



## Open Your Eyes to Blindness Living Blind as a Child or Youth

**cnibi**  
seeing beyond vision loss

**inca**  
voir au-delà de la perte  
de vision



# Living Blind as a Child or Youth

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For children and youth who are blind or partially sighted, moving through the developmental stages of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood can bring **unique practical, emotional and social challenges**. These years are critical for developing confidence, independence and a sense of self-identity. Children and youth who are blind or partially sighted have the same sense of curiosity that sighted children do, and they want to run, jump, play and be included. Unfortunately, they face many challenges their sighted peers can never truly understand.

**Growing up without sight, Shelby became her own advocate at a young age.**

“I was open about my vision loss and I made blind jokes in class. I said ‘if you’re uncomfortable, get over it. I’m comfortable with my situation.’ It broke the ice so people didn’t look at me as the poor blind kid,” says Shelby. “And, in grade 10, I gave a speech about living with vision loss.” Whether she was discovering how to use a white cane or how to cook safely, CNIB has been with Shelby every step of the way.

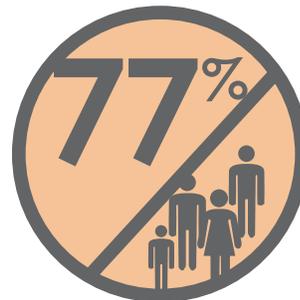


# Challenges

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**A third of parents of children who are blind or partially sighted** say their child has never received birthday or other party invitations.



**77 per cent** of children with sight loss do not belong to clubs.



**74 per cent** of children with sight loss do not play sports.



Only **65 per cent** of teens with sight loss graduate from high school, compared to 87 per cent of their sighted peers.

With your support, CNIB can continue to offer innovative programs and services that empower children and youth who are blind or partially sighted, and provide them with the tools and opportunities to grow into confident, self-motivated and independent adults – and moreover, into the global citizens and decision-makers of the future.



# Why Your Support Matters

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Each year, CNIB helps 10,000 Canadian children and youth build their daily living skills, improve their confidence and overcome the challenges of growing up without sight.

**“The most important thing our family has received through CNIB is the support. I can truly say I would not be where I am today without CNIB, my family would not be where we are today without CNIB,”** says Sarah.

“Starting at the age of 5, I was hooked on the accessible literature at CNIB. My brother and I also spent a few memorable summers at Lake Joe [CNIB’s accessible lakefront facility in Muskoka],” says Garrett. “As a teenager, I took advantage of SCORE [Skills, Confidence and Opportunities through Recreation and Education]. The SCORE program gave me the opportunity to try new things and helped me gain an increased level of confidence to overcome any challenge.”

When Jessica began to lose her sight as a teenager, she described it as shocking and disheartening. “In twelfth grade, I wrote a massive English paper on *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood, which turned out to be the final book I would ever read with my eyes,” says Jessica. “After an evening of theatre rehearsals, I couldn’t read my mom’s text message that said where she was waiting for me outside the school.” As the primary source of support for Ontarians who are blind or partially sighted, CNIB helped Jessica adjust to living with sight loss. “CNIB entered my life in an irreplaceable role. Without them, there would be no way for me to function,” says Jessica. “My orientation and mobility specialist helped me become independent in a way that I never thought I could again. I am forever grateful for the ongoing support from CNIB staff who have become such friends to me, who continue to support me and to CNIB that just helps me be me.



# Creating Brighter Futures

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“For Alyssa, CNIB’s Lake Joseph Centre has always been about inclusion. Born blind, the 17-year-old has been benefitting from CNIB programs and services since she was learning to walk. After spending a week at Lake Joe every summer for the past decade, you’d be hard-pressed to find Alyssa anywhere other than on the water.

**“Alyssa loves waterskiing, wakeboarding, tubing and swimming. She’s had the opportunity to try activities she never would have experienced anywhere else,” says Dawn, Alyssa’s mom. “Kids who are blind are just as capable. They just need the opportunity.”**

Your support can create brighter futures for children and youth living with sight loss.

## Did You Know?

**There are more than 23,000 young people in Canada living with blindness or partial sight. If things don’t change, only 65% of them will graduate high school, only 32% will be employed as adults and almost half of them will live on incomes of \$20,000 or less.**

Confidence.  
Skills.  
Opportunities.

CNS provides community-based support, knowledge and a national voice to ensure Canadians who are blind or partially sighted have the confidence, skills and opportunities to fully participate in life.



# Donor Dollars @ Work

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Whether that means learning how to connect with peers who are living with sight loss, navigating new environments, using new assistive technologies or cooking and preparing snacks safely. These programs include:

- **SCORE** (Skills, Confidence and Opportunities through Recreation and Education) – Engaging camp programs designed to empower and inspire children and youth who are blind or living with sight loss, encouraging healthy lifestyles and planning for the future.
- **Youth Leadership** - This new volunteer-led program will offer youth who are blind or partially sighted a regular opportunity to come together with their peers for learning and fun. Through interactive sessions on a wide range of topics, from employment and technology to social skills and communication, youth will develop vital skills while building lifelong friendships.
- **Peer Support and Mentorship** - To connect people who understand the impact of sight loss on everyday life. These enhanced programs consist of Adjustment to Vision Loss courses, one-to-one peer support/mentorship, drop-in groups, and will soon include telephone-based peer support throughout the province, and e-learning videos to help optimize the reach and quality of the program.

**CNIB  
programs  
and services  
are stepping  
stones to  
a more  
independent,  
active,  
confident life.**



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# We need your support

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- **Recreation and Camps** - CNIB's recreation programs support people who are blind or partially sighted to pursue a wide range of interests and be active, healthy and engaged in their communities. We offer a range of programs and camps that give children and youth with sight loss and their families the opportunity to explore new activities and build skills and relationships in a fun and accessible setting. We also initiate and develop partnerships with blind sports organizations, mainstream community programs and sports leagues.
- **Beyond the Classroom** - This new program will foster knowledge, social skills, and independence among children and youth who are blind or partially sighted as they pursue their education. Working together with educators and the community at large, we'll guide them and their families from pre-school through post-secondary and ensure they have the coordinated services, advocacy skills and opportunities to succeed at every stage.
- **Essential Life Skills** – Programs provide children and youth with the essential skills they need to be independent, now and for the rest of their lives. Working one-on-one with our certified instructors, they learn independent living skills – everything from cooking and cleaning, handling money and laundry to identifying commonly used items around the home – as well as independent travel instruction with the use of a white cane to navigate their communities with confidence. These skills are truly the building blocks of independence, setting them up for limitless opportunities.
- **National Youth Council** - Works to ensure engagement of and strong and sustainable programming for youth who are blind and partially sighted within the CNIB. Through local, regional, national and international opportunities, members of the NYC advocate on behalf of blind and partially sighted young people. Members of the NYC gain valuable leadership experience and opportunities in order to fully contribute to their communities and society at large

# Thank You

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**Thanks to the generosity of people like you, CNIB turns challenges into successes.** With your partnership, we can provide opportunities for children and youth who are blind or partially sighted and help them grow into active, confident adults. We hope you'll provide this much-needed support, and help us give children and youth with sight loss the life-changing experiences they deserve.



## CNIB Mission

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

## About CNIB

Celebrating 100 years in 2018, the CNIB Foundation is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today. We deliver innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empower people impacted by blindness to live their dreams and tear down barriers to inclusion. Our work as a blind foundation is powered by a network of volunteers, donors and partners from coast to coast to coast

### To make a donation or learn more:

1-800-563-2642

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