

# **Cree Human Resources Development Second Annual Cree Abilities Session**

## **What is Disability and How Does It Impact Canadians and First Nations People**

**Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald  
March 10, 2015**

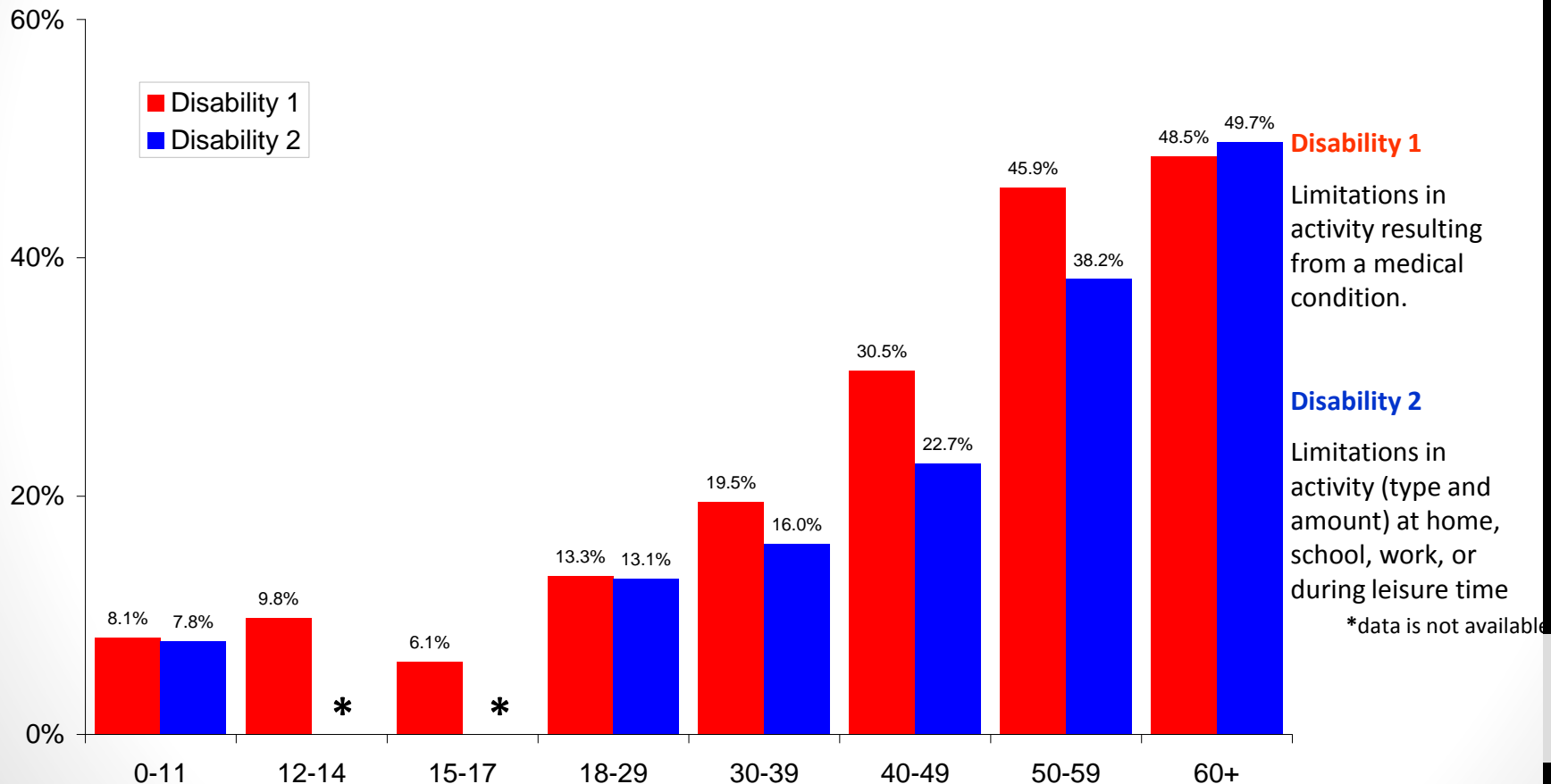
# Disability Rates

- One in six Canadians and one in three Aboriginal people in Canada have a disability.
- 31 per cent of Aboriginal adults have some form of disability – this is twice the national average of the general Canadian population.
- The disability rate among young adults is almost three times higher for Aboriginal people than for non-Aboriginal people.

# Disability Challenges

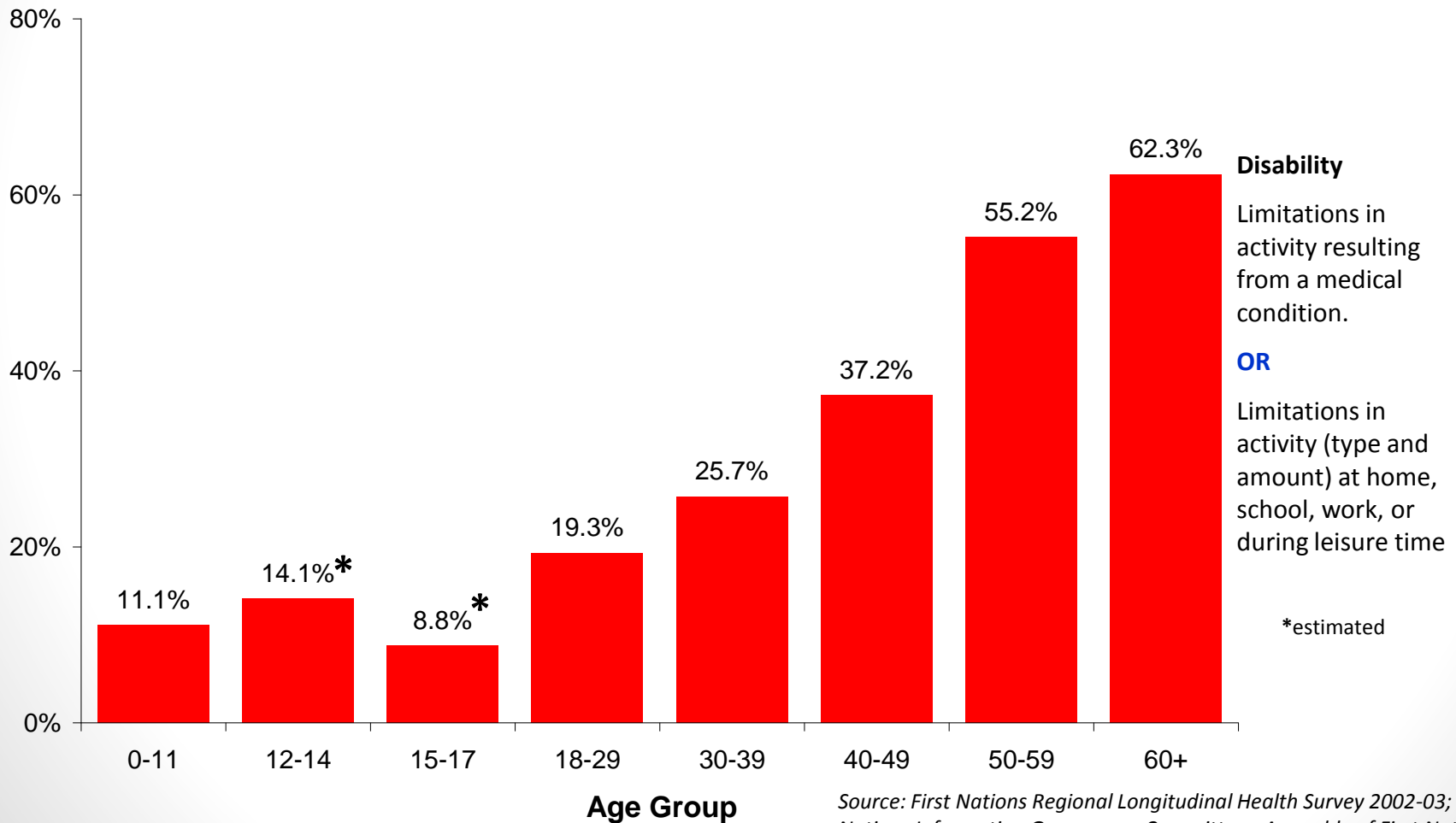
- Common disability challenges include problems related to vision, such as reading;
- Lifting or carrying weight;
- Physical exertion, such as climbing a flight of stairs without resting.
- Vision, hearing, walking, dexterity, and pain that tends to worsen with age.

# Prevalence of Disability Among First Nations Living on Reserve (RHS 2002/03)



Age Group Source: First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey 2002-03; First Nations Information Governance Committee - Assembly of First Nations.

# Prevalence of Disability Among First Nations Living on Reserve (RHS 2002/03)



Source: First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey 2002-03; First Nations Information Governance Committee - Assembly of First Nations

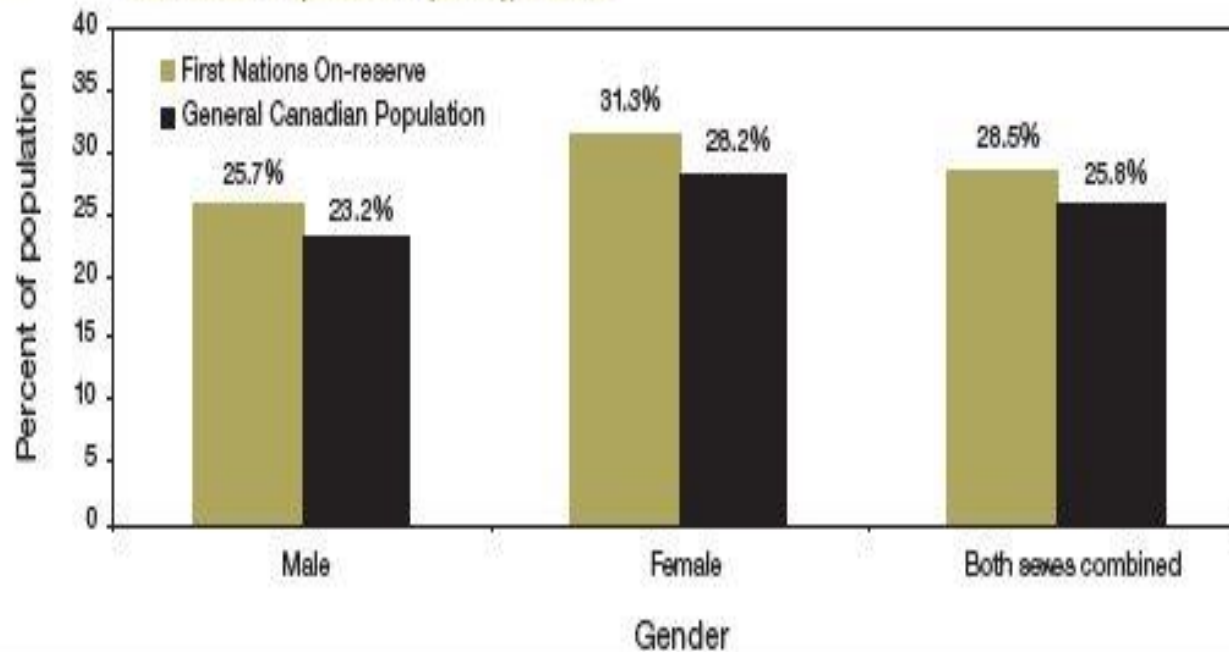
# United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

## *Article 22*

1. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and *persons with disabilities* in the implementation of this Declaration.
2. States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and *discrimination*.

# First Nations On-reserve<sup>2</sup> (2002-2003) and General Canadian Population<sup>3</sup> (2003), Disability Rates Adults by Gender

**Figure 4.** Age-standardized Disability<sup>1</sup>, First Nations On-reserve<sup>2</sup> (2002-03) and General Canadian Population<sup>3</sup> (2003), Adults



# Poverty and Disability

Source: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health 2010

- Poverty and ill-health are linked. In rich and poor countries alike, ill-health follows a distinct social gradient: the lower an individual's socioeconomic status, the worse their health.
- Poverty has many dimensions – material deprivation (food, shelter, sanitation, and safe drinking water), social exclusion, lack of education, unemployment, and low income – each of which “diminishes opportunities, limits choices, undermines hope, and threatens health.”



# Poverty and Disability

Source: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health 2010

- Poverty has been associated with an increased risk of chronic disease, injury, poor infant development, a range of mental health issues (stress, anxiety, depression, and lack of self-esteem), and premature death.
- The burden of poverty falls most heavily on certain groups (women, children, ethnic and minority groups, persons with disabilities) and geographic regions.
- For Aboriginal Canadians, who experience significantly higher rates of poverty and ill-health than the non-Aboriginal population, breaking the “poverty – ill-health – poverty” cycle is critical to improving overall health outcomes

# Causes of Disabilities

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples the disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rates of disability corresponds to the disparity in rates of:

- injury,
- accident,
- violence,
- self-destructive or suicidal behavior, and
- illnesses, such as diabetes, all of which can result in permanent impairments.

# Impacts of Living Conditions

- Infectious diseases, inadequate housing conditions, overcrowding and lack of sanitation facilities are a major risk factor for persons with disabilities, or those at risk of having a disability.
- Those Aboriginal persons with disabilities who live in northern, rural and remote communities face additional challenges that are different from what residents of urban southern Canada experience.
- These include lack of supports, high unemployment, transportation challenges and difficulty in getting access to a wide range of services in areas where the population is smaller and more dispersed.

# Impacts of Living Conditions

HOUSING CONDITIONS	HEALTH PROBLEMS
<b>Crowded Conditions</b>	Infections (e.g. Respiratory, skin and eyes, tuberculosis, meningitis, measles) Injuries, Mental Health, Homicides and Domestic/Non-Domestic Violence
<b>Inadequate Housing (E.g. house in disrepair)</b>	Injuries
<b>Water Sewage Systems</b>	Gastroenteritis, Skin infections
<b>Indoor Air Quality (e.g. wood stoves, high humidity levels and mold, cigarette smoke)</b>	Respiratory symptoms e.g. Asthma
<b>Cleanliness (Dust)</b>	Respiratory e.g. Asthma
<b>Structure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Steps and handrails, Cupboard and closets, Washrooms</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Exterior doors, Interior doors</b></li> </ul>	Barrier to people with mobility, agility, sensory or physical disability
<b>Safety:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>No electricity or appliance resulting in candle, kerosene lamp or camp stove use in the home, Faulty wiring</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Faulty installation of wood stoves</b></li> <li>➤ <b>No inspection or cleaning of chimneys in houses with wood stoves</b></li> </ul>	Fires = Burns, death, disability and injury.

# Risk Factors for Disabilities

- High rates of injury and accident
- High rates of smoking
- High rates of teen suicide
- Mental health issues – confinement to small land areas or communities, the loss of traditional ways to transmit culture from one generation to another, alcoholism, lack of access to gainful employment, etc.
- Diabetes
- HIV/AIDS
- Poor health of infants, young children and their mothers
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Effects (FAS/FAE)
- Lack of home support and nursing services to meet the needs of Elders
- Substandard housing, poor water quality, absence of recreation facilities and unemployment

# What is a Disability?

- Disability for First Nations adults is defined as being limited in the type of amount of activity they can do at home, school, work, or during leisure time.
- A disability may be considered a specific medical condition or a disadvantage in certain situations.
- Disabilities are considered on a continuum beginning with an underlying cause, which typically may be a disease or trauma.

# There are seven disability types:

- Hearing disabilities
- Seeing disabilities
- Speaking disabilities
- Agility disabilities
- Mobility disabilities
- Mental/learning disabilities
- Physical disabilities not classified elsewhere (unknown

# Significant Impacts

- The impact on disability is significant. Aboriginal people with disabilities have many needs similar to those in Canadian society.
- The problem is they must seek solutions within the framework of jurisdictional forces that have lead to fragmented policies and a patchwork of supports and services.
- The net result is Aboriginal people with disabilities are forced to make two choices:
  - to stay in their community and not have access to the basic types of services and supports that would allow them to exercise some control of their own destiny, or
  - to leave their homes and communities to search for the basic necessities of life.



# Barriers to Services

<b>Attitudes and Perceptions</b>	Ignorance, oppressive and racist attitudes. People are uncomfortable with people with a disability and this results in emotional trauma, double discrimination and lack of respect from the public for Aboriginal people with a disability
<b>The Forgotten People</b>	The marginalization of a people. Service agencies consistently fail to recognize the need for consultation with persons with disabilities
<b>Hidden Services</b>	Lack of information. There is a lack of knowledge of Aboriginal persons regarding available services.
<b>Mistrust and Fear</b>	Consumers' Fear and Mistrust of Non-Aboriginal Service Providers. They also fear subtle and overt racism, rejection and the loss of their tribal identity.

# Barriers to Services

<b>Cultural Sensitivity</b>	There is a lack of cultural sensitivity and there is a need for culturally relevant and sensitive services to meet the special needs of Aboriginal people.
<b>Poverty and Independent Living</b>	The lack of income and supports for independent living is a major barrier. The major source of income – social assistance – barely covers the simplest costs of living and does not cover the extra costs associated with living with a disability.
<b>Education and Employment</b>	Education is the best way to assist First Nations people with disabilities to achieve independent living and self-sufficiency.
<b>Physical and transportation problems</b>	Physical and transportation problems still remain a major obstacle on reserve where there are poor roads, lack of paved sidewalks, poor snow removal and inaccessible public and private buildings.

## LABOUR FORCE STATUS OF ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES (15-64) COMPARED TO ADULTS WITHOUT DISABILITY

(Source: In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues)

	<b>With Disabilities</b>	<b>Without Disability</b>
<b>Employed</b>	48%	73%
<b>Unemployed</b>	8%	8%
<b>Not in labour force</b>	44%	19%

## **The reasons for not joining the labour force most often cited by persons with disabilities are:**

- **losing their current income (21%);**
- **problems with training (16%);**
- **no jobs available (15%);**
- **fear they would lose additional supports (13%);**
- **family responsibilities (10%);**
- **discrimination (7%); and**
- **lack of accessible transportation (7%).**

# Programs that Can Assist Persons with Disabilities

- immunization clinics
- reducing unintentional injuries
- improving mental health services
- dealing with issues of family violence
- suicide prevention
- nutrition and health promotion
- diabetes clinics
- asthma checks
- disability and mental health services
- home support services
- spiritual healing and counseling
- child care and early childhood development

# The New Approach to Disability

(Source: In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues)

<b>Participants versus recipients</b>
<b>Active measures to promote employment</b>
<b>Independence versus dependence</b>
<b>Shared responsibility versus government responsibility</b>
<b>Identification of Work skills building on assets not “unemployability”</b>
<b>Incentives to seek employment versus disincentives</b>
<b>Opportunities to develop skills and experience</b>
<b>Person centered approach versus program centered approach</b>
<b>Portable benefits and services</b>
<b>Integrated access requirements – one window service access</b>

# Poverty Reduction Strategies

Source: Council of Canadians with Disabilities 2011 Disability Lens Evaluation of Four Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategies

Enable and reward work	Improve support for those in need	Focus on our Children	Collaborate and Coordinate
<p>Promote work experience.</p> <p>Remove disincentives to work.</p> <p>Prepare for the future through training and education.</p> <p>Create employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Improve supports and access to necessities.</p> <p>Enable greater participation in society.</p>	<p>Strengthen support for children and families.</p> <p>Break the cycle of poverty.</p>	<p>Increase capacity for coordination and integration.</p> <p>Increase public awareness.</p> <p>Develop avoidance-based policy and programs.</p> <p>Strengthen horizontal governance.</p>

# How to Change Things:

Source: World Report on Disability, World Health Organization, World Bank 2011

**Some ideas to help make the lives of people with disabilities better include:**

- **Getting good health care**
- **Providing good, clear information**
- **Communicating in the way that works best for persons with disabilities**
- **Buildings and services they can get into and use**
- **Health care in places near where they live**
- **More choice and control over their health care**
- **Money to help pay for health care**
- **The chance to be involved in training people who give health care so they understand about disability**



# Strategy to Address Multiple Areas of Need

- a) quality, accessible education that develops knowledge and skills;**
- b) training that prepares persons for employment;**
- c) employment opportunities;**
- d) income supports for persons who are unable to fully participate in the labour market;**
- e) affordable housing;**
- f) supportive and safe communities; and**
- g) supports for strong and healthy families.**

Source: Council of Canadians with Disabilities 2011 Disability Lens Evaluation of Four Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategies

# A suite of Public Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

Source: Council of Canadians with Disabilities 2011 Disability Lens Evaluation of Four Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategies

- **Implementation of housing**
- **Education and training**
- **Income security**
- **Institutionalized care**

# Getting Help and Support Means:

- More support to live in one's own community
- More services in the community
- Better support for families or other people who are not paid to care for persons with disabilities
- Support that is planned around the individual needs of a person with disabilities

# Discussion:

- What does disability mean to you in your community?
- How has disability affected you, your family, or someone close to you?
- What problems have you faced as a result of a disability yourself or with someone close to you?
- What do you see as the needs for persons with disabilities in your community?

# Any Questions?

Niawan:kowa for your time.

For More Information Contact

Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald

Akwesasne Mohawk Territory

Akwesasne, Ontario

613-575-2533 (office)

613-930-6894 (mobile)

[info@kateniesresearch.com](mailto:info@kateniesresearch.com)