



**International Day of People with Disabilities (IDPWD)** is a United Nations-sanctioned day that is celebrated internationally on 3 December. IDPWD is just one day on the international calendar, yet it symbolizes the actions we should take every day, in order to create diverse and accepting communities. The intentions of IDPWD are to recognize and value the diversity of our global community; to understand and learn from the experiences of people with living with a disability; to look towards the future and the creation of a world where a person is not characterised by their disabilities, but by their abilities; and take on a commitment to create a world characterised by equal human rights.

**Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences (PCU-WHS)** celebrates IDPWD day alongside people, organizations, agencies, charities and places of learning worldwide. People with disabilities are still amongst our most vulnerable community members, often living in poverty with very limited access to social and economic opportunities. The University continues to promote, educate and support the implementation of work reintegration programs and also support the hiring of persons with disabilities in order to create equitable, accepting and diverse communities.

*"The Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences is committed to the integration of disabled workers into the workforce through advanced education and research. The University offers online post-secondary and continuing education programs in Disability Management and Return to Work practices. These programs equip employers to create opportunities for those facing barriers to their employment as a result of their differing abilities. In recognizing December 3, 2020 as International Day of People with Disabilities, we join an international movement that is building awareness for the need for inclusive and accessible societies and workplaces."* The Honourable Wayne G. Wouters, PC, OC, Chancellor - Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences

According to the WHO World Report on Disability, 15 per cent of the world's population, or more than 1 billion people, are living with disability. Of this number, it's estimated 450 million are living with a mental or neurological condition—and two-thirds of these people will not seek professional medical help, largely due to stigma, discrimination and neglect. The 2020 IDPWD theme 'Not all Disabilities are Visible' focuses on spreading awareness and understanding of disabilities that are not immediately apparent, such as mental illness, chronic pain or fatigue, sight or hearing impairments, diabetes, brain injuries, neurological disorders, learning differences and cognitive dysfunctions, among others.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, isolation, disconnect, disrupted routines and diminished services have greatly impacted the lives and mental well-being of people with disabilities right around the world. Spreading awareness of invisible disabilities, as well as these potentially detrimental—and not always immediately apparent—impacts to mental health, is crucial as the world continues to fight against the virus.

The University has long been supported by Gord Johns, MP. Since 2015, he has served as the New Democrat Member of Parliament for the federal electoral riding of Courtenay-Alberni in the House of Commons of Canada and has seen firsthand amongst his constituents the challenges and barriers faced by peoples with disabilities.

*“The Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences provides much-needed education, resources and advocacy to inform and empower employers to better accommodate workers with disabilities. I’ve followed and supported the university for many years, believing that educational programming and professional certification are key steps in the journey towards a more accessible society. Persons with disabilities are amongst our most vulnerable citizens, and are at increased risk of falling into poverty. On International Day of People with Disabilities we are reminded that a universal understanding of Disability Management and Return to Work best practices is still lacking in Canada, and the work of PCU-WHS towards providing a consistent and standardized approach continues to be hugely significant for those living with disabilities and experiencing greater difficulty accessing opportunities in employment.”* Gord Johns, Canadian Member of Parliament for Courtenay-Alberni



Photo L to R: **Gord Johns** - MP, Courtenay-Alberni, **Jody Thomas** Deputy Minister of National Defence, **Wolfgang Zimmermann**, OBC, President of PCU-WHS, **Hon. Scott Fraser**, former Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and former MLA Mid-Island Pacific Rim

In 2020, employers are focused on adjusting their work practices to comply with COVID-19 public health orders, and an unseen impact of the pandemic has been a decline in willingness to accommodate the return of an ill or injured worker. This further illustrates that people with disabilities are not offered consistent and sustainable support in the workplace. Now more than ever, we need to work together in identifying and addressing the marginalization, inaccessibility, exclusion and discrimination that many people living with disabilities face.

Sources: <https://idpwd.org/> and <https://www.pcu-whs.ca/>



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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



PACIFIC COAST UNIVERSITY  
FOR WORKPLACE HEALTH SCIENCES