KOOTENAY LIBRARIES ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023-2026

Updated March 31, 2024

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Introduction

Territorial Acknowledgement

The public libraries in the Kootenays are grateful to carry out their work upon the traditional and unceded territories of the Sinixt, Ktunaxa, Sylix and Secwepemc people.

Glossary of Terms

Adaptability: Adaptability often refers to home design, which will accommodate lifestyle changes, including reduced ability, without the need to substantially modify the existing structure. This means that the space is readily adjustable and retro-fitable. In terms of service, adaptability means that the service provided can be adjusted to meet the needs of someone requiring some additional support or alternate format.

Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC): An official group established by one or more 'Prescribed Organizations' in collaboration with people with disabilities to develop an accessibility plan and feedback mechanism.

Assistive Device: any device that is designed, made, or adapted to assist a person to perform a particular task.

Accessibility plan: A plan, developed by an AAC, that identify accessibility challenges and solutions for addressing those challenges.

Barrier: Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with a disabilities

    (a) caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies, and

    (b) affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

Collaboration: Collaboration is the action of two or more people working together to produce something.

Diversity: diversity refers to different characteristics in a group of people. This could include ethnicity, gender, gender identity, disabilities, culture, income, and countless other domains.

Inclusion: Inclusion means making social and physical environments open to all human beings, regardless of age, gender, disabilities, race, religion, etc.

Self-determination: Self-determination refers to the concept that each person has the ability to make their own choices and manage their own lives.

Support Person: A support person, in relation to a person with a disability, is another person who accompanies the person with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or access to goods, services or facilities.

Universal design (UD): UD aims to ensure that the design of products and environments are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The seven principles of UD are: equitable use; flexibility in use; simple and intuitive use; perceptible information; tolerance for error; low physical effort; and size and space for approach and use.

Framework Guiding our Work

BC Law Requires Accessibility Plans

The Accessible BC Act became law in 2021 and sets out accessibility requirements for organizations to meet. The Act calls the requirements 'standards' and are in the areas of employment, delivery of services, the built environment, information and communications, transportation, health, education and procurement. Of these eight standards, six are relevant to libraries and will be discussed in this plan: employment, delivery of services, the built environment, information and communications, education and procurement.

The Act requires all public sector organizations to develop an Accessibility Plan. The Plan is intended to demonstrate an organizations' commitment to accessibility. These plans must be publicly available on websites and in paper format, and be updated every three years. Each year the organization must report on their progress implementing the plan.

Our Commitment to the Act

Public libraries commit to meeting their responsibilities under the Accessible BC Act in the following ways:

- communicating information through a variety of channels to account for the different needs of our patrons, staff and community members
- creating a welcoming and respectful environment in all our spaces, physical or virtual
- designing and maintaining public spaces that can be navigated inclusively
- delivering content in a variety of formats
- delivering programs and services that accommodate the needs of library patrons with disabilities
- championing community services and resources that foster inclusion and barrier-free access
- providing the appropriate accommodations for staff and volunteers to undertake their responsibilities
- maintaining feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement in the area of accessibility

Libraries and Their Values

Public libraries strive to be places where each diverse community can come together to imagine, create, learn and grow. To support this vision, public libraries are committed to

providing services in ways that respect the dignity and independence of people with disabilities and demonstrate libraries are inclusive places. Welcoming feedback from our patrons and community members will accelerate and prioritize our abilities to identify, prevent and remove barriers to access and participation.

Social Model of Disability

While creating this plan, the Committee was introduced to the Social Model of Disability. The Social Model of Disability is based on the understanding that disability is caused by barriers to participation in community life, rather than by a person's own impairment. It also acknowledges that disability may be permanent or temporary and is often invisible. The Social Model places the person at the forefront and highlights that it is the environment or negative attitudes that are disabling for people with disabilities. Its' emphasis is on dignity, independence and choice.

About our Committee

The initial focus of the Committee has been to provide input and create our first plan.

Recruitment

Library Directors in 20 communities recruited volunteer Committee members from their patrons, volunteers and community networks. Library staff and Directors are also part of the Committee.

Committee Members and Background

This Plan was created through a Committee, which included:
- two members from the communities of Castlegar and Nelson, representing people with various disabilities
- one representative from the Nakusp Library Board, who is a Vocational Rehabilitation consultant for persons with disabilities
- one representative from the Creston Public Library
- one representative from the Elkford Public Library
- one representative from the Greenwood Public Library
- one representative from the Trail Public Library
- one representative from the Kootenay Library Federation

Consultation

To date, consultations have happened within the Committee and using best practices recommended by the BC Accessibility Hub. The Committee recommends participating libraries consult and seek input from their patrons and community members through a survey in 2024.

Identifying Barriers to Accessibility

To help identify barriers to accessibility, libraries will conduct a gap analysis. The purpose of a gap analysis is to identify the gaps or shortcomings that exist, and to develop a plan to overcome the shortcomings. In this context, libraries will compare their current status in terms of accessibility to their desired status (or goals) of accessibility. In the process of conducting a gap analysis, libraries will collect information and use that information to guide our actions. During this entire process, libraries will be learning a great deal about their patrons and community needs, and about themselves as organizations.

Information gathering at this stage will consist of:

- documenting the existing conditions within each standard,
- identifying and utilizing resources to learn what the desired condition or state is, within each standard (the goal),
- identifying steps and actions to take to achieve the goals
    o this may vary from library to library, depending on the current environment of each.

The table below details the standards, gap analysis examples, and the anticipated resources that will be used. The Kootenay Library Federation (KLF) is a support and resource organization that works to assist the 20 public library members in the delivery of library services. The KLF will source the resources for the libraries.

Standards	Gap Analysis Examples – Prescriptions for Action	Resources
Built environment / design of public space	- Conduct audits to review accessibility barriers in current physical spaces - Learn about universal design improvements - Develop partnerships and work with accessibility-focused organizations - Consider including ongoing maintenance as part of capital improvement plans	- KLF will source accessibility auditor(s) and libraries can choose to opt-in at their cost - KLF will provide universal design goals - KLF will provide list of potential partners and accessibility focused organizations
Delivery of library services Addresses customer service and information and	- Determine what integrated and adapted library programming that accommodates different abilities looks like for your library and community - Engage people with disabilities, the public, organizations, businesses,	- KLF will source examples of integrated and adapted library programming - KLF will source training tips for

communications	library staff, and others not yet identified on the design of new library services and programs	integrated and adapted library programming • KLF will provide tools for libraries to engage with people with disabilities
Employment Labour participation for people with disabilities	• Contact local WorkBC office to gather information about local demographics and employment resources • Develop partnerships and work with accessibility focused organizations who reduce barriers to employment • Determine formats needed for employment documents to promote access and accommodate different abilities	• KLF to provide WorkBC information about local demographics and employment resources • KLF will source formats for making employment documents accessible, based on best practices
Information and communications	• Determine up-to-date web standards for accessibility as pertaining to the library website • Work with technology companies to learn about and test new accessibility applications utilizing best practices • Employ people with disabilities to test and give feedback on the accessibility of library resources, e.g., the website and digital resources	• KLF to provide BC Library Coop's current position on LibPress and web standards for accessibility • KLF to connect with other library sector organizations for collaborative testing and feedback on library resources for accessibility
Procurement	• Conduct a collection assessment to determine gaps in the library's collection with respect to accessible library materials • Evaluate internal procurement processes	• KLF to provide best practices guide to conducting collection assessments for ensuring materials are accessible • KLF to provide

		resources for evaluating internal procurement processes for accessibility
Education Libraries support continuous learning and education	• Learn about different awareness training courses available • Consider including ongoing awareness training as part of KLF's core skills training courses	• KLF will provide list of training courses available • KLF to facilitate training for staff and Board members

From Gap Analysis to Goals

From the results of the gap analysis, goals will be set. The goals include the desired outcomes and may have intermediary goals, along with action items. An outline of the resources (staff, budget, etc.) needed to meet the goals will be included with the goals once they are developed.

Libraries will allocate existing resources and/or seek additional resources through grants, partnerships, and/or volunteer services.

While working to achieve the goals, libraries will set priorities by following the Provincial Accessibility Committee and any Technical Committees. Libraries will stay informed by monitoring information provided by the Province of BC at this link, Accessibility committees - Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca)

Libraries will consider all feedback received and may adjust and amend their information and goals accordingly.

Our 3 Year Plan and Action Items

The objective of the gap analysis process outlined in this document is to provide a framework for libraries to begin working towards accessibility. This plan aims to identify accessibility goals that are general and applicable to all libraries participating in this plan, while also being specific enough to be guiding. To ensure that our plan is successful in meeting the needs of library patrons and community members with disabilities, libraries are strongly encouraged to partner with accessibility-focused organizations to learn and continually adapt their work.

The KLAC Committee will follow the lead set by the Provincial Accessibility Committee. Currently, the Provincial Accessibility Committee has created two Technical Committees:

[Employment Accessibility and Accessible Service Delivery](). We will stay informed and work to achieve their recommendations regarding the standards.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

We will monitor and evaluate how our accessibility plan is working, as well as how we are complying with the province's accessibility standards.

The KLAC will prepare a monitoring report on an annual basis, and it will be shared with the libraries. This report will include a summary of the action items implemented, and recommendations to improve the plan.

Review

The Act requires a review of the Accessibility Plan every three years, to ensure that the goals and action items within the document are still relevant.

Evaluating

This Committee will work with the libraries to recommend the process for reviewing and evaluating the plan every three years.

Feedback on Accessibility and our Accessibility Plan

We welcome your feedback. Please let us know what you think about accessibility and our Accessibility Plan.

How to Submit Feedback – Accessibility at Your Library

If you would like to provide feedback on accessibility at your public library or accessibility in general, please contact your local library.

You may submit feedback in person at your local library, by mail, telephone, email, and through your local library's website. You may attach photos, videos, and voice recordings to feedback submitted by email. Feedback may be submitted anonymously.

When submitting feedback, be sure to include

- A description of the event, program, material, or service you or someone else was trying to access,
- a description of the barrier you or someone else encountered, and
- recommendations and/or general feedback.

How to Submit Feedback – Our Accessibility Plan

If you want a copy of the Accessibility Plan, or want to provide feedback on our Accessibility Plan, please contact your local library using the contact information below.

Why Collect Feedback on Accessibility?

The purpose of collecting feedback on accessibility is to identify, reduce, and remove barriers that patrons experience when accessing services at our member libraries. We will use the feedback from patrons to improve accessibility at our member libraries and to improve our Accessibility Plan.

Anyone can provide feedback on accessibility, including if you experience a barrier or witness someone experiencing a barrier.

What to Expect

All feedback and suggestions will be carefully considered. Feedback may be used to improve library services, library infrastructure, or may be used when developing future accessibility plans.

All feedback will be anonymized regardless of the method by which it is submitted. If submitted in paper format, your feedback will be digitized and stored electronically. Accessibility feedback in both print and digital formats will be stored according to each library's records management policy.

All feedback, except that submitted anonymously, will be acknowledged in the way in which it is received.

Directory of Libraries (continued on the next pages)

Library Name	Telephone	Library email	Library Address	Website
Beaver Valley Public Library	250-367-7114	bvpublic@telus.net	Box 429 1847 - 1st Street Fruitvale, BC V0G 1L0	Beaver Valley Public Library (libraries.coop)
Castlegar Public Library	250-365-6611	info@castlegarlibrary.com	1005 3rd Street, Castlegar, BC V1N 2A2	Castlegar & District Public Library (libraries.coop)
Cranbrook Public Library	250-426-4063	staff@cranbrookpubliclibrary.ca	101 - 1212 Street N. Cranbrook, BC V1C 4T6	Cranbrook Public Library

Creston Valley Public Library	250-428-4141	info@crestonlibrary.com	531 16th Avenue South Creston, BC V0B 1G5	Creston Valley Public Library (crestonlibrary.com)
Elkford Public Library	250- 865-2912	info@elkfordlibrary.org	Box 280, 816 Michel Road, Elkford, BC V0B 1H0	Elkford Public Library (libraries.coop)
Fernie Heritage Library	250-423-4458	info@fernieheritagelibrary.com	PO Box 448 492 3rd Avenue Fernie, BC V0B 1M0	Fernie Heritage Library (libraries.coop)
Grand Forks & District Public Library	250-442-3944	library@gfpl.ca	PO Box 1539 7342-5th Street Grand Forks, BC V0H 1H0	Grand Forks & District Public Library (libraries.coop)
Greenwood Public Library	250-445-6111	greenlib@shaw.ca	P.O. Box 279 346 South Copper Avenue Greenwood, BC V0H 1J0	Greenwood Public Library (libraries.coop)
Invermere Public Library	250-342-6416	publiclibrary@invermere.net	Box 989 646 4th Street, Invermere, BC V0A 1K0	Invermere Public Library (libraries.coop)
Kaslo & District Public Library	250-353-3112	info@kaslo.bclibrary.ca	413 Fourth Street, Box 760 Kaslo, BC V0G 1M0	Kaslo & District Public Library (libraries.coop)
Kimberley Public Library	250-427-	staff@kimberleylibrary.ca	115 Spokane St, Kimberley, BC V1A 2E5	Kimberley Public Library (libraries.coop)
Midway Public Library	250-449-2620	mplpatrons@gmail.com	612 – 6th Avenue Box 268 Midway, BC V0H 1M0	Midway Public Library (libraries.coop)
Nakusp Public Library	6333	contact@nakusplibrary.ca	PO Box 297 92 6th Avenue NW, Nakusp, BC V0G 1R0	Nakusp Public Library (nakusplibrary.ca)
Nelson Public Library	250-352-	library@nelson.ca	602 Stanley Street Nelson, BC V1L 1N4	Nelson Public Library (libraries.coop)

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Penticton Public Library	250-770-7781	access@pentictonlibrary.ca	785 Main Street, Penticton, BC V2A 5E3	Welcome to the Penticton Public Library - Penticton Public Library (pentictonlibrary.ca)
Radium Hot Springs Public Library	250- 347-2434	info@radium.bclibrary.ca	4863 Stanley Street, Radium Hot Springs, BC V0A 1M0	Radium Public Library (libraries.coop)
Rossland Public Library	250- 362-7611	info@rossland.bclibrary.ca	2180 Columbia Ave Box 190 Rossland BC V0G 1Y0	Rossland Public Library (libraries.coop)
Salmo Valley Public Library	250-357-2312	salmolibrary@salmo.bc.libraries.coop	PO Box 458, 104 – 4th Street, Salmo, BC V0G 1Z0	Salmo Valley Public Library (libraries.coop)
Sparwood Public Library	250-425-2299	info@sparwoodlibrary.ca	Box 1060 110 Pine Avenue Sparwood, BC V0B 2G0	Sparwood Public Library (libraries.coop)
Trail & District Public Library	250-364-1731	info@traillibrary.com	1505 Bay Avenue, Trail, BC V1R 4B2	Trail & District Public Library (traillibrary.com)

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