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I am not a status Indian but a Metis. I was born in the United States. I have four healthy sons but I am a single parent now because my husband died. After his death I moved up to Canada with my children to work for a real good friend of mine, an eye doctor. I came to Canada because I wanted to live in or near the bush. I wanted to be among Native people who still practiced their traditional way of life so my children could grow up understanding the old ways.

After what I had heard about Canada while still in the States I was surprised to find there is discrimination here too. It wasn't like in the States, but more subtle. For example, a lot of people I knew were willing to give me furniture or food or clothing but they never would come over to share a cup of coffee or visit. I finally realized that I was their charity case for that time. It wasn't very long, however, before I found lots of friends among the Native people. That's one of the beautiful things about the North. The people here didn't see me as a blind person. They saw me as a friend and someone who could help in the community. I don't think I'm exaggerating about that.

I am termed legally blind. That means I have just enough vision to keep from bumping into things. This

has been the case since I was born. I feel right now like I have two disabilities; one because I'm blind and the other because I am a Native. The reason for this is the problems I face in getting services that I need. If you live in a big urban center or have lots of money, you can get most of the services that you need, but most Indian people live in rural areas and here the services are just not available. An additional problem is that most Native people don't even know what is available. No one has bothered to tell them and they don't like to leave their small communities to go to big centers like Calgary or Edmonton for training. If you've grown up all your life surrounded by beautiful trees, water and blue skies then are plunked down in a noisy, crowded, dirty city, it's pretty scary. Even people who are perfectly normal, in terms of health, don't want to go out to Edmonton by themselves. You see, in the small settlements people are very close. Extended families are real important and a child grows up with a real sense of belonging. If he has problems, say with his mother drinking, there is always an auntie or a grandma to go to. At least this is the way it used to be. Now it is changing somewhat as there is more white contact in the North.

The attitude in most Native communities toward disabled people is good. They feel a great community responsibility to take care of a disabled person. This is good in the sense that a disabled person grows up feeling like he belongs and is not an outcast. It is bad in a way because the community will always take care of him and there is no need to try new things or to try to achieve a better life for himself. A disabled person needs to know what is available in the way of services, but he also has the right to live in his own lifestyle, and at present that is not possible. If a person does not wish to

