

MOSAIC

CARRANZA LLP's Newsletter for Fall 2015

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Bryan Scholomicki's story from tragedy to triumph

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From tragedy to triumph

The inspiring story of one accident victim's road to the national sledge hockey team

Accident victims and their loved ones know that an accident changes many lives in an unforgettable second. All of a sudden the victims and their families are thrown into pain and chaos without

any preparation or warning. This is the story of a man whose indomitable spirit and determination drove him from tragedy to triumph.

As Bryan Scholomicki says, you just have to move forward. Take the best that you can from every situation. A new life means new doors to open, new opportunities to pursue.

And Bryan should know. On August 23, 2009 he was involved in a tragic motorcycle accident in which he sustained multiple injuries including third degree burns to over fifty percent of his body and the loss of part of his left leg. That day changed his life forever and it was

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From triumph to tragedy

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the beginning of a long path of rehabilitation and therapies.

Thanks to a multidisciplinary rehabilitation team and Bryan's steely determination he is now a champion sledge hockey player. He says he'd heard about sledge hockey even before the accident. So after three years of medical treatment and physical therapy, when he was finally in good enough shape to start working out and spending time with other athletes, he went to the sledge hockey training ground in Barrie (Simcoe team) and started training.

"WHEN YOU HAVE GREAT PEOPLE REPRESENTING YOU, YOU CAN FOCUS ON YOUR RECOVERY: GETTING BETTER AND MOVING FORWARD."

National team

Bryan's determination and lots of hard work at the training sites led to him being chosen for the 2014/15 Canadian national sledge hockey team. Although he downplays the work that has gone into making the national sledge hockey team, it is no easy feat. As the Hockey Canada website says: "Sledge hockey is the Paralympic

version of Ice hockey and... is quickly becoming one of the biggest attractions for spectators at the Paralympic Winter Games. It is fast-paced, highly physical and played by male athletes with a physical disability in the lower part of the body."

This year in late April/early May, at the IPC Ice Sledge Hockey World Championships in Buffalo, New York, Team Canada beat Russia 3-2 in the semi-final match and ended up taking home the silver medal (after a gold medal match loss to the hosts, USA).

Bryan clearly loves the sport and is passionate about his new athletic calling. "It's a great group of guys to spend time with. If you think about it, everyone in that locker room has been through something tragic, such as accidents, firefighting, or being born with a genetic disease, and we all have the same positive attitude and determination. And we have a lot of fun, too."

The team took the summer off, before heading to Calgary at the end of August for tryouts. Every September, Hockey Canada chooses the national team for the year, as well as a development team, where younger or less experienced sledge hockey players can gain national experience.

After winning the silver earlier this year, Bryan said the next big competition the team has set their sights on is the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games which will be in Pyeongchang, South Korea, from March 9-18, 2018.

"IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUR MINDSET."

Bryan's allies

Bryan clearly has a determined and positive attitude, but he also credits his family for being by his side during his long road to recovery. He also credits his lawyers at Carranza LLP. He said he would recommend that accident victims choose Carranza to handle their personal injury case. "When you have great people representing you, you can focus on your recovery: getting better and moving forward".

On top of getting strong and fit after his accident and becoming a sledge hockey player for the national team, Bryan is also an entrepreneur. He partnered with a former boss to start his own construction firm. When asked how he got to where he is today, Bryan shrugs as if it's no big deal. "You gotta keep moving forward. Take the best you can from every situation. Even without an accident, you can have a bad day every day if that's your attitude. It's all about your mindset."

For more about the national sledge hockey team, visit: hockeycanada.ca.



Bryan with his silver medal



Parents beware! The risk of concussion in sports

Enrolling a child in a sport program at school or in the community can be a very rewarding experience for any parent. However with the risk of concussion very much in the news these days, it is advisable for parents to be aware of the risk of suffering a concussion while playing sports, how it might be prevented, and what to do if your child does suffer a concussion.

A concussion is a disturbance in brain function that occurs following either a blow to the head or as a result of the violent shaking of the head. The brain is made of soft tissue and is cushioned by the spinal fluid. It is encased in the hard, protective skull. The brain can move around inside the skull and even bang against it. If the brain bangs against the skull — for example, due to a fall or a whiplash-type of injury — blood vessels can be torn and the nerves inside the brain can be injured. These injuries can cause a concussion.

Concussions can have a lasting effect on cognition (e.g. functions of the brain involving thinking, concentrating, learning, and reasoning), as well as physical, and emotional effects, such as depression.

Risky business

The top three sports that cause head injuries for boys are soccer, hockey and football; whereas for girls they are soccer, gymnastics and dance (according to a study on Canadian youth sports).

Since many children's sports leagues are run by parents and volunteers and are not likely to be staffed with healthcare professionals with expertise in recognizing and treating concussions, parents need to be especially vigilant to the signs and symptoms of concussions.

Recognizing a concussion

Many people relate concussions with loss of consciousness. It is very important for parents to understand that someone with a concussion may be knocked unconscious, but this doesn't happen in every case. In fact, a brief loss of consciousness or "blacking out" doesn't mean a concussion is any more or less serious than one where a person didn't black out. In fact, studies reveal that fewer than 10% of sport related concussions involve a loss of consciousness.

Following a sports injury or even after a game or practice in which an injury wasn't witnessed, parents should be on the lookout for these symptoms in their children:

- They appear to be dazed or stunned
- They're confused about directions given
- They forget plays
- They're unsure of game, score, or opponent
- They move clumsily
- They answer questions slowly
- They lose consciousness (even temporarily)
- They show behaviour or personality change
- They forget events prior to hit (retrograde amnesia)
- They forget events after hit (anterograde amnesia).

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Autumn is upon us – tips for outdoor activities and driving

Autumn means several beautiful things, like colourful foliage, delicious turkey, pumpkin pie, hot drinks and nice and comfy sweaters. But for drivers, autumn also brings a whole range of dangers to the roads. Get yourself and your family ready for the Fall driving season by keeping these tips in mind to prevent accidents during this time of year.

- Back to school traffic means more cars and buses on the roads. Watch out for more pedestrians as children walk to and from school.
- Also be aware of school buses and crosswalks, and know how to deal with them lawfully and safely. In Ontario, misbehaving motorists will face higher fines under new laws that came into effect in September 2015 (for infractions such as distracted driving, keeping a safe distance from school buses and bicycles, etc.)
- If you are the pedestrian or bicycle rider, be as visible and careful as possible when you are on the road.
- Keep your walkways and driveways clear. As the leaves start to fall, they can make a slippery mess on your driveway and walkways. Likewise, prepare now for the below freezing days on the horizon – keep salt or sand at the ready to control icy patches where you, your family and neighbours will be walking.

- Heavy rain can be particularly dangerous as water pools on top of dust and oil making the roads very slippery.
- Fall foliage is certainly beautiful but as leaves fall, they cover the roads and make it difficult to see the traffic lines and other markings. And when it rains, it makes the leaves on the road as dangerous as ice. Give yourself extra space between cars for any sudden stops.
- Fall mornings often bring fog, which can limit visibility and depth perception. When driving through fog, do not use your high beams as they will bounce off the fog and create glare.
- During the fall, temperatures drop at night creating frost and icy spots on the road.
- Deer activity is also high during the fall season as it is their time to mate and migrate. Be on the lookout if you are in an area where there are typically deer around.

Top tips for driving safely in the fall

- Watch your speed
- Keep your distance
- Use low beams (i.e. in fog)
- Approach traffic lights with caution;
- Watch for wildlife; and
- Finally, prepare your car in advance by:
 - checking your tire tread and inflation
 - checking your headlights and fog lights
 - making sure your windows and mirrors are not fogged up and are cleared of any frost before departing for your destination.



Staying safe and active outside as the days get cooler and shorter

Apart from changes to our driving habits, autumn often requires us to make changes in our lifestyles or routine due to weather, school activities, and upcoming holidays. Here are some tips to stay active and safe outside at this time of year:

- Be as active as possible on a daily basis, whether out or indoors.
- Make fall yard work fun by providing your children with rakes and other tools that are kid-sized for comfort and safety.
- Keep your driveway and walkway clear of falling leaves, as much as possible.
- Dress the part: Wear lightweight clothes that keep you warm enough without trapping sweat when you are active outside. Shoes should be supportive and comfortable, and should have slip-proof soles in case you come across a patch of wet leaves.
- Do a pre-rake warm-up: It may not seem like a workout, but you can burn nearly 300 calories during an hour of raking! Walk around a bit before you start so your blood gets flowing. Do a couple of stretches to prevent straining the muscles of your shoulders, neck, and back. Side bends and knee-to-chest lifts help open you up and ready you for all of the raking, bending, and lifting you'll do.
- Most of all: enjoy this time of year by getting outside!

Recognizing a concussion

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If any of these symptoms are apparent, parents should go to the nearest emergency room and report the injury sustained and symptoms witnessed as soon as possible.

Prevention is ideal; rest and treatment are key

When it comes to concussions, prevention is the goal. Experts advise measures to implement proper prevention which include wearing appropriate equipment and teaching the children what not to do (e.g. not to tackle, not to “head” the soccer ball and not to hit opponents are examples). Proper education on what not to do can dramatically reduce the number of concussions in young players.

It is also very important to keep in mind that once a concussion is sustained, a child is 2 to 5 times more likely to sustain another one, and therefore concussed youth athletes should be placed on immediate physical and mental rest. That means avoiding physical exercise, computer use, smart phone use, watching television and social outings. Youth who do not rest immediately tend to have much longer recovery periods. Because of these factors and the fact that a youth athlete's brain is still developing and growing, some experts suggest that youth remain out of sports for three weeks or more after they are symptom free, especially if they have a history of prior concussions.

Concussions are very serious injuries that can become even more serious if kids don't get the time and rest needed to heal them completely. Taking the appropriate safety precautions can help prevent concussions, and following the doctor's advice can help minimize their affects if they do happen.



In our community: Casa Maíz

One of the community organizations Carranza LLP has the pleasure to support on an on-going basis is Casa Maíz.

Casa Maíz is a cultural agency located in North York that was created 12 years ago at the initiative of a group of individuals from the Latin American community, including Juan Carranza, to support the cultural development of the Latin American community in Toronto and Canada. The work of Casa Maíz is carried out through the arts, research and culture in its broader definition and through the promotion of creativity, thought and innovation of groups and individuals.

Every year, Casa Maíz organizes a summer camp called, “Semillas Latinas, (Latin Seeds)” offered to children between the ages of 8 and 12 years old. The General Coordinator of Casa Maíz, Mery Perez says, “For two weeks in July, Casa Maíz opened its doors to the laughter, energy and creativity of many children from our Latin American community during the 2015 summer camp of the “Semillas Latinas” program. This initiative is one of our favourite at Casa Maíz since it is designed to share many aspects of our rich cultural heritage with the youngest members of our community.

At the same time, we aim to offer a space for children to discover and develop their artistic talent while they strengthen their identity as Latin Americans in Canada.”

The program includes disciplines such as dance, painting, theatre and music, all of them taught by professionals from the Latin American community. This year’s camp included a special daily guest, various members of our community who shared about

their work with the participants. During the first week, the Semillas Latinas kids had the exciting experience of visiting a luthier shop close to our neighbourhood. This shop is a place where guitars are made and repaired.

The camp closed with its traditional multi-disciplinary artistic presentation entitled “Retratos de Identidad” (Portraits of Identity). This show was prepared by the participants during the camp and was opened to the community.



“We want to thank the parents for their support and for believing in this project. We also thank Carranza LLP for their unconditional support for this project every year since the beginning!” says Mery.

Community organizations like Casa Maíz and their array of programs is what boost us up at Carranza LLP and makes us feel very proud to do what we do. We thank Mery Perez, the rest of the staff, all the volunteers of Casa Maíz and especially all the participants, for making this year’s summer camp, a great success.





Upcoming events

It's a busy time of year for everyone, and that includes us!

Here are some of the events we're looking forward to this Fall:

- September 20: SCI Wheelchair Relay Challenge
- September 21: "Optimizing a High-Risk Child's Potential: Researchers and Parents Working Together" presentation by Bloomberg Nursing
- September 24: William Osler Health Systems conference: Equity, Ethics and Law in Health Care: Integrating Cultural Considerations into Diverse Clinical Care Settings
- October 31: Dia de Los Muertos (Casa Maíz event at Wynchwood Barns, Toronto)
- November 5: Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival
- November 7: The Ontario Employment Education & Research Centre (OEERC) Workers' Bowl



Maximum compensation in any language.

At Carranza LLP, we specialize in personal injury law. Speaking over 24 different languages, we are committed to helping injury survivors achieve maximum compensation while they focus on their recovery.

We specialize in the following areas of personal injury law:

- **Car accident claim**
- **Long term disability claim**
- **Slip and fall claim**
- **Brain injury**
- **Spinal cord injury**
- **Paediatric injury**
- **Orthopaedic injury**

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