

# Youth and Disability



Photo: Flickr/Anjan Chaterjee

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# Equality

Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states:  
“All human beings are born free and **equal** in dignity and rights”.

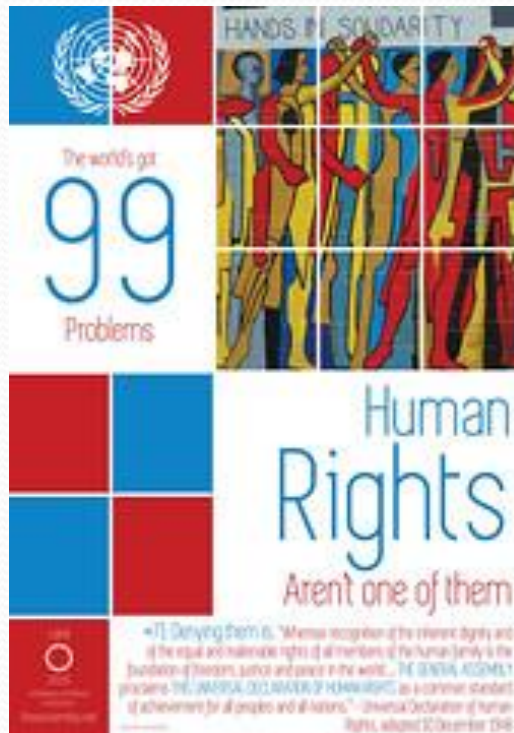


Photo: Flickr/Maina Kiai

# Equality

The Preamble of *Alberta Human Rights Act* states:  
“all persons are equal in: dignity, rights and responsibilities without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, etc...”

# Questions about Equality

What does it mean to be  
**“Equal”**?

What does it mean to be  
**“Unequal”**?

# What is a Disability?

- The World Health Organization's *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (the ICF model), identifies three elements for determining whether a person has a disability: **impairment**, **activity limitations**, and **participation restrictions**.

# What is a Disability?

- The ICF model looks at the medical condition (called “impairment”) and then considers the activity limitations resulting from the condition.
- The activity limitations are defined as difficulties an individual may have in executing a task or an action.
- Under participation restrictions, consideration is given to the impact of the activity limitations on the ability of the person to participate in basic life situations.

# What is a Disability?

- According to Article 1 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*:
  - “Persons with disabilities include those who have some long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barrier may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”
  - Disability is a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions



# What is a Disability?

Section 44(1) of the *Alberta Human Rights Act* defines mental and physical disability as follows:

h) “**mental disability**” means any mental disorder, developmental disorder or learning disorder, regardless of the cause or duration of the disorder;

(l) “**physical disability**” means any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness . . . ;



# What is a Disability?

- For example, if an individual cannot move their legs, he/she experiences a limitation in functioning at the body function level.
- If an individual has difficulty walking, he/she experiences a limitation at the basic activity level, in other words difficulty combining body functions to perform a particular task.
- If an individual cannot work, because of environmental barriers (e.g. an inaccessible work place), then he/she is restricted at the participation level.



# What is a Disability?

- There are some disabilities that one can't see right away, while others you may notice just by looking at the person
  - For example, you may know someone has a mobility challenge because they are using a wheelchair
  - However, you may not be able to tell someone is depressed, as there are often no physical signs

# Now Some Questions for the Class...



Photo: Flickr/Andrew Steele

# Break into small groups

- Name three disabilities that you know of?
  - What is the disability?
  - What are some of the challenges that you think might come with that disability?
- Is there a disability you are confused about?

# Types of Disabilities

- Physical Disabilities
- Visual and Hearing Impairments
- Psychiatric Disabilities (or Mental Disabilities)
- Learning Disabilities



# Physical Disabilities

- A physical disability effects a person's mobility or dexterity
- There are many different physical disabilities, which include:
  - Paraplegia
  - Quadriplegia
  - Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
  - Cerebral Palsy

Photo: Flickr/Tom Magliery



# Visual and Hearing Impairments

- Visual Impairments
  - Refers to impairment of eyesight
  - Visual impairments can be linked to many different causes, including disease, accidents, and congenital illnesses
- Hearing Impairments
  - Refers to impairment of hearing
  - Deafness and hearing loss is linked to a variety of causes, including physical damage, disease during pregnancy, and exposure to very loud noises



Photo: Flickr/CNI Guide Dogs

# Psychiatric Disabilities

- Psychiatric disabilities, which are also called mental disabilities, refer to a number of different mental health conditions, which include:
  - Depression
  - Bipolar Disorder
  - Anxiety
  - Schizophrenia
- Psychiatric disabilities can develop at any age, and it is often difficult to tell that someone is affected by a psychiatric disability



# Learning Disabilities

- A long time ago, learning disabilities were considered to be a sign of low intelligence
  - We now know this is **untrue!**
- A person can be of above average intelligence but may still struggle to keep up with their peer group in terms of learning
  - In fact, many people with learning disabilities are extremely smart, but they just learn in different ways!
- Learning disabilities can cause difficulties in various areas, such as listening, reading, writing and mathematics



# Learning Disabilities

- There are many different types of learning disabilities, which include:
  - Dyslexia
  - Dysgraphia
  - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
  - Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities

# Disability in Canada

- In 2017, it was reported that **6.2 million Canadians (22% of the population)** aged 15 years and over, had a least one disability
- Canadian youth are more likely to be diagnosed with disabilities related to academic and social functioning



# Canadian Youth and Disability

- In 2017, it was reported that 1 in 10 youth in Canada (aged 15 to 24 years) have one or more disabilities
  - more than 540,000 youths aged 15 to 24 years (13%) had one or more disabilities. This compared with 20% or 3.7 million of working age adults (25 to 64 years), and 38% or 2 million of seniors aged 65 and over

# Canadian Youth and Disability

- among youth, mental health-related (8%) was the most common type of disability, followed by learning (6%), and pain-related disabilities (4%).

# The Impact of Disabilities on Youth

- There are at least 93 million children (0-18 years old) with disabilities in the world, but numbers could be much higher.
- Youth with disabilities:
  - Do not always enjoy the same human rights
  - Face more discrimination

# The Impact of Disabilities on Youth

- Exclusion
- Isolation
- Lack of educational and economic opportunities
- Misconceptions about disabilities



Photo: Flickr/sethdickens

It is very difficult to feel like you are alone and that your peers don't understand your abilities!

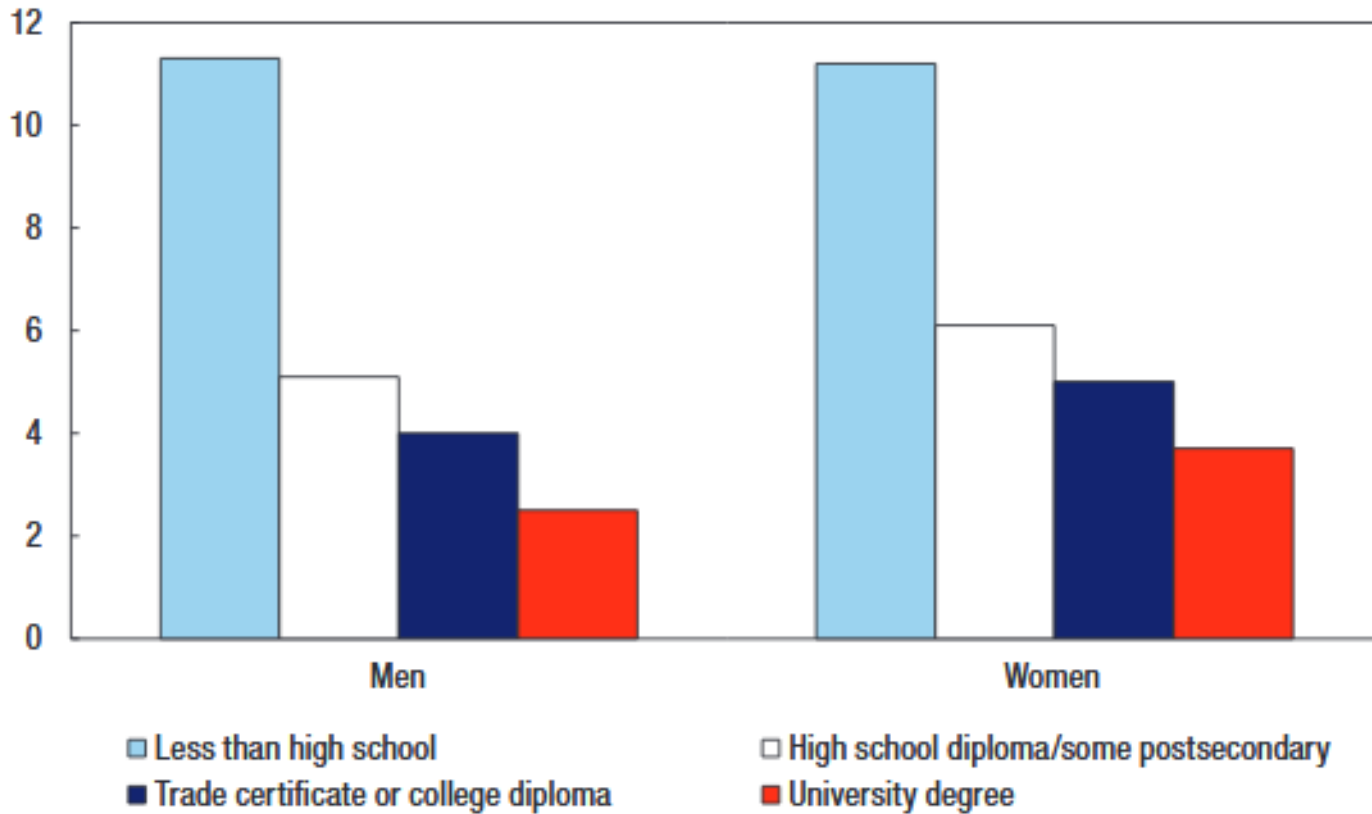


# The Impact of Disabilities on Youth in the Education System

- Youth with disabilities may have a very difficult time at school
- According to a 2017 report, statistics showed that in 2012, men and women without a high school diploma were more likely to have a disability (11%) than men and women with a high school diploma or post secondary degree (6% or less)
- See Chart

## Proportion of individuals aged 25 to 34 with at least one type of chronic disability, by level of education, 2012

percent



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

# The Impact of Disabilities on Youth in the Education System

- Many programs that would be helpful for students with disabilities are not offered at all schools
- When youth with disabilities drop out of school before their peers, it limits their opportunities for the future!
- Youth with disabilities are underrepresented in higher education institutions (like university); however, many higher education institutions do not offer the necessary help for students with disabilities

# The Impact of Learning Disabilities on Youth

- Youth with learning disabilities often:
  - Experience issues with their mood and behaviour
  - Face rejection from their peers and may suffer from very low-self esteem because of their own perceived feelings of inadequacy
- As these youths grow older, they are more likely to face alcoholism, drug abuse, gang affiliations, and drop out of school

# Stereotypes and Disabilities

# Stereotypes and Disabilities

- Incorrect stereotypes assume that all members of a particular group share the same characteristics
  - Example: All lawyers are greedy
- Perpetuating incorrect stereotypes usually portrays people with disabilities as falling into one of three categories:
  - 1. The Victim
  - 2. The Hero
  - 3. The Villain

# CLASS DISCUSSION:

- Example of a stereotype
- Common stereotypes you have heard about people with disabilities?
- Learning disabilities? Psychiatric Disabilities?  
Physical Disabilities?

# (1) The Victim





## (2) The Hero: Daredevil



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## (2) The Hero

- How is being portrayed as a hero a stereotype?
- undermines the daily struggle of people with disabilities who are not able to “overcome” their disabilities
- presents disability as though it is a challenge one overcomes in order to be considered “normal”
- presents a misconception that those who are not overcoming their disabilities are not trying hard enough

## (3) The Villain



## (3) The Villain

- This characterization of people with disabilities is also problematic as it perpetuates the stereotype that people with disabilities are always angry or unhappy about their disabilities
  - The disability “controls their life”
- It appears that this stereotype assumes that a person’s disability stops them from having happy, “normal”, productive lives

# Some Other Common Stereotypes

- People with disabilities cannot experience life to the capacity of a “normal person”
- The lives of people with disabilities are completely different than those of people without disabilities
- Disability is a sickness that must be fixed, or an abnormality that must be “cured”
- Youth with disabilities are childlike, dependent, and need protection
- ALL UNTRUE



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## (4) A Fourth Option

- IF not:
  - the Villain
  - the Hero
  - the Victim
- Then what...?

## (4) Everyday People



Photo: Flickr/U.S. Department of Agriculture

# What laws are there regarding people with disabilities?





# Human Rights and Criminal Law

- Different pieces of legislation concerning human rights law apply to the Canadian people:
  - International Bill of Rights
  - *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
  - Federal Human Rights Legislation
  - Provincial Human Rights Legislation (Alberta Human Rights Act)
  - *Criminal Code of Canada*

# Human Rights

Disability is a human rights issue because:

- People with disabilities experience inequalities – for example, when they are denied equal access to health care, employment, education, or political participation because of their disability.
- People with disabilities are subject to violations of dignity – for example, when they are subjected to violence, abuse, prejudice, or disrespect because of their disability.

# Human Rights

- Some people with disability are denied autonomy – for example, when they are subjected to involuntary sterilization, or when they are confined in institutions against their will, or when they are regarded as legally incompetent because of their disability.

# *Alberta Human Rights Act*

- Some examples of situations that would be covered by the Human Rights Act would be:
  - A landlord refusing to rent an apartment to someone because they are gay
  - A school that doesn't provide physically accessible buildings for students with disabilities
  - A company that fires an employee when they find out that they are Muslim

# Accommodations for Youth With Disabilities in the Education System

- Schools have a duty to accommodate affected students to the point of “undue hardship”
- Accommodations:
  - Process of making changes to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people, including persons with disabilities
  - These changes ensure that the rules are not having a discriminatory effect based on a protected ground

# Accommodations for Youth With Disabilities in the Education System

Example: If a student has an anxiety disorder, they may not be able to complete an exam in the standard three hour time slot, or may not be able to write the exam in a room with other students

→ An accommodation would be to allow this student extra time to complete the exam or to write the exam in a separate room

# Emotional Support Animals

- We are all familiar with the sign “**No Animals Allowed**”
- However, these signs may also read “**With the Exception of Service Animals**”- which is an accommodation to the “no animals” policy
- This accommodation is usually for the blind, who rely on their service animal – not letting them bring in their service animal would be discrimination based on disability!



Photo: Flickr/Veronica Belmont

# Emotional Support Animals

- Emotional support animals are different than service dogs
  - meant to provide support, but they do not need to be trained to support a disability
- Emotional support animals are not allowed in all public spaces like a service dog would be



## Case of Kate Skywalker (2015)

She was told that she could not bring her support animal on an Air Canada flight

Air Canada's policy was:

“Animals that are accompanying people with disabilities are able to enter the plane but the animal must have been trained to assist a person with a disability by a **professional service animal institution**”

# Case Study: Student with a disability

- Janice Berg was a student in a Master's Program at the UBC. She suffered from depression, although she continued to go to class. One very stressful day, Ms. Berg wrote "I am dead" on one of the mirrors in the washroom at school. Later that same day, she saw RCMP and security in the hallway- she became scared and tried to jump through a window at school. The following year the school denied Janice a key to the building she studied in and would not sign a student evaluation. Both of these were given to other students, but not to Janice because of her earlier behaviour. Is this right?

# Temple Grandin- “Different, But Not Less”



# Temple Grandin

- Temple Grandin is one of the most famous people diagnosed with autism in the world today
- Temple did not speak until she was 3 and a half years old
  - Rather, Temple screamed and hummed in order to communicate her frustrations
- Temple was considered by others to be very “weird” in her younger school years

# Temple Grandin

- Eventually, she found a mentor who recognized her unique talents and abilities
- Temple developed her talents into an extremely successful career as a livestock-handling equipment designer
  - She has now designed the facilities in which half the cattle are handled in the United States
  - Burger King and McDonald's both use Temple's designs

# “The World Needs All Kinds of Minds”

The following is a video of Temple Grandin discussing what it is like to grow up with autism, and how the world needs all kinds of people!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fn\\_9f5x0f1Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fn_9f5x0f1Q)

# Class Activity- “Seeing the World Differently”

- Think about some of the barriers or challenges for people with disabilities that we discussed at the beginning of class
  - Can you name some of these barriers?
  - Example: Students in wheelchairs may have difficulty participating in gym class

Can anyone think of how these so-called impairments may become bonuses or helpful?

# Class Activity- “Seeing the World Differently”

- Example: A person who is blind may rely more on personality to get to know someone and not consider their appearance



# How Can You Protect Human Rights?

- Stand up for others
- Stand up for yourself – or find an adult who will bring in an educator to talk about human rights in your classroom
- Talk about human rights with your friends
- Call the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre to get more information or a free education seminar
- Visit [www.aclrc.com](http://www.aclrc.com)



Photo: Flickr/Willard

# Contact Information

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