

CNIB Lake Joe 2021/22 Year in Review

**Celebrating 60 years of enriching lives, making memories,
building independence on the shores of Lake Joseph**





In 2021, CNIB Lake Joe celebrated 60 years of bringing the magic of camp to Canadians with sight loss. With innovative virtual programming and fun celebrations, new in-person programming and new amenities, we'd like to thank everyone who celebrated this amazing milestone with us!

In 2021/22, CNIB Lake Joe had just under 2,000 visits:

- **1,646** participant visits – 1,546 in CNIBLakeJoe@Home virtual programming and 100 in-person for Holiday Weeks.
- **32** attended the Guide Dog Users of Canada AGM.
- **34** attended CNIB, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada and Deafblind Community Services events and meetings.
- **27** special guests from Canada and the United States attended the Synthetic Turf Council's dedication ceremony for the new soccer pitch and mini-golf course.
- More than **250** physically distanced donors, sponsors, participants, and volunteers came together for the wildly successful CNIB Muskoka: Dock-to-Dock: Poker Run fundraising event.

Enriching lives, making memories, building independence on the shores of Lake Joseph

Together, we celebrated our 60th anniversary all year long through online festivities including:

- Our monthly [60th Anniversary Saturday Series](#) virtual program
- A special [60th Anniversary video](#)
- A new [CNIB Lake Joe Historical Timeline](#)
- An AMI documentary called [Ripples – CNIB Lake Joe](#)



CNIB Lake Joe staff welcomes guests back to camp at an outdoor registration table.

2021/22 NEW Program Highlights

Who could have imagined that in our 60th anniversary year, CNIB Lake Joe would go **hybrid!**

With COVID-19 continuing to impact in-person programming, we maintained a full year of **CNIBLakeJoe@Home virtual programs** for adults and children, launching new programs like learning “French with Friends” and expanding the wildly popular Camp-in-a-Box programs.



Here is a photo of virtual camper Kyle, excited to open his Camp-in-a-Box complete with musical instruments and everything he needed for a do-it-yourself Halloween-at-Home party! He and 32 other children and youth scared up lots of fun and laughs together!

People of all ages with sight loss kept connected year-round with CNIBLakeJoe@Home programming:

- **1,545** participant visits in **22** CNIBLakeJoe@Home programs, participating in **4,101** program hours
- **16%** of participants were from outside of Ontario (a 77% increase from last year)
- **37%** were children and youth

As spring turned into summer, staff brainstormed ways to bring people together onsite safely. Exploring CNIB Lake Joe’s history, we discovered that it was originally known as the “Canadian National Institute for the Blind Lake Joseph Adjustment Training and Holiday Centre.” Quite a mouthful, but the “Holiday Centre” part triggered the idea to create a new type of “Holiday Week” program!

In August, we formally launched three **Holiday Week** offerings and welcomed people back to CNIB Lake Joe during the pandemic. A reduced number of guests attended with their friends and family and, with thorough health and safety protocols in place, chose their own adventures.

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This program was a huge success, with 100 guests joining in the summer fun! Thanks to the launch of pre-camp virtual meetings, everyone arrived ready and raring to go. The photo below is of all our guests outside on the last day of Holiday Week #1. We can't see the smiles behind the masks, but we know they're there!



Friends and family experience CNIB Lake Joe's first-ever Holiday Week, August 2021.

Thanks to CNIB Lake Joe Holiday Weeks, I...



"...enjoyed tubing and paddle boating and beach time, sail boating, and a pontoon boat cruise. I also loved the climbing wall. My dad and I went on the tandem bike every day. I loved walking on the nature trail and got to walk Ambassador dog Willow. This was our first time at Lake Joe, and I'm going to go again next year."

Rahul Dighe, camper (right – with mom and dad) at CNIB Lake Joe Holiday Week

With border closures and travel restrictions leaving many Canadians without a guide dog, CNIB Lake Joe partnered with CNIB Guide Dogs and Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLRC) to pilot another new program: **Getting Ready for a Guide Dog**. While people waited to be matched with their next guide dog, staff from CNIB Guide Dogs and VLRC used CNIB Lake Joe – and nearby Parry Sound – to update and enhance clients’ orientation and mobility skills. Thirty-two guests and staff attended.



Sylvie Laferriere, CNIB Guide Dog staff member keeping cool in Lake Joseph with a guide dog.

Thanks to the “Getting Ready for a Guide Dog” program, I...

“...had the most exciting experience this summer that I’ve had in years! We had mobility training for part of the day and then worked with guide dogs for the rest of the day. Having this assessment, I realized I need a large dog, and certainly not a fast one, and that’s what I’m going to be matched with. I’m so excited about it.”

Myra Rodrigues
Guest and CNIB Lake Joe alumni from 1961

CNIB Muskoka 60th Anniversary Weekend Celebration



We were thrilled to be joined by CNIB Muskoka Dock-to-Dock: Poker Run celebrity hosts Ben Mulroney, Joan Kelley Walker (returning emcee) and Rod Black, August 14, 2021!

CNIB Lake Joe hosted its official opening celebration on July 21, 1961, and formally opened its doors to campers on August 17, 1961. Sixty years later, the CNIB Lake Joe community celebrated this milestone over an **action-packed weekend raising \$370,000** for CNIB Lake Joe's capital redevelopment campaign! This funding enables the purchase of adaptive sports and independent living skills equipment for a new multi-purpose recreation and learning facility at CNIB Lake Joe.

As part of this anniversary weekend, CNIB Lake Joe partnered with the Antique and Classic Boat Society-Toronto (ACBS-Toronto) to operate our first-ever **CNIB Muskoka: Dock-to-Dock: Poker Run** on Saturday, August 14. Over 250 participants, including "Dock Hosts," guests, donors, sponsors and volunteers (plus **50/50 draw** ticket purchasers), raised over \$130,000 of our weekend grand total.



Two participants in the CNIB Muskoka: Dock-to-Dock: Poker Run, leaving one of the docks in their antique wooden boat, smiling while holding up their poker hand.

A huge thank you goes out to the mighty, unstoppable team of Nancy Simonot (Co-Chair), Helen Hunt (Co-Chair), Tracey Burton, Tom Cross, Anthony Domenici, and the Antique and Classic Boat Society-Toronto for organizing another successful annual CNIB Muskoka event!

CNIB Lake Joe unveils new accessible soccer pitch and mini-golf course thanks to generous donors



Ribbon cutting on the new soccer field at the Dedication Ceremony, Sept 24/21. Left to right: Sherri Helsdingen & Monique Pilkington, CNIB Lake Joe; Dan Bond, President, Synthetic Turf Council; Mark Klementti, RK & Associates and Secretary, STC Board; and Josh Cook, CNIB Lake Joe.

Through the incredible generosity of its members, the **Synthetic Turf Council (STC)** donated a fully accessible soccer pitch, mini-golf course and amenities to CNIB Lake Joe. Based in the USA, STC partnered with CNIB Lake Joe as its first-ever international Community Service Project and excavation began May 17, 2021. With a reduced number of guests onsite, workers were able to bring this exciting project to a relatively quick completion.

CNIB Lake Joe is deeply grateful to local father/son volunteer team, Roy and Mark Klementti, who spearheaded this initiative, as well as all the local businesses that generously contributed cash, product and labour.

Accessible fun for seasons to come!



Guests in Holiday Week programming were the first to test their limits on the 32' Climbing Tower. They all went home with bragging rights, including this 84-year-old "Wall Warrior."



The new accessible soccer pitch was completed after in-person programming had ended for the season. Staff are anxious to unveil their innovative programming ideas to guests in the 2022 summer season.



The new mini golf course has eight holes with super colourful golf balls and flags to create high contrast. The course was crafted with a mix of easy and difficult holes and spells out the words "mini golf" using the braille alphabet.

CNIB Lake Joe Alumni

We couldn't celebrate our 60th anniversary without connecting with past CNIB Lake Joe staff and volunteers. These incredible people laid the groundwork and sowed the seeds to make CNIB Lake Joe the transformative place that it is.

In 2021, we created a CNIB Lake Joe alumni Facebook group for alum to connect, share, and contribute. **Over 200 members** have joined (and growing)!

Thanks to my time with CNIB Lake Joe, I...



“...am the person that I am today. My parents met at Lake Joe in 1976, so I am a Lake Joe baby! Lake Joe has made me into a person who loves connection, outdoor adventures, and camp. My time inspired me to work with camps across Canada, which brought me back to directing CNIB's children and recreation programs and camps in BC!”

Emily McFarlane, CNIB Program Lead, Children & Youth and Culture & Recreation
CNIB Lake Joe Alumni (2005 to 2009)

CNIB Lake Joe Volunteers



As the pandemic persevered, so did our team of dedicated volunteers. Throughout the year, **144 volunteers** stepped up to serve in many roles, contributing over **1,650 hours** of their time. They provided leadership and inspiration, rolled up their sleeves to transform the property, raised awareness and much-needed funds, and shared their stories of strength and resilience.

Nancy Simonot (right), CNIB Muskoka event co-chair and member of the Lake Joe Vision Team kicks off the Poker Run event with Sue Domenici.

This year, six long-time leadership and philanthropy volunteers were nominated for an **Ontario Volunteer Service Award**. Offered by the Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat, this award recognizes 5+ years of continuous service to an organization:

- Corey Braun
- Tracey Burton
- Tom Cross
- Helen Hunt
- Nancy Simonot
- Derek Thompson

CNIB Lake Joe Advisory Board 2021/22

Our leadership volunteers continue to provide incredible guidance and support as we operationalize our strategic plan:

- Robert Froom, Chair
- Corey Braun
- Jane Casey
- Dawn Clelland
- Terry Kelly
- Daryl Knudson
- Jason Mitschele
- Mark Nelligan
- Blair Spry
- Derek Thompson
- Stephanie Wilsack
- Audrey Wubbenhorst

Philanthropy Partners

Lake Joe Vision Team

Established in 2016 by founding members Tim Hogarth and John Firstbrook (co-captains), Randall Oliphant, Sue Creasy, and Bob Buchan (honorary chair), the Lake Joe Vision Team is a group of philanthropic leadership volunteers who raise funds for highest priority needs and bursaries to boost participation at CNIB Lake Joe.

In 2021/22, the Lake Joe Vision Team continued to help raise funds in support of the \$3.2 million capital campaign to build a new multi-purpose recreation and teaching facility, providing essential indoor space to smash barriers to inclusion through sports, recreation and skill development. In the face of the pandemic, this team transitioned to achieve incredible fundraising success for CNIB Lake Joe virtually.

In addition, Randall Oliphant, founding member of the Lake Joe Vision Team, upped the 60th Anniversary ante by generously donating \$60,000 to CNIB Lake Joe and challenging others to do the same. Three others accepted his “**Super Six Challenge**” and committed to major gifts of \$60,000 each. CNIB Lake Joe is extremely grateful to these donors for their incredible generosity: Hogarth Family / Pioneer Energy; Joan Kelley Walker; and John and Norma MacDonald.

Lake Joe Vision Team 2021/22

- Tim Hogarth & John Firstbrook, Co-Captains
- Susan Creasy
- Joan Kelley Walker
- Norma MacDonald
- Randall Oliphant
- Nancy Simonot

Lions Clubs International

On August 17, 1961, with the financial assistance of the MDA Lions, CNIB Lake Joe opened its doors for the first time. We are grateful to Lions – the Knights of the Blind – for tirelessly serving CNIB Lake Joe ever since as valued volunteers, generous donors, and true advocates for the cause.

CNIB / MDA Lions Committee 2021/22 (Lions' members)

- Lion Bob Tanner, Chair
- Lion Barb Ennis
- Lion Mark Nelligan

The CNIB and MDA Lions Committee were pleased to honour District A2 as the **District of the Year** winner for raising the most funds in support of CNIB, along with 12 local clubs which raised the most funds in their District with a **Club of the Year** award. Bravo!

Meet the CNIB Lake Joe Team

CNIB Lake Joe staff worked hard throughout the year to celebrate Lake Joe's 60th with everyone in the camp community.



Photo from left-right, top row: Monique Pilkington, Executive Director (with Willow); Sherri Helsdingen, Manager, Community Engagement; and Barry Quick, Facility Operator.
Photo from left-right, bottom row: Kelly Hayes, Lead, Guest Services; Lindsay Garrett, Program Manager; and Eugene Chong, General Manager.



Thanks to working at CNIB Lake Joe, I...

“...have been able to make so many connections with many wonderful people that I don’t think that I would have gotten the chance to know. That’s really important to me. Working at CNIB Lake Joe made me realize who I am, to come to terms with my disabilities and do the things I want to do.”

Taylor Gaudon
Program Coordinator, 2021 (staff member since 2016)

CNIB Philanthropy Team

- Jennifer Co, Associate
- Tara Oliphant, Manager
- Eyre Purkin-Bien, Senior Advisor

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