

Employment Issues

December 3rd is the International Day of Disabled Persons. The theme of this year's day, ***Nothing About Us Without Us***, recognizes the need for persons with disabilities to take a lead role in the decision making process. To highlight the importance of this day and theme, the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) is releasing a series of four fact sheets throughout the month of November.

Citizenship can be seen as the realization of certain rights... Physical, social, political, economic, and cultural barriers keep millions of disabled adults and children throughout the world excluded from fundamental citizenship. ~ Marta Russell¹

¹ Marta Russell (2003) [Nothing About Us without Us: Human rights and Disability.](#)

Fact:

- ❖ In Canada, persons with disabilities experience low income, high unemployment, low rates of labour market participation, employment discrimination, and socio-economic disincentives preventing them from entering the workforce.¹
- ❖ People with disabilities are often denied equal opportunities for education, thus making finding paid employment more difficult.²
- ❖ There is a clear relationship between unemployment and poverty.³
- ❖ Over **9%** of the core working-age population (25-54) in Canada has a disability, yet working members of this group have significantly lower household incomes (**\$52,835 compared to \$72,951** for their non-disabled peers).⁴
- ❖ Among persons with disabilities, the employment rate is **41%** for men, and **32%** for women; employment rates are 83% for non-disabled men and 70% for non-disabled women.⁵
- ❖ The employment rate for aboriginal persons with disabilities living on reserve is only **18%**.⁶
- ❖ Persons with disabilities who are a part of the paid labour force typically receive lower hourly wages than their non-disabled peers, with women with disabilities between the ages of 16-34 receiving the lowest wages.⁷
- ❖ The labour market and barriers to participation have been identified by persons with disabilities as a key element that must be addressed.

¹ Saskatchewan Voice of Persons with Disabilities. [Income Support for People with Disabilities.](#)

² Department of International Development. (2000) [Disability, poverty and development.](#)

³ Lochhead, C., & Shillington, R. (1996) [A Statistical Profile of Urban Poverty.](#) Ottawa: Centre for International Statistics.

⁴ Government of Canada. (2001) [Disability in Canada: a 2001 profile.](#)

⁵ Government of Canada. (2002) [Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.](#)

⁶ National Aboriginal Network on Disability Publication (1990) [A Needs Assessment: Aboriginal People and Disability.](#)

⁷ Canadian council on Social Development (2002) [Disability Fact Sheet No.4.](#)

Solutions:

- ❖ Since Navigating the Waters (NTW), CAILC's national employment initiative began in 1997, it has supported over **5,000** persons with disabilities in their journey towards employment.
- ❖ Through NTW, over **1,500** people with disabilities have become employed or self-employed, over **970** persons with disabilities have upgraded their labour market skills and/or become active volunteers, and over **950** persons with disabilities have begun to lay the necessary foundations for labour market inclusion.
- ❖ In **2003-2004** alone, NTW supported over **950** people with disabilities in their journey towards paid employment. During this time, **266** persons became employed or self-employed, **242** became volunteers or upgraded their employability skills, and **207** persons received the support necessary to begin building the foundation necessary for real and sustainable employment.
- ❖ Since its beginning, NTW has illustrated how CAILC and the network of Independent Living Centres across Canada are successfully designing, implementing, and maintaining creative supports and services designed by and for people with disabilities. These initiatives have proven to be successful in the facilitation of the full socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.