

# 2014 ***SAFETY COUNTS!***

## **ROAD SAFETY SURVEY**

Conducted by the



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1-866-979-4673



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The Northern Brain Injury Association conducts a SAFETY COUNTS! road safety survey each year, but this year we're doing something for the very first time. Instead of just publishing the raw impersonal data, we are going to identify the very real preventable dangers that put people and the public at risk of injury, or worse. Our goal is to reveal the actual number of people in communities, that we observed, whose actions put themselves and others at extreme risk of injury or death in Northern British Columbia.

This year, the communities surveyed were Terrace, Burns Lake, Quesnel, Mackenzie and Prince George. The surveys were conducted at high traffic locations for one hour segments twice a day, over a three day period (two days during the week and one day on a weekend, for one hour in the morning, and one hour in the late afternoon). The surveys involved two personnel positioned to observe opposing flows of traffic. We have also included a few of the observers comments about things that they saw happen while conducting the survey.



**United Way**  
**Northern British Columbia**  
unitedwaynbc.ca

A huge thank you to all the community members who participated, with special thanks to community champion Bernadette Peebles of Burns Lake, and the United Way of Northern BC for all the amazing volunteers that they organized to help us as part of their annual 'Days of Caring' campaign. We also sincerely thank the Prince George Brain Injured Group for all of its advice and assistance.

**To better understand this report, here is a brief explanation of the criteria that we used while observing road safety behaviors.**

**Under the category Driving,** 'No Seat Belt' means an adult or older youth not wearing a seat belt while the vehicle was being operated. 'Unsafe Driving' is defined as any driving behavior in violation of motor vehicle laws, such as failing to stop at stop signs, no use of signaling devices, etc.. 'Distracted Driving' is defined as engaging in any activity other than operating the motor vehicle.



**Under the category Cyclists,** 'No Helmet' is defined as not wearing a helmet while operating the cycle. 'Failed To Stop' is defined as failing to come to a complete stop at stop signs. 'Unsafe Use' is defined as riding the wrong way in traffic, riding on sidewalks, failing to walk bicycles through intersections, etc..



**Under the category Pedestrians,** 'Jaywalked' is defined as a person who crosses in between intersections where no crosswalk exists. 'Failed To Look' is defined as failing to look in both directions before crossing a roadway. 'Unsafe Crosswalk Use' is defined as the unsafe use a crosswalk. 'Distracted' is defined as being preoccupied by the use of a device, or involvement in an activity while crossing the roadway.

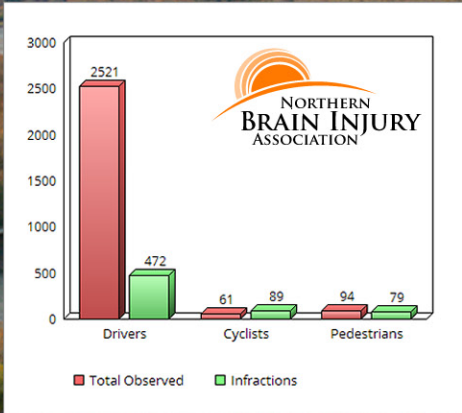


**The board of directors of the Northern Brain Injury Association urge you to always think twice about safety, because you only get one life. Most crashes and injuries are preventable, so please be safe at all times.**





# TERRACE



Terrace is internationally known for its spectacular fishing and friendly folks. Snow capped mountains are fringed with cascading waterfalls and mountain goats overlooking the Skeena River basin, as it flows westward to join the Pacific Ocean. Terrace is an outdoor person's paradise. It is situated on the traditional lands of the Kitsumkalum First Nation, People of the Robin, a galts'ap (community) of the Tsimshian Nation, with traditional territory use in both coastal and inland areas. Kitsumkalum is an original tribe of the Tsimshian Nation.

**This is what was witnessed in Terrace in just 6 hours over three days:**



**Driving:** Observers recorded 2521 drivers during the survey, and 2,049 of them did all the right things! However, seventeen (17) people felt that they were exempt from seat belt laws, and put themselves at unnecessary risk by refusing to buckle up before beginning their journey. A whopping three hundred and seventy eight (378) drivers openly violated provincial motor vehicle laws, and one (1) person even felt that their child was not worthy of restraint. But, the scariest statistic of all, was that seventy six (76) vehicle operators intentionally drove while distracted, putting themselves and innocent people in Terrace at extreme risk of injury or death.

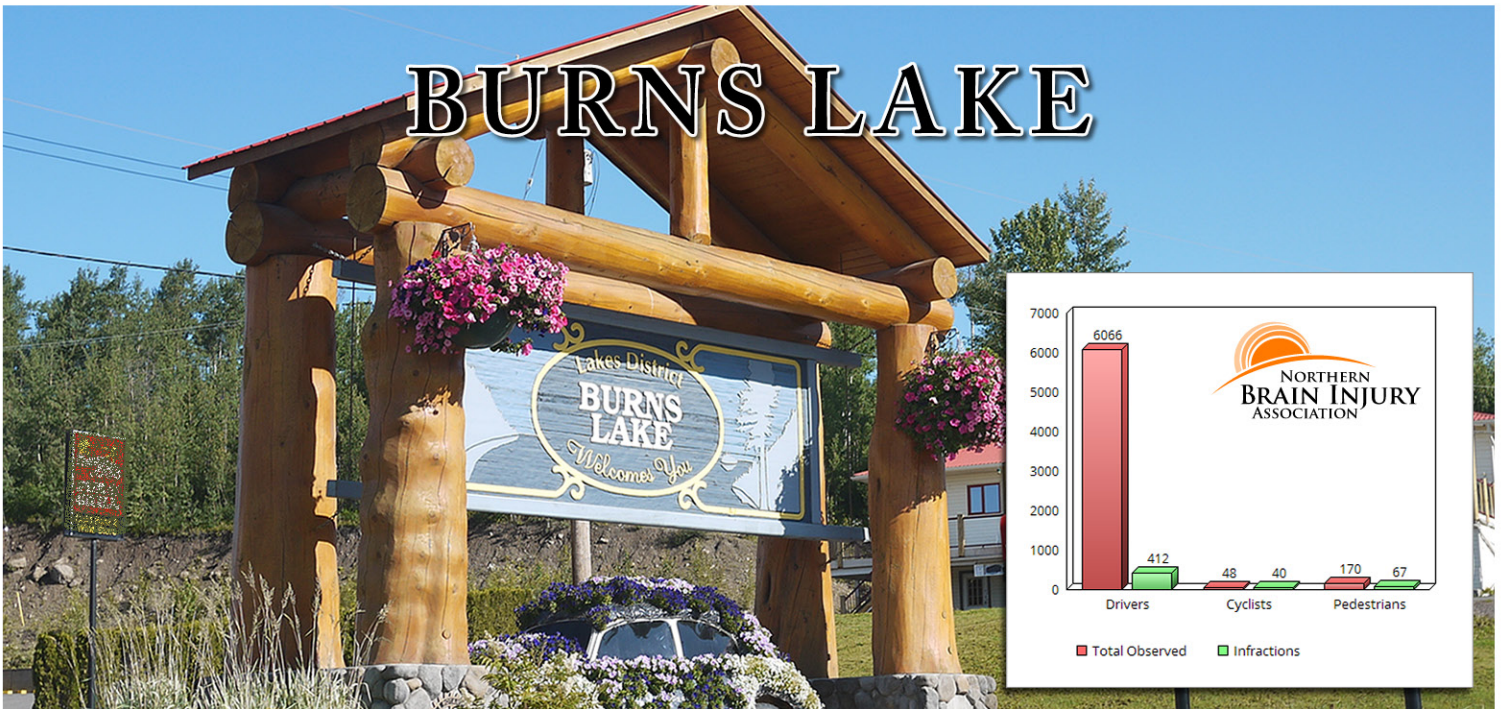
**Cyclists:** Observers recorded a total of sixty one (61) cyclists. While a handful of cyclists rode correctly and responsibly, forty four (44) snubbed their noses at fate and the law by not wearing a helmet, putting themselves at unnecessary risk of a catastrophic life changing injury. Twenty seven (27) considered stop signs as something 'other people' have to abide by. Eighteen (18) showed total disregard for laws by riding against the traffic, on sidewalks, through intersections, and more. So, to you amazing role models who took the time to be safe and ride responsibly while cycling in Terrace, thank you, you are social mentors and community heroes!



**Pedestrians:** Observers recorded 94 pedestrians during the survey, with fifteen (15) people being perfect examples of pedestrian safety. Sadly though, despite all the recent media coverage about increasing pedestrian injury and death rates in BC, nine (9) pedestrians used jaywalking as their preferred means of crossing a roadway. Nineteen (19) people did not bother to look in both directions before stepping into the path of traffic, and twenty one (21) did not use crosswalks in the proper way. But, a number that absolutely horrifies, is thirty (30) pedestrians were distracted by a device or activity while crossing a roadway, and were oblivious to approaching danger.



# BURNS LAKE



Burns Lake is the gateway to the 'Lakes District', and is surrounded by some of the most spectacular fresh water fishing in the world! The area is the traditional territory of the Ts'il Kaz Koh and Wet'suwet'en First Nations. The area is home to over 3,000 miles of fishing opportunities, endless hiking routes, internationally recognized mountain bike trails, and beautiful lakes and mountains. The village has a diverse population of 3,614 residents, and serves a surrounding area of approximately 10,000 residents in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako. It is a community of hard working, warm-hearted people, who work hand in hand to meet the diverse needs of their home.

## This is what our observers witnessed in just 6 hours over three days:

**Driving:** Observers recorded 6,066 drivers during the survey, and 5,654 of them did all the right things! However, one hundred and two (102) people felt that seat belt laws do not apply to them, and made the conscious decision to take unnecessary risk by not using the vehicle's available safety equipment. Two hundred and forty two (242) drivers drove contrary to provincial motor vehicle laws, and twelve (12) people chose not to protect their children with proper restraints. And, as Burns Lake community members went responsibly and innocently about their lives, fifty six (56) vehicle operators made the decision to drive while distracted, putting everyone in their path in extreme danger.



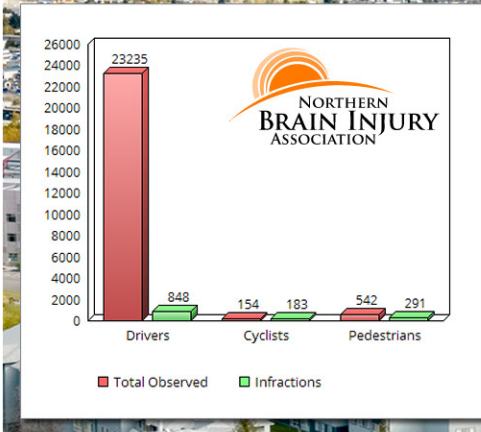
**Cyclists:** Burns Lake observers recorded a total of forty eight (48) cyclists during the survey. Most cyclists rode correctly and responsibly, but seventeen (17) got on their cycle and rode without wearing a helmet, taking the risk of never coming home again. Five (5) cyclists failed to stop at stop signs, and luckily were not harmed as a result of their carelessness. Eighteen (18) riders broke provincial and municipal laws by not walking cycles through intersections, riding on sidewalks and against the traffic, etc. Thankfully, there are awesome riders in Burns Lake who are stellar examples of what to do right. We thank them for being awesome role models and community heroes!

**Pedestrians:** Our observers recorded the movement of 170 pedestrians during the community's survey, with one hundred and three (103) people being perfect examples of pedestrian behavior. However, fifty seven (57) people preferred to jaywalk instead of properly crossing a roadway, and seven (7) did not use crosswalks in the proper way. On the bright side, only one (1) person did not bother to look in both directions before proceeding into the path of oncoming traffic, and only two (2) pedestrians allowed themselves to be distracted by a device or activity while crossing a roadway! While not perfect, it's still absolutely great news. Way to go Burns Lake!



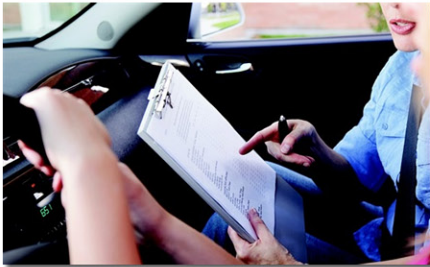


# PRINCE GEORGE



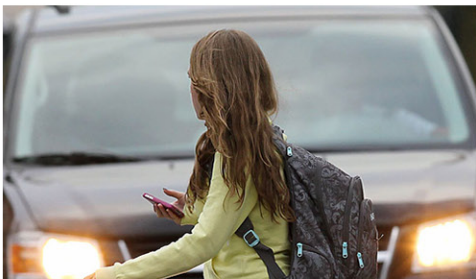
Prince George is the commercial and transportation hub of northern British Columbia, and is located at the junction of the Nechako and Fraser rivers. It is the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, and the location of the 2015 Canada Winter Games. Prince George offers all of the amenities of large urban centres, yet retains its small town charm and warmth. Its growth from a small fort to a large rural centre was a huge accomplishment, and is the direct result of the rugged, wonderfully friendly and determined people who are proud to call Prince George their home.

**This is what we witnessed in Prince George in 6 hours over three days:**



**Driving:** Safety Count observers recorded 23,235 vehicle operators during the survey, and found that 22,387 of them drove superbly! Of those who were not good drivers, two hundred and ninety eight (298) felt that putting on a seat belt was too much of a hassle, one hundred and eighty two (182) drivers decided that violating provincial motor vehicle laws was okay, and six (6) operators had unrestrained children in the vehicle. Unknown to all of the cautious people making their way around Prince George, was that during the six hours surveyed, three hundred and sixty two (362) people made the choice to drive while distracted, knowing full well the death and destruction that can result from such behavior.

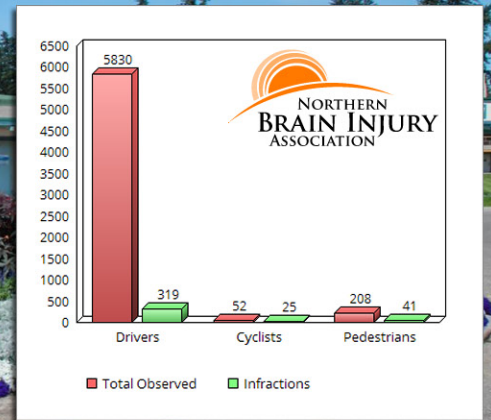
**Cyclists:** Observers recorded a total of 154 cyclists during the survey, and noted one hundred and eighty seven (187) infractions. Eighty three (83) riders found reasons for not wearing a helmet, preferring to take the chance of permanent disability instead. Only seven (7) failed to obey stop signs, but ninety three (93) riders operated their cycles every way but the right way, such as while distracted, on sidewalks, through intersections, and more. On a positive note, despite these figures, Prince George is one of the most proactive cities in western Canada regarding public safety, including helmet use, with many cycling safety events and campaigns held throughout the year.



**Pedestrians:** Our observers documented 542 pedestrians over the six hours of the survey, and were stunned that two hundred and ninety one (291) risky behaviors were recorded! Sadly, despite all the recent pedestrian fatalities in Prince George, one hundred and eighty eight (188) people still jaywalked when crossing a roadway, fourteen (14) people walked directly into roadways without looking in both directions, and sixty eight (68) declined to use crosswalks in the proper way. Last, but not least, twenty one (21) pedestrians were too distracted by a device, or activity, to even be aware of approaching danger while crossing a roadway.



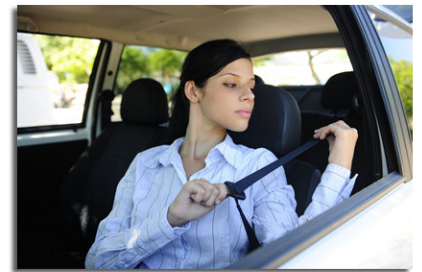
# QUESNEL



Quesnel is one of northern BC's most photographed spots, delighting both visitors and residents with gorgeous overflowing flower beds, baskets and gardens during the summer months. This picturesque community is nestled into a beautiful valley at the junction of the Quesnel and Fraser rivers, and is in the traditional territory of the Lhtako Dene First Nation. A vibrant centre for industry, Quesnel is a major economic engine that contributes massively to the provincial economy. But, all work and no play is not good, so recreation is a big part of the community's daily life. No matter what the sport of choice is, Quesnel is perfectly situated to meet the needs of any enthusiast. For those interested in history, the historic village of Barkerville is just a short drive.

## This is what observers witnessed in Quesnel in 6 hours over three days:

**Driving:** Our Safety Count observers recorded the driving behaviors of 5,380 people operating vehicles during the survey, and found that 5,061 of them drove safely and observed all motor vehicle laws. But, sixteen (16) drivers refused to put on a seat belt, ninety nine (99) operated their vehicle contrary to provincial motor vehicle laws, and three (3) operators declined to restrain children in the vehicle. Chillingly, as mothers took children to and from school, and people returned home from a hard day's work, two hundred and one (201) people drove while distracted, putting the citizens of Quesnel in very grave danger. That was potentially over two hundred and one injuries or deaths... in just six hours!



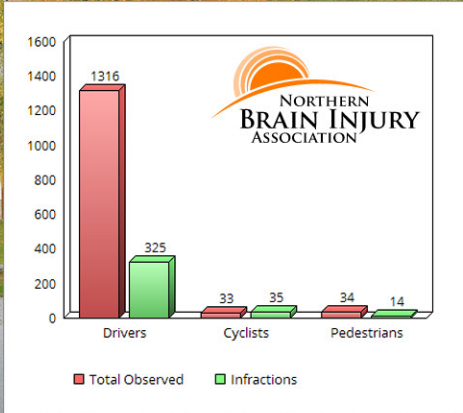
**Cyclists:** Quesnel observers recorded a total of 52 cyclists while conducting the survey, and noted a total of twenty five (25) infractions. Seventeen (17) cyclists did not wear a helmet, preferring the possibility of paralysis to messy hair. Three (3) riders failed to do as instructed by stop signs, and five (5) people operated their cycles incorrectly, such riding against traffic, through intersections, on sidewalks, etc. These numbers show that most Quesnel residents practice safe cycling in northern BC, and the community should be very proud of itself. Every injury prevented saves money, and stops lives from being forever altered due to a crash.

**Pedestrians:** Our observers documented 208 pedestrians during the survey, but there were forty one (41) risky behaviors recorded. Seventeen (17) people chose to jaywalk, one (1) person failed to look before walking out into a roadway, and eighteen (18) pedestrians declined to use crosswalks in the proper way. Last but not least, one (1) pedestrian was distracted by a device or activity while attempting to cross a roadway, disregarding the potential for harm to themselves or others. This means that while Quesnel roadways do present many dangers, most of the community's cyclists and pedestrians exhibit absolutely awesome safety behaviors.





# MACKENZIE



Mackenzie is located at the southern end of Williston Lake, the largest man-made reservoir in British Columbia. Mackenzie is a recreational hub with many trail systems in place that increase the area's outdoor recreation potential. Mackenzie's wilderness setting brings residents and visitors into contact with the area's diverse wildlife population. The natural wilderness provides great opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, camping, fishing, boating, skiing, golfing, wildlife viewing and photography. It is in the traditional territory of the Tsay Keh Dene First Nation, one of the Sekani bands of the northern interior.



**Here is what observers witnessed in Mackenzie in 6 hours over three days:**



**Driving:** Our Mackenzie observers recorded the driving behaviors of 1,316 people during the survey this year. They found that 991 of them drove safely and complied with all motor vehicle laws. But, thirty nine (39) drivers refused to acknowledge the requirement to wear a seat belt, two hundred and forty two (242) operated their vehicle in violation of the provincial motor vehicle laws, and six (6) drivers preferred not to restrain the children in their vehicle. And, what community members did not know, was that as their children went to and from school, and community members went about their business, thirty eight (38) people chose to drive while distracted, putting everyone in the community at risk.

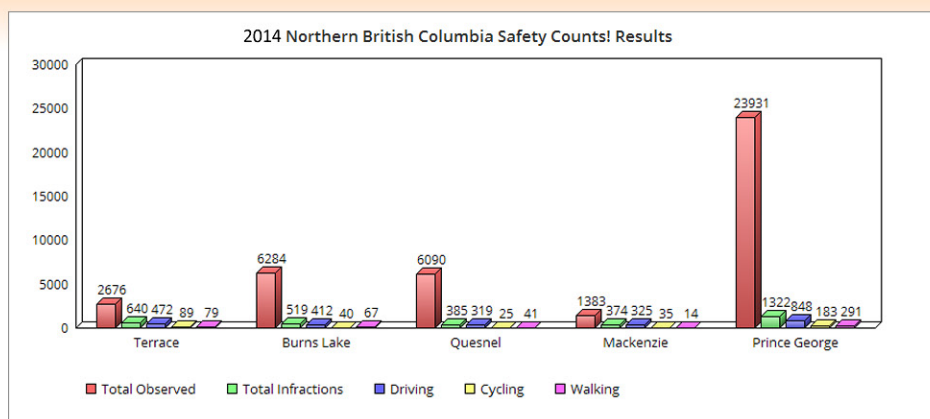
**Cyclists:** Our awesome observers documented 33 cyclists while conducting the survey, and noted a total of 35 infractions. Fifteen (15) riders rode without a helmet, as if crashes only happen to 'other people'. Thirteen cyclists (13) failed to stop at stop signs, and seven (7) cyclists did not operate their cycles in accordance with municipal and provincial laws, such as when they rode against traffic, through intersections, on sidewalks, etc. These numbers indicate that there is still much work to do to raise awareness, promote injury prevention, and educate members of the community. Hopefully, surveys like this one will encourage citizens to make responsible decisions about their safety.



**Pedestrians:** 34 pedestrians were observed during the survey, with fourteen risky behaviors recorded. Four (4) people took the time to jaywalk, and eight (8) people failed to look before walking into a roadway. Two (2) pedestrians declined to use crosswalks in the proper way, and last, but most impressive of all, was that not one (0) pedestrian was distracted by a device or activity while attempting to cross a roadway! This makes Mackenzie the only community in northern BC that did not have a distracted pedestrian recorded during the survey. Way to go Mackenzie! That's a record well worth being proud of, and hopefully, it will remain intact for years to come.



# STATS AT A GLANCE



## TERRACE

Total Observed.....	2,676
Total Infractions.....	649
Vehicle Total.....	2,521
Infraction Total.....	325
No Seat Belt.....	17
Unsafe Driving.....	378
Unsecured Child.....	1
Distracted Driving.....	76
Cyclist Total.....	61
Infraction Total.....	89
Without Helmet.....	44
Failed To Stop.....	27
Unsafe Use.....	18
Pedestrian Total.....	94
Infraction Total.....	79
Jaywalked.....	9
Failed To Look.....	19
Unsafe Crosswalk Use.....	21
Distracted.....	30

## BURNS LAKE

Total Observed.....	6,284
Total Infractions.....	519
Vehicle Total.....	6,066
Infraction Total.....	412
No Seat Belt.....	102
Unsafe Driving.....	242
Unsecured Child.....	12
Distracted Driving.....	56
Cyclist Total.....	48
Infraction Total.....	40
Without Helmet.....	17
Failed To Stop.....	5
Unsafe Use.....	18
Pedestrian Total.....	170
Infraction Total.....	67
Jaywalked.....	57
Failed To Look.....	1
Unsafe Crosswalk Use.....	7
Distracted.....	2

## PRINCE GEORGE

Total Observed.....	23,931
Total Infractions.....	1,322
Vehicle Total.....	23,235
Infraction Total.....	848
No Seat Belt.....	298
Unsafe Driving.....	182
Unsecured Child.....	6
Distracted Driving.....	362
Cyclist Total.....	154
Infraction Total.....	183
Without Helmet.....	83
Failed To Stop.....	7
Unsafe Use.....	93
Pedestrian Total.....	542
Infraction Total.....	291
Jaywalked.....	188
Failed To Look.....	14
Unsafe Crosswalk Use.....	68
Distracted.....	21

## MACKENZIE

Total Observed.....	1,383
Total Infractions.....	374
Vehicle Total.....	1,316
Infraction Total.....	325
No Seat Belt.....	39
Unsafe Driving.....	242
Unsecured Child.....	6
Distracted Driving.....	38
Cyclist Total.....	33
Infraction Total.....	35
Without Helmet.....	15
Failed To Stop.....	13
Unsafe Use.....	7
Pedestrian Total.....	34
Infraction Total.....	14
Jaywalked.....	4
Failed To Look.....	8
Unsafe Crosswalk Use.....	2
Distracted.....	0

## QUESNEL

Total Observed.....	6,090
Total Infractions.....	385
Vehicle Total.....	5,830
Infraction Total.....	319
No Seat Belt.....	16
Unsafe Driving.....	99
Unsecured Child.....	3
Distracted Driving.....	201
Cyclist Total.....	52
Infraction Total.....	25
Without Helmet.....	17
Failed To Stop.....	3
Unsafe Use.....	5
Pedestrian Total.....	208
Infraction Total.....	41
Jaywalked.....	21
Failed To Look.....	1
Unsafe Crosswalk Use.....	18
Distracted.....	1

## ALL COMMUNITIES

Total Observed.....	40,364
Total Infractions.....	3,249
Vehicle Total.....	38,968
Infraction Total.....	2,229
No Seat Belt.....	472
Unsafe Driving.....	1,143
Unsecured Child.....	28
Distracted Driving.....	733
Cyclist Total.....	348
Infraction Total.....	372
Without Helmet.....	176
Failed To Stop.....	65
Unsafe Use.....	143
Pedestrian Total.....	1,048
Infraction Total.....	492
Jaywalked.....	279
Failed To Look.....	43
Unsafe Crosswalk Use.....	116
Distracted.....	54



# CONCLUSION

Northern British Columbia is home to some of Canada's most rugged and hard working people. It is also home to some of the most spectacular geography on Earth. It is a beautiful and vast wilderness, but it is also a very dangerous place. There may be hundreds of kilometers between available medical facilities, and the weather can provide some very extreme road conditions. The Northern Brain Injury Association works tirelessly to prevent injuries, to educate the public about dangers and preventative measures, and to support those whose lives have been impacted by brain injury.

Safety Counts! is an honest six hour snapshot in each community of public safety behaviors and concerns, taken over three days by a combination of paid and volunteer staff. The Safety Counts! survey was not conducted for scientific purposes. The results obtained remind us that while we have made some remarkable improvements, there is still much work that we have left to do. The Northern Brain Injury Association sincerely thanks everyone who helped to make this year's survey such a success, with very special thanks to the United Way of Northern BC and Northern Health!

## OBSERVER COMMENTS

A red corvette failed to stop at a marked and lit railway crossing while the warning lights and bells were activated, and as the crossing arms were descending. It was a heart stopping moment for us!

We watched pedestrians literally walk right past a marked crosswalk to be able to run across the street unsafely.

We were stunned by how few drivers used their turn signals, even commercial vehicles owned and operated by a crown corporation.

We spotted an unstable load in the back of pickup, and when I suggested the driver secure the load, he was horrified to see he was dragging the straps and his load was ready to fall off. He thanked us profusely, and then properly secured the load.

We were shocked at the sheer number of dogs in vehicles that were not secured inside the vehicle, or in the rear cargo box. On the upside, we also spotted a number of drivers who took excellent care of their pets by ensuring they were properly tethered or confined.

We were blown away by the huge number of persons who drove while distracted. Some of the ways people were distracted included eating, drinking, putting out cigarettes, using two-way radios, using cell phones to talk and text, and one driver had his music so loud, that adjacent vehicles could not have heard an approaching emergency vehicle.

We not only spotted people riding bikes without helmets, some riders were going 'all over the street', posing a huge risk to themselves and others.

We could not believe the number of vehicles that made illegal left turns, u-turns, and failed to stop at stop signs!

Observers stated how much they enjoyed the survey, and how they wish that more people would get involved with them, as they feel the surveys increase awareness about unsafe driving habits by people in their community.

A few recommendations by our lead observer in Burns Lake, Bernadette Peebles, are that she would like to see local politicians, regional representatives, MLAs and MPs become involved in the surveys as well. She states, "If they could see what I saw in six hours, perhaps some changes could be made to solve some of the safety issues." She also noted that there seems to be an large increase in the number of large rigs (eighteen wheelers) and bus-sized motor homes travelling through the community, which may become a concern in the future.