



# Prince Edward Island Annual Review 2017 – 2018

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a century of change

**100**  
years



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## About CNIB

Established in 1918, CNIB provided food, clothing, residences and library services to blinded veterans and other Canadians living with vision loss. Our organization has evolved over the last 100 years; in addition to charitable programs – such as education, advocacy, research and client support – CNIB has become the primary provider of vision rehabilitation services in Prince Edward Island.

In 2017, CNIB proudly launched a new brand for our rehabilitation services: **Vision Loss Rehabilitation Prince Edward Island**. With a commitment to the highest standards of care, we help to enhance independence, safety, mobility and emotional well-being for Islanders with vision loss.

CNIB is also continuing to offer a range of **CNIB Foundation** programs, that are entirely dependent on charitable funding, and that complement and enhance our vision rehabilitation services.

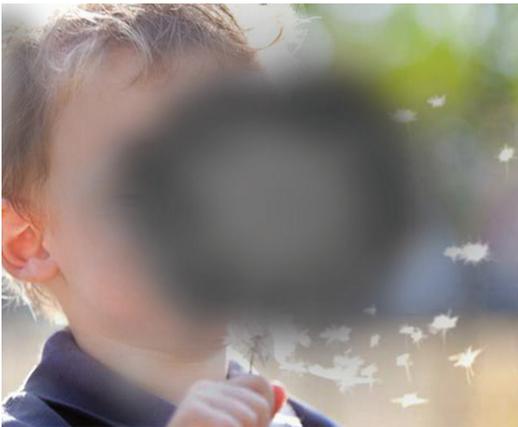
In 2018, we are proud to begin our second century – and we look forward to continuing to work in partnership with those we serve, as well as with other organizations, the medical community, and government to create a future in which every Islander with vision loss has the opportunity to fully participate in life.

## ISLANDERS WITH SIGHT LOSS



Sight loss is a significant health issue in Prince Edward Island, where approximately 22,000 people are estimated to be living with a vision-threatening eye disease. Among this group, approximately 2,000 have experienced serious vision loss and are partially sighted or blind.

The vast majority of vision loss in PEI occurs as a result of eye diseases acquired in adulthood. In some cases, medical or surgical treatment can stabilize or improve eyesight, while in others the loss is permanent.



### **Age-related macular degeneration (AMD):** **5,700 Islanders**

AMD is a progressive eye disease that causes damage to the macula, the central part of the retina. There are two forms of the disease – the dry form, and the more serious, rapidly progressing wet form.



## **Glaucoma:**

**1,100 Islanders**

Glaucoma is an often symptomless eye disease in which a build-up of pressure inside the eye irreversibly damages the optic nerve. Over time it can develop into a loss of peripheral vision, severe tunnel vision or total blindness.



## **Diabetic retinopathy:**

**2,700 Islanders**

Diabetic retinopathy is a complication in which high blood glucose levels cause blood vessels in the retina to swell and leak, damaging eyesight. Nearly all Type 1 and 60% of Type 2 patients develop some retinopathy in the first 20 years of having diabetes.



## **Cataracts:**

**12,700 Islanders**

Cataracts typically form with age as the lenses of the eye harden and turn cloudy, leading to blurred vision. Cataracts generally can be removed through surgery.



# Meet Todd MacAusland

Five hours, 55 minutes and 19 seconds. That was the time it took Todd MacAusland of Stratford, P.E.I. to complete the Boston Marathon in April 2017.

Todd ran with a group of more than 40 runners with sight loss, but there were many other runners with some form of blindness participating in the marathon. “We have a strong presence every year,” says Todd. “There is so much support there for runners with sight loss.”

Finishing the Boston Marathon wasn’t always something Todd imagined himself accomplishing. He recounts attempting to hide his sight loss for nearly 30 years before he was comfortable disclosing his condition to others.

He began losing his sight when he was 12 years old. Diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa – a group of diseases which often run in families and cause slow, but progressive loss of sight – Todd’s sight loss started as night blindness, but quickly progressed. He currently has less than 10 degrees of visual field, and he describes his visual acuity as “not great.”

**Todd ran the Boston Marathon with running mate Rosie Banks. They met while Todd was training for the 2016 Boston Marathon, when she agreed to train with Todd and help him qualify.**

As Todd entered his 40s, he closed down his business and as a result, spent nearly seven months in his home trying to figure out his next step. He began running on the treadmill as a way to remain healthy. This was when he realized running was a way for him to relieve stress and his interest in the activity skyrocketed.

Running guides provide Todd with verbal cues to describe his surroundings. When participating in big races with large crowds, he’ll often run with two guides – one on his left side, one in front – and a tether of rope is used to connect them to Todd.

When asked if he’d like to run the Boston Marathon again, Todd says he’d love to, but it would be tough. Todd and his wife have three small children. It took him four consecutive years to qualify and balancing family life with training can be challenging.

“Join a running club, disclose your sight loss and participate,” advises Todd for blinded or partially sighted individuals interested in running. “Runners typically have A-type personalities: they’re upbeat, supportive and helpful people. The big step is getting out there and doing it.”

# VISION LOSS REHABILITATION

## PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Our specialists deliver services where Islanders need them most: in their homes and communities, over the phone, online and at our CNIB centre in Charlottetown.

Services are delivered through Vision Loss Rehabilitation Prince Edward Island with funding from the **Government of Prince Edward Island**.



## Low Vision Services

For individuals with low vision, learning to use the sight you have left can be life changing.

Our specialists:

- provide information about eye diseases and explain how they affect vision in an easy-to-understand way
- teach individuals how to use lighting and colour contrast to maximize remaining vision
- help individuals select appropriate low vision aids and assistive technology – from specialty magnifiers to telescopes, iPads and apps
- teach individuals how to use these devices for everyday tasks like reading small print on medications and food packages, to reading personal mail, newspapers, phone numbers and recipes, to watching TV, reading street signs and bus numbers

## Independent Living Skills

Our specialists help individuals learn skills to accomplish everyday activities independently and safely. Instruction includes:

- techniques for meal prep, from pouring a cup of coffee to using household appliances and cooking a full course meal
- organization and labeling techniques to easily locate and identify household and personal items, such as medications
- tips for identifying money and banking
- techniques for using the telephone and keeping track of phone numbers
- how to use large print, braille and audio products to read and keep track of information
- how to use products designed for individuals with vision loss, adaptive technology (including cell phones with built-in accessibility features) and apps



## Orientation & Mobility Instruction

Learning to travel independently with vision loss is an essential skill. Our specialists teach:

- safe and comfortable ways to walk with a sighted person
- how to navigate indoor environments safely and independently
- about different types of white canes – ID, support and long – and help determine the proper cane to best meet someone’s needs
- cane techniques to walk safely and independently throughout one’s community
- way-finding skills, including how to use landmarks
- how to safely cross streets at intersections controlled by stop signs and traffic lights
- how to use public transportation
- new routes to be able to travel independently to places in a community
- about guide dogs
- how to use accessible GPS apps that assist with orientation and locating points of interest



# Adjustment to Vision Loss Counselling

Counselling is critical for people coming to terms with their vision loss, understanding and dealing with their emotions and accepting the support and training that will allow them to live independent, active lives. Services include:

- a structured eight-week Adjustment to Vision Loss group program, facilitated by a trained professional, to help individuals adjust to the social and emotional impact of vision loss
- one-on-one counselling and/or referral to other mental health supports
- connecting individuals to community programs and helpful resources available in their local area

**More than half** of the people who come to Vision Loss Rehabilitation Prince Edward Island are referred by an ophthalmologist or an optometrist.



# Centennial Celebration

## Charlottetown

On March 21, 2018 more than 120 guests attended CNIB's centennial celebration at the PEI Brewing Company. A Century of Change award was presented to the family of the late Kevin Walsh and to the Charlottetown Women's Auxiliary. Maria Pochylski and David Woodbury, who volunteer their time for a number of CNIB's weekly programs including the walking club, snowshoeing and socials, also received an award.



## FOUNDATION PROGRAMS



Youth from the island joined youth aged 15 to 23 from across Atlantic Canada at CNIB's Youth Retreat in Wellington, PEI in July 2017. The 16 campers enjoyed a weekend of preparing for the future, friendship and fun – including a water balloon fight.

CNIB offers a range of programs that focus on improving quality of life for Islanders who are blind or partially sighted, and creating a more inclusive, barrier-free society.

CNIB Foundation programs are offered at no cost to participants, thanks to the generosity of our donors.

### Children and Youth Programs

Our Atlantic Youth Retreat took place in Wellington, PEI in July 2017 and was designed for individuals aged 15-23 to prepare for post-secondary and employment while learning practical life skills and having fun. It included a variety of activities – such as paddle boarding, kayaking, yoga, meditation, a trampoline park, and a cooking competition.

## Recreation Programs

Our programs provide an opportunity for individuals with vision loss to connect with others who have similar interests. CNIB PEI recreation activities included an audio book club, a year-round walking group, snow-shoeing in the winter and tandem biking during the summer.

## Peer Support Programs

Our programs ensure individuals with vision loss have ongoing opportunities to connect with others who truly understand what it is like to live with vision loss, and are willing to share their own experiences, challenges and practical tips. This includes monthly social gatherings in Charlottetown and Summerside where participants have enjoyed a variety of activities, from BBQ's and bingo to board games, goal ball and a night out at the movie theatre.

## Vision Mate Program

Eight individuals living with vision loss in PEI were matched with specially-trained volunteers who assist with a variety of tasks, such as reading mail and grocery shopping. Vision Mates and their match also enjoy leisure and recreational activities together – like playing cards and going for walks.



## OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

# How a group of dedicated women helped change what it is to be blind

On November 16, 1937, the following notice appeared in The Guardian newspaper in Charlottetown:

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**In co-operation with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, there will be a meeting held in the Canadian National Hotel, Charlottetown on Tuesday (tomorrow) afternoon at 3 o'clock. All ladies interested in this worthy cause are invited to attend promptly.**

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The next day, 20 women attended a meeting to form the Charlottetown Women's Auxiliary of the CNIB under the leadership of Mrs. W.J.P. MacMillan.

Over the next few years, members of the Women's Auxiliary located Islanders who were blind or partially sighted, visiting them in hospital or at their homes. They purchased milk, groceries, clothing, cigarettes and even paid coal bills for those in need.

Little by little, the women were making a profound difference in the lives of Islanders who were blind or partially sighted.



Photo courtesy of Sally Cole, The Guardian

**Auxiliary President, Marguerite Keating shows her CNIB medallion in recognition of her contributions to CNIB.**

The Women's Auxiliary reported back to CNIB the names of individuals with vision loss who were living in PEI and notified authorities about those who were eligible to receive pensions – and ensured they received their cheques. They also inquired about outstanding bills owed to hospitals by patients with vision loss and paid their bills.

By 1953, there were eight Women's Auxiliaries in the Maritime provinces – with Prince Edward Island being the most active.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the role of the Women's Auxiliary was changing. In addition to visiting patients in hospital, the ladies focused their attention on social get-togethers, bowling, banquets, summer picnics and Christmas parties including gifts.

In the 1990s, the Women's Auxiliary had only six members but they were determined to move forward. Over the next few years they continued to recruit new members to help with their mission.

Today there are 16 members with the longest running member being Gwen Taylor with 35 years of service. They still raise funds through activities like bake sales, fudge sales and basket raffles.

Each year, they donate the funds they raise back to CNIB for the purchase of white canes and victor readers, which allow CNIB clients to travel independently in their communities and to be able to rediscover the joys of reading.

Now marking their 80th anniversary, the Women's Auxiliary of the CNIB in Prince Edward Island is the last remaining one of its kind in Canada.

The Women's Auxiliary has helped shape the organization that CNIB is today and they have changed what it is to be blind in PEI. As CNIB celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2018, we owe much gratitude to the many women – across the Island and spanning many decades – who have made a meaningful impact on the lives of so many Islanders.



**At the 80th anniversary of the Charlottetown Women's Auxiliary of the CNIB in November 2017, CNIB President John Rafferty presented each member with a special CNIB centennial celebration pin. Auxiliary President Marguerite Keating presented John Rafferty with a cheque for \$1,575 for the purchase of three Victor Readers.**



Philip Bower's family with friends at the 2017 Philip Bower Golf Tournament. From left to right: Dr. Barry Bower (Philip's son), Judy Hood (Philip's daughter), Clayton Hood and Bernie Flanagan.

## We couldn't do it without you!

Every dollar raised and each donation received helps us to build and expand our charitable programs in communities across Prince Edward Island.

However one chooses to support CNIB, funds raised are making a significant difference in the lives of individuals with sight loss from Tignish to Souris – and many communities in between.

In partnership with the Belvedere Golf and Country Club, CNIB hosted our 13th annual **Philip Bower Charity Golf Tournament** in August 2017 with 76 golfers participating – including two golfers with sight loss. A group of Islanders who are blind or partially sighted and their guide dogs also attended to meet and greet the golfers as they stopped by the BBQ, provided by the Parkdale Sherwood Lions. The tournament raised \$8,400 to support Foundation programs on the Island.

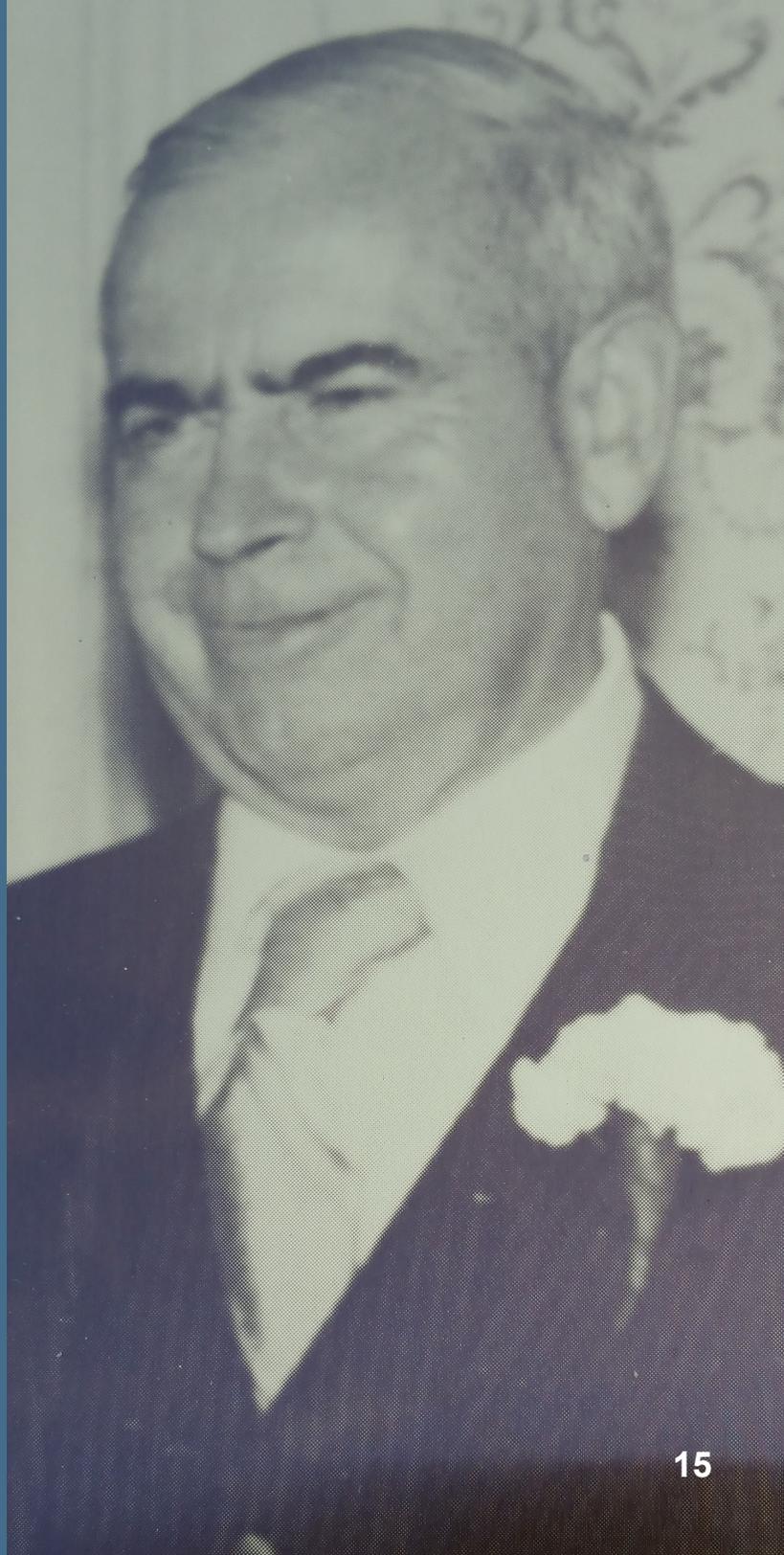
## **PHILIP BOWER:**

### Master athlete, model citizen and visionary

Philip Churchill Bower was blinded by a frozen snowball, thrown by a schoolmate, at age 14. He continued his education at the Halifax School for the Blind and then obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Dalhousie University in 1944. That same year, Phil joined CNIB. In 1954, he moved to PEI where he served the Island community as the District Administrator of the CNIB until his retirement in February 1985.

Active on the boards of several community organizations, Phil Bower was instrumental in the creation of the PEI Council of the Disabled, and the PEI Recreation and Sport Association for the Blind. He served terms as president of the Island Goalball League, and president of the Sports Committee. He was also president of the PEI Recreation and Sports Association for the Physically Challenged from 1979 until 1981.

Among his greatest thrills were being inducted into the PEI Sports Hall of Fame in 1985, and being named a Member of the Order of Canada in 1989. He passed away in March 2005 – and CNIB has been proud to host the Philip Bower Golf Tournament in his honour ever since.





# Dining in the Dark

In March 2018, more than 180 guests attended CNIB's 8th annual Dining in the Dark at Holland College Culinary Institute in Charlottetown – raising \$30,000 in support of CNIB Foundation programs. Guest speakers were Darren MacDougall and Todd MacAusland.





# Heartfelt Thanks

CNIB couldn't do the work we do without the incredible support of our dedicated team of volunteers. We recognize the Prince Edward Island Board members' commitment to vision health and thank them for their contributions in 2017-2018.

## CHAIR

Dave Hilchey

## MEMBERS

Dr. Kristine Giddings

Michelle Hilchey

Todd MacAusland

Sam Sanderson





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**VISION LOSS  
REHABILITATION**  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND