

vi·sion·ar·y (vizh'n-eri || -erri) adj. 1. Characterised by vision or foresight

Visionary

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2023 IGDF Conference Overview and photos from Canada

Training Guide Dogs in Challenging Climatic Conditions



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First and foremost, membership of the IGDF enables Guide Dog Schools around the world to join a community dedicated to serving the visually impaired. That community needs and wants to share its knowledge and the IGDF facilitates that.

The map below outlines the contributing countries for this edition of Visionary – **Australia, Canada, Denmark, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, USA**



Cover Photo

Sam Tawada and Lukas Franck receiving the Ken Lord award at the 2023 IGDF conference

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Message From The Chair

Bill Thornton | Chief Executive Officer
BC & Alberta Guide Dogs, Canada

It was my privilege and pleasure to welcome over 275 delegates from around the world to our 2023 IGDF Conference held in Vancouver. I would like to express my thanks to BC & Alberta Guide Dogs' host committee, staff and volunteers.

The subject matter for the conference was exceptional and I would like to thank Conference Programme Committee Chair, Christine Baroni-Pretsch and her very capable committee of, Lukas Franck, Jane Russenberger, Linda Thornton, Clare Pritchett and David Maynard for putting together such an excellent programme. Our thanks also to all the presenters.

This was our first conference since Sydney in 2018, and I would one last time like to repeat my thanks to Mathilda Guide Dogs who were due to host the 2020 conference in Prague but had to cancel due to the global pandemic.

It is my great honour to say congratulations to Lukas Franck (USA) and Sam Tawada (Japan) on their induction into the Ken Lord Award. Both have been exemplary stewards of the local and International Guide Dog movement. We have been privileged to have you both on our team.

In June, the IGDF Board met jointly with the Board of Assistance Dogs International (ADI) in Brussels. The meeting, kindly hosted by Danny Van Coppennolle, Chair of ADI, built on the success of our

continued

Message From The Chair

recent meetings to further strengthen the relationship and cooperation between our two organisations.

An important outcome of the meeting was to approve the Joint Position Statement on Dog Welfare. This statement clearly sets out the commitment of both organisations to the welfare of our dogs, which was identified as a high priority by members of both ADI and IGDF. The Position Statement was presented to members during two webinars earlier in July. If you were not able to attend either of the webinars, you can watch the recordings [here](#).

Whilst on this topic, I would like to thank the Dog Welfare Working Group: Bob Proesmans, Tim Stafford, Melanie Harris, Tiny De Keuster, Nicola Cotton and Becky Hunt, for their work producing the Joint Position Statement. Special thanks go to Dr Bob Proesmans, Tim Stafford and Jennifer Rogers who led the recent webinars explaining the intent and purpose of the Joint Position Paper of Dog Welfare. This work is an excellent example of how ADI and IGDF are working together to improve outcomes for all our organisations, their clients and dogs around the world.

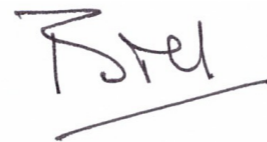
We continue to work with ADI to find further areas for cooperation and collaboration.

Last year ADI and IGDF agreed to open each of our own conferences up to members of the other. As such, ADI have now opened registrations for their 2023 Conference to IGDF member organisations. The Conference takes place in the historic city of Zagreb, Croatia, running from September 10th to 13th, 2023. Details of how to register can be found on page 25. I look forward to seeing some of you there.

I wish you all a continued success with your programs,

Bill Thornton

Chair IGDF



Joint meeting of the ADI and IGDF Boards

IGDF Assessments

Congratulations to the following organisation which has become an EO:

- Challenge Your Senses (Estonia)

Congratulations to the following organisation which has become an AO:

- Fundacja Pies Przewodnik , Poland

Our best wishes go to the following organisation whose EO status has now ended:

- Alertalegria (Portugal)

Congratulations to the following organisations which have passed their accreditation assessments:

- Guide Dogs of the Desert (USA)
- Guide Dogs Queensland (Australia)
- Blind Low Vision New Zealand
- Guide Dogs for the Blind Assoc. (UK)

Danish Association of the Blind celebrating IGDF membership on International Guide Dog Day

Danish Association of the Blind is a large membership organization that serves as a political force representing persons with vision impairment in Denmark and providing rehabilitation services, learning and social opportunities for persons with vision impairment. DAB's Guide Dog Department has recently celebrated 70 years of providing guide dogs in Denmark and as of February 2023 became a member of IGDF.

We are very proud to have become part of the International Guide Dog movement, which gives us endless possibilities to collaborate and develop our program with the help of our international peers. At the same time, we are very proud that our program has been recognized and accredited according to the IGDF standards.

In connection with International Guide Dog Day on the 26th April, we celebrated our guide dogs and our IGDF membership at a reception, where Thanks with a capital T, were extended to all our colleagues, guide dog users, puppy-raisers and collaborators for their unrelenting support, and the guide dogs present received symbolic rosettes with "IGDF certified" on.

We are looking forward to continuing to provide our clients with their precious guide dogs, with an IGDF quality stamp on!



Lene & Jannie with dogs, Ronja & Kingo

Training guide dogs in the snowiest capital of the world

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind



Winter Obstacles Training

Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind's National Training Centre is located in Ottawa, the snowiest capital in the world. Ottawa has an average 120 days a year with at least 1 centimetre of snow. The semi-continental climate can mean a warm, humid summer and a very cold winter. So, when summer humidity can reach forty degrees Celsius or winter windchills are minus thirty degrees Celsius, there are many climatic challenges. Temperatures and snow are just part of the challenges. Ottawa is especially prone to freezing rain. According to Environment Canada's Senior Climatologist, David Phillips, "It's because of the valley. As it's located in a valley, Ottawa typically gets about 60 hours of freezing rain in an average winter."

So, with all these challenges, how does Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind manage? It's almost second nature after nearly forty years.

The municipality is very well-equipped to clear snow and ice, but it does take time and conditions can be very hazardous in the meantime for people driving or walking. At times, it can mean icy sidewalks or lots of salt on them, large snowbanks on sidewalks and street crossings, and poor visibility. In the summer months, sidewalks can be extremely hot.

With sidewalks that can be covered in salt or too hot for the dogs' pads, we sometimes use PAWZ dog boots and recommend these to our clients to use on their dogs. These rubber boots protect dogs well against heat, cold and salt. We've had the best experience with this brand as they fit well especially on the breeds we use for guide dogs, they stay on well, are easy to clean, and affordable for our clients.

Inside vehicles can be hazardous without proper climate control. Therefore, we utilize two different systems to ensure the comfort and safety of our dogs. All dog training vehicles are fitted with continuous run systems as well as the AceK9, K9 HEAT ARLM Pro, a temperature monitoring system for use in a canine vehicle. The temperature alarm setting is permanent until the user reprograms, so we can set a safe and comfortable temperature range for our dogs all year round. The system always powers on when the ignition is turned on and requires

the handler to manually turn the system off. If the handler turns off the ignition and just exits the vehicle, the system stays on and keeps monitoring the interior environment for the dogs. Plus, there is a wireless alert options, so system temperatures can be sent to a mobile phone. Calls or text alerts can be sent to the dog handler and four other contacts. The continuous run switch is a function that with the flip of a switch, the vehicle will remain switched on running either heating or air conditioning even if the key is taken out of the ignition. No matter the weather, we can still transport our dogs and even leave them inside vehicles. It helps optimize training when multiple dogs can be out with one GDMI and the dogs waiting in the training van are safe, comfortable, and happy to be there, and constantly being monitored.

Our fleet of vehicles all have a set of winter tires. So, every fall, our vehicles are serviced, and tires designed for our harsh winters are installed.

If there is a particular day when it's not safe to be outside due to weather, we will stay back to train dogs at our National Training Centre. This can be when winter road conditions are too dangerous to travel, even locally or in the summer when the asphalt is too hot for the dogs. Training on-site on our large property enables us to still work on things such as finding benches, finding doors, turns right left 3/4 left and all kinds of obstacles. We can be inside our state-of-the-art kennel for all kinds of obedience exercises with various distractions, such as food, dogs, and toys all with the distraction of dogs and the daily routines in our kennel. Obstacle courses are set up inside, as well as outside, where we have an obstacles area with various surfaces, all kinds of curbs,

stairs, and mobile obstacles. Plus, our location has lots of trees that provide shade on hot days.

When we are able to drive somewhere safely after roads are clear, but the weather may still be inclement, we do some training at local malls in the area.

The most consistently harsh weather conditions are during the height of winter, so while Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind trains our dogs year-round, our residential training classes are not held from early December to mid-March each year. Acclimatization and continuous work, which is elementary at the start of a new guide dog team, is impossible with the unpredictability of winter.

Other parts of Canada can also have extreme weather, so this must be considered when our GDMI's are traveling the country for interviews and aftercare visits.

As our clients across Canada use their guide dogs in all weather conditions, it is important that our dogs are trained in all weather. Therefore, at Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind, we never let climatic challenges stop us from our mission.



Class Training in November

Sunburn and slosh: Training dogs Downunder

Annette Ferguson
Guide Dogs
Australia

Australian weather can be described as anything but mild. With El Niño weather patterns causing drought, and La Niña causing floods, our Guide Dog schools have to be prepared for both extremes. Floods, droughts and bushfires are normal part of life Downunder.

Floods in 2022 saw the Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Training Centre at Glossodia action their flood roster as the grounds became isolated and soaked to the core with relentless rains. Vans loaded with dogs and dog food ferried our precious goods to what they called 'the mainland' as the rural landscape disappeared under water. Staff and volunteers gathered to keep our Guide Dogs-in-training, puppies and broodies safe, dry and engaged with real life training enduring long periods indoors and going 'quick quick' on soggy, waterlogged grass.



Dubbo Client, Annette pounding the pavement with Guide Dog Leo

At the other extreme, the hardiness and wisdom of our dogs shines like a beacon with Handlers in rural Australia where the temperatures regularly go above 40C/104F. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Client, Annette and her Guide Dog Leo from Dubbo in Central West NSW rely on dog boots to avoid the well baked cement, bitumen and metal surfaces on their late afternoon adventures as the sun slowly disappears. Annette has albinism which means she has no melanin to protect her skin and eyes



Training van stacked with supplies

from the sun. She religiously abides by the Aussie hot weather policy of 'no work above 32C/89F' because it's too hot for her too! Annette and Leo are often seen travelling well planned and shaded routes around Dubbo with Leo guiding Annette from one sheltered shade spot to another.

Challenging climatic conditions in Australia, while very uncomfortable at times, provide opportunities for our Guide Dogs to maximise their ability to adapt and stretch their performance.

Here are our five top tips for training in challenging climatic conditions:

1. Know the lay of the land in your area and where and when extreme weather events are likely.
2. Plan ahead, always have a good stock of food and know where road closures and safe spaces are likely to be.
3. Make a plan for extreme weather events like floods or bushfires; often emergency services like fire brigades can help with planning. Set up a roster and make sure everyone knows their responsibilities.
4. Keep an eye on the weather forecast, no training above 32C/89F as it's too hot for the dogs and attracts negative attention from the public. Plan training activities for early morning, early evening or indoors to avoid the hottest part of the day.
5. Be prepared; ensure dogs are familiar with wearing boots and always have water and a bowl on hand.



Training with flooded walking tracks

Guide dog training on snow-covered roads

Wakako Oma
Japan Guide Dog Association



Five trainers and dogs walking along a ploughed snow wall on a shared road

The Japan Guide Dog Association provides guide dogs to approximately 250 guide dog users. About 30 % of these users live in regular to heavy snowfall areas. Therefore, in order to provide safe walking on snow-covered roads, we consider the effects of snow on orientation and mobility in our training.

Users living in areas with heavy snowfall were interviewed about their difficulties in walking on snow-covered roads.

The effects of snow-covered roads on orientation include:

1. changes in information from the soles of the feet;
2. changes in information used to maintain straightness;

3. changes in cues and landmarks, such as the disappearance of bus stops due to snow;
4. difficulty using sound information because sound is absorbed by the snow; and
5. feeling photophobia due to reflected light.

The following are some example of effects on mobility:

1. the information provided by guide dogs (corners, kerbs, obstacles) is changed by the fact that ploughed snow is placed together at street corners;
2. some obstacles change to height obstacles, such as contact with eaves due to snow accumulation;

3. people and dogs cannot walk side by side due to changes in the width of the road caused by snow;
4. increased risk of getting out on the street due to the ploughed snow being placed together on the corner; and
5. drop in dog's concentration level while walking.

Because of these possible effects, training dogs are usually taught to avoid obstacles and go around them in normal conditions, but they are also taught to climb over snow walls that are knee-high after ploughing in the winter. We also try to get them used to the cold and unusual fluffy feel of snow.

Additionally, users are requested to switch their harness handle from left to right on certain conditions. There is a need to be aware that in snowy conditions, compared to normal conditions, it is more difficult for people to grasp the relationship between

where they are standing and their location to their destination. Both people and dogs are at increased risk of getting lost because they can make mistakes in their judgement. Therefore, we tell our clients to use proactive requests for assistance. We also advise them to ensure that they have enough time to walk, to dress warmly and select non-slip shoes and other walking clothes, and to assess the snow removal situation and change their walking route accordingly.

Other recommendations include the use of brightly coloured clothing, laser lights on harnesses to increase visibility, electronic compasses and telescopic bar handles to enable single file walking behind the dog through narrow ruts.

We will continue to instruct users to walk more safely and securely, which includes visiting the site and providing individual follow-up training.



Working in heavy snow

Training guide dogs in the heat

Kelsi McCausland
Guide Dogs of the
Desert, USA

Guide Dogs of the Desert has been training Guide Dogs in Southern California since 1972. Located in Palm Springs, the dry desert landscape can bring on some challenges when it comes to training guide dogs. As temperatures begin to rise, the temperature of the roads and sidewalks can become 40 -60 degrees hotter than the air temperature. While dogs typically have a high level of endurance and adaptability, they can be susceptible to injuries due to extreme temperatures. Our training program implements procedures that ensure safety and comfort for our guide dog teams.



A training dog acclimating to their new boots through play

Temperature Awareness

While the pads on a dog's feet act as shock absorbers and can help regulate temperature, they can still become damaged with extremely hot or cold surfaces. In the summer months, air temperatures can rise to 120 degrees. This can mean that the temperature of the pavement can reach 150-160 degrees. When air temperatures start getting into the 80's, it's important to check the temperature of the ground. In order to do this, you must find an area that has no reprieve from the sun and place your hand on the surface. If you cannot leave your hand there for more than 10 seconds, it is too hot for your dog's feet. To ensure the dog's paws are protected, we utilize boots that are customized for dog paws.

Boots

Our boots come in various sizes to accommodate our dogs appropriately. Our dogs are first introduced to the boots in the puppy home. Our puppy raisers work on acclimating the dogs to the boots slowly to ensure that they get use to walking in them. The shoes commonly come with a rubber sole for durability against various terrains, and a mesh top for breathability. Velcro straps are used to secure the boot once in place. Our formal training program implements boot adaptation as well. Not all of our puppies have been exposed to boots, simply based on where they were raised. We begin to acclimate the training dogs to boots, prior to temperatures reaching extremes. Typically, we heel them in boots before incorporating them into guidework.

Equiped Vehicles

Our training vehicles can house 10 dogs in individual crates. Each crate is equipped with water and a Nylabone. It is important for the dogs to have access to plenty of water, particularly in the summer months. Our vans are strategically parked in shaded areas when possible, and they are equipped with temperature-controlled safety features. We have the capability to idle the vans with the air conditioner running. This ensures that the dogs can return to a cool place to relax and be comfortable.

Additionally, the vans contain a temperature monitoring system that is linked to the training staff phones. This alerts us if the internal temperature in the van exceeds 84 degrees. Should we get an alert on our phones, we simply return to the van to address the matter.

Location and Times

When our local temperatures become too oppressive, we aim to travel to locations that are further away from the desert. If we can, we try to get an early start and perform any outdoor routes in the morning. As we get closer to noon, temperatures start to get a bit too high. At this point we will continue our training in an indoor environment. This can include various



An apprentice fits a boot to a guide dog's front paw

places of business or our own facility. Working indoors gives us plenty of opportunities for teaching our dogs targeting skills and clearance work.

Moving Forward

While we have access to many accommodations for training in the heat, we always look forward to new forms of accommodations and training opportunities that come with time and research. At present, we are delighted to be able to supply our Guide Dog teams with the equipment and resources necessary to be able to function safely in various climates. This is something we hope to continue as time goes on.

A New Chapter of Empowerment: Blind Low Vision New Zealand's State-of-the-Art Mobility Centre

Ashley Harder
Blind Low Vision
New Zealand



Inside BLVNZ's new centre

In a world where climate change is reshaping our lives, we all need to find ways to adapt and tackle its impact. That's why Blind Low Vision NZ was excited to launch the Mobility Training Centre. It's a fantastic project that shows our commitment to progress and is set to revolutionise guide dog training.

The landscapes of New Zealand, as beautiful as they are, aren't immune to the effects of climate change. Recent storms and floods have reminded us of the urgent need for adaptable solutions – and the Mobility Training Centre was a step in the right direction. It provides a safe indoor environment for training sessions, shielding them from external disruptions. Here, our guide dog trainers can simulate real-life situations, helping clients and their guide dogs gain confidence and navigate challenges. By moving indoors, we reduce the risks associated with adverse weather conditions, making sure our guide dog training programs

are safe and consistent. This approach keeps trainers, handlers, and guide dogs out of harm's way and creates an ideal environment for learning and skill development.

While our community-based guide dog training programs are essential to us, the Mobility Training Centre takes things a step further. By incorporating indoor sessions into our regular curriculum, we enhance the training experience and produce even more capable guide dog partnerships. Indoors, we can introduce specific challenges that are hard to replicate outdoors, like bustling city environments or tricky weather conditions.

Of course, the safety and well-being of our staff are our top priorities. The Mobility Training Centre provides them with a secure space, away from potential dangers on the road and harsh weather conditions. By minimising these risks, we ensure our staff can focus entirely on their mission: training highly skilled guide dogs that transform the lives of their handlers.

As we face the realities of a changing climate, we are fully committed to embracing innovation and finding solutions. The Mobility Training Centre represents a significant leap forward in guide dog training. It emphasises safety and creates an optimal learning environment. By utilising this indoor facility, we adapt to the challenges brought by climate change and empower visually impaired individuals with exceptional guide dogs.

From Ukraine to Poznań for the eyes

Alicja Durka
Labrador Guide Dog
Foundation, Poland

Guide dogs in Ukraine are rare. A trained dog is thus worth its weight in gold. Nakir is probably the first dog from Ukraine to be certified as a guide dog. After 2014, a few dogs were donated to veterans, but these animals were born and trained outside the country. Sergey from Ukraine lost his guide dog on the first day of the war. To this day, nobody knows what happened to her. A foundation from Poznań which trained a black German Shepherd named Nakir, rushed to Sergey's aid. The dog became Sergey's eyes.

Sergey Gavriyuk is from Ukraine. He lost his eyesight at work, working as a carpenter. For the following years, he had to cope



Sergey Havriluk with Plusha

alone or with the help of other people. There are practically no guide dogs in Ukraine, so Sergey tried to seek help in other countries around the world. After a long search, it turned out that one of the police schools organized a project to train several dogs for the blind and visually impaired. Luckily, there were still two unassigned dogs left.

'They showed me two dogs; I could get to know each of them and take a walk with them, but it was Plusha who was closer to my heart. We immediately found a common language,' Sergey recalls, adding that this was only the beginning, because after getting acquainted with the animal, he started learning how to move with the dog and take care of her.

Plusha was a young, biscuit Golden Retriever. After the end of the training, the dog and her guardian became almost inseparable, and Sergey gained the independence he wanted so much. Thanks to the assistance of his dog friend, he was even able to return to his home city, Zhytomyr, twenty years after the death of his parents. He and Plusha managed to visit his grandparents' house and the local cemetery together, and Sergey could get in touch again with his cousins and other family members. They also went to the mountains and climbed several peaks together.

continued

From Ukraine to Poznań



Sergey training with Nakir

The war separated the friends

However, Plusha and Sergey's life together ended all too soon. The date of February 24 etched on the memory of all Ukrainians. That night Sergey and Plusha were in Kiev. They were invited there to help train a Labrador for a blind girl. In the morning of February 24, Sergey was asleep when he was woken up by loud explosions.

'There was the smell of fire and smoke everywhere, people were running in the corridors and shouting in panic. Someone told me to get dressed and leave quickly. I called out for Plusha, but she was nowhere to be found, I couldn't find her,' says Sergey.

The stupefied man was led by someone to a windowless bathroom, which was the safest place in the building. It turned out to be an air raid. As Sergey recalls, there

were gunshots and explosions everywhere, it seemed to him that it was the end of the world.

On that terrible night, there were about 70 dogs at the dog training centre. Many of the dogs escaped in panic through broken windows or opened doors. When the situation calmed down a bit, everyone went out to look for the dogs, and it turned out that many of them were killed, and some were found injured. To this day, neither Plusha nor her body has been found, although television, social media and the press were also used to search for her.

For Sergey, returning home without his beloved Plusha was difficult; the house seemed empty, and the city Sergey lived in became an alien and dangerous place, practically inaccessible to the blind man. He lost not only his closest friend, but also his eyes; his only chance for an independent life.

A chance for a new life

Before the war, an association was formed in Kharkov, Ukraine, the objective of which was to start training guide dogs. The war, however, thwarted these plans. But Sergey decided to contact the members of the association, and his intuition was right. It turned out that the project had indeed collapsed, but the dogs remained. It was therefore decided to donate one to Sergey.

The very next day a young, uncouth, full of energy, black German Shepherd puppy named Nakir weighing several tens of kilograms jumped out of the car and immediately greeted his new guardian.

The dog's owner also delivered all the equipment, but was unable to help with the training because she had to return to the rest of her animals.

And then, virtually immediately, the problem emerged. The young dog was very well cared for, but due to the war, he was not trained at all for his new role. In Poland, such training begins in the first months of a dog's life, and it lasts almost two years. So Sergey had a dog, but he had to deal with the training himself. The dog was not a trained guide dog, nor did he have the appropriate documents and certificates that would entitle him to enter places such as a doctor's office or a plane. Nakir's skills were also not appropriate for training a certified guide dog. The help of specialists was necessary. Sergey wrote to numerous organizations, and fellow IGDF organisation, l'Association de Chiens Guides d'Aveugles de Lyon et du Centre-Est replied, contacting, in turn, the Labrador Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind in Poznań. It was where Sergey finally found help.

He first came to Poznań in November. The Foundation provided him not only with intensive training, but they also paid for his accommodation, maintenance, and – partly – travel.

He came back to Poznań in early spring, and then in late May. In the first days of June, an exam was organized, which Sergey and Nakir passed with flying colours, with Nakir obtaining a certificate confirming his status as a qualified guide dog. In the meantime, Sergey regularly contacted the team, sent videos documenting the training progress, and followed the advice of the experienced trainers.

Sergey and Nakir are a unique couple, as the entire process of training the dog took place in the company of the blind guardian.

Sergey and Nakir have already returned home. Saying goodbye to the Foundation team, Sergey said: "I hope that together we will train many more dogs for the blind of Ukraine".



Sergey with GDMI from Labrador Guide Dog Foundation, Poland

Xabat receives the Animal Welfare Award from the Official Veterinarians College of Madrid

Elisenda Stewart Til
ONCE Guide Dog Foundation,



Elisenda, Alberto & Xabat with their award

The Official College of Veterinarians of Madrid has awarded the 'Animal Welfare' prize to ONCE guide dog Xabat, who accompanies his blind owner with additional needs. Xabat improve his owner's mobility, autonomy and independence in a safe and effective way, thanks to the efforts and innovation of ONCE in their customization of techniques and tools designed to meet their client's mobility and welfare needs.

The award, which recognizes the animal most committed to society, was collected by Elisenda Stewart, mobility instructor of the ONCE Guide Dog Foundation, and Alberto Villalba, the young man who received Xabat in January 2022, after a long and innovative adaptation process, to become his eyes,

Xabat is a black Labrador, very noble, with balanced temperamental traits, raised at the ONCE Guide Dog Foundation. Like all guide dog puppies, he spent his first year of life with a Puppy Walking family with whom he acquired a very good socialization and habituation. After his return to the school, he passed his early training, and then in September 2021, whilst in his advanced training phase, he was matched with Alberto, a double hand amputee. The unit needed different technical adaptations to achieve their goal of graduation, whilst managing their welfare needs.

Among the most significant adaptations that had to be made were the leashes, the harness and the elements for brushing and grooming the dog. These were designed so that Alberto could maintain control and daily hygiene of Xabat, taking into account his double hand amputation. Thanks to these special adaptations, the itineraries and the previous work with the dog, Xabat enjoys guiding Alberto, and together they make a perfect team.

You can see more of this work here on [YouTube](#) or on the [ONCE website](#)



A song for Guide Dogs Tasmania

Julia Scott
Guide Dogs Tasmania



Tyler Richardson

Tyler Richardson is the lead vocalist in punk rock band, Luca Brasi, which has had ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Association) nominations, top 100 songs, and toured with some of Australia's biggest rock bands.

Tyler is also a high school teacher, a dad, and an ambassador for charitable causes. In the midst of touring, teaching, and all the other good work he does, Tyler made the time to write and record a song just for Guide Dogs Tasmania.

This song is about the important work Guide Dogs do, how we can make our communities more supportive and inclusive, and the love, joy and companionship dogs bring into our lives.

Lyrics

Well a Guide Dogs always got your back
But just remember to please stay back
And if you wanna say hi, please say hi to my handler
And I just want to help out my very best pal
To have the best chance to get around
I'm just a good dog, so please always remember
That we've got the same rights as everyone
To go out and to have some fun
I'm in my best orange coat
And I'm out for an adventure
When you see us in the street
We need some room to get through
I'm just doin' the best I can do
I'm clean and I'm quiet
I'm a pup that's filled with love
Because I walk and I sit, I know how to behave
And you do to, so let's not wait
Sometimes the world is a big and scary place
Everyone should have the chance to participate

[Listen to the song here on Soundcloud](#)

2023 IGDF Conference Vancouver, Canada

IGDF Conference Programme Committee



IGDF Board with BC & Alberta staff and volunteers and hotel staff

After a very long 5-year break, it finally happened. It felt like Christmas eve when we came together, at the Fairmont Vancouver hotel on April 27th, 2023. IGDF traditionally holds a conference every other year, and since the first gathering of guide dog professionals in 1973 took place in Paris, France, IGDF has organized 21 conferences. A special mention needs to be made to Mathilda Guide Dogs who were due to host the 2020 event in Prague but due to the pandemic, the conference was postponed to 2021 and finally cancelled.

On the days before the official opening of the conference, our big group of volunteer committee members and assessors, recruited from our many member organizations around the world, also got together for their first face-to-face meetings and workshops in over five years. Did you know that IGDF has only two paid members of staff? The elected IGDF Board, the Accreditation Committee, the Assessors, the Development Committee, the Education Committee, and the Standards Committee could not exist without the dedicated work of highly qualified guide dog professionals who volunteer their time and expertise. Their passion for the mission of the International Guide Dog Federation gives each day purpose.

IGDF Assessors hard at work



Meeting old and new acquaintances

At the welcome reception, held in a spectacular roof top venue, 275 delegates came together in a very festive, warm, and friendly atmosphere which continued throughout the entire conference. Over the following three days, a high-quality program with 7 plenary sessions, 16 workshop sessions, 2 panel discussions, a poster session and a video evening session was delivered by 47 presenters, introduced, and assisted by 21 facilitators. Each delegate would have had their personal favourite topic, but one of the highlights was the launch of the IGDF's Moodle educational platform supported by the IGDF Education Committee in collaboration with Guide Dogs Queensland.



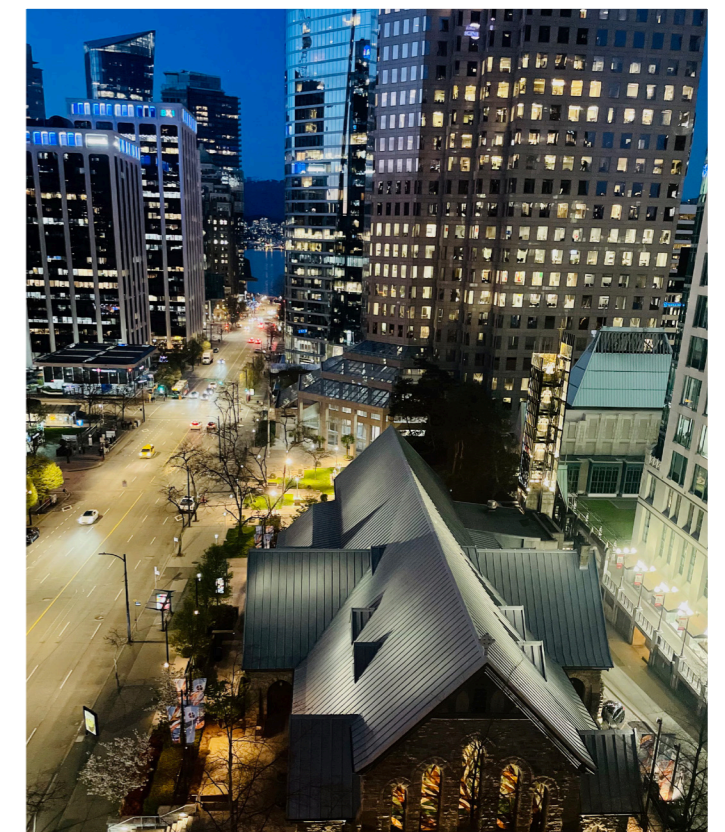
Moodle Learning Platform presentation

Throughout the conference many social events gave us plenty of time to catch up with old friends and make new relationships. Networking is core to our organization and there is a great tradition of sharing expertise and resources, in other words, helping each other wherever it is possible. The highlight of the social events was the Gala Dinner on Saturday night. We were very lucky to be entertained by the Langley Ukulele Ensemble with director Peter Luongo. The evening was topped off by the presentation of the IGDF awards.



Gala celebrations with Canadian Mounties

The Vancouver Conference was outstanding. We express our most heartfelt thanks to Linda and Bill Thornton, founder, and CEO of BC and Alberta Guide Dogs and Chair of the IGDF. Thanks to their tireless efforts, supported by a small but dedicated team and wonderful volunteers, an outstanding hotel, the Canadian spirit and the magnificent city and surrounding nature, we all had a wonderful and memorable experience.



Vancouver by night

International Working Dog Association (IWDA) Breeders Workshop, Vancouver

Matthew Bottomley
International Working Dog Association

Nestling in the wonderful city of Vancouver, over 150 Breeding Workshop delegates were witness to some truly outstanding presentations delivered by world leaders in their field. The topics covered were broad and diverse, ranging from skeletal diseases, eye conditions, cardiac disease and skin allergies to gait and structure evaluation, use of EBV's, strategies for genetic diversity, puppy and adult dog behaviour assessments, pup socialisation, and brood, whelping and neonatal care... to name but a few!

It is well known that dog handlers and their organisations have long been fascinated by dog faeces, whether it's the development of relief routines, managing diarrhoea problems or controlling coprophagia! This conference proved no exception when one of the most stimulating subjects was that of faecal transplants used to encourage a healthy microbiome! (If you would like more information on this or any of the presentations at the conference, keep reading!



150 delegates in main conference room

Day 3 of the workshop provided optional sessions, one on reproduction and the other on behaviour assessment of dogs using the Behaviour Checklist (BCL) and feedback suggests all participants found great value in both.



Reproduction Workshop

The aim of such workshops is to educate and share best practice for the benefit of all working dog breeders and organisations across the world, and of course to benefit all our dogs and ultimately the recipients of our various services.

This is the shared vision of the IWDA (International Working Dog Association), and it is their generous sponsorship of such events that helps to fulfil their mission, not only to encourage education in canine best practice but also to facilitate meaningful collaboration. For those that are unaware, the IWDA is a registered not for profit organisation that relies on subscriptions to deliver it's key objectives in the international working dog community, as well as host and deliver the IWDR

(International Working Dog Registry) for users around the world. Again, for those that don't know, the IWDR is a relational cloud based database that enables organisations and individuals across the world to discreetly and securely record and collate their own accurate canine data. Every member has sole rights to edit and view their own data but may allow others to view their data if they choose as part of their collaborative working aims. Data from all organisations and individuals inputting into the database is used to calculate Estimated Breeding values (EBV's) for a variety of health and behavioural traits to help drive positive genetic change in the most effective and efficient way.

Both the IWDA and the IWDR it hosts, have so much more to offer as well. On both websites there is a growing suite of educational information available to users and the IWDA, and as well as hosting all previous conference and workshop presentations and resources, will soon be posting PowerPoints and recordings of the workshop presentations in Vancouver for all it's members.

Please do subscribe to the IWDA to reap all the benefits of full membership and know at the same time you will be supporting the charity to continue to fund educational events and seminars such as the workshop in Vancouver and to host the invaluable IWDR.

Dr Eldin Leighton



A very special offer is currently available to every Visionary reader and all working dog organisations and staff of a massive 50% discount in annual subscription fee. This will also include immediate access to 3 scientific journals: the Journal of Veterinary Behaviour, Animal Behaviour, and the Journal of Genetics and Genomics (worth over \$1000 a year).

Please have a look at both websites to see how much information is available and how much benefit you and/or your organisation would derive from membership.

Links as follows:

<https://www.iwdba.org/register/>

<https://www.iwdr.org/>



Behaviour Checklist Workshop

Finally, a special thanks to IGDF for the invitation and support in having this Breeders Workshop directly following the IGDF Seminar. Similar huge thanks to the planning and program committees, as well as to our many presenters for such a wonderful workshop, delivering hugely relevant topics and speakers of renown, in a well organised but relaxed and informal setting.

International Working Dog Conference & Workshop



The International Working Dog Association is holding 2 back-to-back conferences at Fort Collins, Colorado in October (16th-20th).

The International Working Dog Conference showcases everything you have come to expect from this established event – the latest in working dog training, health, management, assessment of performance and temperament, and breeding.

The next Breeder's Workshop covers a broad range of breeding information ideal for staff training and upskilling, including early socialization techniques, reproduction management, breeder selection, neonatal care, Dr Karen Overall's relaxation protocol, gaiting, and handling to prepare puppies for their future careers.

More details about both events can be [found on the IWDA website.](#)



2023 ADI Conference

Assistance Dogs International is very excited to announce that the 2023 ADI Conference is going to be a hybrid format with In-Person and Virtual components for this year – September 10-13, 2023.

The ADI Conference Committee has selected the [Westin Hotel](#) in Zagreb, Croatia as the host hotel for the 2023 Conference.

ADI Board would like to thank Marijan Sesar and Centar Za Rehabilitaciju Silver for their patience and perseverance the last three years offering to be the member host for the conference. Zagreb was selected

for its beautiful city, historical sites and surroundings as well as easy access to Centar Silver for a tour of their facilities.

The conference will again be a hybrid conference offering both in-person and virtual attendance options. The conference will begin with a Welcome Reception on Sunday, September 10th and conclude on Wednesday, September 13th at 5pm. ADI hopes our members take advantage of any vacation travel plans and visit the incredible beautiful coast of Croatia. More details will be announced as they become available.



Assistance Dogs INTERNATIONAL
PATHS TO POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS
SEPTEMBER 10-13, 2023
ZAGREB, CROATIA



Additional details

Please see the [ADI website's conference page](#) for additional information and a list of some of the guest speakers.

Costs for IGDF Organisations

IGDF Members Registration for in-person attendance is \$500 USD and registration for virtual attendance is \$229 USD. IGDF Applicant and Enquiring Organisation Registration for in-person attendance is \$550 USD and \$249 USD for virtual attendance.

Registration for IGDF Organisations

You can register for the 2023 ADI conference as an attending IGDF Organisation, or the virtual IGDF attendance option [using this link](#)

2023 EVCBMAW Conference

5th Annual Meeting of the European Veterinary Congress of Behavioural Medicine and Animal Welfare

Looking at Welfare and Behaviour Through the Lens of Human Animal Bond

Date: 19–20 October, 2023

Venue: CNR – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche – Pisa, Italy

Address: Via Giuseppe Moruzzi 56124 Pisa PI, Italy

[For further information, please visit the EVCBMAW Website](#)



Committee Updates

IGDF seeks members for its new Standards Committee

Are you interested in supporting the further development of IGDF standards?

IGDF is working towards greater professionalisation of our standards, and we need volunteers. We are seeking people with a real interest and enthusiasm in the rigorous process of reviewing and writing professional standards.

If you are an experienced practitioner or manager (and especially if you have experience in quality assurance or international experience as an IGDF

assessor) this is your opportunity to join the new Standards Committee.

This is a great opportunity to get involved with the work of IGDF, develop new skills and make a real contribution to the future of our sector.

Please read the [role profile under the IGDF Office What's New Section of the website](#) and send in your CV with a covering message to enquiries@igdf.org.uk, explaining your interest and motivation for getting involved!

IGDF Education Committee Changes

Congratulations and welcome to our newest Education Committee members.

Yuko Inoue joins us from Japan Guide Dog Association, where she is the Manager of International Affairs.



Melinda Bowden joins us from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT (New South Wales / Australian Capital Territory), where she is the Training and Dog Supply Manager.

Melinda Bowden

Finally, a sad farewell and thank you to Sam Tawada from Japan Guide Dog Association who will be stepping down from his position as an Education Committee member. Sam has been on the EC since its inception in 2020 and we are extremely grateful for his time and contribution to both the EC and to IGDF.

Yuko Inoue



New IGDF Assessors

Congratulations to IGDF's four newest Assessors from Norway, France, USA, and the United Kingdom. Each will undergo training and induction with our current team of Assessors before undertaking their own assessments.



Anne Østlid, Lions Guidedog School and Mobility Centre, Norway.

Benjamin Valembois, Paris Guide Dogs.



Jamie Hunt, Guide Dogs of America.

Paco Villalvilla, Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, UK.



Listen out for our upcoming podcast where Communications Committee member, John Welsman will be interviewing and getting to know each of our new Assessors. [IGDF Podcasts Page.](#)

Knowledge Sharing Webinars

Stay in touch with news, research, and best practice from around the world by attending our regular webinars. Webinars are open to all IGDF Members, Affiliates, Applicant Organisations and Enquiring Organisations. Registration details are circulated by the IGDF Office and are available on the IGDF website.

2023 Webinars

IGDF - ADI Joint Position Statement on Dog Welfare

Description: Launch of the ADI and IGDF Joint Position Statement on Dog Welfare.

This webinar is available to watch under the [2023 webinars page](#)

Conference Presentations

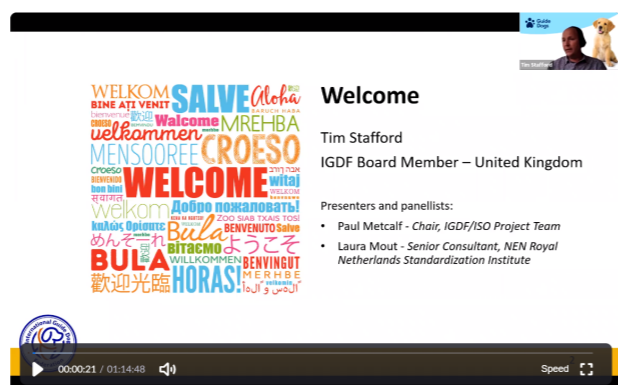
For those unable to attend the 2023 IGDF conference, recordings of the presentations are available under the IGDF webinars page.

These are available to all staff of IGDF Enquiring, Applicant and Member Organisations with logins.

ADI Webinars

What is LIMA, if it isn't a bean?

Description: LIMA dog training principles. is an acronym for "Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive".



A recording of this webinar, hosted by ADI in May, can be accessed by IGDF members through the [IGDF webinars page](#)

Upcoming Webinars

- Introducing the 'New Look' Standards
- Traffic Training panel discussion
- Coping with grief & loss of a guide dog

Webinar Volunteers

We are looking for volunteers interested in sharing their knowledge with the IGDF community. This could include a tour of your facilities, an introduction to a new programme or project your organisation has been working on, or an in-house presentation you think the wider IGDF community would be interested in.

We welcome pre-recorded presentations, including presentations not in English – although adding English subtitles would be desirable.

Please email enquiries@igdf.org.uk

Visionary

Next Issue

The deadline for articles for the next issue of Visionary is: **1st October 2023.**

Special Features – Two options:

- Access Refusals – how are you working with clients to combat access refusals in your country?
- Puppy Raisers – what new methods is your organisation using to recruit new puppy raisers, & to retain existing ones?

Please send articles on this or any other topic to the IGDF Office by the above deadline.

Please supply your articles as a Word file with original images attached as separate jpeg images along with their captions.

Further information can be found on our website at <https://www.igdf.org.uk/visionary/>



Disclaimer | Whilst the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) retains editorial right to all articles presented within the Visionary, accuracy of specific detail and figures quoted are as provided by the author and their supporting organisation. The IGDF, whilst welcoming feedback on content, will not enter into any dialogue relating to perceived inaccuracies in these areas.