



Blind Beginnings



**BLIND BEGINNINGS SOCIETY
ANNUAL REPORT 2018**



Our mission

To inspire children and youth who are blind or partially sighted, and their families, providing diverse programs, experiences, counselling and peer support, and opportunities for them to create fulfilling lives.

Blind Beginnings sees enormous possibilities in children who are blind or partially sighted, and we passionately challenge any perspectives that limit what they are capable of achieving.

If they can dream it we can help them do it.

Limitless potential is all we see.



The first 10 years: 2008 ~ 2018

Since 2008, Blind Beginnings Society has envisioned a world where seeing things differently inspires limitless potential for BC's blind and partially sighted children. Through educational and experiential workshops, pre-employment training, summer camps, recreational activities and individualized counselling, Blind Beginnings offers these youth opportunities to develop skills, confidence and independence.

2018 marked the 10 year anniversary of Blind Beginnings. We want to take this opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments and our impact. We would like to thank the Blind Beginnings community of young people, volunteers, families and other organizations who have supported us throughout these 10 years.

In 2018, we expanded our partnership with Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, a newly incorporated national organization created within the CNIB, to provide services to children from birth to age five and their families in BC. Through this partnership we are now in contact with approximately 150 new families across all regions of BC. We now need to focus on building programs and services outside of the Metro Vancouver region to support these families. The first region we targeted was the Okanagan where we offered an Early Intervention Family Retreat in Kelowna.

This year we also started an online drop-in support group for parents. Many live in rural parts of the province where they may be the only ones in their community raising a child who is blind. These parents can now join together in a private online chat room to communicate with each other using their computer or smartphone.

At the end of 2018, we also created a Facebook group for BC parents of children who are blind or partially sighted. Our hope is that these online programs will make it easier for parents to ask questions and get support from other parents who are living a similar experience. We are also planning to create this type of online support for youth as well.

Looking ahead to our next 10 years

Our work in teaching children and youth skills to increase their independence and confidence is only a part of the challenge. If our world is not ready to include people who are blind or partially sighted they will still face barriers in all aspects of their lives. In order to truly succeed, Blind Beginnings must also educate society and advocate for the strengths and capabilities of people who are blind or partially sighted so they will be included as contributing members.

Our dream for the future is to build a Blind Beginnings house where youth and young adults who are blind or partially sighted can learn to live independently. This would be a new home for Blind Beginnings—a special place for our youth and families that is accessible, inclusive and supportive. We imagine a large kitchen where children and youth can learn daily living skills like cooking and cleaning; a large comfortable living room where youth and parents can attend support groups and workshops; a library with accessible toys, print-braille books, and resources for parents; quiet cozy offices where children, youth, and parents can receive counselling. The Blind Beginnings house would also have a suite where youth who are transitioning to adulthood can learn to live independently.

Shawn's Story

When Shawn Marsolais was twelve years old, she learned that she was legally blind. Her parents told her she had been born with an eye condition called Retinitis Pigmentosa which had limited her vision since birth, and that it would continue to get worse. She and her family were consumed with feelings of shame, fear and grief and didn't have the support they needed to navigate this new reality. By age 18,



Shawn had less than 2% of her vision but decided not to let this stop her from pursuing her dreams. As Shawn says, "Just because I'm blind doesn't mean I can't be all these great things. I just have to smash some misconceptions." And she did.

Shawn went on to become a Paralympian in the 2004 Games, got her Master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, became a wife and a mother and is now fiercely determined to show British Columbians that there is limitless potential for children and youth who are visually impaired.

Shawn founded Blind Beginnings Society in 2008 with the goal to help children and youth who are blind or partially sighted see their value and reach their potential. She wanted parents of blind children to see the possibilities for their child's future. She designed the programs and supports that simply didn't exist for her and her family that would have significantly benefited from when she was younger. Programs for parents where they could meet other parents and learn from them what works and doesn't when raising visually impaired children and youth. Workshops and support groups for the children and youth where they could learn blindness skills, meet blind role models, and spend

time with each other. Programs for the whole family, including sighted siblings so they also learn that their experience is not unique and that there are peers like them with similar experiences. And most importantly, programs to get visually impaired children and youth active, engaged in their communities and building confidence to reach their full potential.

Shawn says, "I used to believe that people wouldn't want to be in my life if they knew I was blind. Now I believe that my blindness is a gift that is enabling me to change the world."

Today, there are hundreds of British Columbians who are seeing the limitless potential of children and youth who are blind or partially sighted thanks to Shawn and the Blind Beginnings programs. Shawn and her team help these children and youth see their potential, explore the world around them and believe that their potential truly is limitless.

Shawn has built Blind Beginnings to be the resource, support and community that she would have liked to have had when she was coming to terms with her blindness. Shawn's unwavering commitment to believing that all people have limitless potential – especially those who are blind or partially-sighted has benefitted the lives of thousands and will continue to do so for many years to come.





Messages from our Executive Director & President

2018 was a year of celebration for Blind Beginnings marking 10 years of operation! After 10 years, I am able to see growth, in the organization, and in the children and youth who were the first members of Blind Beginnings. Those children who were pre-school aged are now starting high-school, participating in our Creating Confidence Workshops, and coming to camp without their parents; those who were elementary school-aged are now graduating from high-school, attending University, competing in sports; and those who were teens in 2008 are now graduated from University, working, living on their own, and traveling independently.

To commemorate our 10th anniversary, many of our children, youth, parents, siblings, volunteers, and staff contributed to a community art project in which each person created a clay piece that was mounted in a planter box. This colourful mix of butterflies, flowers, hands, and stars can be appreciated by both those with and without sight.

We would not be where we are today without the support of our donors, volunteers, and families. I'm incredibly grateful to every person who has helped our organization achieve its mission. If you have made a donation, or shared a link for funding; helped us with a program or on our fundraising committee; if you have participated in a program and sent a testimonial; if you have been a Board member and helped guide the organization forward; if you have shared a positive message about Blind Beginnings with your own networks, thank you so much.

Because of all of you, Blind Beginnings has demonstrated again and again that there is no limit to what is possible for a person who is blind and will continue to encourage our children and youth to push themselves to achieve their potential.

Shawn Marsolais
Founder & Executive Director

As I write this, I am reflecting on the amazing fact that Blind Beginnings has worked with children who are blind and their families for 10 years.

This great organization has made a lasting impact on the children and families who received services. Many skills were learned at Echo Location Workshops, Community Discovery Outings, summer camps and Creating Confidence Workshops. The children of families who participated in founding the organization are now confident and successful young adults.

What does the future hold? There are many possibilities. The work with Youth Leadership will continue. More families will be brought into the organization through Early Intervention programs. Blind Beginnings will soon be providing more services in other BC communities.

It has been a pleasure to serve an organization that is so well placed to provide much needed encouragement and support for families of children who are blind or partially sighted. The reason that my experience helping to lead this organization has been so rewarding is the growth and confidence I see in the children and families who are learning that they have limitless potential to be successful and productive members of society.

Strength, patience, perseverance, adaptability, courage, and the capacity to be creative when confronted with challenges are the characteristics that allow Blind Beginnings members to participate meaningfully in whatever activities they choose.

I would like to congratulate Shawn Marsolais and her team of staff and volunteers. You have changed so many lives for the better, and you will continue to provide support, encouragement and valuable skills to the children and families that you encounter in the future.

Betty Nobel
President

Blind Beginnings 2008 ~ 2018

2008

EARLY 2008

Planning session with families to determine a name and focus. Some of those families are still part of the organization today.

AUGUST 10, 2008

Our first fundraiser ~ Car Wash

SEPTEMBER 27, 2008

The first Community Discovery outing at the Burnaby Fire Hall

NOVEMBER 2008

First Creating Confidence Workshop at Collingwood Neighbourhood House

2009

MARCH 2009

Received our charitable status

APRIL 2009

First Blind Beginnings AGM

SPRING 2009

First What Happens After Grad Workshop at Sunny Hill

SEPTEMBER 2009

First Echolocation event: Introduction to Echolocation with Daniel Kish from World Access for the Blind

2010

APRIL 2010

First Blindness 101 Workshop

APRIL 30 – MAY 2, 2010

First Youth Leadership Weekend



OCTOBER 2010

Started a monthly Junior Explorers Club

First Support Parent Training

DECEMBER 3, 2010

First Blind Beginnings Gala



2011

AUGUST 2011

First Family Adventure Camp in Squamish



2012

DECEMBER 2012

Started Junior Explorers Club on Vancouver Island



2013

JUNE 2013

First Blind Beginnings Has Talent



WINTER 2013

Started monthly Parent Workshops



2014

JULY 2014

First Camp Hornby coordinated by Blind Beginnings



SEPTEMBER 2014

First Seeing Things Differently Parent Support Group

OCTOBER 2014

Started Junior Explorers Club in Chilliwack

2015

JANUARY 2015

Started Preschool Play Group with CNIB

First Aid training for Youth Leaders

APRIL 2015

First Kamloops Community Discovery

OCTOBER 2015

Flashmob in Metrotown

First New Westminster Getting Together with Technology in partnership with Canadian Council of the Blind

2016

JUNE 2016

First Youth Newsletter Committee meeting for Limitless News

First Preschool Community Discovery outing

OCTOBER 2016

First Discovery Day in Prince George

First Vancouver Getting Together with Technology at VCC



2017

JANUARY 2017

First Seeing Things Differently Youth Support Group

JULY 2017

First Advanced Leadership Program at Victory Hill in partnership with CNIB

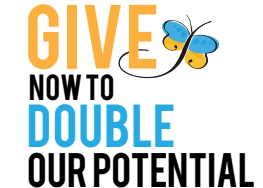
SEPTEMBER 10, 2017

Do the Grind Blind



DECEMBER 2017

First Annual Matching Campaign



2018

JANUARY 2018

BuddyUp Tandem Cycling Club



MARCH 2018

First Trivia Night organized by Blind Beginnings



SPRING 2018

10th Anniversary



Youth Leadership & Pre-employment Program



"Many blind adults struggle to find employment, and I believe it is not due to a lack of skill or ability, but due to a lack of support and empowerment. That is what Blind Beginnings excels at; letting children who are blind or partially sighted know, from a young age, that they will be able to achieve whatever they set their minds to."

~ Clement Chou, Youth Leader

Helping youth become leaders in the workplace

A first-of-its-kind in BC, our Youth Leadership & Pre-employment Program prepares youth who are blind or partially sighted for the transition to work and adult life. Youth increase independence and employability through skills training and practical experience.

The objective of this program is to provide youth with transferable skills and volunteer experience that will assist them in their future employment pursuits.

Leadership Training

Each spring, youth participate in a 3-day Leadership Training weekend, where they learn and experience:

- Leadership skills, working in teams and managing conflict
- Preparing and giving presentations on blindness
- Organization and time management
- How to put sighted peers at ease with blindness
- The benefits of volunteering
- Self-determination and self-advocacy
- Connecting with other youth about the challenges and triumphs of navigating the teenage years
- How to prepare for and participate in job interviews
- Building communication skills

Youth also appreciate the opportunity and learning that comes from independently staying at a hotel, going out to eat in restaurants, and practicing their mobility skills through travel by public transit.

Volunteer Practicum

After the Leadership Training, youth complete a 12-month practicum with volunteer commitments for Blind Beginnings and community organizations, as well as public presentations on blindness and Blind Beginnings.



- **Enhanced employability**
- **Increased confidence**
- **Greater independence**
- **Improved public awareness about capacities of blind youth**

"Getting to meet other people who are visually impaired, and especially adults who are living successful lives gives me hopes that I will be able to find meaningful employment and that I will be able to be a contributing member of society some day." ~ Youth Leader, 18



Youth Leadership & Pre-employment Program

Youth Leadership Weekend

Our Youth Leadership Training Weekend took place in New Westminster from April 20-April 22, 2018. We had 10 youth participants from Victoria, Chemainus, Duncan, the Kootenays and the Lower Mainland. The youth ranged in age from 15-19 years old. The youth learned leadership skills, how to work in teams, how to manage conflict, and they also prepared for and participated in mock job interviews. They learned about organization, time management and how to prepare and give presentations on their visual impairment to put sighted peers at ease with blindness. Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment partnered with us to make the youth leadership weekend a huge success and we thank them for all their support.

Youth Leadership Committees

Youth leader projects included a monthly Craft Committee that has expanded from tactile greeting cards, to include knitted projects, beaded butterfly keychains, and braille chocolate bars. The Committee has been selling these items at various markets across Metro Vancouver to make money for the program and raise Blind Beginnings' public profile. Another group of youth leaders formed a Newsletter Committee and have been publishing issues of Limitless News an average of three times per year.

Getting Together with Technology (GTT) Program

Two of our tech-minded youth worked with the Canadian Council of the Blind to offer the Getting Together with Technology (GTT) program twice a month. This program offers youth an opportunity to provide technology mentoring to adults who are blind and new to using this technology.

Buddy Up Tandem Cycling Club

Our youth leaders also started our tandem cycling program in partnership with BC Blind Sports Youth and sighted pilots who rode together on Sunday mornings throughout the Spring and Summer. Thanks to media coverage about this program, Blind Beginnings received several tandem bike donations from people who heard about our program and wanted to contribute.



2018 Highlights: How our youth excelled

- One Youth Leader is selected by their peers to represent the youth voice as a member of our Board of Directors
- One Youth Leader is instrumental in program planning and attending the Early Intervention Retreat for families with children birth to 5 years old
- 18 Youth Leaders volunteered at our Community Discovery Programs
- Our youth move on to start university at SFU and University of the Fraser Valley
- The youth led Newsletter Committee published two "Limitless News" newsletters
- Two Youth Leaders presented at Spoke Up! Let's Talk Bikes, A HUB Cycling 20th Anniversary Celebration on their experience with tandem cycling.
- Leaders gave presentations at various Elementary schools during "White Cane Week"
- Youth Leader volunteers offered mentorship, guidance and inspiration to our campers and their families at Camp Hornby and Family Adventure Camp.
- Our youth learned how to knit and produced knitted bunnies that are now for sale at a local, artisan gift shop called Muckabout Gift Gallery
- One of our long time Youth Leaders moved on to a great new job video editing with Plugged In at the Kidney Foundation of Canada



"I have always been afraid of public speaking because of my visual impairment and not knowing how to stand or where to look. At the Youth Leadership weekend, I was given some strategies and tools to make public speaking more comfortable, and I feel like I can more confidently stand in front of my classroom now." ~ Youth Leader, 15



Adventure Camps & Active Lifestyle Program



"This camp is a phenomenal opportunity for me as a parent to learn from trained vision professionals. I am learning about how I can involve my child in meal preparations, just as much as my daughter is learning invaluable kitchen skills that she will use throughout her life. Our family loves coming to Blind Beginnings camp, a highlight this year was paddle boarding for the first time—and of course singing 'I See Differently' around the campfire."

Helping children and youth challenge personal limits to lead active lives

Through our Adventure Camps & Active Lifestyle Program, children who are blind or partially sighted challenge personal limits, develop new skills and increase physical activity.

By learning to see their child's true capacities, parents allow their child to develop undiscovered talents and lead an active life.

Family Adventure Camp

Our Family Adventure Camp was held August 16-19 in Sooke to give our families the opportunity to participate in a traditional camping and outdoor adventure experience. Children challenged and extended personal limits by participating in standup paddle boarding, hiking, fishing and practicing their skills in the kitchen as well as other skills related to independent living. At the same time, parents learned to raise their expectations for their child ranging from helping in the kitchen to being out on a lake.

Camp Hornby

Camp Hornby was held on Hornby Island from July 19-23 and provided our families with an outdoor adventure camp experience. They participated in a variety of challenging activities which many people think are impossible for youth who are blind or partially sighted—rock climbing, high rope courses, kayaking, boat riding, challenge games, beep kickball, campfires and more.

Kootenay Project Adventure

Blind Beginnings supported this initiative by Vision Teachers who work in the Kootenays. Executive Director Shawn Marsolais and several Blind Beginnings youth leaders attended the camp in June in Nelson and were involved in a leadership capacity.

One of the main activities took place at the Four Nations Coalition of Indigenous Medicines in the Slocan Valley. Partnering with School District #8 Vision Services, the Four Nations sponsored a full-day to bring students with visual impairments together with sighted peers to participate in indigenous cultural outdoor activities, including blindfold archery tag and making bannock over an open fire.



- Development of physical abilities
- Motivation for life-long active lifestyle
- Expanded personal boundaries
- Increased independence

"Camp Hornby is important to me because I get to see old friends, meet and make new friends and go on daring adventures with everyone!"

~ Camper, age 12



Educational & Experiential Learning Program



"Tracy enjoys nature and really loves the gardening event. She planted Kale and snow peas at home afterwards and she checks the progress from time to time. Unfortunately, the peas cannot survive but the kale stays strong." ~ Icy Chiu, mother of Tracy, age 5

Helping children and youth learn through experience

Educational workshops, monthly recreational clubs and community outings provide children who are blind or partially sighted with a variety of skill-building activities and experiences that support cognitive and motor development, communication, independent travel, social networking and career development. While children increase independence and self-esteem, parents access resources to help their child discover and develop their true capacities.

Creating Confidence Workshop

We offered a Creating Confidence Workshop from July 31 to August 2nd for children or youth aged 9-15. In a fun and safe environment, they shared in activities, discussions, and real-life situations intended to increase confidence and expand social skills. Other topics covered in this intensive 3-day program included: what nonverbal communication says about you; how to communicate effectively and put people at ease about their blindness; adopting positive self-esteem and self-acceptance; and knowing how to dress and what to do in social situations.

Community Discovery Outings

This year we began offering Community Discovery outings every month in the Metro Vancouver region. Our families enjoyed cross country skiing, snow-shoeing, gardening, a Mother's Day lunch, a visit to Playland, a described performance onboard the Stanley Park Ghost Train, bouncing at the Sky Zone Trampoline Park and an ice skating session. As a follow up to the family retreat in Kelowna, a Community Discovery program is now running every two months in the Okanagan so families in those regions can connect on a semi-regular basis as well.

Community Art Project

We created a Community Art Project to commemorate Blind Beginnings' 10th Anniversary. From June to September, we hosted four different opportunities for families to contribute to the project, creating clay pieces using cookie cutters or free-hand, the pieces were later painted, and assembled with the clay pieces sitting on three mobility canes cemented into a planter box. The final project was a masterpiece that was tactile, colourful, and representative of the diversity of families we support at Blind Beginnings.


- **Increased self-confidence**
- **Motivation to try new challenges**
- **Increased independence**
- **Improved readiness for career/adult life**



Community Discovery Outings 2018

- Snowshoeing at Mount Seymour
- Cross Country Skiing at the Whistler Olympic Park
- Blind Hockey Game & Family Open Skate
- Community Garden Party
- Mother's Day Café: making lunch for your Mom
- Watching the Velveteen Rabbit with VocalEye audio description
- Lego Exhibit of New West at the Anvil Centre
- Visiting the Arion Therapeutic Farm
- Ice Skating
- Pizza in the Park
- Family Holiday Party

Early Intervention, Counselling & Family Support Program

A young boy with dark hair and glasses, wearing a grey jacket with a fur-lined hood, is petting a black sheep. The sheep has a thick, shaggy coat. In the background, there is a white building with a corrugated metal roof, a wooden fence, and a line of tall evergreen trees under an overcast sky. Another person's hand is visible on the right side of the frame, also touching the sheep.

"The Blind Beginnings retreat was the most help our family has received since our daughter has been diagnosed with a visual impairment. We have felt so alone, confused, scared, and uncertain about her future. This retreat was the first time we have felt at ease. In one weekend I received more information than we have in four years. We now have resources to help our daughter be the best she can be without struggle. I feel more people need to know about this program and how it can help families."

~ Megan Dostaler

Supporting children, youth and parents

Our Early Intervention, Counselling & Family Support Program offers support groups and individual counselling for children, youth, and parents, as well as early intervention retreats for families with pre-schoolers. Information, resources, and emotional support are provided to families by registered clinical counsellors and by other parents.

Expanded Partnership with CNIB (Vision Loss Rehab Canada)

We expanded our partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) to provide services to children from birth to age five and their families across BC. Blind Beginnings' role in this partnership is to connect with all new families, and help them to connect with each other. Through this partnership, we are now in contact with 150 new families across BC and are focused on building programs and services outside of the Lower Mainland to support these families.

Okanagan Family Retreat

We offered our first Okanagan Family Retreat in West Kelowna November 3-4 in collaboration with CNIB's Vision Loss Rehabilitation, Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired, and the BC Blind Sports & Recreation Association. Families from across the Okanagan attended with children ranging in age from 3 to 9 years old. The weekend covered a wide range of topics, including an introduction to Cortical Visual Impairment, how to make family outings meaningful for children with a visual impairment and how to make physical activity and recreation work for all family members. There was also a music therapy session, an outing to a therapeutic farm, story time, playground fun and card games.

Online Parent Support Groups

We established an online drop-in support group for parents of our children who are blind or partially sighted. The challenges faced by these parents with children and youth who are blind or partially sighted can be overwhelming as they learn about an unfamiliar diagnosis, trying to understand what their child can or can't see and scheduling appointments with many medical professionals and/or therapists. Many live in rural parts of the province where they are the only ones raising a child who is blind in their community. These parents can now connect in a private online chat room moderated by Blind Beginnings Executive Director Shawn Marsolais who is a registered clinical counselor.



- **Increased self-esteem**
- **Overcome fears to try new challenges**
- **More informed parents**
- **Reduced feelings of isolation**

Our Generous Supporters

Our funding in 2018 came from individuals, foundations, corporations and community groups. Over 100 individual donors contributed in 2018, while grants and sponsorships were received from foundations, charitable organizations and corporations.

Many smaller businesses also contributed a long list of items for our annual Gala and Auction that raised funds from over 200 people who bought tickets to the event. We would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia who provided us with a BC Community Gaming Grant.

- The Foord Family Foundation
- Lori Sheppard Memorial Fund: held at the Vancouver Foundation
- The Walsh Foundation
- Thompson Okanagan Community Board
- The Military Police Fund for Blind Children
- Great Canadian Casinos Inc.
- Al Roadburg Foundation
- Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation
- Dorothy Ryan Estate Fund: held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Hamber Foundation
- CKNW Kids' Fund
- Cadillac Fairview
- Pacific Blasting and Demolition Ltd.
- Westminster Savings Foundation
- Ventana Construction
- Accessible Media Inc. (AMI)
- Vancity Community Foundation
- The Recreation Foundation of BC
- Sisters of St. Anne
- Clear Skies Children's Foundation
- Chris Spencer Foundation
- MEC - Outdoor Nation
- Teck Resources Inc.
- Christ Church Ladies Guild
- The Fraternal Order of Eagles, New Westminster
- The Fraternal Order of Eagle, Penticton Aerie
- The Fraternal Order of Eagles Ladies Auxiliary, Penticton Aerie
- Northern Van Lines
- Highbrook Management
- Wawanesa Insurance
- Golden Thread Foundation
- Provincial Employees' Community Service Fund
- Edith Lando Foundation
- The Wickerson Foundation
- Cody's Fund: held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Mountain Meadows PAC
- The Telus Corporation Community Fund
- New Westminster Lions Club
- Vancity Credit Union
- Highpath Consulting

Our Partners

Thanks to our partners, Blind Beginnings has been able to achieve so much to advance our mission to help children and youth who are blind or partially sighted and their families.

- Vision Loss Rehabilitation BC: partner to offer quality support to children birth to five years of age and their families across BC.
- BC Blind Sports & Recreation Association: partner on our tandem cycling program, and participated in our Regional Family Retreats.
- Canadian Council of the Blind: partner in our Youth Leadership program offering opportunities for our youth to gain skills in group facilitation, organizational skills, and peer tutoring through the Getting Together with Technology program
- Teachers for Students with Visual Impairments: volunteer in our summer camps and Youth Leadership Training programs.
- Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children: participated in Regional Family Retreats to provide information about services available to children who are blind or partially sighted
- Canadian Deafblind Association: shared information and resources for families with children who are deafblind
- Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired: partner with our Regional Family Retreats to bring resources to new families.
- BFO Consulting: provides coaching to youth who are blind or partially sighted on all aspects of public speaking.



"My favourite part of every Family Adventure Camp is getting the opportunity to connect with children/youth and their families outside of the school setting."

~ Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments



Blind Beginnings Founder

Shawn Marsolais

Founding Board of Directors

Shawn Marsolais

Peter Moroney

Fraser Loch

Bridie Cotter

Sharon Disanto

Board of Directors 2018-2019

Betty Noble, President

Peter Moroney, Vice-President

Colette Mitchell, Treasurer

Shawn Bishop, Secretary

Harjinder Saran, Youth Representative

Matthew Alvernaz

Heather Topley

Maria Zeldis

Tommy Leung

Victoria Levy

Lindsay Barnett

Jessica Rathwell

Volunteer Hours

Programs

970

Board of Directors

440

Fundraising

324

Community Outreach

76

Our Invaluable Volunteers

We owe the success of Blind Beginnings over the past 10 years in part to the efforts of our volunteers.

Volunteers support Blind Beginnings in so many ways, from Program support at Community Discovery Days, Youth Leader Training, Craft Committee, Camp Hornby and Family Retreats to the efforts of our Gala Committee who organize the annual Gala and auction, and helping out at the Christmas Craft Fair, Family ice skating outing and the Blind Beginnings holiday party.

We also would like to thank and honour those individuals who have volunteered their time and expertise by serving on our Board of Directors. We appreciate the work, commitment, and unique and valuable insight each Board member offers. The organizational leadership provided by the Board of Directors over the past 10 years has helped build a sustainable organization and has helped advance the quality and impact of our programs for children and youth who are blind or partially sighted throughout BC.



How you can help

- Encourage your friends and families to sign up as monthly donors. These ongoing donations will help us build sustainable funding into the future. Visit www.blindbeginnings.ca/donations/
- Share with your networks that Blind Beginnings is available and excited to provide workshops and presentations on blindness to schools, community programs, businesses. One of the ways we generate revenue is by asking for a donation in exchange for these workshops.
- Join our volunteer Fundraising Committee to help us plan fun, profitable fundraising events.
- Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, and share our posts with your friends and followers often and encourage them to do the same. This will help us reach more families, raise awareness and increase funding.
- Order a produce box from SPUD.ca and SPUD will donate 25% back to Blind Beginnings
- Host a fundraiser to raise funds on behalf of Blind Beginnings. Contact lia@blindbeginnings.ca for approval, guidelines and information on how we can help support your event.

Thank you to all the individuals,
foundations, businesses,
community groups
and government who supported
Blind Beginnings in 2018!

"I am proud to say that I became a monthly donor of Blind Beginnings in 2018. As a board member, I have learned first hand the value that the hands-on programming has for young members of the organization. I think an important part of being an active part of any community is being able to contribute in a meaningful way. In addition to giving my time to the Blind Beginnings Board, it was important to me to make a financial donation. Over the last year, learning how that donation has contributed to the organization and its membership in a meaningful way has been truly rewarding."

~ Victoria Levy



Financial Report

Blind Beginnings has shown a steady increase in revenue over the past 10 years. The total revenue for 2018 was \$329,565. The total expenses for 2018 were \$314,596. Blind Beginnings receives funding from various foundations, charities, individuals, corporations and the Province of BC through BC Gaming Grants. Blind Beginnings also earns income from program, membership and as of May 2017, contract fees for outreach and early intervention support from CNIB.

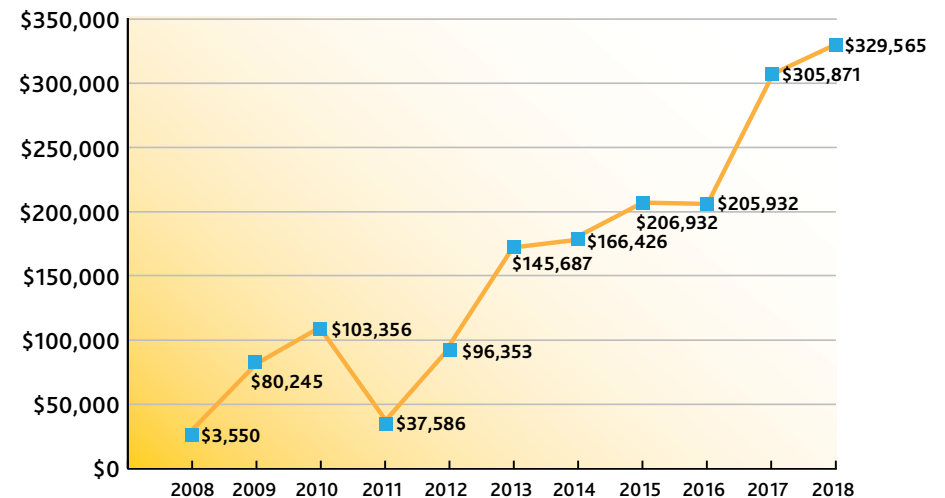
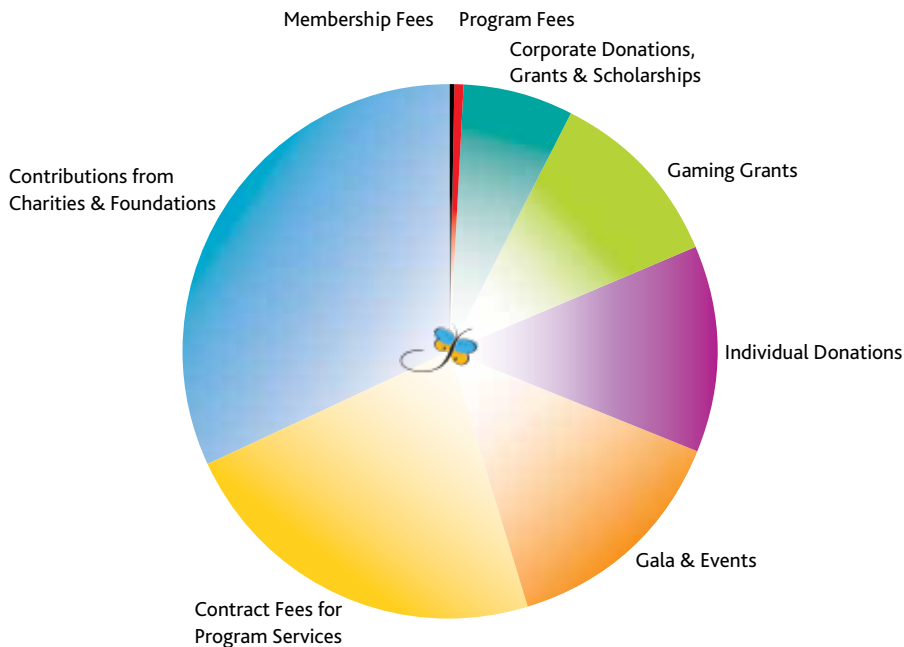
2018 Revenue

- Gaming Grant : \$36,500
- Corporate Donations, Grants and Sponsorships : \$22,132
- Contributions from Charities and Foundations : \$104,782
- Contract Fees for Program Services : \$75,000
- Gala and Events : \$46,710
- Individual Donations : \$41,391
- Program Fees : \$1,950
- Membership Fees : \$1,100



Revenue Growth: 2008 ~ 2018

2008 : \$3,550	2014 : \$166,426
2009 : \$80,245	2015 : \$206,932
2010 : \$103,356	2016 : \$205,932
2011 : \$37,586	2017 : \$305,871
2012 : \$96,353	2018 : \$329,565
2013 : \$145,687	





Blind Beginnings Society

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