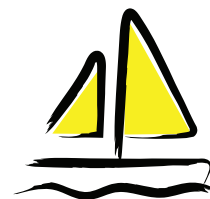


Enriching Lives. Enabling Independence.



Year in Review 2023/24



CNIB
LAKE
JOE

Our year at a glance



Almost **4,000** visits to camp

- 631 participants joined us in-person 700+ times
- 123 participants joined us virtually 2,600+ times
- Welcomed 450 attendees to our signature fundraising event, Cookout with Cuddy
- 150 guests booked their events and meetings in our beautiful venue
- 80 volunteers rolled up their sleeves onsite and online to bring the magic of camp to life

Offered **39** unique camp programs

- 16 in-person camp programs
- 23 virtual camp programs

Participants and their families enjoyed **28,000+** hours in camp programs

Highlights

“Wouldn’t it be great if the whole world was like Lake Joe”

The 2023/24 season was packed with programs that delighted guests, whether onsite or online. Campers enjoyed our time-tested “camp classic” programs, but also got to sample some brand-new offerings!

Young Adult Week



Inspired by CNIB’s National Youth Council, this program grew out of an online “Young Adult Pub Night” that was held monthly for people aged 18-30. The demand to meet in-person was high, and the Young Adult Week was launched. Thirty young adults came from across Canada to enjoy a week at Lake Joe with their peers and they continue to stay connected with monthly pub nights.

Active Adult Week

Many adults with sight loss go their entire lives thinking they cannot participate in athletics. We changed that, offering adults the chance to try sports like blind soccer, water sports and blind hockey. Knowing how a sport can be safely adapted to their individual needs boosted campers’ confidence and enhanced skills, leading to a healthier, more active lifestyle...at camp and at home.



Blind Waterski Program



Thanks to the generosity of donors, our brand new 2023 Malibu Wakesetter 21 LX waterski boat arrived, making it possible for guests to learn how to waterski and wakeboard and enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Introducing the new Multi-Sensory Room

Coming to camp is a new experience for a lot of people and a big change in their day-to-day routines. Some may feel a little out of sorts. CNIB Lake Joe's Inclusion Specialists help guests explore the new Multi-Sensory Room where they can discover light, sound, tactile and mobile experiences and learn what works best for them to fully enjoy and be successful at camp.

“For me CNIB Lake Joe is a safe place to meet new people who all have visual impairment or blindness in common, and it feels like a family right away. It is also a great opportunity to try out new activities that are not always available for us to try. Everyone is very accepting, and explanations are not required.”



CNIBLakeJoe@Home



Over virtual programs keep our camp community connected year-round!

Knowing that excitement for camp can also be mixed with some jitters and homesickness, we launched a special “pre-camp” camp-in-a-box program for all kids registered in our children & youth programs.

Boxes were mailed to each child’s home in advance of their visit to camp with an invitation to join an online program. During the virtual call, everyone eagerly opened their boxes, marvelling at all the fun things inside that they would play with now...and together at camp. It was a great way for kids and parents to meet staff and their fellow campers ahead of time and build confidence and excitement for their upcoming trip to camp.

“It’s better than Disneyland!”

When 12-year-old Gabriel went to CNIB Lake Joe for the first time, he immediately felt at home and accepted. It was, after all, the first time he found himself surrounded by other kids who are blind or have low vision.

“[CNIB Lake Joe] gave me a lot of confidence...and a lot of courage to go into the deep end and just have fun.”

You may have seen Gabriel on TV! He was the star of a CNIB fundraising campaign featuring CNIB Lake Joe.



From Screen to Shore: Tavish and Andrea's Story

Twenty-year-old Tavish Gillan has lived with progressive sight loss since he was eight years old. Over the years, Tavish's sight loss has deteriorated, causing him to feel more and more isolated. When the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, there were no in-person resources for Tavish to learn more about his sight loss or the blind and low vision community. His mom Andrea turned to the internet to see what alternatives they could find.

In 2022, Andrea discovered CNIBLakeJoe@Home's virtual "Reading Room" program. "Tavish loves being read to, so we thought, this is great. We'll sit and listen," Andrea shared.

Tavish thoroughly enjoyed the program, inspiring him to keep coming back. The more programs he attended, the more he and his mom got to connect with members of the community.



"We just can't believe how enriching these programs are. How much you grow and change by attending and being supported," says Andrea. "This is where we've met our people!"

In 2023, the Gillans finally had a chance to attend CNIB Lake Joe in-person. When asked why it was so important for their family to experience going to camp, Tavish said, "to have fun."

Being at camp also gave Tavish a new sense of independence, "It's just such a safe space... he just wandered around, doing his thing on his own." Andrea said. To experience such independence at camp has given Tavish an incredible boost of confidence in his daily life outside of camp. They're looking forward to returning to camp in 2024!

It's all about the place

CNIB Lake Joe is a one-of-a-kind accessible camp that stretches over 12.5 acres on the northwest corner of beautiful Lake Joseph. It's a home-away-from-home for many of our guests. In 2023 we gave our beloved camp a much-needed makeover, ensuring it remains not just beautiful and fun, but fully accessible and energy-efficient.

Always accessible

- 25 new automatic push door openers were added across the property, thanks to Service Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund.
- New swimming lines that are more accessible, tactile, and easily identifiable will make navigating and participating in water-based activities more enjoyable and easier for swimmers. These were funded by Service Canada's Youth Innovation Enabling Accessibility Fund.
- New aluminum railings were installed along the boardwalk and around the property to enhance safety. These low maintenance railings are fully white cane detectible.



It's all about the place (Continued)

Going green

All our buildings and cabins now have upgraded insulation, brand new windows, siding, and LED lighting to make our facility more energy efficient year-round, thanks to Infrastructure Canada's Green & Inclusive Community Buildings program.



Fun for everyone!

A scoreboard for our five-a-side soccer pitch was donated by The Scoreboard Man in memory of beloved volunteer and supporter Roy Klementti.



Cookout with Cuddy



On Saturday, August 12, 2023, CNIB Lake Joe partnered with friends throughout Muskoka and across Canada to raise more than \$300K to support the camp and provide transformative experiences for people with sight loss. The CNIB Lake Joe: Cookout with Cuddy event, presented by IG Private Wealth Management - Throssell Group was a sold out success thanks to the overwhelming generosity and unwavering support of donors, community partners, staff, and volunteers.

More than 450 attendees enjoyed a mouth-watering gourmet BBQ feast featuring unique local vendors, a live sunset performance by Canadian music legend Jim Cuddy from Blue Rodeo, tons of fun with silent and live auctions, and the chance to snuggle with some furry friends in the CNIB Guide Dog puppy pit.

David Throssell, IG Private Wealth Management - Throssell Group, expressed

his deepest gratitude for the incredible presence and unwavering support shown by guests at the Cookout with Cuddy event. “Your heartfelt dedication not only amplifies the momentum of positive change, but also resonates deeply with CNIB Lake Joe’s mission, enriching the lives of those it serves.”

CNIB Lake Joe staff and volunteers also provided opportunities for event guests to learn more about living with vision loss and how participants at camp gain independence, build skills and make lifelong memories by engaging in sports and recreation activities.

Event emcees Rod Black, Canadian sports commentator and Joan Kelley Walker, philanthropist, model, and television personality kept the energy high, engaging with guests and learning more about why this event matters so much to them.

Cookout with Cuddy (Continued)

Special thanks...

To the Cookout with Cuddy event committee volunteers: Helen Hunt, Tom Cross, Colleen McNamara, Chelsey Penrice, Matthew Simonot

Presenting Sponsor IG Private Wealth Management - Throssell Group

And to our extremely generous sponsors: Mantella Corporation, Medcan, Randy Blain Construction, Salex, Sofina Foods, True North Log Homes, Jayne's Cottages



We're all in it together

CNIB Lake Joe Advisory Board

These passionate advocates, ambassadors, fundraisers and “friend-raisers” provide leadership advice and support to ensure CNIB Lake Joe delivers innovative programs and powerful advocacy:

- **Corey Braun**, Chair
- **Jane Casey**
- **Jason Mitschele**
- **Derek Thompson**
- **Stephanie Wilsack**
- **Audrey Wubbenhorst**

Congratulations to Jason Mitschele who received an Ontario Volunteer Service Award for 5+ years of continuous service to CNIB Lake Joe!

Lake Joe Vision Team

The Lake Joe vision Team is a group of philanthropy leadership volunteers who have helped raise funds for highest priority needs and bursaries to boost participation at CNIB Lake Joe.

- **Tim Hogarth & John Firstbrook**, Co-captains
- **Susan Creasy**
- **Helen Hunt**
- **Joan Kelley Walker**
- **Randall Oliphant¹**
- **Nancy Simonot**

¹The CNIB Lake Joe community was deeply saddened when Randall passed away September 1, 2023. As one of the founders of the Lake Joe Vision Team, he was a true champion for people with sight loss and will be truly missed.



“It was so, so much fun. I can honestly say that this is a place that I hope to return to with my family year after year. As a blind parent, it is uniquely empowering to be able to take my children on an entirely accessible getaway without having to rely on sighted friends and family members. It was truly an incredible experience, and I’m so excited to return.”

If you'd like to learn more about how to get involved in supporting CNIB Lake Joe, please contact Steven Smyth, steven.smyth@cnib.ca.

Lions Clubs International



Almost 100 years ago, Helen Keller appealed to Lions to become Knights of the Blind in the crusade against darkness. Local Lions rose to the challenge, making it possible for CNIB Lake Joe to open its doors for the first time in 1961. Ever since, Lions have been stalwart supporters of our camp and its flourishing community.

CNIB / MDA Lions Committee 2023/24

- Lion **Bob Tanner**, Chair
- Lion **Khrisстина Engel**
- Lion **Barb Ennis**
- Lion **Jennifer Rebidoux**

The CNIB and MDA Lions Committee were pleased to honour District A12 as the District of the Year winner for raising the most funds in support of CNIB, along with 21 local clubs that raised the most funds

in their district with a Club of the Year award.

In 2023, the MDA Lions “Got on Board” to raise funds for a new minibus at CNIB Lake Joe. Their challenge was twofold: raise half the cost of the mini-bus (\$82K) and apply for a matching grant from the Lions Community International Fund (LCIF). With the philanthropy pedal to the metal, they exceeded their goal, raising over \$90K and confidently submitting a competitive proposal to the LCIF.

Our deepest thanks to Lion Jerry Rebidoux, A12 District Governor who saw the impact a new minibus will have in getting kids of all ages to camp and made the “Get on Board” his district project. We hope to have good news to share in 2024/25.



Artist rendering of minibus

2023/24 CNIB Lake Joe Staff Team

- **Monique Pilkington**, Executive Director
- **Eugene Chong**, General Manager
- **Maria Reinhart**, Program Manager
- **Emily Harrison**, Lead, Guest Experience
- **Sherri Helsdingen**, Manager, Community Engagement
- **Jake Hudson**, Communications & Community Outreach apprentice
- **Barry Quick**, Facilities Operator
- **Emilee Schevers**, Coordinator, Sport and Active Living
- **Taylor Gaudon**, Virtual Program Coordinator
- **Sam Smadella**, Virtual Music Specialist
- **Curtis Ruttle**, Virtual Program Facilitator



CNIB Lake Joe Philanthropy Team

- **Shane Burt**, Director, Philanthropy
- **Steven Smyth**, Senior Manager, Philanthropy and Campaign Lead, CNIB Lake Joe

Land Acknowledgement

CNIB Lake Joe is on land which is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek (Ojibwe, Pottowattami, and Odawa) people. The Anishinabek still regard these lands as the hunting grounds, medicine areas, and gathering places, related to them through oral history passed down for generations. Other Indigenous Nations have come to occupy this land such as the Haudenosaunee and the Metis Nation. We are grateful for the opportunity to meet here, and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land for thousands of years.





For over 60 years, CNIB Lake Joe has been providing enriching camp experiences for Canadians with sight loss of all ages where children are encouraged to shine, youth are empowered to thrive, and 'kids of all ages' enjoy recreational pursuits. Located in the heart of Muskoka, Ontario, CNIB Lake Joe is a one-of-a-kind accessible camp that stretches over 12.5 acres on the northwest corner of beautiful Lake Joseph.



Visit cnib.ca/LakeJoe

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