



# AMPLIFY

A Voice for women & girls with disabilities

Winter 2018

DAWN CANADA NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 3 / VOLUME 1

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## Why we need to put Women with Disabilities at the Center of our National Anti-violence Agenda

By Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director

In July 2017, the government of Canada announced the next step in its Federal anti-violence strategy. Entitled [It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence](#) the cross-governmental plan includes six departments and agencies and provides \$100.9 million over five years, and \$20.7 million per year ongoing.

It's a welcome plan. After decades of advocacy, women's organizations on the whole are glad to see that there is a plan in place that will begin to address violence against women in a manner that recognizes the complexity of the issue.

Women with disabilities and Deaf women are the largest, poorest

minority group in the world with the highest rates of physical, systemic, financial, psychological and interpersonal/family violence. The fact remains that for women with disabilities and Deaf women in Canada, the incidence of violence has not changed in over three decades.

The fact remains that [sexual assault](#) is the only category of crime that did not decrease in the last decade.

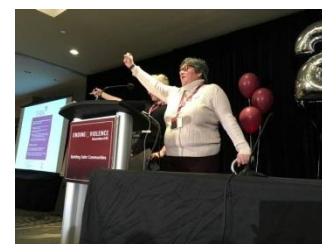
Despite this, policies and funded programs related to violence against women do not include disability. At the same time, disability-related policies and programs either do not mention women or do not provide gender analysis.

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A recent review of legislation, policies and programs related to gender-based violence conducted by the DisAbleD Women's Network Canada revealed that at all levels, women with disabilities are mostly absent from violence-prevention discourse and policy. In some cases, people with disabilities are included, but women with disabilities are not. At best, women with disabilities are listed as a "vulnerable population" in the footnotes at end of a document.

While it is important to recognize the distinct issues faced by marginalized genders (including women, trans people and non-binary people), the absence of women with disabilities in policies, programs and services which address violence shows how deeply rooted systemic bias is.

This "un-gendering" of women with disabilities in the development of responses to violence is a deeply disturbing ableist practice. There is no acknowledgement of the fact that the intersection of gender and disability results in unique experiences of violence and abuse. As a result, there is no funding and no programs or services focused specifically on addressing violence against women with disabilities.

When disability is taken into account in the provision of services to women facing violence, it tends to be limited to physical accommodations. In reality, the needs of an older

woman with reduced mobility, a young woman with autism, an Indigenous woman with a traumatic brain injury, or an immigrant woman with a mental health disability, are varied and nuanced.

As Canadians engage in the development of Federal Accessibility Legislation and as we begin to work to implement the new violence-prevention strategy, it is critical that we keep women and girls with disabilities at the centre. Without an inclusive and intersectional approach, women with disabilities and Deaf women will continue to be marginalized.

In December the world recognized the International Day for Persons with Disabilities (December 3<sup>rd</sup>), and Canadians commemorated the Montreal Massacre with a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women (December 6). There is no better time for us to begin our collective work to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are no longer just a footnote on our national policy agenda 🇨🇦



## DAWN news



### EVA BC Annual Violence-Prevention Training Forum

In November 2017, Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director of DAWN Canada, and Jewelles Smith, British Columbia Provincial Coordinator for DAWN Canada's project Legislation, Policy and Service Responses to Violence Against Women (LPS) presented a workshop at the Ending Violence Association BC annual training forum. They presented the key findings to date of the LPS project to date, and launched More Than a Footnote – a call to action aimed at ensuring that women with disabilities and Deaf women are represented in policies, programs and services which respond to violence. 🇨🇦

### DAWN Canada hosts national policy roundtable on violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women

On December 1st, 2017, DAWN Canada hosted a national policy roundtable on violence against women with disabilities in Ottawa. More than 30 participants representing the disability and women's sectors, academics, government policy makers and labour were present. At the event, DAWN Canada presented the key outcomes of our review of Legislation, Policy and Service Responses to Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women in Canada (LPS), as part of our Status of Women funded project on this issue.

Also present were Karen Martin from the Disability Alliance of British Columbia (DBAC), and Judith Parisien from Le Phénix who presented on their work related to violence against women with disabilities. The panel presentations can be watched here on Facebook Live. We called on participants to join our call to action to address the systemic barriers which result in on-going violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women. See details below 🇨🇦





## MORE THAN A FOOTNOTE

Canada must respect its human rights and treaty obligations to women and girls with disabilities:

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<p>The Committee recommends that the State party develop and implement a comprehensive national gender equality policy to address the structural factors leading to gender inequality, in close consultation with provinces and territories in consultation with civil society organizations.</p> <p>The Committee also recommends that the State party effectively implement and improve existing legislation on equal pay between men and women, at provincial and territorial levels, including the adoption of effective enforcement mechanisms, and include temporary special measures AND adopt targeted measures to increase access to social assistance and employment opportunities for women with disabilities.</p> <p>March 23, 2016</p>	<p>The Committee recommends that the State party develop a comprehensive national gender strategy, policy and action plan, addressing the structural factors that cause persistent inequalities with respect to women and girls, including intersecting forms of discrimination, with a special focus on disadvantaged groups such as women and girls with disabilities, those who are single parents, indigenous, Afro-Canadian, migrant, refugees, and/or seeking asylum and bisexual women and girls, and transsexual and intersex persons.</p> <p>November 18, 2016</p>	<p>The Committee is concerned that women with disabilities face intersecting discrimination, including in access to justice, which particularly affects indigenous women with disabilities. It is also concerned about the lack of information on legislation to promote the meaningful empowerment of women with disabilities through legislation and public policies on gender equality.</p> <p>The Committee, in line with its general comment No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities, recommends that the State party:</p> <p>(a) Ensure that the federal strategy against gender-based violence includes lines of action and specific programming and best practices to address all forms of violence against women and girls with disabilities;</p> <p>(b) Remove barriers and develop inclusive practices in order to create financial and practical support and address prejudices and stigmas;</p> <p>(c) Ensure that indigenous women with disabilities have access to available education programmes, are aware of their rights under the Convention and have access to the support available to claim their rights.</p> <p>May 7, 2017</p>

We call on Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments and their leadership to TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION!!!!

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#MoreThanAFootnoteWWD



## Webinar Presentation Discusses Canada's International Obligations towards Women with Disabilities

On December 9 and 10, Bonnie Brayton participated in a webinar in recognition of the United Nations International Human Rights Day. Her presentation focused on three international covenants to which Canada is a signatory, and the specific obligations to women and girls with disabilities that are outlined in the those covenants: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Committees for each of these treaties made specific recommendations related to women and girls with disabilities, some of which are highlighted in the [poster](#) here. 🌸

## Beyond Accommodations Panel Examines Intersectional Human Rights

In September 2017 the Canadian Human Rights Commission hosted a national symposium entitled "BEYOND LABELS" which challenged participants to examine whether identity labels - for example, gender, disability, race - help ensure human rights for marginalized groups or whether they are divisive. Bonnie Brayton moderated the "Beyond Accommodation" panel which discussed the importance of a human rights framework that goes beyond disability accommodations and that takes into account the intersection of various grounds of discrimination.

Panelists included Fran Odette, Part Time Faculty, George Brown College, Neil Belanger, Executive Director, BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, Alexandre Baril, Professor, Dalhousie University and Dr. Susan Hardie, Executive Director, Canadian Centre on Disability Studies. 🌸



## Identifying Barriers In Access To Justice For Victims With Disabilities (Webinar)

In December 2017, Bonnie Brayton participated as a panelist in a webinar on access to justice for victims with disabilities hosted by the Department of Justice Canada. Her presentation included an analysis of the barriers and key issues facing women with disabilities who are victims of crime, and some of the steps that can be taken to improve access to justice. 🌸

## Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

On November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 marked the beginning of both the 12 days of action on violence against women in Quebec and the international 16 days of activism on Gender-Based violence.

DAWN Canada participated in both of these campaigns, with the goal of addressing the high rates of violence against women, in particular women with disabilities and Deaf women.

Coordinated by the [Fédération des femmes du Québec](#), the focus of this year's [12 days campaign](#) was systemic violence. We chose to focus on three systems of oppressions: Economy, Justice and Health.

Women in general experience many forms of oppression, whether it is due to exclusion in the economic, justice or health systems. But, did you know that women with disabilities and Deaf women experience violence at a rate that is up to three times higher than non-disabled women? And that women with disabilities and Deaf women often cannot find services - such as police and violence prevention services, that are accessible? And on top of this, women are becoming disabled due to violence - for example, they are become brain injured due to being battered?

Further, women with disabilities and Deaf women face significant barriers to reporting abuse. They are not believed when they report abuse. They don't have access to interpreters for sign language in either ASL or LSQ.

Sometimes, they are not aware that what they are experiencing is abuse, because it happens so often. In some cases, they are dependent on their abuser for primary care and financial support.

They may fear law enforcement authorities.

And finally, they lack of information about their rights and options!

Our [comic strips for the 12 days campaign](#) represent these forms of systemic oppression experienced by women with disabilities and Deaf women and the gaps between policies and services offered to women with disabilities.



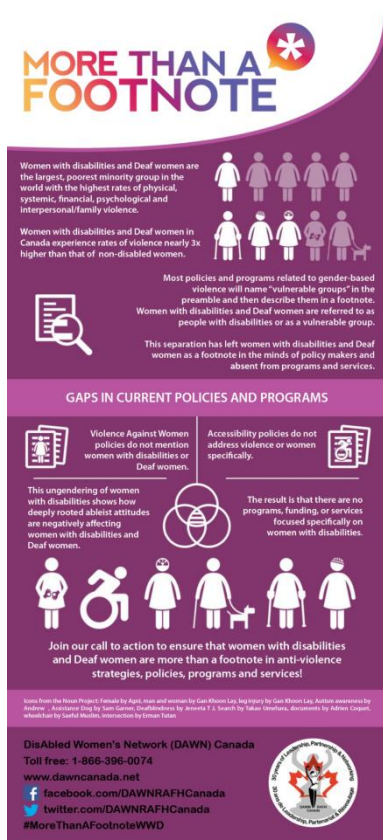
For [the 16 days campaign](#), we conducted a Teach-In campaign

on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 via social media to celebrate the [International Day for Persons with Disabilities](#). With 37k impressions on Twitter and 2000 reached on Facebook, it was a success.

We hosted also "More Than A Footnote" a national policy roundtable where leaders from the women and disability sectors gathered to participate in a call to action to ensure that women with disabilities and Deaf women are more than a footnote in policies, programs and services. The roundtable was held on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Part of it was broadcast live via [Facebook Live](#). With 2.4k reached on Facebook and the engagement of close to 40 in person attendees, it was a success.

These two campaigns against gender-based violence are an opportunity to talk about violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women. But we need to talk about it and to address it not only during these specific days, but 365 days a year 🇨🇦

## Resources



### More Than A Footnote Infographic

On December 3, the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we released an infographic outlining our call to action to ensure that women with disabilities and Deaf women are more than a footnote in policies, programs and services.

You can find the infographic [here](#). We encourage you to share it widely through your social media. 🇨🇦

## Upcoming events

On February 22, 2018 DAWN Canada will conduct an Intersectional Workshop in Montreal for the women's sector to raise awareness about intersectionality and its importance when thinking about women.

For more information, email: [recherche@dawnCanada.net](mailto:recherche@dawnCanada.net)

On March 23, 2018, DAWN Canada will host a roundtable in Montreal to talk about the preliminary outcomes of its initiative "Legislation, Policy and Service Responses to violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women". 🇨🇦



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*A Voice for  
women & girls  
with disabilities*

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