



# AERODYNAMICS

## The AER Canada Newsletter

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of the Blind and Visually Impaired

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## NOW BOARDING

### Welcome Back

By Sara Bennett, Editor

Welcome back to work, school, routine—whatever September means for you. I hope you all had a good summer and are now ready to put your nose to the grindstone once again. For me, September has always meant back-to-school—as a student, not a teacher—and I continue to enjoy the relief I feel when September rolls around and I'm not returning to school. I've spent nearly half of my life in school and perhaps that's the reason for my continued sense of freedom come September. It's ironic because I enjoy learning and chose to pursue post-secondary education. When you come to think of it, though, we are always learning in this field, as are our students and clients, so in a sense we never really leave school at all. I hope you enjoy your learning journey.

I can be reached at: <mailto:saralb@sympatico.ca>

## FIRST CLASS

### The Braille Challenge Finals: Five Canadians Made It!

By Adam Wilton, Regional Coordinator, BC Regional Braille Challenge

On June 22, 2019, 50 students from across North America competed in the [International Braille Challenge Finals in Los Angeles, California](#). This was one of the strongest years in recent memory for Canadian students—three from Alberta and two from British Columbia. These finalists were among the top-scoring participants in their age categories from regional Braille Challenge events held across the continent! At the International Finals, one Canadian from British Columbia placed second in her category. Congratulations, Maggie!

The Braille Challenge is a reading and writing competition open to students from grades 1 to 12 and hosted by the [Braille Institute](#). The main goal of the Challenge is "to motivate students to practice and hone their braille literacy skills, which are essential to academic and employment success."

Depending on grade level, students compete in three or four challenges: Spelling, Reading Comprehension and Proofreading for students in early elementary grade levels; and Reading Comprehension, Proofreading, Speed and Accuracy (timed transcription from audio to braille), and Charts and Graphs for students in late elementary and secondary levels.



Photo shows a Braille Challenge participant sitting in front of a braillewriter as she reads over what she has just written.

Just as important as the Braille Challenge's academic competition are its social and psychological aspects. All of the students read and write braille, and they connect with each other over pizza and during other activities. Many students, parents and teachers emphasize the importance of this sense of community as one of the best parts of the Braille Challenge! And then there is the self-confidence that the participants gain.



Photo shows a group of students playing tactile Twister while on a break between Challenges!

One of my favourite memories from our [British Columbia regional event](#), held each year on the campus of the University of British Columbia, is of a grade 2 student who was participating in his first Braille Challenge. The student was from a remote community and had never met another braille user. The competition room was perfectly silent before the start of the first Challenge, but the student just couldn't contain his excitement. He announced, to the entire room, "You know, guys, I read braille, too!"

To learn more about the Braille Challenge, or for information about starting a regional event in your area/province, contact Matthew Beckwith, National Program Specialist at the Braille Institute, (323) 210-2593 or [mjbeckwith@brailleinstitute.org](mailto:mjbeckwith@brailleinstitute.org). If you would like any support in getting a new Canadian regional set up, please don't hesitate to contact me at (604) 269-2205 or [bcbraillechallenge@gmail.com](mailto:bcbraillechallenge@gmail.com).

## **BUSINESS CLASS**

### **AER International Conference 2020**

Themed "*Gateway to Community*", the AER International Conference 2020, to be held July 22-26, 2020, at the Union Station Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri, is sure to be AER's best conference ever! Are there topics that you want to have covered or is there something that you would like to learn more about during the AER International Conference 2020? Tell us what you want and every effort will be made to have it covered. Click on [Topics & Interests](#). To learn more, email: <mailto:conference@aerbvi.org>

## **AER Ontario: “STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS”**

Date: Thursday, November 14, 2019

Location: W. Ross Macdonald School, Brantford, Ontario

Keynote Speaker: To be announced

You don't want to miss this outstanding opportunity to explore, learn and apply Transition Strategies for your students and clients at all stages of their lives. Network with leaders in the field of Visual Impairment who have the expertise and first-hand knowledge of the challenges that face our unique population. Video conferencing will be available for those who cannot attend in person! Who should attend:

Teachers of the Visually Impaired  
ILS Instructors  
Orientation & Mobility Specialists  
Transition Coordinators

Employment Counsellors  
Early Intervention Specialists  
Intervenors  
Parents



Join AER today and receive a special discounted rate! Just click here: [aerbvi.org/membership](http://aerbvi.org/membership)

Call for Papers: If you or someone you know would be interested in applying to present at this event, please email the Conference Planning Committee directly at [AEROntarioBoard@gmail.com](mailto:AEROntarioBoard@gmail.com). The deadline for submissions is Friday, September 20, 2019.

### **“Beyond All Limits” NE/AER Conference**

North Conway Grand Hotel, New Hampshire

November 13-15, 2019

This year's conference theme, “Beyond All Limits”, is a call for thinking outside the box and for sharing our knowledge with each other. The conference program presents five track areas: education, rehabilitation, technology, orientation and mobility, and research. Presenters hail from Texas, Kentucky, New England and Quebec.

The conference offers hands-on workshops, panel discussions and presentations from leaders in our field. Come and learn about new methods and tools. Share insights and strategies with your peers. Enjoy beautiful North Conway in November!

This year's Northeast AER Conference is not to be missed! [Click here for further details.](#)

### **CNIB Launches Connecting the Dots Conference**

Locations: MaRS Discovery District, Toronto

Date: October 29 and 30, 2019, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

\*Montreal and Vancouver 2020 dates to be announced.

For over 40 years, the CNIB Foundation hosted a variety of successful technology trade shows, conferences and seminars across the country for people who are blind or partially sighted. The Braille Conference in Toronto gathered clients, braille transcribers, educators and staff to discuss the latest advances in Literacy. In Quebec, TechnoVision+ was the largest trade show in the country dedicated to adapted technology and services for people living with sight loss. Attendees and exhibitors included clients, educators, health-care professionals, technology vendors and community organizations. Today, we're thrilled to announce that we've combined these regional events to bring you a bigger, better, and more inclusive conference that combines initiatives from our strategic plan to boost participation in the world of work, unleash the power of technology and drive achievement and equality. Our new nationwide conference, Connecting the Dots, is the largest educational and professional development experience focused on technology, employment and literacy for people with sight loss. With over 40 workshops, this two-day conference will provide opportunities for attendees to:

- Learn more about current trends and innovations in the sight loss community at thought-provoking panel discussions;
- Network with industry experts and connect with other like-minded professionals;
- Experience the latest technological advancements in braille and assistive technologies;
- Gain essential practical experience from industry experts to aid in career advancement.

Explore new ideas and learn from industry leaders at Connecting the Dots! For more information or to register, visit: <http://www.cnib.ca/connectingthedots>

### Call for Abstracts! O&M and Low Vision Conferences

- The International Orientation & Mobility Online Symposium, to be held January 29 to 31, 2020, is accepting presenter applications until October 1, 2019. At this symposium, O&M-related professionals from around the world will share their research and ideas online from the comfort

### Calendar of Events

November 13-15, 2019 -- [Beyond All Limits 2019 NE/AER Annual Conference](#), North Conway, New Hampshire, USA

November 13-16, 2019 -- [Getting In Touch With Literacy Conference](#), Seattle, Washington, USA

November 14, 2019 – Standing at the Crossroads AER Ontario Conference, Brantford, Ontario, Canada

December 5-7, 2019 -- [Association of Vision Rehabilitation Therapists \(AVRT\) Conference](#), Jacksonville, Florida, USA

January 29-31, 2020 -- [International Orientation & Mobility Online Symposium](#)

March 26-27, 2020 – American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference (AFBLC), Arlington, Virginia, USA

May 6-8, 2020 – Canadian Vision Teachers' Conference (CVTC), Toronto, Ontario, Canada

June 22-25, 2020 -- [Challenges for an Inclusive Society International Mobility Conference \(IMC17\)](#), Gothenburg, Sweden

July 12-16, 2020 -- [13th International Conference of the International Society for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation \(ISLRR\)](#), Dublin, Ireland

July 22-26, 2020 – ["Gateway to Community" AER International Conference 2020](#), St. Louis, Missouri, USA

of their own homes or offices. For more information, visit:

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

- The 13th International Low Vision Conference by the International Society for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation will be held at Dublin, Ireland's Convention Centre from July 12 to 16, 2020. Abstracts are being accepted until January 2020, with travel fellowships available to student presenters. Please visit the Vision 2020 website for more details: <https://vision2020dublin.com/abstracts-submission-guidelines/>

## **ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES**

### **News from Canada's Optometrists**

The Manitoba Association of Optometrists (MAO) and the Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba have announced their support for a private member's bill banning the sight-threatening practice of scleral tattooing and jewellery insertion. Titled "The Public Health Amendment Act (Banning Cosmetic Eye Tattooing and Eye Jewellery)", this potentially sight-saving Bill has passed first reading in the Manitoba Legislature. To date, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada to ban these procedures. For more, visit: <https://www.mb-opto.ca/legislation-ban-eyeball-tattoos-and-jewellery>

The Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) is highlighting the importance of annual eye exams for children, particularly at back-to-school time, because vision issues can affect motor skills, social development, attention span and the ability to read and write. Up to 80% of learning is dependent on vision. Kids could be misdiagnosed with behavioral or learning disabilities due to their inability to see or focus, when all they need is a pair of eyeglasses. According to the OAO, only 14% of the province's children had an eye exam during 2017-2018. The OAO recommends that children have their first eye exam at six months, another between the ages of two and five and then every 12 months thereafter, or as recommended by an optometrist.

Meanwhile, Newfoundland and Labrador has become the tenth province in Canada to support a Children's Vision Program. Every child will now have access to a full eye exam before entering school. A vision screening cannot detect as wide a range of issues. The NLAO recommends that children have their first eye exam at the age of 6 months, at age three, age 5 (prior to entering kindergarten) and annually thereafter. According to the NLAO, up to 25% of school-age children have difficulty seeing and 60% of children with reading difficulties have undetected or uncorrected vision issues. October is Children's Vision Month. The NLAO has been advocating for a Children's Vision Program since October 2018. This October parents and optometrists will really have something to celebrate!

## **THE JOURNEY**

### **Endless Possibilities: DeafBlind Ontario Services**

In 1989, a group of parents lobbied the Ontario Government for community-based supported living programs for their children with deafblindness. Thirty years later, DeafBlind Ontario Services is a

leader in the field, with programs in both urban areas and remote communities across the province. Our mission? To support individuals with deafblindness to live and thrive within their communities. DeafBlind Ontario Services provides accessible residential and customized support services across Ontario. Our holistic approach empowers people with deafblindness to achieve their goals and dreams. The organization strives to be the Intervenor Services provider of choice in Ontario. To promote a standard of service excellence, DeafBlind Ontario Services is developing an accreditation process for intervenors. Further, we are actively participating in research to advance our knowledge and to contribute to the field of deafblindness nationally and internationally.

About one percent of Canada’s population or approximately 368,400 people are deafblind. In Ontario, an estimated 147,736 individuals are deafblind.

Deafblindness, a combined loss of hearing and vision, impacts access to information, communication and mobility. People with deafblindness deserve the basic right to have access to a barrier-free society, which includes opportunities to communicate and interact within their communities on an equal level with that of their peers.

DeafBlind Ontario Services’ position paper, “Recognize Deafblindness as a Single Disability: Open your Eyes and Ears”, asks that we continue to support the rights and specialized needs of Canadians who are deafblind or are experiencing age-related dual sensory loss within the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

After this paper was published, The Accessible Canada Act (An Act to Ensure a Barrier-Free Canada, 2019), came into effect on July 11, 2019. Despite efforts by the Canadian Government to identify disability issues as a priority, this Act does not guarantee consistent access to Intervenor Services across the country for people with deafblindness.

For 30 years, DeafBlind Ontario Services has been enriching lives, one touch at a time, for individuals with deafblindness. To learn more about DeafBlind Ontario Services, visit [www.deafblindontario.com](http://www.deafblindontario.com). To read “Recognize Deafblindness as a Single Disability: Open Your Eyes and Ears”, visit: <https://deafblindontario.com/about/publications/>.

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