



# Building Stories of Resilience: Working Together to Better Respond to Violence Against Women with Disabilities

**Disability Awareness Week 2018  
“Equal Opportunity for All”.**

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Victims and  
Survivors of  
Crime Week



Semaine des victimes  
et survivants  
d'actes criminels

[victimsweek.gc.ca](http://victimsweek.gc.ca) • [semainedesvictimes.gc.ca](http://semainedesvictimes.gc.ca)

#victimsweek • #semainedesvictimes

FERGUSON  
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Eliminating Family Violence



Government  
of Canada

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du Canada



I would like to recognize that the  
University of New Brunswick, St. John's  
Campus sits on traditional Wolastoqey  
territory.

One of the biggest mistakes we make is  
assuming that other people think the way we  
think.

Morgan Freeman

# Adopting a disability lens : Reflecting on some potential issues

1. **Accessibility of services** is a challenge for women in the province of New Brunswick, especially those who reside in rural communities
  - Examples:
    - Travel to and from court
    - Filing documents
    - Navigating unfamiliar urban centers
2. The early stages of our research indicated that there is **limited contact** between service providers in anti-violence and criminal justice system and with women who have disabilities

# Violence Against Women with Disabilities in New Brunswick Research Team

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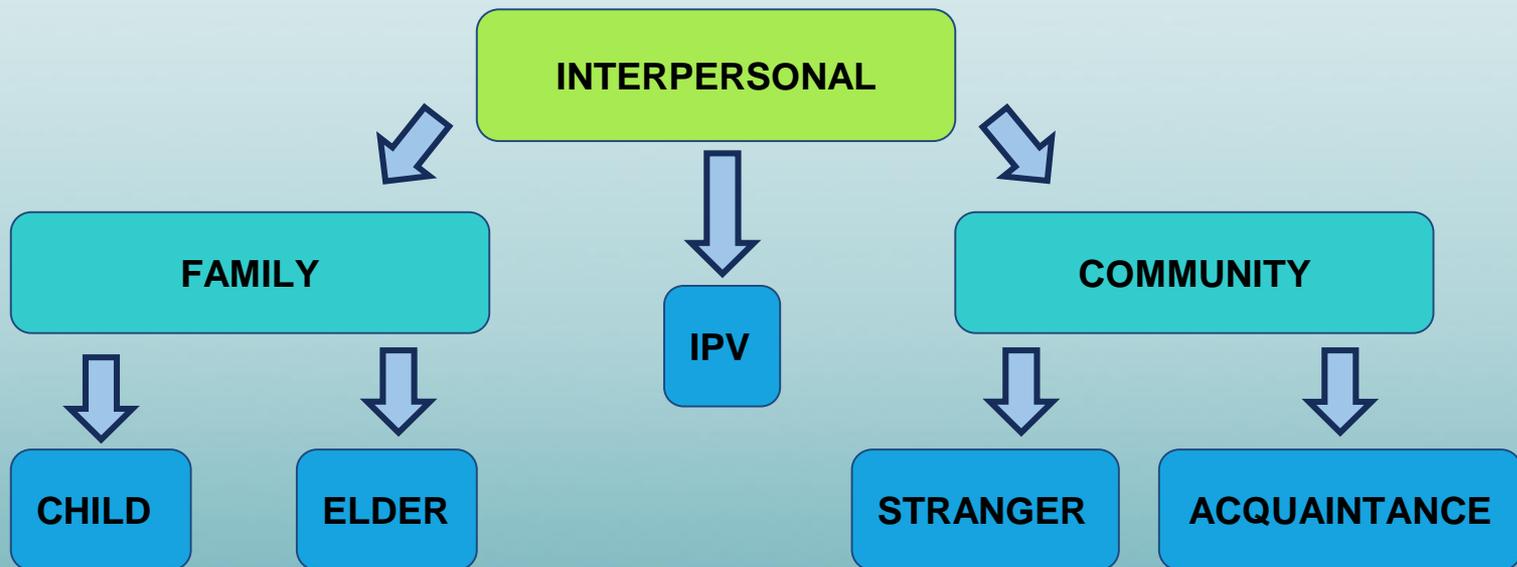
# Disability and IPV

*Women with disabilities are not a 'group' of women - inside every 'group' of women at least one in five lives with a disability. Many women who live with a disability do not self-identify because of stigma, or because being a black woman, or an immigrant woman, or being an Indigenous woman or from the LGBTQTI community, is their first 'identity'. (Bonnie Brayton-DAWN Canada)*

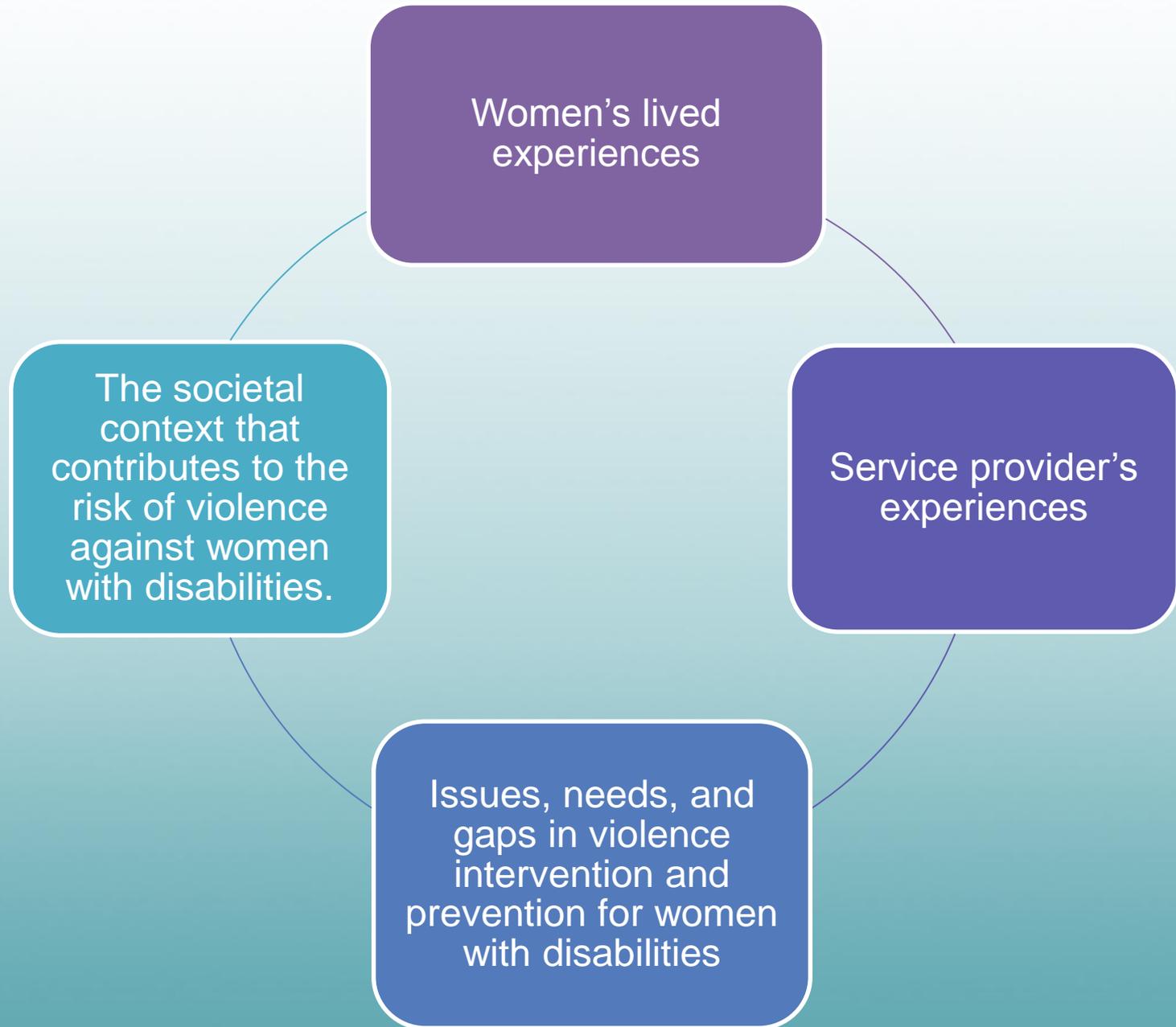
Experiences of disability are diverse and include long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment, which, in *interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, ...impact full and effective participation in society* (United Nations, 2010)

# “Interpersonal Violence”

→ Violence between two individuals



# Research Goals:



# Research Methods

- Online Survey (N. 198):
  - Province-specific baseline understanding of the existing services for abused women with disabilities
- identify current violence prevention and intervention programs:
  - Provincial government departments and agencies (including Social Development and Public Safety)
  - health care agencies and nursing homes
  - violence prevention and intervention services
  - criminal justice professionals
  - community organizations devoted to supporting people living with disabilities.

# Affected Population

- Anyone with a disability is at risk
- Women and men with disability are 2 X more likely to be victims of crime (Cotter, 2018)
- Vulnerability
- Silos and Services
- Facts - Narrative

# Adopting a disability lens : Reflecting on some potential issues

## **3. Women with disabilities struggle to be believed:**

*We have many people with limited mental capacity and therefore the education is not there, business sense neither so you talk to them and they say yes, yes but they do not understand, it is because mentally they are not there... yes she gets beaten but how are we going to bring this to court because her credibility and her words are not good ...?." (Rural Service Provider)*

# What aspects of Violence against Women with Disabilities are we studying?



# Research Methods

- Online Survey (N. 198):
  - Province-specific baseline understanding of the existing services for abused women with disabilities
- identify current violence prevention and intervention programs:
  - Provincial government departments and agencies (including Social Development and Public Safety)
  - health care agencies and nursing homes
  - violence prevention and intervention services
  - criminal justice professionals
  - community organizations devoted to supporting people living with disabilities.

# What have we learned so far?



# Survey Respondents

- English Survey: We had 164 respondents in total.
- French Survey: We had 34 respondents
- 107 (88.43%) respondents identified as female and 14 (11.57%) identified as male. (French 26 women & 8 men)
- 71% of English respondents and 74 % of French respondents worked in Education, Law and Social, Community and Government Services.

# Challenges and barriers for service providers serving this population

## English

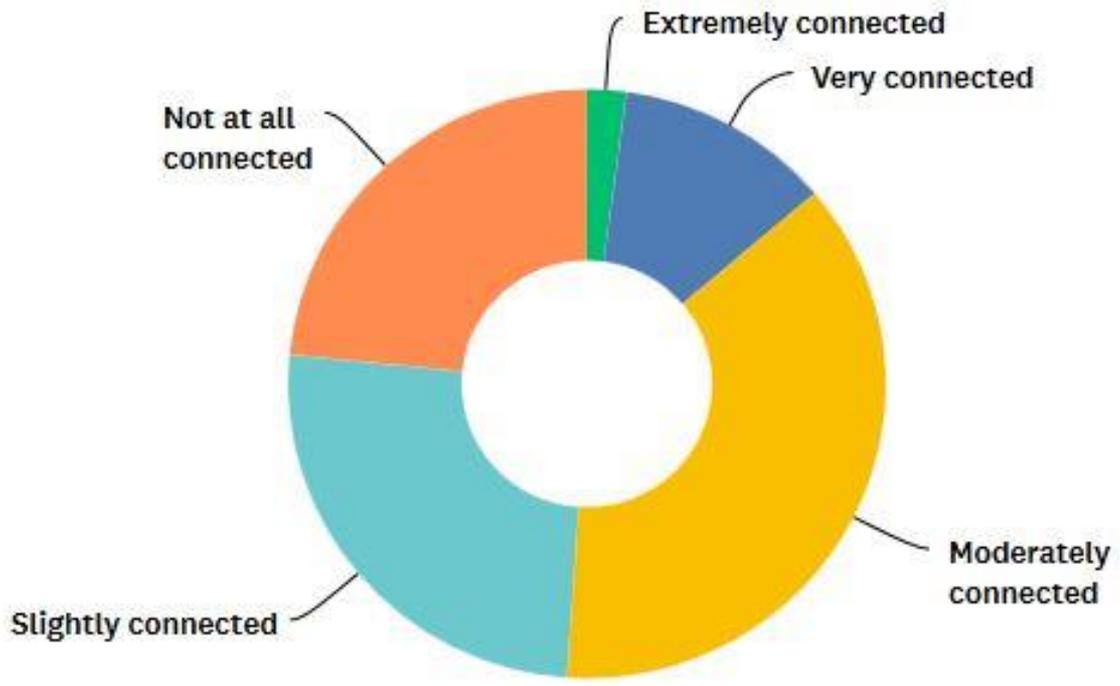
- 34% *Appropriate Resources*
- 14% *Housing*
- 13% *Finances*
- 11% *Accessibility*

## French:

- 35% *Education and awareness*
- 22% *Lack of Appropriate Resources*
- 13% *Accessibility*
- 13% *Isolation*

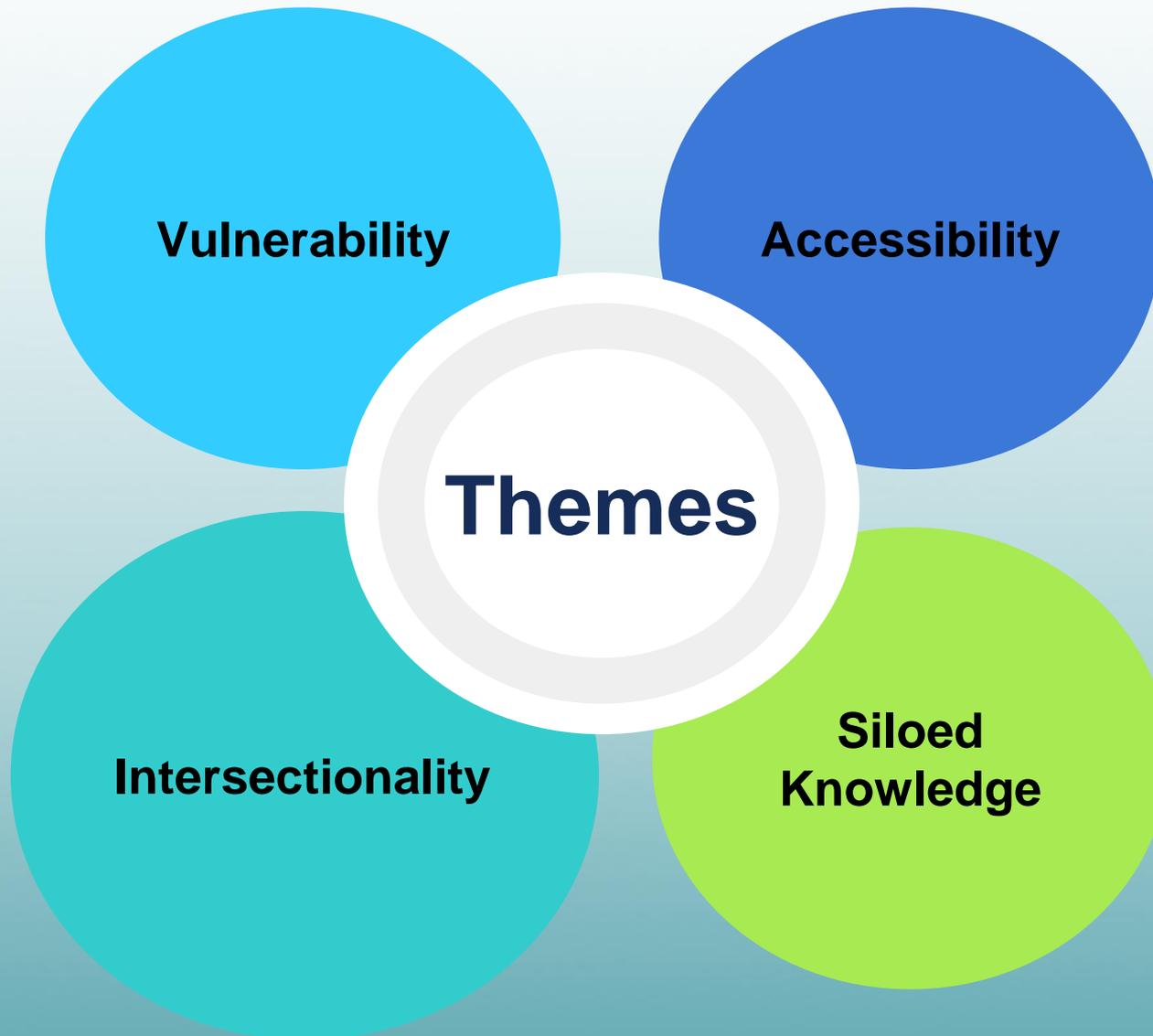
# How connected do you feel with others working in the area for abuse of women with a disability within your province?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 70



# Research Methods

2. Focus group discussions
  - French and English
    - Violence prevention and intervention services
    - Community organizations devoted to supporting people living with disabilities.



1

# Theme: Vulnerability

1

# Theme: Vulnerability

# 2X more likely

to be a victim of violent crime compared to people without disabilities

## 2 or more incidents

36% of victimized women have multiple incidents of violence

## 30%

of violence against a person with a disability occurred in their home



# 'Believability'

- Stereotyping
- Credibility
- Unreliable
- Lack of education and understanding
- Unable to verbalize
- May be unaware of the extent of the issue

## **Women with disabilities struggle to be believed:**

« We have many people with limited mental capacity and therefore the education is not there, ... they say yes, yes but they do not understand, it is because mentally they are not there... yes she gets beaten but how are we going to bring this to court because her credibility and her words are not good ...?.» ( participant)

# **Social context: Limited social safety net and isolation**

« Let's say that their apartment or their house was set up for their disability the decision to leave is now much more difficult. Cause, well where am I going to go? ...»

« You are telling somebody to leave an environment where they are supported granted it's a bad environment to go where? For \$750 a month? Right! And do what? And how am I going to live? »

# Vulnerable in Care

- Caretaker - intimate partner, family member, friend, employed caregiver, etc.
- Nature of work can be intimate
- Lose support/continued care if reported
- Goes beyond traditional methods of abuse

Plummer & Fundley, 2012; Saxton et al., 2001

Preventative programming should address:

- issues of dependency on caretakers who might be the abusers
- fear of losing a caretaker
- shame/guilt

They are vulnerable because we  
do not think to create an  
environment for them in which  
they are not.

Bonnie Brayton, DAWN

# 2

## Theme: *Accessibility*

# Issues, needs, and gaps in violence intervention and prevention for women with disabilities

- Accessibility of information about government and community services
  - Need for multi-media delivery
  - Use of language that is accessible for those with low literacy

« If they have lost vision later in life, they haven't learned braille, they don't have access to technology they need to read things online. They could be reliant on the person who basically has control over their situation to get access to information...»

# Issues, needs, and gaps in violence intervention and prevention for women with disabilities

- Accessibility of shelters and transition houses:
  - Isolation
  - Fear of abuser
  - Limited access to communication systems

« It wouldn't be any different than a newcomer or a refugee. Except for the fact eventually newcomer or refugee will learn the language or the culture of the country or the community they are living in. While the deaf consumer won't. Isolation and the segregation is astronomical. »

## Real Life Learning Cont.

“... writing may be hard for someone with a learning disability, literacy problems, language... even the language that is being used sometimes might be difficult to understand. So the resources that are printed materials sometimes can be great, but may not be useful for a lot of people”

- Participant

# Accessibility

- Defining “accessibility” is useful & challenging
- Achieve goals without barriers
- Requires a definition of disability

# 3 Theme: Intersectionality

# Defining Intersectionality

“The overlap of various social identities: such as gender, race, disability, etc. that come together to create an interdependent system of oppression and discrimination against any given group.”

Crenshaw, 1989

# Intersectionality

- Identity is a combination of things within the individual
- Socially devalued status
- Multiple status
- Rise of oppression & discrimination

Darling, 2013

## 2.3X higher rates

of victimization for women with a disability who identified as gay, lesbian, and bisexual

20.6% compared to 12%

of Indigenous women are violently victimized compared to non-Indigenous women with a disability.

## Lower rates of violence

For immigrants with disabilities (8%) compared to non-immigrants with disability (13.4%)

# 4 Theme: Siloed Knowledge

# ‘Siloed Knowledge’

- Segregation of services and knowledge between different organizations
- Additional strain
  - Service users
  - Service providers
- Desire to eliminate barriers

“Just because you know this organization does this work doesn’t mean that they can’t work with this organization here, and when I look at organizations that work with victimized women, they can’t know everything. (...) So breaking down the silo, the walls, and connecting with the other groups. So if it [is] somebody who has an intellectual disability why are we not partnering to support that person?”

Participant

# Implications

- Intersection of gender-based and disability-related violence
- Lack of connection between anti-violence organizations and disability-support services
- Vulnerabilities emerge from narrow conceptions of accessibility and gaps in services

**Next steps: Toolkit for service  
providers**

# Draft Table of Contents for Toolkit

- Section: Introduction to the Service Providers Working With Interpersonal Violence and Disability Toolkit
- Section: Construction of Disability
- Section: What Is Interpersonal Violence? How Does Interpersonal Violence Impact Women with Disabilities?
- Section: Rights, Policies, and Laws About Disability and Abuse
- Section: Assessing & Planning
- Section: Links to phone numbers for transition houses, resources, helplines, in New Brunswick.
- Section: Suggestions for collaborations
- Sections: Videos

I am a proud disabled woman.

My body and mind may  
challenge me.

I have learned my own special  
way to meet my needs and to  
deal with life.

I have dreams and I have goals.

You will see I will achieve.

Give me respect as I deserve.

I will persevere for my rights.

Disabled friends, they understand.

We share fears, joys, and support.

I am female with feelings as you.

Include me. Enable me. Celebrate me.

I am a disabled woman very much alive.

Hear me. Care about me.

Treasure me.

# Discussion/ Questions



# Resources (DAWN)

1. National Accessibility and Accommodation Survey:  
<http://www.dawncanada.net/issues/issues/national-accessibility-and-accommodation-survey/>
2. Learning Network Newsletter:  
<http://www.dawncanada.net/resources/resources/learning-network-newsletter/>
3. Inclusive Practices Toolkit:  
<http://www.dawncanada.net/resources/resources/diversity-through-inclusive-practice-an-evolving-toolkit-for-creating-inclusive-processes-spaces-events/>

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# Thank You!

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