



# AMPLIFY

A Voice for women & girls  
with disabilities

Winter 2017

DAWN CANADA NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 1 / VOLUME 1

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## Tackling systemic barriers is about collective responsibility and leadership

By Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director

This first issue of AMPLIFY is about recognizing the systemic barriers faced by women with disabilities and what those gaps mean to women who are already experiencing violence at the highest rates. With the close of the 16 Days Campaign for 2016 behind us DAWN Canada is bent on keeping policy makers and service providers focused on one thing in 2017 – a better response for women and girls with disabilities.

Canada's record on human rights, particularly reports/findings that have been released this past year all have one common thread: each of them points to the fact that women and girls with disabilities, including Indigenous women and girls have been

completely forgotten. This is evident in the Recommendation of the United Nations Committee for the Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (CESR), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Canada's pending appearance in March 2017 in Geneva before the United Nations Committee for the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)

How much more evidence do we need to do better? DAWN Canada is determined to AMPLIFY our message until we see real change and that will only happen when there is a sense of collective responsibility towards ALL women. (continued on page 2)



Anti-violence policies exclude women with disabilities

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Early results from the research in our current project "legislation, policy and service responses to violence against women with disabilities", show strong evidence of gaps in violence prevention policy & programs despite the

*“Women and girls with disabilities, including Indigenous women and girls have been completely forgotten”*

higher rates of abuse faced by women and girls with disabilities.

Do you know of a best practice related to addressing/preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities? Write to us and share it – [AMPLIFY IT!](#) 🇨🇦



## DAWN news

Courtesy of Violence against women research hub



### CFICE's Violence against Women Research Hub

[Community-First: Impacts of Community Engagement](#) (CFICE) is a seven-year research project. The [Violence against women research hub](#) is focused on collaborative demonstration projects on violence against women, locally and nationally.

DAWN Canada is part of the Violence against women research hub and is leading a research project to develop tools to assist researchers in addressing the absence of women with disabilities/the intersectional lens in Violence against Women research and policy.

More to come in the spring 2017 issue of [AMPLIFY](#) 🇨🇦

## Government of Canada's Advisory Council on Gender-based Violence

In June 2016, Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director of DAWN Canada, was appointed for two years as member of the [Advisory Council on Gender-based Violence](#) whose task is to support the development of the Government of Canada's Federal Strategy against Gender-based Violence.

Led by Minister Hajdu, the Advisory Council will serve as a forum to exchange views, promising practices and research on issues related to Gender-based Violence 🇨🇦



## Anti-violence Policies exclude Women with Disabilities

By Jewelles Smith, Research Lead & DAWN Canada BC Provincial Coordinator

It has been well documented that women with disabilities and Deaf women experience violence at rates at least twice as high as non-disabled women. But what is less well understood is that they experience another set of barriers when they try to make a police report, approach victim service agencies or seek support from counselors, shelters or other anti-violence organizations.

DAWN Canada is currently conducting a three-year project that aims to address this secondary or systemic violence. In the first phase of the project, we are examining existing legislation, policy and services related to violence prevention to uncover the underlying gaps that lead to these secondary forms of violence and to highlight any good practices we find. This Pan Canadian project is focused in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia.

Early findings indicate that in many instances, women with disabilities and Deaf women and girls are unable to access shelters and resources. Some of our research finds instances of inaccessible websites, communications, resources and physical spaces.

Overall, the research team has discovered that accessibility is poorly addressed, and that policy is often reactionary in nature, created in response to a particular case instead of taking a holistic view of the needs of all women. *(Continued on page 4)*



Use the National Accessibility and Accommodation Survey (NAAS) to audit the accessibility of your spaces. Download it here: <http://bit.ly/2qbUF5I>

“At best policy ignores disabled women as a population; at worst it creates barriers for them,” says Jewelles Smith, research lead and DAWN Canada BC Provincial Coordinator for the project.

For example, in British Columbia domestic violence policy has been amended to one that is primarily focused on the “best interests of the child” and less on protecting women, largely in reaction to a

***“..accessibility is poorly addressed, and that policy is often reactionary in nature..”***

2008 [case](#) in which a father murdered his three children.

“The policy impacts all women—in fact, it identifies women with disabilities, Indigenous women, and immigrant women as higher-risk groups—but it was not created in response to the needs of women,” Smith says.

Legislation and policies have been found to be too generalized and are not able to meet the specific needs of women with disabilities and Deaf women. While many policies mention women with disabilities as a vulnerable group, they do not provide specific tools for addressing their needs. In many cases, reference is made to “people with disabilities”, but not to women with disabilities.

“It’s problematic to remove gender, because this does not acknowledge the fact that women with disabilities face violence both because they have a disability and because they are women,” Smith says.

In Quebec, the government’s 2012-2017 Strategic Plan on Domestic Violence specifically mentions women with disabilities but fails to make it clear that programs need to be made accessible to them.

In Ontario, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), which has been in effect for a decade, both helps and hinders access to violence-prevention services. In reality, violence-prevention agencies are simply not resourced to provide accessible services to women with disabilities and Deaf women.

The Ontario’s Action Plan to end Sexual Violence does note the high victimization rates of women with Disabilities (it does not mention Deaf women) but few responses are in place to assist women. Services that do exist are difficult to access because the system is complex and municipal and provincial services are not coordinated.

The research team recommends that in order for policies to be effective, monitoring processes must be in place and women with disabilities and Deaf women must be consulted in the policy development process. Also frontline workers need to be trained in the policies, and specific education and tools need to be developed to train them. Finally, funding to implement new policy needs to be in place 🇨🇦



***“At best policy ignores disabled women as a population; at worst it creates barriers for them”***

## Events

Ottawa, November 29<sup>th</sup>

According to a recent study conducted for [Informed Opinions](#), Canadian media quote men 71% of the time, and women 29% of the time. In order to help women get their stories told and their perspective represented in the media, Informed Opinions supports women in building their media relations and communications skills.

Through funding from the [Canadian Women's Foundation](#), DAWN Canada staff and board members participated in a one-day workshop delivered by Informed Opinions founder Shari Graydon. Ms Graydon provided a practical, informative and enlightening session that included instruction on how to focus your message for print (eg. op eds), electronic media (TV interviews), or for presenting to government or other decision-makers. Participants got hands on experience in writing and editing their key messages, and recording them on film. They were also encouraged to set up profiles on [ExpertWomen.ca](#), a new database of women experts that Informed Opinions uses to increase media access to women as panelists and interviewees.

Designed as a train-the-trainer session, DAWN Canada will adapt the workshop contents in order to deliver it to women with disabilities and Deaf women at the community level. DAWN Canada's goal is to see women with disabilities and Deaf women represented in the media.

[AMPLIFY IT!](#) 🇨🇦



Download it and use it to open up a discussion in your practice

<http://bit.ly/1AyHnsJ>

## Resources

### We Can Tell We Will Tell!

In 2012, DAWN Canada and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) got involved in the D.A.I case where a victim of abuse with intellectual disabilities was not seen as being truthful about her experience of violence. On February 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the right of people with disabilities to be believed when they report sexual assault and abuse.

This video resource can help people understand what this decision means for women & girls with disabilities. [AMPLIFY it!](#) 🇨🇦

# AMPLIFY

*A Voice for  
women & girls  
with disabilities*

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