

ACCESSIBILITY REPORT 2023

**KITIMAT PUBLIC
LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**



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OUR COMMITMENT

The Kitimat Public Library is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers across its services, programs, communications, and infrastructure, in order to benefit the community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

The Kitimat Public Library recognizes the knowledge and perspectives of people with lived experience of disability and commits to making sure those voices are part of any planning procedures.

The Kitimat Public Library will ensure that the staff and the board of directors are:

- aware of their roles in influencing accessibility
- supporting positive community attitudes

The Kitimat Public Library values all contributions and believes diversity strengthens the community.

BACKGROUND

Kitimat Public Library's Strategic Plan

The Kitimat Public Library is guided by its vision, mission, values and strategy.

We see the library as a place where all patrons and community members come together to engage, innovate, create, learn and grow.

The Kitimat Public Library's mission is to become a place in the community for patrons to connect through ideas, programs and technology.

Our vision is to enrich the lives of our patrons by becoming the hub of the community.

The Kitimat Public Library's strategic goals are to create lifelong learners, build community and promote welcoming spaces for everyone.

Accessibility planning at the library meets the requirements of the BC Accessibility Act and helps the library to develop services that align with our strategic direction. All community members will benefit when services are inclusive, accessible and barrier-free.

JOINT ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee is a group that cares about making sure our community is inclusive and accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities.

Our promise to the community is that we believe in and are committed to making things accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.

“Ours is a community that is diverse in membership, inclusive of the abilities and needs of all citizens, where everyone can participate meaningfully and fully.”

In 2023, the City of Terrace invited the participation of several public sector organizations in the region to join together to inform of accessibility planning that we were all involved in as required by the Accessible British Columbia Act. The committee's main goal is to address accessibility issues in different areas of our community and remove any barriers that might prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society.

The committee members help and support each other in developing plans to improve accessibility in their own organizations. They also created a way for the public to give feedback on accessibility, so they can better understand the needs of the community.

The committee believes in the principle of "nothing about us without us," which means that decisions that affect people with disabilities should include their input. They consult with people with disabilities and experts to make sure they understand what the accessibility needs are in each organization and community.

JOINT ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

The committee is also diverse, representing the different people living in British Columbia, and it ensures that at least one member identifies as Indigenous. Additionally, more than half of the members either have disabilities themselves or work for organizations that help people with disabilities. This way, they can have a better understanding of the challenges people with disabilities face and work towards making our community more inclusive for everyone.

The Kitimat Public Library wants to express our gratitude to the members of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. They have generously contributed their time and expertise to identify barriers to accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities in our communities. They also advised on how to best prevent and remove these barriers moving forward.

This effort has included the perspectives and contributions of partner organization representatives from across public sector organizations including municipalities, libraries, and post secondary education. It has also included, and benefited greatly from, advisory committee members who shared their valuable insights, feedback, and recommendations to help us address accessibility issues in our organization and communities. Collectively, the partner organizations and JAAC, have assisted each organization in creating their own accessibility plan.

Community Advisory Members

The efforts of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee were supported by accessibility experts, self-advocates and residents with experiences related to accessibility. They shared their knowledge and insights to help create this Accessibility Plan. The Kitimat Public Library appreciates their feedback and recommendations on how to improve access to our public facilities and services for everyone.

DEFINITIONS & PRINCIPLES

Barriers to accessibility can affect everyone, but they particularly impact individuals with disabilities and their families. These barriers stop people with disabilities from fully participating in society on an equal basis.

To help our communities better understand accessibility and disability, here are some important terms we're using in our Accessibility Plan. These definitions come from Disability Alliance BC and the BC Accessibility Hub.

- **Accessibility** means how easy it is for people to use and enjoy programs, services, and environments, enabling everyone to participate fully in society without facing obstacles.
- **Barriers** - is anything that prevents a person with an impairment from fully and equally participating in society. Barriers can be found in or caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies, and may be influenced by different forms of discrimination.
- **Disability** refers to the inability of a person to fully and equally participate in society due to the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.
- **Impairment** refers to limitations in a person's physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive functioning, which can be temporary, permanent, or come and go.

DEFINITIONS & PRINCIPLES

Accessibility Principles

The Accessible British Columbia Act has some important principles that organizations must follow when creating or updating their accessibility plans. We used the definitions from the foundation document of the BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation. These definitions support the rights of people with disabilities, along with the principles set by the province for accessibility.

- **Adaptability:** Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility concepts can change overtime as services, technology, and attitudes towards disability advance.
- **Collaboration:** Accessibility plans should encourage organizations and communities to work together. Making communities accessible is a shared responsibility, and everyone has a role to play in promoting access and inclusion.
- **Diversity:** Accessibility plans should recognize that people with disabilities come from various backgrounds and have unique characteristics, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and life experiences. It's important to acknowledge and consider these differences when creating accessibility plans.
- **Inclusion:** Accessibility plans should reflect that all residents of British Columbians, including those with disabilities, can fully participate in and be treated equally within their communities.
- **Self-determination:** Accessibility plans should help people with disabilities feel confident and in control of their own decisions, so they can live the lives they want.
- **Universal Design:** Accessibility plans should be designed in a way that meets the needs of all people, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or other characteristics. This means creating spaces, products and services that are usable by everyone.

By following these principles, organizations can contribute to a more accessible and inclusive British Columbia, where everyone has equal opportunities and rights.

SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

The Social Model of Disability

Our Accessibility Plan is based on a social model, which helps us understand accessibility and disability better.

The traditional medical model of disability sees people as disabled because of their impairments or differences. It focuses on fixing the disability itself as the main problem and doesn't consider the individual's personal experience or promote inclusive ways of living.

On the other hand, the social model of disability believes that disability is not solely caused by an individual's impairments, but by how our society is organized. It aims to remove barriers for people with disabilities that limit the independence, choice, and control in their lives. These barriers can be physical, like inaccessible environments, or attitudinal, like negative perceptions towards people with disabilities. According to this model, society should adapt and become more inclusive to accommodate people's disabilities, rather than expecting individuals to change to fit into an inaccessible world.

In the plan, we use a combination of person-first language, like saying "person with a disability" or "people with autism," and identify-first language, such as "disabled person" and "autistic person." We do this to meet government standards and also respect the preferences of the disability community when discussing disabilities.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

The Kitimat Public Library's Accessibility Plan is based on a law called the Accessible British Columbia Act. This law is very important because it helps identify, remove, and prevent barriers that make it difficult for people to access things in our province. The goal is to make British Columbia more accessible for everyone.

The law covers different areas where accessibility is important. These areas include:

- Making sure services are easy to use for everyone.
- Ensuring that education is accessible to all, regardless of disabilities.
- Creating opportunities for people with disabilities to find employment.
- Making information and communications easy to understand and access.
- Ensuring that health services are accessible to everyone.
- Using fair and accessible methods for buying goods and services.
- Making the environment and buildings accessible to people with disabilities.
- Ensuring transportation is available for everyone.

As a public sector organization, we have a responsibility to follow the Accessible British Columbia Act. This means we must do several things to demonstrate how we are improving accessibility:

1. Create an advisory committee.
2. Create an accessibility action plan.
3. Create a tool to receive public feedback on accessibility matters.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

For the development and content of our Accessibility Plan, we work with an advisory committee that represents our larger Terrace community. This Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee helps us to:

- Develop a common language to refer to matters related to disability and accessibility.
- Identify barriers to accessibility and inclusion in our organization and communities.
- Come up with strategies and ways to remove and prevent these barriers.
- Develop our Accessibility Plan and help other organizations to do the same.
- Gather public input on accessibility and inclusion issues affecting people with disabilities.

In addition, we also need to create a tool and process for the public to give us their comments and feedback on our action plan going forward. We want to know about any problems people face when interacting with our organization or within it.

This feedback is important for improving our Accessibility Plan in the future.

FOCUS AREAS

Information and Communication is one of the eight standards within the Accessible British Columbia Act. This standard looks at the barriers that people face when they interact and communicate in the way that works for them, as well as technology like websites and documents.

This standard considers that information provision and communications is achieved through one or more media or mechanisms, including (but not limited to) convention print, digitally and in person.

We are dedicated to making sure that everyone in our community can access and understand the information we provide. Our first accessibility report focuses on finding and fixing barriers to accessible information and communication within our organization and the communities we serve.

By setting standards and creating plans in this area, we want to ensure that everyone can get the same information in a way that suits their needs and preferences.

We continue to work with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee and the general public to address other areas in the B.C. legislation, and update our Accessibility Plan accordingly.

Barriers to accessible information and communication can occur when people with disabilities are left out because they have or use different ways of communicating. For example:

- Using small print or not providing large-print versions of materials.
- Using complex or technical language that is hard to understand.
- Creating websites and electronic documents that are not formatted for assistive technologies like screen readers.
- Not using closed captioning for videos, events or meetings.
- Not having information available in sign language.

OUR 3-YEAR PLAN

Priority #1 - Signage

The Kitimat Public Library is looking at upgrading all the signage inside and outside the building. Larger signage with a more prominent colour scheme will be easier to read for all patrons.

Priority #2 - Training

The Kitimat Public Library is working with outside organizations to ensure that our staff and board of directors has access to accessibility training. This will be an ongoing process as newer workshops and seminars become available.

Priority #3 - Website & Policies

The Kitimat Public Library is updating our website to include:

- alt-text on photos
- font size is acceptable by the BC Accessible Toolkit
- visual text is an acceptable colour

We will be using the WEBAim website to help us with our website accessibility issues.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING

Monitoring

The Kitimat Public Library will continually monitor the accessibility plan and create updates on a need by need basis. Updates may be done after any feedback is given to the library on community accessibility needs.

Evaluating

The Kitimat Public Library will conduct a review and evaluation of the accessibility plan every three years from adoption [2026]. This plan will be made public on our website.



MORE INFORMATION

If you need to know more about our Accessibility Plan, you can get in touch with Sam Anderson at 250-632-8985 or ask@kitimatlibrary.ca.

You can also find our Accessibility Plan on the Kitimat Library's website:

<https://kitimatlibrary.ca/pages/accessibility-plan>

If you want a standard or accessible version of this document, you can request it for free by emailing ask@kitimatlibrary.ca.