



Disability Rights Promotion International - Canada

Funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

Community-university alliance working to establish a holistic monitoring system to address disability discrimination in Canada

December 2009

A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history...

- Mahatma Gandhi

A wealth of experiences and knowledge

DRPI Canada's 2009 Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of DRPI - Canada was held November 3rd and 4th at York University bringing together project leaders, co-applicants, organizational partners, students, and coordinators of the project's monitoring sites. In spite of the impending flu season, the meeting was attended by over 20 participants traveling to Toronto from as far as St. John's and Vancouver, making this year's meeting another DRPI success.

The first day gave each theme of the project (*monitoring individual experiences, monitoring media, monitoring policy and law, and monitoring survey datasets*) the opportunity to provide a brief presentation outlining its progress to-date, sharing stories of

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Closing the loop: Final training seminar in DRPI - Canada series

St. John's Disability Rights Monitoring Training

DRPI Canada, in collaboration with its local partner, the ILRC in St. John's and government partners, held two training events in St. John's related to disability rights and disability rights monitoring.



Photo by: Daphne Johnson

The first event was a one-day workshop on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, funded by Canadian Heritage. The workshop was attended by over 60 participants who appreciated the event as an 'excellent shared-leadership model', facilitators as 'highly knowledgeable, open to diversity and input, respectful to lived experiences', and training resources as

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'excellent, accurate information; complex material clearly presented'.

Eleven of the participants from the workshop on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights continued with the five-day intensive disability rights monitoring training to become a monitor. This seminar is intended to build capacity in local disability communities across Canada for monitoring human rights of people with disabilities. Involving lectures, role-play, team-building exercises and discussions, the training encouraged the participants to network and share experiences to facilitate working relationship in the field. Participants were given the opportunity to practice their interviewing skills with others in the group and with people with disabilities from local community. Right after the training, the monitors were ready for the challenges in the field, with the knowledge that their important work will bring unheard stories to light.

The St. John's monitoring training seminar was the last in a series of trainings held by DRPI - Canada to empower people with disabilities themselves to take ownership of disability rights monitoring in their communities. The other training seminars were held in Toronto, Quebec City and Vancouver.

Disability rights situation on the ground

Findings from two monitoring sites - Toronto and Quebec City

As we broach the 4th year of this project, the *Monitoring Individual Experiences* theme, working closely with its local partners, has come a long way in collecting and analyzing data about the human rights situation of people with disabilities on the ground.

Key Findings to-date:

- Across all domains of life examined - education, work, income security and supports, privacy and family life, social participation, information and communication, health, habilitation and rehabilitation, and access to justice – reports of denial and violation of human rights were more prevalent than access to and exercise of rights.
- Social participation is the most discussed domain where interviewees reported higher incidence of discrimination, exclusion, disrespect for difference and negative dignity.

These key findings will be used to improve the human rights situation of people with disabilities in Canada.



Workshop on ESC Rights, Quebec City. From left to right (front): Normand Boucher, Ginette Nadeau, Lyne Robichaud, Catherine Fortier, Jean-Michel Bernier; (back) Jean-Yves Dion, Monique Boudreault, Jacques Boudreault, Simon Toulet, David Fiset, Nathalie Nadeau. Photo by: Francis Charrier

success as well as challenges and lessons learned in order to assemble valuable pieces of information produced in each of the four themes of the project.

The second day of the meeting supplied the opportunity to work in break-out groups to consider other themes data and to strategize and create work plans relating to the next steps of the project.

The work that has been done to-date and the continued efforts of DRPI Canada were observed as significant to the current situation of people with disabilities considering that *“human rights monitoring in the advent of the Convention is an increasingly hot topic”* and that the type of data produced by the project proves authoritative evidence beyond the anecdotal *“giving the information a layer of credibility that it hasn't had in the past”*.

Using technology to build global capacity

DRPI's first webinar a success

On October 28th, DRPI with the support of Citizens with Disabilities Ontario put together its first webinar. For about two hours, Marcia Rioux, project Co-Director and Paula Pinto, Post-Doctoral Fellow, presented the work developed by DRPI, both in Canada and internationally, and interacted with participants from all over the world to answer their questions and comments. Over 60 persons registered for the DRPI webinar, a number considered high for this kind of event, signaling the heightened interest on issues of rights monitoring in the international community. And while communication technologies have still some room to improve, through this webinar DRPI was able to reach in real time countries as far as Sweden or Cambodia - an opportunity to strengthen global networks of knowledge and communication around disability rights which will continue to be explored in the future,

The Webinar power point presentation is available on the DRPI website at: http://www.yorku.ca/drpi/files/Webinar_2008_10_21.ppt

Getting voices heard

Focus groups with Monitors and Interviewees in Toronto and Quebec

Following the collection and analysis of individual monitoring data at two of its monitoring sites, Toronto and Quebec City, DRPI - Canada held its first focus groups in partnership with its local partners, the Centre for Independent Living Toronto (CILT), Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche en Réadaptation et Intégration sociale (CIRRIS) et le Regroupement des personnes handicapées de la région 03 (ROP 03).

After presentations of preliminary results from interview data, the monitors and invited interviewees (the latter all being people with disabilities), participated in a subsequent three-hour discussion and debate.

Participants reflected on the preliminary findings coming out of the analysis of monitoring data and shared their own views grounded in their in-depth knowledge and experience of the local disability rights situation. The discussion provided useful insights to contextualize and interpret the data collected, and offered recommendations to inform future monitoring projects. Participants highlighted the importance of reporting results to participants and discussed strategies of knowledge mobilization for a variety of audiences.

In their final remarks, the groups underlined the value of including in disability surveys not just subjects related to violations of rights, but questions directed at the positive aspects associated with the experience of disability to counteract dominant perceptions of disability as ‘personal tragedy’. Finally, participants emphasized the significance and the potential of rights monitoring to build solidarity across disability groups.

A message of gratitude

DRPI - Canada would like to take the opportunity to thank all project partners and participants for their commitment and work over the years. Your efforts will make a tangible difference for people with disabilities. We offer our sincere thanks and wish you all a happy holiday and all the best in the coming new year!