

Pacific Training Centre for the Blind

Strategic Plan

2018/2019

## 1. WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Pacific Training Centre for the Blind (PTCB) is changing blind people's lives one step at a time. Through an innovative and empowering approach, blind people are teaching blind people the skills of independence and freedom.

The PTCB offers a positive, holistic, integrated program of blindness skills training, developed and run by blind people, that uses a nontraditional, problem-solving method of teaching, and is based on a proven model of success already demonstrated in three world-renowned centres in the US. No one else in Canada has the expertise, knowledge and contacts necessary to provide a program of equal caliber and effectiveness....

## 2. VALUES And PHILOSOPHY

Vision Statement

Blind people empowering blind people to be employed, independent and free.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Pacific Training Centre for the Blind is committed to empowering its students to achieve independence, employment, equality and first-class citizenship by offering cutting edge blindness skills training based on a positive, proven, world-renowned model.

Project leaders instill a belief in blind people's own capabilities and in the limitless possibilities open to them and adopt a non-custodial approach (i.e. it is not about sighted people doing things for the blind; it is about blind people doing things for themselves, and it is about blind teachers working with blind students to increase skills and confidence).

### 3. ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Founded in 2011, the PTCB is a registered Canadian charity based in Victoria BC that provides independence and blindness skills training to blind people, such as tactile and Braille skills, orientation and travel with the long white cane, adaptive technology, cooking and life-skills, social skills and job readiness, and a positive approach to blindness.

The centre offers an alternative model to blindness rehabilitation to what currently exists in Canada; it is based on an empowering, nontraditional, nonvisual model of blindness training, called Structured Discovery Learning, where blind people are in the lead.

The centre's model and philosophy is based on the highly successful National Federation of the Blind (NFB) residential-style centres in Louisiana, Minnesota and Colorado, where 80 per cent of graduates find employment or pursue post-secondary education that leads to employment (National Federation of the Blind), and where centre graduates earn on average \$11,000 more per year than people who have not graduated from a centre (Louisiana Tech Institute on Blindness, 2011).

### 4. FORMAL MANDATES

To provide a comprehensive program of training to blind adults in the skills of blindness.

To help students gain confidence through a problem-solving approach to teaching; positive blind role models in the form of blind teachers and mentors; and high-expectations of blind program participants, which is built into the curriculum of the program.

To prepare blind adults to work, live independently and provide for themselves and others.

To ensure that blind adults and seniors can continue to participate in their community in a meaningful way after experiencing vision loss.

## 5. INFORMAL MANDATES

To provide positive education about blindness and the abilities of blind people to employers, educators and the general public.

To hire blind people and provide meaningful work opportunities for blind individuals at the centre

## 6. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

- Stakeholders in the field include the following: 1. Working-age blind adults (and their families) residing in Victoria and neighbouring communities.
- Seniors (and their families) experiencing vision loss residing in Victoria and neighbouring communities.
- Blindness consumer organizations such as the Canadian Federation of the Blind, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians and the Canadian Counsel of the Blind.
- Itinerant teachers and disability services at local colleges and universities.
- Cross-Disability related organizations such as the Victoria Disability Resource Centre.

- Other nonprofit and charitable organizations in Victoria.
- Ophthalmologists and organizations of ophthalmologists.
- Funders and potential funders, including granting organizations, service organizations and corporate and individual donors.
- Government and government entities such as Community Living BC, Work BC, Work Safe and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

## 7. COMPETITION ANALYSIS

The following section offers an analysis of the service providers that currently exist in Canada for blind people. The section also includes brief mention of some non-service related organizations in the field.

The blindness field in Canada comprises: one large charitable agency, CNIB, divided into Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC) and CNIB Foundation, that is responsible for providing services to blind people across the country; a rehabilitation centre in Ontario called Balance for Blind Adults with a focus on Torontonians; a community college program in Vancouver that provides some computer and Braille training; several Canadian and U.S. guide dog schools; a centre for people who are deafblind called the Helen Keller Centre; a unique system of supports in Quebec; three national consumer groups; a blind sports organization; a regulatory body that monitors and promotes the use of Braille; and public educational services and other supports for blind children and their families.

By far the largest alternative to the Pacific Training Centre for the Blind is VLRC. However, VLRC's model, structure and approach contrasts so drastically from that of the Pacific Training Centre for the Blind, and blind Canadians are so underserved, that the two organizations can easily coexist, at least in the short term.

Through VLRC, CNIB provides the only Canada-wide rehabilitation services available to blind adults in the country. The CNIB Foundation focuses on vision health and blindness prevention research, accessible design consulting, the sale of low vision adaptive devices, some community-based “vision” services such as peer mentoring, employment services, fundraising and administration.

According to the Public Sector Salary Disclosure 2013 (Disclosure for 2012) of the CNIB to the Province of Ontario, the highest paid staff members at CNIB at that time received wages between \$100,000 and \$300,000.

<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/publications/salarydisclosure/pssd/orgs.php?organization=other>).

#### Drawbacks and Differences between PTCB and VLRC

VLRC is still being established in British Columbia so an accurate comparison is not possible at this time. The following comparison is based on past rehabilitation services offered by the CNIB.

- The training offered by VLRC may be non-intensive, and short-term whereas PTCB training is for as long as the student requires
- The VLRC training is based on a conventional “guided learning” model of instruction, which often involves a sighted instructor teaching the person to use their remaining vision, and to memorize specific travel routes and tasks, rather than the PTCB’s modern, comprehensive and integrated blindness skill-building and problem solving approach to training.

Since traditionally the majority of people who work for the CNIB are sighted, and since there is usually not a majority of blind people on its board, blind people are not in charge. This fact makes it nearly impossible for CNIB to show by example, that blind people are capable, competent and have their own voice. All teachers,

administration and board members of the PTCB are blind and blind people are in charge.

- The VLRC is based on a “medical model of blindness,” which views blindness as a deficit or symptom of a disease. The PTCB takes a holistic approach and addresses the functional challenges faced by individuals experiencing vision loss, regardless of the medical cause. A medical referral is not required.
- The VLRC may focus on “vision” which distracts from the actual needs of its blind clients to learn blindness skills needed for independence. The PTCB only teaches blindness skills, not vision enhancement.

## 8. SWOT ANALYSIS

### Strengths

- Program focused, low administration costs
- Flexible admission policy
- Individualized training approach
- Positive perspective of blindness and the abilities of blind people
- Empowering outcomes-based approach to teaching and program delivery
- New and innovative, nontraditional approach
- Dedicated blind staff
- Passionate and competent organizational leaders who are also blind
- Growing knowledge of grant writing
- Successful Gaming Grant application in 2017 - 2018
- Development and implementation of Policies and Best Practices based on 7 years of experiential learning
- Growing recognition within the blindness and general Victoria community
- The will to succeed

### Weaknesses

- Inability to secure core funding

#### Opportunities

- Strong marketing potential using modern methods such as social media and crowd sourcing to raise the profile of the PTCB
- Ability to apply for funding such as community grants and corporate sponsors
- The goal to expand to attract participants from other parts of the province and eventually the country
- The possibility of acquiring CARF accreditation

#### Threats

- Limited understanding in the blindness field of our nontraditional approach to teaching blindness skills, including our nonvisual methods
- The potential to be thwarted in our efforts by more established and traditional organizations serving the blind
- Competition for funds

#### 9. CURRENT PROGRAM

- Shared office and training space at Victoria Disability Resource Centre
- Program offered 2 – 2 ½ days a week
- Able to provide services for 12 regular part-time students and up to 5 drop-in students a week through three programs; Blind People in Charge Program, Skill Focused Program and Home Stay Program.

## 10. CURRENT CRITICAL ISSUES

Securing core funding that would enable us to provide the current Blind People in Charge Program each year so we can focus our additional fund-raising efforts on expanding the program.

Staff succession.

Accreditation as a recognized service provider

## 11. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2018 - 2019

Goal 1:

Secure funding to offer the current Blind People in Charge Program in 2019 - 2020

Strategy – Continue to contract a grant writer to assist the Executive Director with the multiple applications for grants

Strategy - continue seeking funding from diverse and multiple funding sources for the centre including contracts, grants and donors.

Strategy – Reapply for a Gaming Grant of \$20,000

Strategy –Continue to dialogue with the provincial government about offering choices for publicly funded rehabilitation of persons who are blind

Goal 2:

Ensure there is a pool of potential trainers to succeed current staff.

Strategy – Continue to prepare current contract staff to take over training and coordination of the program.

Goal 3:

Seek accreditation

Strategy – Apply for accreditation in August 2018

Strategy – Continue to fine tune policies and procedures in preparation of accreditation visit in early 2019.

Goal 4:

Expand Home Stay program

Strategy – Continue to seek out Home Stay hosts

Goal 5:

Develop a residential component to the Blind People in Charge program

Strategy – Continue discussions with the Camp Bowen Society with the goal of offering a pilot residential program at Bowen Lodge

## 12. EVALUATION PLAN

The executive director and staff will do an interim review in January 2019 to make sure progress is being made on these goals and that strategies are being implemented. They will prepare a written report which they will present to the Board in February 2019. They will also review this strategic plan and the interim report prior to developing a strategic plan for 2019 – 2020 to be presented to the Board in July/August 2019.

## 13. VISION OF THE FUTURE

### Short term:

The PTCB will be housed at a location with a dedicated office, storage space, two rooms for training and a kitchen facility.

The PTCB will be in a position to hire one additional staff and offer the Blind People in Charge Program three full days a week.

### Long term:

The PTCB will offer services five days a week to individuals from anywhere in British Columbia.