



AMPLIFY

A Voice for women & girls
with disabilities

Spring 2018

DAWN CANADA NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 4 / VOLUME 1

IN THIS ISSUE

Why are nearly half of all victims of violent victimization women with disabilities

By Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director

On March 15, 2018 the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics released an important but unsurprising [report](#). It is unsurprising because it tells us something we already know – that women with disabilities are at the highest risk of violence. It is important because it validates statistically what feminist disability activists have been saying for decades. Based on the 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization, the report confirmed that on every front, women with disabilities experience higher levels of violent victimization, defined in the report as sexual assault, robbery, or physical assault.

The report states that in 45% of all incidents of violent crime the

victims were women with disabilities. In fact, considering that self-reported statistics are often low, this number may be a conservative estimate.

As well, the rate of violent victimization among women with a mental health-related disability or with a cognitive disability was four times higher compared to those without a disability.

Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director of DAWN Canada says that the latest figures likely underestimate the scope of the problem, since they omit people living in institutions and rely on evidence from people who disclose that they have a disability and that they have experienced a robbery, sexual assault or physical assault.

(continued on page 2)



DAWN Canada consolidates national anti-violence...

Page 4



DAWN News

Page 3

Why is this the case?

“What we have seen over and over again”, notes Brayton, National Executive Director of DAWN Canada, “is that women with disabilities have been left out of research, policies, programs and services related to violence, even those that are supposed to be focused on gender-based violence.”

Feminist disability scholar [Fran Odette](#) explains that ableism, the belief that the disabled body is inferior, combined with sexism, exposes women with disabilities to both increased violence and to unique forms of violence.

For example, Odette notes that limited access to sexual health information for women with disabilities is based on the belief that disabled women will not be sexually active and therefore, do not need reliable sexual health and reproductive health information. This increases their risk for sexual and physical abuse.

Another contributing factor is childhood sexual abuse. “We also know that victims of childhood sexual abuse are more likely to become victims of sexual violence as adults and that girls with disabilities are more likely to experience childhood sexual abuse,” Brayton said.

The report showed that one in five (18%) women with a disability were touched in a sexual way by

an adult before the age of 15, a proportion that was double that of women without a disability (9%).

Predictably, the report confirmed that those who were physically and/or sexually abused as children were more than twice as likely to have experienced violent victimization as adults during the 12 months preceding the survey (7% versus 3% among non-victims). After controlling for other factors, they were at a higher risk of being the victim of both spousal and non-spousal violence later in life.

“It is time for politicians, service providers and for other VAW stakeholders to act on this and to ensure that all violence prevention policies and services are inclusive from both a feminist and disability perspective,” says Brayton. “Canada has failed to adequately protect and support women with disabilities.” 🌸



DAWN news



CSW62 + Silent Tears

DAWN Canada's National Executive Director Bonnie Brayton was invited to present at a side event during the 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62), held in New York in March 2018. Entitled *Disability, violence, and survival of rural women globally*, the panel was part of the Silent Tears Project. The panel of experts, including Ana Pelaez - member of the UN CEDAW Committee, created a 'borderless' conversation to identify and discuss courses of action to facilitate change for rural women and girls with disabilities impacted by violence. Bonnie Brayton presented on Rural Women with Disabilities in Canada. Silent Tears is a multimedia exhibition of the experiences of women with disabilities facing violence. The power of this exhibition lies within the stories shared by women with disabilities who have been subjected to violence and women who have acquired their disabilities caused by violence. UNCSW is one of the largest annual gatherings of global leaders, NGOs, private sector actors, United Nations partners and activists from around the world focusing on the status of rights and empowerment of all women and girls, everywhere 🇨🇦

National Shelter Conference of the future

Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director of DAWN Canada, was [one of four women](#) to engage in a discussion on *Creating change and movement building* at [Women's Shelters Canada \(WSC\) first national shelter conference](#). The theme was approached within the context of the plurality and intersectionality of movements and feminisms in creating change. Bonnie also co-lead a panel on "Shelters of the Future" with DAWN representatives Selma Koudri, Karine-Myrgianie Jean-Francois and Yin Brown. This conference is an occasion to mark WSC's five-year anniversary as a national organization created by provincial shelter organizations that saw a need for a unified voice at the national level 🇨🇦



DAWN news

DAWN Canada consolidates national anti-violence project with provincial leaders in Ontario and Quebec

DAWN Canada recently hosted roundtables with leaders and stakeholders in Quebec and Ontario to discuss the outcomes and next steps in our three-year initiative “Legislation, Policy and Service Responses to Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women”. Now in its final year, this initiative brought together key stakeholders to form Advisory Committees that worked to examine and address the gaps in policy and service provision that contribute to the high levels of violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women. During the Quebec roundtable held in Montreal on March 23rd, 2018, about thirty representatives of different community organizations including the members of the Quebec Provincial and Regional Advisory Committee discussed how to address violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women and challenged policy makers to put women with disabilities at the center of their violence prevention programs. While last April, public policy analysts and other important players attended the Ontario Roundtable. Together, they discussed how to address violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women.



The Honourable Tracy MacCharles, the Ontario Minister Responsible for Accessibility, attended the event. Representatives from the Justice Ontario, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, and the Ministry of Community and Social Services were also present. Research conducted as a result of the project revealed that women with disabilities are “ungendered” in violence-related policies; that is, policies often refer to women as group, and to people with disabilities, but are silent on the specific and unique experiences of women with disabilities. DAWN Canada recognizes the distinct issues faced by marginalized genders (women, trans people, non-binary people), but the ungendering of women with disabilities shows how deeply rooted ableist attitudes are negatively affecting women with disabilities and Deaf women. If women with disabilities are mentioned, they are relegated to a footnote that lists “vulnerable groups”. DAWN’s campaign “[More Than a Footnote](#)” was launched on December 2017 to bring attention to this gap, and to ensure that women with disabilities and Deaf women fully included policies, programs and services related to violence. Join our call to action by [subscribing to our mailing list](#) or by emailing us at: morethanafootnote@dawnCanada.net.

DAWN Participates in Bilateral Meeting with UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women

A bilateral meeting in April with United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, (UNSRV) Ms. Dubravka Šimonović and her team provided DAWN Canada with an important opportunity to raise our concerns regarding violence against women and girls with disabilities. In our meeting and subsequent report to the UNSRV, DAWN Canada pointed out that Canada has failed to act on the issue of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

This is evident from the most recent Canadian [report on violent victimization](#) (defined therein to be physical assault, sexual assault and robbery) which suggests that nearly half of all victims were in fact women with disabilities. However, the absence of women with disabilities in women-serving organizations, the social/economic exclusion of women with disabilities in Canada, and other factors have contributed to this reality being overlooked. In addition, emerging evidence indicates that women in Canada and around the world become disabled through violence in much higher numbers than appears in current statistics, which has significant implications for both policy and direct services. In our meeting, we also pointed out that women with traumatic brain injuries and women with intellectual/learning disabilities have higher rates of mental health and addiction issues.



As a result they are over-represented in VAW support services, in the homeless population, in prisons, and in human trafficking. This fact, however, is grossly under-reported because it competes with other intersecting identities of racialized and Indigenous women.

As far back as 2012, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights prepared a [Thematic study on the issue of violence against women and girls and disability](#), which included clear recommendations to address this issue. And again, in May 2017, the concluding observations to Canada (May 2017) on the [UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#) gave Canada specific recommendations related to women and girls with disabilities and violence. And while all relevant Canadian federal and provincial legislation already prohibits violence, this has not resulted in the prevention or reduction of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

DAWN Canada believes that a policy response could be effective, such as the [Blueprint for Canada's National Action Plan on Violence against Women](#), but insists that an intersectional feminist framework must be adopted and applied in the development of such a plan, as well as to resulting programs and frontline services at all levels - federal, provincial/territorial and local. "The use of an intersectional feminist framework would ensure that the overlapping social identities of women with disabilities, including Indigenous, immigrant, racialized, and LGBTQ women who experience the highest rates of violence, are included in the development of policies and programs related to violence," notes Bonnie Brayton, DAWN Canada's National Executive Director. DAWN Canada will continue to share our concerns, evidence and recommendations with the Special Rapporteur over the next year as she prepares her final report on Violence Against Women, due in June 2019 🇨🇦

DAWN news

New Research on Canadian Women and Girls with Disabilities soon to be released

DAWN Canada recently completed a groundbreaking report which, for the first time, consolidated the key issues facing Canadian women and girls with disabilities. We conducted this research with participation from Realize (a national, charitable organization that responds to the rehabilitation needs of people living with HIV/AIDS and other episodic illnesses) and People First of Canada and the Acquired Brain Injury Research Lab. Support from these groups helped to shed light on areas in which there has been limited research such as women and girls with intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injuries and women with chronic/episodic illnesses. The methodology included a statistical analysis, literature review and environmental scan. On May 25th 2018, DAWN Canada hosted a meeting with its partners in order to discuss the findings of its research and to plan next steps for action. This research was made possible by funding from the Office for Disability Issues, Employment and Social Development Canada. The final report will be available in English and French and will include a plain-language summary of the issues facing women and girls with intellectual disabilities. It will be released in the fall of 2018. 🍁



“Le Forum sur la diversité, l’accessibilité et l’inclusion”

On May 31st 2018, Selma Kouidri, Inclusion Coordinator for Quebec, delivered a workshop on how to plan and conduct an inclusive event at [“Le Forum sur la diversité, l’accessibilité et l’inclusion”](#) hosted by LePhénix in Ottawa (Le Phénix is a provincial organization (based in Ontario) that works for the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in all sectors of activity).

The main objective of the Forum was to support the development of skills that promote inclusive policies and practices. DAWN Canada developed the [Inclusive Practices Toolkit](#) to assist organizations in addressing accessibility barriers when organizing an event. We offer this workshop to organizations on request. For more information or to book your workshop contact: communications@dawncanada.net 🍁





Check out our new accessible website!

In February 2018, DAWN Canada launched its new website, totally accessible for women and girls with disabilities and Deaf women and girls. This [new website](#) was developed by Elmir Lekovic: a great developer from Ottawa. We hope you enjoy navigating the site and checking out our new look! 🍁

AMPLIFY

*A Voice for
women & girls
with disabilities*

**DisAbled Women's
Network Canada (DAWN
Canada)**

469, Jean Talon Street
#215
Montreal H3N 1R4

Tel: 1-866-396-0074

www.dawncanada.net

Legislation, Policy & Service Responses
to Violence against Women with
Disabilities **Project Team**

Bonnie Brayton

National Executive Director
admin@dawncanada.net

Hanane Khaless

Communications Coordinator
communications@dawncanada.net

Jewelless Smith

British Columbia Project Coordinator
jewelless.smith@gmail.com

Karine Myrgianie Jean-François

Senior Project Manager
projects@dawncanada.net

Nelly Bassily

Project Officer
agente@dawncanada.net

Selma Kouidri

Québec Project Coordinator
inclusion@dawncanada.net

Yin Brown

Greater Toronto Area Project Coordinator
yin.brown@dawncanada.net