

Blind Beginnings Society

ANNUAL REPORT 2021





“You will succeed if you persevere; and you will find joy in overcoming obstacles.”

-Helen Keller

per·se·ver·ance

/ˌpɜrsəˈvɪrəns/

noun: perseverance

persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

Perseverance is not only part of our organizational values, but is also a word that perfectly encapsulates 2021 for us. It was a year in which Blind Beginnings found itself in a new landscape brought about by COVID. If 2020 was a year of reacting to COVID, then 2021 was the year in which we had adapt and learn to live with the new limitations it placed on everything from administration and staff to program delivery.

Programs continued to be adapted on-line and ever-shifting public health mandates meant that we had to experiment with a hybrid of in-person and virtual programming. However, we faced these challenges with ingenuity, creativity, and the constant support of our community. Staff, volunteers, donors, and members came together to work through these problems with sheer will ... and yes, perseverance.

Helen Keller may have been born in 1890, but her words regarding adversity and overcoming barriers resound with just as much relevance today in the early part of the 21st Century, as they did heading into the 20th.

And, just as her quote suggests, persevering through those challenges has indeed given us much joy in being able to watch the organization grow and evolve through adversity and to see the Blind Beginnings community rally and support us in a myriad of ways.

Our Mission

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

Our Commitment

Diversity and Inclusion are and always have been integral parts of the core Blind Beginnings values. We recognize that there is always room for us to grow, listen, learn and participate in support of anti-racism. For this reason, we have formed a Diversity Committee that consists of board and staff members in order for us to take meaningful action in support of Black Lives Matter and other organizations that work against systemic racism against Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC).

Our Values

- Build a diverse and inclusive community
- Value and respect all abilities
- Lead by example
- Empower through growth and learning
- Challenge the limits of possibility
- Adapt and persevere



Our Vision

Our vision includes a world where seeing things differently inspires **LIMITLESS** possibilities.



Our journey of reconciliation is a long one, and we at Blind Beginnings are grateful to be learning more about the land on which we live, work, and play. As we expand and connect families around the province, we are fortunate to have access to land and space that can support our mission. Blind Beginnings acknowledges that we carry out our programs throughout the lands of Indigenous nations across the province. We would also like to acknowledge that our office is located on the unceded homelands of the Qiqéyt (Qayqayt) First Nation.



Message from the Outgoing President of the Board



For the past several years, it has been my great pleasure to serve as a Director on the Board of Blind Beginnings. As I reflect upon what has taken place in our organization over the last eight years I have been a Director, I would like to share some observations with all of you. As I thought about what to write in this message, the first thing that came to mind is that over the years, while some staff members and Directors have come and gone, the basic nature of Blind Beginnings has remained solid and constant. The people who come through our doors to work really care about the kids they serve. Staff contributes to the success of our programs by their hard work and their commitment to increasing our organizational profile.

The Directors, including me, benefited from the knowledge and experience of those who came before us and stayed to help with the board transition as their terms ended. The organization is growing and expanding. Some of our dreams are becoming reality. And why is that? How has this come about? From the perspective of the Board, the courage to commit time and resources to the development of our first strategic/business plan was instrumental in helping the organization move forward. We got advice that led us to apply to Social Venture Partners for assistance with organizational development. This support has been, and continues to be, extremely beneficial. In addition, we found a staff person to assist with managing the financial, fundraising, and operational activities so that Shawn could put more energy into program development.

The children who attend our programs develop very important life skills, connect with each other, learn how to be leaders, and thrive in an environment with no limits on their potential for success ... and we wouldn't want it any other way. With the addition of more counselling services, increased space, development of new partnerships and, in time, more sustainable funding, Blind Beginnings will continue to thrive and prosper. As long as there is a need for children who are blind or partially sighted to have exposure to an environment where they can be themselves, and succeed or fail at any task as long as they don't give up on their abilities, Blind Beginnings will be there for them. With the leadership of Directors like the current President, Maria Zeldis, the children we work with will continue to have the resources to learn and grow and become independent adults. Parents will have the support they need as they face the challenges and risks of allowing their children to enjoy life experiences that will give them the opportunity to learn and grow and explore their potential.

As I end my service as a Director, I can leave this role with the confidence that the organization will continue to prosper and expand. I also know that I can remain involved in other ways. Vision is not only a physical attribute. While I may not have sight, I do have vision. I see Blind Beginnings providing guidance, opportunities for self-discovery, support, and expertise on the capabilities of children who are blind or partially sighted and I see limitless potential for the growth of the organization.

Betty Nobel
Outgoing President of the Board

Message from the President of the Board

Eight years ago, I came to Blind Beginnings as a parent dealing with their child's vision loss diagnosis. Since that time, our family has benefited from Blind Beginnings' programs and supportive community, and embraced the "No Limits" philosophy.

As someone who understands the impact of this organization first-hand, I am honoured and excited to step into the role of President of the Board of Blind Beginnings.

First and foremost, I would like to thank our outgoing President, Betty Nobel, for her years of service and dedication to Blind Beginnings. She led our Board through 6 years of exponential growth, and through the toughest stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Betty, thank you for your leadership, optimism, wisdom, and hard work. I will endeavour to uphold the high standards you have set.

We now emerge from pandemic life with many lessons from the past 2 years, and many hopes for the future.

One of our biggest lessons came from going "virtual" for most of our programs. This enabled us to reach more families across the province and to deliver services in new ways. Kudos to our creative and adaptable staff for seizing opportunities in a time of crisis, and ensuring that we continue to provide quality services to children across the province.

Although we are looking forward to increasing in-person interactions, we have learned the value of virtual programming and leveraging technology to expand our reach. A great example of this is our Limitless Podcast, which has reached almost 20,000 downloads from 43 countries around the globe, and just celebrated its 100th episode.

Our hope for the future is to create even more meaningful connections and experiences for our children and youth, that will help them reach their full potential. We will accomplish this by continuing to offer fun and inclusive programs that teach life skills, build community, and change perceptions of blindness in our community. These are lofty goals, but with the support of our donors and volunteers there are no limits to what we can achieve.

Maria Zeldis
President of the Board



Message from the Executive Director



In many ways 2021 looked and felt very much like 2020 with the continuation of the pandemic and predominantly virtual programs. However, there were still successes, growth, and much to be proud of and we learned which programs work well virtually and which are better in person.

An exciting accomplishment of 2021 was “Through My Eyes” a documentary about why I started Blind Beginnings which was filmed

and produced by one of our Board members Candice Macalino and her husband Jaeger Mah. We are optimistic for the exposure to Blind Beginnings this film will bring as it continues to be shared at conferences and film festivals in the future.

Another highlight was helping to organize and be a presenting partner in the Seeing Mental Health Differently virtual conference in partnership with PRCVI and the BC Vision Teachers Association. Given the state of our world, the topic of mental health was an important one to tackle, and I was grateful for the opportunity to help organize and present at this event.

In 2021 we moved into our second year of support with Social Venture Partners and with their support looked more closely at how we are measuring the impact of our programs and evaluating the work we do. We strengthened both our methods for capturing feedback from staff and volunteers as well as youth and families participating in our programs.

I'm so grateful to the staff: Lia, Emily, & Rob for their commitment to the organization through another pandemic year; to all our volunteers who give of their time and expertise to support our mission, to the families who have stayed with us as we navigate adapting programs from virtual to hybrid, and to our donors for your continued support.

Shawn Marsolais
Executive Director

Message from the Board Youth Representative



2021 was a year that embodied transition. Some of the previous COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, and it was an opportunity for several of the youth centered programs to take place in person once again.

This set the stage for 2022 where, just prior to the writing of this message, we were able to hold the annual Youth Leadership Training Weekend in person

for the first time in two years. The youth had a wonderful time in getting the opportunity to practice skills such as independently using transit, navigating a shopping mall, and learning vital skills that further allows for development of important skill sets.

Many virtual programs such as Creating Confidence and Kids Connect continued throughout 2021. These programs allowed for the youth to connect with one another, as well as gain valuable volunteering experience despite how far they are located from one another. Throughout the year, we also relaunched monthly Youth Leadership meetings, in which youth leaders are able to gather to hear about exciting volunteering opportunities within Blind Beginnings, learn about important leadership qualities, and make lasting connections with one another.

Overall, although this year brought some uncertainty during a transitional period, it allowed for some wonderful opportunities for the youth to experience new and exciting things both through our virtual and in person programming, and I am confident that the upcoming year will be no different.

Ishita Bhatia
Board Youth Representative



THEORY OF CHANGE

Our theory of change requires parents, children, teachers and society to adopt a positive perspective of blindness. When this happens, children and youth who are blind or partially sighted will live a more fulfilling life. Blind Beginnings, through its programs and services, is working toward a world where seeing things differently inspires limitless possibilities, where children can reach their potential, without being held back by perceived limitations.

We're Changing Perspectives

Historically, people have negative stereotypes of blindness, lacking the understanding of the abilities of people who are blind. Even parents of a child who is blind or partially sighted can have these negative stereotypes and doubts that their child can grow up to be independent, capable and employable, resulting in feelings of hopelessness.

Blind Beginnings shifts these negative perceptions of blindness from the past by supporting the child/youth who is blind and their immediate family, as well as working to change society's perceptions of blindness.

This greater understanding will result in parents being more likely to already know a positive blind role model when their child is born, resulting in parents' views of blindness being more accurate, less negative and deficit based. They will assume their child who is blind will be able to achieve the same things as a sighted child. With these raised expectations, they will encourage and support their child to pursue their dreams and goals.

Children and youth are empowered and confident in their abilities. Society has a greater acceptance and understanding which leads to inclusivity and people who are blind being integrated into a wide range of jobs and all aspects of society.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

This program, originally called Baby Beginnings, is offered in partnership with **Vision Loss Rehab BC**, and was designed for parents raising babies who are blind or partially sighted under 2 years of age. When it became a virtual program we opened it up to focus on families with children 5 years and younger and incorporated **Adam's Accessible Story Time**. In May of 2021 we added a hands-on activity targeted toward preschool aged children and we re-branded the program Early Beginnings. Families who register each month receive the activity supplies in the mail and join us on Zoom to listen to Adam's stories and do an accessible activity that involves the whole family.



PROGRAM NEED

We believe that connecting with parents at an early stage may help to shift a negative perception of blindness to one of possibility. Through stories, songs, and hands-on craft making, parents of babies, toddlers and preschoolers learn how to make these activities come alive for their children and to connect with other parents also raising a baby with a vision impairment.

We offer Early Beginnings and Accessible Story Time as part of a contract for service with

**VISION LOSS
REHABILITATION**
CANADA

with funds provided by the Ministry of Children and Families.

Accessible Story Time was in partnership with

PRCVI :: :: ::



PROGRAM GOALS

- Provide information and resources for parents from a Vision Specialist from Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada.
- Give parents an opportunity to socialize babies and introduce them to songs and stories.
- Provide emotional support to parents and reduce feelings of isolation.
- To raise parents' expectations of their child so they support their child in reaching his/her potential.
- To provide Blind Beginnings families with opportunities to meet each other to learn from and support each other.



Baby Beginnings has given us sensory specific strategies for encouraging our son's optimal development. I would also be remiss if I failed to highlight the fact that the online delivery of these programs has built a community of meaningful relationships in a time where isolation would otherwise be a hallmark of daily life.

- Parent of a child who is partially sighted

COMMUNITY DISCOVERY

Through educational workshops, recreational clubs and community outings, blind or partially sighted children are exposed to skill-building activities, experiences, and hands-on learning that support cognitive and motor development, communication, independent travel, and socialization. While children increase independence and self-esteem, parents access resources to help their child discover and develop their true capacities.



PROGRAM NEED

Community Discovery was created to address serious issues children who are blind or partially sighted face growing up - they often have unnecessary limits placed on them by teachers, society and even their own families who are trying to protect them from getting hurt or don't know how to adapt an activity to be done without sight. As a result, children who are blind or partially sighted often grow up not participating in physical activity at school and are hesitant to try new experiences. This impacts their self-confidence, their physical health and their social and emotional health. Community Discovery provides children who are blind or partially sighted with the time and opportunities for hands-on exploration, which they require in order to learn new concepts in the world or experience a new activity.

PROGRAM GOALS

- To raise the personal expectations of children who are blind or partially sighted with respect to what they believe they can do, leading to increased self-confidence and new skills development.
- To provide a hands-on means for children and youth who are blind or partially sighted to learn basic concepts, at their own pace.
- To provide children who are blind or partially sighted with opportunities to improve motor skills and build interest in lifelong physical activity by experiencing sports and leisure activities with their families.
- To raise parents' expectations of their child so they support their child in reaching his/her potential.
- To provide Blind Beginnings families with opportunities to meet each other to learn from and support each other.

2021 DISCOVERIES

- Continued our popular **Baking with Blind Beginnings Program** where we made such treats as EatMore Bars, Mini Egg Cookies, and Carrot Cake.
- Attended a virtual interactive **Indigenous Storytelling Workshop** hosted by 3 Crows Productions
- Gathered in person at the **Reifel Bird Sanctuary** in Metro Vancouver
- Partnered with VocalEye and enjoyed an “almost live” production virtual production of **Alice in Wonderland**
- Attended a **Learn to Fish Program**, put on by the Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery
- Experienced **Project Fire Flower**, an interactive art exhibition showed us the full experience of fireworks through touch, hearing, and vision



CREATING CONFIDENCE

The Creating Confidence Program was designed to help children and youth who are blind or partially sighted build self-confidence, self-acceptance and independence. Over a series of workshop sessions, children learn to develop skills and confidence. Some of the topics covered are Independent Living Skills, technology use, how to use and understand body language, facial expressions, gestures, and personal space. They also learn how to prepare their look according to the social situation, how to help others feel at ease with their visual impairment, and how to behave in a variety of social and professional settings.



PROGRAM NEED

For children approaching adolescence, fitting-in becomes important and often youth look to their friends and peers to build confidence and self-acceptance. Youth who are blind or partially sighted don't have this point of reference, so developing personal style can be very challenging. Youth who are blind or partially sighted face many challenges that hinder their career success. This can be attributed to many factors including: low self-confidence, social challenges, and misconceptions held by employers and the general public about the abilities and potential of people who are blind or partially sighted.



I really love Creating Confidence workshops because of all the humour. I find the humour makes the workshops a little more fun and puts people at ease to talk about their own personal experiences.

- 15 year old Real Teen Talk Workshop Participant



PROGRAM GOALS

- To fill the gaps in what youth learn in school including independent living skills
- To boost self-acceptance and confidence.
- To learn how to effectively communicate with sighted peers
- To develop friendships with peers who are blind or partially sighted
- To help youth who are blind or partially sighted take steps toward career choice and successful employment.
- To teach youth who are blind about how and when to disclose their disability during the employment process.
- To make available confidence and skill-building workshops to all children and youth who are blind or partially sighted in BC
- To provide children and families with opportunities to meet each other and benefit from shared experience and peer support

2021 WORKSHOPS

- **Real Talk Teen.** Topics in this program included personal style, dating or flirting, navigating social situations and personal hygiene.
- **Mental Toughness Workshop.** This workshop was offered to teens to build psychological strength and mental toughness to battle life's challenges, especially in the time of a pandemic.
- **Independent Living Skills Workshop.** Learning independent living skills is critical for young people who are blind or partially sighted to build their confidence and prepare them to live independently.
- **Improv Workshop.** Newly created in 2021, this Workshop helps youth develop public speaking skills, social skills, build confidence, and create connections in a fun, lighthearted environment.



YOUTH LEADERSHIP & PRE-EMPLOYMENT



A first-of-its-kind in BC, the Youth Leadership & Pre-employment Program prepares youth who are blind or partially sighted for their future transition to work and adult life. While the youth build employment and life skills, they also learn to see their true abilities and to not be held back by limits set by others. The program is designed to provide direct training and practical experience in leadership, team building, public speaking, communication, and career planning and also provides them with opportunities to volunteer in order to help build valuable skills and confidence.

PROGRAM NEED

Youth who are blind or partially sighted face many challenges that hinder their career success, as indicated by the national unemployment rate of approximately 70 percent. While there are employment readiness training programs for individuals with disabilities, there are no other programs specific to blindness or visual impairment. Furthermore, youth who are blind or partially sighted often experience low self-confidence and social challenges that negatively impact their search for employment and career development.

This program has helped me immensely throughout my teenage years and will continue to impact me for the rest of my life.

- 20 year old University Student

PROGRAM GOALS

- To provide youth who are blind or partially sighted with skill-building training and practical experience that supports their employability and career success.
- To help youth who are blind or partially sighted set higher personal goals and increase self-confidence to improve their chances of employability and career success.
- To teach youth who are blind or partially sighted how to put their friends, co-workers, bosses and others at ease with their blindness to support their success at work.
- To educate the public about blindness to increase expectations and inclusivity for youth who are blind in the workplace and in the community.

YOUTH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES 2021

- **Creating Connections Workshops.** Youth Leaders helped to plan our Creating Connections Workshop that runs the last Friday of each month. These workshops are an opportunity for youth to socialize and enjoy each other's company over a shared activity.
- **Harry Potter Book Club.** Each week participants would join the Zoom room to listen to a couple of chapters read by two of our Alumni. Participants would sign up to be a guest reader and read the lines of a certain character in the book.
- **Kids Connect.** Youth leaders were invited to our Kids Connect program which is a support group for children 7-12. Youth Leaders came to act as role models, lead activities and connect with the kids.
- **Virtual Summer Camp.** Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in British Columbia, we held a virtual camp this summer. Youth Leaders and Alumni were welcomed to camp to act as role models and lead activities. Their support helped in creating connections among kids, teens and families.
- **Contributing to Limitless Content.** This includes writing blog articles for the Limitless Blog and co-hosting duties on the Limitless Podcast.
- **Educational Public Speaking About Blindness.** Providing blindness presentations in the community.



SUMMER CAMP



Blind Beginnings' Summer Camp Program offers children and youth who are blind or partially sighted opportunities to challenge personal limits, develop new skills and increase self-confidence through summer camps and physical activities. Through observation, parents begin to see their child's true capacities and lift unnecessary limits, thus allowing the child to develop undiscovered talents and increase independence.

PROGRAM NEED

Children who are blind or partially sighted often have unnecessary limits placed on them by teachers, society and even their own families. As a result, these children can underestimate their own abilities, which can directly impact their physical pursuits. When children who are blind or partially sighted are not given the opportunity to try physical challenges at a young age, they often grow up hesitant to try new experiences, thus impacting their self-confidence.

PROGRAM GOALS

- To raise the personal expectations of children and youth who are blind or partially sighted, with respect to what they believe they can do, leading to increased self-confidence and new skills development.
- To raise parents' expectations of their child to support them in reaching their full potential.
- To provide families with opportunities to meet other families to learn from and support each other.
- To increase community awareness about how children who are blind learn, thus leading to increased inclusivity in public programs and venues.
- To challenge physical limits and improve physical strength, thereby increasing overall interest in physical activities.



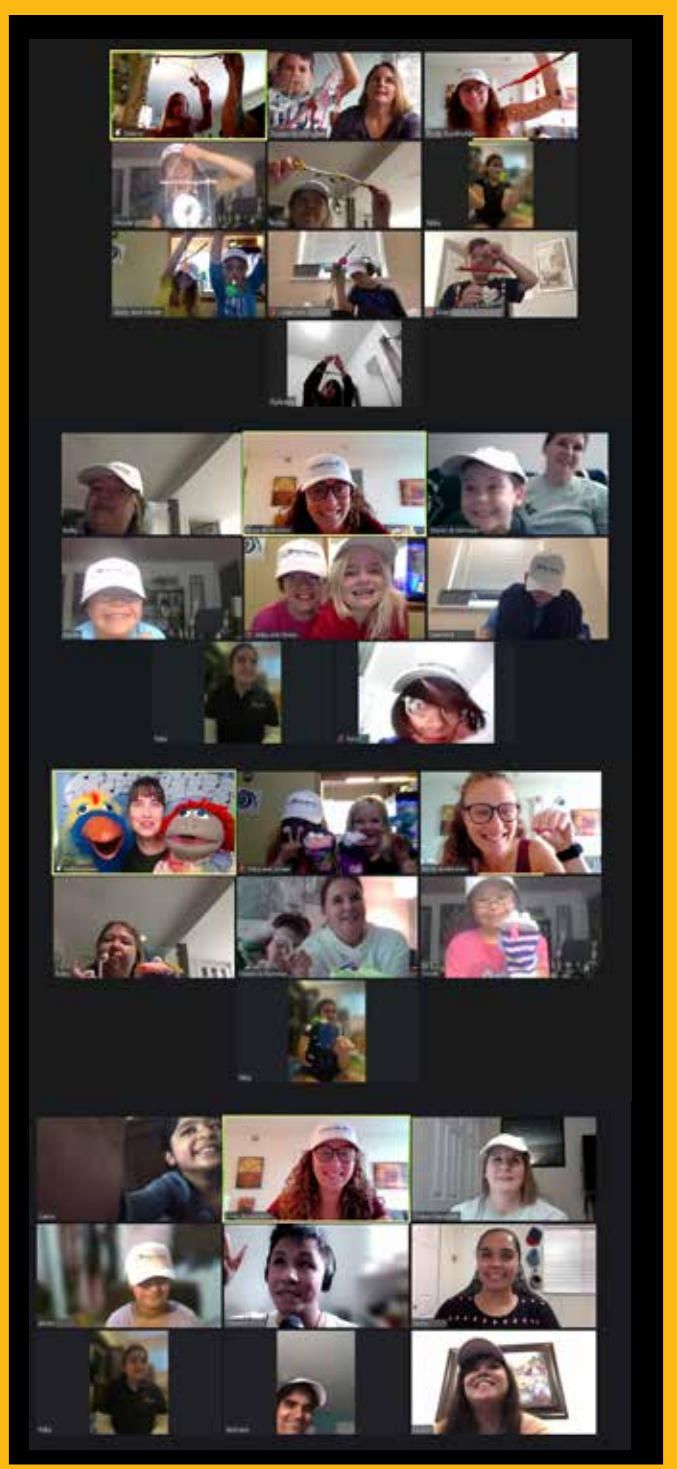
We didn't know when we registered but this camp turned out to be the highlight of our summer. With COVID restrictions in our region, this was the only social opportunity N has had.

- Parent of a child who is partially sighted



VIRTUAL SUMMER CAMP 2021

We were once again prevented from holding our annual **Camp Hornby** or **Family Adventure Camps** in 2021 as overnight camps were still banned due to COVID restrictions. As disappointing as this was, we instead held a week long 'Virtual Summer Camp' that was full of activities for all ages and that culminated in an in-person evening Campfire Sing-A-Long. Because we were in the middle of a summertime fire ban, we weren't able to have a real campfire, but we got creative and were able to bask in the warm glow of some LED lights wrapped around a collection of firewood instead.



COUNSELLING & SUPPORT

Today in British Columbia, there are approximately 750 families raising children who are blind or partially sighted and 45 additional families each year with children who are newly diagnosed. Blind Beginnings wants to ensure that families have access to available early intervention support, children have a place to connect with their peers, and that all families know where to get information and can connect with blindness professionals and other families who have begun the journey before them.

PROGRAM NEED

When their child is diagnosed as blind, most parents usually experience a period of mourning and a deep sense of loss for the life they imagined their child would live. The quality and frequency of services provided to new parents depends greatly on where they live, which community organizations they are referred to, and the level of education and experience of the professionals within those organizations.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Reduce feelings of isolation
- Connect with others with shared life experience
- Provide emotional support
- Suggest coping strategies
- Build a community
- Provide resources
- Create opportunity for social interaction



Hearing stories from parents who are asking similar questions or have found answers and hope to the questions I am having was incredibly helpful. The group felt like a safe place to be honest and feel heard.

- Participant in our Seeing Things Differently Parent Support Group



Support Groups

- Kids Connect
- Virtual Parents' Night Out
- Seeing Things Differently Support Group
- Creating Connections
- Individual Counselling Sessions





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LIMITLESS
Blind Beginnings **PODCAST**

2021 was a big year for the **Limitless Podcast**. Established the year prior in 2020, the show not only began to grow its audience and establish a core listening base, but we were able to begin to build up a library of engaging, entertaining, and educational episodes that featured many of our Youth Alumni volunteers, Blind Beginnings

community members, parents, and high profile guests such as author **Amanda Leduc**, Canadian Paralympic Alpine skier **Mac Marcoux** and talented musician and producer, **Joey Stuckey**.

The **Limitless Blog** gives our youth another medium in which to express themselves and give voice to topics and discussions that are important to them and that could help educate those outside of the blind or partially sighted community. We had many well written and thought provoking blogs written by youth and our Limitless Blog pages continued to be one of the most well-visited pages on the website.



Apple Podcasts



Google Podcasts

“Through My Eyes” MOVIE SCREENING

On Saturday, September 18th 2021, Blind Beginnings held a very special fundraiser at The Cinematheque in downtown Vancouver. The event was a Movie Screening of a documentary called “**Through My Eyes**” by **Candice Macalino** and **Jaeger Mah** that featured our very own Executive Director, **Shawn Marsolais**. This very emotional afternoon was the first in-person fundraising event the Blind Beginnings had held in over 2 years. Our community was very happy to connect and come together once again.

Complete with photo opportunities on a Red Carpet, a virtual 50/50 Draw, and Door Prizes, this very special fundraising event raised over **\$2000** for Blind Beginnings, and a follow-up Virtual Screening of the documentary raised an additional **\$1600**.



TRIVIA NIGHT ONLINE VERSION 2021

On **March 6, 2021**, Blind Beginnings held a Virtual Trivia Night where teams of trivia fans gathered to join in an epic clash of trivia knowledge! There was a lot of laughter and sharing of useless pieces of knowledge, and the event raised over **\$2300** to help fund our Programs.

THE



Rob Mineault
Communications
Coordinator

Angela Smith
Donor Relations
& Admin Assistant

Lia Dicicco
Director of
Operations

Shawn Marsolais
Executive Director

Took the picture
(We made her that hat) →

Emily Burkholder
Volunteer and Program
Coordinator



Blind Beginnings

SUPPORTERS

We are very grateful to have a strong committed group of supporters who believe in our mission and provide financial support of our programs and services. Our Community of Supporters includes individuals, corporations, foundations and government grants. We value and appreciate every donation, sponsorship and grant we receive.

Major Supporters

We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia



The Walsh Foundation

The Jules Foundation

\$1,001 - \$5,000

Edith Lando Foundation
F.K. Morrow Foundation
The Hamber Foundation
Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation

Margie Ellis Maxwell and Gaylene Munday
Mamida Holdings Inc.
Delta Gamma Fraternity
Michael Marsolais

Sean Gercsak
Tony Valente
Roberto Valente
Rose-Marie Marsolais
Vanshika Bobal
Nicole Poon



Lori Sheppard Memorial Fund held at



\$10,001 - \$25,000



The Dorothy Ryan Estate Fund held at



\$5,001 - \$10,000



Boychuk Knoblauch Financial Group



Diane Johnson

\$500 - \$1,000

Cody's Fund held at the Vancouver Foundation
Wawanesa Insurance
Kathy Findlay

Stacey Gasoi
John Healy
Summan Mamman
Richard Marion
Serbhi Mehta
Betty Nobel

Ken and Marilyn Rushton
Kim Zebehazy
Maria Zeldis

We also want to acknowledge and offer our gratitude to the 22 monthly donors who contributed over \$9,600 in 2021!

Blind Beginnings VOLUNTEERS

2021 continued to be a challenging year for us in terms of the delivery of programs as well as fundraising events. COVID policies were ever-shifting to coincide with the waves of infection, which provided brief windows of opportunity to have in-person events, which in turn affected how we were able to engage with our volunteers. However, volunteers continued to contribute to our many different committees, including our **Fundraising Committee, Governance Committee, Diversity Committee, and Limitless Committee.** These committees help with everything from fund development and event planning to infrastructure.

Volunteers also proved key in helping carry out our two 2021 Fundraising events, our Movie Screening and Online Trivia Night. We also would like to mention Adam Wilton specifically for his tireless and enthusiastic contributions over the year to our **Early Beginnings** program with his **Accessible Story Time.**

We are so grateful to every single one of our volunteers and would not be able to do what we do without them.



Board of Directors 2021



Betty Nobel
Outgoing President



Maria Zeldis
President



Candice Mah
Vice President



Kim Zebehazy
Secretary



Clara Au-Yeung
Treasurer



Amit Gatenyo
Member-at-Large



Sofeya Devji
Member-at-Large



Grant Hardy
Member-at-Large



Kathie Johnson
Member-at-Large



Richard Marrison
Member-at-Large



Ishita Bhatia
Youth Representative

Founding Board of Directors

Shawn Marsolais

Peter Moroney

Fraser Loch

Bridie Cotter

Sharon Disanto

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Blind Beginnings' financial position remained strong during 2021. We were grateful to have continued to receive funding and financial support from our donors and grantors during the second year of the pandemic. We also received financial support through Government wage subsidies. We continued to provide service for Early Intervention support as a subcontractor through a contract with **Vision Loss Rehab BC** and the **Ministry of Children and Family Development**. Blind Beginnings also earned revenue from membership fees, workshop fees and through fundraising events.

The total revenue for 2021 was **\$413,892** and the total expenses were **\$404,523** which left us with an excess of revenue over expenses of **\$9,369**.

Blind Beginnings saw an increase in overall expenses in 2021 compared to 2020 as we invested in building our systems and in building organizational capacity with the hiring of an additional staff member.

TOTAL 2021 REVENUE - \$413,892

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Donations and Scholarships | \$145,955 | 35% |
| Grants | \$162,030 | 39% |
| Contract Fees | \$75,000 | 18% |
| Government Wage Subsidies | \$17,039 | 4% |
| Fundraising Events | \$6,987 | 2% |
| Earned & Miscellaneous | \$6,881 | 2% |

TOTAL 2021 EXPENSES - \$404,523

| | | |
|--|-----------|-----|
| Salaries and contracts | \$316,507 | 79% |
| Facility Rentals | \$22,205 | 5% |
| Program Supplies & Activity Costs | \$15,707 | 4% |
| IT Systems | \$12,902 | 3% |
| Office, Insurance & Amortization, Bank Fees | \$16,741 | 4% |
| Professional Fees | \$6,605 | 2% |
| Bursaries | \$4,800 | 1% |
| Outreach, Advertising & In Kind Expense | \$9,056 | 2% |

For a full copy of our Financial Statements please contact lia@blindbeginnings.ca

HOW TO GET INVOLVED



Encourage your friends or family to sign up as **monthly donors**. These ongoing donations will help us build sustainable funding into the future.



Share with your networks that Blind Beginnings is available and excited to provide workshops and presentations on blindness to schools, community programs, or businesses. Help us work to shift the perspective of what it means to be blind or partially sighted!



Join our volunteer committees such as the Fundraising Committee. Help us plan fun and profitable fundraising events. Can't help us plan our events? Attend instead!



Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and 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.



Subscribe, listen, and share our weekly Blind Beginnings Limitless Podcast and Limitless Blog. You can find both on our website at www.blindbeginnings.ca.



Host a fundraising event 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.



Sign up to our email list and keep up to date on all Blind Beginnings events and news.



I am proud to be a Blind Beginnings monthly donor. I am a Blind Beginnings Board member and I work in the field of education for students who are blind and visually impaired. Blind Beginnings offers exceptional programming for families and their children and youth with visual impairments that enhances what teachers of students with visual impairments are able to offer in the schools. The Blind Beginning philosophy of no limits supports confidence building and aspirations to reach one's potential. Giving monthly helps Blind Beginnings to be able to project some finances to support program planning.

-Kim, Monthly Donor

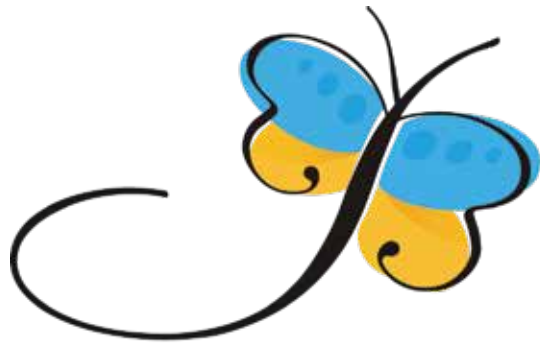


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Charitable Registration #: 81329-0616-RR0001



Blind Beginnings



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