



**CNIB**

# **RECONCILIATION**

## **The Way Forward**

# **Reconciliation – The Way Forward**

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## **Land Acknowledgement**

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

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

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

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

## **CNIB's Role in Reconciliation**

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

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

## **Our Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation**

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

## **CNIB is Answering the Call to Action**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**CNIB Reconciliation Action Plan**

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

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

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



John Rafferty  
President and Chief Executive Officer

## CNIB Reconciliation Icon; Meaning Behind the Art



This icon representing CNIB's journey toward Reconciliation was collaboratively designed by Haida artist April White (Haida Gwaii, British Columbia) and Mi'kmaq Artist Lorne Julien (Millbrook First Nation, Truro, Nova Scotia). This image as a whole holds representation of Indigenous Peoples across Canada.

The icon is encompassed in a yellow circle to represent a Potlatch ring, coming full circle and to represent the four directions. A chief would receive a ring for each Potlatch that his clan hosted. These Potlatches, which represented a cultural supreme court and a means for oral histories to be carried forward, were banned in an effort to prevent Indigenous peoples from gathering in large numbers and prevent the growth of culture and traditions.

The bottom half of the ring shows waves flowing from left to right and right to left. The waves represent the Pacific Ocean (left curling right) and the Atlantic Ocean (right curling left). In the middle of these waves sits an eye in black and white.

The eye represents being witnesses. The top eyelid symbolizes the soil across Canada, while the inner crescent in the iris represents the Canadian Shield, a solid plutonic rock coming up from below. The style used is identifiable to the Haida peoples of the West Coast. It is perceived in Haida culture that islands or land are floating on the ocean, and the sea of yellow paired with the eye signifies a different way of seeing the world.

In the upper half of the inner circle above the eye sits an 8-point star outlined in black and filled yellow. There are different versions of how the star came about. A fact is that the petroglyph was found in Bedford (near Halifax) and that the eight-pointed is often used in designs and crafts to represent the Mi'kmaq people L'nu'k (the people). Placed in the star's centre is an eagle head in white, outlined in black. The eagle is a symbol of respect, love, honour, strength, courage, and wisdom. The eagle is seen to be sacred as it flies closest to the creator. To receive an eagle feather means you are held in the highest respect. The feathers are also used to smudge and bless people, places, things, and gatherings. Typically, these feathers are earned or gifted.

Lastly, under the yellow ring sits a double curve mosaic design with a plant in the centre. This symbol is highly recognizable and related to Mi'kmaq arts and crafts. Used over many generations, the interpretation is of Mother Earth and nature. Each curve can represent plant life that holds a high significance to the people in terms of harvesting food, sacred medicines, and traditional healing properties.

## **Our Vision**

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

## **Our Objectives**

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

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

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

- Collaborate with or support Indigenous organizations and communities to develop inclusive and tailored programs for Indigenous peoples who are blind, partially sighted, or Deafblind within CNIB's core program areas: Live, Work, Play, Learn and Technology.
- Integrate Indigenous participation as part of the CNIB's new strategic plan, The Way Forward for 2023 – 2028, and the three commitment areas:
  - **Attitude is Everything:** Increase understanding of blindness and dispel misconceptions about people who are blind, partially sighted, or Deafblind.
  - **Safe and Accessible Journeys:** Remove barriers and create safe, accessible door-to-door journeys for all.
  - **Our Kids will Thrive:** Give parents and children the support they need to excel in and out of the classroom.



- Engage with Indigenous communities and organizations to increase CNIB programs and develop new co-created service offerings.
- Create dedicated resources within our website for Indigenous users that provides information about available programs, services, point of contact, and FAQs.

## **Building an Inclusive Organization**

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

## **Building Allyship**

- Support learning and implementation of inclusive approaches across CNIB's network:
  - CNIB Access Labs
  - CNIB Come to Work
  - CNIB Phone it Forward
  - CNIB Guide Dogs
  - CNIB Lake Joe
  - CNIB Mobile Hub
  - CNIB Scholarships
  - CNIB SmartLife
  - CNIB Vision Mate
  - Deafblind Community Services
  - Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada
  - Other Partners
- Share resources with Canadian employers via Accessibility Standards Canada Inclusive Workplaces Project.
- Work with Indigenous communities and organizations, and government, to review existing programs to ensure they meet the needs of Indigenous peoples who are blind, partially sighted or Deafblind.
- Participate in Indigenous-led networks, such as:

- Enrolling in the Progressive Aboriginal Relations certification program of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB)
- Partnering with National Collaborating Center for Indigenous Health
- Signing MOU with national Indigenous organizations

### **Governance and Accountability**

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