

## **“From Isolation to Self-Determination”**

### **Accessibility and Accommodation**

#### **Issues, Challenges, Concerns**

#### **Indigenous Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs**

### **Call for Proposals**

This call for proposals is being issued by the Wabanaki Council on Disability and the Mawita'mk Society to request interested Indigenous contractors/researchers to submit a proposal regarding the conducting of research and reporting on the issues and matters under the topic of accessibility for persons with disabilities and special needs.

There will be a particular regional geographic focus for this research on the Atlantic region which includes: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland/Labrador.

The successful proposal (researcher) will have until February 19, 2021 to conduct the research associated with this CFP and submit a final report to the Wabanaki Council and Mawita'mk Society.

Questions and requests for clarification regarding this CFP should be directed in writing (email only) to Conrad Saulis at [saulisc@sympatico.ca](mailto:saulisc@sympatico.ca)

The contract value for this research is \$25,000. Payments will be negotiated with the successful contractor following approval of their proposal.

Applicant's proposals should be submitted to Conrad Saulis via email to [saulisc@sympatico.ca](mailto:saulisc@sympatico.ca)

The application deadline is October 23, 2020 5:00 pm (Atlantic time).

#### **Overview**

Indigenous persons with disabilities and special needs face, manage, confront, navigate, overcome and seek to find resolve for a myriad of issues and matters that fall under the topic of accessibility.

Issues falling under the scope of accessibility impact the lives of persons with disabilities from the earliest of ages as infants/children to being a youth, during adulthood and well into later in life. The frequency of disability and special need in the Indigenous population is not well documented however the realities they face on a daily and life-long basis are real and have serious impacts on their lives.

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Accessibility issues also impact Indigenous peoples of all gender identifications – there are no exemptions and there are no communities that do not have a population of persons with disabilities and special needs.

The impacts of poor and no accessibility have multiple negative impacts on persons with disabilities and special needs.

In July 2019 the government of Canada enacted the Accessible Canada Act. According to Employment and Social Development Canada:

*“This legislation will benefit everyone in Canada, especially persons with disabilities, by helping to create a barrier-free Canada through the proactive identification, removal and prevention of barriers to accessibility wherever Canadians interact with areas under federal jurisdiction. 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. These new regulations will set out requirements for organizations to follow in order to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. The Accessible Canada Act will also put in place compliance and enforcement measures, as well as an accessibility complaints mechanism.”*

Research conducted under this Call will include a focus on the federal legislation insofar that it may impact Indigenous persons with disabilities. Otherwise the focus of this research will be to identify the multitude of accessibility issues that impact the lives of Indigenous persons with disabilities and special needs within the capacity of the funding available.

### **Host Organizations**

The Wabanaki Council on Disability (WCD) is recognized as an Indigenous organization in Atlantic Canada that advances the economic, social and cultural, spiritual, civil rights of Mi’kmaq, Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Innu, Inuit, Passamaquoddy and Penobscot persons with disabilities.

The WCD is comprised of representatives from Indigenous organizations and communities throughout Atlantic Canada and of all Indigenous Nations living in the region. The WCD supports the needs of Indigenous persons with disabilities ordinarily resident on reserve in the Atlantic region. The WCD is supported in its work by the Atlantic Policy Congress of Chiefs.

Mawita’mk Society is supported and endorsed by the Whycocomagh Chief and Council. In 1986, Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy, Margaret Poulette and Tom Gunn created a not-for-profit Mi’kmaq Organization called Mawitam’k (Being Together). In 2001 the organization was incorporated as a Society under Nova Scotia law.

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In 1986 Mi'kmaq Grand Chief Sylliboy and Elders of Whycomagh were concerned that Indigenous people who needed community-based supports had to leave their cultural community to access services. Having to leave the safety and security of the reserve it was believed added to their disability and increased their sense of isolation. A community of volunteers, support staff, members, partners, family and friends have enabled the dream to have real homes and real jobs for Mi'kmaq people with disabilities to grow.

### **Applicant Proposal Details**

Applicants to this CFP are asked to provide a proposal that includes the following:

- Applicants research experiences in conducting research focused on Indigenous peoples – this must include descriptions of social/health related research – if there are examples of research on vulnerable populations this should be highlighted;
- The goals and objectives of the research project congruent to the contents of this CFP;
- The overall research methodology and approach bearing in mind the health requirements of various jurisdictions for consideration of safety during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- A statement of the work the applicant determines will be necessary to successfully complete this work, detailed project activities that will lead to successfully meeting the project goals and objectives;
- A workplan for the project with activities and timelines;
- Reporting stages/timeframes for the research project leading to the successful completion of the final report;
- Anticipated risks and the ways risk will be managed/mitigated/addressed if the risk factor should arise.

### **Project Purpose and Scope:**

The purpose of this research is to examine ‘Accessibility’ in its broadest perspective. Poor, inadequate and improper accessibility and accommodation for accessibility seriously impacts the lives of Indigenous persons with disabilities and special needs in many ways.

Accessibility in its broadest considerations includes all of life’s realities including access to buildings, access within buildings, access to services and supports, access to cultural knowledge and learning about traditions, access to the natural environment, access to employment and training, access to education (all levels) and much more (what has been cited here is not an exhaustive list). It also impacts people of all ages from infants to seniors/elders and people of all gender identifications.

There are many things that people who do not have a disability or a special need take for granted including the many access opportunities they have and do not give a second thought about. At

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minimum these include stairs, narrow doorways, narrow hallways, washrooms, kitchens, education, employment, the many ways and forms of communications, enjoying the outdoors such as going to the beach or being in the forest or going to a park etc. All of these adversely impact the lives of persons with disabilities and special needs.

Indigenous persons children, youth and young adults may face and confront particular accessibility challenges that impedes or adversely impacts their opportunities and chances of being successful in education, in employment and in sports as well as in learning about their Nation’s culture, language, traditions and knowledge of nature and other traditional knowledge including craftwork.

This research will explore the area of accessibility in its broadest frame. It will be inclusive of all factors that impede and adversely impact opportunities for persons with disabilities and special needs. The research must be inclusive of all ages groups and gender identifications.

### **Methodologies to consider**

Some of the potential ways of conducting this research are generally established research methodologies however during this time of pandemic some research processes cannot be utilized including in-person interviews. Interviewing people can remain as a methodology but alternate ways of completing the interview(s) must be described.

- Literature search on accessibility issues for the general population and focus on Indigenous accessibility where the info exists;
- Conduct interviews – as possible (in-person and via phone/internet video) with
  - persons with disabilities and special needs;
  - with service groups and with service providers;
  - with government officials;
  - with others as proposed/identified by the applicants (in their proposal).
- Other research approaches are welcomed to be proposed as identified by applicants in their proposals.

Focus on all accessibility issues, topics and matters including housing, buildings, education, employment and training, education, recreation and cultural (outdoor) spaces and knowledge, sports and sporting events, Information Technology (IT) equipment and resources, communications resources and barriers; include all age groups.

Applicants must clearly describe the methodologies/approaches they will utilize to successfully complete the work of this research.

### **Provide a detailed project workplan**

Applicants must provide a clearly described workplan that supports a full scope of research and an approach that leads to successfully providing a comprehensive final report. The research

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approach must keep in mind and account-for health and safety protocols for each province regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Deliverable:**

The final product of the research will be a detailed analytical report of the issues and matters pertaining to accessibility and accommodation for Indigenous persons with disabilities and special needs living in the Atlantic region.

### **Budget**

Applicants must provide a budget for the completion of the work they include and outline in their proposal.

The budget maximum for this research project is set at \$25,000. All contractor work associated for the completion of the methodologies and activities included in the proposal must be contained within the budget maximum.

### **Provide references**

Applicants must provide 1 reference of research they have successfully conducted and completed in the last 5 years.

### **Additional CFP Information**

The following information is provided to support clarity to those considering submitting a proposal to this call.

#### **Western/Mainstream Definition of Disability**

- any degree of physical disability,
- infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury,
- birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes:
  - diabetes mellitus,
  - epilepsy,
  - a brain injury,
  - any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination,
  - blindness or visual impediment,
  - deaf or hearing impediment,
  - muteness or speech impediment, or
  - physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a
  - wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
  - a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

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- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance

### Indigenous Perspective of Disability (Ability)

Persons with disabilities were recognized as gifts from the Creator having special talents, skills, abilities and knowledge – they completed the circle. (Need to hear from traditional knowledge keepers and knowledge sharers)

A person that had a type of non-functioning human function (sight, hearing, mobility) was not considered as being disabled rather they were seen as having additional abilities – they were seen for what they could do and how they added their world view to their family and community – they were not seen in the negative context rather in a positive perspective.

Think of disability as being fluid – there are good days and challenging days.

Disability includes:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Mental
- Cultural
- Connection to the land / environmental (knowledge of plants and knowledge of nature, traditional medicines)
- Language
- Knowledge of traditions and ancestral history
- Economic
  - Poverty (Being poor and low income)
- Education and Learning Environments
  - Hands on and learning in the natural environment
- Ability to socialize (and participate in events, meetings and functions)
  - Comfort to participate (in meetings, functions and gatherings)
  - Capacity to participate (accessibility, opportunity to attend)
- Disability focus for various ages groups including: infants/toddlers/children; youth; adults; seniors/Elders.

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### Atlantic Population data on persons with disabilities

Indigenous individuals and families living with a disability and special needs have become marginalized groups within an already marginalized population and are the "invisible" members of the Canada's disability and special needs sector.

The frequency of disabilities among Indigenous Canadians (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) is conservatively estimated at twice that of the national rate or approximately 30%. Other research has suggested that the overall disability rates for Indigenous people in Canada is approximately 32% and up to three times higher than the national rate within some age groups. It is also known that the prevalence of disabilities and the likelihood of becoming disabled within impoverished populations, such as the conditions seen within many Indigenous communities and racialized urban centres, are significantly higher than in populations that are not.

Between the years 2011 and 2016, Statistics Canada reported that the Indigenous population of Canada increased by 42.5% to a national total of 1,673,785. In Atlantic Canada the total Indigenous population in 2011 was reported at 123,370.

Understanding this and based on the 2016 demographics, we can conservatively estimate that there are over 502,135 (30%) Indigenous persons, of all ages, living with a disability within Canada, and approximately 37,000 residing in the Atlantic region.

Table 1. provides estimates of the Indigenous persons with disabilities populations by province and region based on various percentages for the Atlantic provinces. The variety of percentages presented in the Table are being utilized to demonstrate that there is very little information available for this sector of the Indigenous population and to show that persons with disabilities is a significant portion of the regional/provincial Indigenous population base.

Table 1. Indigenous persons with disabilities population Atlantic region (estimates)

Province	2016 Total Population*	30%	32%	35%	40%
Newfoundland	42,615	12,784	13,637	14,915	17,046
Nova Scotia	49,935	14,980	15,979	17,477	19,974
PEI	2,660	799	851	931	1,064
New Brunswick	28,160	8,448	9,011	9,856	11,264
Totals	123,370	37,011	39,478	43,179	49,348

\*Total population is the total of all Indigenous peoples per province, source: Statistics Canada, 2016

**Proposals should be submitted to  
Conrad Saulis via email to [saulisc@sympatico.ca](mailto:saulisc@sympatico.ca)**

**The application deadline is October 23, 2020  
5:00 pm (Atlantic time).**

**Proposals received after this deadline will not be accepted**