

# 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

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## ABLEISM, DISABILITY & GBV

November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month, which includes the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign calling for an end to gender-based violence. It begins on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, includes The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6th, and ends on December 10th: Human Rights Day.

Thunder Bay City Council formally declared GBV and IPV an epidemic on September 25th immediately following our deputation. In addition, City officials have invited us to present to the local social services administration board and the Intergovernmental Affairs committee, and also supply a list of actionable goals for City Council to better support survivors of GBV in our community.

Our 2023 16 Days campaign will focus on these actionable goals - efforts at the municipal and personal levels to address gender-based violence.

### Why it Matters

- GBV/IPV can cause disability and disability can increase the risk of victimization for women. Ableism makes women and girls with disabilities more vulnerable to violence.
- Statistics Canada indicates that 24% of women report having a disability. The rate is above 30% for Black and Indigenous women and girls because systemic discrimination, including racism increases the risk of disability. (DAWN, Parliamentary Brief, 2022)
- 39% of women with disabilities have experienced spousal violence, 46% have been physically injured because of this violence, and 38% have feared for their lives. Women with disabilities living in marital or common law unions are reported as more likely to experience violence by 40%, while rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) are higher among women who report an activity limitation than those without. Women with cognitive disabilities are more likely to be the victim of violence from a common-law partner, or current or former spouse (43%). (DAWN, 2022)
- More than half of women with disabilities have experienced some form of IPV in their lifetime; Women with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to experience sexual or physical assault by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Statistics Canada, 2019)
- Survivors of physical, sexual and/or psychological violence may experience PTSD. Victimization rates are higher for certain groups such as women, Indigenous people, persons experiencing homelessness, and those who are LGBTQ2. Children and youth are especially vulnerable to violence and have a higher risk of mental health conditions in adulthood. (PHAC, 2019)
- It is estimated that violence by an intimate partner causes more than 290,000 concussions among women, girls and gender diverse people in Canada each year. For every 1 NHL concussion, it is estimated that more than 7,000 women suffer the same injury by an intimate partner. (Ending Violence Association of BC)
- Evidence shows that up to 90 percent of people surviving intimate partner violence experience a brain injury. Injuries can range from a concussion to a severe head injury and are associated with high rates of post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression and other symptoms that can last for months to years. Long-term effects may also include cognitive disability and dementia (Michael Smith Health Research BC)
- Brain injury in IPV can also happen from a loss of oxygen to the brain caused by strangulation. Often times, these injuries result from repetitive episodes of IPV occurring over many months or years. (Brain Injury Canada)

### ACTION

- Challenge ableist-myths and stereotypes about women/girls with disabilities.
- Learn from the work of feminist disability justice activists
- Learn about high-risk IPV behaviours (e.g.: choking) which could have long-term or lethal consequences. Explore OAITH's self-paced course, The Neurobiology of Gender-Based Violence Across The Lifespan, or read the foundational document, "Her Brain Chose for Her," which explains the impacts of strangulation as part of Trauma & Concurrent Health Issues.
- Support survivors in seeking medical assessment and treatment for any head/neck injuries to rule out concussion, brain injury and traumatic brain injury.

Choking and strangulation is an indication of increased risk of lethality and must be treated seriously.

### Resources

- Addressing Sexual Violence and Promoting the Sexual Rights of Women Labelled with Intellectual Disabilities: [https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased\\_newsletters/issue-41/Learning-Network-Issue-41.pdf](https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased_newsletters/issue-41/Learning-Network-Issue-41.pdf)
- At the intersection of intimate partner violence and brain injury: A call to action: <https://soarproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/IPV-AND-BI-A-CALL-TO-ACTION.pdf>
- Factsheet: Women with Disabilities and Violence: <https://www.dawncanada.net/main/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/English-Violence-January-2014.pdf>
- Federal Framework on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Recognition, collaboration and support (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2019): <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/federal-framework-post-traumatic-stress-disorder.html>
- Intimate partner violence: Experiences of women with disabilities in Canada, 2018 (Statistics Canada, 2019): <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00006-eng.htm>
- Intimate partner violence & brain injury: <https://braininjurycanada.ca/en/issues-advocacy/intimate-partner-violence/>
- Parliamentary Brief: Women with Disabilities and Interpersonal Violence. Prepared for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for their Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada (DisAbleD Women's Network, 2022): <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Brief/BR11638212/br-external/DisAbleDWomensNetworkOfCanada-e.pdf>
- Moving Ahead Survivor's Guide to Brain Injury in Intimate Partner Violence (SOAR brochure): <https://soarproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/20-02-SOAR-SurvivorBrochure-prf05.pdf>
- Strangulation clinic in Surrey offers specialized care for survivors of partner violence: <https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.6734338>
- Survivors shape research on brain injury after intimate partner violence: [https://healthresearchbc.ca/news\\_article/survivors-shape-research-on-brain-injury-after-intimate-partner-violence/](https://healthresearchbc.ca/news_article/survivors-shape-research-on-brain-injury-after-intimate-partner-violence/)
- YWCA Metro Vancouver's intimate partner violence (IPV) and concussion campaign: <https://endingviolence.org/ywca-metrovan-concussion-story/>



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