



Assembly of First Nations (AFN)

National Forum on Income Assistance

September 11, 2024

Calgary, Alberta



Key Updates

Accessibility & Disability Inclusion

The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into law in 2019, and First Nations will be subject to the ACA in 2026.

AFN Resolutions:

- **AFN Resolution #10/2018**, directs the AFN to work with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to secure resources to develop distinct First Nations accessibility legislation.
- **AFN Resolution 15/2022**, advocates to extend the date for implementation in First Nations and to secure major investments for First Nations and the regions to become accessible.
- **AFN Resolution #15/2022**, Major Investment Needed to Build Fully Accessible First Nations.
- **AFN Resolution # #41/2024**, Work to Address Misdiagnosis in First Nations.
- **AFN Resolution #03/2024**, Amendment to Charter Re: Establishment of an Accessibility and Disability Council as a Recognized “Principal Organ” Under Article 5 of AFN Charter.
- Advocacy efforts are ongoing to secure long-term funding to engage with First Nations to advance legal options to inform ***A Distinct First Nations Accessibility Law***.



Accessibility Law and First Nations



New Federal and First Nations Laws and Policies to support Persons with Disabilities.

Canada Disability Benefit:

Purpose: A new benefit to fill the gap in the social safety net for low-income, working-age persons with disabilities, complementing provincial and territorial income supports.

Key Features: - Max benefit: \$2,400/year for persons aged 18-64 with a valid Disability Tax Credit (DTC).
- \$243M over six years for medical forms needed to apply for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC).

On-Reserve Income Assistance- New Supports for Persons with Disabilities (Budget 2024):

- Additional \$213.5M over five years starting in 2024-25
- Additional \$49.8M annually ongoing for income supports for Indigenous persons with disabilities.

Goal: Align supports for persons with disabilities on reserve and in Yukon with those available off-reserve, ensuring fair access to opportunities and success.

Accessibility Canada Act (ACT), 2019:

The ACT focuses on: Employment, built environment (i.e. infrastructure), information communication technologies, communication *not* IT (ie sign language), procurement of goods and services, transportation, design of programs and services

AFN Resolution 10/2018, Resources for Engagement on **A Distinct First Nations Accessibility Law: This law would encompass all of the above areas!**

A Distinct First Nations Accessibility Law

In 2022, [A Distinct First Nations Accessibility Law Discussion Guide](#) was developed to guide engagements with First Nations, the regions and leadership on the following four legal options:

- 1: First Nations Regulations under the Accessible Canada Act.***
- 2: Legislation where individual First Nations design their own law.***
- 3: A new First Nations accessibility law that applies to all First Nations.***
- 4: First Nations Accessibility Law within First Nations Health Law.***



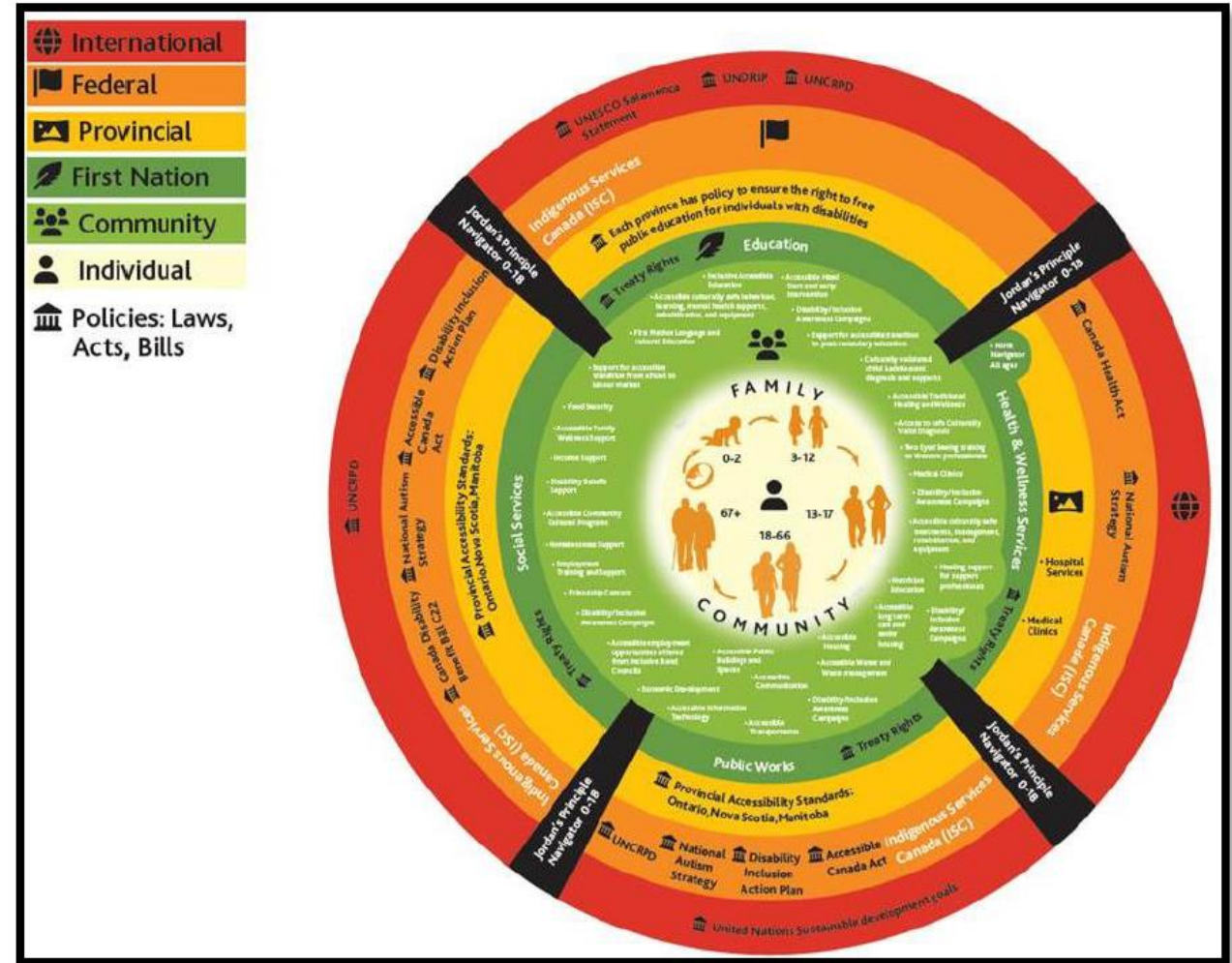
It is imperative that First Nations continue dialogue toward a legislative option for building fully accessible First Nations.

Taking a Poll to get a Pulse!

Advancing Accessibility in First Nations

Accessibility and Disability Surveys:

1. Survey for FNPWD (and for undiagnosed individuals): 127 responses
2. Survey for Jordan's Principle Navigators: 102 responses
3. Survey for NIHB Navigators: 29 responses
4. Survey for First Nations Health Centres: 59 responses



Quick Recap:

Types of Disability Conditions

Everyone is unique, with gifts and abilities to share.

Disability results from the interaction between:

Individuals with a Condition

and

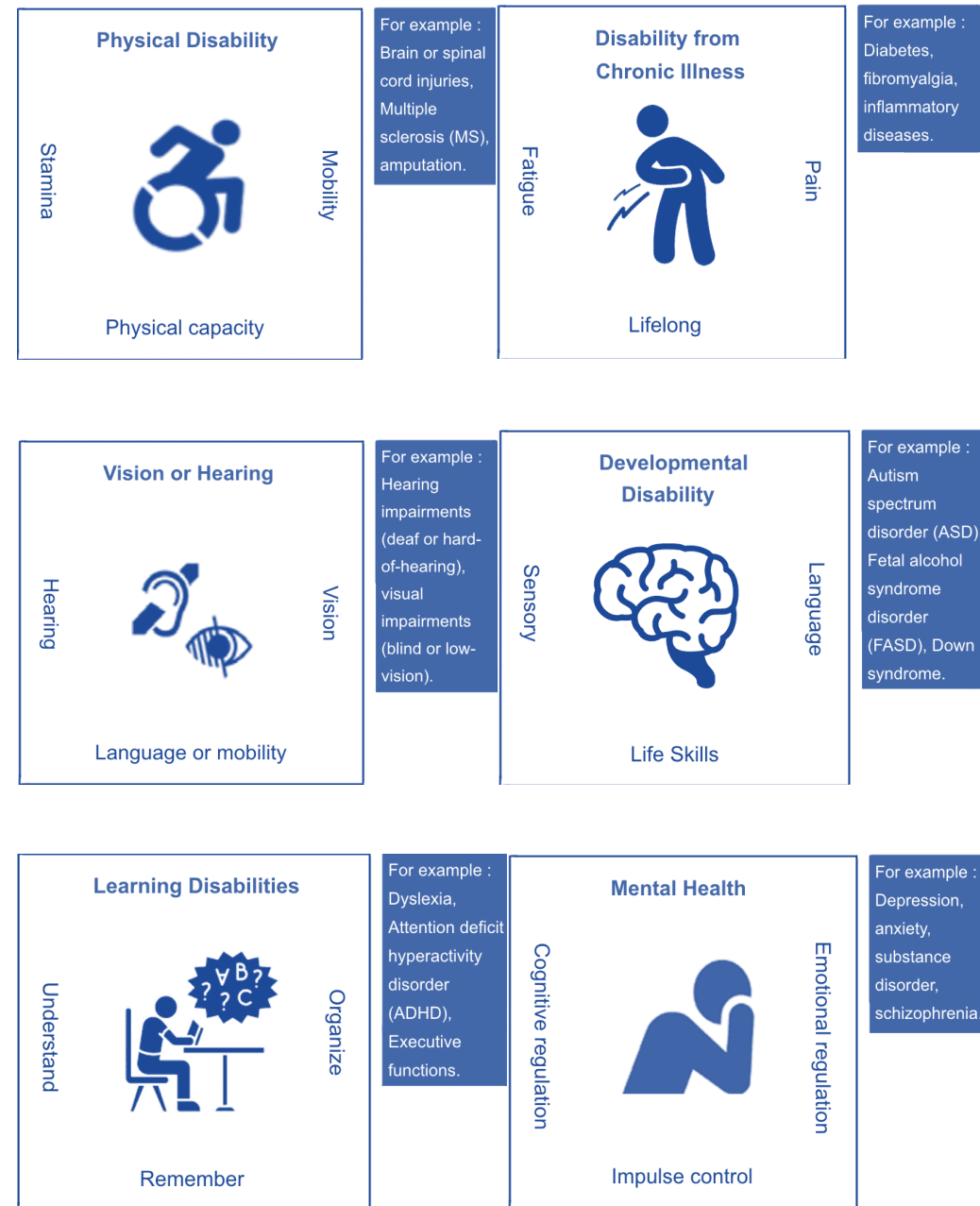
Personal and Environmental Factors

Factors can include such things as:

- negative attitudes
- inaccessible transportation and public buildings
- limited social support



Diverse Conditions



Quick Recap: Disability

Medical Model
Understanding
of Disability



The problem is

the disabled person

PHOTO CREDIT: CRIPPLEN, DISABILITY ARTS ONLINE

So you see
it's the barriers
within society that
disables you



Social Model
Understanding
of Disability



- PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS
- INSTITUTIONAL & ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS
- INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION BARRIERS
- ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

The problem is the barriers within society



Requirements for Disability Income Support and Other Disability Programs & Services

Determining Who is Eligible



Eligibility Criteria:

- Requires medical documentation and assessment of disability impact
- Consistency in applying criteria varies across provinces

Importance of Diagnosis:

- Essential for accessing disability income support
- FNPWD face significant barriers in obtaining an accurate diagnosis

Barriers to Diagnosis = Barriers to Eligibility

Getting Needed Supports

To be eligible to receive disability Income Supports, access to disability educational & training programs, most organizations will require a diagnosis to prove disability status. However, there is an unspoken crisis of misdiagnosis in First Nations today.

The **Canadian Psychological Association** describes
the state of misdiagnosis in First Nations as
“A DIRE SITUATION”!



Barriers to Diagnosis = Barriers to Eligibility

FNPWD told Us about: Misdiagnosis, No Diagnosis, Culturally Safe and Valid Diagnosis.

Those with *Invisible* disabilities face significant barriers to culturally safe and valid diagnosis.

73% of all respondents do not have access to professionals who can provide **culturally safe and accurate assessments**.

This increases to:

- 82% for respondents with Mental Health conditions
- 89% of respondents who reported their Spiritual Wellness was affected by disability
- and 100% of Two Spirit Respondents

45% of all respondents with **Invisible disabilities** thought they had a condition, but **did not have a diagnosis**.

- This was closer to **75% for certain conditions such as addiction, PTSD, and Substance Use Disorder**.

58% with Mental Health conditions reported this was in part caused by **intergenerational trauma or colonization**.

- 76% with Mental Health conditions reported this was in part caused by personal trauma.



Barriers to Diagnosis = Barriers to Eligibility

Discrimination in the Healthcare System

- 55% of *all* respondents have encountered **racism** in the healthcare system's assessment and/or treatment processes. This goes up to **87% of Female respondents**.
- 55 % **Fear having to go to the healthcare system** to get assessed or diagnosed. This goes up to **100% of Two Spirit respondents**.



Quotes:

“Our community struggles... there are many barriers created by non-indigenous health workers...”

- Cecile Sanderson

“We have an Aboriginal Healthcare Centre with NOT one Aboriginal Doctor...”

- Doris Edwards

Barriers to Diagnosis = Barriers to Eligibility

Finding the Right Professional

57% of all respondents do not know **who or what professionals** to go to for assistance in getting an appropriate assessment.

- This increases to **67% of respondents with Mental Health conditions**, and **71%** of respondents who **indicated Spiritual Wellness** was affected by their disability.
- This increases again to **77% of respondents with Learning Disabilities** and **100% of those with Developmental Conditions** such as Autism or Developmental Delays.
- This increases to **100% of Two Spirit** respondents.



Barriers to Inclusion

Discrimination and Ableism

Even if a diagnosis is given, being labelled as having a disability can cause fears and concerns:

- 51% fear **losing their independence** due to their disability status
- This fear is most pronounced among those with **physical disabilities** (70%)
- 52% worry disability status could lead to **losing their job**.
- **46%** worry about being forced into **unwanted treatments**
- Concerns of unwanted treatments are particularly high among those with **mental health (52%), physical(62%), and developmental (83%)** conditions
- 15% worry disability status could lead to **losing their children**



Barriers to Inclusion

Discrimination and Ableism

Over half of FNPWD worry about **discrimination** within their community or family

- This issue is more pronounced for those with learning and developmental conditions

Many FNPWD feel that their condition is **not recognized as a disability** by family, friends, and community members

- This is a bigger issue for those with “invisible” conditions, specifically **learning and developmental** conditions.



Barriers to Health and Wellness

Financial Security: Affording Basic Needs

70% of the FNPWD survey respondents do not receive a disability income supplement or support.

Over half of all respondents struggle to afford their **basic needs** for example:

- **Caregiver and Support Worker Care:** 72% cannot afford adequate caregiver or support worker care
- **Healthy Food:** 61% cannot afford healthy food
- **Accessible Transportation:** 59% cannot afford accessible transportation
- **Accessible Housing:** 56% cannot afford accessible housing that meets their needs
- **Seasonal Necessities:** 40% cannot afford seasonal necessities like winter coats and boots



Barriers to Health and Wellness

Financial Security: Affording Basic Needs



Practitioner Fees & Supports:

- 63% of FNPWD cannot afford fees for therapists, counsellors, and other professionals
- 56% cannot afford medical equipment

Traditional Wellness:

- 65.% cannot afford traditional healers
- 59.% cannot afford traditional medicines

Barriers to Education & Employment

Financial Security: Affording Basic Needs

Accessible Education:

- 62% struggle to afford accessible education

Accessible Work and Skills Training:

- 68% FNPWD cannot afford accessible work and skills training programs



A Significant Protective Factor: Feeling Welcomed by the Band Office, Public, and Community Services!



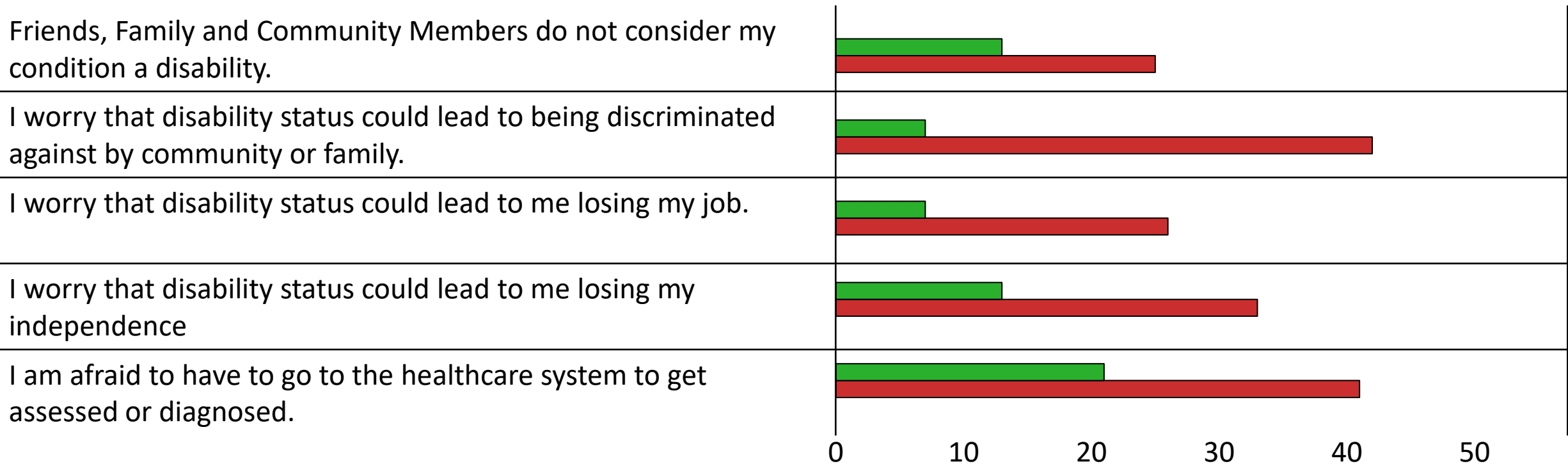
*Feeling Comfortable or Welcome by
Band, Public or Community Services:*

Reduces the **fear** and **worry** that First Nations
Persons with Disabilities face in many aspects of
their lives.



A Significant Protective Factor: Feeling Welcomed by the Band Office, Public, and Community Services!

Response Rate for FNPWD who live in their First Nation



- Comfortable or Welcome by Public, Band and Community Services
- Not Comfortable or Welcome by Public, Band and Community Services



QUESTIONS or COMMENTS?



SUSTAINABILITY



THE 7
GENERATION
Spiral

- children, grandchildren,
great grandchildren
& so on...

The AFN acknowledges the countless disability advocates over the decades that have made this work possible, including Wendall Nicholas, Doreen Demas, and many more!

