Indigenous Communities and Federal Accessibility Standards:

A Situational Review

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Executive Summary

This report examines how the accessibility standards introduced under the *Accessible Canada Act* may have an impact on Indigenous Communities.

There is no systematic or national data available to understand the number or type of disabilities for persons living in Indigenous communities. However, several studies and reports suggest that a higher proportion of Indigenous people live with disabilities than found in the general Canadian population.

One of the challenges in understanding disabilities in Indigenous communities is that disability may be defined differently in those communities. While there are legislative definitions of disability and barriers, in some Indigenous communities, there may be different cultural meanings for disabilities and barriers.

For example, Indigenous people with disabilities may not see or report barriers that others may find to be a challenge. Aboriginal cultures may value interdependence differently than Canadians living off reserve.

There is a lack of research or information on how the accessibility standards of design of space, employment, plain language, and accessible means of egress have an impact on Indigenous communities.

The studies that exist focus on how dwellings or community facilities are not properly equipped to accommodate the mobility needs of individuals.

Some of the ongoing challenges mentioned affect the entire community, include a lack of access to meaningful employment and high-speed internet, or to banks or ATM machines.

This study found that many of the older building structures do not have ramps or are not accessible for persons with disabilities.

Newer building structures seem to be more accommodating, but in many cases the interior of the buildings have limited accessibility. Persons with disabilities cannot access hallways, have limited space in their workstations and cannot access washrooms.

Ramps that were built do not meet national building codes. Some view ramps to be culturally unpleasing and many are unusable, especially in the north.

Employment opportunities for persons with disabilities are not easily available in many of the communities.

The research found that Chief and Councils require more capacity and knowledge with respect to accessibility issues. In many cases, there are few resources to care effectively for persons with disabilities within their communities.

To move forward, several recommendations are provided including the submission of an accessibility plan;

additional resources to accommodate national standards; and evaluations that include direct input from persons with disabilities who are affected by the changes.

Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

Recently, the Canadian government introduced "An Act to Ensure a Barrier-free Canada (*Accessible Canada Act*)" to fulfill its mandate to introduce federal accessibility legislation. The *Accessible Canada Act* provides for the development of accessibility standards and gives the Government of Canada the authority to work with stakeholders and persons with disabilities to create new accessibility regulations that will apply to sectors within the federal jurisdiction, such as banking, telecommunications, transportation industries and the Government of Canada itself. Accessibility can also be an issue in Indigenous communities.

The Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization (CASDO) was established to develop standards for the legislation. CASDO will focus on the following accessibility standards:

1. **Design of public space**: Individuals living in the community with disabilities should have access to an entire community. Design of community/public space

patterns describes ways to make outdoor communal spaces more accessible for community members with disabilities.

2. **Employmen**t: Employers such as Chief and Council, and other businesses located in communities are obliged to make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities.

3. **Plain writing or plain language**: Plain writing or plain language benefits all users including individuals with cognitive or learning disabilities. Plain writing also benefits individuals with dementia or individuals who are encountering an unknown topic or language. Plain writing or plain language includes short sentences or one idea per sentence. There is more use of pictures and illustrations.

4. **Accessible means of egress/exits out of buildings**: Exits can be through doors, windows, stairways, platform lifts or ramps all directly leading to the outside of the building. Generally, the discussion on emergency exits focuses on escaping from fires. While this is a primary reason for

emergency exits from a building, it is not the only reason. Other hazards may include explosions, earthquakes or smoke (without a fire), flash floods, storms (hurricane and tornado etc.) or threatened actions just to name a few.

However, little is known about how these standards are being adopted within Indigenous communities. The purpose of this report is to focus on the four accessibility standards to empower individuals to participate, move around, and access the physical structures, including their homes, in Indigenous communities.

2 Objectives:

The objectives for this report are as follows:

1. Examine the literature (academic, government, stakeholder reports) with respect to Indigenous communities regarding barriers for people with disabilities.

2. Identify the current government programs (federal, provincial/territorial) to help Indigenous communities

implement accessibility standards. Include any assessment(s) of these programs.

3. Identify the accessibility standards implemented in Indigenous communities.

4. Identify the challenges that Indigenous communities have regarding the implementation of accessibility standards.

5. Collect quantitative and qualitative information (e.g., at the community level) to provide an understanding regarding the challenges people with disabilities.

6. Identify measurements that can be used to help gauge or evaluate the implementation of standards.

7. Provide recommendations as to how to move forward.

3 Approach:

A review of the literature, reports, peer review articles and conference presentations/reports was conducted[1]. The focus on literature was a specifically on Indigenous

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[1] Key search words for the literature review included accessibility standards, plain language, employment, housing and buildings egress/exits, open space and First Nations and Indigenous.

communities. The literature off reserve is very substantial which was not included in this report. However, this literature should be referenced in the future specially on how these standards should be implemented within Indigenous communities. Much could be learned from this information as there are may organizations that provide support for persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, a survey instrument was developed and made available at regional housing conferences and distributed via FNNBOA emails. The focus was to identify people who understood disabilities within their communities and 40 individuals responded[2].

One major finding was that most of the people who received the survey did not have any knowledge about disabilities. This was evident in follow-up interviews and inquiries as to why the surveys were not completed. While many individuals forwarded the survey to individuals at their Councils, few Councils have persons

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[2] A probability sampling technique was used. The survey was sent out using the FNNBOA email list, with the survey distributed at conferences. Where individuals indicated they did not have knowledge of disabilities, FNNBOA asked that the survey be sent to a person who could provide the information.

working for them that understand accessibility issues within their communities[3].

Another finding was that persons who completed the survey may only have had knowledge in one area of the disability standard, resulting in blank responses. Finally, some respondents felt the survey instrument was too long.

Interviews were conducted with disability organizations that serve Indigenous communities as well as Councils that had a designated person responsible for disabilities. Eight disabilities organizations were approached. Three organizations provided a response, two refused to participate, and three organizations did not reply to numerous emails and calls for an interview.

Interviews were also conducted with federal government officials responsible for programs associated with accessibility. In these cases, the individuals reiterated the

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[3] For more information regarding the challenges of disability research see for example: Bury (1996) and Winance (2016).

information that we found on the various government websites.

4 Definition of Disability

For the purpose of this report, two important concepts were defined:

1. Disability means a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment, or a functional limitation, whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.

2. Barrier means anything including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Attempts were made to use a common-sense definition of disability that adopts an individual disability as a barrier to interaction or adjustments as required to physical environment (building design) within their communities.

However, it is important to acknowledge that there are different ways in which disability can be conceptualized. The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) (2013) points out that the concept of disability within Aboriginal communities in Australia can mean many different things. In some communities a word or cultural definition for disability does not exist. In his work on understanding disabilities in Aboriginal communities, Jalla (2016) notes that disability as a construct is not unlike simple words such as saying 'please' and 'thank you', which are culturally weighted words.

Gething (1995) underlines differences between perceptions of Aboriginal people in Australia and those of "the trained professional" whereby Aboriginal people are inclined not to see disabilities as discrete, but as part of

problems which are widespread and accepted as part of the lifecycle. Similarly, Stopher and D'Antoine (2009) state that rather than a generic term for 'disability' in Aboriginal cultures, "people were referred to as having a specific impairment or 'sickness' that prevented them doing certain tasks, but that they were still involved in the kinship system with roles and responsibilities" (2009:5). They suggest that for some Aboriginal people, use of the generic term 'disability' is a devaluing experience. It is more responsive therefore to discuss and respond to specific disability impacts.

Hickey (2014) and Adleson (2005) found that disability is conceptualized as a "westernized concept". Hickey further argues that Indigenous peoples' definition of disability has therefore been characterized by resisting Westernized concepts of impairment and disability.

Disabilities within Aboriginal communities tend to be considered special gifts or powers which enable people to communicate with the spiritual world (Durst, 2006; Durst, Bluechardt, & Morin, 2001). Durst (2006) provides

an example of the Hopi American Tribe in the United States, who believe that a person who is born with a condition that inhibits mobility but can still contribute to the functioning of the community, is not disabled. However, someone who consumes alcohol excessively and is unproductive in the community is shunned and is considered disabled. The Hopi idea of disability is therefore based on one's contribution to society rather than notions of difference.

Findlay et al., (2009) from their research on people with disabilities in Northern Saskatchewan, argue that Aboriginal peoples with disabilities may not see or report barriers that others find challenging. Whereas mainstream Canadians value independence, Aboriginal cultures value interdependence and the different contributions people make to community (Durst and Bluechardt 2004).

According to Johnson (2015) Cree First Nations traditional teachings guide beliefs and values that children born with disabilities are special, and a sign that

their soul is still in touch with the Spirit World. This Cree traditional knowledge indicates that children living with disabilities deserve to be treasured. Finally, the NWT Disabilities Council (2015) in their survey used a self-identification of disability including mental illness and addiction in their definition. The Council argues that by allowing people to identify themselves as living with a disability if they were limited in their daily activity or participation would allow people who had previously been excluded from conversations on disability issues to participate.

5 Prevalence of Disabilities among First Nations

There is no systematic or national data concerning Aboriginal children and youth with learning and or behavioural disabilities. (FNQLHSC, 2013). However, to understand the prevalence of disabilities among Indigenous communities, several studies were reviewed.

In one of the earlier studies, McDonald et al., (2000) observes that 6.5 percent of First Nation youth reported disabilities. They further point out that the incidence of disability among Aboriginal youth is 1.7 times higher than the general population. Aboriginal youth are at elevated risk of suffering from a development, learning or physical disability.

The authors cited the Aboriginal Peoples survey [1991] that found nearly a third of all First Nations peoples aged 15 and older had a disability of 31 percent which is more than double the national rate during the same time period. Similarly, Fricke (1998) reports that in 1991, Aboriginal Adults in Manitoba reported that 45 percent described their disability as mobile in nature. Hearing was the second most frequently reported disability followed by agility.

To explain the higher rate of disabilities for persons living on the reserve, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People notes that "disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rates of disability correspond to disparities in

rates of injury, accident, violence, self-destructive or suicidal behaviour, and illness (such as diabetes) that can result in permanent impairment" (RCAP, 1996:148).

Ng (1996), Kryskan and Moore (2005), and Szlemko et al., (2006) further argue that the high disability rate in First Nations communities was due to fetal alcohol syndrome. Elias and Demas (2001) identify these factors: food insecurity, unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing, social and geographic isolation, and diabetes (source of 32 percent of the cases reported in the survey). Similar findings were made by the Dion (2017) as part of his review on Indigenous children with disabilities.

The First Nations Information Governance Centre, First Nations Regional Health Survey (2008/10) surveyed First Nations living on-reserve or in northern communities. The survey found:

- The percentage of First Nations adults reporting disabilities increased with age. Among those aged 55

or older, more than half (50.5 percent) reported having an activity limitation (2008/10;169).

- The percentage of First Nations adults with one or more health conditions was nearly five times higher for those who reported an activity limitation than for those who did not (2008/10;169).

- The percentage of First Nations adults experiencing limitations was significantly higher than the overall Canadian rates among those 45 to 64 years old (37.8 percent vs. 32.9 percent) and those of 65 years or older (57.4 percent vs. 48.2 percent) (2008/10;173).

The FNQLHSSC (2013) conducted a review on the First Nations residing in Quebec who are living with a disability or have special needs. The authors of the report point out that 22.9 percent of adult First Nations living on-reserve reported having at least one disability. They further found that among First Nations adults on-reserve, the proportion of individuals who reported having disabilities increased consistently with age.

That is, respondents aged 18 to 29 years reported the lowest prevalence of disability (13.1 percent), while respondents aged 60 years and older reported the highest prevalence of disability (49.7 percent) (2013:9). The author reports that while these figures are similar to the prevalence among the general population, caution should be exercised when comparing the prevalence of disability between population due to methodological and survey differences across the various studies.

The Health Council of Canada (2013) reports that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis seniors are among Canada's most vulnerable citizens. In comparison to the larger Canadian population, a significantly larger proportion of Aboriginal seniors live on low incomes and in poor health, with multiple chronic conditions and disabilities. Many seniors are not able to pay to adapt their homes for medical equipment or to accommodate disabilities.

In their disability strategic framework, the Northwest Territories government (2017) points out that of the 2,700 persons (8 percent of the population) aged 15

years or older reported a disability They further report that over 1,300 persons (48 percent) experienced severe to very severe disabilities. Most interesting, is the government reported that 66 percent of the persons who responded had a disability and lived in the small communities or in the regional centres.

Finally, as part of their consultation on the proposed Federal accessibility legislation, the Assembly of First Nations (2017) presents the following data regarding youth on reserve and northern communities:

- 2.4 percent had ADD/ADHD in 2002 vs. 3.8 percent in 2008. Among those with the condition, 34.2 percent were treated in 2002 vs. 45.0 percent in 2008.
- 1.9 percent had blindness or serious vision problems in 2002 vs. 3.5 percent in 2008. Among those with the condition, 16.7 percent were treated in 2002 vs. 48.0 percent in 2008.
- 0.8 percent had a cognitive or mental disability in 2002 vs. 0.8 percent in 2008. Among those with the

condition, 57.6 percent were treated in 2008. The numbers for 2002/03 was suppressed due to low counts.

- 1.7 percent had a hearing impairment in 2002 vs. 1.9 percent in 2008. Among those with the condition, 35.6 percent were treated in 2008. The number for 2002 was suppressed due to low counts.
- 3.5 percent had a learning disability in 2002 vs. 5.8 percent in 2008. Among those with the condition, 12.6 percent were treated in 2002 vs. 44.3 percent in 2008.
- 0.8 percent had a physical disability in 2003. Among those with the condition, 37.2 percent were treated in 2002.

Assembly of First Nations further reported that among First Nations adults on-reserve and in northern communities in 2008:

- 16.2 percent had chronic back pain
- 8.8 percent had hearing impairment
- 3.6 percent had a learning disability

- 3.6 percent had blindness or serious vision problems

- 3.5 percent had osteoporosis

- 3.3 percent had psychologic or nervous disorders

- 1.9 percent had effects of stroke

- 1.6 percent had glaucoma

- 1.2 percent had a cognitive or mental disability

- 1.1 percent had attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). (Assembly of First Nations, 2017:5)

The Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (2010) observes that geographic, socio-economic and cultural distance have an impact on the possibility and frequency of families accessing programs for speech language and hearing services.

It is clear that the rates of disabilities are alarmingly high among Aboriginal people. Depending on the disability and the region under consideration, estimates range from 20 percent to 50 percent higher than those found in the non-Aboriginal population. However, there is a lack of

quality study on how communities are responding to disabled people living in the communities (Louw, 2014; Durst & Bluechardt, 2011)[4]. These numbers will also be a major challenge to ensure federal standards on accessibilities are adopted.

6 Research and Disabilities in FN communities

There are few peer reviewed studies and reports that focus on the challenges of persons with disabilities living in Indigenous communities.

Wearmount and Wilandt (2009) researched on-reserve First Nations peoples with physical disabilities. They report that the participants' dwellings and community facilities were not properly equipped to accommodate the mobility needs of these populations.

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[4] When compared to studies of Aboriginal people with disabilities in Australia and New Zealand, there appears to be a substantial research on the topic. See for example L Gething, (1995); D. Hollinsworth (2013); and M. Roy and S. Balaratnasingam (2014)

The authors argue that people using wheeled mobility to negotiate the reserve terrain are challenged; there is a lack adequate transportation; people are isolated due to harsh winters and it is difficult to participate in cultural ceremonies. Croxall (2017) reports that when First Nations people with spinal cord injury are discharged home they often experience a lack of access to appropriate services, have difficulty outfitting their homes for wheelchair accessibility and they are often denied the chance of experiencing functional independence.

In their study on housing and disabilities in Manitoba, Ellias and Demas (2001) point out that adequate bathroom facilities are just one of the many physical barriers that First Nations people with disabilities have in their homes. Other physical barriers include no handrails on outside steps, no access ramps or ground-level entrance, narrow doorways and hallways, and a lack of access to bathrooms and entranceways. There are also challenges with people using wheeled mobility equipment to negotiate the terrain in the community.

As part of their consultation with First Nations, Assembly of First Nations (nd) sent out a First Nations Discussion Guide[5]. Many of the discussions among the participants focused on access to health care related to disabilities rather than addressing physical barriers.

Key points raised by participants at the conference included:

- One presenter mentioned the need for sign language and the limited or lack of access to a person to provide sign language
- Access to meaningful employment
- Breakdown some of the obstacles to allow persons with disabilities to fully participate within their community
- No access ramps at the airfields or to access the airplanes
- Older buildings in the communities are inaccessible

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[5] . FEEDBACK (Empowering First Nations Persons with First Nations Persons with Disabilities (webinar) (https://livestream.com/afn/access/videos/163137290).

- Lack of computer systems or up-to-date software to allow a person to access disability software
- No transportation for persons with wheelchairs especially in remote communities (no taxi services or no one has a van with a ramp to transport a person with a wheelchair)
- No or the lack of access to banks and ATM machines
- No level entrance ramps, or wheelchair-accessible bathrooms
- Lack of information on what changes the communities need to make to ensure accessibility
- Lack of funds to make structural changes
- The implementation of universal design that will eliminate barriers in the buildings and within the communities

One of the presenters provided a good summary of many of the issues facing Indigenous communities. He stated:

"So, we still have incredible barriers in our communities. And I believe that, you know hearing from people with disabilities that live

there, and many that had to leave their community because there was no access for them. So, I believe that a lot of these barriers are not only structural, not only having to do with a set of stairs or that no-one is going to listen to you if you are deaf. They get too frustrated, doing notes back and forth. No one is going to carry you into the band office up a set of stairs or into the health center. So, we have considerable structural issues, but a lot of them still remain as attitudinal. So, we have a way to go."

As part of a consultation, the Native Women's Association of Canada (2018) identified several areas of challenge for persons with disabilities. The author of the report notes that women residing in First Nations communities have challenges accessing buildings. There is also a higher cost for travel for those residing in remote and isolated communities.

Finally, in March 2020, the Assembly of First Nations held a conference in Toronto. One of the presentations was entitled, "Leaving No One Behind - Transformative Change Calls for Happy Homes and Innovative Infrastructure Solutions".

The following points were raised in the presentation:

- People who use sign language require larger rooms and better lighting.
- Many current homes have narrow stairwells.
- While a home for a disabled person may be modified, the person may be unable to visit friends or other family members because of lack of access.
- Retrofitting older homes is extremely expensive.
- Advocate for principles of universal design. Makes the environment, streets, and infrastructure accessible to persons with disabilities.

7 Jordan Principle and Other Government Programs

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle intended to resolve jurisdictional disputes within, and between, provincial/territorial and federal governments concerning payment for services to First Nations children when the service is available to all other children.

In December 2007, Parliament unanimously supported Private Member's Motion 296 in support of Jordan's Principle 296. The Principle aims to make sure First Nations children can access all public services in a way that is reflective of their distinct cultural needs. The focus is on substantive equality and takes full account of the historical disadvantage linked to colonization that First Nations children face. It seeks to ensure that First Nations children do not experience any service denials, delays or disruptions because they are First Nations.

Under the Jordan Principle, Indigenous Services Canada covers some of the cost for the construction of wheelchair ramps (Assembly of First Nations, 2018).

The federal, provincial and territorial governments have several programs where Indigenous people with disabilities can apply for funding. These are in appendix A.

In addition to these government programs, there are other not-for-profit organizations (e.g., March of Dimes, Easter Seals Society, community services clubs such as the Rotary Clubs,) and foundations (e.g., Jennifer Ashleigh Children's Charity, President's Choice Children's Charity). that may also provide funding and resources to Indigenous communities[6].

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[6] For more information please go to: https://mobilitybasics.ca/onfund

8 Research Accessibility Standards in Indigenous Communities

8.1 Design of Space

There is little research or information regarding public space use in Indigenous communities. Millette (2011) focuses on a model of land use planning on First Nations lands. Few communities have land development or zoning plans that focuses on land usage. The Tzeachten First Nation and the Tsawwassen First Nation have comprehensive land planning use documents which include how roads and sidewalks must accommodate persons with mobility issues.

8.2 Employment

There is no information regarding employment of persons with disabilities relating to the physical, environmental, communication and technical challenges in Indigenous communities. No information can be found regarding persons with disabilities being accommodated at their

workplace (e.g., Chief and Council) to meet their needs, to meet needs that are requested during all stages of the hiring process and throughout their employment.

8.3 Plain Language

Little research exists on plain language for Indigenous communities. In their Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, Assembly of First Nations (2011) recommended that the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* "should be amended to require proponents to develop plain language summaries that respond directly to concerns raised by First Nations in the scoping process. Plain language summaries should detail any assumptions made, as well as the effect of the assumption, including, where possible, an explanation of outcomes using alternate assumptions" (2011:np).

There are examples of plain language documents in Indigenous communities. One of the first Plain language reports for Indigenous communities was written by the BC Treaty Commission entitled, "What's in these treaties"

a plain language guide to the Tsawwassen First Nation Treaty and the Maa-nulth First Nations Treaty" (BC Treaty Commission, 2008).

Dominion Diamond Ekati Corporation (2014) provides a plain language summary of the developer's assessment report for the Jay Project located 300 Kilometres northeast of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Whitefish River First Nation (2018) presents a Boundary Claim Settlement Draft Trust Agreement in plain language to its community.

Canadian Natural Resources Limited Project (2017) gives a plain language project package on the Horizon North Pit Extension project areas 20.5 km northwest of the Community of Fort McKay in the regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

Boyd (2015) discuss how Mr. Justice Nakatsuru of the Ontario Court of Justice released a judgment written in plain language in the case of R. v Jesse Armitage. Mr. Jesse Armitage was of Aboriginal heritage. Similarly, in 2019, Canada's Federal Court delivered its first ruling in Cree and Dene languages (Thurton, 2019).

There has been a move towards writing some of the legislation that relates to Indigenous people are written in plain language. This includes: *the Indian Act*; *The Family Homes on Reserve and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act (Canada)* (2014).

8.4 Accessible Means of Egress

Means of egress is an unobstructed path to leave buildings, spaces or structures. A means of egress is comprised of exit access, exst, and exit discharge. No studies or reports can be identified that focus on accessible means of egress in Indigenous communities.

Under "Level of Service Standards - Fire Protection Services - Capital Facilities and Maintenance Program" ISC requires as part of the fire plan examination needs to include fire suppression capacity matches building needs including but not limited for fire apparatus access/egress (ISC, 2018).

9 Results from Survey and Interviews

The purpose of this survey is to gain further understanding on barriers to participation in the community of individuals with disabilities. Respondents were asked a series of questions under the four standards headings of design of community/public space; employment; plain writing/plain language/clear language and exits out buildings/accessible means of egress. These terms were defined earlier in the paper. The respondents were further asked to identify various government programs for persons with disabilities. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

9.1 Level of Accessibility to Standards

The respondents were asked to give their views on persons with disabilities and access to public spaces, to their workplace, information in plain language and to be able to exit from buildings within their communities. Table 1 provides a summary on the individual's level of

access to these four accessibility standards (see Appendix
C Table 3).

**Table 1 A Summary of the Accessibility Standards and the
Level of Accessibility within Indigenous Communities**

Accessibility Standards	Not at all Accessible	Slightly Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Very Accessible	Extremely Accessible	No Answer
Public Space	62	145	156	172	58	67
Employment	42	39	44	28	15	20
Plain Language	25	18	24	6	3	6
Exits	16	29	21	40	21	19
Total	**144**	**229**	**245**	**256**	**97**	**120**

Table 1 reveals that individuals believe there have been
some positive initiatives for persons to access public
space and egress. However, the responses show that
there is still substantial work required in communities for
the implementation of these standards. The rating of very
accessible for building with exits is attributed to newer
buildings.

Older buildings do not have the required exits or workplace space (e.g., narrow hallways). The individuals believe that the workplace, employment practices, and plain language are somewhat accessible. Again, workplace access is attributed to communities using newer buildings with access to internet.

Our findings on the level of accessibility for these four standards are consistent with those found by British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (2018), the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (2018), the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal People (2015) and the NWT Disabilities Council (2015).

A further look at the data reveals that persons with disabilities have more difficulty accessing public space, and outdoor living spaces are less accessible than indoor living space. Outdoor space does not lend itself to manipulation as easily as built structures. These findings are consistent with research conducted in other off-reserve communities (Madsen et al., 2019; Madsen et al., 2020).

Interestingly, the "no answer" responses could illustrate that respondents may not have enough information to express an opinion on any of the standards – for example with topics such as boardwalks in public space.

In our follow-up interviews with some of the respondents, interviewees pointed out that outdoors spaces may be a challenge to change as Indigenous ways of life are inextricably intertwined with their environment. Yu et al., (2020), and Black and Bean (2016) for example, write about Indigenous physical environment and their connection to the land and the importance of local knowledge to create any changes to the land (Puketapu-Dentice et al., 2017).

In our interviews, the respondents acknowledge that those views do not necessarily accommodate persons with disabilities. Similarly, one respondent pointed out that many communities design open space for members who are disabled, but any building codes or standards must be flexible to accommodate any standards. This area requires further research and understanding to

identify how public space standards can be incorporated into the cultural landscape of the communities.

Another interesting finding from our follow-up interviews relates to ramps. Changes such as ramp design will need to take into account the cultural factors for that particular community. The respondents pointed out that the majority of ramps installed do not meet the building code. There are no hard surfaces at the bottom of the ramp and they are not culturally pleasing.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that in northern Canada where homes are built on stilts, ramps need to be built to a second storey level. These ramps are generally not built to code and are not safe in the winter due to snow and ice on the decking, making it difficult for people to travel up or down the ramp. Ramps take up substantial space on the outside because of the required slope (see also Mbadugha, 2013).

The following comments were provided in one of our interviews with a person very familiar with the construction of ramps in Northern Canada:

"In northern communities, ramps are a challenge. To a degree less so, a) in Yellowknife, the regional centers (such as Hay River, Fort Simpson, Inuvik); b) in the southern part of the Territory, compared to the Northern communities, primarily due to foundation designs, due to the geotechnical conditions (permafrost); c) on commercial, public buildings (schools, stores, government buildings, rental apartments) etc.; and d) less so on larger building compared to privately owned residentials units and newer buildings. The greatest challenge is in the remote communities, that are not located on all season roads.

So, examples can be found, examples that are on buildings that use piles, (almost a second story); some have changes in directions, some are long, some of the older ones, or private ones are not built to code, and many are temporary from the user's perspective. Some are not maintained or cleared of snow, on a regular

basis, some are located under the eaves of buildings and they can ice up.

Ramps, that I have been involved with, we typically build ramps, barrier free entry and exits to code in effect at the time of the design and build. Ramps are designed to suit local conditions and case-by-case situations. For example, in most communities there is no local concrete supply, limited granular fill, foundation limitations, etc. So the ramps are likely a wooden structure using open grating (to limit show build-up and so on)".

In 2014, CBC News reported on accessibility of buildings in Iqaluit. The reporter interviewed Ms. Wendy Ireland who relies on a wheelchair. The reporter focused on the challenges of persons with disabilities have on accessing buildings and traveling along the streets. The following URL links is to the 2.31 minute video that features the challenges of persons with disabilities using ramps and trying to access buildings.

9.2 Challenges to Implement Accessibility Standards

The respondents were asked to list the top five challenges their communities face in making outdoor communal space, employment, plain language and exits more accessible for the community members with disabilities. These comments can be found in Table 4 in Appendix C. Besides the challenges associated with funding and capacity, there were three interesting comments made:

- "Annual plans don't prioritize to improve facilities to meet disabilities need."
- "Lack of awareness or lack of planning or understanding on what are the needs for disabilities."
- "Access to accessible equipment in Northern Canada – not all company's ship here and those that do

often have high shipping rates. Also, items with batteries can sometimes be considered dangerous goods so are prevented from being shipped by traditional methods."

Similar challenges listed were also found in other reports such as the Assembly of First Nations (2017; 2011), British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (2018), the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (2018), the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal People (2015), the NWT Disabilities Council (2015), and Kyser (2012) and Salisbury and Green (2019).

9.3 Chief and Councils' Understanding of Disabilities

The respondents were asked to provide insights on how they would rate their Chief and Council's understanding in ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to public spaces, employment, plain writing and are able to exit out of buildings.

Table 2 shows that Chief and Councils have no understanding regarding exits from buildings, especially for older buildings. Chief and Councils have some understanding for plain writing, for employment and for public space. The responses show that there is a need to build the capacity and transfer the knowledge to the Chief and Council on standards for persons with disabilities. This will be a challenge, especially since the majority of Councils do not have a department or an individual responsible for disabilities policies and programs.

Table 2 Chief and Council's Understanding of the Four Accessibility Standards

	Public Space	Employment	Plain Writing	Exits
A Great Deal	2	1	2	3
Much	3	3	5	5
Somewhat	9	9	5	6
Little	1	1	14	3
None	0	13	0	17

Respondents were asked to provide further comments. These included:

- Older facilities have no access.
- If they aren't fitted to accommodate, then they all need to be fitted properly ASAP to accommodate individuals with disabilities.
- Our public buildings all comply with the building code on this side.

9.4 Disabilities Programs

The final section of the survey focused on asking respondents to tell us which government/territorial department or agency is providing funding for individuals with disabilities and to name these programs.

Few people were able to provide any insights. For those who did reply, one respondent was aware of the programs on disabilities provided by Indigenous Services Canada, Health Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Two people knew about a program

from ISC, and three people were aware of CMHC programs. One person was aware of the funds from the Jordan Principle.

One explanation for this lack of awareness of various disability programs may be that there is no one person responsible for accessibility in communities. If there is a person, they may only be in this position for a limited time and may not be aware of all these programs.

While there are a few organizations that help Indigenous people with disabilities, the people working in this area may not be aware. This situation is similar to housing and housing management where individuals are constantly changing and new people need to be retrained and understand how all the various programs operate (McTavish et al., 2012).

Our findings are similar to other reports such as the Assembly of First Nations (2017; 2011), British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (2018), the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (2018), Native Womens Association of Canada (2018), the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on

Aboriginal People (2015) and the NWT Disabilities Council (2015).

10 Discussion

This project attempted to provide further understanding of the application of accessibility standards and techniques in Indigenous communities for persons with disabilities. The report focused on how the definition of disabilities among Indigenous communities differs from those used by the federal governments to define disabilities.

There is a lack of evidence-based research that identifies the number of persons with disabilities that are residing in an Indigenous community. However, several reports focused on individuals telling their stories about the hardships and challenges of being disabled and residing in Indigenous communities. People with disabilities who live in Indigenous communities are often facing difficulties seldom encountered in non-Indigenous communities. These stories strongly support the need for the four accessibility standards to be implemented in

Indigenous communities. Information was gathered by surveys and follow up interviews were conducted.

Based on the information reviewed and collected the following summary of the results are provided:

- Chief and Councils require substantial capacity and knowledge in the area of accessibility issues. Many Chief and Councils lack the resources to care effectively for persons with disabilities within their communities.
- Chief and Councils do not have the funds to implement these standards. Financial resources will be paramount to the implementation of any of these standards. Currently, some federal government programs exist that can be used to meet these standards.
- Many public buildings in Indigenous communities were not designed to address accessibility standards. Consequently, substantial funds will be required to retrofit these buildings.
- Chiefs and Councils need to be aware of organizations that can assists them to become more

knowledgeable about disabilities. While the standards address many accessibility issues, there needs to be a place for one-stop shopping for all information to implement accessibility standards.

- Disability associations need to continuously communicate their services to Chief and Councils, as there is a high turnover of people in many of the positions with responsibility for accessibility programs and standards.

Other key summaries focus on the specific disability standards:

10.1   Public Space

1. Need a specific set of standards that clearly explains the standard dimensions for ramps, car parks, entrances, doors, corridors, stairs, bathrooms, and toilets. This can be done in the form of a booklet that focuses on Indigenous communities.
2. While newer buildings appear to meet accessibility standards, older buildings need to be retrofitted.

3. Indigenous communities may have environmental features such as no sidewalks or hard surfaces for persons to walk or roll in a wheelchair to their work or other facilities. Designers and the community must consider the needs of users in conjunction with local conditions in order to determine the most appropriate surface material(s) for a sidewalks or trails.

4. Ramps need to be better integrated within communities both in terms of cultural design and practicality (e.g., a hard surface of 6 feet must be at the beginning of a ramp). Ramps are also a challenge in communities where homes are built on stilts where a ramp may be as high as a second storey. These ramps need to be designed to take wintry weather into account.

5. Designing public space within Indigenous communities must involve the communities, especially persons with disabilities, to determine how best to design the space for persons with disabilities. Design of public space for persons with disabilities

must also be part and parcel of community and infrastructure plans.

10.2   Employment

1. Need to develop a specific set of accessibility standards with respect to Council's employment practices to meet the need of employees and job applicants with disabilities.
2. Workplace areas need to be retrofitted for persons with disabilities to work within the community.
3. Access to highspeed internet and the most up-to-date computer hardware and software are important for persons with disabilities.

10.3   Plain Language

1. Government documents geared to Indigenous communities must meet plain language requirements.
2. Need to develop training or courses on writing reports in plain language.
3. Resources will be needed for reports to be edited/revised based on plain language standards.

10.4   Exits Out of Buildings

1. Need a specific set of standards that clearly explains the standard dimensions of exits out of all buildings including homes.

2. To build capacity on the importance of exits from buildings a guide can be developed to assist Councils to meet their obligations to create the necessary requirements to exit buildings. This guide needs to consider how it will be used in relation to the Council's policy, planning and practices; include background information on building design issues; and describe where to get additional information.

3. Council should consider the development of an egress plan that will include the mobility and the level of disability (the use of vibrating alert).

10.5   Disability Programs

1. Associations need to provide more information regarding the programs that are available for persons with disabilities and for Chief and Councils.

2. Federal government departments that deliver disability programs need to provide more information to communities about their programs

11 Moving Forward

To implement federal accessibility standards in Indigenous communities, the federal government should consider providing a funding grant/program to assist First Nations to meet those costs. The funds should go directly to the Indigenous communities.

These funds will be used to implement the federal standards. Funds may be allocated based on geographic zones. Communities with no year-round road access to an urban area, or those that are only accessible by aircraft should receive additional monies.

In addition, consideration should be given to provide Indigenous organizations with funds to provide support to Indigenous communities. However, there must be clear indicators that the monies are used to implement accessibility standards.

As part of the funding program, the first step should be for the Indigenous communities to submit an Accessibility Plan[7]. An Accessibility Plan will identify how the community is planning to meet the accessibility needs of people with disabilities within the community. There may be a need for some communities to hire expertise from other organizations who can help to develop an accessibility plan. The accessibility plan should also identify all the government departments involved to ensure there is a coherent approach among these organizations.

The plan should focus on identifying and remove barriers (only focusing on the four standards) faced by people with disabilities. The plan should also include identifying the number of people with disabilities within the community. Funds should be provided to develop an Accessibility Plan. The Accessibility Plans should be reviewed, and monies identified accordingly. This function can be done by a third-party organization (preferably an

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[7] In Ontario, public sector organizations are required to submit A Comprehensive Guide for Developing Accessibility Policies and Accessibility Plans.

Indigenous organization) with the expertise to review Accessibility Plans and make recommendations for funding to the Federal government.

To determine whether the funds were spent on the specific tasks, it is important that the input/evaluation be provided by persons with disabilities within the community. It is important to not use self-evaluation as it is important the funds be spent to specifically address the tasks.

12 APPENDICES

12.1   Appendix A

Name:	Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities (RRAP-D)
Department	Canada Mortgage and housing Corporation

Purpose/Objective	First Nations and First Nation members can apply for support for modifications to make the home accessible in relation to the occupant's disability.
Funding	Financial support is available for a wide range of home modifications related to a disability. For example, we can help with accessibility features such as: • ramps • handrails, chair lifts and bath lifts • height adjustments to countertops • cues for doorbells, fire alarms and smoke detectors CMHC will provide up to $60,000 for the needed accessibility modifications. If the property is on-reserve in northern or remote areas, the maximum amount may be increased by 25%. This is a forgivable loan, meaning it doesn't have to be repaid

	if you meet all the terms and conditions are met.
Contact:	Contact your CMHC Consultant or local CMHC office. You can also contact CMHC at 1-800-668-2642.
Source:	https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/cmhc/pdfs/content/en/residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program-persons-disabilities.pdf?rev=df99145e-1161-40a1-8e76-26aa3afd9ff8

Name:	Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence (HASI)
Department	Canada Mortgage and housing Corporation

Purpose/Objective	A First Nation or First Nation member living on reserve may receive assistance. However, the senior occupant must meet the following criteria: Be 65 or older and have difficulties with daily activities due to age.
Funding	Financial support is available for minor home adaptations that will help you live independently in your own home. Several kinds of age-related adaptations are covered by this program. For example, we can help you install: • handrails • easy-to-reach work and storage areas in your kitchen • lever handles on doors • walk-in showers with grab bars • bathtub grab bars and seats

	- Other work may be covered as long as the adaptations are permanent and fixed to the home. CMHC will provide eligible owners with up to $10,000 for the needed home adaptations. If the property is on-reserve in northern or remote areas, the maximum amount may be increased by 25%. This is a forgivable loan, which means it doesn't have to be repaid as long as you meet certain conditions
Contact:	Contact your CMHC Consultant or local CMHC office. You can also contact CMHC at 1-800-668-2642.
Source:	https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/funding-opportunities/on-

	reserve-renovation-programs/home-adaptations-for-seniors-independence

Name:	Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP)
Department	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Purpose/Objective	Funding to build and repair shelters and housing for people who are fleeing domestic violence.
Funding	Financial support is available to create a new shelter or second-stage housing. Funding can also be provided for repairs to existing shelters or second-stage housing, including: • repairs to bring the property up to a minimum level of health and safety

	- modifications to make the property accessible to persons with disabilities - safe play areas for children and an appropriate level of security for all occupants - an appropriate level of security for all occupants. This program covers only the capital costs of new construction or renovation. Operating support for shelters and second-stage housing must be secured through Indigenous Services Canada or another acceptable source. For second-stage housing, occupants are expected to make modest contributions to offset the operating costs. For new construction, we will provide up to 100% of the project's capital costs. The forgivable loan must be secured by a

	Ministerial Loan Guarantee for a period of 15 years.

For renovations, we will provide up to $60,000 for each unit or bed-unit being updated. If your shelter is located on-reserve in northern or remote areas, the maximum amount may be increased by 25%.

In both cases, support is provided in the form of a forgivable loan. This means it doesn't have to be repaid as long as you meet all the terms and conditions. |
| Contact: | Contact your CMHC Consultant or local CMHC office. You can also contact CMHC at 1-800-668-2642. |
| Source: | https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/funding-opportunities/on- |

	reserve-renovation-programs/shelter-enhancement-program

Name:	Assisted Living Program
Department	Indigenous Services Canada
Purpose/Objective	The program provides funding for non-medical, social services to seniors and to individuals living with disabilities (mental and physical) and chronic illness. The program is available to individuals living on reserve. The objective of the program is to ensure that individuals living with disabilities and chronic illness can maintain functional independence and achieve greater self reliance.

Funding	Limited to minor home maintenance such as fixing a door knob or attaching a railing along stairs
Contact:	Contact ISC regional offices
Source:	https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1557149461181/1557149488566

Name:	Jordan's Principle
Department	Indigenous Services Canada
Purpose/Objective	The services covered by Jordan's Principle are as diverse as the First Nations children it serves. Any government-provided service available to all other children, including service assessments, is

	included in Jordan's Principle coverage. If a service is not necessarily available to other children or is an exceptional service, the child will still have their needs evaluated to determine if the service will ensure substantive equality.
Funding	Examples of services covered include: Wheelchair ramps
Contact:	www.canada.ca/jordans-principle https://fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle
Source:	https://www.afn.ca/policy-sectors/social-secretariat/jordans-principle/

Name:	Vehicle Retrofit Program (Persons with Disabilities)
Department	New Brunswick: Transportation and Infrastructure
Purpose/Objective	This program is designed to increase the mobility of persons with a disability residing in the province of New Brunswick by providing financial assistance towards the cost of supplying and installing eligible retrofitting and accessibility features for vehicles.
Funding	Ability NB's Vehicle Retrofit Program is designed for access to transportation to increase the mobility of persons with a disability that are residents within the province by financially assisting in the retrofitting of vehicles. The following terms and conditions apply:

	• 80% of the cost of eligible accessibility features for a new or existing vehicle to a maximum total grant of $8,000.00. • Taxes are the responsibility of the applicant. • Sales tax on some accessibility features may be rebated by the Department of Finance, Province of New Brunswick. • Renewable every 8 years for individuals, 5 years for organizations.
Contact:	See: https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.7715.Vehicle_Retrofit_Program_(Persons_with_Disabilities).html
Source:	https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.7715.Vehicle_Re

	trofit_Program_(Persons_with_Disabilities).html

Name:	Accessible Vehicle Funding Program
Department	Newfoundland Labrador: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development
Purpose/Objective	To provide an accessible transportation option to individuals and families throughout the province and reduce costs associated with disability. This is achieved by providing funding to eligible individuals and families to adapt personal vehicles for accessibility.
Funding	Accessible Vehicle Funding: • provides maximum funding of $25,000; • is income tested to determine applicants' financial eligibility; • provides 100 %

	funding up to $25,000 to eligible applicants with annual net incomes of $46,500 or less; • provides partial funding for eligible applicants with annual net incomes between $46,500 and $64,000; o uses a sliding scale formula to determine the amount of funding for which the applicant is eligible (Sliding Scale Calculation); and • considers disability-related costs, not currently covered by another funding source, when determining financial eligibility. (– Disability-Related Costs.)
Contact:	Accessible Vehicle Funding Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development PO Box 8700 6th Floor, West Block Confederation Building St. John's, NL, A1B 4J6

	Telephone: (709) 729-6048 Toll-free: (888) 729-6279 TTY: (709) 729-5000 Toll-free TTY: (888) 729-5440
Source:	https://www.gov.nl.ca/cssd/files/disabiliti es-pdf-avf-policy-manual.pdf

Name:	Access-A-Home Program
Department	Nova Scotia Housing
Purpose/Objective	This program helps people adapt their homes to become wheelchair accessible.
Funding	Any additions or alterations made to your home must be permanent and should be made to improve both access and use of basic facilities. Any changes made to your home should also increase the

	safety of the person limited to a wheelchair. The funding can be put toward the cost of materials, labour, taxes and other related costs. The amount of the grant depends on your income and the maximum amount available is $7,000 forgivable grant.
Contact:	Contact Housing Nova Scotia, one of our staff members will be happy to help. You can call us toll-free at 1-844-424-5110
Source:	https://housing.novascotia.ca/programs/housing-programs-persons-disabilities/access-home-program

Name:	Residential Adaption Assistance Program

Department	Quebec Société d'habitation du Québec
Purpose/Objective	This program provides financial assistance for people with disabilities to cover some of the cost of adapting and making their homes accessible.
Funding	Depending on the type of household, the grant may vary between $4,000 and $16,000: Owner household: grant of up to $16,000.00 Tenant household: grant of up to $8,000.00 Boarder household: grant of up to $4,000.
Contact:	http://www.habitation.gouv.qc.ca/nous_joindre/demande_de_renseignements.html

Source:	http://www.habitation.gouv.qc.ca/english/detail_du_programme_english/programme/residential_adaptation_assistance_program.html

Name:	Assistive Devices Program
Department	Ontario: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Purpose/Objective	Provide funding to individuals who have a long-term physical disability, can receive funds to help pay for equipment and supplies
Funding	Funds may be available for following types of equipment and supplies: • mobility aids • hearing aids and other devices • communication aids

	• visual aids • Miscellaneous such as grab bars, home renovations for ramps and porch lifts We cover 75% of the cost for equipment and supplies. For these items, we are billed directly by the supplier and you pay 25% when you buy the item.
Contact:	Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Assistive Devices Program 7th Floor, 5700 Yonge Street Toronto, ON M2M 4K5 416-327-8804 Toll-free: 1-800-268-6021 TTY: 416-327-4282 Toll-free TTY: 1-800-387-5559

Source:	https://www.ontario.ca/page/assistive-devices-program#section-2

Name:	Residential Access Modification Program (RAMP)
Department	Alberta: Community and Social Services
Purpose/Objective	RAMP is intended to assist low income Albertans with mobility challenges with grants to modify their home in order to remain living safely in their own homes.
Funding	An eligible applicant may receive RAMP grant funding, to the following limits and conditions: $7,500 each benefit year $15,000 in a ten-year period

	RAMP will not fund the same modification at the same principal residence within ten years.
Contact:	Phone: 780-427-5760 (Edmonton and area) Toll free: 1-877-427-5760 (Alberta) Email: css.ramp@gov.ab.ca
Source:	https://www.alberta.ca/residential-access-modification-program.aspx

Name:	Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI)
Department	British Columbia: BC Housing
Purpose/Objective	HAFI is a grant program for people with diminished physical abilities. Landlords who rent to low-income households can submit a joint

	application with their tenants to pay for modifications to their rental unit to allow the tenant to live independently.
Funding	The applicant could receive a grant for up to $17,500 for eligible adaptations, calculated as follows: • 100% grant for adaptations up to and including $15,000 • 50% cost share on an additional $5,000 of adaptations ($2,500 grant, $2,500 your portion) • The maximum total lifetime grant is $17,500 per household/unit (Effective for funding provided after April 1, 2019). For Tenant & Landlord applications, other restrictions apply.

Contact:	Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI) Inquiry Line
	Address: 101-4555 Kingsway, Burnaby, BC V5H 4V8
	Phone: 604-433-2218 (Lower mainland)
Source:	https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/HAFI/program-overview

Name:	Home Repair Program
Department	Yukon: Yukon Housing
Purpose/Objective	The Home Repair Program includes three streams of funding: a grant for emergency repair for your home, a grant to improve the accessibility of your home and a loan to repair your home.

Funding	Accessibility Grant: This stream will fund homeowners to retrofit their homes if they have mobility challenges. Up to $30,000.
Contact:	For questions about applying for a loan to repair your home email ykhouse@gov.yk.ca or phone: 867-667-5759 or toll free in Yukon: 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5759.
Source:	https://yukon.ca/en/apply-funding-repair-home

Name:	Care Mobility
Department	Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
Purpose/Objective	The Contributing Assistance for Repairs & Enhancements Mobility

	(CARE Mobility) Program provides assistance to existing homeowners with a household member with a disability, to support modifications that will promote continued independent living.
Funding	The NWTHC will fund modifications required to improve the accessibility of dwellings for persons with disabilities. Clients receive assistance in the form of forgivable loans to subsidize the cost of modifications related to their disability. The forgiveness period is dependent on the amount of assistance being provided. Assistance up to $100,000 excluding freight and Contractor accommodation costs is available.

Contact:	Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
	P.O. BOX 2100 YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 2P6
	HTTP://WWW.NWTHC.GOV.NT.CA
Source:	https://www.nwthc.gov.nt.ca/sites/nwthc/files/resources/care_mobility_june_23.pdf

Name:	Nunavut Solutions Grants for persons living with mobility-related disabilities
Department	Nunavut: Ministry of Family Services
Purpose/Objective	Funds from Nunavut Solutions Grants for programs, equipment, and services that will improve the quality of life for persons with

	mobility-related disabilities in the territory
Funding	Twenty thousand dollars is assigned to support the unmet needs of Nunavummiut with mobility-related disabilities.
Contact:	Department of Family Services 867-975-7821 aibanez@gov.nu.ca
Source:	https://www.gov.nu.ca/family-services/news/nunavut-solutions-grants-persons-living-mobility-related-disabilities

12.2   Appendix B

SURVEY

Accessibility Awareness in Indigenous Communities

The purpose of this survey is to gain further knowledge on barriers to participation in the community of individuals with disabilities.

For example, individuals with physical disabilities who rely on wheelchairs to get around often encounter obstacles. Individuals with disabilities may want to work but are unable to because of barriers to access the workplace. Community members with disabilities want reports that are both readable and understandable.

FNNBOA would greatly appreciate your participation by completing the survey. It will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation is anonymous and anything you say will not be attributed to you personally.

Please answer as many questions as you can.

Once you have completed the survey, you can submit your comments to:

• Take pictures of each page with your cell phone and email them to info@fnnboa.ca

• Scan your comments and email them to info@fnnboa.ca

• Send it by mail to the following

First Nations National Building Officers Association

Attn: Keith Maracle

5731 Old Hwy #2

P.O. Box 219

Shannonville, Ontario

K0K 3AO

The First Nations National Building Officers Association received a grant from the Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization to conduct research into accessibility for individuals with disabilities living in Indigenous communities.

Please submit your responses to before September 25, 2020

If you have any questions or require further information, please call (613) 236-2040.

For the purpose of this survey there are two important words we need to define:

Barrier means anything – including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice – that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Disability means a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.

Background Information

The first three questions focus on some background information about you and the community.

1. Background information - please include all individuals who participate in the interview

Name(s) of Individual(s) Completing Interview:	
Position(s):	
Address(es)	Work Telephone Number(s):
Email address(es):	

2. Tell us more about your community or organization (background)?
3. Do you have any reports or estimates that will tell us about the type of disabilities in Indigenous Communities?

Awareness of Accessibility

I now want to focus on four areas to gain some understanding as to your awareness of accessibility and disability.

1. Design of Community/Public Space

Individuals living in the community with disabilities should have access to an entire community. Design of community/public space patterns describes ways to make outdoor communal spaces more accessible for community members with disabilities.

4. Following is a list of design elements within a community where individuals with disabilities may want access. Please tell us whether individuals with disabilities can access these areas of the community.

#	Design Elements	Not at all Accessible	Slightly Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Very Accessible	Extremely Accessible	No Answer
4a	Pathways & recreational trails/access through a park						
4b	Lake/river/beach water access routes						
4c	Boardwalks						
4d	Ramps						
4e	Outdoor picnic & family use eating areas						
4f	Sidewalk (usually paved/cement)						

4g	Sideway/walkway/ pathway/footpath/footway/ located at side of road						
4h	Accessible parking spaces						
4i	Access aisles/hallways						
4j	Signage						
4k	Customer/client service counters						
4l	Waiting Areas/reception rooms/lobby						
4m	Main Entrance						
4n	Interior floor (e.g., low pile carpet)						

4o	Washroom/restrooms						
4p	Upper floor accessibility						
4q	Opening thresholds						
4r	Grab bars, safety rails						
4	Hindrances regarding canes						
S	Others (please specify)						

5. What are some of the challenges your community faces to make outdoor communal space more accessible for the community members with disabilities? Please list your top 5 challenges.

1	
2	

3	
4	
5	

6. In your view, how would you rate Chief and Council's understanding of the information the design of community/public space patterns to make outdoor communal spaces more accessible for the community members with disabilities?

☐ A Great Deal ☐ Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ Little ☐ None ☐ Other please explain:

7. Are there any comments or information you want to provide on design of community space within your community?

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Employment

Employers like Chief and Council, and other businesses located in the community are obliged to make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities.

8. We want to ask a few questions on your view of employment for individuals with disabilities. The following is a list of formats or communications supports for individuals with disabilities to help them do their work. Please tell us how accessible many of these areas are for community members with disabilities.

#	Formats or Communication Supports	Not at all Accessible	Slightly Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Very Accessible	Extremely Accessible	No Answer
	Receives information in Accessible formats:						

8a	• Braille						
8b	• Large Print						
8c	• Computer Files & Accessible Web Content						
8d	• Audio						
8e	• Sign language						
8f	Access to the workplace (e.g., ramp at door)						
8g	Access to the workstation/desk						
8h	Access to all areas of the						

	workplace (e.g., manager's office, meeting or gathering rooms)						
8i	Access to hardware						
8j	Access to screen reader software & other related software to accommodate that individual's disability						

	Others (please specify)						
8k							
8l							

9. What are some of the challenges your community faces to make the workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities? Please list your top 5 challenges.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

10. In your view, how would you rate Chief and Council's understanding to have the community (including businesses) accommodate their workplace and employment practices accessible for individuals with disabilities?

☐ A Great Deal ☐ Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ Little ☐None ☐Other please

explain:

11. Are there any comments or information you want to provide on how communities can make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities?

Plain writing/Plain Language/Clear Language

Plain writing or plain language benefits all users including individuals with

cognitive or learning disabilities. Plain writing also benefits individuals with

dementia or individuals who are encountering an unknown topic or language. Plain writing or plain language includes short sentences or one idea per sentence. There is more use of pictures and illustrations.

12. The following is a list of documents that an individual with disabilities may receive. Please tell us the frequency an individual with disabilities may have received reports that clearly state are expressed in plain writing, plain language or clear language?

#	Reports or brochures	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	No Answer
12a	Reports/brochures from Chief and Council						

12b	Reports from Federal government						
121c	Reports from companies working with your community such as forestry or mining company						
12d	Reports from consultants						
12e	Reports written in your Indigenous language (please						

	identify which language)						
12 f	Others (please specify)						

13. What are some of the challenges your community faces to provide reports or documents written in plain writing, plain language or clear language? Please list your top 5 challenges.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

14. In your view, how would you rate Chief and Council's understanding that reports should be in plain writing, plain language or clear language to allow individuals with disabilities can read the information?

☐A Great Deal ☐ Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ Little ☐None ☐Other please explain:

15. Are there any comments or information you want to provide regarding reports being expressed in plain writing, plain language or clear language to ensure individuals with disabilities and others can read the information?

Exits Out of Buildings/Accessible Means of Egress

Exits out of buildings or accessible means of egress defines where an individual can safely exit the building without being obstructed. These exits can be through doors, windows, stairways, platform lifts or ramps all directly leading to the outside of the building. Generally, the discussion on emergency exits focuses on escaping from fires. While this is a primary reason for emergency exits from a building, it is not the only reason. Other hazards may include explosions, earthquakes or smoke (without a fire), flash floods, storms (hurricane and tornado etc.) or threatened actions just to name a few.

16. The following is a list of buildings that can be found in an Indigenous community. Please tell us whether properly designed exits are accessible to allow individuals with disabilities to escape safely from a fire or other emergency environment?

#	Buildings	Not at all Accessible	Slightly Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Very Accessible	Extremely Accessible	No Answer

16a	Council/band main office						
16b	Schools						
16c	Community halls						
16d	Auditorium/gym						
16e	Arenas						
16f	Health centres/nurse stations						
16g	Day care centres						

16h	Council offices (e.g., Housing department, infrastructure etc)					
	Others (please list)					

17. In your view, how would you rate Chief and Council's collective understanding about emergency exits from buildings and the specific requirements associated with these exits (e.g., the width of the door, panic hardware and fire exit hardware on the doors, the marking on how to exit a building or identifying an exit door, emergency lighting) to ensure individuals with disabilities can exit the building?

☐A Great Deal ☐ Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ Little ☐None ☐Other please explain:

18. Are there any comments or information you want to provide about properly designed exits to allow individuals with disabilities to safely escape from a building?

Programs for Individuals with Disabilities

We have a few last questions to help us understand programs that are available for individuals with disabilities.

19. Can you tell us which government/territorial department or agency is providing funding for individuals with disabilities and the name of the program? These programs can be specifically for the individual or to the community to provide services to an individual with disabilities.

Government Department or agency	Name of funding program
Federal government	
Indigenous Services Canada	
Health Canada	
Employment and Social Development Canada	
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation	
Others: please list them	
Provincial/Territorial Governments	

Please list the name of the department	

20. Do you have any other comments or questions you want to provide regarding individuals with disabilities living and working in Indigenous communities?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO DO THIS INTERVIEW. YOU INPUT IS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED.

Please submit your responses by September 25, 2020.

Any questions regarding the survey please contact

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12.3   Appendix C

Table 3 Respondents view on Persons with Disabilities Accessibility to Public Space, Employment, Plan Language and are able to Enter and Exit Buildings within their Communities.

Public Space/Design of Community						
Design Elements	Not at all Accessible	Slightly Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Very Accessible	Extremely Accessible	No Answer
Pathways & recreational trails/access through a park	8	10	5	8	2	2
Lake/river/beach water access routes	6	3	14	8	0	6
Boardwalks	6	6	2	4	4	15
Ramps	0	6	115	6	4	0
Outdoor picnic & family use eating areas	6	9	6	6	4	4
Sidewalk (usually paved/cement)	8	8	4	6	4	4
Sideway/walkway/ pathway/footpath/footway/ located at side of road	14	5	6	2	4	6
Accessible parking spaces	0	7	8	12	6	2
Access aisles/hallways	0	7	12	10	6	0
Signage	4	7	8	12	2	4
Customer/client service counters	2	7	6	14	6	0
Waiting Areas/reception rooms/lobby	0	9	6	14	2	2
Main Entrance	1	10	4	18	2	0
Interior floor (e.g., low pile carpet)	0	7	10	10	2	4
Washroom/restrooms	0	7	8	14	2	4
Upper floor accessibility	6	9	6	8	4	4

Opening thresholds	0	7	14	8	0	4
Grab bars, safety rails	0	11	16	6	0	0
Hindrances regarding canes	0	11	6	6	4	6
Others (please specify)						
Taxi	1					

Employment						
Formats or Communication Supports	Not at all Accessible	Slightly Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Very Accessible	Extremely Accessible	No Answer
Receives information in Accessible formats:						
• Braille	10	4	13	1	2	3
• Large Print	7	2	2	1	2	2
• Computer Files & Accessible Web Content	3	4	4	1	0	2
• Audio	7	4	2	3	0	1
• Sign language	8	4	2	0	0	3
Access to the workplace (e.g., ramp at door)	1	4	4	6	1	2
Access to the workstation/desk	2	2	4	3	7	1
Access to all areas of the workplace (e.g., manager's office, meeting or gathering rooms)	0	4	5	6	2	1
Access to hardware	2	3	6	4	0	2
Access to screen reader software & other related software to accommodate that individual's disability	2	5	2	3	1	3

Plain writing/Plain language/Clear language						
Reports or brochures	Not at all Accessible	Slightly Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Very Accessible	Extremely Accessible	No Answer
Reports/brochures from Chief and Council	3	4	4	4	1	1
Reports from Federal government	4	3	6	1	1	2

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Reports from companies working with your community such as forestry or mining company	5	5	5	0	0	2
Reports from consultants	5	4	6	1	0	1
Reports written in your Indigenous language (please identify which language)	8	2	3	0	1	0

Exits out of buildings/Accessible Means of egress						
Buildings	Not at all Accessible	Slightly Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Very Accessible	Extremely Accessible	No Answer
Council/band main office	15	3	7	5	2	1
Schools	0	2	2	9	2	2
Community halls	0	3	3	7	3	2
Auditorium/gym	0	3	2	7	3	2
Arenas	0	3	1	5	1	7
Health centres/nurse stations	0	2	1	7	7	1
Day care centres	1	4	3	6	3	2
Council offices (e.g., Housing department, infrastructure etc)	0	7	3	3	2	2
Court House		1				
Tech services building		1				

Table 4 Top Five Challenges Communities for Persons with Disabilities Accessibility to Access Public Space, Employment, Plan Language and are able to Enter and Exit Buildings within their Communities.

Public Space/Design of Community		
• disabilities not recognised or funded they are now in stages of assessment and consultation	• Location	• Lack of funds to upgrade capital buildings (5 similar responses)
• Statistics linked funding	• Annual plans don't prioritize to improve facilities to meet disabilities need	• Older structures
• Only access ground level	• Flat even surfaces with no dips or gaps in walkways	• Costs to upgrade buildings
• Lack of desire to upgrade or improve buildings	• Lack of awareness or lack of planning or understanding on what are the needs for disabilities	• Access to ramps and walkways that accommodate all modes of handicap travel
• Paved walk paths beside the highway	• Maintenance	• No loading ramps at airport
• No sidewalk or good pathways	• No transportation	• No paved roads: all

for wheelchairs (3)	for persons in wheelchairs	gravel/dirt roads
• Lack of ramps	• No automatic door openers or inappropriate design.	• No accessible public transportation
• Employment	•	•
• Cost to renovate existing facilities to accommodate (5)	• No transportation for persons with disability	• Awareness (3) and training
• No signage or braille machines	• Modern signage with lights sounds	• Knowledge of what disability exits
• No elevator for second floor access.	• Ramps for schools and interior usage (gyms)	• No handicap bathrooms
• No automatic doors openers (3)	• No high speed internet	• Paved areas around schools
• No guardrails or walkway accessible for handicap people to access schools	• Access to accessible equipment in Northern Canada – not all company's ship here and those that do	• Old school buildings and do not accommodate persons with disabilities

	often have high shipping rates. Also, items with batteries can sometimes be considered dangerous goods so are prevented from being shipped by traditional methods	
• Plain Language	•	•
• No funding (4)	• No one available to write up plain language reports (3)	• Training and the lack thereof
• Most reports or updates are very wordy and use complicated language that can be misleading or confusing	• If the language is used in a report or handout, the English translation must always be provided. We are loosing our fluent speakers, readers and writers, to help protect us from loosing, that is why English is still used.	• Documents are not translated and therefore hard to put into plain language

• Documents are too lengthy	• Reports/documents often have visuals attached – no photo explanation is provided for those with vision barriers.	• Lack of time among staff to write two versions of a given document (e.g. a position paper for the government funder and a plain language version).

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