

NVPAC Diversity & Inclusion Parent Advisory Committee

Ableism 101

2020/2021





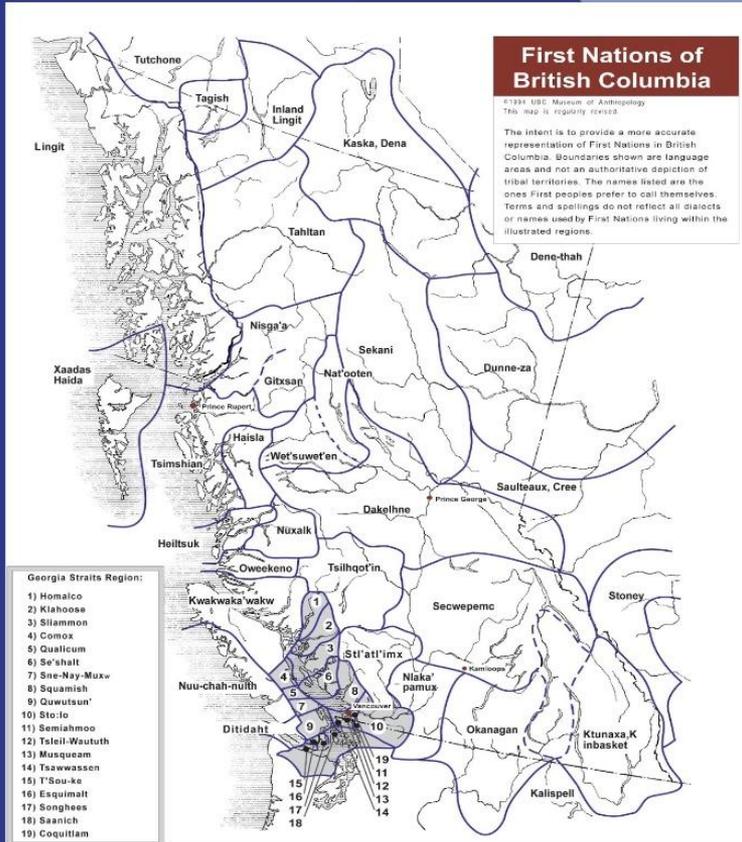
Ableism 101

What is Ableism ?



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and thank the Coast Salish people whose traditional unceded territory the North Vancouver School District resides on. We value the opportunity to learn, live and share educational experiences on the traditional unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



***** Trigger Warning *****

**This presentation includes / contains ableist language, examples of ableism and ableist slurs
I will be referring to the disability community with
“identity first language”
I will also use
“first person language”**

What is Ableism?

1/2

- Ableism is a neologism that the disability/ neurodivergent community has used to define and describe the discrimination that they experience by able bodied / neurotypical persons.
- The term ableism evolved from the Disabled People's rights movements in the United States and Britain during **the 1960s and 1970s**.
- Ableism is used by the disability / neurodivergent community as a word that can help to define and express their personal experiences and discrimination .
- Ableism is a conscious or unconscious bias, discrimination or microaggression that is placed on or against a person with a visible or non visible disability or against a person who is neurodivergent, Intentionally or unintentionally.

What is Ableism?

2/2

It is a form of discrimination by able bodied / neurotypical persons, usually hidden in seemingly “innocent phrases” , in overt or covert actions or the lack there of.

An example of this would be :

“ I know it is a disability parking spot, I will only be here for a few minutes, I won't be long! “

It is a discriminatory way that able bodied/neurotypical people treat and speak to persons with disabilities/ neurodivergence . When non disabled people dismiss their experiences assuming that they know more than those persons who have the lived experiences of a particular disability and their lived experience as a person living with the disability.

It is based on the belief that abled bodied / neurotypical persons are superior to persons with a disability or who are neurodivergent.

What Are Some Examples of Ableism? 1/2

An example of ableism for a person with a mobility disability could be:

A coffee shop opens up down the street and installs a wheelchair accessibility button but neglects to build a ramp to access the button to be able to enter the establishment.

An example of ableism for blind persons can be :

If we post photos on social media or in documents , and we do not use alt text or image descriptions underneath the image.

This then becomes inaccessible for those who use assistive technology.

What Are Some Examples of Ableism? 2/2

Another example of ableism can be codes of conduct that do not make exemptions for a person's disability / neurodivergence who may be unable to adhere to these policies due directly to their disability or neurodivergence. They may be penalized or excluded from participating as a direct result. Which discriminates against the person because of their disability / neurodivergence.

Another example of ableism within the deaf or autistic communities would be the refusal to provide an ASL interpreter or augmentative assistive communication (AAC) technology which is vital and imperative to their ability to communicate with hearing and speaking persons.

Let's Talk Tokenism

Tokenism is a forced form of diversity that creates a superficial appearance of equality or equity without truly achieving it.

Tokenism is a performative action. Often, workplaces and schools exercise tokenism to appear as if they are diverse when they actually aren't.

Tokenism is then used for public gain, it tricks onlookers into thinking that the organisation has the objective of inclusion when the organisation only has the intention of including a disabled person to be perceived well by the public.

We need to acknowledge when companies are taking part in performative diversity, equality and inclusion under the mask of tokenism. We need to call out the tokenism and stop organizations from using disabled people for public gain.

Behaviour IS Communication

Persons who are neurodivergent can display certain behaviours that may be perceived as defiant, oppositional, non compliant, attention seeking or rude.

Many times these behaviours are a direct result of an overwhelming sensory environment, a trauma response, anxiety, mental health or a direct response that is triggered by another person's behaviour or even PDA.

Often this results in punitive responses that actually do more harm, reduce self esteem, induce trauma that can then result in PTSD or (Internalized Ableism)

Behaviour is most often not intentional. It is not about a person "being bad".

Next time you think of the phrase "attention seeking behaviour" **think** "connection seeking behaviour" You may will be surprised how your perception may shift!

How Can We Best Support ?

What are ways we can reduce/remove ableism from our practices

- Utilize de-escalation strategies
- Authentic trauma informed strategies
- Adequate and appropriate sensory spaces
- Use Neurodiverse positive strategies
- Listen to the individual and what they need
- Trained counsellors who understand and can support the needs of a neurodiverse person
- Low arousal approach
- Acknowledgement and accountability when things go wrong
- Make accessibility equitable and accessible

If a child can't **learn**
the way *we* teach,
maybe we should
teach the way *they*
learn.

- Ignacio Estrada



What is an Ableist?

An Ableist can be defined as a person who discriminates against a person with a visible or invisible disability.

Being ableist can be defined as how one speaks to or treats a person with a disability / neurodivergence. This typically presents itself as speaking to a person in a demeaning, degrading, derogatory, oppressive, stigmatizing, infantilizing or dehumanizing way.

It can also be when someone presumes incompetence of a person with a disability / or who is neurodivergent.

It can also be by an act that goes against or a statement which refuses to acknowledge an inclusive mindset towards the acceptance, accommodations, equitable access and accessibility for persons with disabilities / neurodivergence.

What is systemic Ableism ?

Systemic Ableism is a term used to define an educational, government, medical or employment institution that refuses the rights of persons with disabilities /neurodivergence to be able to access accommodations, appropriate therapies and supports, assessments, curriculum, education, housing, employment, marriage equality rights, and even the right to live (bill-c7)

Examples of Everyday Ableism

1/2

- Inaccessible entry points
- Hostile sensory environments
- Notions of incompetence
- Exclusion
- Grammar or spelling correction on social media
- Tone policing
- Being asked to leave a space due to one's disability/ neurodivergence
- Placing someone into a different age category
- Infantilizing tone or behaviour
- Non accessible curriculum
- Using a disability parking space without a permit

Examples of Everyday Ableism

2/2

- Assuming someone is "suffering" from their disability/neurodivergence
- Viewing someone with a disability as "inspirational"
- Segregation of persons with disabilities / neurodivergence
- Exclusion of persons with disabilities / neurodivergence
- Asking someone to stop "stimming"

Identity First VS Person First Language

1/2

“Person First language vs Identity First language”

For some, the structure of their usage determines if they are harmful.

Some advocate that “First Person language” reflects a medical model of disability, whereas “Identity First language” reflects the social model of disability.

This is most notable and seen within both the (deaf and autistic communities)

For an example of this I will reference the autistic community :

Social Model

VS

Medical Model

“I am Autistic”

“I have Autism”

“Autistic Person ”

“Person with Autism”

“Autistic Child”

“Child who has Autism”

Identity First VS Person First Language

2/2

This type of language can be specifically offensive to those within the (Deaf & Autistic) communities that perceive “person first language” as referring to their disabilities / neurodivergence as something that needs to “be cured” or “fixed”. The use of “with” and “has” in these types of context can be perceived as ableist, referring to an “illness” or “disease” that needs to be cured or fixed, rather than something that is fundamentally inherent to their identity.

Identity First VS First Person Language

Mindful and respectful courtesy around this type of language would be to ask a person how they would prefer to be addressed or identified, “person first language” or “identity first language” and then use those specific terms when speaking or communicating with that individual, with the same respect that we would consider affording to pronouns.

Examples of Ableist Language

- ❖ Using the word Retard
- ❖ “We are all a little Autistic”
- ❖ “What are you slow?”
- ❖ “Suck it up”
- ❖ “Did you take your meds today?”
- ❖ “What are you Dumb/Stupid?”
- ❖ “Are you Crazy/Insane?”
- ❖ Handicapped
- ❖ Idiotic/idiot
- ❖ Handicapable
- ❖ Abnormal

Examples of Ableist Language

2/3

- ❖ “Skewed perception”
- ❖ “That’s so lame”
- ❖ “ Ya you are special ,
special needs kind of special”
- ❖ “You are such a spaz“
- ❖ Why can’t you be normal?
- ❖ Implying pity and feeling sorry for someone
(stricken with, unfortunate)
- ❖ “You belong on the short bus”
- ❖ “Special Ed” “Special Needs”
- ❖ “What’s wrong with you?”

Examples of Ableist Language

3/3

- ❖ “Tone deaf”
- ❖ “Blind leading the blind”
- ❖ “What are you deaf”
- ❖ “Did I stutter? you must be deaf”
- ❖ “That’s retarded”
- ❖ “That’s not normal”
- ❖ “Blind to criticism”
- ❖ Deformed/Deformity
- ❖ Midget

Using Euphemisms: Instead of Disability / Neurodivergence

There can often be misunderstandings as to what causes someone harm.

Many terms that some people may view as harmful are not viewed as hurtful by others, where some people are hurt by certain terms, others may be hurt by the replacement of such terms with what they consider to be euphemisms and ableist.

For Example :

“Physically Challenged”

“Wheelchair Bound”

“Unique Abilities”

“Differently Abled”

“Special Needs”

“Vulnerable Learners”

“Diverse Abilities”

“Complex Learners”

“Priority Learners”

Internalized Ableism

Persons with disabilities/neurodivergence face discrimination their entire lives, some face this multiple times a day. Many experience this more often than not.

Ableism can also be harmful and even hateful and may cause emotional and physical unwellness to the person who is experiencing ableism or ableist behaviours towards them. This can then in turn become **Internalized Ableism**.

For many persons with disabilities/neurodivergence for the entirety of their lives they have had to accept that ableism is “normalized” within our society , and that they are “inferior, incompetent, not normal and just not good enough”

Over time if everyone around you perceives you this way , you can begin to believe that.

The outcome of this is that persons with disabilities/neurodivergence can develop what is known as **Internalized ableism**.
(Internalizing the ableism)

Internalizing ableism can lower self esteem, produce feelings of unworthiness, self hatred, inferiority, negatively impacting mental health and can lead to an absolute removal of a sense of belonging which can lead to increased risk for depression, anxiety, self harmful behaviours and suicide.

An example of ableism in schools

A student hands in an assignment to their teacher. The teacher asks them to fix it as they can not read their printing.

The student sits down, corrects it, hands it in again and is told again to go back and correct it as they can not read it and it's messy.

The student takes the paper sits back down and again erases and tries to print it out again. The student then hands the assignment in again to the teacher.

The teacher responds 'I suppose it's good enough, i'll just accept it'

The student is Autistic and has a learning disability in written output.
The student has accomodations in their IEP for printing assignments.

The student returns home and tells their parent that they "hate themselves because they are stupid"

This is ableist, this is ableism and this is how internalized Ableism begins

An Example of an Ableist statement in Schools....

(Which leads to internalized ableism)

“To be successful, I will...”

How a person with disability/neurodivergence may interpret this as,

“I have failed, because I did not do that”

“I am a failure, because I did not do that”

“I will be a failure, because I am not able to do that” ... (yet)

Ableism within our School system

Here is an example of an Autistic child with an IEP, who has been scored lower than her peer due directly to the student's challenges with how her Autism affects those challenges.

note

- Read off of a screen
- Choppy and unsure
- Didn't look at audience
- Quiet

This is an example of an ableist scoring system in grading an Autistic student.

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(2) and they do not need to be religious)
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As well, hand in one criteria sheet/group on the due

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Allmusic.com
celebritynetwork.com
m.imdb.com

above

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Ableism and Inclusion

Ableism is the premise of Exclusion

It is the refusal to accommodate the needs of a person based on their disability/ neurodivergence and the appropriate accommodations they need to be able to live their lives to their fullest potential without systemic barriers.

Ableism is an act of exclusion.

Ableism is also refusing to acknowledge the equity barriers that persons with disabilities/neurodivergence face.

It is the refusal to reduce or remove the barriers that prevent a person with disabilities/neurodivergence to be fully included in our society and within our communities. **This is Exclusion.**

Self Advocacy & Ableism

The challenge with this is that a student may not know what they need, or when they need it.

When they do ask for accommodations and are told, “you don’t need that” or “we can’t do that” or “we don’t do that” or “If I allow that I will have to allow every student to do that” we are being ableist in our approach which can lead to internalized ableism and a student who will not ask for help or accommodations when they feel they need them.

Neurodivergent students need opportunities to develop and acquire these skills in a trauma supportive and positive response way. Denying a student's request for accommodation does not facilitate self advocacy or their sense of personal agency.

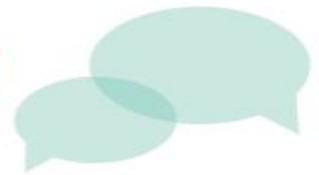
In 2020/2021 44% of the discrimination complaints to the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal were from Persons with Disabilities & Neurodivergence.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (CRPD) is an international agreement that promotes and protects human rights for people with disabilities. The Canadian Human Rights Commission is responsible for monitoring how the CRPD is being followed in Canada.

In 2016 Canada ratified and signed the agreement on The UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. To date Canada has not honoured this agreement nor has it made adequate efforts to work towards this.

[UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

MONITORING THE CRPD



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international agreement that promotes and protects human rights for people with disabilities. The Canadian Human Rights Commission is responsible for monitoring how the CRPD is being followed in Canada.

WHAT WE HEARD

In June and July 2020, the Commission asked people across Canada about how they want to be involved in this important work, and what they think is important.

SURVEY RESPONSES 2,927

64% IDENTIFY AS HAVING A DISABILITY

48% ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE CRPD

 **54%**
THINK THE CRPD WILL HAVE A **POSITIVE** EFFECT

 **86%**
FEEL CANADA IS DOING A **POOR** JOB PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

 **83%**
FEEL CANADA IS DOING A **POOR** JOB PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

TOP ISSUES OR AREAS OF CONCERN

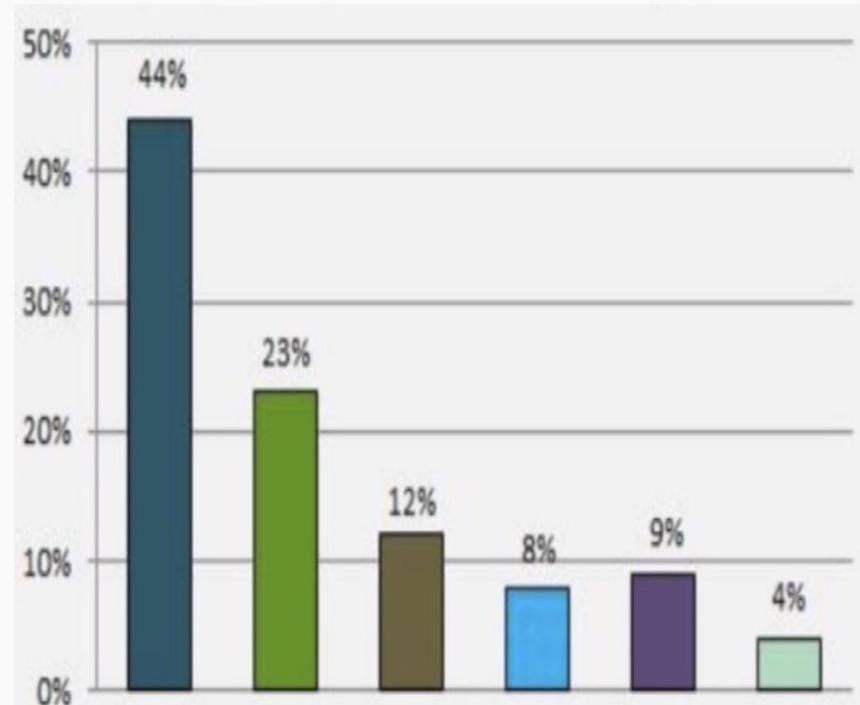
1.  **POVERTY**

2.  **HOUSING**

3.  **WORK AND EMPLOYMENT**

B.C. Human Rights Tribunal 2020/2021

Complaints by Grounds of Discrimination April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021		
Total - Disability	2732	44%
Physical Disability	1486	24%
Mental Disability	1246	20%
Total - Ethnicity	1465	23%
Race	587	9%
Place of Origin	307	5%
Ancestry	242	4%
Colour	329	5%
Total - Sex	771	12%
Sex (including Harassment and Pregnancy)	623	10%
Gender Identity or Expression	148	2%
Total - Family and Marital Status	517	8%
Family Status	333	5%
Marital Status	184	3%
Total Other - (listed below)	531	9%
Religion	244	4%
Sexual Orientation	143	2%
Unrelated Criminal Conviction	44	1%
Political Belief	62	1%
Lawful Source of Income	38	1%
Age	243	4%
Total Grounds Alleged	6259	



22%

Did you know that approximately 22% of Canadians,

According to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, **more than 6 million Canadians aged 15 and over** identify as having a disability, and it is expected actual numbers are likely higher.

1 in 5 people

15%

Did you know? As of 2015, **more than 685,000 British Columbians** live with physical, mental or developmental disability

Close to 15% of the B.C.'s population of 4.6 million.

There are approximately 334,000 people in B.C., aged 15 to 64 who self-identify as having a disability.

Nothing About Us Without Us

There is a very long standing statement within the disability/neurodivergence communities specifically around advocacy and self advocacy,

“Nothing About Us Without Us”

Which is often used to communicate the idea that no policy or decision should be decided by any representative body or any individual without the full and direct participation and collaboration of the person or member(s) of the group or groups that are affected by that policy or decision.

- **Authentic Collaboration with the Disability/Neurodivergent Communities**
- **Authentic Collaboration with the individual or Group of Individuals**

Access IS Accessibility

Access is what is required to reduce/remove the barriers to Accessibility.

[Accessibility Act Canada](#)

Systemic Exclusion

Persons with Disabilities/ Neurodivergence are too often not included in conversation or collaboration around key decisions that directly impact them and THEIR lives, This occurs when Non Disabled/Neurotypical people choose not to include people with Disabilities/Neurodivergence at the table.

Disability/Disabled
are **NOT** Dirty Words!

These are actually the preferred words
that are used by the Disability
community to define a person who lives
with a Disability.

Neurodivergent/Neurodivergence

Neurodivergent: A person who is defined as one whose neurological development and state are atypical, usually viewed as abnormal or extreme. The term was coined in the neurodiversity movement as an opposite for "neurotypical" - previously the term "neurodiverse" was sometimes applied to individuals for this purpose.

Neurodivergence: refers to an individual or group who has/have a less typical cognitive variation such as Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia etc. Is defined as divergence in mental or neurological function from what is considered typical or normal (frequently used with reference to autistic spectrum disorders) - (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/neurodivergence>). Several recognised types of neurodivergence, include autism, Asperger's syndrome, dyslexia, dyscalculia, epilepsy, hyperlexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and Tourette syndrome (TS). Left-handedness, transgender, and homosexuality are sometimes also included. - (<https://psychology.wikia.org/wiki/Neurodivergent>).

Neurodiverse/Neurotypical

Neurodiverse: (ND) Having an atypical neurological configuration, for example a person who has a developmental disorder and/or a mental illness. The word refers to a group of people, where some of the members of that group are neurodivergent.

Neurotypical: The word Neurotypical (**NT**) is the the opposite of Neurodivergent. Neurotypical means being "neurologically typical" - within the typical (average) range for human neurology. The term originated in the autistic community, as a way to refer to non-autistic people, and is used to describe a person whose neurological development and state are typical, conforming to what most people would perceive as normal. People whose neurological development is atypical are referred to as "neurodivergent".

Neurodiversity Paradigm

Neurodiversity Paradigm

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the basic meaning of the term paradigm as "a typical example or pattern of something; a pattern or model". The historian of science Thomas Kuhn gave it its contemporary meaning when he adopted the word to refer to the set of practices that define a scientific discipline at any particular period of time.

The neurodiversity paradigm is said to have been initially embraced by people on the autism spectrum, however subsequent groups have applied the concept to conditions that aren't on the autism spectrum such as bipolar, ADHD, schizophrenia, schizoaffective, sociopathy, circadian rhythm disorders, developmental speech disorders, Parkinson's disease, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysnomia, intellectual disability, obsessive-compulsive, and Tourette syndrome.

The Neurodiversity Movement

Neurodiversity Movement

The Neurodiversity Movement is a social justice movement that seeks civil rights, equality, respect, and full societal inclusion for the neurodivergent. For example, the Autism Rights Movement (ARM) is a social movement within the neurodiversity movement that encourages autistic people, their caregivers and society to adopt a position of neurodiversity, accepting autism as a variation in functioning rather than a mental disorder to be cured.

Some advocates believe that common therapies for the behavioral and language differences associated with autism, like applied behavior analysis, are not only misguided but also harmful and unethical.

Now you have an understanding of Ableism

What can you do about it?

1.) Involve the person to authentically collaborate on decisions that impact them, decisions regarding their lives.

2.) Invite members from the disability/neurodivergent communities to authentically collaborate on policies, decisions, work plans, accessibility, building plans, committees etc that directly involve and impact those individuals from the disability/neurodivergent communities

3.) Be mindful of word/language choices.

4.) Build inclusive spaces with mindful intention.

5.) Identify and remove systemic barriers to inclusion for persons with disabilities/neurodivergence.

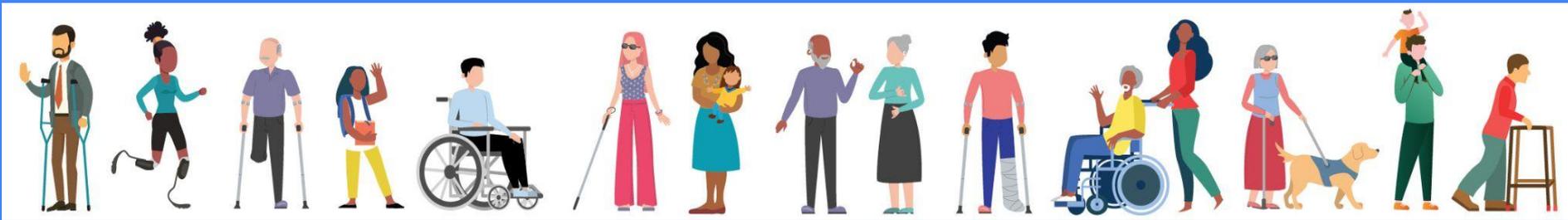
6.) Presume ability not inability.

7.) Provide Equitable Access.

8.) Reduce/Remove barriers to employment/education.

9.) Celebrate Disabilities & Neurodivergence

10.) ASK A PWD - Come from a place of authentic curiosity, inquiry and engagement.



Source/reference links:

[Stats Canada](#)

[Easter seals disability in Canada](#)

[Accessible Canada Act](#)

[Accessibility of Canadians with disabilities](#)

[UN Convention of Rights of persons with Disabilities Act](#)

[Annual B.C. Human Rights Tribunal Reports](#)

[aninjusticemag](#)

[Jennifer Branston Letter to the Board Feb 2020](#)

source/reference links:

[BCEDAccess Exclusion Tracker report](#)

[Stop Ableism Website](#)

[Inclusion B.C. Annual Report](#)

[British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society](#)

[BC Peoples First](#)

[BC Disability Caucus](#)

[Disabled World](#)