

# The Blind Canadian

A publication of the Canadian Federation of the Blind (CFB)



## In This Issue:

- MP Carla Qualtrough drafts national disability access law
- Gina graduates from Louisiana Center for the Blind
- Advocacy and personal success stories
- Remembering Michael Freeman



# CFB

The Canadian Federation of the Blind is not an organization speaking for the blind — it is the blind speaking for themselves.



# CFB

The Canadian Federation of the Blind is a non-profit, grassroots organization created by and for Blind Canadians. Its mandate is to improve the lives of blind people across the country through:

- blind people mentoring blind people;
- public education about the abilities of blind people;
- advocacy to create better opportunities and training for Blind Canadians.

The long white cane is a symbol of empowerment and a tool for independence.

With proper training, opportunity and a positive attitude, blindness is nothing more than a characteristic. Blind people can do almost everything sighted people can do; sometimes they just use alternative techniques to get the job done.

We are educated. We have skills. We are independent. We are parents. We are teachers. We have wisdom. We represent the same range of human diversity, strengths and weaknesses as any other sector of the population.

The CFB would like to realize a positive future for all people who are blind. A future where blind people can find employment; a future where blind people are valued for their contributions; a future where blind people are treated like anyone else.

This future involves you. No matter who you are, blind or sighted, you can work with us to realize this dream.

Together, we can create change in our social landscape, for the real barriers blind people face are erected by ignorance and misunderstanding. Help us achieve what we all want: to be treated with dignity and respect. Join us today and be a part of the solution.

## **Our Philosophy**

**We are not an organization speaking on behalf of blind people; rather we are an organization of blind people speaking for ourselves.**

**We believe it is respectable to be blind.**

**We believe that with proper training and opportunity, blind people can compete on terms of equality with their sighted peers.**

**We believe the real problem of blindness is not the lack of eyesight. The real problem is the lack of positive information about blindness and the achievements of blind people.**



*Committed to the  
equality of blind Canadians*

# **CFB The Blind Canadian**

**A publication of the Canadian Federation of the Blind**

The **Canadian Federation of the Blind (CFB)** is a not-for-profit, entirely volunteer, grassroots organization, incorporated on June 2nd, 1999.

The Blind Canadian offers a positive philosophy of blindness; serves as a vehicle for advocacy and civil rights; addresses social concerns affecting the blind; discusses issues relating to employment, education, legislation and rehabilitation; and provides news of products and technology used by blind people.

We publish two issues annually of "The Blind Canadian" targeted at informing members of the general public about blindness and issues blind Canadians face. It is the leading publication of the CFB; it covers the events and activities of the CFB and addresses the issues and concerns of blind Canadians. Look for the magazine at **www.cfb.ca** in print, Braille, or audio downloadable form, or request a physical copy.

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# Blind MP to Draft National Accessibility Law

## Human Rights Lawyer and Paralympian Seeks Input in Crafting New Legislation

By Laurie Monsebraaten

*Toronto Star, August 28, 2016. Reprinted with permission.*

*From the Blind Canadian editor: Several CFB members have spoken at these town hall meetings, including Graeme McCreath and Oriano Belusic in Victoria, B.C., and Nancy Gill and Mary Ellen Gabias in Vancouver, B.C. Please see Mary Ellen's report following this article.*



Carla Qualtrough, who is legally blind, grew up learning alternative ways of doing almost everything.

"When I was growing up, it was called accommodation. But today it's called innovation," said Qualtrough, 44, Canada's federal minister of sport and first-ever minister responsible for people with disabilities.

The human rights lawyer and former Paralympics and world championship swimming medallist is helping Canadians think about disability in a new way as she crafts the country's first national accessibility legislation.

Under the current legal framework, people with disabilities can only defend their rights once they have been ignored, a process the minister called "exhausting, expensive and unfairly burdensome."

"When systems and spaces are accessible, every Canadian wins. Barriers are bad for business," Qualtrough told a gathering last week at Whitby's Abilities Centre, where she announced a series of national round-tables and town hall meetings this fall.

The government has received more than 700 submissions since online consultations on the new law began in July.

Canadians have until February 2017 to give their views.

Qualtrough will report on the consultations next spring and said she hopes to have legislation ready to introduce in the Commons by the end of 2017 or early 2018.

The MP from Delta, B.C., said she was thrilled when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave her the double-barrelled portfolio - encompassing her two life passions - and told her to "go out and change the world."

"No pressure," she quipped. "The creation of this cabinet position makes it very clear that people with disabilities are important to our government and that we deserve to be considered in every decision around the cabinet table."

Just as Ginger Rogers once noted how she had to perform the same artistic feats as her dance partner, Fred Astaire - but backwards and in high heels - people with disabilities are masters of innovation, Qualtrough said.

"Imagine the creativity that persons with disabilities must employ every day to navigate buildings, products and services that were not designed with their needs in mind," she said.

"Development of creative products, ways of doing things and - ultimately - a different way of looking at the world" are key to Canada's quest for accessibility, she added.

Qualtrough, who has worked in human rights at both the federal and provincial levels and served as staff for several Liberal cabinet ministers on Parliament Hill between 1999 and 2005, knows her way around Ottawa.

But the busy mother of four, including two teenage stepchildren and her own 6- and 3-year-old kids, admits she hesitated when asked to run for office a year and a half ago.

She's glad she took the plunge.

"It's a very interesting time in the evolution of disability rights," she said.

For the government to create a cabinet position and to give it to someone with a disability, "it's a big deal."

Toronto lawyer David Lepofsky, co-chair of Barrier-Free Canada, which called for a national law during last year's election, is also excited about Qualtrough's appointment and her mandate.

"It's great that the federal government is going to do a national consultation on this to hear from people," said Lepofsky, who is also blind.

Canada is late to the table when it comes to accessibility legislation. The United States has had the Americans with Disabilities Act since 1990. The landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was introduced in 2005, with a goal of making the province fully accessible by 2025.

Ontario's experience will help guide the federal law, Qualtrough said. But she will also be looking at how other provinces and countries legislate accessibility and learn from their successes and shortcomings.

One of Qualtrough's main goals is to develop a common definition for disability that would apply to all federal laws and regulations and eventually be adopted by the provinces.

"Let's try and harmonize our approach to disability across the federal government. That would be huge for Canadians."

Qualtrough expects public consultations, the country's first national conversation about accessibility, will provide valuable input for Ottawa's legislation and other federal programs such as the Canada Pension Plan, Disability Benefit, the Disability Tax Credit and the Registered Disability Savings Plan.

It may even show provincial and municipal governments where they are coming up short.

"We know we are going to hear way more than what is going to be covered by the law. And that is intentional," she said.

## **Vancouver Public Consultation on New Federal Access Law (For the future Canadians with Disabilities Act)**

### **Report by Mary Ellen Gabias, CFB President**

On November 26, Nancy Gill and I attended the Vancouver, B.C. town hall meeting on the new federal disability access law. It was similar to the one Oriano Belusic and Graeme McCreath attended in Victoria on November 7, except this one was much bigger. Fifty people asked to speak, so the time allotted to each person began at five minutes but was eventually cut to three.

Nancy was the fifth person to speak. She gave a from-the-heart plea for rehabilitation and told how her requests for funding had been denied.

I was number 34. That meant I spoke during the second half when times were cut down; it also meant that many of the participants had left at the break. However, Minister Qualtrough was in the room when Nancy and I spoke.

I touched briefly on the need for government funded accountable rehabilitation and the need for individual choice. I gave several suggestions of ways the federal government could encourage innovation and competition in rehabilitation. I also

talked about access to books, encouraging government to make sure that books born digital are also born accessible, and I praised the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) for its integrated structure. In the area of employment, I touched on the problem of treating all disabilities as if they're the same and I pointed out the 90% unemployment rate among blind people. Quotas don't work because of "creaming," a practice that counts people with minor disabilities in the same way as those belonging to a group with more severe employment problems. I explained that subsidizing jobs often means that the job ends with the subsidy. I suggested picking several occupations in a variety of employment areas, intensively training blind people, intensively placing them in jobs, following up until the jobs are secure, and publicizing the successes in detail to act as a template for employers.

Clearly I could only touch on the main points. Our written submission will need to fill in the blanks. Please keep thinking about what you want our submission to include. Very early in January 2017 we'll be holding a telephone conference call session, like the in-person one we held in Nanaimo, B.C. last August, to pull our submission into final form. Also, each of you have the opportunity to write your own comments using the on-line submission form on the government website.

I love the way the skills and passions of CFB members compliment and reinforce one another. Nancy's very personal and deeply felt statement turned what would have been a policy plea for service into something very real and personal. It was good that she spoke near the beginning and I spoke near the end, kind of like bookends.

Several deaf-blind people spoke, as did Bill from the Sunshine Coast, who talked about problems with federal customs officials wanting to scan his dog and take off its equipment. Rob Sleath gave a general speech and urged people to join the BC Access 2024 initiative. I had to leave at the time the meeting was scheduled to end or I would have missed my flight home to Kelowna, so I don't know if any other blind person or organization spoke after me. Unfortunately for the later speakers, Carla Qualtrough had to leave about the time I did, so she didn't hear them.

I don't know where this saying originated, but I've heard it said that 80% of life is showing up. If that's true, then CFB has gained by showing up, not once, but twice.



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## **Doctor Piano is Blind, But He's Also a Top Piano Mover**

**Gary Trenholm jokes he was 'hell bent to be a blind person,' but it hasn't hampered his career**

**By Elizabeth Chiu, *CBC News*, July 31, 2015  
*Reprinted with permission: CBC Licensing***

Gary Trenholm, 60, became blind through old-fashioned child's play.

When he was five years old, he was hit in his left eye with a BB.

Doctors performed surgeries and managed to save his eyesight, but after just a few months he was playing again with a bow and arrow.

As luck would have it, an arrow struck him in the eye.

Trenholm hid the wound from his parents and the infection spread quickly.

At the age of six his left eye was "yanked out."

He believes he was the first in North America to undergo cornea transplant surgery when he was 16. But it wasn't successful, and his right eye was removed.

"I was hell bent to be a blind person," Trenholm said with a laugh. "Just the type of accidents I had you'd have a hard time making them happen again if you set out to do it."

Gary Trenholm co-owns Doctor Piano in Halifax.

His blindness hasn't stopped Trenholm for becoming a successful businessman. He is the co-owner of Doctor Piano in Halifax, which sells, tunes and moves pianos - from a popular upright model to a \$90,000 Steinway grand piano.

He's proud to say the business was established in 1977.

Trenholm tunes pianos, although he spends most of his time managing the store's day-to-day operations.

He can also move pianos like nobody's business, except that it is his business.

"They're heavy and they're awkward," he said. "You have to make sure you keep it balanced all the time."

Despite not being able to see, the mover has never had to file an insurance claim for causing major damage.

"Most everyone who calls us, it's through word of mouth and word of confidence. All of the institutions, from the Maritime Conservatory [of Performing Arts] and Dalhousie and Acadia and St. FX [universities]. All the schools and the teachers," he said.

"It's got to the point now where I'm trusted enough that people will say 'Go see Gary and he'll take care of you.' That's great."

He chalks up his skill to experience.

"I don't stop and think how these things are done very much. You sort of operate on instinct a lot of the time," he said. "When you go to put your shoes on, you have a pretty good idea where your feet are all the time."

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/doctor-piano-is-blind-but-he-is-also-a-top-piano-mover-1.3175543>



*Mary Ellen Gabias  
CFB President*

## **CFB Annual General Meeting and Election Report**

**Ramada Hotel, Nanaimo, B.C.**

**Saturday, August 13, 2016**

**By Mary Ellen Gabias**

Thanks to everyone who attended the CFB AGM in Nanaimo last weekend. A huge thanks goes to Donna Hudon and the Nanaimo folks for putting on an event that was energizing, relaxing and a bit pampering. The hotel accommodations were comfortable, the location convenient and the staff uniformly courteous and helpful. Donna found a caterer I would cheerfully kidnap to Kelowna!

When we in CFB get together, we draw strength from one another and we share a depth of feeling that we don't always have the freedom to share. This gathering was no exception. I came away from the weekend feeling energized and encouraged by the commitment, skill and determination I found in that room.

The day consisted of three major items (with delicious food intermingled throughout!) First, we talked at great length about the proposed Federal Persons with Disabilities Act, or as it is being referred to more and more frequently, the Access Act. It isn't possible to explain all the discussion here. The government has put out a document intended to steer the discussion. We used it as a jumping off place for our thoughts and opinions. As a follow-up, we're going to provide a link to the discussion paper and ask CFB list participants to respond to the discussion questions it contains. The resulting opinions will be gathered together into a paper we will submit to government.

Another main topic of concern is the unintended consequences of the new BC guide and service dog legislation. It is clear from the experiences of the guide dog handlers in the room that access rights are under more severe threat now than they had been in the memory of any advocates present. We decided to strongly encourage guide dog users who face challenges to access rights to video their experiences, either as live shots while the incident proceeds or as summaries after the fact. It is our intention to put together a package of information to alert the press to the problems the new act has exacerbated. The group was also brought up to date on the ways to file a formal complaint with the new provincial Registrar, the recent Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) victory, and the pending court challenge concerning the Human Rights Tribunal and taxi discrimination. We heard some heartbreaking stories about guide dog team discrimination; the group expressed its determination to stand tall alongside those whose rights have been dismissed and whose dignity has been denied.

As this was our AGM, I'll end this report with the results of our elections. I thank the members of CFB for the incredible honour of electing me to serve as your president for another two years. The work we do is serious and I'm fully aware that you have entrusted me with a major responsibility. The work we do is also fun and energizing and CFB members are so generous with their time and support that mostly it doesn't feel like work at all! You also once again elected Graeme McCreath as your treasurer. Managing our treasury is a detail-laden task; Graeme, with the strong support of his wife Christine, makes it appear simple. We all appreciate his generosity in taking on this task for another two years.

It was particularly heartening that so many people present volunteered to understudy the executive in order to learn the mechanics of CFB tasks. We're in good hands as new people grow in confidence and knowledge.

## **CFB Executive 2016-17**

President, Mary Ellen Gabias

Vice President, Oriano Belusic

Secretary, Elizabeth Lalonde

Treasurer, Graeme McCreath

Member at Large, Donna Hudon

## **2017 B.C. Budget Consultation**

*Editor's note: Mary Ellen Gabias, CFB President, attended the Select Standing Committee on Budget and Finance held in Kelowna, B.C. on September 21, 2016. CFB makes a submission each year in hopes of making positive change for blind people in B.C.*

The following is CFB's submission to the budget consultation process. It's similar to our submissions from the past several years except for the added brief summary at the beginning.

### **Summary**

It is long past time for British Columbia to recognize the right of blind people to receive training that leads to independence and employment for those of working age.

The Canadian Federation of the Blind (CFB) believes provision of meaningful training should be publicly funded, publicly accountable, and the outcome of training services should be publicly disclosed and evaluated.

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We recommend that funds currently provided to CNIB be redirected to pay for a public process in order to develop a long-term plan for maximizing accountable and effective rehabilitation options.

## **Background**

Government has partially funded the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) but has imposed very little accountability for outcomes. The province has tried to claim credit for random successes while refusing to be held accountable for the overall failure of CNIB. In fact, government is so out of touch that most legislators appear to be unaware that CNIB is failing abysmally!

We strongly deplore this abdication of control of what should be public services to CNIB, an unaccountable private Toronto corporation.

The charity model was appropriate a hundred years ago; it is demeaning and destructive today! There is no reason to believe that continuing to support the CNIB corporate monopoly will lead to a future that is any better than the current dismal unemployment rate that some have estimated as approaching ninety per cent.

Cost-benefit analysis has shown that investment in good rehabilitation results in overall savings due to significant reductions in public assistance caseloads and increased taxes paid by employed individuals. Other costs, such as paratransit and personal care support, are also decreased. It is difficult to estimate the likely costs and benefits in British Columbia because the province has never made a commitment to creating an effective rehabilitation plan.

The Canadian Federation of the Blind recommends a system in which individualized service plans are developed jointly by the individual seeking services and a navigator who is responsible for assisting individuals to explore all available options. The province needs to adopt policies encouraging innovation and competition. Adopting this approach with respect to rehabilitation would lead to the development of creative and effective service models.

Simply funding CNIB with no meaningful alternative and no outcome based oversight is wasteful of provincial funds and squanders the potential and blights the futures of blind people in this province.

The Canadian Federation of the Blind submits the following statement of principles:

## **Position Statement of the Canadian Federation of the Blind Concerning Rehabilitation**

1. Blind and vision impaired Canadians have the right to the opportunity to learn the skills and attitudes of blindness necessary to succeed economically and socially. Because the opportunity to learn these skills is a right, it must be provided at government expense. Just as the right to a free and public education exists for all Canadian children, the right to rehabilitation must be provided to blind and vision impaired adults.
2. Blind and vision impaired Canadians are not a homogeneous group. Therefore, it is appropriate that a variety of rehabilitation options be available to meet varying needs.
3. Individuals seeking rehabilitation have the right to informed consent when choosing the type of services that best fit their needs.
4. Funding for rehabilitation should follow the individual, not the program.
5. An Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan, specifying the type of training to be provided, the responsibilities of the entity providing the training, the government funding it, and the rehabilitation student, and the expected outcomes must be drawn up and agreed to jointly by the government, the blind individual, and the service provider.
6. Evaluation of contracts for rehabilitation should be based on the outcomes for the students, not merely on the contractor's provision of services.
7. Students must not be geographically limited in their choice of training options, since the most appropriate training may not currently be available in the province; those choosing training out of province or in another country should continue to receive medical coverage and other public benefits while participating in the training course.

Mary Ellen Gabias, President

Canadian Federation of the Blind

***“It’s all to do with training: you can do a lot if  
you are properly trained.”***

*~ Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*

## **Gina Graduates From Louisiana Center for the Blind!**



*Gina Huylenbroeck*

*Editor's note: Gina Huylenbroeck just returned back to Victoria, B.C. on December 26 after nine months of blindness skills training in Ruston, Louisiana at the Louisiana Center for the Blind (LCB). She graduated on December 16 and received her Freedom Bell.*

*Gina started her training in April. The article 'Gina's Preparing for Blindness,' in The Blind Canadian, Volume 11, July 2016 gives her backstory. It can be read on CFB's website [www.cfb.ca](http://www.cfb.ca) under publications.*

*The Louisiana Center for the Blind is one of three U.S. National Federation of the Blind (NFB) training centers which offer superb blindness skills training, from cane travel, to Braille, to cooking and woodwork, to technology and employment skills. And learning to have a good attitude about blindness, learning self advocacy skills, and gaining self-confidence are also*

*important components of the training. Canada does not have these Federation-style immersion training centers which are so beneficial to blind people and their success. That's why it's important that blind Canadians be given the opportunity to attain this training and that government fund them.*

*Below is a compilation of emails about Gina's last days at LCB.*

### **Gina Nailed the Drop Route!**

*Gina reported over Facebook on November 1, 2016: "I nailed it! Today I had my first independent drop route! What's a "drop route" you ask?" A drop route is when you are driven to an unknown location, where from there you have to navigate your way back to the training center on your own, with no use of technology or information from anyone! In a situation like this, the sun, traffic and the skills you have acquired during your training are your best friends. Today of course it was foggy, and I had no sun! Go*

figure! At first my instructor was going to postpone it and I said, "This is total Victoria weather, cloudy, grey and foggy." LOL. So I gave it a try. Last week I did my first drop but my instructor was with me while I did all the problem solving and that did not go so well! Today, though, I nailed it, even with fog! I'm feeling really proud right now! It is pretty awesome that everything I am doing here, I am doing under sleep shades! This training center is preparing me for a better future! I am really learning so much! I am so thankful for everyone's support and encouragement over these past months! All my hard work is definitely being showcased! Thank you Danielle, Joanne and Derick for teaching me so well!"

## **Gina Graduated!**

*Mary Ellen Gabias reported on the CFB listserv, December, 15, 2016:* "Gina has worked very hard to fulfill all the requirements of the program. When I caught her today, she was in the wood shop. Her independent project was the creation of a series of intricate nested boxes. Gina found woodworking both fun and challenging; she says it was her favorite class.

When she arrived in Louisiana, the thought of traveling independently under blindfold scared her quite a bit. Now, as she puts it, "My white cane is my friend!"

Creating a dinner party for eight and a buffet meal for 40 also kept her working. She found time to join in recreational activities including horseback riding, water sports, and rock climbing.

These are the things most Louisiana Center students do. As is always the case, Gina added her unique touch to the training because of the personal experiences and friendships she made.

It will be wonderful to have her home. We celebrate Gina's victory along with her. We're proud of you, Gina!"

*Gina sent this email to the CFB listserv on December 16, 2016, the day of her graduation:* "Thank you for all your nice messages! It is final! I graduated today from the Louisiana Center for the Blind in Ruston! I am looking forward to returning home with a tool box full of new skills! I am truly grateful for this amazing opportunity! Prior to coming here I did not think I had a lot of options. Oh how this program changed my previous thought process. I now know that I can do whatever my heart desires and blindness won't hold me back!

We need a full time training program like LCB in Canada, so every blind Canadian who wants to live the life they want too, can have the opportunity to gain the skills they need moving forward! I am grateful to have received this once-in-a-lifetime training! I am excited to put my new found skills and passion into action! Looking forward to a full and adventurous 2017.



## The Value of NFB Conventions: A Letter

*Editor's note: Georgia Pike is one of three blind Canadians that CFB sponsored to attend the week-long National Federation of the Blind (NFB) blindness convention in Orlando, Florida in July 2016. These annual NFB conventions in the U.S. are one of the largest blindness conventions in the world and are very beneficial for blind people to attend. Thank you Georgia for writing this letter, another testimony to the value of NFB conventions. CFB sponsors blind individuals each year to attend through financial support and through our Aeroplan Miles program:*  
<http://beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/partners/546>

September 4, 2016

Canadian Federation of the Blind,

Dear Sir or Madam

I would like to thank the Canadian Federation of the Blind for enabling me to attend an important convention in Orlando, Florida this summer. Your generous funding allowed me to fly to Orlando and take part in the U.S. National Federation of the Blind annual convention. I learned so much at this gathering and I am grateful for the opportunity.



*Elizabeth Lalonde, CFB Member  
at NFB convention banquet.*

The convention took place at the expansive Rosen Shingle Creek Hotel. My accommodation was at one end of the building and the convention at the other end. I gained a sense of independence and self-confidence while learning to navigate around my environment with my Seeing Eye Dog. I could ask the many volunteers at the hotel for directions. The staff and volunteers were welcoming.

I also learned more about international travel with a guide dog. I gained a better understanding of the different rules governing guide dogs in the United States and in Canada. As a resident of B.C., new legislation restricts my access to public venues unless I show government-issued identification for my dog. In the U.S., however, it is illegal to ask a service dog user for identification. This preserves the user's right to privacy around his or her disability. During my visit to Orlando, I was never asked for identification to enter a public space. I felt equal to every other person around me.

Attending this convention has helped me develop a different perspective. I am now more confident in my ability to be assertive and take charge of my life. I heard from many inspiring speakers about how blindness does not define a person and that people with visual impairments can attain their goals. My views about blindness have shifted and I am now teaching others about my experiences as a person with a visual impairment.

I have begun to advocate for change to the new B.C. legislation regarding guide and service dog users. I was interviewed about my concerns on the CBC current affairs program, Daybreak, which is broadcast to the southern interior of the province.

Thank you again for this opportunity to expand my horizons and develop advocacy skills.

Yours sincerely,

Georgia Pike

## **Letter to the BC Ombudsperson Regarding BC Transit Call-Out Noncompliance**

*Editor's note: As of the time of printing, this investigation is underway and the outcome is pending. The letter tells the story.*

August 3, 2016

Mr. Chalke,

Office of the Ombudsperson,

P.O. Box 9039 STN PROV GOVT.

Victoria, B.C. V8W 9A5

Dear Mr. Chalke,

We are seeking your office's assistance in resolving a long-standing dispute between the Canadian Federation of the Blind (CFB) and BC Transit over the accessibility of public transit for visually impaired users.

Public transit is a critical service for the disabled and can be essential in them obtaining an education, finding and retaining gainful employment, or accessing health care services. Conversely, not having access to public transit can leave the disabled socially isolated and unable to participate actively in the community. Significantly, a 2002 consultation report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission noted that an accessible public transit system was a human right and: "...the lack of adequate, dignified and accessible transportation can pose major barriers to participation in employment, education and community activities."

Traditionally, the blind and visually impaired in B.C. (outside of the lower mainland) have had two public transit options. First they could use the services of handyDART, a door-to-door shared transit service for the disabled. Alternatively, they could use the regular fixed-route bus service and ask the driver to let them off at their desired stop. Both of these options pose significant challenges and limitations for visually impaired transit users.

HandyDART requires advance bookings and therefore cannot be used to participate in unplanned activities, such as on-call employment. In addition, as a shared service, it is frequently necessary for users to leave events prematurely due to scheduling issues or conflicts. The problem with regular public transit is that asking the driver to remember your stop does not make for a reliable transportation system. Frequently, drivers will forget and the user must backtrack to get to their destination. The prospect of being let off the bus, perhaps a significant distance away from their destination and in unfamiliar surroundings, can be extremely troublesome for some blind individuals. As a result, many visually impaired individuals do not view the regular public transit system as being a viable transportation option.

Announcing the stops over an internal PA system can circumvent these accessibility issues. A call-out system not only empowers the visually impaired transit user but it also allows them to have a more relaxing and enjoyable trip, as they get regular updates on their location and don't need to worry that the driver might forget their destination.

Members of the CFB have lobbied BC Transit for more than 20 years to increase the accessibility of public transit by implementing a call-out system. However, historically, the corporation's management has deemed this to be a low-priority issue.

In July 2007, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRT) found that the failure to announce the stops on buses and streetcars violated the human rights of the visually impaired. As a result, it ordered the Toronto Transit Commission to implement a call-out system within 30 days of their decision (*Lepofsky v. Toronto Transit Commission*). Shortly thereafter, the Ontario Human Rights Commission advised all of the public transit authorities in the Province of Ontario of their human right responsibilities. The Commission continued to pursue this issue in 2009 and filed HRT applications against transit providers in Hamilton, Sudbury and Thunder Bay for not meeting their commitments to implement call-out systems.

Bolstered by the Ontario decisions, members of the CFB have filed two human rights complaints against BC Transit for its failure to implement a call-out system. The BC Human Rights Tribunal declined to hear the first complaint (*Doris Belusic*, 2012) on the grounds that more than six months had passed since the cited incidences. The second complaint (*Elizabeth Lalonde*) was withdrawn on June 23, 2014 when BC Transit's management agreed to implement a call-out system.

In the mediated settlement between BC Transit and the CFB (see attached agreement), the company committed to require that their operators make clear, audible announcements of all stops. They also committed to monitor and audit drivers for compliance. However, unlike Ontario, which opted for automated systems, BC Transit

initially decided to direct its drivers to call out all of the stops over the existing PA system.

There was strong resistance to the call-out policy from the drivers and their union. They argued that requiring the drivers to call out all stops was distracting and would endanger public safety. In fact, most drivers simply refused to comply with the directive. An informal survey in December 2014 by CFB members found that approximately 80 percent of drivers did not call out the stops, even when they knew there was a visually impaired passenger on board the bus.

While the company agreed to audit drivers for compliance, the onus has fallen to visually impaired users to report those who are not complying. This put our members in the unenviable position of policing the system and has led to a frosty reception from some drivers.

After significant local press on the issue, in August 2015 BC Transit announced that it would be implementing a low-cost automated call system on its buses (Trekker Breeze +). Initially, the bus drivers, their union representatives, and the CFB welcomed the new system, as it appeared to offer a long-term solution. Unfortunately, this optimism has been short-lived. Specifically, today most drivers either turn the unit off or have the volume set so low that it is virtually inaudible. When questioned about this, drivers have indicated that it is either broken or that they and/or the other passengers don't like listening to the voice.

If you wish to verify that this matter is still an issue all one need do is take a few bus rides in Victoria. Based on our members' experience, it is a pretty safe assumption that if the unit is on, the volume will be at an inaudible level.

The matter has been raised with BC Transit's management but they seem unable or unwilling to deal with it. Our goal is simply to have BC Transit honour the mediated agreement with the CFB and take responsibility for:

- 1) implementing a reliable call-out system; and
- 2) auditing its operators for compliance.

Anything your office can do to help us achieve a more accessible public transit system would be greatly appreciated.

Yours truly,

Mary Ellen Gabias, President

***“A lot of people have gone farther than they thought they could because someone else believed in them.”***

*~ quote often attributed to Zig Ziglar, is the substance of mentoring and is fundamental to the CFB and NFB*

# **Not Recognizing the Disabled's Protected Rights is a Form of Oppression**

By Graeme McCreath

*Editor's note: Graeme is a CFB executive member and a 50-year guide dog handler. As an advocate, he has been instrumental in working for guide dog team access rights in B.C., especially taxi discrimination in Victoria. (Please see The Blind Canadian, July 2016, Vol. 11 for more in-depth articles.)*

**A Legislated Right of Access Means EQUAL Access With Others and is NOT Classed  
as a Request or Privilege**

*Quotation from the Ontario Human Rights Code:*

*"In human rights terms, accommodation is the word used to describe the duties of an employer, service provider or landlord to give equal access to people who are protected by Ontario's Human Rights Code.*

*This includes, for example, people with disabilities, seniors and youth, people from racialized communities, families, single parents, recent immigrants, and all individuals identified with a ground of discrimination recognized under Ontario's Human Rights Code. The duty to accommodate recognizes that people have different needs and require different solutions to gain equal access to services, housing and employment. To accommodate someone means to remove the barriers which prevent people from gaining access to jobs, housing, and the use of goods, services and facilities (e.g. public transit or schools). If you are a person who has Code-protected rights, this means that an employer, service provider or landlord has a positive duty to change the way they provide workspace, services, or housing...."*

British Columbia government officials are misinterpreting the term "accommodation" to permit discrimination towards blind people with guide dogs.

Have you ever failed to make an important out-of-town appointment because of being refused transportation? Have you ever flown from Victoria Harbour to Vancouver and had taxis pass you by while you anxiously wait on the wharf? Have you ever been refused hotel or rental accommodation, entry to a public place, prevented from completing your journey, and even refused service in a restaurant? Despite clear protective laws, blind citizens and their guide dogs have quietly endured all these indignities. Be glad you have not, because in British Columbia rightful redress is broken or hijacked. A right in law, such as the B.C. Guide Dog and Service Dog Act, is a protected right and therefore, the duty to accommodate means "equal access" with others.

When a bus arrives at my stop, I don't negotiate with the driver whether I ride or not. When we go to a restaurant, I don't "ask" if we can come in. The law is justifiably clear, stating "we are to be treated as if the guide dog is not present." The law is also clear in that "no one shall interfere with that right." So why are thousands of people confused and why are hundreds of guide dog users across Canada, and particularly in B.C., having our right of access laws undermined and officially reduced to a request?

The Justice Ministry, the BC Human Rights Tribunal, and the Passenger Transportation Board are all complicit in misinterpreting "accommodation" to make a legal right of access subject to the status of a request. Furthermore, a refusal of the fundamental right of access should never be perceived as just an "inconvenience," in doing so Human Rights officials and others are turning citizens with protected rights into inferior members of society. This is a perverse perception directed at a vulnerable, generally resource-deprived group, with little defence.

Here are some of the basic reasons how guide dog users' access rights are being undermined in B.C.:

1. Poor enforcement of violation fines, with a reluctance to penalize violators.
2. The BC Human Rights Tribunal ignores our access rights in law and instead reduces "right of access" to a misinterpretation of the term "accommodation." This has enabled unproven, illegitimate barriers to flourish.
3. Individuals, such as Jan Brookes of the B.C. Passenger Transportation Board, do not respect our rights in law and instead inexplicably enable taxi companies and their drivers to ignore the provincial taxi licence rules, therefore allowing individual companies and drivers to create their own policies.
4. Guide dog users are being told they should pre-identify when taking a cab. This is discriminatory, which directly undermines the law and results in unequal service. It also conflicts with the taxi licencing rules.
5. "Managing discrimination": Taxi companies, which electronically store names of blind people who use guide dogs—without written consent—are violating the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). Furthermore, electronic taxi dispatch data should prevent available cabs from viewing customer addresses unless the call has been accepted.

The B.C. government's new Guide Dog and Service Dog Act acknowledges the need to continue protecting the rights of a vulnerable group. Why then has the same government, through its various departments, systematically blocked any effective channels to ensure our right of access is genuinely upheld? Enforcement fines through the local Enforcement Officer needs to be immediately implemented, but according to the Justice Ministry, this will not happen. To date, it is unclear how and if any fines will ever be issued. Since January 18, 2016, when the revised Guide Dog and Service Dog Act was passed, very serious guide dog team access violations have occurred, with Ministry staff excusing the violators' unlawful actions.

The law cannot tolerate manipulation—in reducing our fundamental right of access to become a "request." If someone blocks our access, the law must be applied with a fine, otherwise we are allowing unfounded barriers. The law is there to protect and ensure any oppression of vulnerable disabled people is not possible. Once any barrier is accepted without consequence, our access rights are all in jeopardy.

Government officials, the relevant Ministries, as well as blind guide dog users must all work to ensure that our lawful access rights are upheld; and to avoid being pressured into having them reduced by the whim of a service provider.

## **Cab Company in Newfoundland Refused to Serve Visually Impaired Woman and Her Dog (NL-Cab-Discrimination)**

*Source: The Canadian Press  
February 16, 2016 10:18. Reprinted with permission.*



*Anne Malone*

ST. JOHN'S, N.L.—A cab company in Newfoundland has been ordered to pay a visually impaired woman \$5,000 in compensation after three of its drivers refused to offer service to her and her service dog.

The Human Rights Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador issued a statement Tuesday saying it agreed with an earlier decision by a board of inquiry that investigated the woman's complaint.

Anne Malone of St. John's told the board that when she tried to get a cab at a St. John's taxi stand in April 2013, two drivers denied her request, and a third abruptly drove away.

The board found the taxi company discriminated against Malone.

The commission says the decision sends the right message to service providers that the rights of disabled persons accompanied by service animals cannot be ignored.

The board has also ordered the company to take part in training provided by the commission dealing with the accommodation of disabled persons.

## **Another Look at the Book, *The Politics of Blindness***

**Book Written by Graeme McCreath**

*The Politics of Blindness* examines the conventional approaches to numerous problems that affect people who are blind, such as education, Braille literacy, economic inequities, stereotyping, job training and employment opportunities, poverty, rehabilitation and social services.

### **An Award for *The Politics of Blindness***

In 2012, Graeme received the Best Author for Achievement Award at the Sixth Annual University of Victoria Access A+ ceremony in honour of the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities.



*The Politics of Blindness* can be purchased online at [www.thepoliticsofblindness.com](http://www.thepoliticsofblindness.com) in print, ebook, digital audio, audio ready by John Stonehouse and Braille editions.

As a blind person I have written this book to help bring all blind Canadians into the twenty-first century as full participating citizens. My recommendations can change our status from second-class charity recipients to full contributing members of society.

This book provides a comprehensive examination of the general experiences of blind people; the founding of the predominant charity, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; the human rights aspect of being classed as charity dependents; a detailed analysis of key studies; several descriptions of blind Canadians' experiences; blind people in the work place and finally a full outline of how to solve the plight that blind people find themselves.

The 3 main goals are:

1. Remove the charity status of blind Canadians and let us become independent autonomous participating individuals.



2. Provide resources directly to individuals giving us opportunity for choice and self-determination as well as the introduction of publicly funded training centres in all aspects of blindness replacing the custodial approach. Centres across Canada should be readily available to train and prepare the working age to cope in the job market.
3. To reverse the shocking unemployment figures and put blind people to work. All my life I have been one of the minority of working blind people and have been plagued by persistently defending blind people's abilities and constantly trying to change the misconception that we are incapable. In 2005 a national study pegged unemployment of blind Canadians at 75 per cent, mirroring a similar study 40 years ago. Recently this shocking statistic appears to be deteriorating even more. It is essential to introduce employment incentive programs to assist potential blind workers and employers, particularly in the private sector.

All citizens must be given the right to succeed and at present blind people are hindered by social barriers rather than physical ones. Failure should be replaced by success and all levels of government need to take responsibility to ensure all members of society have the opportunity to succeed.

Graeme McCreath

## **Joseph Michael "Mike" Freeman Obituary**

October 30, 1948 – December 24, 2016

Mike passed away December 24, 2016 from a cardiac event. As a child, Mike attended the Washington State School for the Blind where he would later serve as a member of several committees. He graduated from Columbia River High School. He attended Reed College before receiving his master's degree in physics from New Mexico State University.

Dedicated to public service, Mike spent many years in service to the National Federation of the Blind. President of the Washington State chapter for several years, he also served as a member of the national board.

Mike held his Ham Radio license for more than 50 years and has been an active member of the Clark County Ham Radio Club.

Remembered for his great sense of humor, and love of lively conversation, Mike was an accomplished musician and played numerous instruments. He and his wife, Connie, enjoyed many travel adventures with their trailer.

Mike is survived by his wife, Connie Utterback, and daughter, Shanthi Freeman. He was preceded in death by his parents Rex and Helen Freeman.

At Mike's request, no funeral service was held.  
Donations may be made to -  
National Federation of the Blind  
200 East Wells Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21230

Please sign his guestbook at [www.columban.com/obits](http://www.columban.com/obits)

Published in The Columbian on Dec. 29, 2016

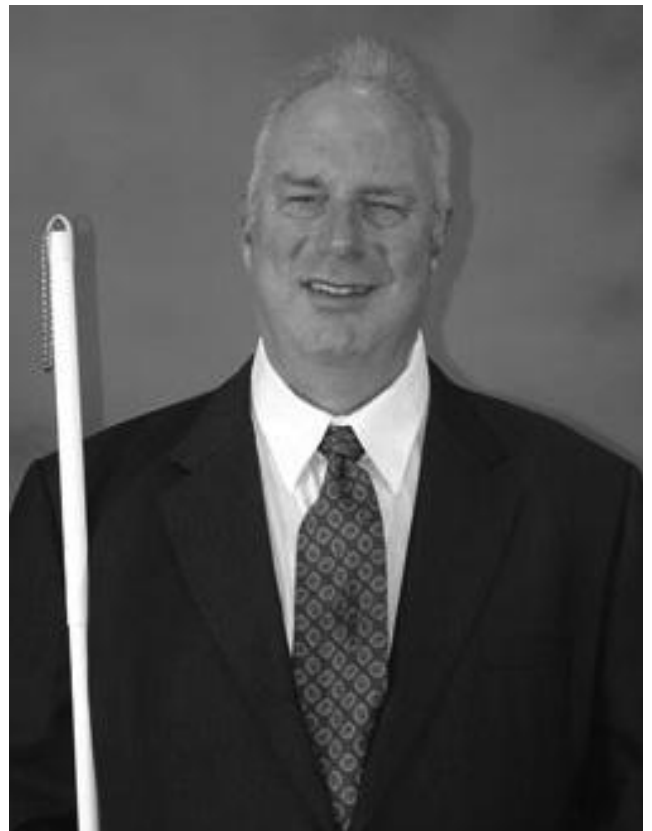
<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/joseph-freeman-obituary?pid=1000000183241122>

## **Michael Freeman—One of the Blind Who Led the Blind (Computer Systems Programmer, Musician, Activist)**

*From The Blind Canadian editor: This excerpt is from “Who Are the Blind Who Lead the Blind?” reprinted from the May 2010 Braille Monitor, the flagship magazine of the U.S. National Federation of the Blind (NFB). All volumes of this very informative blindness magazine can be read at [nfb.org](http://nfb.org), under “publications”. NFB is a sister organization to the Canadian Federation of the Blind (CFB). This brief bio showcases who Michael was and his many accomplishments. Mike will be much missed.*

Michael Freeman was born more than two months prematurely on October 30, 1948, in Vancouver, Washington. He spent his early childhood just across the Columbia River in Portland, Oregon, beginning his education in the Portland public schools. Later he attended the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) in Vancouver and ultimately graduated from the city's Columbia River High School, where he was a member of the National Honour Society.

In the fall of 1966 Mike matriculated at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, receiving commendation by vote of the faculty for outstanding academic achievement at the end of his freshman year. He graduated from Reed with a BA in physics. He briefly ventured away from the Pacific Northwest to earn his MS in physics from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces.



For over thirty years Michael has been a computer systems programmer at the Bonneville Power Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Energy. He provides mainstream information technology support to a large and technically diverse staff. While he believes that his blindness definitely kept him from finding employment as a physicist, he good-naturedly admits that in the middle 1970s scientists were a dime a dozen and that many of his colleagues also found careers in complex computer systems programming. He says, "I've had fun here. I've found my work at the BPA to be a rewarding and intellectually stimulating experience."

Michael's talents are reflected as much by his personal interests and accomplishments as they are in his professional achievements. He speaks fluent German, and he is able to converse competently in French and Spanish. He plays several musical instruments, most notably piano. Michael recalls the honor of playing George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with the Oregon Symphony Orchestra in 1971 at twenty-three. An amateur radio operator since 1962, he now holds an amateur extra class license. He is a voracious reader, particularly interested in military and political history, foreign affairs, economics, fire science, the natural sciences, music, and medicine.

"I became aware of the National Federation of the Blind shortly after graduating from high school when I began applying for college scholarships. I received an NFB Howard Brown Rickard Scholarship in the late 1960s. Bennett Prows, a longtime Federationist, introduced me to the writings of Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, the NFB's founder. Dr. tenBroek's erudite style and message that blindness need not be a tragedy and could be reduced to a physical nuisance--a message of common sense and hope--expressed my thinking exactly. Being a skeptic, it took me several years to join the NFB, but it was the best decision I have ever made."

Michael returned to Vancouver in 1978 and helped establish the Clark County chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Washington in early 1983. He began serving as first vice president of the Washington affiliate in 1984, becoming its president for a term in 1996. He has served as affiliate president continuously since 2003. In 2005 he became diabetic. In 2008 he was elected president of the Diabetes Action Network, the NFB division for diabetics.

Michael's work as an activist in the Federation is most evident in his success as the Washington State affiliate's legislative chair for the last thirty years. He has led campaigns to pass strong Braille literacy legislation (1996); first-in-the-nation consumer guide dog protections (1988); and progressive reforms strengthening the Washington State School for the Blind, making it a stand-alone agency of state government (1985). In the same year that the affiliate realized the WSSB victory, Michael also orchestrated early landmark nondiscrimination legislation making it unlawful to deem a parent or guardian of a minor neglectful or abusive solely by virtue of his or her blindness. He is the proud father of Shanthi Anne Freeman, his adopted multiply-disabled daughter from India; she was born in November 1989.

"The NFB has offered me the chance to do my part to educate society that it is respectable to be blind, to make life better for the blind, and to promote the integration of the blind into society. I am grateful for the opportunity that the NFB has given me to

pay the debt I owe to those who have made possible the civil rights and the chance to succeed that I enjoy. In working for the goals of the NFB, I have helped myself too, for I have proved to myself that it is respectable to be blind."

<https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/bm/bm10/bm1005/bm100503.htm>

## **Mike Freeman Remembered**

**By Oriano Belusic**

Mike Freeman was a fellow ham radio operator and a steadfast supporter of the Canadian Federation of the Blind (CFB). We in the CFB were fortunate to have had Mike's ear on our listserv where he was always ready to pitch in when needed, even as recently as mid-December. Mike contributed invaluable input to our organization, always in a most respectful manner. Mike was always ready to offer information ranging from federation philosophy to detailed technical assistance. We always felt most welcomed when attending Washington State NFB conventions during his presidency. We were introduced to friends in the federation, many of whom are still there for us, thanks to Mike.

Mike honoured us by being a special guest at CFB's 2012 'The Journey' blindness convention held in Victoria, B.C., along with his wife Connie. He was the keynote speaker delivering the banquet address.

On a personal note, I had the pleasure of sharing a few beers and great conversations with Mike. Of course, we shared the hobby of amateur radio but we also enjoyed discussing a wide range of topics such as cane and guide dog travel, rehabilitation for the blind, fundraising, employment and blind politics.

Dear Mike, you and your distinct great voice will be much missed by all who knew you. Rest assured that your many decades of tireless service working to improve blind people's lives inspires us to follow your example.



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# **My New York City Marathon Adventure**

**By Gaston Bedard**

*From Mary Ellen Gabias, CFB President:*

*“Gaston, you continue to inspire! It's not sappy inspiration either! You inspire because you set goals, work hard, do things that scare you, and never forget the joy and power of a good joke! For some of us the goal is a marathon. For others, it might be learning to dance or sew. It might be getting that new job, writing something for publication, or making new friends. If the goal is a stretch, the spirit is hopeful, the joy is contagious – that's inspiration!”*

*Editor's note: Gaston Bedard, 64, lives in Aylmer, Quebec. He began his running comeback as a deaf-blind runner in May 2012 and since then he has completed more than 30 road races, including three full marathons with sighted guides.*

*Today Gaston is totally blind with severe hearing loss in the 90-decibel range in both ears. Minutes before Gaston lines up to run with his guides, he removes his two hearing aids which then renders him totally deaf, as well as being totally blind.*

*Gaston ran the NYC Marathon with three guides on November 6, 2016 at age 64. He ran the Boston Marathon with two guides on April 20, 2015 at age 62 (see his article about Boston in *The Blind Canadian*, Vol. 11). And he ran the Scotiabank Ottawa Marathon with three guides on May 25, 2014 at age 61.*

*As of today, Gaston has completed 14 full marathons as a sighted runner and three marathons as a deaf-blind runner with sighted guides.*

*A retired elementary school teacher, Gaston is deaf-blind from Usher's syndrome with retinitis pigmentosa, which has progressed since childhood.*

*Gaston caught the running bug during the 1976 Montreal Olympics and started with a pair of \$4 running shoes.*

*The New York City Marathon is 42.2 km (26.2 miles) and is the largest marathon in the world with participants from over 132 countries.*

*Achilles International is an organization that enables people with all types of disabilities to participate in mainstream running events in order to promote personal achievement.*

*Congratulations Gaston on another super accomplishment!*

We did it! We ran and completed the New York City Marathon on Sunday, November 6, 2016. We ran and participated as members of Achilles International, based in New York City.

It was an awesome, amazing experience that my son, guides and I will never forget. We met some wonderful people, including athletes from all over the world.

The folks at Achilles International were very friendly, helpful, and it was thanks to them that it worked out so well.

I had a wonderful time chatting with Dick Traum, founder and president of Achilles International at the reception dinner on Friday evening. Dick is the first amputee to complete the NYC Marathon, which he did in 1976. Dick inspired Terry Fox to pursue his Marathon of Hope across Canada.



*From left to right: Michel Carriere, Laurence Wright, Gaston Bedard and Addie Lee. Team photo after crossing the finish line, taken in front of the NYC Marathon race banner with our medals.*

*Photo Credit - Marc Bedard*

We were told there were some 300 Achilles athletes and 400 guides in the marathon this year and there were 52,000 runners in total. And, more than 10,000 volunteers to make it all possible during the race weekend.

At the starting line on Staten Island, there were four waves, with the elite and faster runners up front in lane one, the green wave. There were some 10,000 runners in each

of the four waves. We started just behind the first wave, wave one, at the base of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, at around 9:55 am.

My son Marc was an excellent facilitator and great help getting me through to the finish in Central Park. It was an awesome father son adventure, great team work, an experience we will never forget. I gave Marc three big hugs during the marathon, at 13 km, 24 km, then at 34 km. Marc was also at the Achilles International family reunion tent at the finish.

My three sighted guides, Addie Lee, Michel Carriere and Laurence Wright did a great job guiding me to the finish. They are very special people. The four of us wore the Achilles International singlet with logo and colours. It felt so wonderful crossing the finish line, the four of us holding hands with arms held up high.

I do like to say, "When you have good people around you, it's amazing what you can do."

## **Why NNELS is a Better Deal for People Who Use Alternative Format Books**

**By Mary Ellen Gabias – October 2016**

*Editor's note: This article was born from discussion on our CFB listserv about the current library service conflict. A blind person wrote in: "I don't follow blind politics all that much, but it seems to me anything that supplies us with more accessible reading material is only a good thing." Below, Mary Ellen tries to explain the complex library issue and why NNELS is the way to go for alternative format books for print disabled people. At the end of this article are other articles on libraries from past issues of The Blind Canadian.*

*Knowing the definitions of CELA, NNELS, Marrakesh Treaty and Print Disabled are helpful to understand the issue:*

*-Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)—is a hub-model library structure where books are partially publicly funded and are owned and controlled by the private specialized entity of the charity, CNIB.*

*-National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)—is a public non-segregated, inclusive distributed service model library structure that is an integral part of public libraries where books are owned by public libraries and libraries are publicly accountable.*

*Marrakesh Treaty is an international treaty administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) that was adopted in Marrakesh, Morocco in June 2013. The treaty aims to facilitate access to published works for persons with print disabilities by providing the material in formats that they can easily use. The treaty establishes international norms that require countries to provide exceptions in their copyright laws to facilitate the availability of works in accessible formats, such as Braille and audiobooks, for persons with print disabilities. This includes provisions facilitating the acquisition of accessible works from other Treaty countries. In 2016 Canada has signed on to be a part of this treaty. Print disabled Canadians will have access to alternate format books from 20 or more countries. The United States has not signed on as of yet.*

*-Print disabled—anyone who cannot read the written word from a book due to factors such as visual impairment/blindness, dyslexia and other learning disabilities, and those who are unable to hold and turn pages of a book.*

The blind community, as well as the community of others who have print disabilities, is grappling with fundamental questions about the structure and direction of future access to the written word. It is critical that our decisions be based on long-term thinking and that they be understood as much more than emotional reactions to CNIB.

The CFB website contains two fairly lengthy articles about the history of the current library struggle in Canada. They can be found in the advocacy section. I won't attempt to repeat all of the history here, except for a bit of background that is specifically necessary for this discussion.

Traditionally, books for the blind were a very specialized sort of book. It used to be that they were recorded by CNIB, the Chrane Library at the University of British Columbia, the Library Services Branch of the Province of British Columbia, and a few other Canadian sources. The Library of Congress in the United States, as well as Recording for the Blind (now known as Learning Ally) were huge sources for Americans. Most other countries, notably Great Britain, also produced books. Because of copyright law, these books could not easily be shared across borders. The Marrakesh Treaty now allows cross-border sharing of collections; that's why it is so important.

Audio books for the general public have only been around in any major way since the widespread adoption of the audiocassette in the 1980's. The CD has made production of audiobooks cheaper and easier. Digital services like audible.com have greatly increased the type and number of titles available in audio format.

Although they are still the preferred format for fiction reading, audio books are no longer the only format blind people need to be concerned about. In fact, they are becoming less and less important for individuals with print disabilities who are computer literate.



All books are "born digital," in that they are created digitally. They usually begin as word processed documents on the author's computer. At some point, once final edits are done, publishers convert the files to whatever format is required for printing and also to a digital rights management format (frequently EPUB or MOBY) for EBook publication.

In theory, a digital book can be presented in formats that work with screen readers. Sometimes this happens; far too frequently it does not.

Libraries face their own difficulties as they begin including electronic books in their collections. Most electronic publishers refuse to sell to libraries, fearing that books will be duplicated or in some other way distributed in a manner that will reduce sales. They allow libraries to lease copies of electronic books, but frequently include digital rights management that is not accessible.

As the publishing and library worlds change, our struggle as borrowers and buyers with print disabilities is to get libraries and publishers to include access for us as part of their mainstream options. As a block, libraries could become major consumers of electronic books. If they close ranks and demand that any book they purchase must be accessible to people with print disabilities, our chances of diminishing the book famine increase.

The ultimate question raised by this history and technological advances is how we want our avenues of access to be structured. Who will own the books in our library? Will our access be an integral part of the public library system or will we continue to get our books from a specialized entity?

I believe firmly that the specialized books created for the sole use of people with print disabilities ought to be owned by the public library system. If government chooses to fund the production of alternate format books, it should require, at the very least, that these newly created resources be publicly owned.

Books owned by NNELS are owned by public libraries and cannot be withheld.

CNIB retains private ownership and control of the books in the CELA collection. CNIB has already demonstrated willingness and ability to withhold access. They cut service to people with print disabilities other than blindness in 2010. That service had been provided through agreements between public library systems in the provinces and CNIB. When some provinces refused to pay greatly increased fees, CNIB ended agreements and told blind people to borrow from CNIB directly. People with other print disabilities were just told to go away. This happened even though government had helped pay to digitize the books CNIB withheld.

The questions surrounding structure and governance are a bit more complex. Either structure has advantages and drawbacks. One thing is clear, however. It is highly

unlikely that both NNELS and CNIB/CELA will continue to run parallel programs. Duplication of effort is wasteful of resources; one program will survive and the other will not. We need to decide as a community which structure holds the greater promise for full access to the written word.

CNIB/CELA has the advantage of a collection that is currently larger. Its books are read by human narrators.

NNELS has a smaller collection that consists to a large degree of digital files that are read with synthesized speech.

CNIB tends to produce bestsellers and other widely read books. NNELS is more likely to respond quickly to consumer requests and produce books with a smaller, more specialized appeal.

Since both collections are maintained digitally, it would be a relatively simple and inexpensive matter for the duelling libraries to share collections. The will is not there, but the technical problems are minimal.

For the sake of this discussion, let's assume that neither program is so vindictive as to destroy its collection if it should happen to lose the struggle. That leaves the structural issues and the direction of future development to consider.

CNIB uses a "hub" model in which all roads lead to the single producer/provider. NNELS uses a "distributed service" model in which a wide variety of entities add books to the collection and contribute resources.

The advantage of the hub is that everything is centralized. That's also its great disadvantage; if something happens to the hub, the service breaks down. If a large province decides to stop funding the hub, staff will need to be fired and other major consequences are likely. With the distributed structure, loss of funding from a large province would cause problems, but the difficulties would be distributed in such a way that service interruptions would be less likely.

The hub model focusses more attention on specialized services, but it reinforces the idea that specialists are ultimately responsible for serving people with print disabilities. The distributed service model raises the danger that services to people with print disabilities will be one among many functions of busy library executives and will tend to be shuffled to the bottom when priorities are determined. However, in the distributed model provincial libraries know they have charter responsibilities for serving all Canadians.

Ultimate control in a distributed service model rests with provincial libraries. Consumers wanting more or better service must deal with the political system in their province to make things better, but it is crystal clear that the provincial libraries are accountable.

Ultimate control with the hub model is harder to pinpoint because the hub manages services but the provinces fund them. This means that the provinces can blame the hub for poor service and the hub can blame the provinces for inadequate funding. No one is ultimately accountable.

I believe strongly that public libraries must own alternate format books and that they should never be withheld. I also believe borrowers need clear lines of accountability and that we should be able to advocate politically for improved service. CNIB/CELA is not a public entity. NNELS is.

I hope this helps explain why I believe the service model matters. If I could wave a magic wand, I'd turn ownership of all alternate format materials to the public library, include CNIB in a production network along with any other interested producer, and pay CNIB and others the reasonable costs of production. I would put control in public hands and devise a formula for assessing provinces for the cost of production and coordination. Then I'd tell all public libraries that we're borrowers, too, and it is no longer acceptable to regard us as somebody else's problem. In fact, if libraries are firm in their determination to buy only accessible digital books, the need for specialized production would diminish greatly. Some specialized production would be required for graphics, mathematical and scientific notation, etc, but the goal should be for truly accessible public libraries.

*For more information on libraries, please see these articles, below, on CFB's website [www.cfb.ca](http://www.cfb.ca) under publications:*

*The Blind Canadian, Volume 9, January 2015:  
NNEELS: Then and Now, by Allan Carlson, Project Management Specialist, Libraries Branch, Prov. of B.C.*

*The Blind Canadian, Volume 7, October 2013:  
Treatng Blnd People as Equals—A Letter Urging Parliament to Advance Accountable Public Library System, by Mary Ellen Gabias*

*The Blind Canadian, Volume 6, April 2013:  
At the Crossroads: Will Canada Choose Equitable Library Services for Blind and Print-disabled Canadians or Revert to Last Century's Solution? By Mary Ellen Gabias and NNEELS, by Jaqueline vanDyk, Director, Libraries and Literacy, Ministry of Education, Vancouver*

*The Blind Canadian, Volume 5, July 2012:  
A Home Grown Public Library Solution, by Allan Carlson, Project Specialist, Libraries and Literacy Branch, B.C. Ministry of Education*

## **Dr. Paul Gabias at Work—A YouTube Video**

Dr. Paul Gabias is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. He also has an LLD from the University of Victoria. Paul is the founder of Federationism in Canada, the founder of CFB, along with his wife Mary Ellen. They live in Kelowna and have four children.

The University of British Columbia Okanagan has created a video of Paul and it is now on their website. It is a very inspirational clip showing Paul at work. The video includes him teaching, using blindness tools such as a Braille, slate and stylus and tactile pictures. He's also walking around campus. Though blindness is mentioned in the audio, the focus of the video is on his teaching and courses.

To see the video, please go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJ2xf1q8Ovw>

Below, Paul describes the visuals on the video:

While I'm talking, there are shots of me walking on campus using a long white cane going down some outdoor brick stairs. There are shots of me in my office reading braille, haptically scanning pictures, using a braille writer, a computer and a PlexTalk. There are shots of me lecturing to students in a classroom and demonstrating on the white board an experiment on the perception of a complete rod behind a block by young 3-month-old infants. The rod I am using for the demonstration is a partially folded-up white cane. The block is simply a big block of wood. Students are taking notes.

## **Transit Company's Pass is the Way to Go**

We in CFB, believe that government and service providers should work directly with blind people, just as they do with the rest of the public. Take, for instance, bus passes. In Canada, blind people can easily use their CNIB ID card as a bus pass these days. But we do not believe that going through a charity to ride the public transit system is the way to go. We believe it's important for blind people to be treated like the rest of society and to be able to obtain their passes directly from the source—in Victoria's case, BC Transit.

Several years ago CFB advocated for the right to obtain a BC Transit bus pass directly from BC Transit rather than having to get a CNIB identification card.

The B-series bus pass costs \$25 and is good for five years.

You have to agree not to have a CNIB pass and you must obtain proof of blindness from an ophthalmologist.

Unfortunately, it's only available in Victoria, B.C. presently.

If you live in Victoria and are interested in getting one of these B-series bus passes from BC Transit, the application form is available through BC Transit.

We urge blind transit riders in other areas to do the same. Talk with your transit company, use Victoria's B-pass as an example, then ride your area's transit with the transit company's pass, like other citizens do.

## CFB Fun Trivia Night Fundraiser Report

By Doris Belusic

The Canadian Federation of the Blind held another Fun Trivia Night fundraiser on Saturday, November 5, 2016 at Norway House in Victoria, B.C. This fundraiser was generously sponsored by the Victoria Imperial Lions Club.

Approximately 65 people attended. The quiz master, John Stonehouse, asked over 100 questions and each table of eight players worked as teams casting their answers on sheets of paper which were later marked and tallied. Laughter and chatter filled the hall and some players tried to fool opponents by speaking out loud wrong answers. Question categories included topics such as music, history, entertainment, geography and the Olympics.



Table 10      Photo Credit - Sandy Steele

Chips and baked goodies on plates on each table helped fuel our heavy-thinking minds and we could purchase beer, wine and pop. Coffee and tea were available by donation. Halfway through the evening, complimentary pizza arrived and we ate.

First, second and third winning tables received prizes of gift certificates/cards, boxes of chocolate and bottles of wine.

We also played two games of “heads and tails”—a quick, easy, fun elimination game that we learned to play at our previous Trivia Night last February. Everyone chips in one loonie to play and then chooses a

position: either two hands on their head, two hands on their butt (tail), or one hand on their head and one on their butt. Then two coins are flipped and the result is called out. It may be head and tail. So, all those who have one hand on their head and one on their butt stay standing. The rest sit down. The same goes for whichever sides the coins land: heads and heads, tails and tails, or head and tail. Those left standing again choose a position and the coins are flipped again. People are eliminated until only one person remains standing, who is the winner and gets a prize.

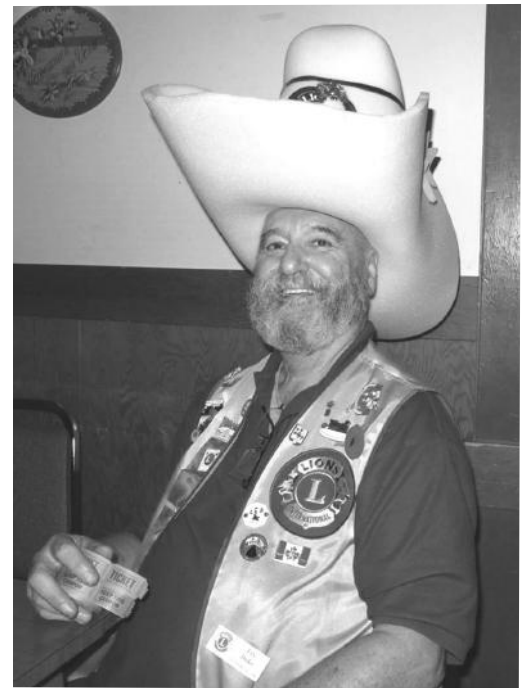
Irv Duke, the Victoria Imperial Lion's Tail-Twister—a position in Lionism that promotes camaraderie and fun—wore a huge Texas-size stetson and ran a 50/50 draw.

The evening started at 6:30 and ended just after 9:30.

CFB would like to sincerely thank the Victoria Imperial Lions Club for sponsoring this event—their generous donation and support during the evening helped make this fundraiser both fun and a great success.

We would also like to sincerely thank:

Thelma Fayle (Sr.)  
Fifth Street Bar and Grill  
Daryl Jones  
Leigh Lundgren  
Shiki Sushi  
Spice Jammer



*Irv Duke, Victoria Imperial Lions Tail-Twister running 50/50 draw.*

*Photo Credit - Lois Jones*

A big thank you goes out to all who attended and made this event one of CFB's best fundraisers. Without your support this wouldn't have been possible.

Lastly, a HUGE thank you to Graeme and Christine McCreath for once again planning, preparing for and running this fundraiser. Kudos!

Looking forward to the next one!



*Table 8 Photo Credit - Sandy Steele*



*Table 9 Photo Credit - Sandy Steele*

## Help Blind Canadians by Donating Aeroplan Miles

The Canadian Federation of the Blind (CFB) uses donated miles to fly blind Canadians to the next National Federation of the Blind (NFB) blindness convention. This unique week-long gathering of over 3,000 blind people from around the world is an exceptional educational and mentoring experience. There is no comparable opportunity that offers the blind so much in such an intensive and compact session. Those who have had a chance to attend in the past consider it life-changing.

Many blind Canadians are isolated and do not come in contact with other blind people in their daily lives. What's more, many blind people lack confidence, blindness-specific skills and information. To meet and be mentored by blind people who are positive, capable and successful is the best way for any blind person to learn about blindness and one's own potential.

In addition, numerous blindness-related supports are offered, including hands-on demonstrations of the latest blindness technologies, resources and aids. Blind speakers hold talks on topics of accomplishments, education and rehabilitation, Braille, employment, cane travel, independence, advocacy and inspiration.

The convention is held annually in a large North American city. The most favorable accommodation rates are provided, along with good transportation links to enable as many blind participants as possible to attend.

The Canadian Federation of the Blind is truly trying to change what it means to be blind. We feel strongly that enabling blind people to participate in this extraordinarily positive and inspirational convention is the best way to maximize their chance for a better life.

Please help us raise the miles necessary so that more blind Canadians may benefit. Also, if you know of anyone who may be interested in contributing to this cause, please let them know about this Aeroplan charitable pooling initiative. Thank you for your support!

To contribute: <http://beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/partners/546>





*Committed to the equality of blind Canadians*

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Thank you for your interest and your support of the Canadian Federation of the Blind. By donating to the Canadian Federation of the Blind, you can help make a significant difference in the lives of blind people across the country.

***Donate Today and Help Change What it Means to be Blind! Together We Can Create a Positive Future for All Blind People.***

#### **General Donations:**

General donations are a great way to contribute to CFB programs and support on-going efforts to improve equality and opportunity for the blind. Donations can be made online or by mail.

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The CFB accepts online donations through Canada Helps, enabling you to contribute by credit card, Interac, or Paypal. Please go to: <https://www.canadahelps.org/dn/17020>

##### **2) By Mail:**

Please make cheque payable to Canadian Federation of the Blind, and send to:

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P.O. Box 8007  
Victoria, BC, V8W 3R7

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<http://beyondmiles.aeroplane.com/eng/partners/546>

*We thank you for your consideration and generosity.*



## Role Models in Reverse?

by Mary Ellen Gabias

*Editor's note: This inspiring article was written in 1999 by Mary Ellen when she was editor of an earlier Canadian Federation blindness magazine. It has been reprinted in NFB's 'The Braille Monitor, October 1999.*

*This story's messages are as important today as they were when it was first written: do not accept pity; hold high expectations; let blind children and adults learn about their environment without a lot of interference; keep a positive can-do attitude; blindness doesn't define who you are, your abilities or your life; and even though you may be learning from a mentor, you may also be or become a mentor—even to your own mentor.*

*Mary Ellen grew up in Toledo, Ohio. Her father was a real inspiration to her and to the many people who knew him. He passed away in 2009.*

I'm proud of my Dad. I've wanted him to write his story for a long time, but he's never thought what he does is anything to brag about. I think it is. When I was born blind, Mom and Dad were quite naturally upset. They wondered what kind of life I could have. Fortunately for me, Dad worked with a blinded veteran. The man was very capable; he did the dispatching for the military base in our city. He later went on to get a university degree. After facing much discrimination in his search for employment, he finally found work as a rehabilitation counsellor.

From his example Dad knew that blind people could be productive. Dad and Mom were determined that I would be. Our extended family wasn't so sure. For the first several months of my life my maternal grandparents cried whenever they saw me. Grandpa used to ask, "What is she going to do - stand on a street corner and sell pencils?" After six months of this Dad had had enough! He told my grandparents in no uncertain terms that they would not see our family again until they stopped their negativity. (By the time he died, Grandpa was asking me where I planned to go to college. I am convinced that my Dad's firmness was the beginning of Grandpa's change in attitude.)

Dad didn't have many answers about how to raise a blind child, but he had a few general principles to guide him. He knew he wouldn't always be there to take care of me, so he expected me to learn to take care of myself. Above all he hated pity. He would challenge anyone who felt sorry for me. Strangers often glared at him when he stood by while I struggled to learn something new on the playground. He often had to intervene to keep them, in their pitying zeal to help, from depriving me of the opportunity to gain new skills. Dad was quick to give praise when he felt it was deserved. I always knew he was proud of my genuine accomplishments. But he had no patience with people who praised me to the skies for poor work.

In high school I entered a contest which required me to make a sales presentation in front of a panel of judges. They graded my presentation and wrote comments to help improve my technique. Dad earned his living selling auto parts, so he took a keen

interest in my progress. All but one of the judges gave me the mediocre scores I deserved. Their comments were both critical and helpful. One judge gave me a nearly perfect score and commented on how kind I was. Dad said, "That judge graded you out of pity, but he would never hire you to sell anything."

The local agency for the blind oozed pity and low expectations. Dad, along with other parents of blind children, took the chairman of the agency's board to task when his company newsletter contained a tear-jerking article about the agency and blind children. "Blind people need understanding, not pity," Dad said to anyone who would listen and to quite a few people who wouldn't.

Dad managed a warehouse and sales outlet for a company which rebuilt auto water pumps. A large part of his job involved selling and delivering pumps to garages and auto parts stores. At least half of his time was spent behind the wheel of the company truck. When Dad was about fifty-five, he learned during a routine eye exam that he had glaucoma. A few years after that a botched lens implant during cataract surgery left him legally blind in one eye. He was grateful that he could still drive and noted the development of a second cataract with deep anxiety.

After the second surgery things looked pretty good. His corrected vision was 20/40. But his field of vision was narrowing, and he found it difficult to adjust to changes in lighting. One evening at dusk he was driving home when he nearly collided with a boy on a bicycle. He walked into the house, hung his keys on their hook, and never drove again. Mom helped with the driving on the job when she could. But it was clear that there were no alternative techniques which could replace Dad's presence when it came to making sales.

He was still trying to find an efficient way to get his work done when the factory that rebuilt the pumps Dad sold went out of business. Dad was in his early sixties and out of a job. It didn't take long for my Dad to turn a predicament into an opportunity. He had a friend who was one of the chief investors in a new business warehouse complex and wanted to be sure the place was well managed. Dad's reputation for hard work and honesty made him a logical candidate for the job. Though he had never been a building manager before, he didn't let his age stop him. He oversaw the final construction details, rented the units in the complex, and made sure the necessary maintenance was done. His boss didn't think Dad's continually diminishing eyesight was anything to worry about. He told Dad, "I hired you for who you are and what you know, not for what you can see."

Dad was glad to be employed, but he was getting bored. Unlike the auto parts business, where it was often difficult to find a free moment to wolf down lunch, the life of a business complex manager could be downright leisurely. If there were no units available to be rented and if the maintenance work was all done, Dad had time on his hands. He did a lot of reading using recorded books. He struck up friendships with complex tenants. But his honesty and his work ethic kept gnawing at him. He was expected to put in full time at a job which could easily be done in a few hours a week. The boss was more than happy with his work, but Dad resigned. He told me, "I want to work if I'm going to have a job. If I'm going to be sitting around, I might as well do that

at home, where I'm comfortable." Dad was sixty-two and legally blind. He applied for early Social Security retirement. This meant he would get reduced benefits for the rest of his life.

By this time I was an active member of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). I had learned enough about the Social Security law through my work in the Federation to know that Dad had made an error. I talked him into going back to Social Security with his medical records and reapplying for disability insurance benefits based on blindness. The national office of the Federation helped with information and advice. Dad's reapplication resulted in the payment of back benefits and in a monthly increase which will last for the rest of his life.

It also resulted in a referral to vocational rehabilitation. When the counsellor came to visit, Dad was not in the house. He was in a shed in our backyard doing woodworking. Before too long he had convinced the counsellor to help him establish a home business making novelty and gift items out of wood. Dad would design the items, cut out the pieces, assemble them, and sand and stain the finished product. Occasionally, if the item called for artistic detail work, Mom would pick up her paint brush and help. (Even when he could see, Dad painted the walls and Mom painted the pictures.) The business didn't make much money, but it gave Dad an outlet for his creativity, and it kept his confidence up. He needed all the confidence he could get. Every month he lost more and more vision. He could no longer see a regular deck of playing cards. Bright sunshine blinded him completely. Small tasks, like plugging in an electrical cord, were impossible to do efficiently using vision.

One day Dad decided his vision was not good enough for travelling safely when the sun was very bright. He asked me to show him how to use a white cane. After a five-minute introduction to cane travel, he was on his own. Though his technique in those early days could best be called "poke and hope," it made getting around safer and more comfortable. Later he attended a veteran's rehabilitation centre where his technique was refined. But the positive spirit which made him willing to get out and travel was there from the beginning. He never sat around helplessly waiting for formal lessons.

Dad's responsibilities increased when my mother's health began to fail. He took over the cooking and much of the housework and discovered that he had a talent for cooking - especially cooking for large groups. He was frequently asked to cook for dinners at his war veterans' post. Often this meant preparing meals for two hundred people. Mom's illness became critical in 1992. The doctors diagnosed congestive heart failure, lung disease, and cancer. After three months in a convalescent care centre, she came home, and Dad cared for her until she died. The family helped a lot; hospice did wonderful work; but the main responsibility was Dad's. At sixty-eight he was the single, widowed occupant of a four-bedroom home located more than a mile from the nearest grocery store.

For more than a year Dad depended on family and friends to drive him to church, to the store, and to most other events. Then he sold the family home and moved into an apartment within walking distance of a store, a veterans' post and a good bus line. He

explained the reason for his move to me: "I hate being dependent on other people all the time!" Sometimes Dad gets frustrated with his blindness, but self-pity has never been his style. Besides, he's been preaching about the abilities of blind people for so long that he has no choice but to act independently. If he starts to say, "I can't do that because I'm blind," one of my brothers tells him, "You never let Sis get away with that." Sometimes, when he's faced with a particularly difficult challenge, Dad calls me and says, "It's all your fault! You got me into this."

Dad was fortunate to have a second love in his life. He began seeing a woman who had been a close friend of the family for years. They were inseparable until last fall when she became ill and died. Once again Dad had to adjust to being on his own. This summer Dad achieved a lifelong dream. He travelled the Alaska Highway from Fairbanks to Whitehorse. It's true that he had to change his technique. Instead of driving the highway himself, he took a bus tour. Because of Barbara's death, he travelled alone to Alaska and met the tour in Fairbanks. When he needed help, he asked for it. When others needed help, he gave it. He returned with great memories and stories to tell.

Dad is seventy-five now, and his health is far from perfect. I phoned last week to see how he was doing. The social calendar he recited left me dizzy. I told Dad I wanted to write about him because so many people think becoming blind as a senior means being doomed to a bleak life. I thought his story might encourage someone else. He told me to go ahead, and he'd correct me if I got it wrong. "You forgot to say that I'm not doing woodworking any more now that your brother's moved and I don't have a convenient place to keep my tools. Other than that, you've got the details right. You've always been the one who likes to write. Maybe I'll write a little bit of the family history when I get back from the rehabilitation centre. Oh, by the way, did I tell you I'm going there to learn the computer?"

## **For Your Information—CNIB Top Paid Salaries of 2015**

*Editor's note: A CFB member did some research on the salaries of top CNIB executives. Below is what was discovered—and this only covers the province of Ontario. Consider this when donating.*

"I just finished searching the Province of Ontario's database on salary disclosures for government employees and employees of organizations receiving government funds who made over \$100,000 in 2015.

CNIB listed 22 individuals. The highest paid, of course, was John Rafferty, the CEO, at \$325,000. A total of 22 names appeared on the list and their total salaries and benefits reached \$3,220,134.65."

## SOURCE:

Ontario Public Sector Salary Disclosure 2015

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/public-sector-salary-disclosure-2015-all-sectors-and-seconded-employees>

## Recipes!

### Creole Praline Yam Casserole

*This festive, easy side dish comes from Doris Belusic of Victoria, B.C. It's a favourite dish on the Christmas table.*

Serves approx 10 people.

4 yams  
A little over 1/4 c butter  
1 rounded Tbsp brown sugar  
1 tsp salt  
Pepper  
A little milk

Streusel Topping:  
1/3 c firmly packed brown sugar  
2 Tbsp flour  
1/2 tsp salt  
3 Tbsp butter  
1/3 c or more chopped pecans

Peel and cut yams into pieces. Place into pot with just enough water to cover. Boil until soft. Then pour water off.

Make as per mash potatoes—mash the yams, add butter, sugar, salt, pepper and a little milk. Put into a greased casserole dish.

Make topping by rubbing the ingredients together with your fingers to form a streusel. Sprinkle over the top of the mashed yams.

Bake casserole in oven 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Serve hot.

Note: This casserole can be made the day before serving and kept (covered) in the fridge until the next day. Before serving, heat it up in the microwave for 6 or 8 minutes until it's hot. It turns out very good and tasty—just as though it was baked the same day.

### **Mrs. Allan's Scottish Shortbread**

*This recipe also comes from Doris Belusic, but originally is from a master baker in Glasgow, Scotland – my late friend's grandfather. It's a favourite shortbread recipe.*

1 c plus 1 Tbsp (or a hint more) butter, very soft  
1/2 c berry (super fine) sugar  
1/2 c rice flour  
2 c all purpose flour

Beat butter and sugar together with an electric mixer. Add rice flour then mix, then add the all purpose flour. Beat with electric mixer to mix ingredients together, the dough will still be fairly crumbly. Then knead well by hand to make a nice firm dough. The more you knead it the better it is.

Roll dough out onto floured surface to 1/2 inch thick. Cut into rectangular bars with knife or into shapes with cookie cutters. Place onto ungreased cookie sheet. Can prick bars with fork tines to make fork marks. Can sprinkle with red and green sugar or other sprinkles.

Or, can roll dough into balls and slightly flatten with a fork and top with sprinkles.

Bake at 300 degrees for 30 minutes. These should be white. Cool on rack. These cookies are even better the day after baking, more buttery, less floury.

#### Variations:

The variations to this recipe in flavour and shape are only limited by your imagination. A whole assorted cookie plate can be made from this one recipe. For example:

- can add chopped cherries, raisins, walnuts, candied fruit, currants, etc. into the dough.
- for orange shortbread, can add 1 Tbsp grated orange rind. Maybe form cookies into crescents and after baked, dip ends or drizzle with melted chocolate or orange glaze.
- for spice- can add 1 tsp each of cinnamon and ginger, 1/2 tsp cloves and 1/4 tsp nutmeg.
- for lemon shortbread—can add grated rind of 1 lemon, 1/2 - 1 tsp lemon extract and after cookies are baked, glaze or drizzle with icing made from juice of 1/2 a lemon mixed with icing sugar.
- can add or top with chocolate chunks, chips, kisses, smarties, etc.

## **THANK YOU to the following Blind Canadian sponsors!**

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London, ON N5W 3B9  
Tel: 519-455-4004  
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www.aseneskak.ca

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