

## A Seat at the Table | eLearning (Transcript)

Hello everyone. My name is Wendy Humphrey and I work with Abilities Manitoba.

Welcome here and thanks for joining me in this e-learning video where we will discuss supporting people to be heard and engaged. We call this video A Seat at the Table.

For decades, people with lived experiences who rely on services and supports have said – **Nothing About Us Without Us** when it comes to human service system **planning**, implementation, and efforts to **make improvements** so people can experience and live a good life.

**Perhaps** you have heard it said before Nothing about us without us but has it resonated with you and impacted the way you support and engage people?

**Nothing** about us without Us became the rallying call for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and it **speaks** volumes of the conviction that people with lived experiences know what is best for their lives and must be included and heard in all decisions that impact them no matter what table they are sitting at.

This could be at the dining room table when deciding what to eat, who to invite, and what topics of conversation to engage in.

This could be at the boardroom table in organizations where decisions are being made that influence policies, procedures and practices that directly impact the people they serve.

This could be a seat at the government tables where people can advocate for the resources and supports they need based on how each person defines quality of life.

For some people nothing about us without us means being involved in decisions that institutions like banks and health care systems make that impact people's rights,

People want to be included in decisions that influences employers and business owners when hiring people with lived experiences so people are paid a fair wage and valued for their reasonable contributions.

**It's about being included and having a say in** substitute decision making practices and ensuring people's **priorities, preferences and perspectives** are being solicited and acted upon especially if the substitute decision maker is the Public Guardian

and Trustee. And if that is the case, how are we supporting people to become their own decision maker again or at the very least support people to build natural support networks so they don't need to rely on systems who don't know them but make decisions on their behalf?

Nothing about us without us means having influence in **the direction** our politicians take when they hear the amplified voices of people saying

**Disability Matters** Vote, accessible environments matter - ask us for our opinions – we have lived experiences **and closing the Manitoba Developmental Centre matters because an institution is not a home.**

**People with lived experiences** have already started a movement and their voices are being amplified. People First groups and self-advocates of Manitoba and Canada are in court rooms and before the senate and overflowing the atrium in the legislature building – adding their voice to the conversations about disability rights, ethics, and validation.

**People** are making history so other parts of history do not get repeated and **that outcomes result in** equity, inclusion and the value of all people.

**People** with lived experiences are **exercising** their rights and holding people accountable.

And it is **time for us** to rise to the occasion in our organizations and **empower** people with an **invitation** to be in the room **fully** included and engaged not only at the dinner room table but at the **boardroom** tables too and at every table in between where decisions about people with lived experiences of disability are being made. History shows that people have been excluded from these tables and it's time the tables were turned so people are front and center involved in conversations that matter to them. Let's never forget who the table belongs too.

**So**, what can **we** do to ensure that everything about people is done with people?

No matter your title or role, we all have a responsibility in supporting people to be heard and engaged in decisions both big and small. It all starts with the ask.

How do we know what's important to a person without first asking and how do we know how to support people in this without acting and advocating with and for people because of what we heard – they are the voice and we are the megaphone in our actions and advocacy. So, if we are going to ask then we must act.

In the e-learning video on Supporting Choice and Control, there are suggestions on how you can encourage people to make choices and decisions everyday – the

more times people make choices and decisions, the more they develop muscle memory and are better prepared, equipped and confident to make bigger decisions in the future. Always take a person-centered approach. Encourage and empower people to think and dream big. Help pp to develop skills and make valued contributions. Support people to be advocates and have a voice. Never engage in talking about them without them.

If you support people who are members of working groups, committees and board executives find out how you can help them to be successful. Perhaps they need support in knowing what to expect, what to wear, showing up on time, practicing their parts and developing that muscle memory.

It takes leadership in the organization to support people to have a seat at the board tables in your organizations. It's critical that people not only have a seat but are active members with meaningful involvement at the board level tables including organizational working groups and committees.

The National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems recently developed a best practice guide to assist organizations in effectively engaging people who receive services in work groups, public policy and decision-making processes. The guide details five strategies to help agencies directly

involve people in work groups and teams engaged in system planning and improvement. Here is a link to the guide. Check it out if you are interested in engaging people at these tables. The benefits are so worth it.

I would like conclude this e-learning video with a quote from Joe Gerstank. He said “If you don’t intentionally and deliberately include, you will unintentionally exclude.” Such a powerful message.

We can all adopt the mantra nothing about us without us. May it be your guide as you go forth listening, engaging and advocating with and for people to have a better life.

Thank you for time.