

Reconciliation – The Way Forward

September 2023



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Land Acknowledgement

We humbly acknowledge that the CNIB team lives, learns, works, and plays across Turtle Island. With staff spanning from Lekwungen territory in the West to Algonquin territory in the East, we pay respect to the traditional guardians of the land upon which we live and work.

CNIB acknowledges that Indigenous peoples are the traditional guardians of Turtle Island, on the land also known as Canada. We recognize their long standing and ongoing relationship with this territory, which includes unceded and traditional land, and acknowledge our duty to walk with and alongside reconciliation and decolonization efforts.

We believe that as settlers on this land, we have a responsibility to continually engage along our journey to meaningfully enact allyship, to reassess and reconsider our positionality in the spaces we occupy, and to use our voice to speak out against systemic injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples.

Reconciliation is an ongoing process, requiring unlearning colonial practices and history alongside relearning our shared past, present and future. CNIB is committed to working in partnership to pursue a more inclusive, collaborative, and respectful path forward by working on our own reconciliation plan that is grounded in the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

CNIB's Role in Reconciliation

Reconciliation must be a priority for all Canadians and CNIB is committed to being a part of this important journey. CNIB recognizes historical wrongs in Canada's past and will work to create a better future by addressing the challenges of today. We are committed to reconciliation by ensuring the work we do is built on relationships, partnerships and guidance with First Nation, Métis and Inuit people, co-creating a shared future ensuring rights, equity and well-being.

The CNIB Reconciliation Action Plan will be measured annually and publicly reported to contribute to the Calls of Action outlined in the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Together, with the support of our neighbours, we will break down barriers that Indigenous peoples who are blind, partially sighted or Deafblind face as a marginalized segment of the population.

Our Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation

CNIB is committed to ensuring that we continue to explore and engage in meaningful dialogue and unlearn colonial practices. We have served Indigenous peoples for 50 years through mobile care units and community programming. We will continue to take direction from the lived experience of Indigenous participants and amplify their voices to ensure our innovative programs and powerful advocacy incorporate the Calls to Action outlined in the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. As we honour the truth and reconcile for the future, we will develop new partnerships to serve our Indigenous community and foster a more inclusive Canada.

CNIB is Answering the Call to Action

CNIB aims to empower people who are blind, partially sighted or Deafblind to better understand their rights, navigate provincial legal systems and self-advocate to challenge discrimination. This is heightened to include the Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) in Canada who have been strategically oppressed and marginalized through centuries of colonization, which has impacted the current determinants of health such as increased rates of poverty, poor housing which cannot accommodate their disabilities and/or homelessness, low educational attainment, and high rates of incarceration. Within those segments, it is known that more than 1 in 3 of Indigenous people live with some form of a disability, including visual disability, compared to 1 in 5 in the rest of Canada. Indigenous peoples have a higher incidence of diabetes and diabetes-related complications than other people, which can include blindness and visual impairment.¹

CNIB is responding to the Calls to Action outlined in the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, beginning Call to Action #7, regarding Education and Call to Action #18, regarding Health, which state:

7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

18. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools, and to recognize and implement the health-care rights of Aboriginal people as identified in international law, constitutional law, and under the Treaties.

Furthermore, we are responding to the Calls to Action for Business and Reconciliation which state:

92. We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i.** Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- ii.** Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
- iii.** Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

CNIB Reconciliation Action Plan

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility isn't just a set of practices, it's embedded in our values and every aspect of our mission. While it takes time, every member of the CNIB team is committed to this self-discovery process. We have become comfortable with being uncomfortable because we know vulnerability leads to tangible change. When we invest in authentic relationships, we create meaningful connections, which lays the foundation for a strong sense of belonging as we build inclusive communities where everyone can live, learn, work and play...together.

In responses to the 94 Calls to Action outlined in the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, CNIB has been working with Tawi:ne Consulting Inc., an Indigenous-owned company specializing in Indigenous engagement and consultation, policy/governance, and capacity development, to develop the CNIB Reconciliation Action Plan with measurable targets and specific actions to hold us accountable for this important work. While this won't be perfect, and we will make mistakes along the way, we are committed to continuous learning and deepening our understanding as we strive toward reconciliation.

Our CNIB Reconciliation Action Plan will be weaved into our programs, our advocacy, our policies, and our recruitment practices, with an intersectional lens as part of **The Way Forward**. These objectives will complement other initiatives we will undertake to support marginalized communities to help create an inclusive Canada where people who are blind, low vision, or Deafblind and all lived experiences can thrive.



John Rafferty
President and Chief Executive Officer

Our Vision

Deliver innovative programs and powerful advocacy across the country to empower first Nations, Inuit and Metis people impacted by blindness to live their dreams and tear down barriers to inclusion.

Our Objectives

As part of CNIB's Truth and Reconciliation journey, we will:

- Educate our workforce and provide skills-based training to embrace inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility and belonging that supports intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism for Indigenous peoples.
- Understand the Indigenous landscape in Canada from a regional perspective and building meaningful relationships to support Indigenous peoples.
- Define, develop, and deliver beneficial programs, based on consultations with Indigenous peoples living with sight loss, and secure sustainable funding.
- Strengthen our workforce through the recruitment and retention of Indigenous peoples while providing equitable access to employment opportunities.

Maximizing Impact for Indigenous peoples who are blind, partially sighted or Deafblind

- Collaborate with or support Indigenous organizations and communities to develop inclusive and tailored programs for Indigenous peoples who are blind,

partially sighted, or Deafblind within CNIB's core program areas: Live, Work, Play, Learn and Technology.

- Integrate Indigenous participation as part of the CNIB's new strategic plan, The Way Forward for 2023 – 2028, and the three commitment areas:
 - **Attitude is Everything:** Increase understanding of blindness and dispel misconceptions about people who are blind, partially sighted, or Deafblind.
 - **Safe and Accessible Journeys:** Remove barriers and create safe, accessible door-to-door journeys for all.
 - **Our Kids will Thrive:** Give parents and children the support they need to excel in and out of the classroom.
- Engage with Indigenous communities and organizations to increase CNIB programs and develop new co-created service offerings.
- Create dedicated resources within our website for Indigenous users that provides information about available programs, services, point of contact, and FAQs.

Building an Inclusive Organization

- Review and update policies, programs and processes, such as:
 - Indigenous Relations Strategy
 - Indigenous Inclusion Policy to increase recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff
 - Indigenous Procurement Policy for procurement from Indigenous providers
 - Indigenous Cultural Practices and Resources Guide
- Workplace inclusion programs (benefits, wellness, etc.)
- Organizational learning

Building Allyship

- Support learning and implementation of inclusive approaches across CNIB's network:
 - CNIB Access Labs
 - CNIB Come to Work
 - CNIB Phone it Forward
 - CNIB Guide Dogs
 - CNIB Lake Joe
 - CNIB Mobile Hub
 - CNIB Scholarships
 - CNIB SmartLife
 - CNIB Vision Mate
 - Deafblind Community Services
 - Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada
 - Other Partners

- Share resources with Canadian employers via Accessibility Standards Canada Inclusive Workplaces Project.
- Work with Indigenous communities and organizations, and government, to review existing programs to ensure they meet the needs of Indigenous peoples who are blind, partially sighted or Deafblind.
- Participate in Indigenous-led networks, such as:
 - Enrolling in the Progressive Aboriginal Relations certification program of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB)
 - Partnering with National Collaborating Center for Indigenous Health
 - Signing MOU with national Indigenous organizations

Governance and Accountability

We are committed to holding our organization accountable for its role in reconciliation. Therefore, activities, targets, timelines, and responsibilities, including annual reporting, have been established to support the implementation of the CNIB Reconciliation Action Plan.

For discussion:

Indigenous Council

Report for CNIB National Board of Directors

Internal + External Communications Plan

Appendix A – CNIB Reconciliation Plan Targets

