

# **BUILDING A BOLDER, BRIGHTER FUTURE**

**2018-19 Annual Review**



**FOUNDATION  
NOVA SCOTIA**

# OUR MISSION

To change what it is to be blind through innovative programs and powerful advocacy that enable Canadians impacted by blindness to live the lives they choose.

# OUR VALUES

**Empowerment:**

We take bold, decisive action to move our mission forward and empower people impacted by blindness to find their courage, raise their voices and realize their dreams.

**Passion:**

We care deeply about what we do, because we know how much it matters. We pursue our goals relentlessly and we don't give up on anyone, or anything.

**Collaboration:**

We believe that to make change happen, we need to bring people, ideas and resources together in new and exciting combinations. Teamwork is fundamental to our success.

**Inclusiveness:**

We are a community that welcomes all. We embrace one another's differences and we break down barriers that would exclude anyone from being meaningfully engaged in our world.

**Innovation:**

We think big, take risks and embrace change that can accelerate progress and enable success for our clients/participants, volunteers, donors and employees.

**Integrity:**

We treat others the way we want to be treated. We are kind, fair, honest and respectful, and we maintain open and transparent decision-making in all aspects of our work.



**CNIB Walking Club at Rainbow  
Haven Beach, September 2018**

# Changing what it is to be blind

The CNIB Foundation Nova Scotia is working to create powerful change for individuals with sight loss. We are changing what it is to be blind through innovative programs and powerful advocacy that enable individuals impacted by blindness to live the lives they choose.

Today, nearly 50,000 individuals in our province are blind or partially sighted. Factoring in their families, friends and caregivers, sight loss touches thousands more.

In 2017, we spoke with Canadians impacted by blindness about their experiences, needs, ambitions and what they want from CNIB. Here's what they told us:

- **We want to work:** 91 per cent of respondents agreed employment levels are a serious problem facing people with sight loss.
- **We need technology:** 97 per cent of respondents with sight loss said accessible technology is important in leading an independent life.
- **We demand equality and respect:** 69 per cent of respondents with sight loss reported experiencing social stigma related to blindness.

Through our new strategic plan, Bold Dreams, Bright Futures, CNIB is facing these challenges head-on. We have chosen three ambitious goals that are driving our work from 2018 to 2022.

## Our strategic ambitions:

1. Boost Participation in the World of Work
2. Unleash the Power of Technology
3. Drive Achievement and Equality





## STRATEGIC AMBITION 1.

# Boost Participation in the World of Work



A job is so much more than just a paycheck: it's a means to self-reliance, a source of identity and pride, and a gateway to a brighter future. From the moment children are old enough to dream what they'll be when they grow up, through every stage of their education and careers, we'll fuel their ambition and champion their equal participation in the world of work.

Our **Life After High School Program** is designed to help students transition from high school to post-secondary education or employment. Last year's camp ran from July 8 to 12. Participants stayed on-campus at St. Mary's University in Halifax. Activities included an employment workshop, mock job interviews, a tour of Nova Scotia Community College and Mount Saint Vincent University and a descriptive and tactile tour of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

**CNIB's Summer Day Camp** is five days jam-packed with fun activities. It's a camp where kids can just be kids, while developing life skills and making new friends. Last year, campers enjoyed activities including a goalball demonstration, a picnic at Point Pleasant Park, a Rockband workshop and a visit to the Discovery Centre.



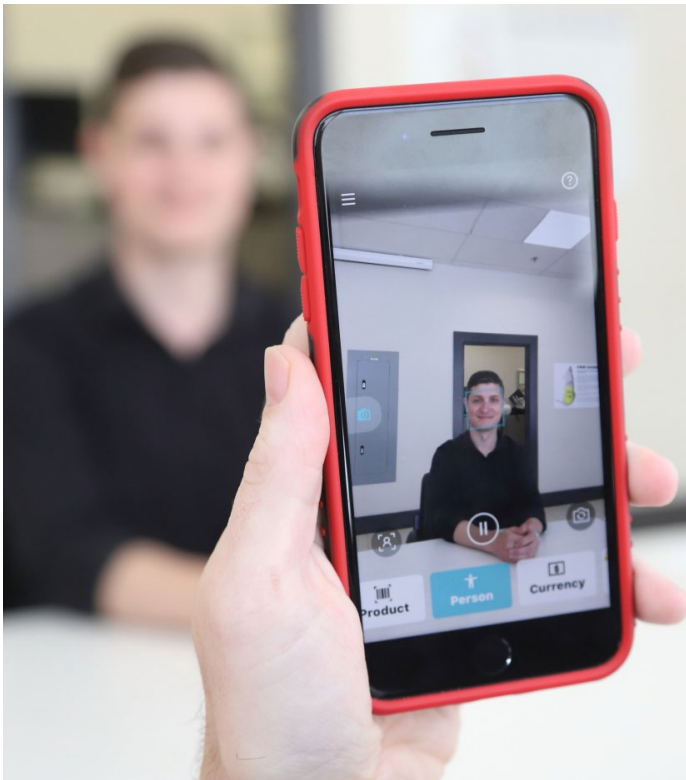
Summer Day Camp - visiting Ross Farm

## STRATEGIC AMBITION 2.

# Unleash the Power of Technology



Technology can level the playing field for people who are blind or partially sighted – but only when it’s accessible, available and affordable. We’re helping to connect people of all ages with the cutting-edge technology they need and want, and teaching them the skills to capitalize on its potential.



Today, accessible smartphone apps make it possible for people who are blind to do all kinds of things that may have seemed challenging before. Modern smartphones allow people who are blind to:

- Read print documents like prescription labels or letters in the mail
- Scan barcodes to identify products
- Travel safely and independently using GPS
- Identify different types of currency
- And do hundreds of other day-to-day tasks most of us take for granted

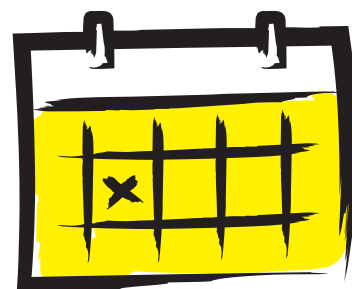
In September 2018, CNIB launched **Phone it Forward**, a program that gives smartphones to people with sight loss who need them. Many people don’t realize the tremendous impact modern smartphones have in the lives of Canadians who are blind.

To donate your used smartphone, visit **PhoneItForward.ca**. We’ll wipe and refurbish your phone, and give it to a person with sight loss who needs it.



### STRATEGIC AMBITION 3.


# Drive Achievement and Equality



Life is a beautiful, wonderful, crazy thing. Life with blindness should be no different. We'll embolden people who are blind or partially sighted to lead independent, active lives and chase their dreams – and we'll smash the stigma and barriers that stand in their way.

Our **Self-Advocacy Workshops** help Nova Scotians with sight loss learn self-advocacy techniques, empowering them to become advocates for change in their lives and the lives of those around them. Nine individuals participated in the one-day workshop at CNIB Halifax in June 2018.

During the workshop, participants learned about effective communication strategies, the meaning of advocacy, three behavior types that impact self-advocacy, techniques to enhance communication and assertiveness and lastly, identified their personal goals for applying self-advocacy skills.



**Living Safe** is a two-day program that teaches Nova Scotians living with vision loss how to stay safe and build confidence. Nine individuals participated in a workshop in June 2018 that focused on stress management practices, assertiveness training and self-defence skills training.



# Overcoming barriers through self-advocacy



Through CNIB's self-advocacy workshops, Nova Scotians living with sight loss can learn how to effectively communicate their needs. Participants leave the session with confidence and new strategies to help them speak to be heard.

In June 2018, nine individuals took part in the one-day event. During this session, Kim Cusack, a 50-year-old woman from Dartmouth learned how to advocate for herself.

"Self-advocacy training helps me interact in all aspects of my life," says Kim. "It helps me when I feel the most vulnerable."

Born in Louisbourg, Kim lives with optic neuritis — an eye condition developed from multiple sclerosis that left her with sight loss since 1985.

"I lost 100 per cent of sight in my left eye and 95 per cent of peripheral vision in my right," says Kim.

As a person living with sight loss, one of Kim's biggest challenges is asking others for help.

"I don't want people to think I'm weak," states Kim. "People will say, 'let me know if you need anything,' but one of my biggest problems is asking others for help."

To overcome this challenge, Kim attended the CNIB self-advocacy workshop, as well as other CNIB programs such as peer support groups.

Through these programs, Kim has been able to retain her independence, and maintain her positive outlook on the world.

"I should have a negative outlook based on things that have happened during my life — but I don't," says Kim. "My ability to remain positive is one of my greatest accomplishments."





# PROGRAMS

CNIB strives to improve the quality of life for Nova Scotians living with sight loss, and to create a more inclusive, barrier-free society. Through a wide range of programs, individuals who are blind or partially sighted have the opportunity to learn, socialize and enjoy life to the fullest.

**Recreation:** Our programs provide an opportunity for individuals with vision loss to connect with others who have similar interests. We hold monthly socials in communities across the province, an audio book club, a walking club, a knitting club and yoga classes.

**Technology:** Our programs transform lives by connecting people of all ages with cutting-edge technology, such as smartphones with built-in accessibility features and apps that read print, describe objects and help people navigate through their community safely.

**Advocacy:** We focus on challenging stigma, supporting equal rights, breaking down barriers and creating an inclusive society.



**Our Vision Mate Program** matches individuals living with vision loss with specially-trained volunteers who assist with a variety of activities, including reading mail and shopping, as well as enjoying social activities together — like grabbing a coffee and going for walks.



# Community Partnerships

The CNIB Foundation collaborates with post-secondary schools in Nova Scotia to provide experience in the students' chosen field.

Through internships with the CNIB Foundation, public relations students from Mount Saint Vincent University and Nova Scotia Community College help to raise awareness about our programs by writing stories, coordinating social media posts, and designing promotional materials.

CNIB provides work experience for up to 10 students from Dalhousie University's Pharmacy Program. In 2018-2019, our pharmacy students have assisted with our Vision Mate Program and Recreation Programs. Occupational Therapy students and Social Work students from Dalhousie University also completed placements with CNIB.

**MSVU PR student Devin Sturge getting some puppy love from future guide dog Sherman**

Photo by: Dean Casavechia

## Reducing eye injuries one workshop at a time

Nearly 1,300 skilled trades students at 10 Nova Scotia Community College campuses across the province — as well as several businesses — learned about eye safety and reducing eye injuries at work, home and play.

A big thank you to our partners, the **Department of Labour and Advanced Education, Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia**, and **NSCC** for making this program possible.





# Raising the next generation of Future Guide Dogs

CNIB is raising and training dogs exclusively for Canadians who are blind or partially sighted. CNIB Guide Dogs also focuses on ensuring the built environment and societal attitudes change to universal acceptance, recognition and understanding of guide dogs.

**Luna, future CNIB Guide Dog, patiently waiting for a treat from puppy raiser Dan O'Brien**





As a CNIB Puppy Raiser, Dan O'Brien volunteers his time 24/7...365 days a year to provide a safe, loving home for Luna – a yellow lab-golden retriever cross – to help set her up for success as a guide dog.

A CNIB Puppy Raiser spends a full year with a future guide dog focusing on obedience and socialization. During their time together, Dan will introduce Luna to many different situations she may encounter while on the job, and also make sure she attends training sessions.

“We teach our puppies a range of cues like sit, down and stand” says Dan. “We also train our puppies to ignore all distractions including food, people and other dogs.”

At approximately 15 months of age, guide dog puppies move onto intensive training. While this can be a sad time for puppy raisers, Dan knows that Luna

is going on to make a positive impact on someone's life.

“You do become very attached to the puppy over the year,” says Dan.

“However, not unlike sending a child to college, you know they are going on to do something very important, and you have a great feeling of accomplishment.”

Our puppy raisers take pride in knowing that in choosing to raise a puppy, they're helping a person living with sight loss regain a sense of confidence, independence and security.

“There are many rewards that come with being a CNIB Puppy Raiser,” says Dan. “The main one is the knowledge that the work we do early on with these puppies will dramatically change the life of a person who is blind or partially sighted for the better.”



## Must love dogs!

Do you love dogs and want to make a difference? Consider becoming a volunteer puppy raiser at CNIB! Are you...

- age 18+
- able to provide a comfortable home environment where dogs can safely learn, play and explore
- able to invest the necessary time to train and socialize a puppy in a wide range of environments and situations, including work, if you are employed
- flexible, open-minded and willing to follow our puppy care and training philosophies

For more information, visit **[cnibguidedogs.ca](http://cnibguidedogs.ca)** or call **1-800-563-2642**.

# Volunteer Highlights

- **152 volunteers** contributed more than **9,000 hours** of their time over the last year.
- **Five volunteers** with sight loss contributed over **840 hours** leading monthly socials and peer support groups in Halifax, Bridgewater, Sydney, New Glasgow and Annapolis Valley.
- **11 volunteers** helped staff the front desk at our Halifax Centre, contributing 1,163 hours.
- Our volunteer ambassadors made **35 presentations** about sight loss at **seven schools** reaching over **900 students**.
- **62 people** living with sight loss were matched with a **Vision Mate Volunteer**.



CNIB couldn't do the work we do without the incredible support of our dedicated team of volunteer leaders. We recognize the Nova Scotia Board members' commitment and thank them for their contributions in 2018-2019:

Chair: **Glenda Parsons**; Vice Chair: **William (Bill) Blight**; Members: **David Hirtle, Bethany Hoffe, Dr. Marcelo Nicolela, Dan O'Brien, Alycia Pottie, Emma Street, Brian Yee and Robert Ganong.**



# Giving back, one lesson at a time

**“The best feeling is simply seeing that ‘Eureka!’ moment.”**

Photo courtesy of The Chronicle Herald

Every Tuesday, Genevieve Wales volunteers with the CNIB Foundation in Halifax, where she teaches braille to three individuals living with sight loss.

Genevieve began volunteering with CNIB in April 2011, starting as a vision mate and event volunteer. Three years later she was asked to begin teaching a person with sight loss who wanted to improve their braille.

Having experience and interest in braille from her career at the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, she accepted and has been volunteering in the position ever since.

“It felt like the most natural, easiest way to give back to the community,” says Genevieve.

Genevieve’s personal gratification from volunteering comes from the enjoyment she feels when working with students and giving back to her community.

“The best feeling is simply just seeing that ‘Eureka!’ moment on someone’s face after they’ve been successful with braille for the first time,” says Genevieve.

Genevieve urges more people to volunteer: “Get involved with something you’re interested in and help someone in your community in the process. Everybody involved benefits — the organization, the volunteers, and the community.”

# Philanthropy Highlights

Every year we are astounded by the incredible support of our donors. Whether it was hosting a fundraising event, leaving a gift in their will or signing up to become a monthly donor, our generous donors made it possible for Nova Scotians with sight loss to live full, independent lives.

In September, the CNIB Foundation hosted **Dog Days of Summer**, a donor appreciation event, where our donors met nine Future Guide Dogs and their volunteer puppy raisers, and learned about their obedience training and socialization. CNIB launched its 2019 CNIB Guide Dog Calendar fundraiser at the event, featuring all nine puppies being raised in Halifax in 2019/2020.

In partnership with K-Rock 89.3, the CNIB Foundation hosted a **Dancing in the Dark** fundraiser in New Minas in February 2019. Guests enjoyed an evening of stand-up comedy by Jay Malone, dancing to fantastic music by the Bluesmobile, and bidding on silent auction items.



Dancing in the Dark fundraiser  
in New Minas, February 2019



# **CNIB would like to recognize others who supported us in 2018-2019**

**Acclaro Properties**

**All Saints Bedford Players**

**Naomi Black**

**Congregation of Notre Dame  
Visitation Province**

**Halifax Protestant Infants  
Foundation**

**Kingston Lions Club**

**Kristine Mayer**

**John Mogan**

**NSLC**

**Lori Park**

**Port Williams & District Lions Club**

**Sobeys Inc.**

**Stefmore Incorporated**

**Johanna Stork**

**The Donalda McKenna  
Charitable Trust**

**Warren Weeks**

**Westwood Developments Limited**

**We couldn't do  
it without you**





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