

# paraScope

SPRING 2021



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Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Inc.

**Saskatchewan Provincial Office**

311-38th Street East  
Saskatoon SK S7K 0T1

Phone: 306.652.9644  
Toll-Free: 1.888.282.0186  
Fax: 306.652.2957  
Email: [sciinfo@scisask.ca](mailto:sciinfo@scisask.ca)

**Regional Office**

130-335 Hoffer Drive  
Regina SK S4N 6E2

Phone: 306.584.0101  
Toll-Free: 1.877.582.4483  
Fax: 306.584.0008  
Email: [sciinfo@scisask.ca](mailto:sciinfo@scisask.ca)

Visit us on the web  
[www.scisask.ca](http://www.scisask.ca)  
[www.facebook.com/SCISask/](http://www.facebook.com/SCISask/)

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Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan  
311-38th Street East  
Saskatoon SK S7K 0T1

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## SPINAL CORD INJURY SASKATCHEWAN INC.

### MISSION

To assist persons with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities to achieve independence, self-reliance and full community participation.

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WEEK MAY 30 - JUNE 5 2021**





# Message from the Executive Director



SCI Saskatchewan Inc continues to prioritize connecting with our clientele across Saskatchewan especially during this Covid-19 Pandemic, where individuals are challenged with access to everyday services and persons living with disabilities experience magnified vulnerability. SCI Sask actively collaborates with SK Health Authority, Government of Canada, and Government of SK

to ensure your interests are best represented in precautions, vaccinations, financial resources and general implications in your life-journey through this unknown time.

Despite these pandemic challenges, SCI Sask continues to successfully move forward in many areas. Highlights of these initiatives are found within this Spring 2021 Parascopes, and include:

- Results of the Accessibility Survey conducted by the SCI Sask Research Support Officer
- Inauguration of the Virtual Platform of the Peer Mentorship Network
- SCI Sask LA Charities Post-Secondary Education Scholarship and SCI Canada Scholarships
- NeuroSK Partnership
- SCI Sask Best Business and Supporters Campaign

Accessibility evolution and momentum is gaining strides, and SCI Sask is in the very midst of the action through connectivity and alignments by:

- Collaborating with the implementation of national accessibility enhancements through the Accessible Canada Act
- Participating with the SK Government Accessibility Act Consultation and Development
- Members of the Accessibility Professional Network (APN)
- Delivering the SCI Sask Accessibility Strategy
- Relaunching the ChairLeader Campaign
- Engagement with McMaster University Accessibility Literature Research Project

Our Human Resource Team, in both the Provincial Office in Saskatoon and the Regional Office in Regina, is committed to deliver services and supports to individuals living with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities. The services include Rehabilitation, Education & Employment, Information and Navigation, and Community Inclusion & Awareness.

The [www.scisask.ca](http://www.scisask.ca) is informative and inclusive of our services, news, Covid-19 updates and much more. Be sure to visit us regularly. Best wishes and stay safe,

*Laurel J. Scott*

## Organizational Update



### Nigel Fernandez Client Service Coordinator

Nigel began with SCI Sask in August of 2020 in a term position of Research Support Officer. That role culminated in November, and then extended with a contract to complete the Accessible Survey project, which distributed over one thousand surveys in Accessibility of Services, Housing, Transportation, Hospitality (including Conference Centres, Hotels and Restaurants). A report of this project is included in this issue of Parascopes. Nigel, who shares that he is a person living with a spinal cord injury, has permanently joined the SCI Sask HR Team in February 2021 as a Client Service Coordinator. Nigel works from the Provincial Office in Saskatoon and supports over two-hundred clients in Saskatoon and Area.

### Patti Dunlop Client Service Coordinator

Patti joined the SCI Sask HR Team in a permanent position of Client Service Coordinator in March 2021. Previously Patti has worked in the Health field as a Licensed Practical Nurse, in the Educational field as an Educational Assistant, as well as in the Disability field as a Community Coordinator and Employment Services Manager. Patti is working in the SCI Sask Regional Office in Regina, supporting over two-hundred individuals living with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities in the Southwest of SK, as well as Regina and area.

SCI Sask is pleased to welcome both Nigel and Patti to the Human Resource Team.

### Departures from the SCI Sask HR Team

Christine van der Merwe left the Regional Office Team in December of 2020 to pursue other opportunities.

Colin Farnan departed the Provincial Office in March 2021 after a five-year tenure with the organization. Colin is pursuing other possibilities in his pathway, including self-employment in art work, and perhaps further education in the Accessible Arts field.

Aaron Wright completed his term position as the Peer Mentorship Network Coordinator and has moved into an HR Analyst role with SIIT. Aaron will remain involved with SCI Sask as our Fund Development and Event Coordinator.

*SCI Sask wishes these individuals well in their new endeavors.*





## SCI CANADA SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The **Chopnick Hilliard Scholarship** is open to any post-secondary student who has a spinal cord injury and who is living in Canada. There is one scholarship worth \$1,500.

The **Sun Life Financial Scholarship** is open to any post-secondary student with a spinal cord injury who is living in Canada, and who is also a peer support volunteer with one of SCI/CPA corporate members. There is one scholarship worth \$1,500.

The **Kirby Rowe Scholarship** is established in memory of William Kirby Rowe who provided outstanding and valued leadership throughout his career to advance access and inclusion for people with disabilities in Canada. One Kirby Rowe Scholarship of \$1,000 is available annually to a student with a spinal cord injury to pursue post-secondary education in fields related to management and leadership.

### How to apply?

Please Visit the SCI Canada  
Website at <https://sci-can.ca/>

**DEADLINE: MAY 31, 2021**  
**at midnight.**

Applicants must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible:

- The applicant must be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.
- The applicant must be attending, or will be attending, a recognized post-secondary institution in Canada.
- The applicant has provided a copy of his/her most recent two years of transcripts (unless the applicant has not been in school for the past five years).
- One letter of reference is required, recognizing the applicant's outstanding initiative, scholastic achievement and contributions to the community.

You may qualify for the.....

### LA Charities Post-Secondary Education Scholarship

Administered by SCI SASK to  
support Post-Secondary Studies

**Application Deadline:**  
**June 30 2021**

For more details please visit our website at: [scisask.ca](http://scisask.ca)

To apply or for more information please contact

Regional Office  
Toll Free: 1.877.582.4483  
Locally: 1.306.584.0101

Provincial Office  
Toll-Free: 1.888.282.0186  
Locally: 1.306.652.9644

You can also email us at: [sciinfo@scisask.ca](mailto:sciinfo@scisask.ca)

**Are you a Saskatchewan  
Student living with a Spinal Cord  
Injury or Physical Disability?**



# Handling the Pandemic Blues with Technology: What Have We Learned in a Year?

March 11 2021 marks the one-year anniversary since the WHO officially declared Covid-19 a global pandemic. The isolation has sometimes been overwhelming, especially for those extroverts who crave a social scene, or for many people who live alone and miss the daily trek to work, weekend dinner dates, or a Sunday afternoon worship service. We have missed concerts, sporting events, and extra-curricular activities. For some, we've even actually missed going to the grocery store!

But, on the other hand, what have we learned? We have learned how to do things differently. We have learned how to socialize in a different way, not necessarily better, but different. We have learned to utilize tools that are at our fingertips, that we would've never thought of using before. We've made connections that we never would've made. We have learned how to make work easier for people living with disabilities: alleviate transportation issues, improve upon accessibility issues, and manage constraints due to time consuming personal care regimes. And for many of the ways we have adapted, we can give credit to technology and the internet.

## Communication

Companionship is a basic human need. Technology has enabled us to see each other across miles. It's not the same as sitting across the table with someone, but it's more personal than speaking on the phone. And, people of all ages have suddenly started using these tools to be able to connect with other people. Developers have made platforms easier to access, allowing connections by a click of a button. Some popular options are:

1. FaceTime for iPhone or iMac users only or Google Duo for Android or Apple users
2. Facebook video chat
3. Google Meet-formerly Google Hangouts

## Entertainment

It is nothing new that the Internet is responsible for hours of entertainment, but over the past year people have given themselves permission to surf at their leisure without as much guilt as pre-Covid. Museums and zoos have opened virtual tours, offering glimpses of artifacts and animals people may not have had the opportunity to view otherwise. Suddenly you may take the opportunity to view a movie in real time with a friend in another province, play a Pictionary type game on Zoom or a web platform with a group of colleagues, or borrow a library book by downloading from your local chapter and a like-minded app. Some fun entertainment choices are:

1. Teleparty-formerly Netflix Party: Teleparty synchronizes video playback and adds a group chat to Netflix and other services. This can be used on Chrome browsers on desktop or laptop computers only. For extra fun, order your favourite movie food through a food delivery service and enjoy!
2. Scattergories on Zoom: A fun way to spend some time! Search "21 Best Games to Play on Zoom Right Now", and you will get some great ideas.
3. Libby: This app is useful if you have a library card. Access hundreds of available digital books. Returns are automatic, so no late fees, and you can easily put popular books on hold until they are ready to borrow.

## Physical Activity

If one positive thing has come out of the pandemic, it is the availability of access to participate in physical activity for people living with disabilities. The amount of information on the Internet has suddenly exploded. From accessing YouTube for pre-recorded videos, to being able to participate in real time, such as YouTube live videos, joining a Zoom group, or Facebook live, the options are vast. Some favourites of SCI SK clients are:

1. Saskatchewan's NeuroSask Active and Connected: Seated

a place of mind  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Determining limiting factors in the public use the natural areas for people living with some mobility disability.**

"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity"  
John Muir, Our National Parks (1923)



**Abstract:** There is increasing interest in the benefits of nature in society; several studies have revealed the importance of nature for health improvement. There are a limited number of studies about barriers and facilities for some specific population groups, such as **people with mobility impairments**. About 15% of the world's population live with some form of disability, of whom 2-4% experience significant difficulties in functioning; these figures will increase, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011). This study aims to provide information about visitation frequency, accessibility difficulties and knowledge of National Parks of the mobility impaired population. Data will be gathered through a survey of people with mobility impairments.

**If you are people living with (or even "experiencing") a physical or mobility disability, you qualify to take part in this survey. Which is being administered online via "Qualtrics" platform in the next link:**

[https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_cOrORihB9SNgHPL](https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cOrORihB9SNgHPL)

exercises with an added information session once weekly. Tuesday and Thursday afternoons via Zoom, geared toward people living with neurological disabilities. Registration required. (<https://rehabscience.usask.ca/neurosask/>)

2. Adapt to Perform: Featuring UK based Ben Clark, a personal trainer living with SCI. Live streaming Monday and Friday mornings via YouTube, or video library via YouTube. Cardio, HIIT, Resistance Bands, Yoga, and more on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
3. GymPossible: Featuring UK based personal trainers living with disabilities. Video library accessed on YouTube. Cardio, Push Cardio, Wheelchair TABATA, Resistance Bands, and more on Facebook and Instagram.

## Groceries/Meals

While many restaurants, fast food establishments, and confectionaries have economically suffered during the pandemic, the demand for food delivery has exploded. With that, many establishments that refused to use delivery services prior moved to this method. Whether using Uber Eats, or Skip the Dishes, you are sure to find what you are craving quickly and easily. Many restaurants offer curbside pick-up as well.

But, what about groceries, or homemade meals? Here are 3 options:

1. Instacart: Choose from a variety of local stores, and a personal shopper will pick up and deliver your items for a small delivery fee. In Saskatoon and Regina choose from stores like Costco, Walmart, Superstore, and more.
2. Skip a Beet Meal Delivery Service in Saskatoon: Choose from healthy, individual meals delivered straight to your doorstep. Choose from fresh or frozen options. Menu is posted weekly and delivered each Monday. Can be found on Facebook.
3. Hello Fresh: Step by step recipes and pre-measured ingredients delivered to your doorstep. You still do the cooking so the meals are fresh. Family friendly options for picky eaters available.

And, last, but definitely not least, technology is enabling us at SCI Sask to connect with you. We are excited to launch our Peer Mentorship Network 'All Comers' Gatherings, where we meet virtually with individual clients and their circle of support. To view dates and times, check out the Peer Mentorship Network calendar on [www.scisask.ca](http://www.scisask.ca) website.

If you have found another awesome way that technology has benefitted you over the last year send a message, or call and let us know! Knowledge is better shared!

Prepared by Delynn Bortis, CSC SCI Sask Provincial Office



## Help Create an Accessible Saskatchewan

Our government is developing legislation (a set of laws) to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities. This site gives you the opportunity to share your ideas and suggestions for the legislation. Your input will help ensure accessibility legislation meets the needs of Saskatchewan people.



### Phase One: Accessibility Legislation Engagement is Open!

Survey  
open  
Feb. 4 to  
Mar. 31

We want to hear from people with disabilities to create Saskatchewan's first accessibility legislation. Participate today at [accessiblesk.saskatchewan.ca](https://accessiblesk.saskatchewan.ca)

Share your vision for Saskatchewan's accessibility legislation at [accessiblesk.saskatchewan.ca](https://accessiblesk.saskatchewan.ca)

### Creating Inclusive Communities



To stay informed and be alerted to Phase 2 please visit the Saskatchewan Website at

[accessiblesk.saskatchewan.ca/register](https://accessiblesk.saskatchewan.ca/register)

You can also follow the [scisask.ca](https://scisask.ca) website for further information and the "findings results" towards the SK Government Accessibility Legislation Development.

# SCI SASK PEER MENTORSHIP NETWORK



The Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Peer Mentorship Network (PMN) connects people living with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities with trained volunteer peer mentors who share their familiarity and knowledge. The Peer Mentorship Network is a component of the SCI Sask Rehabilitation Services. This allows for the "right support with the right person at the right time".

Over the past several months, SCI Sask has been working diligently to improve upon the Peer Mentorship Network and grow a virtual platform for Peers and Peer Mentors to connect. In September, SCI Sask hired Aaron Wright to engage in the process to ensure the virtual platform was sustainable. Aaron has been working with external resources to ensure all virtual components are established. We are now pleased to announce we have an online Peer Mentorship Network Calendar (PMN Calendar). Here you will find important information on events, group gatherings, and more! To check out the PMN Calendar go to: <https://scisask.ca/peer-mentorship-network/>

Additionally, over 80% of the Peer Mentors within our Peer Mentorship Network participated in a test trial for the new virtual platform while obtaining Transformation Leadership Training. This training was provided by Dr. Sylvia Lee and engaged our Peer Mentors in a number of Transformational Leadership situations coupled with training surrounding Psychological Capital.

To initiate the **PMN All Comers Group Gathering**, SCI Sask will host the gatherings on the 4th Wednesday from March to June 2021. The gatherings will not be active for the months of July, August and December. This gathering, inaugurated on March 24 2021, will be open to all SCI Sask Clients and the link to these events can be found on our PMN Calendar. The time selected is 7pm to best facilitate attendance for all.

SCI Sask looks forward to your participation and contribution in these gatherings!



## PMN ALL COMERS GROUP GATHERING

Mark these 2021 dates on your calendars; reminders will be sent at the beginning of each month. A discussion on date and time options will be held during the first few gatherings, and alternate days and times may be considered for the fall restart.

**SAVE THE DATE**



### DATES

April 28 2021

May 26 2021

June 23 2021

### TIME

7 pm - 8:30 pm





**# A P N 2 0 2 1**

**Accelerating Access**

### #APN2021: Accelerating Access

On March 11th and 12th, the Rick Hansen Foundation hosted the Accessibility Professional Network Conference (#APN2021), bringing together over 500 delegates from around the world to engage in dialogue about current and emerging issues around accessibility in the built environment. Over 50 conference speakers engaged attendees, including The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Rick Hansen, Founder, Rick Hansen Foundation, and Caroline Casey, Founder, The Valuable 500.

Delegates were invited to reflect on how they would accelerate access when they returned to their

communities in the virtual “I Will...” wall. Responses were thoughtful as people spoke to their personal goals of making the built environment inclusive, advocating for accessible travel, and championing accessibility initiatives in their communities.

The Rick Hansen Foundation will continue to create awareness of the importance of equal access for everyone, everywhere. Learn more at [RickHansen.com/APN2021](https://rickhansen.com/APN2021).

### SCI Sask HR TEAM ENGAGES IN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID DEVELOPMENT

On December 17 and 18 2021, eight members of the SCI Sask HR Team participated in Mental Health First Aid training provided by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The course outlined the importance of mental wellness and how to best handle differing situations and environments that one may encounter. The HR Team members engaged with others from different organizations across Canada to improve their understanding of the components of mental health.

SCI Sask is recognizes the importance of ensuring our HR Team is trained to assist with the various needs and situations with our clientele across the province. Topics covered during the training included: depression, anxiety, psychosis, substance use problems, gambling problems, panic attacks, suicidal thoughts, and other mental health issues. If you or anyone you know is experiencing mental health issues, please feel free to contact the SCI Sask office to speak to a trained mental health first aider OR call the Canadian Mental Health Hotline at: 1-800-668-6868.



**NeuroSask**  
Active and Connected

NeuroSask is a free virtual seated-movement program for individuals living with neurological conditions. It is organized by rehabilitation specialists and runs at 2:00pm every Tuesday and Thursday throughout all of 2021. NeuroSask offers a 30-minute seated movement class followed by either a stretching session (Tuesdays) or an educational session (Thursdays). For more information and to register check out <https://rehabscience.usask.ca/neurosask/> or contact [neurosask@usask.ca](mailto:neurosask@usask.ca)

# Spinal Cord Injury in Uganda

## An inspirational story of Jairus Wanyera

Jairus Wanyera has a vision. Like many others living with a spinal cord injury, he dreams of a world of inclusion, accessibility and acceptance. He wants to move around in freedom, have access to equipment, and medical supplies. He has hopes of creating a national wheelchair rugby team. But, many of his dreams are more basic, more selfless. He wants to create a community for people living with spinal cord injuries in his country. He wants a rehabilitation centre, complete with trained medical staff, therapists, exercise and rehabilitative equipment, and just as importantly, a peer centred focus to adjusting to life after injury.

The youngest of 3 siblings, Jairus grew up in Uganda's capital city, Kampala. It was there that he received his education. In 2008, at 17 years old, he took a brief vacation to travel to a neighbouring city, where a fall from a rooftop caused a spinal cord injury that would change his life forever. The friends he was with had no knowledge of how to handle him, or why he couldn't move. Spinal cord injury was not a common event there, and education on how to move people after injury was not known to them. His friends managed to get him humped over the back of one of the local boda boda taxis (a motorcycle) and drove him 4 km to the nearest clinic, where no one on site knew how to diagnose him, or what to do for him. Thankfully, the clinic was owned by a group of doctors with more extensive medical knowledge than the general staff, and approximately twenty hours after his injury occurred, one of these physicians attended and was able to suggest a diagnosis. Jairus had laid on a bed in the clinic, with no medical intervention prior to the doctor arriving. He was then referred to a regional hospital in the area, where upon arrival, he was left unattended for two days. Again the medical staff had no knowledge of how to manage with someone with a spinal cord injury. His family was notified, but he was in a different city, and as his parents lived in poverty; travel was very difficult. They managed the 68 km trek from Kampala to Jinja City to get to Jairus, three days after his accident. Up to this point he had had no medical intervention; no catheters, no bowel attention, no skin checks. Nothing.

His parents were urged to raise funds to pay for an ambulance for a transfer. The country is very impoverished, and not even considered at a middle-income. There is no health insurance for people who cannot afford it. But, Jairus had to be moved to a facility more adept at handling his situation. Once enough funds were raised, he was transferred by ambulance to the Mulago Hospital, the main referral hospital in his country. He was admitted to a casualty ward, usually meant for people with minor fractures and injuries. They did x-rays, and no fracture showed up. This is where he would stay for one month. No medication, no intervention, and no staff knowledgeable in treating people with spinal cord injury. To warm his cold skin, hot water bottles were placed beneath his sheets, never acknowledging loss of sensation or temperature fluctuations that occur with a spinal cord injury. Those hot water bottles caused burns that would take six months to heal.

After a month in Mulago Hospital, it was suggested that



Jairus be moved to Main Hospital, where there is a spinal cord injury unit. Again his family was put in the position of having to find money to pay for his medical care. His mother had to bribe \$200 worth of cash so he could be placed on the ward. \$200 was a huge sum of money for a family below the poverty level, but she was distraught and wanted the best possible outcome for her son. She managed to raise the funds.

On the Spinal Cord Injury Unit at Main Hospital, Jairus was quick to notice that it was more of an educational ward, and less of a working specialty unit. Doctors from Canada would come and teach healthcare practitioners in the areas of physiotherapy and occupational therapy, but there were no experts there. Finally, though, a CT scan was suggested, and after 2 months of fundraising to have the procedure, a C5/6 compression fracture was discovered. Surgery was an option, but the time frame and the cost were too huge of obstacles to overcome.

At this point Jairus was regaining some movement in his arms, and as pphysiotherapy costs were high, and his family just could not afford it, he began on his own. He was very driven; he did not want to be fed, it was degrading to him. So he began to work on his bed, devising his exercises. He realized there were small things he could do to adapt. And





he started very small. He realized he could push a button on his FM radio, and that was a really big achievement. However, eating and drinking were two things that were not coming along very well. He did not want someone to feed him so he started to lose weight, and eventually developed ulcers in his stomach. He developed nerve pain, and felt like his body was on fire, but could not understand why pouring cold water on it did not take the pain away. He spent six months on that ward, realizing that it wasn't helping him. It was the same thing, day after day. No therapy, no medications to help with the pain. He asked to be discharged so he could go home.

Similar to many people, anywhere, upon returning home to their "new normal" after a spinal cord injury, Jairus felt isolated and alone. To add to that isolation, he had not been given the tools or knowledge to manage his regimes. He had not been taught how to manage bowel and bladder effectively. Many people felt that he had been bewitched, or cursed, so they stayed away. He had been ambitious in his studies, was an exemplary student and had dreams of becoming a lawyer. Depression set in, and there were thoughts and attempts at ending the pain. Other than family, there was no support; no one to call; no where to get information.

Accessibility was absolutely the worst. Not only accessibility in the environment, but accessibility to any kind of information, medical equipment, supplies, wheelchairs. Because of this, many people in Uganda are kept in their houses after injury, and only carried where they need to go because there is no access to mobility devices. Many of the homes don't have indoor toilets. Managing bowel and bladder is extremely difficult.

It was almost at Jairus's darkest moment that he begged a very good friend, that had stuck around, to get him a computer and access to the Internet. He had to learn about spinal cord injuries, and he needed to educate himself. Was there a cure? Was there anything else he could do? He read about stem cells, and all kinds of interventions. He also realized that this was probably going to be permanent. Fortunately, the third web page to pop up when he searched for spinal cord injury happened to be the SCI BC home page. He inquired about getting support and was quickly answered by peer support coordinator named Teri Thorson. A connection he feels was life-changing. Through her, he was put in touch with other peers, and he learned about managing his spinal cord injury. He strived to become resilient and work on being the best he could with life as it was now going to be.

Realizing that there was a large community of people with spinal cord injury in his own community, Jairus began speaking out about sci on his social media pages. He didn't know how many people he could reach, but he wanted others to know they weren't alone, and even though he no longer had friends, he knew that virtually there were people who were listening. He began to create awareness and was contacted by universities, who asked him to come in and educate students about sci and disability awareness. People with injuries began contacting him. They needed support and did not know where to find it. They had their pictures on their profile pages, and only showed their faces. There is a stigma attached to disability in developing countries that we do not experience on the same level in Canada. Jairus made sure to include full length shots, so people knew they were not alone.

Today, through mentoring peers in his country, Jairus believes that many people have been able to live with their spinal cord injury more positively. He is very proud to say that some individuals have returned to school, or are OK to go out in public because of the connection.



He is trying to form a Ugandan wheelchair rugby club and has a vision of starting a non-profit to assist people to access peer support and other services. He visits new patients in the hospital, sharing hope, and education ways to live life with their spinal cord injury. He has reached out to others with sci, worldwide through social media, but says that the compassion and support he has received from the Canadian Spinal Cord Injury community has been amazing. His focus is always on supporting the people living with spinal cord injury in his country. In his own words, "People are no longer that generous as before. People are selfish. But that doesn't have to stop us. They might not help us, but they will know that we exist."

As told to Delynn Bortis, SCI Sask Client Service Coordinator





**Together, let's take action to build an inclusive and accessible Canada**

**May 30 - June 5 2021**

**National AccessAbility Week (NAAW)** is an opportunity:

- ♦ to celebrate the valuable contributions of Canadians with disabilities
- ♦ to recognize the efforts of individuals, communities and workplaces that are actively working to remove barriers to accessibility and inclusion

We all benefit from a society and an economy without barriers to inclusion. When persons with disabilities can participate in all aspects of society, including accessing employment, resources and services, it enriches Canada's economy.

### **Let's change the way we think, talk and act about accessibility and inclusion!**

National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) takes place every year starting on the last Sunday in May. It is a time when accessibility and inclusion is promoted across communities and workplaces and a time to celebrate the contributions of Canadians with disabilities. It is also an opportunity to recognize the efforts of Canadians who are actively removing barriers and ensuring persons with disabilities have an equal chance to participate in all aspects of Canadian society.

The increased social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities has positive economic and social benefits, for persons with disabilities, for business, the economy, and society in general.

When persons with disabilities can access meaningful employment, resources and services, Canada's economy grows. Businesses have the chance to welcome more customers, service satisfaction improves and workplaces reflect Canada's diversity.

By bringing Canadians together to recognize the valuable contributions of persons with disabilities, we are strengthening the collaborative effort needed to create a country that is fully accessible and inclusive.

#### **A message from James van Raalte, Director General, Office for Disability Issues, Employment and Social Development Canada**

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities announced the annual National AccessAbility Week and indicated that this week is dedicated to celebrate, highlight and promote inclusion and accessibility in our communities and workplaces across the country. You can find all of the resources at the Accessible Canada website. We encourage you to follow @AccessibleGC on Twitter, Accessible Canada on Facebook and follow the hashtag #AccessibleCanada and #AccessAbility for the latest information.

#### **Services and information**

- ♦ Making an Accessible Canada for persons with disabilities  
Find out how communities, workplaces and services can contribute to a Canada without barriers where everyone can participate fully.
- ♦ Social Development Partnerships Program - Disability  
Supports projects that help persons with disabilities to participate in all aspects of Canadian society.
- ♦ Enabling Accessibility Fund  
Supports community-based projects across Canada aimed at improving accessibility and safety in communities and workplaces.
- ♦ Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities  
Contributes to projects that help persons with disabilities find jobs in Canada.
- ♦ Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit  
A taxable benefit that individuals may be eligible for if they are unable to work because of a disability.
- ♦ Registered Disability Savings Plan  
A savings plan to help participants save for the long-term financial security of a person who is eligible for the disability tax credit.

# What is Accessibility?

An SCI Sask Survey Evaluating the Effectiveness of Accessible Services Throughout the Province of Saskatchewan. Prepared by Nigel Fernandez, SCI Sask Research Support Officer.

While past literature on those living with a physical disability has revealed mixed results on measures of accessible services, very few have focused on the delivery of these services throughout the province of Saskatchewan. Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan primary goal in conducting Accessibility Assessment Surveys was to identify any gaps in the delivery of accessible services and ultimately provide recommendations to the various industry sectors, entities, organizations, government and/or institutions involved. More specifically, this brief survey was initiated by evaluating clients' needs and has identified four sectors of poor access as a result. These included Housing, Transportation, Hospitality, and Event/ Recreational sectors throughout the province of Saskatchewan. In response to this, Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan seeks to assist people living with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities to achieve independence, self-reliance and full community participation. In fact, a central part of conducting these surveys was to fully understand client needs, struggles, experiences and barriers relating to access. By evaluating these four key areas that impact individuals daily, Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Inc, seeks to remove these barriers and more importantly, create an inclusive community.

## People living with Physical Disability Surveys

Demographics: Client surveys were designed using a variety of self-reported questions that included multiple response answers, open ended responses and Likert/ rating approaches. Participants were recruited from November 1st 2020- December 30th 2020 by mail. Diligent attention was paid to informed consent, respect for rights, dignity, justice, confidentiality, and concern for well-being was maintained. During this initial phase, Spinal Cord Injury had 18 participants out of a targeted population of 500. 6% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-34, 17% were between the ages of 35-54, 72% were 55 or older. 28% of respondents identified as being a visible minority and 72% did not identify as being part of the visible minority population. All participants live in either a rural town or city. 28% of participants reported being single, 28% were separated, 17% were common law, 11% were married, 11% were divorced and 6% were widowed. On scores relating to range of income 0% earned below \$10,000, 44% reported earning \$10,000 - \$35,000, 44% reported earning \$

10,000 - \$35,000. While 11% of respondents reported earning over \$70,000 and the remaining 1% had no response. On reports of education completed, 11% reported finishing high school and 89% reported with at least some post-secondary education. On reports of current housing accommodations, 18% living in a condo and 63% reported living in a house. In regard to current living arrangements 72% own their home, 22% rent and 6% are classified in the other category. Of all respondents, 56% were male and 44% were female. 83% of participants identify as having a severe disability while 33% report having a moderate disability and 0% report having a mild disability. Of all test subjects, 22% report being active in the work force, 11% report being on social assistance, 28% receive a Canada Pension and 6% primary source of income was student loans. In contrast to this, on scores of preferred housing, 6% prefer living in an apartment, 22% prefer living in a condo, 11% prefer living in a duplex, 11% in a group and 33% expressed a desire to live in a home. In fact, 83% of subjects prefer to own their own home while the remaining 17% prefer to rent. All participants reported significant levels of barriers to access relating to clothing stores, grocery stores, medical clinics, leisure centers, medical clinics and parking lots at an overall average of 26% of the time. In relation to housing conditions, many find do not feel they can function with safety, independence, and dignity. 44% said always, 44% said never, 6% said most of the time and 6% chose not to respond. A typical finding was that many participants reported feelings of isolation due to a severe lack of accessible services in rural areas.

## Sector Surveys

### Methods and Results

All sectors were compared with current CSA built environment guidelines. Accordingly, a three point scoring system was utilized in order to score how accessible a company or service is. In the Transportation sector, Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan surveyed 6 out of 54 Transportation companies throughout Saskatchewan. This included both data from rural and city communities as well as one airport. In fact, the majority of data relating to city transit revealed almost 100% of accessible service compared to 78% of rural transit being inaccessible to those living with a disability and require a wheelchair lift. Only 22% of rural communities surveyed report having an operating wheelchair lift. One airport was determined to be on average of 72% accessible out lined by the CSA standards.

The Hospitality sector was found to be accessible.

5 out of 277 surveys were obtained. One limitation was that only one of the five surveys were in a rural setting which likely has a greater impact on how reliable the data obtained is.

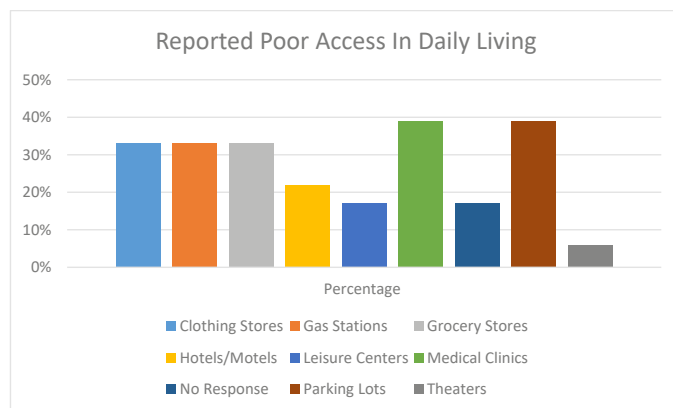
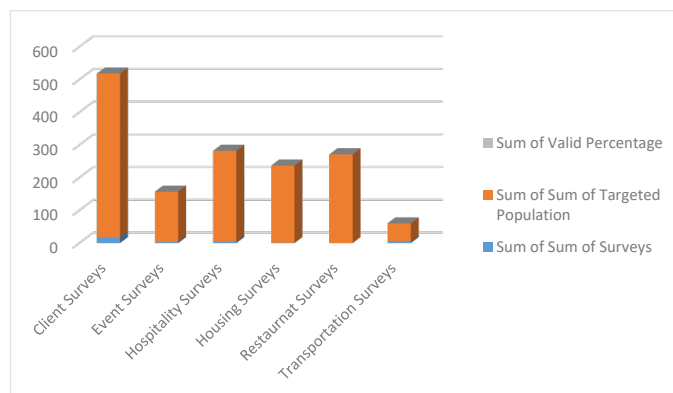
The Events sector also has its limitations. 4 out of 154 surveys were obtained which included data from both a rural and city setting. There is a substantial discrepancy in this sector. For example, in rural event centers, on average 61% are considered accessible while on average 86% of event centers are considered to be accessible.

The Housing sector is one significant area of concern throughout Saskatchewan. Only one survey was received out of a target population of 234, suggesting very little is available to those living with a physical disability. More importantly, accessible housing is not considered affordable by the CMHC standards throughout Saskatchewan. While 72% of clients surveyed did own their own home, this is significantly limited by the lack of participants and the fact that most respondents are 55 or older and may have not had their injury for the duration of their life. Because of this discrepancy, respondents over the age of 55 may not have experienced the same barriers to employment, low income and education which is strongly correlated with increased levels of support in the housing sector. Despite the poor response, social housing, home builders, rental companies and private landlords were included in this survey.

Out of 271 surveyed, no one from the Restaurant sector chose to participate in this survey.

In Summary, Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan conducted Accessibility Assessment Surveys in the areas of business, housing, hospitality, transportation, and events sector with a very poor response rate that directly impacts the reliability and validity of this study. Because most of the responses that were received from clients were in the age group of 55 or older, many may have not had a physical disability for their duration of their life and therefore may have not experienced the same low levels of income, barriers to educations and employment. Another limitation is that while many of these industry sectors were compared to the current CSA Built Environment guidelines and given a score based on a three-point scale, it was self-reported and not actually measured in-person for accuracy. However, the data captured reflects a significant discrepancy of accessible services in rural communities when compared to a city community. In fact, many individual respondents (clients) expressed high levels of frustration, stating that there are very few accessible services in rural communities. A common complaint was that many buildings in both city

and rural communities are not up to building code standards and that appropriate enforcement of these measures are not in place. Accessible housing on the other hand, continues to be a very large problem for the majority of people living with a physical disability. Event centers demonstrate to be most inclusive in city communities while communities and just barely or sometimes not at all in meeting an acceptable standard in rural communities thus, making the quality of life drop significantly to those without a disability. Transportation in many rural communities does not offer (in many cases) transit to the disabled community which also contributes to a strong sense of isolation and lower sense of wellbeing. This contrasts with larger city centers, that offer almost 100% accessible services and are associated with a much lower sense of self reported isolation. More research is needed, however, it is clear that rural communities continue to struggle when it comes to accessing supports and services within their community.



## Upcoming Events

- ♦ 2021 SCI Sask 2nd Annual Golf Tournament
- ♦ 2021 SCI Sask Wheelchair Relay

Watch for updated on SCI Sask Facebook and Website





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## Letters to the Editor

To play at a playground you do not have to be rich, nor poor; young or old, gay or straight, or of a particular race. To play in most parks in Canada, a person just needs to be able-bodied.

Play is an essential component in the development for all children. A playground is a space in which to foster growth and development. It provides opportunity to engage, interact and bond.

A child cannot avoid recess. The cultural and social impact is harmful to the child on the sidelines but also to the children observing. An accessible park allows for children to play side by side. These magical moments are ones that change culture, and perceptions of disability. Simply put, its life changing.

There is no code or law to require accessibility in parks. In contrast all parks in the USA have been required to meet American Disability Act (ADA) standards since 2010. These standards require an accessible surfacing material that meets ASTM1951 and at least 50% of all activities to be accessible. In our environment, engineered wood fiber fails to comply

with ASTM1951 at a remarkably high rate.

Without an enforceable guideline, parks are being built with ramps leading to stairs, ramps to woodchips and inclusivity has become a buzz word for park salespeople.

We must advocate to create real enforceable guidelines for parks. No child should be left to sit on the sidelines.

### SARAH TURNBULL

Registered Interior Designer, Design Director  
[www.bespokeinteriordesign.ca](http://www.bespokeinteriordesign.ca)



Authored by Sarah Turnbull; Photo of daughter Blake and mother Elizabeth Turnbull

#### Disclaimer:

While all feedback is welcome, the Editor reserves the right to decline to publish. SCI Sask does not necessarily support nor endorse opinions expressed in letters to the Editor.



### SCI Sask Membership

SCI Sask offers annual memberships that assist to increase our organization's capacity and services throughout Saskatchewan.

Our membership includes the following categories:

- Founding Member is the Canadian Paraplegic Association, and its successor of Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Inc.
- Honorary Member status is conferred by the Board of Directors to individuals whose contribution are supportive or consistent with the objects of the corporation; Honorary Members are not entitled to vote at any meetings of the corporation nor subject to fees
- Ordinary Members may be clients living with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities, Board of Directors or general public; ordinary members shall receive notice and be eligible to vote at meetings of the members, and shall pay annual membership fees



Members who are individuals living with spinal cord injuries or other physical disabilities are eligible for the additional benefits of:

- SaskTel Cellular Plan
- SGI Vehicle Rebate

All members receive the SCI Sask Parascopes News Magazine. Annual membership fees are \$40.00 and extend from April 1 to March 31. To become a member of SCI Sask, and for more information, contact the Provincial Office at [sciinfo@scisask.ca](mailto:sciinfo@scisask.ca) or call 306.652.9644.



### SPINAL CORD INJURY SASKATCHEWAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board is seeking interested community-minded individuals to become a member of the SCI Sask Board of Directors. The Board of Directors promotes inclusion of individuals living with a disability in decisions, consultations and policy-making. Demonstrated qualities that contribute to the success of the Board include:

- commitment of time, interest and willingness to serve
- outstanding communication and interpersonal skills
- good judgment
- integrity and a strong sense of ethics
- the skills to work effectively with others
- a willingness to learn and grow

Please contact the Nominating Committee Chairperson Lynn Archdekin at [lynn.archdekin@scisask.ca](mailto:lynn.archdekin@scisask.ca) or call 306.652.9644 for additional information.

The SCI Sask Vision, Mission and Services are found on our website at

[www.scisask.ca](http://www.scisask.ca)







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## RECOGNITION TO SCI SASK 2020-21 FUNDERS, SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

### Thank you to our 2021 SCI Sask Supporters

Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan thanks our 2021 SCI Sask Supporters! These organizations have committed to improve the wellbeing of Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Clients by ensuring services are available through generous donations to the organization!

### Thank you to our 2021 SCI Sask Best Business

Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan extends a thank you to our 2021 SCI Sask Best Business! These organizations have committed to improve the wellbeing of SCI SASK Clients by ensuring services are available and to assist with changed aspects of individual life-journey and challenges for people living with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities by donating a portion of their proceeds to our organization.



<u>January</u> N/A	<u>February</u> N/A	<u>March</u> N/A
<u>April</u> Available for your business!	<u>May</u> 	<u>June</u> Available for your business!
<u>July</u> 	<u>August</u> Available for your business!	<u>September</u> Available for your business!
<u>November</u> Available for your business!	<u>October</u> Available for your business!	<u>December</u> Available for your business!

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Day of Giving!

**When:** May 27, 2021 from 8:00am – 6:00pm

**Where:** Across Saskatchewan; Hosted on Rawlco Radio

**Saskatoon:** Rock 102FM      **Regina:** Jack 94.5FM

**What:** The Day of Giving is a community fundraising activity where individuals, families, friends, businesses and co-workers come together in support of individuals with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities.

**Why:** Through a contribution, you support the SCI Sask goal of enhancing an inclusive and accessible community for persons living with a disability. All donations are greatly appreciated during this time of need and are eligible for a tax receipt.

**Contributors:** To become a corporate contributor for this event please contact [sciinfo@scisask.ca](mailto:sciinfo@scisask.ca) or [aaronwright@scisask.ca](mailto:aaronwright@scisask.ca)

### Ways to Give

For any organization wishing to sponsor, donate, or contribute to a campaign or event, please email [sciinfo@scisask.ca](mailto:sciinfo@scisask.ca) for more information or see opportunities on [www.scisask.ca](http://www.scisask.ca)

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