



KEYNOTE

Empowerment and the Right to Rehabilitation and Participation From a Client's Perspective

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Penny Hartin is the Chief Executive Officer of the World Blind Union (www.wbu.ngo), which represents the views and needs of some 285 Million blind and partially sighted persons at the global level. Prior to joining the WBU in 2006 as its first CEO, Penny spent over 25 years in senior management roles with the CNIB, the major provider of rehabilitation services for blind and partially sighted persons in Canada. At the international level, she served for six years on the first UN Panel of Experts to monitor the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for persons with Disabilities, worked on the UNCPRD development and implementation work and frequently represents the WBU at the international arena including the United Nations and its agencies. Penny has low vision, uses speech and screen magnification access technology and cherishes her guide dog named "Chicory".

Keynote outline

Now that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been in place for ten years, and subsequent treaty and policy developments within the international arena have reinforced the rights of persons with disabilities to self-determination and independence, it is well understood that persons with low vision enjoy those same advances. And we have benefited in many ways due to advances in medical care, technology, more favourable regulatory environments and better informed societal attitudes. Yet there are still enormous gaps in access to eye-health care, affordable and useful technology, accessible information and environments and inclusion in supportive networks. Sometimes those of us with low vision feel caught between two worlds – the seeing world and the non-seeing world and

it can be a challenge to understand and express our unique needs and fit into a system that works for us.

This presentation will identify some of the regulatory, societal and technological advances that have taken place over the past number of years and the opportunities that these avail for enhanced independence and inclusion. We will also explore some of the service, technological, access and technological gaps that continue to impede our full participation as persons with low vision. And we will discuss the importance of empowerment and advocacy, both individual and collective to promote full access to the vision rehabilitation services and supports we need as well as opportunities for full inclusion and engagement in our communities.