

Indigenous Disability Awareness Month Transcript

A Broken Legacy, my Journey as an Indigenous Hard of Hearing Woman...

November 7, 2024

Darren Macdonald: Hello, everybody. Welcome to our webinar today in honour of Indigenous Disability Awareness Month. We are just going to let everybody get settled, get logged in, give it a minute or two for all of you to join us. Thanks for taking time today to join our webinar. As people are coming in, I will just let people know a few housekeeping items, get your screen set up.

Darren Macdonald: You will notice you are muted and that the microphones and videos are turned off when you joined the call. This just helps us with the background noise and visuals to keep it to a minimum so there are fewer distractions when we are recording zoom and when we are watching the presentation today. So, we will spotlight and pin the presenters, the captioner, and the ASL interpreters for your convenience.

Darren Macdonald: There are a few accessibility features and language features on zoom. So, to access them, you need to -- the closed captioning, there is an icon at the bottom right of the screen, two letters, two letter C's. You can click on that to activate subtitles. For American Sign Language interpretation, click the globe icon, which is also on the bottom right. And select American Sign Language. So, we will give everyone a couple minutes to set things up.

Darren Macdonald: If you have any questions or you are having technical difficulties, you can reach out to our office. Our e-mail address is mao@gov.mb.ca, and there's people behind the scenes that will help you out. Please note that our webinar today is being recorded and will be posted on our website afterwards. And we welcome your questions, so if you have questions, there is a number of ways you can type them in chat. That is probably the best way. If not, you can e-mail those to us directly. We will try to get to as many questions and answers as possible, but if we do not get to yours during the event today, we will respond to you by e-mail after if you emailed in your questions. So please let us know if you have questions.

Darren Macdonald: It looks like we have most folks on the call today. We are up to about 80, wow, great to see! So again, thanks for taking the time to join us today. Your participation and engagement are crucial for the success of this day and Indigenous Disability Awareness Month or IDAM.

Darren Macdonald: Some may know back in 2017, the United Nations International Committee on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities recommended Canada officially recognize and proclaim November as Indigenous Disability Awareness Month as an annual event. And the Government of Manitoba first recognized November as Indigenous Disability

Awareness Month back in 2021. So, Manitobans joined people across the country in promoting awareness of barriers experienced by Indigenous People living with disabilities. So annually, Indigenous Disability Awareness Month is recognized in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and by hundreds of other organizations, communities across Canada, including Indigenous governments and organizations. And we recognize the month to raise awareness of this initiative and issues and really celebrate the accomplishments of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. So, I am so happy to have you here today.

Darren Macdonald: As many of you will know, unfortunately Indigenous Peoples across Canada experience disabilities at a rate that is much higher than the non-Indigenous population. So, it is for reasons like this that we want to raise awareness, we want to take time to highlight some issues but also the achievements of Indigenous Peoples living with disabilities and recognize the valuable contributions made to our communities.

Darren Macdonald: So, for today's agenda, I am very excited, we have Shawna Joynt joining us in our webinar titled "A Broken Legacy: My Journey as an Indigenous Hard of Hearing Woman." So, we will introduce Shawna in a moment. Before we do, here at the Manitoba Accessibility Office, we really take and honour the spirit of reconciliation. And we feel it is important to not just talk the talk but to walk the walk, as they say. And so a few ways we try to demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation is to take time to learn about our traditional lands, so we'll open with a land acknowledgment, and we also invited Vern Dano, a Knowledge Keeper, to give us his greetings and a bit of an opening, his opening remarks, to reflect on a few things. Then we will get to Shawna's presentation.

Darren Macdonald: Before we get to all that, let us kick things off with a poll. So, we are going to put a poll up on the screen. And we are curious. Before this webinar, had you participated in an Indigenous Disability Awareness Month event? So, from us or from a different organization or your employer or somewhere else. So just curious if this is sort of your first time or you are joining us for the first time, which is great, or have you been involved in past years. We will give that just a moment. And then by the magic of the internet, we will display our results. Giving everyone a moment to answer. I do not think I am allowed to vote! But this is not my first event. In case you are curious! I am not seeing the results pop up. So, we will give it just a minute. There they are. So, yes, it looks like a number of folks are saying, yes, that have participated. 17%, wow, great. The majority though, this is your first time, great, welcome, glad you could join us. And a few are unsure, no problem. That is good to know too, so thank you for indulging us with the poll question. And as I said, we do like to open with a land acknowledgment, so I would like to introduce my colleague, Colleen Watters, and Colleen is a Policy Analyst at the Manitoba Accessibility Office and she is going to talk about her connection with the traditional lands.

Colleen? You are set up and unmuted, Colleen.

Colleen Watters: Welcome, everyone, to the Indigenous Disability Awareness Month webinar. I am Colleen Watters, Policy Analyst with the Manitoba Accessibility Office. I am proud to be here today to present the land acknowledgment on behalf of our office. As a person with a disability, living in Canada, I am a Canadian settler with parental origins from England and Ireland and proud to call Treaty One Territory home.

Colleen Watters: On behalf of the Manitoba Accessibility Office, I would like to further acknowledge that we are presenting today from Treaty 1 Territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations.

Colleen Watters: We acknowledge that Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We also acknowledge that northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of Inuit.

Colleen Watters: As we gather in celebration of Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, we recognize the advances Canada as a country has made to improve accessibility including accessibility for Indigenous Peoples, while also acknowledging that work needs to continue. The Manitoba Accessibility Office strives to improve accessibility with the full implementation of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA). We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, collaboration and to make Manitoba more inclusive and accessible for all.

Darren Macdonald: Thank you, Colleen. And next up, I'd like to introduce Vern Dano, and Vern is a Knowledge Keeper who we've had at many events at the Manitoba Accessibility Office, and I always love to hear what you have to say, Vern, so I'll turn the floor over to you to kick us off with your opening remarks.

Vern Dano: Thank you very much. I hope everyone is doing well today. I appreciate the land acknowledgment. I also appreciate the time that we have a visitor here today coming in, Shawna. I appreciate you sharing your sacred story with people that are going to be directly on-site and maybe through the recordings later. And I do apologize, I am with a school right now, so I have to run and do some other things, but it's important to remember that with disability, it's something that's ongoing and usually for life. And as a person who identifies with disability and has a whole family with it, it is dear to my heart. I know we have translators that are doing American Sign Language, and I have not really said any prayers in the Ojibwa language because I do not think they can translate well, so I did not want to set them up for a very hard presentation! But I want you to do right now, it is the time of year of change. We are coming to a time when our bears are going into hibernation, and this is a time we take a step back within ourselves and we ask for help. We look for guidance. It is okay to get those supports that are needed. And sometimes we have to advocate maybe with the strength of a bear and push for those services that are needed. So, this time of year, we usually put tobacco

out and we ask the bear to take with it as it goes into hibernation some of our sicknesses, needs, and wants, and to help us find our way in life, especially during the season, during the fall. And because the geese are heading south, it is the time for us here in Manitoba to go and check and see what do we have for resources. What do we have for materials? What do we have for comforts and so forth. And as an Indigenous man, I know for myself, I still have privileges and as a patriarchal ally, I do my best to support my community.

Vern Dano: Here in Manitoba, you can see my backdrop, I have the bridge there. I think it is the San Francisco bridge. I love bridging together different ideas. And that is what we are trying to do is build together something better. And so, I want you to know that this fall, be safe, everyone. It is a very dangerous time of year, and say prayers for all those on the land, because this is a time when the ice is thin. Our northern communities start lacking the accessibility due to the thin ice and so not only do they have disabilities, they're challenged with the resources of the land. Listen to this beautiful lady's story who is coming all the way from the big mountains. I give thanks for times like this. I really appreciate what is happening here with your organization to give us a platform to be heard, to be acknowledged, to be appreciated. And that we all have challenges together. So, take care, everyone, have a great day, a safe week. Enjoy your weekend. And get out there and do some stuff, okay? Enjoy it before it gets too cold! Take care, everyone! Bye.

Darren Macdonald: Thank you, Vern. We will let you get back to your school, thank you very much for that opening message. And our office would just like to, you know, quickly just acknowledge the passing of Murray Sinclair this weekend. I think like Vern, Sinclair believed in the power of education and the ability of young people to be changemakers, so it's very thematic that you're at a school today and we're talking about change. And Murray Sinclair really believed that education was the key to reconciliation in Canada, and he was the ultimate bridge maker, right? He, throughout his life, he worked to repair the relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples. So, he will be remembered for that fine work and as the Chief Commissioner of Truth and Reconciliation. I want to encourage people to take a moment to reflect about Murray Sinclair. If you do not know much about him, look it up. He is a remarkable person. And take time now to reflect on him or later today. So, thank you, Vern. We will let you get back.

Darren Macdonald: And next, I will welcome another staff from our office, from the Manitoba accessibility office, Wendy. Oh, I see you are on. Wendy is our Communication and Engagement Specialist with the Manitoba Accessibility Office. And she is here today to introduce our keynote speaker, so I hand it over to you, Wendy.

Wendy Harrisko: Thanks, Darren. It is my pleasure today to introduce Shawna Joynt, our keynote presenter. She is here today to present her story, A Broken Legacy: My Journey as an Indigenous Hard of Hearing Woman. Shawna is a First Nation woman who is hard of hearing from the Tr'ondek Hwechin Han nation in Dawson Creek's Yukon. She is known for her

strong will, determination, kindness, respectfulness, and her desire to become a listener and a healer. Creating safe spaces and showing respect are all important to her. She strongly believes in teamwork. Shawna is currently on several boards, including being the president of the Canadian Association of the Deaf, president of the Manitoba Deaf Association, on the board for the Canadian Deaf Sports Association, and the president of the Manitoba Deaf Sports Association. Shawna is also a member of the Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Council, and this Council is responsible for the development of standards under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. It is made up of members of the disability community, key decision-makers, including representatives of business, municipalities, and other organizations. Shawna, alongside the other Council members, is currently working on making the recommendations to the Minister responsible for Accessibility following the consultations on the Five-Year Review of the Accessibility Standard for Employment. Shawna also believes that we can work together and make sure everyone has equal rights. We hope you enjoy Shawna's story today. Now, over to you, Shawna.

Shawna Joynt: Okay, hello, everyone. Hi! There has been a lot of different presentations and stories here, but, for some reason, I have done quite a lot, but I am very nervous for today, so I think this presentation is quite different. It is more I guess a personal story here that I will be sharing with you guys.

Shawna Joynt: And so, I want to share with you today just a few moments of some of the things that I have gone through in my life, Some of the experiences. So, I am going to start a presentation. And if you can just give me one second. Is everyone now able to see the slide deck? So, this is the beginning, the Broken Legacy, and my journey as an Indigenous Hard of Hearing Woman. And what you may notice in the top right-hand corner is there is a logo there. And that is how I see myself. I recognize that there is a medicine wheel there attached. There is a red hand covering my mouth and that is for the murdered and missing Indigenous women. And then there is the orange. That reflects the "every child matters" and, of course, the turtle reflects Turtle Island, so North America. My picture that you see there as well has a number of different graphics around it. There is a lot of my -- it was definitely challenging to take that photo.

I took a lot of photos going through this moment and there were a lot of tears shed during that time. And so, I am happy that I'm able to share this moment with you all.

Shawna Joynt: Before I play the video, I definitely would like to recognize three different languages. We have ASL, we have French, and we do have ISL as well, so ISL being Indigenous Sign Language. And Indigenous Sign Language has a number of different sign languages within it from different Indigenous groups. I have gone backwards, give me a second!

Shawna Joynt: So, you can see that there are three images on the screen right now. In the top left-hand corner, if you are looking at it, there would be a picture of myself when I was three, four months old, when I was very happy, things in life are good. And then later on, my parents had noticed that my head would be down, off to the side. I would not be sitting straight up. My neck would not be -- I would not be able to hold my head up. Doctors would discredit everything and say everything was fine. What ended up happening is I ended up having spinal meningitis, ended up having a high fever and some individuals pass away from that. Some people live through that, but it can be very serious. For myself, I became a hard of hearing individual as a result of it. My family did not know that I was hard of hearing until later on. I was watching tv, I would sit fairly close. I would have my ear towards the tv as well because I'm trying to listen. I was always turning the tv up loud. And my family was thinking something must be wrong, so they took me to an audiologist where they identified I was a hard of hearing individual. So, moving forward, I would always have a lot of audiology appointments, oral skill development and therapy which was not fun, but I had to go through all those things as well. And sometimes you think that it is just myself. It is only me. I am the only one going through that. So, moving forward, there were struggles within my life. I would see my parents, my families constantly fighting. It was not a wonderful environment for a child to be in. I would see the police come to the home as well. I would see them having discussions.

And there were negative things, because I would not understand what was being said or they would take advantage of me as in not providing me all the information that I needed. And not giving me all the information that I required to understand the situation that was happening. So as life moved forward and I fast-forward through my life, my family had breakdowns.

I ended up moving from home to home. I was not a very happy individual at that time, of course. It was definitely emotionally challenging. There were a lot of struggles. I did not know who I could trust moving forward. I did not know which adult I could trust, who would listen to me, you know. If I was not paying attention, if I wasn't responding, I'd be pinched, punched, slapped, and those were challenging times for me as well, and I wasn't in an environment that had the Indigenous culture. But I was in a home.

Shawna Joynt: I had traveled to a Manitoba Deaf School. There were struggles within the school, especially mainstream hearing schools, and when I went to the Manitoba School for the Deaf, it was the best decision I had ever made, because I was able to use and find my language, my culture, as a Deaf individual. My heart was overwhelmed to be able to be involved and learn and grow from my peers around me. I ended up staying in residence, because it was a little bit of a challenge to drive back and forth. I had Deaf Indigenous peers there as well that I could relate to. But we never really had discussions in regard to our Indigenous culture or our background. I never was able to talk to them about that.

I think I was afraid. I think something within me thought that that brainwashing of, oh, if you talk about that, there's alcohol associated with it. You are a dirty person if you talk about being an Indigenous person. So, I was afraid to broach that subject with individuals.

Shawna Joynt: Once I graduated through high school, I ended up traveling and having that opportunity to do the things that I wanted to do. I have four young children, four boys. I have no regrets in life honestly. I gave them a different style of life. I gave them all the love I could have. I gave them all the opportunities. I tried to provide them with everything, whether it be sports, whatever they wanted to, I gave them those opportunities. Because what I did not have, I wanted them to have. I wanted them to be happy, I wanted to see them be happy, I wanted them to feel good and I feel I did a good job as a mom. In the back of my head, I had struggles and I had challenges.

Shawna Joynt: And, of course, historically as Indigenous individuals, there is abuse that we deal with, right? So, we typically lock ourselves and we hide things, and we do not let things out. And it goes on generation to generation. And there is no change. It is hard to break that cycle. And I wanted that change to happen. I wanted to break the cycle.

I did not want to see that carry on. I wanted there to be change for my boys. And so, there's just different photos there.

Shawna Joynt: There was a Deaf artist that I know very well, and I had -- and he is very famous in drawing a ton of marvel comics and I said would you mind drawing a portrait of myself with my kids as marvel characters? And so, he drew this, and it makes me feel great and he did a great job.

Shawna Joynt: And then moving forward, my father, of course, I was not very close.

We did keep in touch. But there was a lot of things that obviously were missed in life. I could remember hearing him from the hearing I had left. I remember him saying things. He was very straightforward. He was very soft-spoken. He was very honest. It was very factual. Just kind of laying down the facts all the time. I miss him every day. And I told my four boys that, you know, at some point in time, it would have been nice to have the opportunity to see him. And I know that my father unfortunately died tragically in an accident, and so, I mean, I had a lot of opportunities. I wanted him to be a grandfather and meet his grandkids and I wanted him to see the boys. I remember going to the funeral. It was packed!

It was packed. There were so many individuals there. And I thought, wow, so many people came to respect him. It was very inspiring to see that. And, after the funeral, I had met a lot of individuals. They wanted to know who I was. That I was the daughter, that I looked exactly like him, right? And that I had the exact same smile as him, so that was nice to hear and meet a lot of his friends. And he will always remain close to my heart as well.

Shawna Joynt: One of my best friend's partners as well, he became the stepdad to my kids.

He taught them things in life, life skills. He was great. He had passed away, unfortunately, through an accident as well. And those were tough times. Those were really struggling times, but we keep moving forward.

Shawna Joynt: I definitely wanted to continue to support my kids. And I remember one of them would always tell me that you can do what you want to do. Do not let anyone stop you. You make your story. They do not decide for you. And that was kind of on loop in my life all the time. And again, I mentioned that I have four children, four boys. One, the second oldest, was born and he has some stomach issues called gastroschisis. Which means that his intestines are kind of outside of the stomach and kind of floating around, so he needed surgeries to put those back in place again. When he was born, we recognized that and for 16 years he was doing well until one time he became fairly ill, and he was ill for a month, and we ended up going to the emergency five times. Doctors never listened to me. It was extremely frustrating. I saw my son suffering. He was not able to eat.

And on the fifth visit to the hospital, he was vomiting black. And I tried to tell the doctors that there is an issue that his stomach had flipped, and they would not listen to me. It was extremely frustrating. And we ended up going to the emergency again. And I tried to be patient, I really did. I know that the health care, the doctors, the nurses, I know they are busy, I know they are stressed, but at the same time, I felt like it was not fair. They kept discrediting me, saying no, it was extremely frustrating and at the end when they had tested him out, after that time, the doctor and nurse finally listened to me. And when I said that, you know, his stomach has flipped, there is something going on, they listened. Surgery happened. And everything went well. The recovery went well. The surgery went well. He ended up doing better.

Shawna Joynt: And then about a year, a week later, there was another issue. He ended up going to emergency again. The process was much quicker.

They realized it was serious. But it is life changing, right? He had to make those changes in life in order to make sure that he did not deal with those issues again. Okay, just looking back at my experience with that, I realized that the health care had failed, they failed Indigenous people, failing people who they just assume have that discrimination against Indigenous people and we do not all get fair treatment. And now my son, through his experience here, he has gone to university, and he is wanting to become a doctor. So, it's wonderful for him. Showing that Indigenous people can also do what they want to do when they put their minds to it.

Shawna Joynt: So first I joined Manitoba, the MDSA, Manitoba Deaf Sports Association. And I remember being on the board, not understanding anything here, the terminology that was used. For Manitoba Deaf Sports Association, the acronym, what is the acronym here? And they were very patient with me trying to let me know and taught me a lot here until I obviously

understood everything and now, I know all the acronyms and words that are used for the association here. And now I was vice president and now I have become president, so that is just a picture of me being vice president. Or sorry, with my vice president who is just a wonderful listener, supportive person, obviously we do have our disagreements at times, but it does come to a positive outcome which I think is important to recognize as well, so we are good for each other working together.

Shawna Joynt: And then shortly after that, I joined the CDSA, the Canadian Deaf Sport Association here. I thought I would try that. I thought it would be a good challenge. The knowledge I had here, I was accepted onto the board. It was very different. It was a great experience here and a good journey for myself. So then that picture there is with the executive director, they are French. So, the two of us, you know, a little bit challenging for communication-wise here! But I am trying to include now having an ISL, the Indigenous Sign Language here, so trying to include that in so it does make for communication to be a little challenging at times but it's a good learning process.

Shawna Joynt: And then I joined the Canadian Association for the Deaf as the Indigenous Director. So, I knew very little about at that point of Indigenous culture and background, but they felt that they were wanting to have me there, and it was a good challenge for myself. I think they needed somebody that was a leader, being able to help, so I thought, okay, that is something I could do. I felt confident I would be qualified. I am skilled, I have the knowledge. I have met a lot of Indigenous Deaf people across Canada and the north as well, so it has been a wonderful experience to see through. And then a little while later, I ended up becoming president and, wow, it is a very different experience being president! With the federal meetings, a lot of people that are included in the meeting, the workload is a lot. The emails are a lot.

Yes, it is a lot, but I feel that I am good at being president here. My mind and my heart and my soul are in it. Listening to different perspectives that come to the table. And now 2025, I will finish my term here at the Manitoba advisory committee here, so I am interested in continuing on that. It has been a good team. Again, everyone is such a good listener here. The different disabilities that come to the table and the different perspectives, many times I thought, oh, I've never realized that or thought about that before, so it's been beneficial for me in learning a lot. So, my experience and journey has led me to a lot of different Indigenous presentations you'd think here, but this would be the first time I've ever done a presentation like that in front of an audience. The community here, I think needs to have more information about Indigenous needs and the history and the culture. There is a lot of basic understanding, just at a surface level. A lot of people have asked at the time they felt they did not know a lot here, so I do believe that is important for educating everybody here. You can like me or not like me here, but the underlying importance is the education piece for everybody to understand. So, at this presentation, it was a good presentation. Everybody learned something. And again, it is just maybe basic knowledge here and they have a book to see and understand different Indigenous businesses here. And I thought that it was a very impactful presentation.

So, I know being a leader here, there is a lot of things, issues with things that you come across and have to approach. And so, with this presentation here, there seemed to be a lot of negative, you know, comments here about I do not have a lot of experience here. I am not having an Indigenous culture here. And my response to people who make comments like that is, well, where is there somebody that is able to help? There is nobody here, and I am able to help. I want to start this process and maybe later somebody that has a different understanding of it can come in and take the lead as well, but I am wanting to have that implemented here.

So being involved in Indigenous culture is very close to my heart, and I feel -- I made my decision here and thought, you know, you cannot tell me no! You are not able to say no. You are not able to say I cannot do that; you cannot tell me that. You know what, I grew up and I am not listening to that word "no" and I'm going to challenge myself and go forward with myself. So still learning a lot more about Indigenous culture here and Indigenous health. Sweetgrass and sage, there is just something -- it is my best friend, I feel. I am very emotional, and then I am smelling the sage and just being around it is a very empowering feeling. I work from home. Sometimes I am just drained a little bit at the end of the day here and I always have sage with me, and I will use it to just have a moment to, here you go, you can see it.

It is always near to me. I have a small dish in my office here and around the house as well.

Shawna Joynt: So, for many years, I did not really feel, you know, saying I was an Indigenous woman, being proud of saying that. I would say maybe about four or five years ago, I accepted my identity in being an Indigenous woman. I am involved in quite a lot. I am always constantly learning. And I just feel, for example, seeing the picture of the teepee here, I just feel very safe inside. I feel very free. It is a very freeing feeling here. It is a very emotional experience being in a teepee as well.

Shauna Joynt: And then, you know, after many years here, finally, I was able to see the ocean, and I felt just like a happy little girl in that moment! It was a pretty wonderful experience. And I just felt that connection even stronger, which is an amazing feeling.

Shawna Joynt: So, across Canada, Deaf communities, and hearing communities, obviously they are aware of the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and Two-Spirited.

Every child matters. So, what is the reason of this starting? There was a lot of questions talking about these two campaigns here, and so just having some information here. There are some projects I am wanting to go ahead that are just dear to my heart of inspiring me to do. And I feel like these two show a very powerful message, and it is just very important to understand. It is just a very dear and quite important thing to me and with "every child matters," since 2015, they have found 215 children in Kamloops. And I just feel like very edgy and emotional and tense from the middle of September to the middle of October. I just feel more sensitive, and I have noticed that increasing each year as the time goes on from that moment. So, I just feel there is a lot of negativity still around, and that just means that I still feel that there is more

bodies to be found. So, through the years here, I am a very open-minded individual. My heart is in the right places here.

Shawna Joynt: I have attended a lot of different conferences and learned a lot of different things regarding health, lots of presentations, taking in a lot of stories from elders, from youth.

And I volunteer to a lot of different places, so it has been very wonderful here. And I like to watch people make the teepee from start to finish. I do not want to leave; I am very fascinated by watching the experience thinking about how everything goes together and fits perfectly to support and make the teepee. And that's kind of how I feel like the health of the teepee is.

All parts have to go together to be whole. So, myself, I teach ASL here to Indigenous children up north. And I noticed that their learning and teaching is quite different. They are in smaller communities here. Obviously with Covid and everything there's a lot of trauma that has come from that, so I'm wanting to learn more of how to approach with a mental health perspective here and how to be able to teach these children and how they can all get a good rapport and good relationship as they're learning the language. So being president here of a Deaf organization here, I believe in that sense of belonging, community, working together.

There is one Deaf Indigenous person who had experienced some troubles and homelessness in their life, and they wanted to be able to show other people their experience and talk about that. And, like I said, I am a very open-minded person.

Just wanting to see what people have to say here. And you never want to put a judgment on somebody, you do not know their story and what they have all been through. So, every month, we kind of have a Deaf get-together. We do have hearing people coming to, but we get together to provide for the homeless, if there's food or clothing they need. It is a wonderful experience for all of us and we feel it is maybe a bit more of an understanding of what they are experiencing. It is wonderful that we get to see that and understand what is going on. Oh, I'm going backwards now.

Shawna Joynt: Okay, so through my journey, like I said, I have been on many different organizations and committees here. And I got to meet a very special person here, Justin Trudeau. That was not a prepared meeting here! I was in, like, comfortable clothing here as we flew in and then all of a sudden, I was in just jogging pants, nothing was formal. I did not look put together here, and I felt a little out of place here, and then just kind of figuring out here I should have maybe always make sure I wear nicer clothing! You never know who you are going to meet in those moments, but I had the privilege of meeting him.

Shawna Joynt: The other picture here, you can see the picture that has the table.

So, it is the Canadian Association for the Deaf. There were other organizations that had come together trying to see how we are able to partner together and work on things there. So, we have a national partnership that we have. I think it gives more power and able to take on things

with the government being together in partnership. Regarding Elections Canada, we currently have three Deaf on the committee, advisors that are helping to improve voting in Canada, trying to get accessibility better prepared for Deaf people. He was trying to learn sign, which was very good. I thought it was wonderful they were trying to learn that. The next picture in the middle with our famous interpreter, his name is Nigel Howard. So, I was pretty honoured to meet this individual. That picture was in Korea. There was a national Deaf association get-together there. It was pretty inspiring meeting this individual. He is a wonderful person, so I felt very blessed to be able to meet him.

Shawna Joynt: And then the other picture is -- I was a team manager for the North American Indigenous Games. So, I met a lot of Deaf people from there. And that was held in Nova Scotia. So, there was one Deaf individual. He was a soccer coach. And good for him that he was able to be a coach. My experience as a team manager for the Indigenous organization, it is pretty challenging to deal with coaches here. They do not have any knowledge how to work with a hard of hearing individual. And our relationship was pretty tough throughout that time there. I felt that individual was very rude towards me here. They thought I did not know what I was doing, and I was ignoring my duties, and I am saying I am a Deaf and hard of hearing person, you can't just talk so fast. I need to understand what was being said and what you are saying. So, you know, he had said sorry. He was told he had to say sorry, but I do believe he is a wonderful coach. He is wonderful for his team, but he is just missing that educational piece of understanding deaf culture and how to communicate when you're around a deaf individual. So, these are more projects that I have worked on over my years.

Shawna Joynt: So, in September, I had gone to Vancouver for the Canada Video Relay Service. There was a conference there. So, I was invited to have a short presentation, short and sweet, I like that! More talking about team commitment, working together and expanding on that. And so just seeing the success that you can get from being together and not having so many segregated communities but all coming together as one. And then you see, I have done video training for MAO, Manitoba Accessibility Office. So, there's videos to be able to learn Sign Language here. A few of my hearing friends said it looked really good and was wonderful. They were asking me a lot of questions that they were wanting more, so that's good positive feedback, and I appreciate that.

Shawna Joynt: I was at the first -- here you can see in this one picture, at the Indigenous National Youth, I was a director there. And so that is a goal for Deaf youth across Canada to see them succeed, so that was a really good experience as well.

Shawna Joynt: The other photo down in the corner here is a Deaf awareness project. And then the movie "CODA," C-O-D-A. I am curious, wanting to ask if you guys have seen that movie?

CODA? That is what it is called. I am just curious if any of you have seen that. Okay, a couple thumbs-up, okay. The children of Deaf adults, I had watched that. It was great. My son had said that that is interesting. That is what it is like? And I said, yeah, absolutely, that is exactly what it is like to be a Deaf adult. The way we sign, the way we understand things, the way we pick up on things as well. And it was a great thing to get that understanding, it was a great educational movie for just people who were non-Deaf. So, we do now have a group of individuals called the National Indigenous Deaf Cultural Group, which was, I believe, erected three years ago, or established three years ago, and two years ago, we hosted our first conference here in Winnipeg, Manitoba. And at that time, we wanted to show that nationally across Canada, we have individuals who have the skill sets to do the things, to educate each other. We know that there's people who are missing out on some of those cultural needs, and so this was a way for us to kind of connect. It was great. We saw everyone there, we appreciated the guests that came in, and we planned to do this again next year in Alberta, so I am looking forward to that. I have had the opportunity to meet a number of Deaf individuals just across different places, different platforms, different venues, and it's very inspiring to see them. They have different skill sets, different knowledge, and it is great, because these are individuals who are using Sign Language. And not only just American Sign Language, but Indigenous Sign Language as well. And so, I am hoping that moving forward that we have that opportunity to share that knowledge a little bit more freely with each other.

Shawna Joynt: So, these are just again additional leaders that we have coast to coast from east to west. And I just love meeting individuals wherever we go, whether it is for training, whether it is for a conference, whether it is just because. It is a great opportunity just to get out there and meet some folks.

Shawna Joynt: So, this past September, what I should say is annually, there is the International Week of the Deaf as well, which is also hosted in the third week in September. And so this year was a little bit different. This year, we had a Deaf flag. And with that, it was myself, I flew to Ottawa, and there we had a flag that was risen and we had -- again, it was only done temporarily. But we will make sure that we work on something that is a little bit more permanent that would be noticed across Canada during that week of the International Week of the Deaf as well. And when that was completed, and I had the opportunity to fly back home to Winnipeg, I arrived here and met the vice president of our association here as well. And, of course, I am very busy, and I know other individuals are extremely busy as well, but I think it was important to recognize the hard work that everyone had done in order to make this happen. It was not an individual effort, it was a complete team effort, so this is individuals across Canada to make sure that having our flag risen at Parliament was done.

Shawna Joynt: So now I have been working on doing some Indigenous Sign Language and producing some videos and figuring out what the best way is to make sure that this information gets across. And so, this is kind of my first project. You will first see me signing that into ASL and then into ISL, Indigenous Sign Language. So, enjoy, take a look. So, I am just going to

show you some family signs. This is mother in ASL, and this is mother in ISL. This is father in ASL and father in ISL. This is sister, brother, daughter, Son, grandma, grandpa. And you may have noticed that there are the five books just below the video as well. And there are some different illustrations there on the books as well. And I plan on doing a little bit more research in regards to some of the Indigenous Sign Languages that are out there right now.

Shawna Joynt: So, throughout my travels, I had the opportunity to meet a number of inspiring individuals. These are just a few of them that I have had the honour to meet, and I'm starting to build relationships with them and starting to have that dialogue with them. And it has helped me to continue to go, because I have heard their words now, and in the top, there's Dawn Birley, she's Deaf as well, she is a dancer. And I have had amazing conversations with her where I have built really great relationships and she has given me so much feedback, the relationship is just great. And just beside that is our Premier, Wab Kinew as well, and he notices there are issues and struggles within our community. And we have had some great conversations as well. And I love his humour and the discussions that we have together. And beside that is Nahanni Fontaine. And I have had one meeting with her, and I was blown away. From the moment she comes into the room, she was very optimistic. You get chills when she comes into a room.

And she is a leader for us Indigenous women. And she comes down and she sits, and she has a discussion, and she goes through the agenda, and when it was time for me to tell my story, I was able to sign. And she said that she wanted to see that more often, that we come into the conversation. And wanting to make sure that we have the right to have communication, and I agreed with her, and she agreed with me, and I think that we need to continue to move forward. And then at the bottom, you would see Cathy Merrick. And she had just recently passed away, which is unfortunate for the community, but I was very honoured to have met Cathy as well. And the relationship that we have had, and she is again just another very positive individual. Very positive. And it has always been helpful. And I think the thing that each one of them has done is, you know, the things that you are doing, keep going. It is something that I hear over and over again. Whether people try to pull you down, the importance is that you need to keep going. You will be successful. And so those words kind of stick in me, and that's kind of that loop that I have playing over and over again, because when there are hard times, I focus on those words to move forward in a good way. And so, my journey, my growth, I have more growing to still do. I have more journeys. I am still looking forward to those. It is still continuing. So, I have had opportunities to be a part of a number of different things. I have a book coming out in 2025 next year. That is the hope. I hope to expand a little bit more on some of the stories that I have told you today. And these are stories that come from my heart. These are my emotions. It definitely was not easy to put pen to paper to the stories that I have gone through. Some of the things that I had to reconnect with, some traumas that I had to reexperience again to remind myself that, Shawna, it is okay. You have gone through a lot of things in life, and you can continue to go through this, and you can make this book.

Darren Macdonald: Thank you, Shawna! Thanks for the presentation, and I think I speak for everybody on the call that your determination, your dedication, your resilience, are just really inspiring. And I cannot wait to read your book! I will invite Wendy back on the call because we do have some time for questions and answers. We can take a few minutes to do that. And then I promise we can get everybody off the call with extra time today. But I do not want to rush the question and answers if there are a few coming in. So, Wendy, what has come in so far?

Wendy Harrisko: Yes, so Shawna, we do have a question here. As an employer, what is important in terms of Deaf culture? And what should I know for dealing with employees who are hard of hearing?

Shawna Joynt: Well, that is a good question. We do have an awareness team, a Deaf awareness team now that is available that would be able to come down to your workplace and provide you with a presentation, to give you a little bit more of an understanding in regard to Deaf culture. However, I would say at the same time, if there is an individual who is at your work with that lived experience, approach them. I would say that if you are waiting for the presentation to come to you, learn Sign Language, some basic Sign Language, some ABCs. I think in your workplace, if you are having meetings, I think it is important to provide accessibility, so have an interpreter available for those people so they can participate. At your workplace, I think it is important, for example, that if you need to get somebody's attention at the other end of the room, it is okay to wave your hand at a Deaf person. Just some of those cultural things, it is okay to turn the light on and off. If you have monitors or screens in your building, have closed captioning available for them as well so they can be involved and feel included. So I think accessibility, making sure individuals can be included, making sure when there's talk or cross-talk happening across the office that you find ways to include that Deaf or hard of hearing individual so they're not just sitting there seeing mouths move and not know what's going on. And never assume, right? Never assume a Deaf person cannot read, that they cannot -- or that they can lip-read. Never assume. I think it is important to approach that individual and ask them you know what is the best method of working with you? How can we create an opportunity to make things accessible for you in the workplace.

Wendy Harrisko: Great. I think that is some really good advice there. And kind of goes along the lines of when in doubt, just ask! So, we do have another question here for you. So, looking back on your journey and where you are today, is there any advice that you would give your younger self?

Shawna Joynt: I think for sure I would say be proud of yourself. Be proud of the Indigenous person that you are. Be proud that you are hard of hearing. I think those are two things that I would tell myself. Without a doubt.

Wendy Harrisko: Great. So, we do have another question here. So, your book sounds really wonderful. And it sounds like it is going to be very impactful. When it is available, where will we be able to find it?

Shawna Joynt: I will make sure that there is an announcement, and I will make sure that people will know where they can purchase it. And I know next year seems like a -- it may still be some time, but I will make sure you are aware of where to purchase it.

Wendy Harrisko: Great! So, when it is available, let us know and we can put it in accessibility news so we can get the word out for you too!

Shawna Joynt: Definitely, yes, I will.

Wendy Harrisko: So, it sounds like you have had a lot of experience navigating the health care system. Do you have any advice for everybody? On dealing with those challenges.

Shawna Joynt: I had the opportunity to go in and teach a lot of medical students who are in medicine right now and giving them some examples. During the time that they are still in university. So, I say the same thing. Do not ever assume. I say make sure that a Deaf person does have the right to have an interpreter in hospital. A lot of individuals do not realize that. So, provide them with that opportunity to have the interpreters available to them. And the same advice that I would provide to your employer is just do not assume. Do not assume. Sometimes if somebody is hurting or struggling, listen to what their needs are. Obviously, the job is to try to make them as comfortable as possible, so whatever they need, try to provide it to them. And I think now we have a doctor -- well, we have a nurse, I believe, who is deaf or hard of hearing as well and they are going around right now educating as well. And so, they are in the education system. They are at University of Manitoba. And so, they are advocating for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals now. So, the challenge is though, you know, it is tough, right? For staff, new staff who are coming in the door have to learn this new information. So, I've done a lot of educating through a number of years, but I think it's important to provide that through information pamphlets, provide all that information to the staff that are there as well in regards to disability.

Colleen Watters, Manitoba Accessibility Office: This is Colleen Watters. I believe there is also a doctor who is Deaf.

Shawna Joynt: Yes, yes. You are right, there is. Her name escapes me right now, but, yes, we do have a Deaf doctor in Winnipeg.

Colleen Watters: Megan Jack, I think?

Shawna Joynt: Yes, that is it, DR. Megan Jack, yes. And Deaf individuals feel that relationship, right? Because they want to have that privacy and so having that ability to have a deaf doctor means that they do not need to have any barriers. They can just go in there and have that conversation with their doctor without having a third party in the room.

Wendy Harrisko: Great, thank you. So, we do have another question here from Sheila. So, she says thank you for the wonderful presentation. It was a very powerful journey. My heart goes out to you. Can you tell us what we need to do or know that we can better support the Indigenous deaf community?

Shawna Joynt: That is a good question. I think we have different individuals. Some people who want that help, but there's other individuals who do not want the help. And you may ask, and they may say no. I think it is important to just listen. To be there to offer support and help if needed. There are barriers in place, and so sometimes we need to remove those barriers. Sometimes individuals just do not want the support or help because they have trauma in their life and that perhaps is a frustration for them and so they do not want to have somebody else try to step into their life and take over and support them again. So, we need to be respectful of that. And just know that Indigenous individuals are still going through a lot. There is a lot of issues that they may be dealing with in life, and so just to be aware that they are going through things.

Wendy Harrisko: Great, some great advice there. So how do you -- sorry. What changes would you like to see in society to better support Deaf and hard of hearing individuals? So, what would be your ideal dream one day?

Shawna Joynt: I think a dream for any Deaf person would be a world where everyone can sign, and everyone knows sign language! And that is a Deaf world. That is a dream. But I think just more accessibility, you know, with TVs having accessibility on there, people talking, you would be able to have more Deaf involved on TV, more signing. I know Manitoba here is in the process of working and trying to make those changes, having the interpreting program, learning how to sign here. So, we are on the right track, but there is lots to go.

Wendy Harrisko: Okay, I think this is maybe one of the last questions we have here. Could you recommend a school or education program where you could learn ASL?

Shawna Joynt: So right now, in Manitoba here, we do have a few places where you are able to learn Sign Language. We do have the Red River College where we are able to learn Sign Language. I know there is a few more. I know the Deaf Resource Center. They would have a list of a lot more places where you could learn Sign Language here. There are a couple that are maybe more private contracted where you are learning that. But everybody has different schedules, different times, if you prefer in-person or remote. So, it is different. There are a lot of challenges with individual needs of everybody.

Wendy Harrisko: Great. And I think that wraps up all our questions, so thank you, Shawna, and I will hand it back over to Darren.

Darren Macdonald: Yes, thank you, Shawna, and thanks, everybody, for your questions and for attending today. I just want to also thank Vern Dano for kicking us off today and the staff at the Manitoba Accessibility Office, thank you for your hard work in organizing the webinar. Thank you to the interpreters and for captioning for doing a wonderful job. A reminder, we will be posting the recordings, so if you want to come back and revisit part of it or send people to our website, our website is accessibilityMB.ca. And the video should be up in a couple of days. Also a shameless plug, please subscribe to our newsletter for monthly updates and if you have any questions or feedback, please don't hesitate to contact us at our e-mail address, mao@gov.mb.ca. And lastly, we are planning another webinar event on December 3rd at 1:00 to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities. And we will be discussing the accessibility of Manitoba parks and the inclusiveness of Manitoba sport and recreation. So please go to our website for information and register for that. And again, thank you very much for joining us. Take care! And please spread the word about Indigenous Disability Awareness Month. Thank you for your time and have a good day!

Shawna Joynt: Miigwech!