

VISIONS

Canadian Council of the Blind Newsletter

September 2019

“A lack of sight is not a lack of vision”



President's Message++



*1*Louise Gillis - CCB National President

Now that summer is almost over as children return to school and holidays over for many. I hope you have enjoyed the sunshine and fresh air, had some well-deserved relaxation.

June was a very busy and exciting month. Beginning with the conclusion of the regional meeting of the North American/ Caribbean World Blind Union meeting on May 31st. The meeting was held in Trinidad where we welcomed new individual National member countries from the Caribbean Region to the WBU. Prior to this these countries were all part of the Caribbean Region now as individual member counties it gives more opportunity for each to grow with in WBU.

Representatives of CCB attended an International Federation on Ageing (IFA) Webinar with presenters for the session were Louise Gillis CCB and Thomas Simpson CNIB on Eye Care in Canada and how it relates to the aging population both in Canada and internationally. This was well attended by people from around the globe.



Several meetings were held with Service Canada and other Federal Agencies prior to the anticipated passage of Bill C-81. These meetings included other organizations of persons with disabilities. Also, there was a Tele Town Hall meeting sponsored by Sterling Creations and CCB with representatives from Elections Canada to field questions from persons with vision loss across Canada asking questions and providing solutions regarding accessibility for the next Federal Election. There was a good representation from across the Country with great input to be looked at

regarding access to both the voting process and the premises. All much appreciated by the officials.

Having attended the Canadian Ophthalmology Society conference in Quebec City I was able to go to a Gala Awards Ceremony in Montreal where VIA Rail received two awards for their work on the Ottawa train station and the work towards the improvements to the Montreal-Windsor Corridor. CCB and CNIB were asked to attend and receive the awards when presented as both organizations assisted with the process.



2 Hon Carla Qualtrough and Louise Gillis

I then was able to continue to Ottawa to attend a reception invited by Hon. Minister Carla Qualtrough and members of her ministry for the passage of Bill C-81. There were many organizations of persons with disabilities in attendance as we provided a great deal of work towards the building of the Act. Then on June 21st many of us were invited to the

sitting of the Senate to hear as Royal Assent was given and Bill C-81 became the Accessible Canada Act – this indeed was a historic moment to be part of as I represented CCB.

The last week of June involved more meetings with Government Agencies as now it is time to get regulations in place for the enforcement of the Act. These meetings will take place at intervals over the summer and fall. Activities continued over the summer months including meetings with Service Canada, Neil Squires, People First Canada, & CNIB as we look at accessibility features and electronic payment systems – which is an on-going issue. Also we have been working on other health related items such as new treatments for eye diseases soon to be available in Canada. Staff have been busy prepare Membership renewal packets among other things which keeps everyone busy. Now it is time to begin fall programs including curling. It is time to think about getting teams prepared for the championship in February.

Louise Gillis, National President

Announcements

Inside and Outside; How CCB Representatives Improve Accessibility For Those With Vision Loss++

Recently, through connections with the City of Ottawa's Accessibility Office, Kim Kilpatrick and Shelley Ann Morris participated in a 'walk through' of one of Ottawa's biggest downtown construction projects. City engineers wanted to know how they could improve navigation and safety for blind/low vision

pedestrians. A project foreman guided Kim and Shelley through the site while the engineers took notes. As Kim (who is blind) and Shelley (who has low vision) walked through the site, they encountered barriers and made recommendations on how to increase access and safety. Kim and Shelley also learned that while construction sites can



be quite frightening, a team of dedicated construction workers guides the heavy equipment, and watches for pedestrians, providing assistance when needed. Kim made suggestions about how walking conditions could be improved and made more tactile for those who do not see. She also pointed out the differences between navigating construction sites with a white cane or a guide dog. Shelley asked if high-contrast paint could be applied to posts and railings, increasing visibility. Much to her surprise, Shelley noticed that orange paint covered many of the posts at the end of the tour!



Kim and Shelley were also invited to the Diefenbunker (Canada's Cold War Museum) by staff who wanted to increase accessibility of the site, and improve the descriptions of the museum's exhibits during guided tours. They spent two hours touring the majority of the museum, hearing about the exhibits and exploring the rooms that were not cordoned off to the public.

They provided suggestions on how to describe the exhibits so that they could be appreciated by all visitors, including those with vision loss. Shelley commented on how high contrast and larger print would improve signage. Kim suggested that braille signage and tactile models could be used at the beginning of the tour to provide orientation to all of the Diefenbunker's four levels. Plans are underway to re-do the audio guides in several different languages, and a return visit will be scheduled soon so that more staff can ask questions and learn how to make their tours more descriptive and inclusive.

Curling update ++

As the days quickly get shorter and the weather starts to turn away from those warm summer days, there is one reassuring fact we can all hang on to, Curling season is almost here!

Ok, ok, maybe not everyone gets all that excited about it, but we at the CCB are hard at work preparing for the 2020 Canadian Vision Impaired Curling Championship, that promises to be the best ever. A committee was established shortly after last year's event primarily to review and perhaps "refresh" the event somewhat. Let me assure you that we are hopeful for some positive change that will be communicated to all concerned over the next few months.

However, we would love nothing more than to see the event expanded to encompass more participants, especially from areas where blind curling has not been represented in recent years. How about in Quebec, Newfoundland, PEI and New Brunswick? And yes, with Nova Scotia winning the event last year, we are hopeful to get a second rink from that province also.

So, if you are interested in Curling, please contact Becky Goodwin at our national office and we will try and link you up with others from your area and hopefully 2020 can be the year we welcome some new curlers into the fold!



3 Ann Lafontaine from Team Ontario 2019

Stay tuned to both the National Newsletter and our FaceBook and twitter feeds for more info on Curling, as the event draws nearer.

GTT Just Keeps Getting Better & Better!++:

GTT (Get Together with Technology) is growing and thriving and expanding.

We are very excited by this and thank all group leaders, participants, volunteers and community partners for all of your support.

If you are interested in starting a GTT group where you are, where participants can learn and share their knowledge on assistive technology, and all things accessible, please get in touch with Kim Kilpatrick through the CCB National Office.

Accessible Canada Act comes into force++

Accessibility in Canada is about creating communities, workplaces and services that enable everyone to participate fully in society without barriers. The Government of Canada believes that all Canadians deserve the same opportunities and chances at success and is pleased to announce the coming into force of the Accessible Canada Act.

Reaching this milestone demonstrates the Government's commitment to implement this transformational legislation in a timely manner, creating more opportunities for persons with disabilities and ensuring greater access for all Canadians.



The coming into force of the Accessible Canada Act establishes a framework to create a barrier-free Canada through the proactive identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers.

It will also ensure that persons with disabilities are no longer required to fight barriers to accessibility on an individual basis. With this legislation in place, millions of Canadians with disabilities can rely on the Government of Canada to remove the barriers that hinder their full participation in society.

The Accessible Canada Act applies to the federally regulated private sector, which includes the banking, transportation and telecommunications sectors, as well as the Government of Canada, Crown corporations and Parliament. Under the Act, these organizations will be required to develop and publish accessibility plans that describe how they will identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. They will also be required to establish a mechanism for receiving and addressing feedback on accessibility from anyone who interacts with their organization. Finally, they will have to develop regular progress reports on the implementation of their plan and addressing any feedback they receive.

The Accessible Canada Act also establishes new structures and positions, including:

- The Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization (CASDO), led by a board of directors comprised of a majority of persons with disabilities that will develop accessibility standards in collaboration with the disability community and industry;
- A Chief Accessibility Officer, who will advise the Minister of Accessibility and monitor systemic and emerging accessibility issues;
- An Accessibility Commissioner, who will spearhead compliance and enforcement activities under the legislation.
- The next phase of implementation will include the development of standards and regulations that will provide clear guidance on accessibility requirements.



The new legislation is built on a whole-of-government approach to accessibility. Existing regulators and complaints bodies—such as the Canadian Transportation Agency, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board—are required to collaborate to put in place a mechanism for the efficient and expeditious referral of accessibility-related complaints and to foster complementary accessibility policies and practices.

The coming into force of the Accessible Canada Act also legislates National AccessAbility Week as beginning each year on the last Sunday in May, with the objective of promoting accessibility and celebrating the contributions of persons with disabilities across the country.

"Today marks a major milestone in the history of disability rights. I am so proud that the Accessible Canada Act has now come into force and is a reality. This important achievement would not have been possible without the dedication and engagement of the disability community and I thank them for their hard work. With this legislation now in place, we can begin a journey that will lead us to a society that treats all people with the dignity they deserve. Now more than ever, we can say: Nothing without us!"



The Honourable Carla Qualtrough,
Minister of Public Services and
Procurement and Accessibility

Quick facts

- Approximately one in five Canadians, or about 6.2 million people aged 15 and over, report having a disability that limits them in their daily activities.
- The Accessible Canada Act was developed following the most inclusive and accessible consultations with the disability community in our country's history. More than 6,000 Canadians and 100 accessibility organizations shared their views and ideas about an accessible Canada.
- Bill C-81, the Accessible Canada Act, was tabled in Parliament on June 20, 2018, and passed by the Senate with amendments on May 13, 2019. The House of Commons concurred with all amendments on May 29, 2019, and the Act received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019.

Canadian Transportation Agency Launches a New Confidential Toll-Free Accessibility Help Line++

The disability community and persons with disabilities now have new tools available to help them exercise their right to an accessible transportation network.

In support of the implementation of the new Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations, the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) has launched a new confidential toll-free Accessibility Help Line to provide information, and guidance about dispute resolution services relating to accessible travel.

Callers to the Accessibility Help Line can have access to a staff member if they have questions relating to accessible transportation, or if they wish to file a transportation-related accessibility complaint. This is a confidential service. Staff are available Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Eastern Time.

New Accessibility Help Line
1-844-943-0273

For those wishing to file a complaint, the CTA has also developed a new simplified complaint form to streamline the process of transportation-related accessibility complaints. Persons with disabilities who encounter an accessibility issue while they travel can file a complaint at <https://www.otc-cta.gc.ca/accessibility>



“The Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations will help ensure that the fundamental right to accessible transportation is realized in practice. If a traveler with a disability believes this right hasn’t been respected, the CTA’s new accessibility help line and simplified complaint form will make it easier for them to get information and bring forward a claim. These steps reflect the CTA’s commitment to making sure our expert, impartial dispute resolution services are themselves as accessible and straightforward as possible.”

Scott Streiner, Chair and CEO of the Canadian Transportation Agency

Canada Workers Benefit++

Since 2015, the Government of Canada has been investing in the middle class and those working hard to join it. This means providing more support to individuals who need it most and helping more people to join and stay in the workforce.



That is why Budget 2018 introduced the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB). This new benefit is replacing the Working Income Tax Benefit and is intended to supplement the earnings of low-income workers and improve work incentives for low-income Canadians. The CWB will be easier to receive and is more generous than the previous benefit it replaces. The Canada Revenue Agency will calculate the benefit when Canadians file their taxes so anyone who can benefit from it will receive it.

For example, an unattached worker could receive up to \$1,355 from the CWB in 2020—up to an additional \$296 annually. A single parent or a worker in a couple could receive up to \$2,335—up to an additional \$413 annually. This means more support to help cover the cost of essential expenses.

Through the CWB, the Government of Canada will be offering real help to more than 2 million Canadians, while helping to lift an additional 74,000 Canadians out of poverty, providing more Canadians with a real and fair chance to succeed.

A banner featuring the text "Assistive Technology" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The background is a dark, blurred image of colorful text, likely representing computer code or data, in various colors like green, yellow, and red.

++How to Make Transit More Accessible to the Visually Impaired:

New signage and NaviLens technology have been rolled out in Barcelona, Madrid, and Murcia City to help visually impaired people navigate public transportation.

When you are blind or partially sighted, everyday tasks can present a challenge, not least of all finding your way around the city. Things such as locating the ticket machine in a railway station or knowing if your bus has just pulled into the bus stop can be tricky or even impossible



to do without help. But since 2018, brightly colored tags have been popping up in Barcelona, and more recently in other Spanish cities to simplify navigation for people who are blind and partially sighted.

Paired with a mobile phone, they are part of a system known as NaviLens developed by the Mobile Vision Research Lab at the University of Alicante and the technology company, Neosistec. Designed to be used alongside traditional sight aides such as canes and guide dogs, NaviLens aims to help visually impaired people feel more independent when moving around the city.

“It’s like using the camera of the phone as the eyes of a visually impaired person.”

Following the pilot on a small section of the transport network, Barcelona is extending the NaviLens system to its 2,400 bus stops and 159 metro stations as part of broader efforts to make the city’s transport network more accessible. In 2019, public transit in Madrid also began limited use of the system, and it is also available in Murcia City.



Using a free app and the camera in their smartphones, users scan their environment to locate the tags which are strategically positioned in bus stops and metro stations by elevators, platforms, stairs, escalators, and ticket machines—anywhere a user needs to take a navigation decision or hear other useful information.

The tags, which are made up of colored squares on a black background, provide users with the kind of information a sighted person would usually take for granted. For instance when approaching a metro station equipped with NaviLens, users access the app and hold up their phones to scan for a tag that will play an audible message on their device telling them at how many meters and in which direction they will find an elevator going down into the station. As they approach the elevator, the user is continually updated with their distance from it.

Once inside the station lobby, a user could then wave their phone to sweep the environment for a tag that lets them know in which direction and how far to walk to reach the ticket vending machines, before scanning the space again for further tags that will help them plot a step-by-step route through to the platform they need, just as a sighted person would do by reading signboards.

Forty-eight-year-old Barcelona-resident Juan Nuñez began losing his sight 10 years ago as a result of a rare, degenerative disease. “Using the metro or bus network became a big challenge. I had to learn the layout of the metro stations by heart,” he says.

But an unanticipated change, such as a relocated bus stop is sometimes all it takes to throw a visually impaired person off their memorized route. A former engineer, Nuñez says he is a fan of new technologies and now regularly relies on a host of mobile apps to help him get around. “It’s easier

as it gives you the information you need in the areas you feel lost. For example, there are tags on elevators that will tell you if the elevator is broken or working,” says Nuñez.

At Madrid’s main railway station, Atocha, they are experimenting with using the tags on tactile paving—patterns of textured bumps on the ground that share warnings and information with visually impaired pedestrians.

Usually tactile paving can only provide a visually impaired person with general information such as notifying them that they’ve reached a spot in the station where there’s a turn off to a platform. A visually impaired person wouldn’t however, know which platform they’ve reached without having previously learned the layout of the station or asking a passerby. When a NaviLens tag is placed on an area of tactile paving users can scan the tag to know which platforms the turn off leads to. They will also be told whether they need to turn left or right since the system detects from which direction a user is approaching and tailors the message that’s played back.



Once a tag has been located and centered using audio prompts, a user can choose to listen to the information that’s stored in the tag by shaking their wrist. The information is played in the default language of the user’s phone.

“We’ve tried to simulate the same behavior as human vision,” says Javier Pita, CEO of NaviLens. “It’s like using the camera of the phone as the eyes of a visually impaired person.”

The system’s ability to play back information in multiple languages has however, also found it an audience among non-visually impaired tourists visiting Barcelona from places such as Japan who have been using the

system as a way to translate directional signboards in the transit system into their own languages.

The tags can be programmed with any kind of information from navigation directions to details about special promotions in a station's coffee shop. The tags can also provide real-time information such as live bus schedules which a user can listen to as they approach a bus stop as well as alerts of service disruptions.



One of the keys to the success of the system is getting the placement of the tags right to make them easy for visually impaired users to find. For this Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona (TMB), the city's public transport service, enlisted the support of ONCE, Spain's national organization for the blind.

Unlike with QR codes, users don't need to know exactly where a tag is to be able to read it. A tag measuring 20 x 20 centimeters (7.9 x 7.9 inches) can be detected from 12 meters (39 feet) away, even in motion and without having to focus the phone's camera.

Robin Spinks, a partially-sighted technology expert at the United Kingdom's Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) has been trying out NaviLens in RNIB's London office. For him, the system's advances on the QR code are a huge plus.

"The key thing is that the system is unlike traditional QR codes which are difficult for blind or partially sighted people to locate," he says.

Advances in communications technology have made a significant difference to the lives of people with visual impairments—253 million in the world, by a World Health Organization estimate—as an ever-increasing number of tools for navigation are available on the market.

Among them is U.S. app Aira, which is available for free in some supermarkets across the United States and several airports across the world. Aira allows visually impaired users to connect over the web to a trained live agent who can



use the phone's camera to see what the user is seeing and guide them like a second pair of eyes. Another popular app, BlindSquare uses GPS to describe obstacles in the environment, places of interest and street intersections to users as they travel.

Many apps however, rely either on an internet connection or GPS which only works indoors with special beacons. Bluetooth beacons can be more costly to put in place along an extensive transport network. Raul Casas of the universal accessibility team at Barcelona transport says that the fact that NaviLens can be used without having to install special beacons was one of its advantages for them.

Spinks, who has been testing a number of new technologies, is impressed by NaviLens' potential for wider use in cities.

“The key thing with NaviLens is it's a low cost sustainable system that's reliable,” he says. “Navigation is a challenge for every single blind or partially sighted person—it's one of the most fundamental challenges we face in day-to-day life and anything that can be done to help in that is beneficial.”

By Aisha Majid

++BlindShell, Simple, intuitive and accessible phones for visually impaired:

Over the past few years, we have sold phones for the visually impaired to thousands of customers across 20 countries. We have worked to create a phone that would be durable, stylish, and most importantly, easy to use for the blind and visually impaired. Based on the feedback and input from our users, we introduced the BlindShell Classic last year. This phone



encompasses the best of what the world of mobile phones for the blind offers.

- Carefully designed keypad with comfortable buttons.
- Voice Control or tactile keypad for the simplest to use phone yet.
- Optimized shape, which perfectly fits your hand.
- Lifetime updates and fantastic support.

WHAT SEPARATES BLINDSHELL FROM THE REST?

First and foremost, it's been designed to be helpful. No frills. We've listened to our customers and honed its features to be simple. The BlindShell Classic caters to the actual needs of visually impaired users. The physical keypad and large assortment of applications are designed and chosen specifically for the blind user's needs.

It is truly intuitive to use. You can either use the keypad or control your phone by voice. And yes, you'll figure out how to operate it in less than 30 minutes.

Lastly, we wanted to develop a phone which will last. That's why we carefully chose the BlindShell Classic design to be practical, sturdy, and easy to use. The lifelong free updates give peace of mind that you will be happy with your purchase for years to come.

For more information on BlindShell, please visit:

<https://www.blindshell.com/>

In the News

++This blind woman says self-checkouts lower the bar (code) for accessibility:

Self-checkouts seem to be popping up everywhere in St. John's, from Walmart to Canadian Tire to Dominion, replacing cashier interaction with inanimate exchange. Some people love the control and convenience; others prefer a face-to-face chat and fear the machines are taking away minimum-wage jobs. Then, there are the people totally left out of these contrasting takes, because they physically cannot navigate them at all.



One of those individuals is Kelly Picco, a St. John's resident who has optic atrophy, a progressive condition that has left her legally blind. When she shops, it's usually with the assistance of a friend or family member, but the growing prevalence of self-checkouts has her concerned about what could happen in the future on the occasions when she faces aisles alone.

"I'm afraid that, eventually, there's not going to be enough people working in these retail stores like Walmart to help me get my groceries or supplies checked out," she said.

Beeps and barcodes

Picco attempted to check out her own groceries at a Dominion in St. John's with CBC Radio's On The Go along, and ran into roadblocks almost from the start.



"I'm getting ready to check out a pack of Jam Jams, and I have no idea where the barcode is to, to scan it on the self-checkouts," she said.

She had another problem after beeping them in.

"I don't know how much they are, and I can't see the screen," she said.

Ultimately, there's no independence for Picco at a self-checkout.

"I would simply have to ask them to help me through the entire process. And it's not so bad when you have one or two items, but when you have a cartful of groceries, it's going to be challenging," she said.

"There is always an option for our customers to either have a staff member assist them there, or at a traditional checkout lane," said Loblaw Companies, the parent company of Dominion, in a statement to CBC News.

"We strive to offer our customers a pleasant and convenient shopping experience every time they visit us."

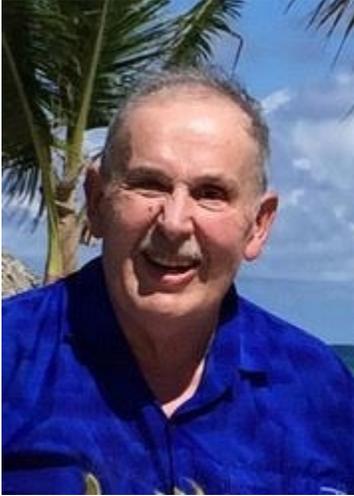
But Picco wonders what will happen in the future with the trend.

"They have to consider that there are people in this world, in society, that aren't able to use these self-checkouts," she said.

"There has to be more considerations given when it comes to putting electronic things in stores, over actual people."

By Jill Power, CBC News

++In Memory, On behalf of Louise Gillis and the CCB:



4 Chris Stark

To the Stark Family,
On behalf of myself as National President and the Board of Directors of the CCB, I extend our deepest condolences to Marie, Jeffery and Chantal – their spouses and as well to the grandchildren. We all have been shocked by Chris’s sudden passing. Chris has made major contributions to blind and partially sighted Canadians for which we are truly grateful and will not be forgotten.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you as you go through this very difficult time.

Sincerely,
Louise Gillis
National President, The Canadian Council of the Blind

Here is the text of the Human Rights Commission statement below Albert’s words:

“As long as you can see it, I have a right to know about it.”, Chris Stark April 2016

Canada and the community of citizens who are blind, deaf-blind and partially sighted recently lost a visionary, an advocate and an activist who made a profound and lasting difference throughout his short 72 years of life. Through his family, I want to thank Chris Stark for those things I didn't take the time to thank him for during his life, to thank the Canadian Human Rights Commission for their below recognition of those accomplishments, and to thank Beth Robertson and her Envisioning Technologies project for documenting the legacies Chris and Marie worked so hard to achieve for themselves, and by extension for all Canadians. I urge all to access Beth's work below to learn all that this humble servant did in an effort to live his best life as independently as he could using the tools society had to offer.



Thank you Chris Stark. May you rest in peace.
-Albert A. Ruel

Statement - Chris Stark — A champion for accessibility, inclusion and human rights in Canada

June 6, 2019 – Ottawa, Ontario – Canadian Human Rights Commission

We are deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Chris Stark — a champion for accessibility and a longtime activist for the rights of persons with disabilities.



Chris's tireless efforts led to the first talking ATM in the world, which made banking more accessible for blind and partially sighted people.

Throughout a long career in both the private sector and the federal government, he was an unwavering advocate for accessibility and inclusion, with a particular focus on technology and transport. While working towards a more accessible Canadian society, he once said, 'As long as you can see it, I have a right to know about it.'

He was a trailblazer who travelled to the Arctic Circle and Israel, among other places, at a time when he said, "blind people weren't doing that kind of thing."

His life and legacy will continue to have a positive impact on the lives of persons with disabilities for many years to come.

Marie-Claude Landry, Ad. E.
Chief Commissioner, Canadian Human Rights Commission

Read more about Chris Stark in this EnvisionTech article from 2016:

Chris Stark and Marie Laporte-Stark – A Legacy of Activism

"As long as you can see it, I have a right to know about it."

So were the words of Chris Stark on a sunny afternoon in late April 2016 as he expressed his arguments for a more accessible Canadian society. This principle and others held dearly by Chris and Marie Laporte-Stark were

forged over decades of activism, long before their involvement with the development of the talking ATM in the 1990s.

In 1969, Chris Stark, alongside other young graduates from the Halifax School for the Blind in Nova Scotia, formed a group that would formalize into the Blind Rights Action Movement (BRAM). BRAM, largely inspired by the Civil Rights Movement that was also erupting at the time, “had the effect of developing a social conscience among its members,” Stark has written. Although relatively short-lived, the organization represented a much larger and significant shift in terms of their approach and conviction that accessibility was not a matter of charity, but of fundamental human rights. This change in perspective would not be embraced by everyone, however, leading to growing tensions between older institutions and emergent organizations that would soon follow BRAM, including the Blind Organization of Ontario with Self-Help Tactics (BOOST) and later, the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC).

Chris Stark would go on from BRAM in the spring of 1973 to take a position with the CNIB, after which he would move on to work with the New Brunswick Bicentennial Commission, and then to Ottawa in 1984 with the Canadian Department of Transportation. During his



impressive career with the federal government, Stark strived to create more accessible airports and terminals, directed studies evaluating the need for regulatory legislative amendments, developed policy for energy use and laboured to improve accessible transportation for persons with disabilities and seniors across the country. He retired in 2009 after becoming ill, yet his activism continues until this day as a board member of the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund.

Marie Laporte-Stark’s first act of advocacy was for herself as a student at L’Institut Nazareth in 1960s Montreal. Rather than learn piano, she

convinced the school administrators and her parents that she should learn touch-typing instead. At the time, Laporte-Stark's request was viewed as novel. As she explains, "... in the early 60s, girls who were blind were expected to stay at home or in institutions, play the piano or organ and sing in the church choir. But after school, I wanted to leave home, be independent and live on my own, and go to university to earn a degree, and eventually find employment."



Laporte-Stark's determination would eventually pay off, but not without surmounting several impediments placed in her way. Obtaining her first job as a rehabilitation teacher with the CNIB seemed relatively easy, she thought. In 1973, Laporte-Stark married Chris Stark and six years later left full-time work to raise a family. As a young mother, she found time to complete a Bachelor of Arts in psychology at the University of Ottawa, which she graduated from in 1982. Returning to the workforce in her mid-thirties, Laporte-Stark faced systemic discrimination. She nevertheless persisted and was finally hired in 1986 by the not-for-profit organization Canadian Guide Dogs

for the Blind. A year later in 1987, she obtained employment with the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a position that served as the beginning to a long career with the federal service. Even here, however, Laporte-Stark had to convince upper management to provide her with reasonable accommodation so that she could perform her duties effectively. Over the next two decades, Laporte-Stark moved on to work with various different departments, including Human Resources Development Canada, Citizen and Immigration Canada and finally with the Employment Equity Career Development Office of the Public Service Commission of Canada. As a senior advisor, she researched and helped develop policy for creating

more viable and equitable employment standards in Canada. After 25 years with the federal government, Laporte-Stark retired in 2012.



Membership Madness++

Hi Everyone! Becky from the office here. Membership packages are in the mail and your chapter should have theirs soon. Independent membership will be sent shortly.

Early Bird Draw Deadline – October 28, 2019

Chapter Rebate Deadline – December 2, 2019

All 2019 Memberships Due – December 31, 2019

White Cane Week Orders Due – December 20, 2019

WCW Insurance Requests Due – December 20, 2019

DON'T FORGET DONATIONS!++

Donations Received in the office in 2019 are the only ones that can be receipted for 2019. Remember to send those donations if you want receipts.

www.ccbnational.net

ccb@ccbnational.net

CANADIAN COUNCIL
OF THE BLIND



LE CONSEIL CANADIEN
DES AVEUGLES

1-877-304-0968