



Building the Future Together

Annual Report 2022/23

Building the Future Together: ASL

CNIB
DEAFBLIND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES



Celebrating Progress, Envisioning Tomorrow

Letter from the Board Chair and Vice President: ASL

Letter from the Board Chair and Vice President

As we reflect on the past year, and the completion of our previous strategic plan, **Bold Dreams, Bright Futures**, we're proud to look back on the remarkable achievements that have defined our path so far.

To achieve our goal of **driving achievement and equality**, we embarked on an exciting expansion project built on our belief in the importance of ensuring everyone across the country who is Deafblind can have access to our services. Through this work, we extended our services to three provinces, raising the banner of Deafblind services from coast to coast to coast.

As we worked towards our goal of **unleashing the power of technology**, we provided 25 per cent of our client population with smartphones through CNIB's Phone It Forward program, and we pushed ourselves to be at the forefront of technological innovation, supporting projects like the Tactile American Sign Language (ASL) Robot from Northeastern University and the Termability website piloted by the University of Waterloo.

And to achieve our goal of **maximizing engagement and performance**, we built vital connections with partners, funders, and stakeholders nationwide, and we sought

excellence with more than 40 per cent of DBCS staff actively working towards becoming Certified Deafblind Intervenor Specialists - the pinnacle of accreditation in our field.

As we think back to all we've accomplished, and begin to close the chapter on Bold Dreams, Bright Futures, we are more excited than ever about what lies ahead.

We're now proudly embarking on our new strategic plan, **Reach Higher, Dream Bigger**, but as always, we know there will be many challenges to come. Equitable access to services continues to elude a significant portion of the Deafblind community across Canada, a stark reminder of the work yet to be done.

Together, we will continue to advocate for a brighter future for Deafblind Canadians - one where they have everything they need to live the lives they choose.

Thank you,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Bennett'.

Penny Bennett
Board of
Directors Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sherry Grabowski'.

Sherry Grabowski
Vice President

Highlights

Highlights: ASL

Launching our next strategic plan

Over the past year, we've been working behind the scenes to develop our next strategic plan, **Reach Higher, Dream Bigger**. Through this process, we launched our most extensive listening and research process to date, gathering input from more than 750 stakeholders to better understand how we can better serve our community.

The plan marks an important milestone for our organization and will set the tone for the future of CNIB Deafblind Community Services - calling for equitable access to services across the country.



Transforming deafblindservices.ca

This year, we proudly unveiled the new and improved deafblindservices.ca. The refreshed website was built with an accessibility and inclusion focused lens, featuring a brand-new resource section filled with materials to help teach visitors about everything from different communication methods to the sighted guide technique.

Championing inclusion in our services

This year, DBCS collaborated on the launch of an Accessibility Standards Canada research initiative to enhance services for the Deafblind community across the country. The initiative's main goal was to thoroughly research and tackle the challenges faced in accessing government-regulated services. Often, existing service models unintentionally overlook individuals with sensory disabilities, underscoring the need for more inclusive approaches. This important research will centre on ensuring user-friendly products by prioritizing accessibility from the start.

Partnering with the University of Waterloo to improve online access

This year, our literacy team was proud to partner with the University of Waterloo to create the Termability Website, a groundbreaking project aimed at helping individuals who are blind, have low vision, or are Deafblind better understand legal and privacy terms on the internet. Also accessible as a Google Chrome Extension, the website is designed to present terms of service and data privacy concepts in plain language so users can access this crucial information with ease.



Connecting our communities through tactile art

In June, in honour of National Deafblind Awareness Month, CNIB Deafblind Community Services (DBCS) staff, clients, and volunteers worked to make their communities a little more colourful - and tactile - all in the spirit of helping others learn more about the people in their communities who are Deafblind. Alongside these incredible tactile art installations, we also launched a multifaceted marketing campaign to connect with and educate more than 7 million members of the public about the unique experiences and challenges that individuals who are Deafblind face every day.

Rekindling Passions

Marty's Story: ASL



Marty's Story

Local Oakville resident Marty Goldstein has always loved creating things.

A self-described woodcarver and active member of the Oakville Wood Carving Guild, Marty has worked hard at developing his skills and honing his craft carving masterful creations. Marty is also Deafblind.

Despite some of the barriers he faces in creating his art, Marty found himself looking for a new way to explore his love of woodworking.

“

About 10 years ago, a different kind of woodwork caught my attention,” says Marty. “So I began looking into the unique art of pyrography.

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Pyrography, often referred to as wood burning, is the art of decorating wood or other materials with burn marks resulting from the controlled application of a heated pen.

“The end of the pen is heated up to around 450 degrees Fahrenheit,” he explains. “The person using the hot pen controls the temperature accordingly as the pen burns on the wood piece.”

Despite being an accomplished artisan, working with tools like a wood burner could pose a potential safety risk for Marty, given his sight loss. Marty knew that reaching out for support would help him to continue pursuing his passions - so he turned to our team at DBCS.

Right away, Marty started receiving intervenor services from DBCS – and he was blown away by the support. He was connected with Rosita Folley, an intervenor specialist who helped ensure Marty would have access to the support he needed to live his life to the fullest.

Intervenor specialists help people who are Deafblind access the information they need in a way that’s accessible to them. For Marty, that’s through tactile American Sign Language (ASL), a method of communication that relies heavily on touch. The receiver’s hands are placed lightly on the back of the signer’s hands to feel their signs through touch and movement.

Alongside benefiting from day-to-day support from Rosita, Marty was also focused on getting back to furthering his artistic skills.

“When Rosita and I first started last year, I showed her how to use the pen with me. I don’t see lines well enough, so it means Rosita is my guide,” says Marty. “When we start an area of the traced image on the wood, I lower the hot pen onto the line or arc, and Rosita wraps her hands around my hand that has the pen in it.”

Rosita becomes Marty’s eyes, guiding his hands, and together, they embrace the challenge of crafting intricate designs, each stroke of the pen a testament to the importance of collaboration and trust in a partnership between an intervenor and client.

“

She often taps my hand to let me know we are moving on to another line or arc, so I am aware of the movement,” says Marty. “I am hoping to work on some more challenging projects this Fall, like a 1950s classic car or the main characters from the Wizard of Oz. I am always grateful to DBCS and Rosita for helping make this great hobby of pyrography possible and enjoyable.

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Empowerment through Connection

Kerry G. Wadman Award Winner: ASL

Recognizing the 2023 Kerry G. Wadman Award Winner: Nicol Rumball

In a world where human connection can be rare, there are those who stand out for bridging gaps and bringing individuals together. This year, intervenor specialist Nicol Rumball serves as a prime example of this, having received the esteemed Kerry G. Wadman Award for Service Excellence.

This award is a testament to her exceptional dedication to service, her profound impact on the community, and her embodiment of the core values that drive DBCS. She's had a profound impact on both her clients and colleagues.

Growing up as a child of a deaf adult (CODA), Nicol has always been embedded in the Deaf community. Inspired by the connection she saw between clients and intervenors during a DBCS visit to the nursing home where she worked, Nicol set out on the next stage of her career journey, becoming an Intervenor in 2007.

"I got the job and never looked back," she says.

Her expertise, professionalism, and dedication have made her a cornerstone of our community. Clients and peers alike are drawn to her compassionate nature and unshakeable passion. Being such a strong member of the team, Nicol has had countless requests for mentorship from her colleagues, and clients consistently place her on their preferred intervenor lists.

“

I love that every day is different. I love that we're able to make connections with our clients," says Nicol. "Through our work with clients in the community, we foster awareness and understanding about the capabilities of Deafblind individuals - which are limitless.

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In honouring Nicol Rumball with the Kerry G. Wadman Award for Service Excellence, DBCS celebrates an outstanding team member who embodies the transformative power of connection and advocacy. She reminds us that every moment, interaction, and connection holds limitless potential.



Kerry G. Wadman
Service Excellence
Award
Nicol Rainball
2023

Our Impact at a Glance

Our Impact at a Glance: ASL

Total clients served:
215+

Total direct service hours:
50,000+
15% increase year over year

Regional Impact

British Columbia

- 13 new clients have signed on for service in the first year of service

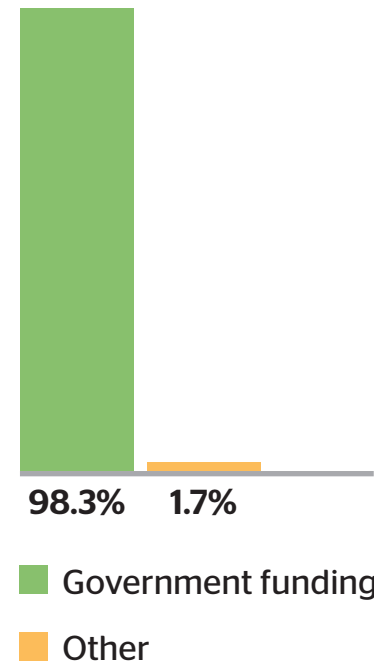
Saskatchewan

- Steady increase in clients year over year
- 200 per cent increase in direct service hours year over year

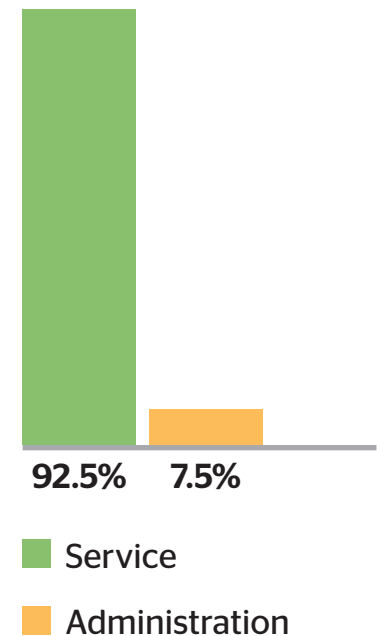
Ontario

- 100+ emergency service requests delivered
- 500+ literacy classes provided to more than 50 learners

Operating revenue



Operating expenses



CNIB Deafblind Community Services takes pride in upholding the highest standard of ethics and accountability in stewarding the funding we receive from our provincial government partners. Our financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023 were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations and were audited by Ernst & Young LLP. Visit deafblindservices.ca for more information.

Board of Directors and Executive Leadership

Board of Directors: ASL

Leading the Way to Service Excellence

CNIB Deafblind Community Services is made up of a diverse team of passionate and enthusiastic professionals. We are proud to be governed by a board of directors comprised of leaders in the field of Deafblind services and advocacy, including individuals who are living with a loss of both hearing and sight, as well as a talented executive leadership team.



Board of Directors

Penny Bennett | Chair

Lindee David | Vice Chair

Ammad Anwar

Jane Ashford (Treasurer)

Shari Bancarz

Denise Beaumont

Kelly Kimens

Kim Leclerc

Arvind Mohandoss

Christy Sebastian

Charlie Thompson (past Chair)

Executive Leadership Team

John M. Rafferty | President and CEO

Sherry Grabowski | Vice President

Trevor Hinds | National Director, Program Operations

CNIB
**DEAFBLIND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

CNIB Deafblind Community Services is one of Canada's leading providers of specialized support and emergency services for people who are Deafblind. Our services enable people who are Deafblind to maximize their independence and engagement with the world around them.

- Visit **deafblindservices.ca**
- Email **infoweb@deafblindservices.ca**
- Call **1-855-862-6001**

 @CNIBDeafblindServices

 @CNIB_DBCS

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Stronger Together



Together, we support and stand by Canadians who are blind, partially sighted, or Deafblind.