

SPRING 2024

# Canadian Burn Survivors Community



## What's Inside?

- Upcoming Events
- Research Articles
- Important Information
- How to Stay Connected

## Welcome

### A message from our Chair

Hi everyone, welcome to our 2025 Spring - Winter Newsletter.

It is with sadness, that on March 23, 2025 our CBSC burn community lost our Treasurer / Secretary and friend Debbie Ward following a brave fight with cancer. Debbie's support for others in the burn community was astounding. She helped so many near her home with the Nova Scotia Firefighters Burn Treatment Society, across Canada through her involvement in the Canadian Burn Survivors Community and internationally through the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors. I had the honour with being your friend within the burn community and will miss our chats that we had regularly while working with CBSC.

Condolences to your immediate family as they process this loss. The impact you had on everyone will live on in all our memories.

Thank-you to all our volunteer board members for all their work to ensure our bi-weekly Wednesday Chats that help burn survivors, family, and caregivers with peer support.

The next in-person Canadian Burn Survivor Conference is scheduled for April 30 to May 3, 2025 in Victoria, BC as hosted by the BC Professional Firefighters Burn Fund. As the conference is approaching, we are looking forward to meeting everyone both new and old friends to help everyone move forward in their healing journey. Please enjoy the newsletter and thank-you our Communications Committee Chair Victoria Vass and her team for all their work putting it together.



**Michael Cook**  
**CBSC Chair**

Canadian  
Burn Survivors  
Community



IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
**DEBBIE WARD**



It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of our cherished board member and dear friend, Debbie Ward.



*Heaven has gained another angel. Rest in peace, Debbie—now pain free and forever remembered.*



The Canadian Burn Survivors Community 



**Join us for a celebration of life!**

**Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**9:30AM PST | 12:30PM EST**

Link to join: <https://zoom.us/j/94820264038?pwd=rBNaVnCVrGv3TLBWgM6BAAN9zzGzUb.1>



To: Debbie's Family

My name is Michael Cook, and I am a burn survivor and the current Chair of the Canadian Burn Survivors Community group known as CBSC. On behalf of our board of directors it is with profound sadness that I am writing this in honour of our burn family member Debbie Ward. However, we take comfort in Debbie's memory and all the positive times that we have shared together. I personally will miss the regular chats that we had well working with CBSC.

She made a significant impact providing peer support and assistance to other burn survivors and their family members at the local level in Nova Scotia with the Nova Scotia Firefighters Burn Treatment Society, nationally in Canada with her role with CBSC. Further, her impact was felt internationally through friends she met at World Burn Congress through the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors.

The burn community was her second family, and she treated everyone as such. One story I would like to share is on my third trip to World Burn in Grand Rapids Michigan in 2002. Firstly, my wife Sandy is originally from Halifax, and she was unable to attend that conference. Debbie and their group made me an honorary Nova Scotian and I had a great time at the conference. That's what our burn family is all about.

In 2007, at World Burn in Vancouver, BC all the Canadians in attendance had a meeting and we discussed starting a national Burn Survivor Group in Canada. In 2008 the Canadian Burn Survivors Community (CBSC) was formed. Debbie immediately stepped up and volunteered in one of the lead roles as the Secretary/ Treasurer including being the first point of contact on our website, she remained in that role up until her passing.

In closing, I send condolences to Earl and Debbie's families, our burn family and friends. Our lost is significant, however she made a positive difference in the lives she touched, and those memories will last for ever.

Heaven just gained another Angel. May you rest in peace, now pain free.

Michael Cook  
Chair  
Canadian Burn Survivors Community

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# Embracing Spring: A Message of Renewal and Hope

As the long winter months give way to the gentle warmth of spring, we find ourselves immersed in a season that symbolizes new beginnings, growth, and resilience. In the Canadian Burn Survivors Community, every new bud reminds us of our own strength—emerging, slowly but steadily, into the light.



## A Season of Renewal

Spring is not just a change in weather—it's a time for inner healing. Just as nature awakens after a long dormancy, many of us find that this season encourages fresh starts, renewed energy, and the opportunity to reflect on our journeys. Our scars, both visible and unseen, tell stories of endurance and transformation. This is the season to celebrate how far we've come and to set hopeful intentions for the future.

## Nurturing Growth Through Community

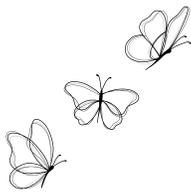
The heart of our community is found in the shared experiences and support that each member brings. This spring, we invite you to join our virtual gatherings and local meet-ups designed to celebrate our victories and to provide gentle support during the challenging times. Whether it's through a supportive conversation, creative expression, or simply spending time outdoors, every act of self-care helps us flourish.





### Looking Ahead

As we step forward into this vibrant season, let's lean on one another and celebrate the courage it takes to grow after adversity. Our community is a place where every story of survival adds to a powerful mosaic of hope. Remember, each step you take is a testament to the strength that lives within you, and together, we create a tapestry of resilience that inspires us all.



May this spring bring you peace, joy, and a renewed sense of purpose. We're excited to journey through this season of transformation with you.

**Daniel Nguyen**

**On Behalf of The Board of Directors of the Canadian Burn Survivor Community**

### Self-Care in Bloom

With nature in full bloom, consider integrating small, mindful practices into your daily routine:

- **Morning Reflections:** Start your day with gratitude, acknowledging a personal strength or victory.
- **Nature Walks:** Enjoy the refreshing outdoors—feel the breeze, notice the budding flowers, and let nature's beauty remind you of your own resilience.
- **Creative Expression:** Whether through writing, painting, or another form of art, let the energy of spring guide your creativity and healing.





# CBSC Conference 2025

## Reconnect with Self

Sponsored by  
[www.burnfund.org](http://www.burnfund.org)



Canadian  
Burn Survivors  
Community

The 2025 Canadian Burn Survivors Community (CBSC) Conference is a unique gathering focused on healing, empowerment, and connection. Taking place in Victoria, BC, from April 30 to May 3, this event brings together burn survivors, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and firefighters. With a theme of Reconnect with Self, attendees will experience insightful keynote speeches, interactive workshops, therapeutic activities, and social events designed to foster community and personal growth. This conference offers a supportive space for individuals to share their stories, learn from each other, and leave feeling renewed and inspired.

**Wednesday,  
April 30<sup>th</sup> - Saturday,  
May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025**



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**  
**AARON VOLPATTI**  
*Former NHL player, burn survivor, and expert  
visualization and performance coach.*

### **Aaron Volpatti**

We're excited to welcome former NHL player and burn survivor Aaron Volpatti to our conference. After sustaining life-threatening burns at 19, Aaron defied the odds by not only recovering but achieving his dream of playing in the NHL. His inspiring journey of resilience, mindset, and purpose continues to motivate people worldwide. Learn more at [aaronvolpatti.com/about](http://aaronvolpatti.com/about).

For more information, visit:  
[www.canadianburnsurvivors.ca](http://www.canadianburnsurvivors.ca)

# VIRTUAL BURN SURVIVOR PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Share experiences, learn from others, and build your support network in a safe and welcoming environment. Facilitated by burn professionals, these biweekly sessions are designed to connect and inspire.

## Wednesday's & Saturday's

April 12th & 23rd  
May 10th & 21st  
June 7th & 18th

### Wednesday's

5:00 PM PST | 6:00 PM MST | 8:00 PM EST | 9:00 PM AST

### Saturday's

8:00 AM PST | 9:00 AM MST | 11:00 PM EST | 12:00 PM AST

## Loved Ones & Caregivers Support Group:

Last Thursday of each month

4pm PST | 7PM EST

April 24

May 29

June 26

Email Victoria at [ourlifeafterburns@gmail.com](mailto:ourlifeafterburns@gmail.com)

Foothills Hospital Group Meetings (Hybrid): 2nd Wednesday  
of the Month at 6:30pm MT

Email [burn.survivors@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:burn.survivors@albertahealthservices.ca)

[www.cfbts.org](http://www.cfbts.org)

# Sun Protection for Scars in Darker Skin: Breaking the Myth

Submitted by Aziz Ghafoor and Kimia Ameri

With the arrival of the spring season, that means the days will be longer and sunnier. It's essential to address a common misconception: **the belief that darker skin doesn't require sunscreen**. This myth can be particularly harmful for burn survivors, as scars and grafted skin are **extra sensitive to ultraviolet (UV) rays**, increasing the risk of **hyperpigmentation, hypopigmentation**, and other complications (1).



## Why Is Sun Protection Crucial for Burn Scars?

As part of the healing process of burn, the newly formed scar tissue lacks the same protective melanin levels as the surrounding skin, making it more susceptible to sun damage. Without proper sun protection, UV exposure can lead to:

- **Post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH):** Darkened patches that can persist for months or even years (2).
- **Hypopigmentation:** Loss of pigment, causing lighter spots that may become permanent (3).
- **Thickened, raised scars (hypertrophic scars & keloids):** Sun exposure can exacerbate scar formation in melanin-rich skin (4).
- **Increased risk of skin cancer:** While melanin provides some natural protection, burn scars remain highly susceptible to UV damage (5).

## Choosing the Right Sunscreen for Darker Skin

Not all sunscreens are the same, here's what to look for:

- **SPF 50+ and Broad-Spectrum Protection:** Shields against both UVA (aging rays) and UVB (burning rays) (1).
- **Mineral vs. Chemical Sunscreens:**
  - *Mineral sunscreens (zinc oxide, titanium dioxide):* Provide instant protection but may leave a white cast (2).
  - *Chemical sunscreens (oxybenzone, avobenzone, etc.):* Absorb UV rays and blend better on darker skin (3).
- **Tinted Sunscreens:** Offer protection while blending seamlessly into deeper skin tones and reducing visible discoloration (4).
- **Water-Resistant Options:** Ideal for those enjoying outdoor activities in spring (5).



# Sun Protection for Scars in Darker Skin: Breaking the Myth

Continued

## More Than Sunscreen: Extra Protection Tips

In addition to sunscreen, physical protection plays a key role in shielding burn scars from UV exposure:

- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Long sleeves, wide-brimmed hats, and UPF-rated fabrics add an extra layer of defense (3).
- **Seek Shade:** Minimize direct sun exposure between 10 AM and 4 PM when UV rays are strongest (2).
- **Reapply Sunscreen:** Every two hours when outdoors, and immediately after sweating or swimming (5).
- **Use Antioxidants:** Vitamin C and E serums can help fight free radical damage and promote even skin tone (1).



## Embracing Sun Protection for Healthier Healing

For burn survivors with darker skin, sun protection isn't just about preventing sunburn—it's about ensuring proper scar healing, maintaining even skin tone, and protecting against long-term damage. As we welcome spring, let's prioritize sun safety and break the myth that melanin-rich skin doesn't need sunscreen. By incorporating daily sun protection, burn survivors can take an essential step toward healthy, resilient skin for years to come.



## References:

1. Buster, K., & Stevens, E. (2022). Photoprotection for Skin of Color. *Dermatology and Therapy*, 12(1), 15-24.
2. Shen, L. (2022). Sun Protection Tips for Those with Black and Brown Skin. *Boston University Today*.
3. American Academy of Dermatology. (n.d.). Sunscreen FAQs. *AAD.org*.
4. Taylor, S. C., & Sharlow, E. (2021). Photoprotection and Skin of Color. *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, 84(3), 731-740.
5. Alexis, A. F., & Sergay, A. B. (2020). Sunscreen Practices and Preferences of Skin of Color Patients. *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology*, 19(5), 456-462.

# GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH IN WOUND HEALING!

A huge congratulations to our colleagues and partners, Dr. Vincent Gabriel, Dr. Taisiya Sigaeva, Dr. Holly Sparks, and Dr. Jeffrey Biernaskie on securing this prestigious research grant! Their pioneering work is advancing the science of skin regeneration, with the potential to transform the treatment of severe wounds—including burns, trauma, and ulcers—by preventing scarring and promoting true dermal healing.

By studying the remarkable regenerative properties of reindeer velvet skin, this research aims to unlock new ways to modulate fibroblast function, enhance immune cell interactions, and promote scar-free healing in human patients.



With over 14 million severe skin wounds treated annually in North America and wound care costs exceeding \$5 billion in Canada alone, this work could have life-changing impacts for millions.

We are incredibly proud of this team's dedication to innovative, patient-centered research. Stay tuned as they push the boundaries of regenerative medicine!

To learn more about our incredible burn community, visit [CFBTS.org](http://CFBTS.org), subscribe to the Calgary Firefighters Burn Treatment Society newsletter, and check out our CFBTS swag. Finally, please consider becoming a monthly donor—every contribution supports the dedicated doctors, nurses, therapists, researchers, and burn survivors we serve!

**Visit [CFBTS.org](http://CFBTS.org)**

# Global Burn Research Priorities: What Matters Most to the Canadian Burn Survivor Community?

Submitted By Catherine Liao

**Burn injuries have life-changing physical, emotional, and social impacts.** While medical advancements have improved survival rates, many unanswered questions remain about the best ways to enhance burn care, recovery, and long-term rehabilitation.

Recognizing the need for patient-centered research, the James Lind Alliance (JLA) has partnered with the University of Bristol to establish the Global Burns Research Priority Setting Partnership (PSP). This initiative brings together burn survivors, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and researchers worldwide to identify and prioritize the most critical unanswered questions in burn care.

## What is the James Lind Alliance (JLA)?

The [James Lind Alliance \(JLA\)](#) is a UK-based non-profit that ensures research focuses on the real-world needs of those directly affected by health conditions. Their Priority Setting Partnerships (PSPs) bring together patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals to determine which research questions matter most.

Through the [Global Burns Research PSP](#), the JLA is pinpointing the most urgent gaps in burn care and treatment by:

**Gathering Input** – Collecting perspectives from burn survivors, caregivers, and healthcare professionals worldwide.

**Ranking Research Questions** – Identifying which unanswered questions are most critical for improving care.

**Guiding Future Research** – Informing funders, researchers, and policymakers about key priorities in burn care.



**James  
Lind  
Alliance**

Priority Setting Partnerships

## The Top 10 Global Burns Research Priorities

Following extensive consultations, the Global Burns Research PSP has identified the top 10 most important unanswered questions in burn care:

- 1. Mental Health & Well-Being** – How can we better support the emotional health of burn survivors, including PTSD, anxiety, and body image concerns?
- 2. Pain & Itch Management** – What are the most effective ways to alleviate chronic pain and post-burn itch?
- 3. Scar Prevention & Treatment** – How can we improve wound healing to reduce scarring and enhance function and appearance?
- 4. Rehabilitation & Social Reintegration** – What support systems help burn survivors return to work, school, and daily life?
- 5. Equitable Access to Burn Care** – How do we ensure that high-quality burn care is available to everyone, including underserved populations?



# Global Burn Research Priorities: What Matters Most to the Canadian Burn Survivor Community?

Continued

6. **Acute Burn Care Practices** – What are the best evidence-based protocols for early burn management?
7. **Infection Prevention & Control** – How can we reduce the risk of burn wound infections and improve recovery?
8. **Advancing Wound Care Technologies** – What new treatments and materials can promote faster, more effective healing?
9. **Supporting Caregivers & Families** – How can we better support the family and caregivers of burn survivors?
10. **Burn Prevention Education** – What strategies are most effective in reducing burn injuries in high-risk groups?



## What Do These Priorities Mean for the Canadian Burn Survivor Community?

The Global Burns Research PSP highlights key areas for improving burn care, but how do these priorities align with the experiences of burn survivors in Canada?

- Do these global priorities reflect the most pressing concerns for Canadian burn survivors?
- Are there unique challenges in Canada that need greater attention in research and policy?
- What topics do Canadian survivors feel are overlooked or under-researched?

**While many of the global priorities resonate, some Canada-specific challenges may include:**

- **Access to Specialized Burn Care in Rural & Remote Areas** – How can we ensure equitable access to care for those outside major cities?
- **Mental Health & Peer Support Services** – Are there enough survivor-led mental health supports that meet diverse needs?
- **Long-Term Rehabilitation & Quality of Life** – What resources and policies can improve long-term recovery beyond acute care?



**We want to hear from you! Share your thoughts by emailing [cliao@mycbasc.ca](mailto:cliao@mycbasc.ca)**

- What challenges have you faced that require more research and advocacy?
- What aspects of burn recovery should be prioritized in Canadian research?
- What improvements would make the biggest difference in your journey?

Let's work together to ensure that burn research, policies, and healthcare initiatives reflect the needs of the burns community in Canada.

# BIG NEWS: CBSC IS OFFICIALLY ON THE PATH TO BECOMING A REGISTERED CHARITY!

We're thrilled to share that the Canadian Burn Survivors Community (CBSC) has taken the first steps toward obtaining official charitable status in Canada!

## What does this mean for us—and for you?

- ✓ **More Support for Survivors**—As a registered charity, we'll be able to access more funding opportunities, grants, and donations that will help us expand our programs, outreach, and peer support initiatives across the country.
- ✓ **Tax Receipts for Donations**—Once approved, we'll be able to issue tax receipts to our generous donors, making it even easier for people to give back and support our mission.
- ✓ **Greater Impact**—This status allows us to grow CBSC's presence and credibility, advocate more effectively, and serve even more burn survivors and their families.

We're excited about what this next chapter means for our community. Stay tuned for updates—and thank you for continuing to walk alongside us in our mission to support, educate, and empower all those affected by burn trauma.

**Together, we are stronger.**



## The Mamingwey Burn Society Upcoming Events

Mamingwey is having their annual fundraiser, the "Go For the Burn Run" happening at Assiniboine Park in Winnipeg on Saturday April 26, 2025. Click the butterfly to register, there is a virtual option available if you do not live in Winnipeg!



### 2025 — Go For the Burn Run —

Go For the Burn Run 55 Pavilion Crescent, Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N6, Canada - Go For the Burn Run Saturday April 26, 2025 / 9:00 A.M. /... - April 26, 2025

🦋 Go For the Burn Run / Apr 26



**Burn Camp for kids 6-17 years  
August 25-29, 2025  
Camp Arnes**

**Mamingwey Burn Conference  
Oct 24 and 25, 2025  
Canad Inns Polo Park in Winnipeg**





**ATLANTIC**

**Atlantic Burn**



**BURN**

**Camp**



**CAMP**

**Welcomes youth**

**age 6 to 17**

***from the Atlantic Provinces  
that have suffered a burn.***

**NO CHARGE TO ATTEND**

**This Years ABC will be held**

***August 17<sup>th</sup>-August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025***  
**In New Campbellton, Cape Breton, NS**



***For more information***

***contact us by calling***

***1-902-562-4156 or***

***toll free 1-855-282-2876.***



***Email: [atlanticburncamp@bellaliant.com](mailto:atlanticburncamp@bellaliant.com)***

# Join Us for the CBSC Annual General Meeting!

**Thursday, May 1, 2025**

**5:00 PM PST | 6:00 PM MST | 8:00 PM EST**

**Location: In-person at the Conference & Online (Hybrid)**

## **What to Expect:**

- 2024 Year in Review & Program Highlights
- Financial Report & Updates
- CBSC's Journey Toward Becoming a Registered Charity
- Election of Officers to the CBSC Conference Board
- Election of Board Members (as recommended by the Nomination Committee)
- Open Q&A and Community Discussion
- Light refreshments at in-person location

*Whether you're a survivor, family member, healthcare provider, firefighter, volunteer, or supporter—you are an essential part of our story, and your voice matters.*

**Attend In-Person or Join Us Online!**

**RSVP for ZOOM Link by email [Kyle@mycbsc.ca](mailto:Kyle@mycbsc.ca)**

Let's celebrate the strides we've made and step boldly into the future—  
Together, we are stronger.

# Volunteer With Us

Make an impact utilizing your skillset and passions!

Other volunteering opportunities include:

- Administrative
- Board of Directors
- Communications
- Fundraising
- Development
- Peer Support

If you are interested, fill out our [Volunteer Form](#).

Any questions? Email Victoria at [v.vass@mycbisc.ca](mailto:v.vass@mycbisc.ca)

Go to our website

[www.canadianburnsurvivors.ca/volunteer](http://www.canadianburnsurvivors.ca/volunteer)

# CBSC T-Shirts for Sale!

The CBSC now has T-Shirts available on our website!!  
\$35/shirt (Shipping fee within Canada included)  
Visit our website to purchase! Small - XXXL available



# Donate to Support the CBSC

Since 2006, the CBSC has aided over 1,000 burn survivors in Canada and the US. We facilitate monthly chats, provide 1-on-1 mentoring, and host nationwide conferences uniting survivors, families, caregivers, and the medical community to share advancements.

To continue our mission of supporting burn patients as they transition to becoming survivors, we depend on your support. Our volunteer-run organization depends on individual and corporate donations. With this support, we've assisted 1,000+ patients but our work isn't complete.

Your contributions enable us to aid more survivors, particularly in areas lacking local support. Your donation to the CBSC assists burn survivors in their journey to recovery, empowering them to move forward confidently. Support our cause by donating today!

# CONTACT US



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