

STATEMENT ON TIM CRATCHIT AND THE REPRESENTATION OF DISABILITY ON STAGE

In Charles Dickens' story *A Christmas Carol*, the character "Tiny Tim" is the disabled son of Scrooge's overworked and underpaid clerk, Bob Cratchit. "Tiny Tim" is a disability stereotype in popular culture, the legacy of the frail boy with a crutch and a "sweet innocent" meant to draw pity from both the reader and Scrooge himself.

The Citadel Theatre recognizes the importance of authentic representation of different bodies and abilities on stage and in the stories we tell. We understand that it is our responsibility to move away from disability tropes or caricatures in our production of this classic tale.

Thanks to the consultation and guidance of numerous disabled artists and advocates, playwright David van Belle, director Daryl Cloran and the cast are working to ensure our "Tim" has independence, agency, and is a well-rounded character that is not defined by his size or disability. This is why we call him "Tim," and not "Tiny Tim."

We urge our audience to consider the same shift in language.

As we look to this production and future versions of *A Christmas Carol*, it has been our priority that an actor with lived experience of disability and/or chronic illness be sought to play "Tim" in our productions of Dickens' classic story. In 2022, Tim will be played at most performances by Elias Martin, a young disabled actor from Leduc.

Models Of Disability

While person-first language ("people with disabilities") is commonly used in Canada, the Citadel Theatre chooses to use language in our materials that reflects the social model of disability, versus the medical model of disability. This is a reflection of our commitment to removing barriers to Deaf and disabled people's involvement with Citadel Theatre.

The **social model of disability** understands disability as created by inaccessible architecture, policies and attitudes that exclude disabled people from full participation in society. The social model of disability says that people are disabled by barriers in society, such as buildings not having a ramp or accessible toilets, or people's attitudes, like assuming people with disability can't do certain things.

The **medical model of disability** says people are disabled by their differences, and looks at what is 'wrong' with the person, not what the person needs. We believe that the medical model of disability creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice and control in their lives.

The **social model of disability** helps us recognize barriers that make life harder for people with disability. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers people with disability more independence, choice and control.

Removing Barriers

To be truly inclusive for disabled artists takes time, energy, and investment in reimagining building structures and creative processes; it must be done thoroughly and mindfully to ensure barriers are removed to provide a welcoming and effective working space for all.

Older buildings like The Citadel Theatre are filled with significant barriers to participation for disabled artists and audience members alike, from a lack of accessible seating options to stairwells without lift access, insufficient washroom options, and aging elevators.

The Citadel has spent the last two years putting plans in place to host a disabled actor in the role of "Tim" in our Maclab Theatre, including community consultations, space audits, staff training in disability awareness and fundraising for renovations.

This season you will also notice two exciting renovations to our building: a newly completed accessible row in the Shoctor Theatre, as well as an accessible universal washroom next to our main box office.

Why is this work necessary and ongoing? We want to welcome disabled artists and audience members to a building where they feel safe, comfortable and independent.