

The Checkered Eye Project

1. Link to The Checkered Eye website:
www.checkeredeye.com
2. Rick Mercer YouTube link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2teSFxsHCh0>
3. Doug Routley's presentation in the legislature
<https://youtu.be/rD0VdV3cxCh>
4. Link for public service announcement on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sv4X_EtbxB4&feature=youtu.be
5. Saugeen Shores municipal page re: accessibility:
<https://www.saugeenshores.ca/en/town-hall/accessibility.aspx>
6. Article by Libby Thaw, founder of The Checkered Eye project:

Check For The Checkered Eye

By Libby Thaw

subjects: [Attitudes and Beliefs About Vision Impairment, Deaf Blindness & Disability, Consumerism - Activists, Organizations](#)

related issues: [Understanding Blindness](#)

Editor's Note: Editor's Note: Libby Thaw is the designer of the Checkered Eye symbol.

Image: The Checkered Eye symbol which is a circle with the words LOW VISION and a checkered eye in the middle.

In the fall of 2000, I attended a CNIB service day in the small town where I live, Saugeen Shores, Ontario.

Resulting from macular degeneration due to Stargardt's disease, I have been legally blind since the age of 19, but have significant eyesight remaining; 20/300.

I've been a registered client of the CNIB since 1981, and therefore have always been notified of upcoming service days. So, on the advertised day, I rode my bike

up to the Legion Hall to chat with volunteers and other CNIB clients, and see what goodies may be available to help me with fine detail visual tasks.

Two ladies at the hall were acquaintances of mine, and we soon found ourselves discussing circumstances relating to our visual difficulties. We ended up swapping stories of situations which were embarrassing or problematic, not because we couldn't see well, but because the people we were interacting with weren't aware of that fact.

A volunteer who participated in the conversation offered, "Clients have been asking for some sort of badge to let people know they can't see". We all agreed that it was a great idea, but were informed that nothing like that existed...yet!

I went home, designed a symbol, and sent it off to the CNIB. I filled them in on the discussion at the Saugeen Shores service day, and said they could use my design.

My suggestions were turned down.

None of the concerns they articulated convinced me that it was not a good idea, so I decided to take on the project myself, and founded the Checkered Eye Project.

Even now, the concept remains controversial among people involved with the "blind community", and I'll fill you in on concerns that have been expressed.

"People don't want to label themselves."

Some people do. There is already a larger label in use--the I D cane. No one is forced to use either label. It's a matter of personal choice.

"The use of another symbol confuses the public."

Indeed the public is already confused. They haven't been adequately informed that some people use an I D cane, for the sole purpose of communicating the fact that they have some degree of vision loss. Therefore, when people such as myself use a white cane, we are sometimes suspected of using it fraudulently. So, since there is already a need to increase awareness, The Checkered Eye Project is working to educate the public about both symbols.

"Lapel pins are not a reliable method of conveying the needs of people with visual limitations."

Without some awareness, the pin on its own would not be very effective. However, even with just one person doing the educating, the Checkered Eye symbol is increasing in its effectiveness.

We must also remember that a Checkered Eye lapel pin, like a white cane, only gives a small amount of information. The individual must articulate his/her own needs, if they want them to be known.

"The white cane is one of the most effective tools for self-identification".

Until now, it was the only one. Consider people in wheel chairs who also have low vision; it is very difficult to hold an I D cane. There are also people with disabilities in their hands and arms for whom it is impossible or difficult to hold the cane. And then there are folks like me who, when doing such things as travelling with luggage, transporting groceries, or attending small children, find the cane very awkward and cumbersome.

The white cane is an excellent beacon, to increase ones visibility in traffic, and a wonderful tool for mobility. But if you don't need either of those functions, it may be more convenient to wear a pin, rather than occupy a hand with your communication device.

So far the education effort includes a web site, www.checkeredeye.com, public speaking engagements, pamphlets on display in places like doctor's offices, libraries, and drug stores. There are also stickers posted by businesses, which show the emblem and web address, and state "We check for the checkered eye".

As a result of these methods and some media coverage, there are now people with low vision using the Checkered Eye emblem in four provinces and two states.

The public education process will be ongoing for many years I expect, and I am very happy to welcome the cooperation of the NFB:AE, who recently passed a resolution to become involved in the awareness efforts