

Indigenous people with disabilities and their experiences with getting a job

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Plain Language Executive Summary

What this paper is about

Indigenous people with disabilities face many barriers in Canada. This includes barriers to getting a job. This paper looks at these barriers. It also looks at how both Indigenous and non-Indigenous job programs can help.

Why this matters

Indigenous people are the fastest-growing group in Canada. They are also the youngest. But they face a number of barriers. They have a higher rate of disability. The rates below show a large difference.

- Between 33-50% of Indigenous people have a disability.
- About 22% of non-Indigenous people have a disability.

Indigenous people also face barriers to getting a job. Again, the rates below show a large difference.

- Only 47% of Indigenous people have jobs.
- About 74% of non-Indigenous people have jobs.

Why Indigenous people face more barriers to finding a job

Indigenous people have lived all over Canada for thousands of years. Settlers from Europe came to Canada about 400 years ago. The settlers claimed the land for themselves. They formed governments and made rules. The settlers treated Indigenous people very badly. The settlers took away their land. They took away Indigenous peoples' rights. They separated families. They took children away from their parents. The settlers tried to take away the Indigenous Peoples languages and traditions.

The settlers made laws to limit the freedom of Indigenous peoples. One of these was called the Indian Act. This law made it hard for Indigenous people to get an education or a job. It also made it hard for Indigenous peoples to form their own governments.

These actions caused deep harm. This harm still affects Indigenous people today. They continue to face more barriers than other groups. This includes barriers to finding a job and being treated equally at work.

Indigenous view of disability

Indigenous cultures see disability as a natural part of life. They do not view disability as something that makes a person 'less than' others.

But this is not always the view outside of Indigenous communities. This means Indigenous people with disabilities often face more unfair treatment. Many job programs and workplaces do not understand their experiences.

Old government rules still cause problems today. Many job programs for Indigenous people do not have enough money to help properly. Programs for people with disabilities often do not include Indigenous job seekers.

Job programs do not always respect Indigenous ways of thinking about disability and community. This makes it harder for Indigenous people to feel included and supported at work.

What is missing in job support

Studies have found that Indigenous job seekers struggle to get help for the following reasons.

- There is not enough money for Indigenous job programs.
- Many job programs do not include people living on reserves.
- Indigenous people often feel unsafe using non-Indigenous job programs due to past unfair treatment.
- Some job program staff do not understand that Indigenous job seekers may struggle with confidence, anxiety and past trauma.

How to make things better

This paper suggests ways to fix these barriers. It starts with an action plan with these points.

- Follow the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) recommendations to include Indigenous people in job programs.
- Train job helpers and employers to understand Indigenous experiences.
- Work with Indigenous communities to create better job programs.
- Make sure workplaces are fair, safe and supportive for Indigenous workers.

People who help with jobs have an important role in making workplaces fair for everyone. They should work closely with Indigenous communities to understand their needs. By doing this, they can help more Indigenous people with disabilities find jobs. They can create a fairer workforce. And they can support healing and fairness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.