how provinces and territories can **build their own strategies** while supporting a larger national framework.

From Consensus to National Strategy

At the federal level, we're pushing for the reintroduction of **Bill C-277**, the **National Strategy on Brain Injury Act**, which would bring a coordinated, pan-Canadian approach to this critical issue. But this won't succeed without grassroots support and provincial alignment.

That's where consensus continues to play a crucial role.

By engaging diverse voices across Canada—from Indigenous communities in the North to urban service hubs in the South—we're not just building a strategy. We're building a **movement**. One grounded in dignity, equity, and the real-life experiences of people who know the journey best.

A Vision We Can All Stand Behind

At its heart, building consensus is about **belonging**. It's about ensuring that every person with a brain injury—and those who walk beside them—know that they are seen, heard, and part of something bigger.

We don't need to agree on everything. But we do need to agree on this:

Everyone deserves the opportunity to recover, participate fully, and live with dignity after a brain injury.

That's our shared vision. And with it, we can drive real change.

Join the movement. Read the BC Consensus and support the call for a National Strategy on Brain Injury at www.nationalstrategyonbraininjury.ca.

Janelle Breese Biagioni is a national leader in brain injury advocacy and the CEO of the CGB Centre for Traumatic Life Losses. She has been advancing a shared vision for brain injury reform for over 30 years.