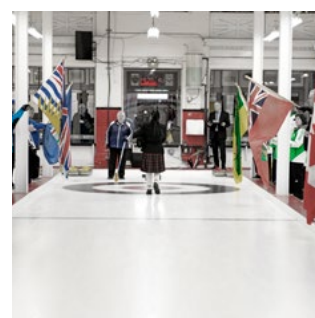
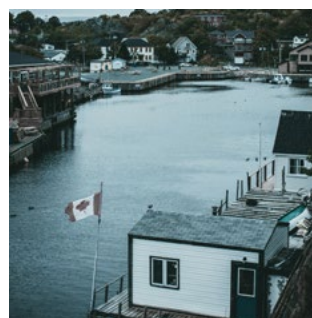
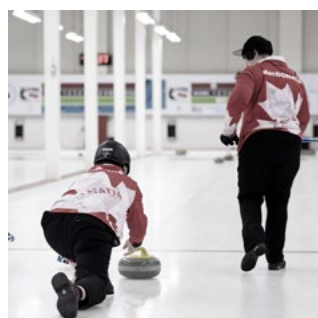
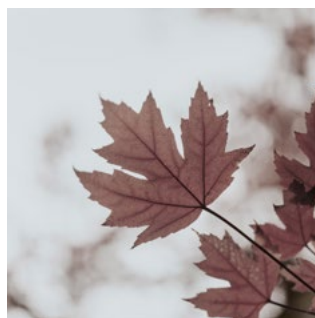
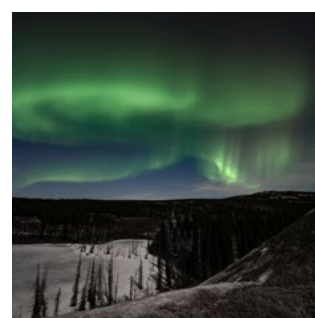
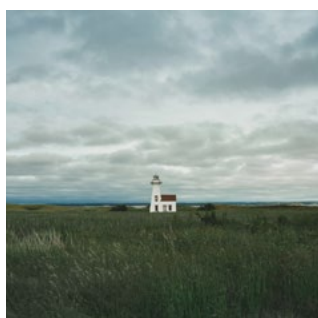


White Cane

The Voice of the Blind™ in Canada

Magazine



INSIDE: _____

Seeing Canada Clearly—Even When You're Blind

Keeping Focused on the Target: CCB's 2026 President's Award Winner

Vision Health Month: Seeing the Bigger Picture

Every day
of
lost vision
is one
too many.

Every day
of
lost vision
is one
too many.



Sight is our window to the world. It connects us, guides, and inspires us. At Astellas, we are committed to researching advanced eye diseases such as geographic atrophy.



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Jim Tokos photographed by Andre Martin.

President's Message

May marks Vision Health Month, a time to reflect on the importance of eye health and vision care. It is also a moment to look honestly at where progress is being made and where gaps remain.

Jim Tokos, National President of the Canadian Council of the Blind

At the heart of this year's issue is a clear and urgent theme: the need for a more coordinated approach to vision health and community-based support for Canadians who are blind, low vision, or living with vision loss. Too often, access to services depends on geography, local capacity, or timing.

Editor Mike Potvin dives deep into the diversity of experiences across Canada and encourages us to think on the value of coordinated national care. Special contributions from CCB's vision health partners also highlight the complexity of delivering care across Canada and the importance of approaches centred on lived experience.

This year, I am pleased to recognize the outstanding contributions of two leaders within our network. The President's Award is being presented to David Greene, in recognition of his meaningful guidance as not only an assistive technology trainer with the Get Together with Technology program but as a pillar of the community. We also honour Jennifer Urosevic as our Person of the Year, acknowledging her longstanding commitment to the blindness community through her work as the President and CEO of Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC) and her outstanding leadership of the Vision Health Partners' Coalition.

We also take time to celebrate the success of White Cane Week and the Canadian Vision Impaired Curling Championship (CVICC), which once again brought together athletes and supporters from across the country. Congratulations to Team Alberta, who earned the gold medal in a spirited competition that reflects the camaraderie of our membership.

As we celebrate Vision Health Month, let us continue to elevate pan-Canadian voices, recognize regional experiences, and strengthen the connections that help build a more accessible and inclusive future for all.

Yours in service,
Jim Tokos

Vision Health Month: Seeing the Bigger Picture

DR. ALLISON SCOTT
President, Canadian Association of Optometrists



May marks Vision Health Month in Canada, a timely reminder to check in on your eye health and the role it plays in your overall well-being. The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) recently commissioned public polling through Abacus Data, and the results tell a compelling story about how Canadians view vision care.

Good eye health is fundamental to learning, independence, and quality of life. The good news is that Canadians understand its importance: 85% say eye health impacts their overall well-being, and half rate it as extremely important. But awareness alone isn't enough. Many Canadians still wait until something feels wrong before seeking care, instead of taking simple, proactive steps to protect their vision.

This gap between belief and action is one of the most important challenges for ensuring healthy vision.



Nearly one in four Canadians fall behind on eye exams,

despite 86% of Canadians saying they recognize exams should happen every two years. It's easy to let more time pass than recommended, especially when everything seems "fine."

Screen time has become a defining feature of modern life, with nearly 50% of Canadians spending over 7 hours a day on digital devices.

- 76% of Canadians agree that prolonged screen time is harmful, while
- 64% of Canadians report screen time has already impacted their vision,

Changing daily habits isn't always easy, but even small changes, like taking breaks from screen work, can make a meaningful difference over time.

The data revealed that while Canadians trust optometrists and see them as an important part of their healthcare, many people still think of eye exams as something to do only when they need glasses or notice a problem. The reality is that regular eye exams can help detect issues early, even before noticeable symptoms appear, and are an important part of maintaining overall health.

So, where do we go from here? Canadians already value their vision and trust the professionals who care for it. The next step is turning that awareness into action.

Vision Health Month provides that opportunity. At CAO, we are working with the federal government and partners across the country to strengthen public understanding of the importance of regular eye exams and the essential role optometrists play in primary eye care. Through national efforts, we aim to better inform Canadians about when and why to seek care, while reinforcing optometrists as a trusted first point of contact.

Our goal is simple: to ensure Canadians make preventive eye care a routine part of managing their overall health and well-being.



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES OPTOMÉTRISTES

Seeing Canada Clearly— Even When You're Blind

Mike Potvin, Editor of the White Cane Magazine

As a blind Canadian, I experience this country through tools, people, and policies that either open doors or quietly shut them. Disability rights and vision care are often discussed as abstract policy files, but for me—and for hundreds of thousands of Canadians with vision loss—they define how fully we can participate in national life. From coast to coast to coast, our approaches to eye health and vision rehabilitation remain uneven, and those gaps tell a troubling story about who gets to thrive.

Canada prides itself on universal health care, yet eye and vision care fall into a patchwork of provincial and territorial responsibility. Where you live determines whether routine eye examinations are publicly covered, how soon you can access a low-vision clinic, or whether vision rehabilitation services exist at all within a reasonable distance. That reality contradicts the spirit of pan-Canadian disability rights, which promise dignity, independence, and inclusion regardless of postal code.

In urban centres, a newly blind person may find integrated teams—optometrists, ophthalmologists, orientation and mobility specialists, and adaptive technology trainers—working together. In rural or remote communities, including many Indigenous and northern regions, the picture is starkly different. Long travel distances, limited specialists, and inconsistent funding mean vision loss too often becomes life-altering disability rather than a manageable condition. A routine eye exam that could catch glaucoma early may simply be unavailable.

This disparity is not just about health; it is about equity. When vision rehabilitation is delayed or absent, people are more likely to lose jobs, withdraw from education, and experience isolation. For seniors, untreated vision loss increases the risk of falls and cognitive decline. For working-age adults, it can mean permanent detachment from the labour force. These outcomes cost far more—socially and economically—than timely, coordinated care ever would.

From coast to coast to coast, our approaches to eye health and vision rehabilitation remain uneven, and those gaps tell a troubling story about who gets to thrive.



Mike Potvin photographed by
Andre Martin.

The Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB), a national, community-based organization of the blind with a history for over 80 years of hosting a range of programs from peer support, to sports and recreation, to general social activities, to computer training through our Get Together with Technology (GTT) program, is well positioned to reach out and lend a helping hand to isolated members of the community.

Within the CCB are members who, through their participation in its programs, have forged and maintained lives that in responding to the challenges and trauma of a loss of sight became more involved and active than at any othertime in their lives. These individuals ski, sculpt, act, sail, cycle; participate in book and current affairs clubs; mentor and support others, organize accessible activities for others; and develop networks of their peers.

From a blind person's standpoint, access to accessible programs such as these and accessibility in general is not charity. It is infrastructure. Just as Canadians expect reliable roads and clean water across provinces, we should expect baseline vision care standards nationwide: publicly funded regular eye exams, consistent access to low-vision services, and digital and physical environments designed with accessibility in mind.

A truly pan-Canadian vision strategy—developed with blind and partially sighted people at the table—would recognize eye health as preventive care, not an optional extra. Until then, blindness in Canada will remain as much about geography as it is about biology. And that is something we can—and must—do better.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Potvin".

Mike Potvin

The Evolving Understanding of Dry Eye Disease in Canada

Why Early and Comprehensive Care Matters

Dry Eye Disease (DED), medically known as keratoconjunctivitis sicca, is recognized as a chronic condition that can significantly affect comfort, vision, and quality of life for millions of Canadians^{1, 2}. Despite its prevalence, DED often goes undiagnosed or undertreated, leaving many people to cope with symptoms that could be better managed².

What We Now Know About Dry Eye Disease

DED is a multifactorial condition involving an imbalance of the tear film, which is essential for protecting and nourishing the ocular surface³. When this balance is disrupted through tear film instability, ocular surface inflammation, or epithelial damage, patients may experience irritation, fluctuating vision, and reduced quality of life³.

In Canada, surveys suggest that between 21% and 30% of adults experience DED symptoms². This translates to more than 6 million Canadians affected—a significant public health consideration. Women and older adults are disproportionately impacted, in part due to hormonal changes associated with aging¹.

September is recognized as Healthy Aging Month, a reminder that age-related changes can affect many aspects of health, including eye health. Dry eye is more common with aging¹, making awareness and early management especially important for older adults. Environmental exposures such as Canada's cold, dry winters, indoor heating, and lifestyle factors like prolonged screen time and reduced blinking further worsen symptoms³.

Types, Causes, and the Role of Inflammation

DED is broadly categorized into:

- Aqueous-deficient dry eye, where tear production is insufficient.

- Evaporative dry eye, the more common form, frequently associated with Meibomian Gland Dysfunction (MGD)³.

Inflammation is a central mechanism in both forms³. Left unchecked, it can create a cycle of worsening tear film instability, ocular surface damage, and persistent discomfort³. Evidence suggests that addressing inflammation directly is key to breaking this cycle and supporting longer-term management outcomes³.

The Canadian Reality: Impact Beyond the Eyes

DED affects patients well beyond eye comfort. In Canada, the annual economic burden per patient has been estimated at \$24,331 CAD, with significant loss in productivity and quality of life⁴.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has acknowledged dry eye to be a substantial economic burden as it is a leading reason why people seek eye care services due to painful and troublesome symptoms. Furthermore, the WHO indicated that population ageing, coupled with environmental and lifestyle changes, will lead to an increase in the number of people with dry eye.⁵

Patients with DED often report challenges with reading, driving, computer use, and daily work activities, contributing to reduced performance and well-being^{2, 4}. Research has also linked DED to higher rates of sleep disturbances⁶ and an increased likelihood of anxiety or depression, highlighting its broader health impact⁷.

Today's Approach: From Relief to Long-Term Care

Management of DED requires a layered approach tailored to each patient³:

- Artificial tears and lubricating drops are a first step, offering temporary comfort by supplementing the tear film³.
- OTC eye drops specifically indicated for dry eye go beyond general lubricants. These therapies are formulated to replenish and protect the tear film in ways designed for dry eye patients³.
- For individuals with chronic or more severe symptoms, advanced prescription therapies are available to help disrupt the inflammatory cycle that drives ongoing disease³. These options can support longer-lasting relief when over-the-counter measures alone are not enough³.

This stepwise strategy, from OTC options to targeted advanced therapies, allows care to be both personalized and progressive.

The Role of Eye Care Providers

Healthcare providers are central to detecting and managing DED. Regular eye exams help identify tear film instability and ocular surface changes early, enabling preventive strategies and timely intervention³. Pharmacists can also reinforce adherence, provide guidance on correct drop administration, and recommend indicated OTC options³.

Moving Forward: A Holistic Mindset

In 2025, the understanding of DED emphasizes chronic disease management rather than short-term relief³. Combining education, environment-based adjustments, OTC options, and advanced therapies when needed, may improve comfort, reduce disease burden, and enhance quality of life for Canadians living with dry eye^{2, 3, 4}.

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Keeping Focused on the Target: CCB's 2026 President's Award Winner

David Greene, Assistive Technology Trainer at the Canadian Council of the Blind.



David Greene.

Braydin Frizell - Sponsorships, Development, & Communications Manager at CCB

When David Greene learned he had been selected as the recipient of the Canadian Council of the Blind's 2026 President's Award, his reaction was characteristically humble.

"Honoured," he said.

That response reflects the approach David has taken throughout his time with the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB): steady, practical, and focused on serving the community.

It's also consistent with how he thinks about leadership and service more broadly. In conversation, David described the concept of "vision casting" which is a way of keeping a clear goal in mind while remaining flexible in how one achieves said goal. "The bullseye doesn't change," he explains. "But how you get there can." It's a perspective shaped by years of experience across different roles, and one that continues to guide his work with the Get Together with Technology (GTT) program today.

Growing the Get Together with Technology Program

David's involvement with the CCB began in 2014 after moving to Ottawa from rural Nova Scotia. With some extra time in his schedule, David started volunteering a few hours a week with the Get Together with Technology (GTT) program, helping people in the CCB Community learn to use computers and smartphones.

At the time, the program was still in its infancy. As more people began to access the service, David gradually increased his involvement from a few hours a week, to a few full days a week, to contract work, and eventually the full-time role he now fills.

The shift to virtual programming during COVID-19 also played a key role in expanding the program's reach. "Before Zoom, we were mainly serving people locally," David explains. "Now we're able to connect with people across the country."

Today, he continues to support that national reach alongside his colleague Nolan, delivering training to individuals at all stages of vision loss.

More Than Technology

At its core, GTT is about teaching accessible technology, but for David the work has always gone deeper.

"All through my working career, it's been about serving people," he says. "What can I do to make life better for you?"

That philosophy is evident in every interaction. David explained how many individuals who come to GTT are experiencing vision loss for the first time, sometimes quite suddenly, and arrive overwhelmed, frustrated, and uncertain about their future.

"It's not about learning everything at once," David explains. "It's a little bit today, a little bit next week, and it adds up."

A Philosophy Grounded in Service

Anyone who has worked with David knows he is principled and grounded. David often speaks in metaphors, as described above, when we spoke he continually referenced his work and career back to the theme of vision casting the idea of a "bullseye."

The mission is constant: serve the blind community. The methods, however, must evolve. Technology changes rapidly. What is cutting-edge today can be obsolete in a matter of years. For programs like GTT, keeping pace is both essential and challenging.

"Being blind is costly," David explains. "We can talk about the latest technology, but we can't always demonstrate it because there isn't room in the budget." Despite these constraints, the program continues to innovate. From smartphones to emerging tools like AI-powered smart glasses, David and his team work tirelessly to stay current, often carving out time between training schedules to research new developments.

Equally important is the program's flexibility. Unlike more rigid training models, GTT is not bound by strict timelines for each user. "We're not limited to six weeks," David says, referring to some programs where participants only have access to the program for a set number of sessions. "We train people until they're independent."

That commitment reflects a deeper belief for GTT, one that reflects how every individual is worth the time and investment required to succeed.

"The air just rings with it," he says. "You're worth it. You can do it."

Stories That Define a Career

Over 12 years working at the GTT, David has worked with hundreds of individuals. Each story is different, but many share a common theme: technology as a gateway to independence and reconnection.

He recalls one client, a retired dentist, who lost his vision almost overnight. “He drove himself to the hospital,” David says. “That was the last time he ever drove.” Within months, the man began training with GTT, learning to use an iPhone and computer without sight. Slowly, his confidence returned.

Another story stands out even more vividly. A former professional dancer from Ukraine, losing his vision to glaucoma, came to GTT with a simple goal: reconnect with his family. After several sessions, David helped him install and learn to use WhatsApp. When the man made his first call to his sister overseas, the moment was unforgettable. “I watched him standing there in tears,” David recalls. “He couldn’t believe he was talking to her.”

For David, that moment captured everything. “That’s it,” he says. “That’s the bullseye.”

The Human Element

While technology is the medium, relationships are the foundation of GTT’s success. David emphasizes patience, empathy, and the importance of listening. “One of the greatest tools you can give someone is a listening ear,” he says. His background includes years in pastoral ministry which has shaped his approach to serving the community. Though he no longer serves in that role formally, the influence remains.



David with guide dog Hoya.

“I’ve been able to pastor without wearing the pastor hat,” he reflects. Clients sense that authenticity. It creates a safe, supportive environment where growth and learning can take place both technically and emotionally.

Well-Deserved Recognition

The President’s Award recognizes outstanding service and contribution to the mission of the Canadian Council of the Blind. In David Greene’s case, it acknowledges something even more profound: a sustained commitment to empowering others.

Yet for David, the true reward is not the recognition. “My reward is every day when I go home,” he says, “knowing I rubbed shoulders with somebody and helped.” It’s a statement that encapsulates a lifetime of service. For the countless individuals whose lives have been transformed through David’s work, it is a legacy that speaks far louder than any award.



Braille Literacy Canada, Canada’s Braille Authority

For many Canadians who are blind or with low vision, braille is the key to literacy and independence. Braille is for the blind, what print is for the sighted. Braille Literacy Canada educates and advocates for equitable and timely access to high-quality braille for those who are blind, DeafBlind, or who have low vision. We believe in a world where braille is universally acknowledged, respected, accessible, and integrated into every facet of society.

Come join us! Being a member gives you a voice in our work, and access to tools to help you advocate for access to braille. Visit <https://www.brailleliteracycanada.ca/en/membership>

Braille Zoomers

Interested, but not too sure about braille? To help those who are learning braille later in life, Braille Literacy Canada launched the Braille Zoomers group - a monthly virtual get-together for adult and older adult braille learners. Whether you are in the process of learning braille now or you learned it as an adult at some time in the past, come join us! Braille and tactile markers can help support independence around the home and community – reading

elevator panels, labeling medications, or highlighting the touch pad on a microwave – Braille Zoomers have strategies to share. While there will be a general theme each month, participants will determine the direction of the discussion so that we can best support your braille learning journey. Each virtual get-together will be an informal opportunity to share resources, support and ideas for adult braille learners.

The Braille Zoomers group generally meets the first Saturday of each month, there is no cost and no obligation. If you would like to register to attend the next meeting, or have specific braille learning or braille usage questions you’d like us to address, you can write to us at any time.

**For more information visit our website:
www.brailleliteracycanada.ca or email
us at info@blc-lbc.ca**

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- Diagnose and manage many common eye conditions

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The Orthoptist

Eye Movement Expert

Orthoptists specialize in how the eyes move and work together.

They:

- Assess and treat double vision
- Manage eye misalignment (strabismus)
- Treat amblyopia (“lazy eye”)
- Provide non-surgical therapy to improve eye coordination

Orthoptists work closely with ophthalmologists to support effective vision.



The Optician

Eyewear Expert

Opticians help turn prescriptions into clear, comfortable vision.

They:

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- Help you choose frames and lenses
- Adjust eyewear for proper fit and comfort

Advancing Patient Outcomes Through Coordinated Eye Care

Optimal vision care depends on strong collaboration across disciplines – with medical and surgical expertise guiding the management of complex and sight threatening disease. Clear referral pathways and timely co management ensure patients receive the right level of care at the right time.

Learn more at [SeeThePossibilities.ca](https://www.see-thepossibilities.ca)
See the Possibilities is an initiative of the
Canadian Ophthalmological Society

The Ophthalmologist – Eye MD

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An ophthalmologist (Eye MD) is a medical doctor who specializes in the advanced medical and surgical management of eye disease.

They:

- Diagnose and treat serious eye conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, and diabetic eye disease
- Perform sight-saving surgeries, including cataract, retinal, and corneal procedures
- Manage complex or advanced eye problems and sight-threatening diseases
- An ophthalmologist is the expert in treating medical and surgical eye disease. You may be referred to an ophthalmologist by your optometrist.



See The Possibilities

CCB's 2026 Person of the Year

Jennifer Urosevic, President and CEO of Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC).



Jennifer Urosevic.

Braydin Frizell - Sponsorships, Development, & Communications Manager at CCB

When she learned she had been selected as the recipient of the Canadian Council of the Blind's 2026 Person of the Year Award, her first reaction was not about the recognition itself, but instead about the people behind it. "I was genuinely surprised and deeply honoured," Jennifer says. "This work has never felt like something you do alone."

That perspective reflects a career built not only on leadership, but on collaboration, bringing together professionals, organizations, and communities to strengthen how vision care is delivered across Canada.

A Career Grounded in Frontline Experience

Jennifer's journey in the vision health sector began nearly three decades ago as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Her experience shapes her approach today. "Working directly with individuals navigating vision loss gave me a deep appreciation for how transformative this work can be," she explains. "It's not just about learning skills, it's about building confidence, dignity, and possibility."

From there, her career expanded into roles spanning regional, provincial, and national operations, as well as service quality, evaluation, and research. Over time, Jennifer's focus shifted toward a broader question of how to move from supporting individuals one at a time, to improving the systems that serve the community.

This viewpoint now informs her leadership as President and CEO of Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC), where she works to align frontline experience with system-level change.

From Individual Impact to System Change

A defining theme throughout her career has been the importance of connecting individual outcomes with larger structural improvements. "I believe in providing the right service, at the right time, by the right professional, and doing it right the first time," she says. "That's my north star." Under her leadership, VLRC has focused on strengthening its role within the broader healthcare system and positioning vision rehabilitation as an essential service rather than an optional one. This work has included contributing to national conversations on vision health, including testimony before the Senate in support of Bill C-284, as well as advancing a long-term strategic plan: *Aim Higher, Reach Further*. The strategy reflects a shift toward earlier intervention, stronger integration with eye care professionals, and more equitable access to services across Canada.

"It's about moving beyond incremental change," she explains. "We need to think at a system level if we want to improve outcomes in a meaningful way."

Staying Connected to What Matters

Despite her national leadership role, the most meaningful moments remain grounded in individual experience. "I remember working with people who felt like their world had become smaller overnight," she says. "And then seeing that shift, when participants start to regain confidence and independence." Those moments continue to inform Jennifer's work and reinforce the importance of accessible, timely support. "People remind you that this work is essential," she says. "It changes lives in very real ways."

Collaboration as a Driving Force

In addition to her role at VLRC, Jennifer also leads the Vision Health Partners Coalition (VHPC), a national initiative focused on strengthening coordination across the vision care system. Balancing both roles, she explains, is possible because of their shared purpose. "Both are focused on improving outcomes for Canadians who are blind or living with low vision," she says. "One is focused on service delivery, the other on system design." Central to both is collaboration. Through partnerships with organizations across healthcare, research, and community services, including groups like the Canadian Council of the Blind, CNIB, and others, the work is increasingly aligned toward a shared goal. "We're starting to move beyond individual mandates and toward a more coordinated approach," Jennifer says.



Jennifer with MP Leslie Church, Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for Seniors and the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), and Josie McGee, VLRC's Vice President, Healthcare Innovation.

Centering Lived Experience

A consistent theme throughout Jennifer's work is the importance of listening to, and learning from, those with lived experience. "The individuals we serve have been some of my greatest teachers," she says.

Jennifer also highlights the role patient organizations like the Canadian Council of the Blind play in ensuring those voices are heard. "There's a real opportunity to continue creating space for advocacy and engagement," she notes. "But also to ensure those voices are influencing decisions." This includes everything from policy development to program design.

Looking Ahead

Looking to the future, Jennifer's focus remains primarily on building a more integrated and coordinated vision care system in Canada.

"My hope is that we move toward a system where prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation are fully connected," she says.

Through the Vision Health Partners' Coalition, she sees an opportunity to bring together stakeholders across sectors to design solutions grounded in both evidence and lived experience. "We know what the gaps are," she says. "Now it's about acting on them together."

A Recognition Shared

For Jennifer, the Person of the Year Award is not an individual achievement, but a reflection of collective effort. "To be recognized by the community itself is incredibly meaningful,"

she says. "It reinforces that the work we're doing matters." It also serves as motivation to continue, however "There's still a lot more to do," she adds.

Advice for Future Leaders

For those entering the field, Jennifer's advice is simple: "Stay connected to the people you serve, that's where the purpose comes from." Jennifer also encourages openness to new experiences and a willingness to think beyond traditional approaches.

"This sector needs people who are willing to challenge the status quo and work collaboratively," she says.

In many ways, her words reflect the broader direction of the vision health sector as a whole, one that is increasingly focused on connection, collaboration, and meaningful impact. All traits Jennifer has showcased throughout her career.



Jennifer posing with her nomination for the 2025 Premier's Award for Outstanding Ontario College Graduates.

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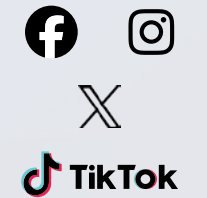
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Learn more about AMI and its commitment to the disability community in Canada



Postcards From Host Christa Couture.

AMI is a media company dedicated to establishing and supporting a voice for Canadians with a disability, representing their interests, concerns, and values through accessible media, reflection, and portrayal.

AMI's content teams are committed to providing a platform for the disability community and to share the stories that are unique and relevant to them. AMI's library of award-winning content on AMI-audio, AMI-tv, AMI+, and AMI-télé shine a light on the people and topics that are often overlooked or ignored in mainstream media.

"I joke that I fit three minorities: big, Black, and blind," jokes Kelly MacDonald, a veteran of AMI and senior feature reporter for AMI-audio's Reflections. "AMI tells everyone's stories, and I personally have enjoyed telling mine. Over time, our programming has got braver, we don't shy away from letting our subjects or the topic speak."

AMI-audio, AMI-tv, and AMI-télé are all available as part of basic digital packages offered by most television providers across the country. If you have basic cable, you have access to AMI.

AMI-audio

AMI-audio is an accessible television channel and streaming service offering a variety of compelling stories and engaging original content to Canadians who are blind, partially sighted, or otherwise print restricted.

AMI-audio airs a variety of programs covering topics that are relevant to Canadians of all abilities, in addition to presenting feature articles from top Canadian and international publications like The Globe and Mail, Maclean's, The Walrus, and The Guardian. AMI-audio programs are available free to download as podcasts on all major podcasting apps and platforms.

Highlights of AMI-audio programming include:

Reflections

Hosted by Ramya Amuthan, Reflections listens in on how we make sense of the world, through conversation and the lens of lived experience, weaving our questions with your stories.

Audiobook Café

Host Jacob Shymanski keeps you up to date with the latest audiobook releases and literary news. Tune in as he shares in-depth conversations with authors, narrators, and industry experts.

Double Tap

Hosted by Steven Scott and Shaun Preece, listen to news, reviews, and technology stories of interest to people who are blind, partially sighted or part of the disability community.



Reflections senior feature reporter Kelly MacDonald.

Disability Rights, and Wrongs: The David Lepodsky

Outspoken disability rights advocate David Lepodsky and AMI's Jacob Shymanski welcome guests to discuss the latest in disability rights ... and wrongs.

Para Sport Nation

Alex Smyth and Paralympian Nathan Clement spotlight upcoming para sport events in Canada and abroad, pull back the curtain on how para sports are played, and interview para sport athletes, coaches, and trainers.

Visit [AMI.ca/channels](https://ami.ca/channels) to find AMI-audio in your area.

"My favourite AMI-audio show is Reflections for sure because that is my current post," Kelly says with a laugh. "Over on AMI-tv, I am loving History in 60, Crip Trip, and Underdog Inc."

AMI-tv

AMI-tv is a television channel that is broadcast nationally in English. The channel offers two specialized features, open-described video and closed captioning, on all of its programming.

AMI-tv original programs feature Integrated Described Video (IDV), a groundbreaking style of description pioneered by AMI to create a more seamless experience for the audience. IDV tells the story with natural, ambient sound and description from the cast during production, eliminating the need for a secondary audio track.

Highlights of AMI-tv programming include:

Postcards From

Hosted by Christa Couture, embark on a multisensory journey, revealing a secret side to Canada we taste, touch, smell, see, and hear for the first time.

All Access Comedy

Hosted by D.J. Demers, these one-hour specials feature stand-up comedy from members of the disability community.

Game Changers

Each episode of Game Changers finds host Dave Brown in his element, visiting stunning locales while spending the day chatting with notable Canadians.

Crip Trip

One quadruple amputee, one first-time caregiver, one beaten-up old motorhome, and one cross-continent crusade. What could go wrong? (Spoiler alert: a lot.)

The Squeaky Wheel: Canada

A satirical, half-hour news format poking fun at the ableist society people with disabilities face

every day.

Pretty Blind

In this scripted comedy, follow Jennie as she navigates life in an inaccessible and uneducated world, using her intelligence and sharp wit to educate others about disability.

Underdog Inc.

An adrenaline-fueled docuseries following Dale Kristensen, who stands just four-foot-two but takes on jobs built for giants.

History in 60

Host John Loepky tells the stories of Canada's evolving disability history in 60 seconds.

Visit [AMI.ca/channels](https://ami.ca/channels) to find AMI-tv in your area.

“When I was in the field filming or recording, or simply manning a table at an event, people would come up to say, ‘Hi,’ and want to ask about something we did or were doing,” Kelly recalls. “They wanted to know as an interested party, not someone who was surprised a blind guy was out of his house. They treated me like any other media person, which meant acceptance! I was the same as any other broadcaster as far as they were concerned. AMI is doing the job and making all facets of media normal to the public by getting us out there in the community.”

AMI-télé

AMI-télé offers a wide range of programming including comedies, documentaries, and movies. Its flagship original program, *Ça me regarde*, is a weekly magazine-style program focused on disability, exploring everything from health and technology to personal finances and travel.

AMI-télé has continued its commitment to producing original programming that is both interesting and pertinent to the francophone community and Canadians of all abilities. Original programs include *Ça ne se demande pas*, *Pas de panique, on cuisine!*, *Style sur mesure* and the hit comedy *Vestiaires*.

AMI+

With a streamlined layout, visitors to AMI's free streaming service, AMI+, can access our stable of audio and television content created by and for the disability community. Additionally, visitors can utilize customizable accessibility settings for the blind and partially sighted community AMI serves.

Placed at the very top of the site and on every page of AMI+, users can select Accessibility Preferences and choose from eight levels of contrast, change the line spacing, and the font. Once those selections are made, the website will remember those settings. AMI+ is fully compatible with assistive technology, including screen readers and magnifiers, and Windows, Apple, and Android platforms and devices.

Stream AMI original content at [AMIplus.ca](https://amiplus.ca) today!



Underdog Inc. stars Cooper (left) and Dale Kristensen.

The AMI Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarship

Launched in 2012, the AMI Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarship was created to ensure that post-secondary education is available to members of the disability community.

The program is open to Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada with a permanent disability who are currently registered in and returning to a full-time program of study at an accredited Canadian post-secondary college or university. AMI awards two \$5,000 bursaries to two deserving students with a permanent disability: one from the English community and one from the French.

Visit AMI.ca/scholarship for more information.

Paid Internships and Apprenticeships

Exciting opportunities await students who have a passion to make a difference every day. AMI will provide a challenging and rewarding experience in the broadcast industry.

If you are enrolled in a training institution for an audio or television career, or if you are interested in developing broadcast skills or pursuing a future career in content creation, AMI will provide you with a challenging and rewarding experience in the media industry with a paid apprenticeship or internship.

Go to AMI.ca and click on the Careers page for more information and to apply.

AMI Research Panel

AMI's Research Panel serves as an ongoing feedback mechanism between AMI and the community. Canadians from the disability community are invited to join and share insights and opinions on accessible technology, TV programming, media consumption, and more through online questionnaires and telephone surveys. Join the AMI Research Panel today and help shape the future of accessible media.

Visit AMI.ca/panel for more information, and to enroll.

Looking for exclusive AMI content, you won't get anywhere else? Head to our YouTube channel for video highlights, curated playlists, and more! Head to [YouTube.com/AccessibleMedia](https://www.youtube.com/AccessibleMedia) now!

Keep up to date on everything going on at AMI and in the community we serve by signing up for the AMI newsletter at AMI.ca/newsletter and have it delivered straight to your inbox.

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The 2026 Canadian Vision Impaired Curling Championship



Curlers at the 2026 CVICC opening ceremony.

Corry Stuive – Event Coordinator & GTT Manager at CCB

Western hospitality and great curling were both in abundance at the Canadian Vision Impaired Curling Championship (CVICC) held earlier this year during White Cane Week in Edmonton.

2026 marked the first year that the championship had ever been held west of Ontario. The Edmonton Blind Curling Club (EBCC), our hosts, did an outstanding job in making the event one of the most successful to date.

Before elaborating on the specifics of this event, let's answer a few questions you might be asking.

First, why would anyone with limited or no vision want to participate in a sport played in a cold venue on a sheet of ice? Obviously, everyone's response will be different, but the fact that the sport only requires slight modification to be enjoyed by vision-impaired curlers would be high on the list. Other responses might include great physical activity, a sense of community and belonging, remaining socially connected through sport or

simply being involved in an activity enjoyed by so many.

Second, what are the modifications? A vision-impaired curling team is made up of 4 curlers. At least one of the four must be totally blind or have only light perception. The other 3 must be legally blind or have less than 20/200 vision. Along with the 4 curlers, each team has a designated sweeper whose only task is to sweep in place of the totally blind participants inability to do so and in no way is involved in calling the game. A coach/guide is also permitted on the ice to assist with “lack of vision related things” when and if required.

Beyond that, there is no variance to the game and/or its rules. The placement of the broom (typically held at the opposite end of the ice) can be modified to accommodate the vision level of the curler. For example, a curler with low vision might request the broom be held at the first hog line. A light, attached to a broom or on its own, can also be used in support of the curler releasing the stone where requested. The totally blind curler might rely on audio cues to release the stone where requested.

Back to CVICC 2026, the curling took place at the home rink of the EBCC, the Granite Curling Club. The management, staff, and volunteers at the club did an amazing job in welcoming and hosting the curlers, and the ice was first-rate!

Curlers from 7 provinces participated in the event to see who could dethrone last year’s champions from Prince George, BC. The championship began with opening ceremonies, where the curlers were piped in and welcomed to the event. The ceremonial rock was delivered by Roger Morin from Edmonton, who was honoured at the event.



Team Alberta’s Roger Morin.

Roger has been instrumental in the development of Blind curling in Western Canada and was in attendance at the first Blind Curling event ever hosted by the Lions Club of Calmar Alberta some 52 years ago.

“I had to earn the right to curl as lead for Roger, and now it’s such a privilege to curl alongside him and his daughter, winning the national championship.”

- Lori Hysert, Alberta

Round robin action began on Monday afternoon and when the dust had settled at the end of the day on Thursday, these were the final standings.

Alberta, 7 – 0
Team Canada, 6 – 1
British Columbia, 4 – 3
Nova Scotia, 4 – 3
Ontario, 3 – 4
New Brunswick, 2 – 5
Manitoba, 2 – 5
Saskatchewan, 0 – 7

Friday saw some exciting playoff action. In the final two games, Alberta defeated British Columbia 8 to 4 to win the gold medal and is now the new Team Canada and will be invited back to defend at the next CVICC. BC took silver, and Nova Scotia, who defeated the outgoing Team Canada 7 to 2 in the other playoff game, received bronze.

**The New Team Canada:
Team Alberta**

**Skip: Natalie Morin,
Third: Roger Morin
Second: Steve Vandereems
Lead: Lori Hysert
Sweeper: Carrie Anton
Coach/Guide: Mandy Collins**



Team Alberta.

“Though we didn’t bring home the Team Canada title, we did bring home something just as special—great memories, lots of laughter, new friendships, delicious food, helpful tips, and stories we’ll be sharing for years.”

- Cara Olafson, Saskatchewan

Along with the curling, participants enjoyed a “meet and greet” evening where pizza was served and friendships were rekindled or born. Other activities throughout the week include a fun-filled trivia night with a great dinner (thanks to our supporters), a trip to the West Edmonton Mall, and a fantastic wind-up banquet that was held at our host hotel, the Sandman South Edmonton.



Team Manitoba on the ice.

The CCB is extremely proud of its rich history and involvement in the sport of Vision Impaired Curling. We look forward to continuing our support of the curlers and look forward to hosting the event again in 2028, as the event will now be held biennially.



Team Nova Scotia on the ice.

“Huge thanks to the Canadian Council of the Blind and Edmonton Blind Curling! Made the 2026 CVICC unforgettable! Played curling, forged friendships & rekindled BFFs! Until 2028...”

- CCB Moncton Curling Club

There are so many people to thank for making the event the success that it was.

A special thanks goes out to EBCC President, Natalie Morin, local organizing committee Lori Hysert and Carrie Anton, event umpire Yvon Lefort, and Rob Creswick who provided transportation. Thank you to all the other volunteers and supporters of the event. We could not have done it without you; you folks made it happen!

To the curlers and guests who travelled far to be a part of the event: thanks for participating! You are all champions!

“It was a great week of curling in Edmonton. Thanks to the Canadian Council of the Blind and the Edmonton Blind Curling Club. We got the royal treatment and were spoiled for the whole week.”

- Norm Lyons, Manitoba

Swipe, Tap, and Triumph: White Cane Week Meets Paralympians



Priscilla Gagné at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games.

Amanda Lloy – Program Manager at CCB

During the 2026 White Cane Week, nearly a hundred Canadians logged on from across the country to join a two-part interactive webinar series starring two blind Canadian Paralympians: middle-distance runner Jason Dunkerley and judo athlete Priscilla Gagné. Hosted by the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB), the sessions explored the athletes’ journeys to the Paralympic Games and their lived experiences as individuals with sight loss. Reflecting on the themes of White Cane Week, both athletes also discussed their experiences using a white cane.

The Meaning of the White Cane

Recognizable by its white body and red tip, the white cane is a mobility and identification tool used by individuals who are blind or have low vision. This important symbol of independence is at the heart of White Cane Week (WCW), a public awareness event held during the full first week of February. WCW focuses on bringing awareness not only of the white cane, but of the barriers that people with sight loss face, as well as their accomplishments.

Priscilla Gagné: Finding Power Through Judo

Priscilla Gagné grew up in a small town in Ontario as someone with low sight, later diagnosed as Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). From an early age, she was on the move. She fiercely embraced trying new activities, like rollerblading, ice skating, and baseball. In her chase for activities that pushed her limits, she developed a strong drive to compete. She jokingly recalled writing a speech in middle school titled “*A Promise I Could Never Keep is to Slow Down.*”

After transitioning from a mainstream school to a school for the blind, Gagné was able to broaden her involvement in sports. She tried wrestling competitively for the first time and quickly came to love it. Around this time, a fellow wrestling teammate introduced her to judo, but she didn’t pursue it—it wouldn’t be until a chance encounter with a Paralympian at an airport years later that she returned to the sport. He connected her with a judo coach, and she began training at 23, eventually competing in her first Paralympics at 30.

In light of White Cane Week, Gagné reflected on her experiences with her white cane. She was initially resistant, fearing that it would change how people perceive her. She eventually came to see it differently:

“Now it feels like a tool. It doesn’t feel like it’s my identity—just like judo is not my identity, or a Paralympian is not my identity. My identity is me, and I choose to embrace the cane.”

When later asked for advice to someone hesitant to use a white cane, her message was memorable:

“When you are using your cane—head held high, shoulders back—that is your ticket to freedom!”

Gagné reminds us that becoming confident with your white cane allows you to develop your independence. She also encourages those who are interested in trying a new activity to take the first step, even without a clear plan. “Just do it. Just show up. Even if there is no plan, keep accountability, tell someone you’re doing it, or get someone to do it with. Don’t overthink it. It will work out.”

Balancing her life as an athlete and a professional requires skill. For Gagné, spending her time wasn’t exactly an equal distribution of leisure and training.

“Balance doesn’t always mean 50/50,” Priscilla explained.

Leading up to the Paralympics, she often trained up to six days a week. Finding balance meant making even just a sliver of time for herself, which for her looked like dressing up for church on Sundays, where she could connect with her community outside of sport. When reflecting on lessons that she learned from judo that she believed applied to everyday life, she says:

“Patience... Life is not always easy. The things we want can sometimes feel just out of reach. We just have to keep at [it].”

She notes that during competition, things don’t always go according to plan. Sometimes you lose a match, or a referee makes a call you disagree with, and you have to learn to accept and move forward.

“You cannot control what the referee does, what the other person does, or the fairness of it,” she said. “But you can control how you react.”

Jason Dunkerley: Running with Opportunity

Born in Northern Ireland and later immigrating to Canada, Jason Dunkerley has a genetic condition called Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA). Despite the rarity of the condition, Dunkerley recalls never feeling alone, noting that his younger twin brothers were born with the same disorder.

From a young age, the siblings stayed active together through a range of activities such as riding bikes and playing soccer. They rarely encountered an activity they couldn’t do with a small adaptation. He recalled a time in his youth when he and his brothers tied a plastic bag to a soccer ball, turning it into something they could hear and follow as they played.

While attending the school for the blind in Northern Ireland, Dunkerley participated in his first cross-country race at 11, marking the start of a lifelong love for the sport. After moving to Canada when he was 13, Dunkerley continued to attend a school for the blind, where running soon became an anchor in his life. Around this time, he also discovered a passion for music and learned to play the guitar.

Determined to continue athletics at a high level, Dunkerley attended the University of Guelph, known for its strong running team. After his first year of university, Dunkerley qualified for his first national team at the International Blind

Sports Association World Championships in 1998. This would kick start his accomplished career as an athlete and sports professional, including participating in the Paralympics.

Reflecting on community and connection during his journey from Northern Ireland to Canada, as well as into sports and athleticism he shared that: “Blindness is an opportunity to meet people you never otherwise would.”

Dunkerley’s sight loss has created opportunities for unique connections and encounters.

When reflecting on his early experiences with the white cane, Dunkerley noted that, having been blind from birth, it has always been a familiar tool in his life. However, through listening to the experiences of others in his community, he came to understand that individuals who lose their sight later in life often face additional barriers when learning to use the cane.

When asked to give advice on someone who is hesitant to use the cane, he said:

“It’s not a black and white transition... give yourself some grace with that. Trust that using a cane is absolutely a great option for anyone...when it comes to safety and just feeling empowered to go out in the world.”

Reflecting on his experience in sport, he said, “I think there really are so many opportunities, the sky is the limit... and I think the limiter in many instances is ourselves, and the belief [in what] we can do,” Jason says, reminding those in the blind and vision loss community that there is so much out there to explore.



Jason Dunkerley with Joshua Karanja (Guide) at the 2012 London Paralympic Games.

“What brings light to life is when we can find ways to tap into things that light us up. It doesn’t have to be sports, it can be music, gardening, reading, cooking.... All kinds of things. Figuring what some things are and developing them and exploring them and connecting with people that care about it too.”

He offers this as advice to attendees on finding interest in finding their light in life, highlighting that you can make anything your thing, and emphasizing how important it is to find community within that.

Key Takeaways

Through a powerful webinar series, audiences had the opportunity to hear the inspiring stories of two exceptional athletes. From advice on using a white cane to tips on staying active and finding your niche, participants left with a renewed sense of reassurance and motivation. Whether you were starting to lose your sight, interested in starting in a sport, or looking for an interesting story– the White Cane Webinar Series provided something for all audience members. Recorded versions of the webinar are available at cbnational.net for a deeper look into Gagné and Dunkerley’s athletic journeys and personal stories.

Chapters of the Canadian Council of the Blind

Alberta

CCB Calgary Club
CCB Edmonton Chapter
CCB GTT Edmonton Chapter

British Columbia and Yukon

CCB 100 Mile House & District Chapter
CCB Blind-Yukon Chapter
CCB Alberni Valley Chapter
CCB Campbell River White Cane Chapter
CCB Chilliwack & District Chapter
CCB Comox Valley Chapter
CCB Dogwood Chapter
CCB Festival of Friends Chapter
CCB GTT BC Chapter
CCB Kamloops White Cane Chapter
CCB Kelowna Blind Curlers Chapter
CCB Hands on Yarn Chapter
CCB Lower Mainland Chapter
CCB Nanaimo Chapter
CCB Parksville & District 69 Chapter
CCB Prince George Blind Curling Chapter
CCB Provincial Book Club
CCB South Okanagan Chapter
CCB Sunshine Coast White Cane Chapter
CCB Vancouver Arts & Culture Lovers Chapter

New Brunswick

CCB Bathurst Club
CCB Miramichi Club
CCB Moncton Curling Chapter
CCB Moncton Club

Newfoundland and Labrador

CCB St. John’s Royles Chapter
CCB Humber Valley – Bay of Islands Chapter

Nova Scotia

CCB Blind Sports Nova Scotia Chapter
CCB Crafts & Hobbies Chapter
CCB Faith, Hope & Love Chapter
CCB Sydney Curling Chapter
CCB Sydney Chapter

Ontario

CCB Afloat Chapter
CCB Chatham-Kent Chapter
CCB Club “60” Barrie Chapter
CCB Cornwall Chapter
CCB Dragon Boat Toronto Chapter
CCB GTT North Bay Chapter
CCB Hamilton Blind Curlers Chapter
CCB Hamilton Chapter
CCB Listeners Book Club
CCB London Chapter
CCB London Vision Impaired Curling Chapter

CCB Mississauga V.I.P.s Chapter

CCB Ontario Blind Golf Chapter
CCB Ottawa Blind Curlers Club
CCB Ottawa Chapter
CCB Pembroke White Cane Chapter
CCB Peterborough Chapter
CCB Road Runners Chapter
CCB Rocks Chapter
CCB Sault Ste. Marie White Cane Chapter
CCB Thunder Bay & District Chapter
CCB Toronto Blind Curling Club
CCB Toronto Ski Hawks Ski Club Chapter
CCB Toronto Visionaries Chapter
CCB Waterloo Regional Club
CCB York Region Lighthouse Chapter

Prince Edward Island

CCB Prince County Chapter
CCB Queensland Chapter
CCB Summerside Socialites Chapter

Saskatchewan

CCB Regina Chapter
CCB Ohana Saskatoon Chapter



Celebrating the Power of Community: National Volunteer Week 2026



A team of CNIB volunteers.

Andrew Galster – Executive Director, Operations and Volunteers at CNIB

From April 19 to 25, communities across the country marked National Volunteer Week, a time to recognize the people who show up, pitch in, and help build a stronger, more connected Canada. In the sight loss community, this week is especially meaningful. It's a chance to celebrate

the thousands of volunteers who contribute to creating connection and possibility every single day.

At CNIB alone, more than 1,500 volunteers from coast to coast to coast give over 600,000 hours each year. And CNIB is just one organization in our community. Across the country, volunteers are building a world where people with sight loss can pursue their goals, build relationships, and explore new opportunities.

Volunteers give in many ways, and their impact is everywhere.

Across our community, volunteers **create spaces where people can connect** with others who share similar experiences. Through facilitating peer support and social groups, they provide a welcoming environment to exchange ideas, learn new skills, and build lasting friendships. For someone beginning their journey with sight loss, these groups can open the door to practical tips, encouragement, and a renewed sense of confidence.

With individuals, volunteers **build meaningful one-to-one connections**. Through programs like Vision Mates and mentoring, volunteers and

participants work together to achieve personal goals, whether that's getting out into the community, trying something new, or building independence in everyday life.

At the cutting edge of technology, volunteers **teach tools and skills** that support independence and connection. From learning how to navigate an iPhone using Voiceover to exploring new assistive devices, these shared learning moments open doors to communication, connection, and information.

Bridging outward from our community, volunteers **raise awareness and advocate** for a more inclusive Canada. They share their perspectives, educate others, and contribute to conversations that shape communities, workplaces, and public spaces.

Even behind the scenes, **volunteers provide administrative support** – answering the door, making phone calls, organizing information, and connecting people across organizations.

Of course, these are only some examples of the many ways that volunteers choose to give. Every day, across the country, people are finding ways to contribute their time, skills, and experience to the sight loss community.

A changing landscape and a dedicated community.

Across Canada, volunteering is evolving. Recent data from Statistics Canada shows that while fewer people are volunteering overall and total volunteer hours have declined, a consistent pattern remains: those who are most engaged continue to give significantly. In fact, the top 10% of volunteers account for more than half of all volunteer hours.

The sight loss community reflects this broader trend. While many people are balancing busy schedules and competing priorities, our

dedicated volunteers continue to show up in meaningful ways. And their commitment ensures that programs, services, and connections remain strong.

It also highlights something else important: every contribution matters. Whether it's a few hours at an event or an ongoing role, each moment adds up. At CNIB alone, volunteer contributions equate to a value of more than \$11 million each year. Extended across the whole sight loss community, the scale of impact from volunteers is both impressive and irreplicable.

The wonderful thing about volunteering is that everyone can do it. Community members with the lived experience of sight loss, family members, allies, supporters, and partners – we all build this community together. From preparing coffee at a peer social, to mentoring a young person as they start their career, to standing in the halls of power to fight for our rights, everyone can contribute to our community in their unique way.

Every role matters. Every contribution counts.

National Volunteer Week is a moment to celebrate, but it is also an invitation. An invitation to recognize the impact of volunteers in our community, to appreciate the people who make it possible, and to consider how each of us can play a part. When people come together with a shared purpose, the possibilities grow.

Every hour given builds a stronger, more connected sight loss community in Canada. And every action, big or small, shapes our community and creates a future where Canadians with sight loss can live the lives they choose.

That's something worth celebrating, not just this week, but all year long.



JOURNÉE MACULA : UN RASSEMBLEMENT QUI REDONNE DE L'ÉLAN

À l'automne dernier s'est tenue la première Journée Macula dans l'histoire de l'Association québécoise de la dégénérescence maculaire (AQDM). Pendant quelques heures, des personnes vivant avec la dégénérescence maculaire, des proches, du personnel spécialisé en santé et des alliés se sont réunis pour échanger de l'information, partager des expériences et découvrir des outils concrets.

La Journée Macula visait notamment à établir des liens entre les personnes qui y participaient afin qu'elles puissent se reconnaître dans le cheminement des autres. Cette approche a permis de briser l'isolement et de redonner de l'élan à plusieurs! Ce grand rassemblement a aussi mis en lumière une réalité trop souvent sous-estimée : l'adaptation à la maladie est un processus continu.

Vivre avec une maladie qui évolue

On le sait, la dégénérescence maculaire évolue au fil du temps, des besoins, des capacités et des contextes de vie. Par conséquent, il n'existe pas de solution unique ni de trajectoire linéaire. Les gens composent avec leur réalité, à leur rythme, avec les outils qui leur conviennent.

Enfin, la Journée Macula nous a rappelé que le travail ne s'arrête pas une fois les chaises rangées. Il ne s'agissait donc pas d'une fin en soi, mais d'un point de départ où des organisations qui sont alliées de l'Association ont expliqué en quoi ils peuvent venir en aide aux gens qui souffrent de cette maladie oculaire à différents moments de leur vie.

L'AQDM poursuit un travail essentiel chaque jour : informer, accompagner, défendre l'autonomie et la dignité des personnes vivant avec la dégénérescence maculaire. Parce qu'au-delà d'un tel rassemblement, c'est une démarche collective qui se construit.



MACULA DAY: A GATHERING THAT BROUGHT NEW MOMENTUM

Last fall, the Quebec macular degeneration association (Association québécoise de la dégénérescence maculaire - AQDM) held its first-ever Macula Day. For a few hours, people living with macular degeneration, their loved ones, medical experts, and allies came together to share information, talk about their experiences, and learn more about helpful resources.

The goal of Macula Day was to create a space where participants could network and bond over their shared journeys, ultimately helping them feel less isolated and, in many cases, more optimistic.

Living With an Evolving Condition

One key—and often overlooked—fact emerged from this sizable event, which is that adapting to the disease is an ongoing process. We know that macular degeneration evolves over time, bringing changes in needs, abilities, and lifestyle habits for patients. For that reason, there is no one solution or linear path to the disease. Patients cope with their situation as best they can, using the tools that work best for them.

Macula Day was also a wakeup call—that the work doesn't end once all the chairs have been stacked and put away. In that sense, the event wasn't a culmination so much as a starting point where the AQDM's allies explained how they help people living with macular degeneration at different stages of their lives.

Every day, the AQDM is hard at work on the ground, providing information, supporting, and advocating for the autonomy and dignity of people with macular degeneration. Because events like Macula Day aren't just for show; they're the foundation of a collective movement.



FIGHTING
BLINDNESS
CANADA

RESEARCH FOR TOMORROW. SUPPORT FOR TODAY.

Fighting Blindness Canada (FBC) is the largest national funder of vision health research in Canada. But breakthroughs don't happen overnight. Transformative vision research can take years – sometimes decades – to move from discovery to treatment. While that work continues, FBC is also committed to ensuring people living with vision loss today can get some answers through accessible, expert-led education and connection programs.

View Point Education Series

At the centre of this effort is FBC's View Point education series – an ongoing program designed to connect Canadians with the latest research, clinical insights, and practical information about eye health. These sessions – both online and in person – bring together leading researchers and clinicians to share updates on emerging therapies and clinical trials.

Eye Health Resources

FBC also extends its educational impact through comprehensive eye health pages on its website. These resources offer clear, trusted information on a wide range of eye diseases, helping individuals better understand symptoms, progression, and current research. Designed to be accessible and easy to navigate, these pages serve as a reliable starting point for anyone seeking to learn more about their diagnosis or support a loved one.

Community Connections

What sets FBC's View Point sessions apart is their focus on connection. Many events include a dedicated Community Connect session, where people living with vision loss can come together to share experiences, reflect, and support one another.

Health Information Line

Beyond webinars and events, FBC also offers ongoing, personalized support through our Health Information Line. This free resource connects individuals with specialists who can provide trusted information about eye conditions, research developments, and available supports. **You can reach the Health Information Line at: 1.888.626.2995, or at healthinfo@fightingblindness.ca.**

Together, these programs ensure that while research is building the future, Canadians affected by vision loss have the knowledge, resources, and community they need right now.

Learn more about upcoming educational events: [FightingBlindness.ca/viewpoint](https://fightingblindness.ca/viewpoint)



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VISION LOSS REHABILITATION™

CANADA

How Canada's Vast Geography Influences a New Vision for Rehabilitation

Shane Guadeloupe – Manager, Marketing and Communications at VLRC

After five days in Red Lake, ON, the team drives 270 km to Kenora, ON, for a day of community care before continuing to Rainy River, ON. In nine days, they'll examine and treat 300 patients.

Every year, the Eye Van, operated by Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC), provides eye care services to underserved rural and remote communities in Northern Ontario. For these communities, the Eye Van's annual visit is a lifeline to much-needed eye care.

“Whenever I needed information, they responded promptly and made sure I had everything I needed. Throughout the procedures, their efforts to ensure I felt comfortable did not go unnoticed.”

- Eye Van Patient



Eye Van Ophthalmic Assistants Mahsa Farahani and Hamidreza Aminparvin.

What does vision care access look like across Canada?

The *Living with Vision Loss in Canada: Survey Report 2025* offers one of the clearest answers to date. Wanting to better understand the real, on-the-ground state of vision rehabilitation and support across the country, VLRC conducted a survey to hear directly from Canadians living with vision loss—and what came back was revealing.

Based on 1,075 responses, the report highlights significant variation in experiences with vision rehabilitation. Rural respondents frequently mentioned service gaps, with 9.6 percent identifying distance as a barrier.

Nearly one-third of respondents who had not used rehabilitation services were unaware they existed, and 20 per cent didn't know how to access them. Limited referral networks in smaller communities further compound these barriers.

Building Better Pathways to Rehabilitation

Understanding how individuals access rehabilitation services is just as crucial as knowing that the services are available.

The survey revealed that the most common way into rehabilitation was through a referral from an ophthalmologist or optometrist — nearly half of respondents (46.8 per cent) arrived this way. Another 22 per cent referred themselves, and 7.1 per cent were directed by a family member or relative.

For Canadians in rural, remote, and underserved areas, guaranteed access to an eye care professional is often lacking, leading to fewer referrals for rehabilitation. These access and awareness challenges are even more pronounced in underserved regions.

Considering this perspective, the referral process highlights equity concerns and presents an opportunity for a national organization to develop community-focused entry points. Integrating referrals to rehabilitation into existing health, home, and community programs can mitigate access issues, especially when traditional rehabilitation options are limited.

Innovation Born from Necessity

What does it take to provide equitable vision rehabilitation across a country of this size?

The honest answer is that no single model is enough. Across Canada, VLRC's approach has been to develop three programs that reflect different geographies, communities, and care stages. Each one has a distinct focus: the Eye Van delivers direct clinical care to rural communities; the Eye Health Screening Initiative (EHSI) provides targeted screenings to identify diabetic retinopathy among at-risk populations; and the GAIN Program offers navigation and support for disability benefits. Together, these initiatives demonstrate this multifaceted strategy in action.

The Eye Van, serving Northern Ontario since 1972, brings eye care directly to communities facing distance barriers. Each year, it travels over 6,000 kilometres with a team of over 25 ophthalmologists who serve nearly 4,500 patients.



The Eye Van at one of its tour stops in Gore Bay, ON.



Josie McGee, Vice President, Health Care Innovation.

The EHSI focuses on early detection and prevention by providing portable screening services, particularly for underserved, rural, remote, and Indigenous individuals living with diabetes. While diabetic retinopathy is a leading cause of vision loss in Canada and especially prevalent among adults younger than 75, screening and follow-up services have been hardest to access in the most at-risk communities.

“EHSI was designed to meet people where they are,” says Josie McGee, Vice President, Healthcare Innovation at VLRC. “It embeds portable screening into trusted local programs, so communities don’t have to travel for care. We’ve learned that equitable care is built, not delivered: technology helps, but trusted local partnerships and leadership make it work.”

VLRC created the award-winning EHSI to serve remote communities by incorporating screenings into local programs, eliminating the need for travel. Starting in Ontario and screening over 2,300 individuals with 50+

community partners, it has expanded coast to coast. In British Columbia, new partnerships helped it reach nearly 300 individuals in its first year. The EHSI now operates in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and the Yukon, with its first clinic in Whitehorse. The model remains consistent: portable technology, trusted local partnerships, and community-based care.

The GAIN Program — Guidance and Assistance in Navigating Disability Supports — takes a different approach, focusing on helping Canadians with disabilities access the financial benefits and tax credits to which they are entitled. Unlike direct clinical or screening services, GAIN centers on system navigation and personalized support for clients as they pursue benefits.

Navigating federal, provincial, and territorial disability benefit systems can be overwhelming, leaving many Canadians uncertain, denied applications, and supports unclaimed. Through GAIN, VLRC’s Disability Benefit Navigators provide free, personalized support from start to finish — guiding clients from applications to appeals, if necessary. Each client is supported by the same Navigator throughout their journey.

One GAIN client, previously denied disability benefits a decade ago, described a Navigator’s call simply: “It is nice to have a human voice letting me know that this program is available. It shows that someone cares.”

The difference was just as clear to a caregiver supporting her mother through the process. “This program is giving my mom things we didn’t think were possible.”



The EHSI in Port Douglas, BC, features Kamyar Mohamadi, VLRC’s Low Vision Specialist, conducting a diabetic retinopathy screening.

What This Means Nationally

VLRC’s innovative programs demonstrate responsiveness to local needs, designing initiatives that address specific community requirements while maintaining scalability for adoption in other jurisdictions nationwide. Every remote screening, benefits navigator call, and referral to rehabilitation reflects a care model built to be equitable by design. The question is not if this approach can be expanded, but how swiftly it can be scaled to serve more communities.

“Canada is vast, and our work in rural, remote, and underserved areas is transforming vision rehabilitation and habilitation,” says VLRC’s President and CEO, Jennifer Urosevic. “By expanding our partnerships and designing for the hardest-to-reach populations, we create better solutions for everyone.”

If you would like to read the “Living with Vision Loss in Canada: Survey Report 2025,” you can find it by visiting the website: visionlossrehab.ca/en/about-us/reports-and-publications. This resource may provide valuable insights into the experiences of individuals living with vision loss in Canada. Learn more about the EHSI and the GAIN Program on visionlossrehab.ca under Programs.




Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of vision loss in people over the age of 55, affecting ~2.5 million Canadians

In AMD, your central vision is affected, making it harder to do activities like reading, driving, and distinguishing faces.



AMD is a progressive disease, which means that it gets worse over time.

There are three stages of AMD based on the number of drusen on the retina. Drusen are tiny yellow or white spots made up of proteins and fatty substances that result in central vision loss. There are three stages of AMD based on the number of drusen on the retina.

EARLY STAGE	INTERMEDIATE STAGE	LATER STAGE
<p>Low quantity of drusen.</p>  <p>Doesn't cause noticeable symptoms or vision loss.</p>	<p>The quantity of drusen is higher than it was in the early stage.</p>  <p>Mild blurriness in central vision or trouble seeing in low lighting.</p>	<p>The quantity of drusen is quite high. It's at this point that AMD will be split into the dry type or wet type.</p>  <p>Very noticeable symptoms, namely central vision loss. Straight lines look wavy or crooked. Growing blurriness, trouble seeing in low lighting, blank spots, and colors appear less bright.</p>

What is the difference between dry and wet AMD?

Dry AMD	Wet AMD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characterized by gradual thinning and breakdown of the macula, the center of the retina that is responsible for detailed central vision Central vision loss tends to occur more slowly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caused by leaky blood vessels that damage the macula Sudden onset with more rapid and significant central vision loss

Did you know?

- Risk factors for AMD include older age, smoking, extensive UV light exposure, family history of AMD and cardiovascular disease
- Wet AMD accounts for 10% – 20% of AMD cases
- 80% – 90% of severe cases of AMD-related vision loss are caused by wet AMD
- Once AMD is present in one eye, there is an increased chance of it developing in the other eye
- Self-monitoring for AMD-related vision changes can be done at home using an Amster grid

Keep healthy vision in focus: visit your doctor for a routine eye exam†



Learn how to live with and manage AMD

Scan this QR code or visit fightingblindness.ca to access helpful resources and tips on coping with vision changes in AMD

Recognizing the signs early:

Elizabeth Tully's Journey with AMD

How long have you been diagnosed with AMD?

I've been aware of having AMD for about 25 years and I've had wet AMD for about 9 years. I knew much earlier that I had a high risk of developing it. In my early 40s, a relative mentioned it, and I later learned that both my mother and another cousin had it as well. That planted the idea in my mind, though I didn't think much about it at the time.

For me, the vision changes were so gradual that I naturally adapted without realizing it. It wasn't until I developed the advanced form, wet AMD, that I really started noticing the differences.

Looking back, what were some of these vision changes you dismissed or overlooked at very initial stages?

Early on, I had difficulty seeing when moving from a light to a dark environment. I first noticed this when I went into a movie theater after the movie had started. I couldn't find any vacant seats, so I walked along the row, found one that looked empty and sat down, only to realize someone was sitting there. Fortunately, we both had a good sense of humor. But, at that time, it didn't occur to me that it could be my AMD, but now I recognize it as one of the first symptoms. I also remember having trouble reading under poor lighting conditions. The lines would sometimes merge, or individual letters would appear in the wrong places. I'd have to blink really hard to get the lines to settle down.

Another issue I had was when I was out walking. Sometimes I'd suddenly fall, and I now realize it was because I was losing my depth perception and contrast sensitivity. Even performing tasks like cutting a piece of paper, I'd end up cutting into thin air above or below it. For me, these changes were so gradual and slow that I didn't even realize I was losing these skills.

How did knowing about your potential risk for AMD impact your approach to managing the condition and your daily life?

I strongly believe that people should have the opportunity to know if AMD could be in their future, if they want to know. For me, that knowledge was invaluable. There's a mindset in the medical world, particularly in ophthalmology, that if something can't be treated or cured, it shouldn't be discussed because it could upset the patient. But for me, it's the opposite—I'm much better at dealing with what I know rather than the unknown. I'm independent and a planner by nature, and you can't plan for something big like this without knowing about it. I understand that not everyone wants to know, but for those who do, I think testing can be incredibly helpful. It allowed me to be proactive—like noticing my loss of depth perception and contrast sensitivity—and make adjustments, like picking up my feet more when walking.

How did you react when you were told your condition had progressed to wet AMD?

By the time I saw him, I had been going to him for about three years, ever since I was diagnosed with early AMD in one eye and moderate to intermediate in the other. He had confirmed the wet AMD diagnosis and seemed pretty matter of fact about it. I remember feeling a mix of anxiety and acceptance—it wasn't entirely unexpected, but hearing the words still made it real. I just wanted to know what came next and how we could manage it.

What would you say to someone that might be ignoring the early signs of vision change?

Ignoring it doesn't mean it won't happen. It just means you will be less prepared than you could have otherwise been if you had delved into the situation earlier.

AMD doesn't wait. Neither should you. If something feels off, get your eyes checked.

Early detection can help protect your vision. Schedule an eye exam today.



Learn how to live with and manage AMD

Scan this QR code or visit fightingblindness.ca to access helpful resources and tips on coping with vision changes in AMD

† Adults without eye conditions aged 40 – 64 should have routine eye exams every 2 years. Adults aged 65 years or older should have an annual eye exam.



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Testimony presented is from a real patient recounting their personal experience with AMD. This individual has provided their consent to share their story and image for the purpose of bringing awareness to AMD. Please note that individual experiences with AMD may vary. This is intended for general informational and awareness purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. For medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, please consult a healthcare professional. This material is unbranded and does not endorse or promote any specific medical treatments or products.



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Donations through wills are often tax beneficial to your estate and loved ones while offering you the opportunity to empower the blind community. Your legacy can live on through technology training, preventive eye health advocacy, and innovative research.

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The Vision Health Partners' Coalition

The Vision Health Partners' Coalition (VHPC) is a group of not-for-profit organizations working together to improve vision care across Canada. We advocate for policy change, raise public awareness, and support research and education that help Canadians protect and manage their eye health.

We believe everyone in Canada—no matter where they live or their income or background—

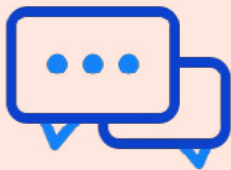
should have access to affordable, high-quality eye care. Good vision care helps people stay independent, continue working, and fully participate in everyday life.

That is why VHPC is proud to support Health Canada in developing a National Strategy for Eye Care. Together, coalition members have created a shared set of recommendations to help guide the strategy and strengthen eye care for people across the country.





Is wet AMD disrupting life's best moments?



There are solutions that can help.
Talk to your ophthalmologist.
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If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact Roche at 1-800-561-1759.

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