**An Oral Statement Submission to the 79th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Seeking Input on the Rights of Indigenous Women**

**Date:** June 18, 2021

**To:** Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

**Intervenor:** Lynn Gehl, Ph.D., Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe (from Canada)

**Re:** General Discussion of the General Recommendations on the Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls (General Discussion on GRIWAG)

**Theme:** Part 1: Equality and non-discrimination with a focus on Indigenous women and girls and intersecting forms of discrimination

**Submission Focus:** Due to intersectional oppression–racism, sexism, ableism–Indigenous Women and Girls with Disabilities are Bigger Targets of Sexual Violence

My name is Lynn Gehl. Thank you for accepting my submission regarding the emergency situation of Indigenous women and girls with disabilities (IWagWid) in Canada who are targets of sexual assault, resulting from intersectional oppression, namely sexism, racism, and ableism, best known as “Triple Jeopardy Magnified”. While Canada’s recent National Action Plan (NAP) (June 2021) claimed an intersectional lens as a guiding principle, the NAP failed because disability is not recognized as a significant pillar of a person’s identity. Regardless, Canada is a signatory of CEDAW and is obligated to protect them from sex assault.[[1]](#endnote-1)

In 2017 Burlock stated in Canada Indigenous women are more than 1.5 times as likely as non-Indigenous women to report having a disability. This higher rate must not be interpreted as the Indigenous body being inferior. Rather, it is the result of Canada’s historic and ongoing genocide that resulting in poor air and water quality, poverty and a lack of nutritious food, and poor housing. This is due to the loss of land, the residential school system, the resource extraction industry, issues of environmental racism, and the ongoing sex discrimination in the Indian Act. In 2018 Statistics Canada offered two data findings: First, Indigenous women with a disability are 2 times more likely than Indigenous women without a disability to report sexual assault; Second, Indigenous women living with a disability are 1.5 times more likely than non-Indigenous women with a disability to report sexual assault. Canada must remedy both this higher rate of disability and sexual assault. There is no need for more research.

The 1981 Obstacles Report, the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and more recently in 2018 the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society put forward recommendations such as a the need for accessible housing, respite funding for over worked caregivers, proper screening of service providers, accessible transportation, the elimination of jurisdictional barriers between the federal and provincial governments, and the elimination of the language barriers in the province of Quebec.

Indigenous women and girls with disabilities are bigger targets of sexual violence because some cannot see or hear perpetrators approach, others are unable to escape because they are in wheelchairs, and others are paralyzed and unable to move and defend themselves. Canada can do better; Canada must do better. We have been making recommendations for 40 years yet this is an emergency situation.

1. This submission relies on The Gehl Report: Indigenous Women and Girls with Disabilities and Gender-Based Violence (2021). This report, with bibliographic references, is available through www.lynngehl.com [↑](#endnote-ref-1)