

# ACCESSIBILITY



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

## INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

- Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others<sup>1</sup>.
- It is estimated that more than 420,000 (30%) Indigenous people in Canada live with a disability or functional limitation.
- In 2012, 22% of Indigenous women aged 15 and older, reported having a disability that limited their daily activities compared with 15% of the total female population in Canada<sup>2</sup>.
- 1 in 8 Indigenous children is disabled which is double the rate of non-Indigenous children<sup>3</sup>.
- Jordan's Principle brought to light the devastating impacts of the current jurisdictional battle that happens between federal and provincial responsibility for the health care of First Nations children with disabilities.
- Inuit women in the North report having a strong sense of community that helps women and girls with disabilities feel included and a part of the social network.



## VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Women and girls with disabilities experience physical and sexual assaults at **4 times** the national average<sup>4</sup>. Neurodiverse<sup>5</sup> women and girls are especially vulnerable.
- Racism, sexism, and ableism perpetrated against Indigenous women increases vulnerability to not only experiencing violence, but also to accessing victim supports – a contributor to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG).
- In systemic, targeted efforts to reduce First Nations, Inuit, and Metis populations, the Government of Canada forcibly sterilized tens of thousands of Indigenous women.
- Medical violence, typically in the form of coerced sterilization, against Indigenous women with disabilities or who have birthed children with disabilities continues to happen to this day<sup>6</sup>. Current measures are systemic, slow, and devastating to Indigenous women and their communities.

**TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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## UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal design is widely recognized as the gold standard for building accessible and inclusive societies.

### PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN:

- Equitable use – appealing and useful to all users, but marketable for those with disabilities
- Flexibility in use – accommodates a wide range of user preferences and abilities (ex. right and left-handed)
- Simple and intuitive – easy to understand for all language and literacy skills
- Perceptible information – legible in all lighting, and repeats messages in different ways
- Tolerance for errors – minimizes hazards and has fail-safe features when possible
- Low physical effort – minimum physical effort and strain on the body
- Size and space for approach and use – ensures there is adequate space or the design is the proper size to carry out the task

## NWAC CREATING NEW FEDERAL ACCESSIBILITY LEGISLATION

- Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is engaging with organizations and individuals across Canada to create accessibility legislation that will improve the accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- In 2017, NWAC engaged with Indigenous women with varying disabilities and those who are caregivers of persons with disabilities as part of developing new Federal Accessibility Legislation.
- Over 70% of participants reported encountering accessibility difficulties when interacting with federal government workers or accessing services.
- Indigenous women and girls are subjected to social and economic exclusion which is intensified by the lack of supports and services provided to women and girls with disabilities and their families.
- Indigenous peoples/persons with disabilities have the right to full and effective participation in all aspects of life. Realization of this right requires accessibility in terms of physical environments, transportation, information and communications, and access to other facilities and services, both in urban and in rural areas.

### Works Cited

- <sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106
- <sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. (2009). First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women, in Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada
- <sup>3</sup> DiGiacomo, M. et al. (2013). 'Doing the Hard Yards'. *BMC Health Services Research* 13(326).
- <sup>4</sup> National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. (2004). Violence Against Women with Disabilities. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada.
- <sup>5</sup> Neurodiversity refers to neurological differences constituting developmental, cognitive, and emotional differences that are recognized and respected as a human variation. This is a strengths-based approach to discussing neurological disabilities. These differences can include those with Dyslexia, ADHD, and Autistic Spectrum, among others.
- <sup>6</sup> Boyer, Dr. Y. & Bartlett, Dr. J. (July 2017). External Review: Tubal Ligation in the Saskatoon Health Region: The Lived Experience of Aboriginal Women.