

THE ENABLED ENVIRONMENT:

UNDERSTANDING BATHROOMS AS SENSORY INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES

Community Partner Research Report
UBC, Okanagan + Okanagan Regional Library

December 2019



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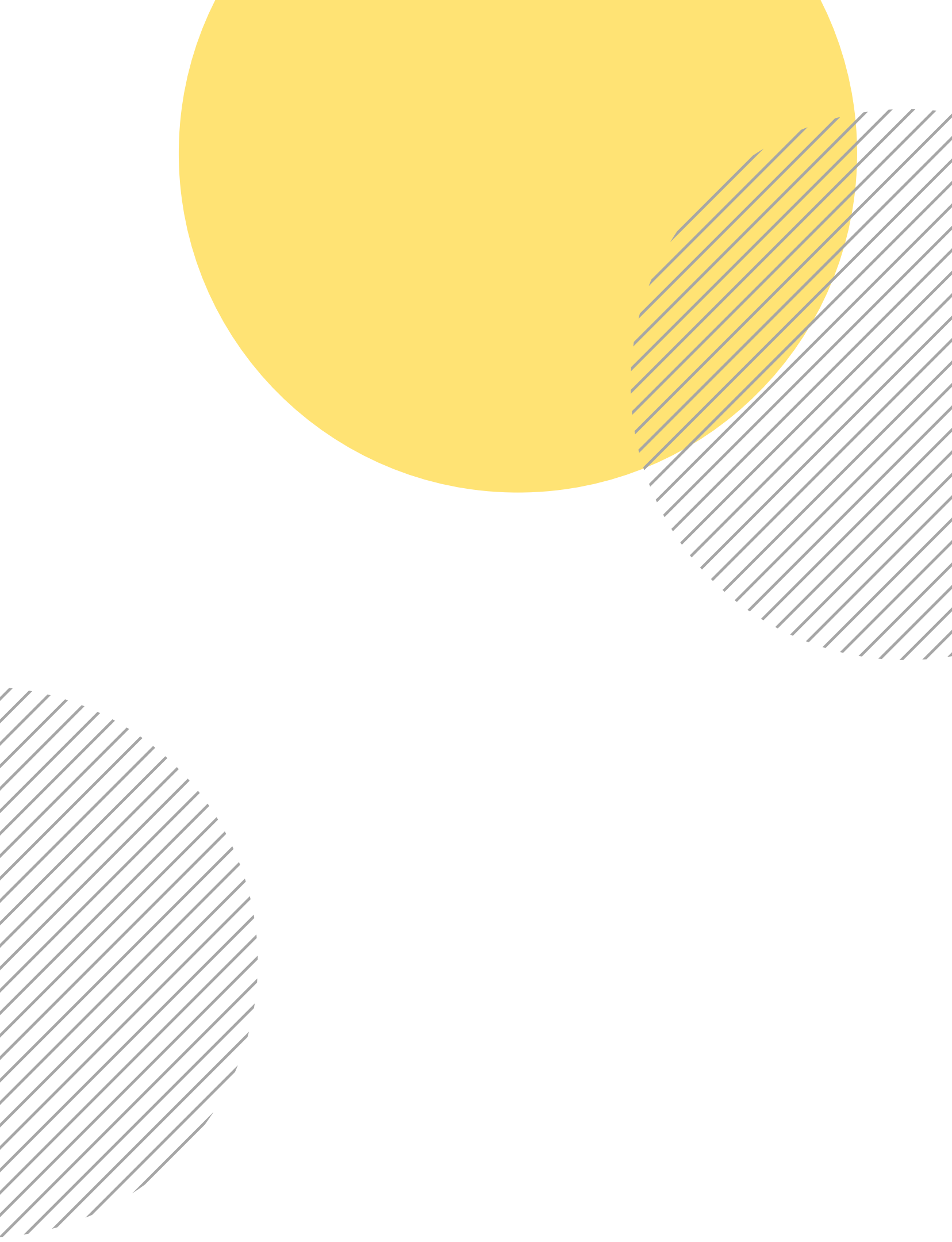


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FRONT MATTER

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This research was conducted on the unceded, ancestral land of the Okanagan Nation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Enabled Environment: Understanding Bathrooms as Sensory Inclusive Public Spaces is a community-based project between the Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) and the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus (UBCO) in response to the *Accessible Canada Act* that was officially passed into Federal law on June 21, 2019. The *Accessible Canada Act* addresses the physical, social, and economic inequalities experienced by disabled individuals to ensure more inclusive participation by all citizens.

Through a multi-sited research project at branches of the Okanagan Regional Library, the research team from UBCO collected quantitative data (in the form of Public Intercept Surveys) and qualitative data (in the form of literature reviews, online questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews) about general baseline understandings of accessibility in the Okanagan and how patrons of the public library system wish to engage with knowledge about the *Accessible Canada Act*. This report presents and synthesizes the original findings from these data and highlights **three key recommendations** to ORL in preparing for change as the Province of British Columbia has proposed its own legislation, Bill M219 *Accessible Act*, that responds to the *Accessible Canada Act* with a plan to be barrier-free province-wide by 2024.

CULTURE OF CHANGE

With new accessibility specific legislation and action plans underway, the Okanagan (and British Columbia in general) is experiencing a culture of change. Patrons of and staff of the ORL are not adverse to this change and the ORL is recommended to continue to consult with other communities, organizations, public institutions, and people, including those with disabilities, children and youth, community members, and other staff, to understand what best practices and resources are needed that exceed current building codes.

TRAINING

It is recommended that the ORL continue to engage with its staff to determine what they understand about sensory accessibility and inclusivity and where additional resources could be brought into contribute to knowledge building for the organization as a whole through formal training.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The public readily understands issues of access when they can physically see a wheelchair or physical disability. The ORL can play an active role in educating public by implementing new spaces, practices, and protocols around less visible disabilities, such as fostering scent free environments and including bathroom facilities free of automatic features that act as triggers for those with sensory disturbances.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key strategic actions for the ORL to undertake as proactive steps to be barrier-free by 2024 and eventually compliant with the proposed British Columbia *Accessible Act* (Bill M219):

- Conduct an accessibility audit at each ORL branch. This can be done in collaboration with UBCO to develop a new project to create an audit instrument that can be adapted in the future as an open access resource for libraries.
- Create a formal accessibility strategy for ORL based on findings from the accessibility audit.
- Write a formal accessibility statement to post online and in ORL branches.
- Take strategic steps to improve web accessibility that will ensure online access to ensure ORL is barrier-free by 2024.
- Improve signage at all branches by creating a way-finding plan in multiple languages or universal formats.
- Create a scent free and automatic fixture-free spaces in existing bathrooms.
- Share findings from this report with the public as a poster/flyer.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Enabled Environment: Understanding Bathrooms as Sensory Inclusive Public Spaces is a community-based anthropological research project that looks at how permanent fixtures, such as lighting, automatic hand dryers, and self-flushing toilets, influence the sensory accessibility of public washrooms and community spaces in the Okanagan. This project emerged as a topic in late-2018 as a pilot research idea to explore a community-based project between the Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) and the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus (UBCO) because the Government of Canada was in the process of reviewing Bill C81: An Act to ensure a Barrier-Free Canada. Emerging from Bill C81 eventually came the *Accessible Canada Act* that was officially passed into Federal law in Canada on June 21, 2019 by Royal Assent (See Chapter 3 for a full summary and overview) at the time this research was approved to take place. The *Accessible Canada Act* addresses the physical, social, and economic inequalities experienced by disabled individuals to ensure more inclusive participation by all citizens. This aligns with the Province of British Columbia's Bill M219 (2018) known as the *Accessibility Act* that is currently in its first reading at the time of this report.

This report presents original findings from a study that focuses specifically on the social realities of underrepresented, less visible, and sensory impairments (i.e. such as but not limited to, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)) in the Okanagan and how a public organization can be prepared for change to be compliant with the Province of British Columbia's goal to be barrier-free by 2024 as outlined in Bill M219 (as summarized in this report on page 18). Through a multi-sited research project at branches of the Okanagan Regional Library, the research team from UBCO set out to understand what is needed to create truly accessible and inclusive public spaces in the Okanagan, and what do people in the Okanagan know about accessibility. To narrow this study further, it focuses on accessibility and public bathrooms.

The goal of this project was to gain socio-cultural insights that will assist and support the Okanagan Regional Library moving forward to prepare for change in federal and provincial legislation to ensure inclusive spaces, this report presents and synthesizes the findings from quantitative data (in the form of Public Intercept Surveys) and qualitative data (in the form of literature reviews, online questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews) about general baseline understandings of accessibility in the Okanagan and how patrons of the public library system wish to engage with knowledge about new legislation

The core research questions guiding this project are:

- (1) Where and how do misinterpretations and misrepresentations of sensory knowledges and experiences exist in public space?
- (2) How do permanent fixtures and design features influence the general and sensory accessibility of these spaces?
- (3) How do people in the Okanagan approach accessibility, especially when it is related to less visible disabilities?

For the research team, sensory accessibility means researching how objects or experiences in an environment might become a barrier to somebody experiencing sensitivity to either sound, touch, smell, or any other senses.

This research report captures the following:

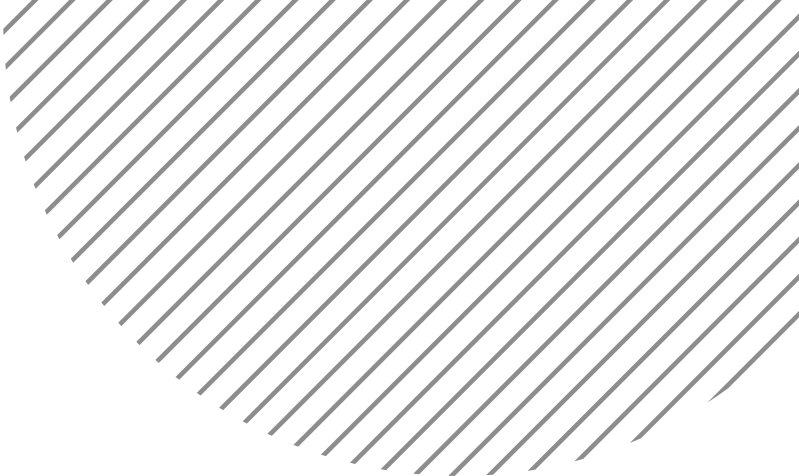
- An understanding into how public institutions like libraries approach accessibility and understand less visible disabilities.
- Insight into library patrons' and community members' baseline understandings, experiences, and observations regarding accessibility and disability in public spaces.
- A presentation of knowledge about the ORL staff's baseline understanding of accessibility in relation to their experiences and observations of the sensory complexities and social realities of public bathrooms in the Okanagan.



A Brief History of Public Bathrooms

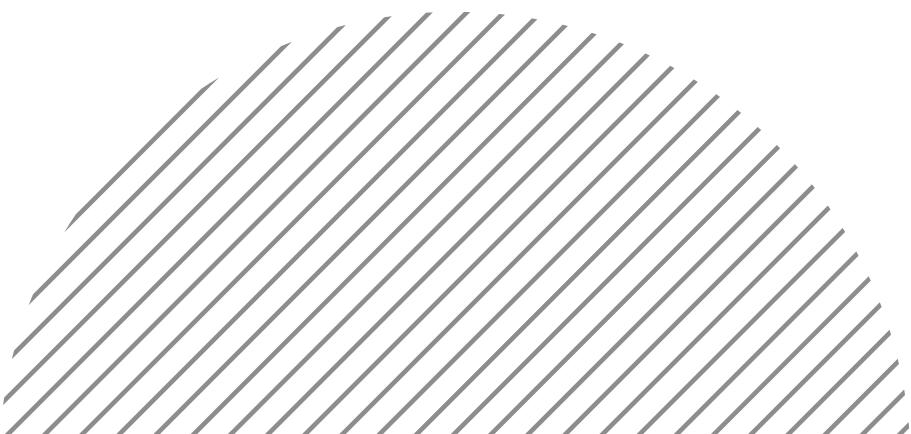
Public bathroom facilities originated in the Industrial era as a response to increased urbanization, population density, sanitation, and public health concerns within city centres (Hesse 2016; Hoagland 2018; Sullivan 2013). Building codes were eventually developed to include water closet accommodations as municipalities invested in sewage treatment facilities and fresh water infrastructures. As historical psychologists Haslam (2011) and Kogan (2018) discuss, an increase of female workers in the 19th century led to the establishment of gender segregated washroom facilities in an effort to maintain ideals of modesty and female sensibility while protecting women from the potential vulnerability of sharing such spaces with male coworkers. Continued technological and sanitation advancements included waste treatment facilities, plumbing, pressured water, and gas heaters. These advancements contributed to the centralization of the bathroom within private and public spaces. The presence of design features such as electricity, bright lighting, tiling, ventilation fans, porcelain toilets, and hand drying technology symbolized luxury, privacy, retreat, glamour, pride, class, and social status (Reagan 2015, Sullivan 2013, Hoagland 2018). From this emerged trends for automation cloaked in narratives of sanitation.

Today, in North America, automation in the public bathroom is advertised as being economically and environmentally beneficial, hygienic and sanitary, innovative, and maintenance free. In 2004, less than 10% of public bathrooms in the United States were equipped with automated hand dryers (Smith 2015). When the British company Dyson released their Airblade dryer, they launched extensive promotional and research campaigns to highlight how cost effective, environmentally friendly, hygienic, and low maintenance their product was. In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that the Dyson Airblade pays for itself in 3-6 months; in 2014, the University of Buffalo states that in addition to cost savings, the Dyson Airblade decreases carbon emissions by 42% in comparison to paper towels (Smith 2015).



User frustration, dissatisfaction, and irritation are often reported when automatic fixtures are present in bathrooms today. For self-flushing toilets the frustrations include water wasted from “courtesy” or “phantom” flushes. In a 2010 study, Kolleler found automatic toilets use 54% more water than manual flush toilets which led to an extensive campaign to better design self flushing toilets (Spanne 2015). Body size is another factor that influences the ability for sensor efficiency. Additionally, many people with sensory sensitivities note the abrasive, unpredictable, and invasive experience when using a self flushing toilet. In 2015, the state of Oregon introduced a bill under the sponsorship of Senator Chris Edwards to regulate and reduce the high levels of noise emitted by automatic hand dryers to 84 decibels (roughly equivalent to the decibel level of a lawnmower). Such complaints regarding automation in the public bathroom highlight crucial areas where fixtures can be better designed to meet the needs of all users and were informative to how research questions were designed in this study (See Chapter 5).

Public washrooms contain complex histories and social dynamics. Added to this, the public bathroom has become simultaneously both a deeply private and yet a public political space. This site is both public, private, and political, in that a bathroom produces, encompasses, and conceals, multiple and interacting social inequalities, forms of discrimination, and the forces of oppression. Gender, sexuality, and feminist scholar, Kathi Weeks highlights that “the public toilet serves as a site of the production and regulation of sex, gender, sexuality, class, caste, and disability, and it is today the target of activists demanding justice for many, including women and poor, disabled, queer, and transgender people” (Weeks 2016, 744). Weeks highlights how the behaviours, contents, and boundaries within a public bathroom are variable as they challenge and reconfigure the notion of “what is conceived as private and what is seen as public” (745).





Research Approach + Research Team

This project started through a phone call to ORL in December 2018 and a brief conversation with Don Nettleton that eventually, and fortuitously, resulted in a series of dynamic conversations between Monica Gaucher of the ORL and UBCO researchers Dr. Fiona P. McDonald and Madelaine Lekei. At the outset of designing the research questions and approving this study, a broader overarching objective was outlined by Monica Gaucher.

Added to the list of research questions above, this study also set out to answer:

What are the barriers that exist to accessing knowledge and disseminating knowledge? How does knowledge get into the hands of community members? What knowledge do community members want? What does ORL need to do in imagining/thinking outside/beyond physical barriers and space?

During these preliminary conversations, through which the research project was collaboratively designed, and the ensuing data collection and analysis phases of the project, it became very clear that each branch of the ORL are spaces that strive to be equitable, accessible, non-discriminatory, and are all uniquely community-minded. This is indeed congruent to values outlined in the 2016-2019 ORL *Connecting Curious Minds Strategic Plan*.

This collaborative project is a local, qualitative case-study that highlights how partnerships with community members can bridge gaps in public policy and research applications. This is not a study or audit of the ORL but rather is a partnership between UBCO and the ORL. As the *Accessible Canada Act* is now federal law, anthropological knowledge gained from this project will create an Open Access resource through this report that will assist decision-makers and community members of the Okanagan to consult as they prepare for both provincial and federal changes.

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data Collection Methods

This research partnership between the UBC, Okanagan (UBCO) and the Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) began with an in-person meeting with Monica Gaucher, Dr. Fiona McDonald, and Madelaine Lekei to begin the community consultation that informed the overall project design, limitations, and research methods. A mixed methods, sensory ethnographic approach was proposed and then undertaken to understand what sensory inclusivity meant in public bathrooms.

Sensory ethnography is a qualitative research method that aims to understand the particular experience of individuals by attending to, representing, and questioning dominant perceptions of the senses (Pink 2015). The objective of this project is to understand how permanent fixtures, such as automatic hand dryers and self-flushing toilets, influence the general and sensory accessibility of environments like public washrooms. In conducting a sensory ethnography, the research methods and instruments were directed towards garnering an understanding of the sensory knowledge and experiences of members of the public who use bathrooms at public libraries. Ethnographic methods such as public intercept surveys, online questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and community focus groups were used to gain qualitative insights into the social dynamics and sensory complexities of public bathrooms.

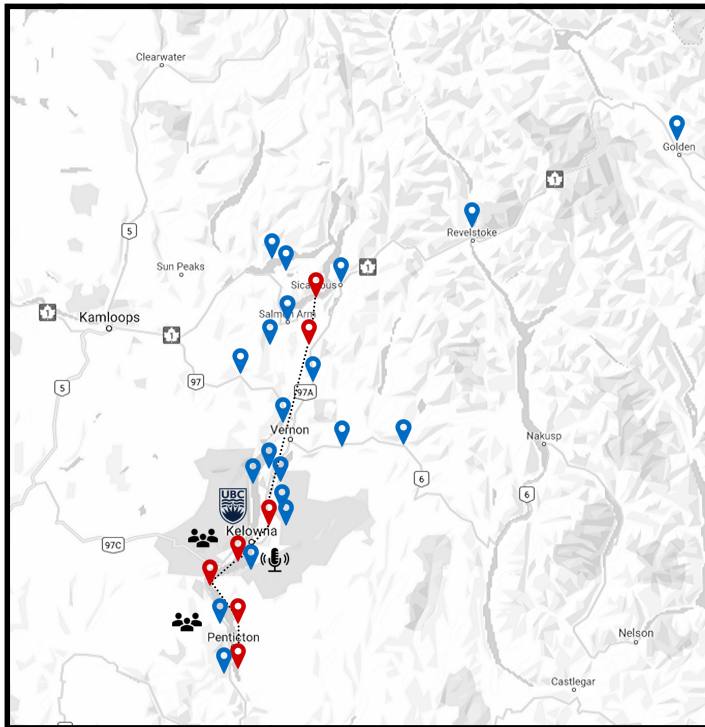


Collaborative Approach

This project defines collaboration. It was originally imagined by Madelaine Lekei as part of an undergraduate summer research training program in response to her interest in disability studies and anthropology. It was co-developed and supervised by anthropologists Dr. Fiona P. McDonald and Dr. Christine Schreyer, faculty members of Community, Culture, and Global Studies (CCGS) at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan, and undertaken in collaboration with Monica Gaucher and the ORL staff through the Okanagan. This research was conducted from May 2019 - September 2019 with active data collection being concentrated to July 2019 according to consultation with ORL. From May - July 2019 Madelaine Lekei conducted a preliminary literature review in order to theoretically situate the project within critical disability studies, commons and public theory, mixed and applied sensory ethnography methods, and current North American library accessibility approaches. And from August - November 2019, data was cleaned, analyzed, and make up the content of this final report for ORL. Additionally, this data was presented in the form of an oral presentation by Madelaine Lekei, coupled with consultation and feedback a draft of this community report, that occurred on Wednesday, November 6, 2019, at the Okanagan Regional Library Headquarters in Kelowna BC, Canada. Feedback from this session is reflected in the final version of this report.

In order to conduct this research, the research team carry current ethical certifications including the *TCPS 2: CORE Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* training. The qualitative and quantitative data collection was conducted under the supervision of the University of British Columbia, Okanagan Research Ethics Board (UBCO REB STUDY #: H19-00118), which was approved on July 3, 2019 before starting data collection (See Appendix I & II). The REB protocol ensures that all research participants were protected and that best research practices were followed during the project for data collection and management. In addition to this, a Travel and Field Safety Assessment was also conducted and approved by Jason McLeod at UBCO Health, Safety, and Environment Risk Management. The Primary Investigator (Dr. McDonald) and the Co-Investigator (Dr. Schreyer) have advanced training in social science research, project design, and analysis. Their collective supervision of Madelaine Lekei, an undergraduate researcher, ensured best practices in applied social science and community-based research were strictly followed.

Scope of Field Sites



Public Intercept Surveys

8 branches

N=56

4-5 minutes each



Online ORL Staff Questionnaires

31 branches

N=52

5-10 minutes each



Community Focus Groups

2 branches

N=6 with 6 participants

1 hour each



Interviews

N=1

1 hour each

Data Instruments

Public Intercept Surveys were conducted to gain insight into library patrons baseline understandings, experiences, and observations regarding accessibility and disability in public spaces with specific attention given to public bathrooms. Researchers traveled to eight branches of ORL to administer 4-5 minute surveys on an iPad using the survey platform Qualtrics which ensured ease of use for participants. Survey participation was open to any voluntary member of the public over the age of 18. According to ORL board policy, library patrons were not solicited for participation. A total of 56 participants engaged with the researchers at 8 ORL branches (N=56).

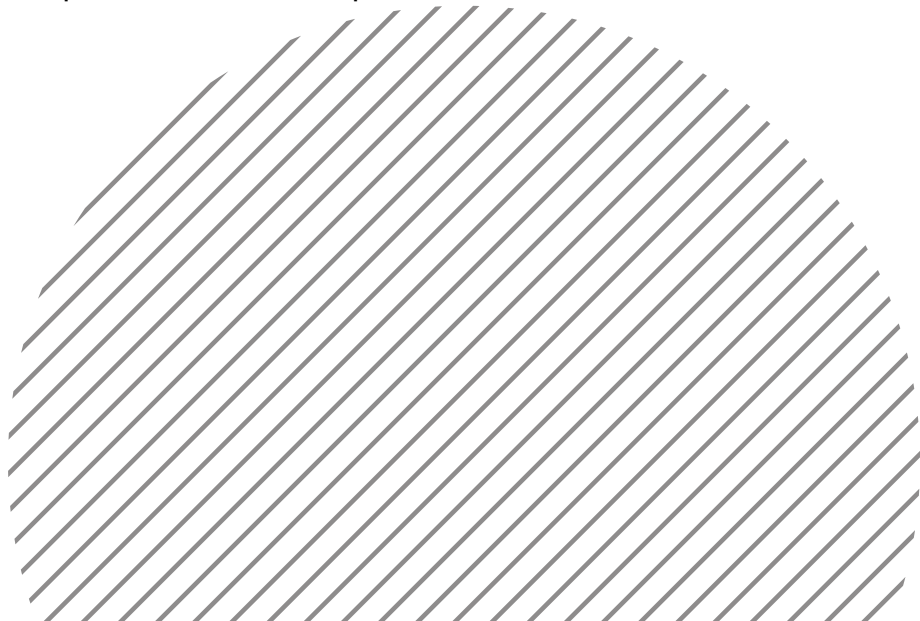
Online Staff Questionnaires were distributed to ORL staff to understand frontline library workers experiences and needs when it came to navigating accessibility issues. Additionally, these qualitative questionnaires captured frontline library worker's baseline understandings regarding less visible disabilities. The questionnaire was distributed via the Qualtrics platform hosted at UBC and were then distributed through email by Monica Gaucher to all 246 staff associated with the Okanagan Regional Library. The survey was open for 4 weeks and all staff associated with ORL were welcome to participate and able to withdraw at any point. A total of 52 (N=52) ORL staff members completed the online questionnaire across 31 branches.

Community Focus Groups were conducted to gain an in-depth, collective perspective regarding community members nuanced experiences and baseline understandings regarding general and sensory accessibility. This was an opportunity to hear lived experiences of navigating public bathrooms and community members perspectives on how to facilitate greater inclusion in public spaces. These one-hour, semi-structured, community conversations were key opportunities to capture qualitative observations from participants in response to core research questions. Participants were recruited through posters sent out to branches as well as ORL and IKBSAS social media channels. Interested community members were encouraged to sign up with their email address through a website. The research team sent follow-up welcome emails to confirm participation in the focus group. Two focus groups were facilitated by the research team with 6 participants in total (N=6).

Interviews with an upper management ORL staff member was key to understanding how public institutions like libraries approach accessibility and understand less visible disabilities. Interviews were an opportunity to better grasp ORL's values and motivations toward creating more inclusive public institutions. A one-on-one, semi-structured interview provided an administrative perspective regarding the motivations, values, and approaches in facilitating greater inclusion when it comes to accessibility and less visible disabilities within public institutions. A total of one interview was conducted (N=1).

Methods of Analysis

All data was securely downloaded, anonymized, and cleaned by the research team. Analysis for the qualitative data sets was iteratively and collaboratively done by the research team (Lekei, Schreyer, McDonald) using open coding as a first stage. This allowed the research team to draw out larger topics, themes, and findings that emerged using a second stage of focused and selective coding (Mannik and McGarry 2017). All quantitative data was sorted by instrument type and are visualized in Chapters 5 + 6 of this report.

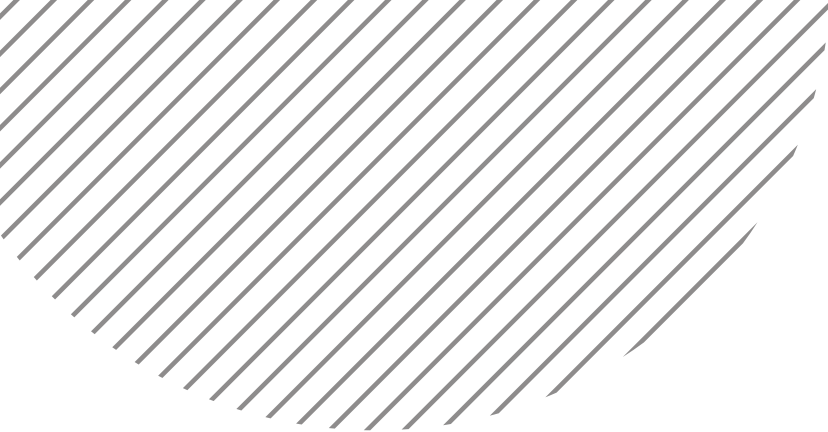


Situating this Project within Anthropology + Disability Studies

The Enabled Environment project sits at the nexus of several bodies of literature that emerge from the history of bathrooms, and extends to literature on human rights and the Commons, as well as the importance of applied research in understanding social justice and disability studies. To situate this study within the literature it is important to consider how this research advances new knowledge. As geographer Joyce Davidson notes:


It is not sufficient to merely assist or more passively 'allow' the person who is challenged to identify, design, construct, and maintain their own means - mechanical or otherwise - of managing disabling space. A responsible, relational approach to accommodating complex sensory impairments takes steps to bring about change, steps that begin with geographic imagination (Davidson 2009, 310).

Leading disability anthropologists, Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp examine how disability is a relational category that is shaped by social conditions that can exclude or encourage participation within private and public spheres of society (Ginsburg and Rapp 2013, 54). They discuss that disability is “framed through the social organization of daily life, understandings of personhood, and governmentality” (55). Most noteworthy, they foreground that the history of how disability was brought into public awareness and discourse was through the Civil Rights movement and the closure of mental institutions and asylums. These events prompted movements such as the disability rights, self-advocacy, and visual activism movements, which in turn informed politics regarding recognition and representation of disability. People with disabilities, alongside their allies actively reframed the narrative of disability by claiming agency, visibility, and voice in public and private life. Authors discussing these dynamics highlight disability as a foundational human category that influences and informs “every domain of life” (62). Ginsburg and Rapp’s work help us in this project to understand that disability is a “relational category ... shaped by social conditions that exclude full participation from society” (54). And that disability “is a fact of life at home and in the public sphere ... that demands anthropological attention as an essential form of human nature” (63). Disability is informed by the particularity of individual physical, physiological, and psychological states, in conjunction with broader cultural values, social expectations, and political landscapes. The creation of the *Accessible Canada Act* speaks directly to the ethical and political call to action for rights for all Canadians.



When considering this work in relation to discourses around the built environment, geographers Rob Imrie and Marion Kumar tackle how barriers within the built environment signify difference and lead to forms of design apartheid and separation for people with disabilities. In their work, they discuss how social and environmental barriers function like modern asylums where “spatial markers [signify] a difference between those within and those outside of the institution, while materially influencing where ... people [can] go” (Imrie and Kumar 1998, 358).

Through research design for *The Enabled Environment* project, ensuring community members voices were heard was essential. Imrie and Kumar emphasize a need for equitable collaboration between the lived experience of persons with disabilities and “expert” and “design reductionist” and “technical” professionals who implement legislation and design the publics. Their work and this project highlight the need for holistic, collaborative, and community-based research that attends to the lived experience, social realities, and implications of the built environment in order to fully realize and establish inclusive accessibility.



"Nobody really wants to address [bathroom issues], because nobody likes talking about bathrooms, nobody likes dealing with bathroom problems ... they just want to pin it on the individual."

EXCERPT FROM FOCUS GROUP

CHAPTER 3

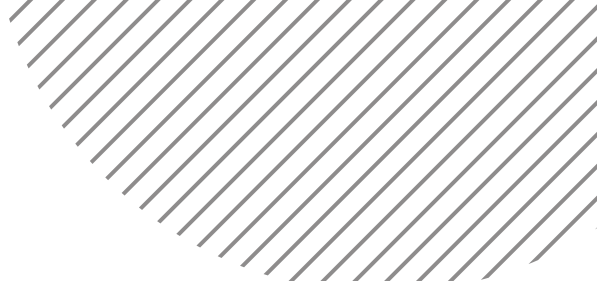
SUMMARY OF THE ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT

Bill C81 to *The Accessible Canada Act*

In June 2019, through a process of Royal Assent with the Crown, the new *Accessible Canada Act* came into effect in Canada. The history of the *Accessible Canada Act* traces back to the initial adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010 in Canada (with a further adoption in 2019 of an amendment to the convention that strengthens human rights in Canada for those living with various abilities). In 2016, the Government of Canada undertook a series of interviews and conversations with Canadians across the country. The data from these surveys resulted in the report “Accessible Canada Creating New Federal Accessibility Legislation: What We Learned From Canadians” (2017).^{*} This data was then used to put forward Bill C81 by the Honourable Kristy Duncan (LIB), Minister of Sports and Persons with Disabilities. Bill C81 was advanced through a series of committee reviews, readings, and revisions between the Senate and the House of Commons over a three-year period. Throughout this process it continually received nonpartisan support.

From Bill C81 to the *Accessible Canada Act*, one noteworthy action is that it brings about more clarity to how disability is understood and how accessibility needs to be improved in Canada. Specifically, the *Accessible Canada Act* defines disability as any impairment including physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, or sensory impairment, or functional limitation that an interaction with a barrier hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. The second piece of language that the Act foregrounds is barriers. Barriers now include anything physical, architectural, technological, attitudinal, and anything based on information or communication that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment.

^{*}Note, we reached out on several occasions to access the data from these surveys from the Federal Government but at the time of publishing this report have not received any reply.



This clarification of language and the reality of the *Accessible Canada Act* might not seem like a big deal until you situate it in relation to the fact that the United States passed similar legislation 29 years ago (1990), Australia 27 years ago (1992), and New Zealand 19 years ago (2000). In Canada, this is an exciting, historic moment for human rights and social justice. It is also important to note that the ORL and UBCO partnership on *the Enabled Environments* project that looked at inclusivity and accessibility of public bathrooms in the Okanagan took place in real-time as this legislation passed into law when fieldwork to library branches throughout the Okanagan began. This is noteworthy as ORL and UBCO are a leading partnership in community-based research around public knowledge around accessibility and the implications of such legislation in Canada today.

As of today, the *Accessible Canada Act* applies only to Parliament buildings, Government of Canada, and Federally-regulated private sector. However, it is anticipated that the act will be adopted by provincial and territorial governments in the coming years.

In this speculative future of implementation within British Columbia, it is hard to know what entities/organizations it will apply to. However, given the language of the *Accessible Canada Act*, it will likely effect entities providing service design and delivery, programming, the built environment, employment, information and communication technologies, communications, transportation, and procurement. In this case, it will directly impact the work of the ORL. In anticipation of this, the final recommendations of this report turn to speak to this future in order to support the ORL to meet the needs of its community members and comply with future provincial legislation.

Added to this, since the passing of Federal legislation the Province of British Columbia has started a survey to engage with public interest in the implementation of this legislation province-wide [<https://engage.gov.bc.ca/accessibility/>] available until Friday, November 29, 2019 at 4pm PST.

FROM BILL C81 TO THE ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT

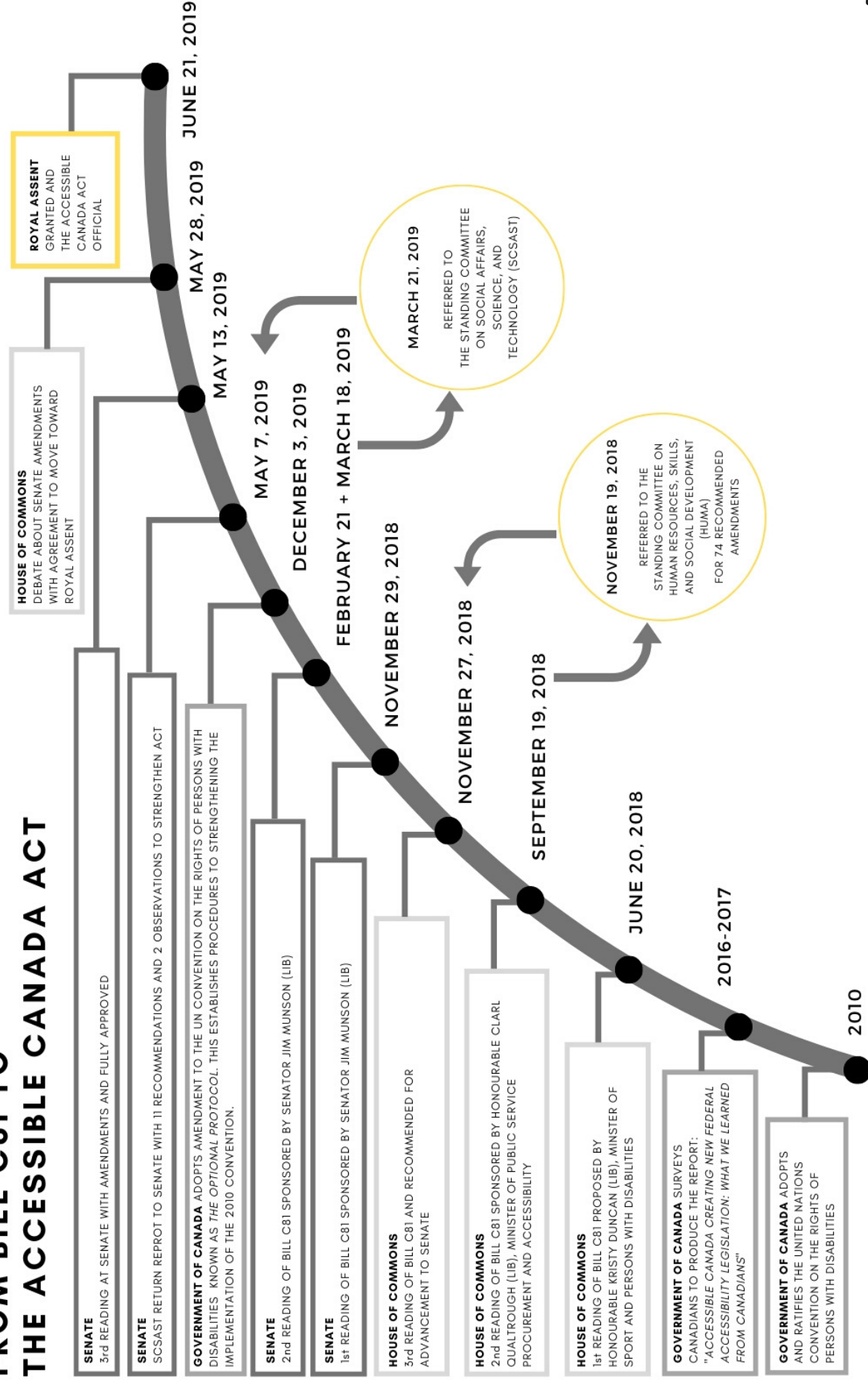


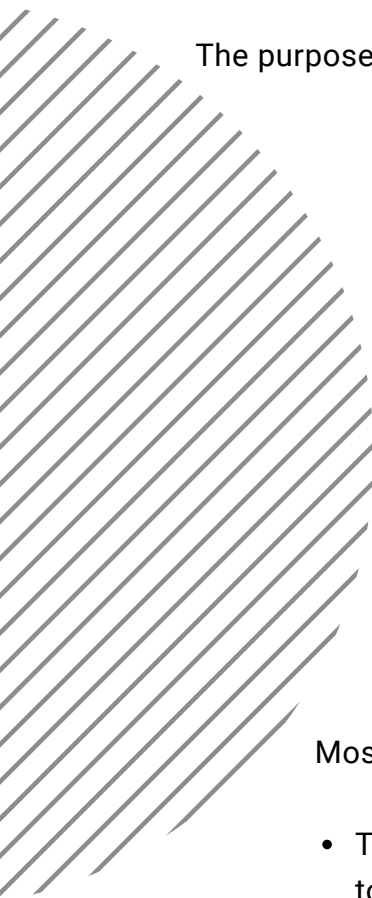
Table 3: A timeline of Bill C:81 moving through the House of Commons, Senate, and receiving Royal Assent.



Bill M219 The British Columbia *Accessible Act*

In 2014, the Government of British Columbia noted that they have a plan/goal that by 2024 to make British Columbia the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities. This is being enacted through Bill M219 that is currently in its first reading at the time of this report.

The purpose of this Bill is to:

- 
- (a) Achieve accessibility by preventing and removing barriers that disable people with respect to:
 - (i) the delivery and receipt of goods and services,
 - (ii) information and communication,
 - (iii) public transportation and transportation infrastructure,
 - (iv) employment,
 - (v) the built environment, so that all new construction is accessible,
 - (vi) education,
 - (vii) a prescribed activity or undertaking;
 - (b) Facilitate the timely implementation of accessibility standards with a goal of achieving an accessible British Columbia by 2024.

Most noteworthy for the ORL is item four in Bill M219 that outlines how:

- This act will require public sector bodies to prepare annual accessibility plans to show how they are working to remove barriers in their organizations.

Beyond the physical space, the Government of British Columbia, through Bill M219 and the future implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act*, is ensuring accessibility to digital environments. Details can be found here:
siteimprove.com/en-ca/accessibility/accessible-canada-act/

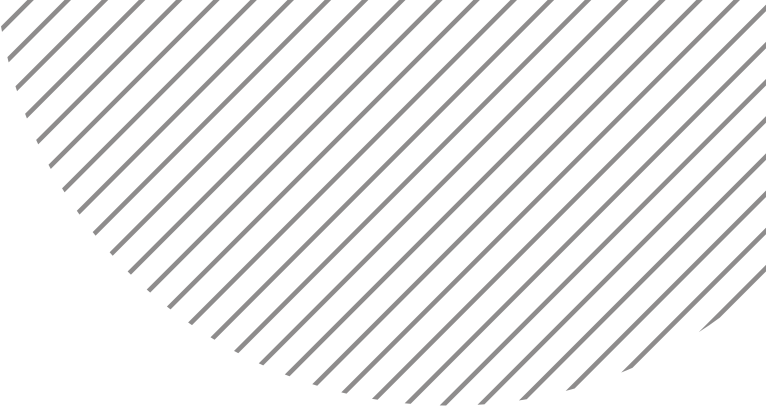
CHAPTER 4

ORL IN RELATION TO NORTH AMERICAN LIBRARIES

Situating ORL within a landscape of Accessibility in North American Libraries

The Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) is part of a cohort of North American libraries addressing and responding to the accessibility needs within their districts and communities. These libraries are in alliance in their particular and varied efforts of creating equitable and inclusive public institutions across North America. A field-scan from a diverse sample of public libraries was conducted to gain an understanding of specific and generalized accessibility approaches. This field-scan provides collaborative insight into how public institutions can implement formal accessibility standards and informal best practices. The presence of accessibility plans ensure that an organization's commitments and goals are clearly articulated. Further, these approaches recognize the efforts public institutions are making to ensure public spaces are equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. These efforts attend to compliance measures while moving beyond compliance toward more inclusive, just, and equitable futures across North America.

In Canada, there is a noteworthy variation in accessibility initiatives and protocols due to differences in provincial, territorial, and municipal regulations, building codes, and community best design practices. Of the ten provinces and three territories in Canada, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Ontario are the only ones to have developed accessibility specific legislation at a provincial level. Of these, British Columbia's legislation was enacted in December 2018. While designed to improve accessibility standards to ensure a barrier-free BC by 2024 (already discussed in Chapter 3), British Columbia's action plan has yet to address concerns or contribute substantial change.



In contrast, Ontario's provincial accessibility legislation is both proactive and well-established and it provides applicable examples from many public institutions regarding resources, initiatives, and best practices. Additionally, there remains an absence in both legislative frameworks and research applications regarding the implementation of such standards in public institutions like libraries. By comparison, in the United States, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* of 1990 is a civil rights act that addresses discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life. With such federal legislation established, there is a greater occurrence of generalized approaches and best practices regarding accessibility in public institutions given its nearly thirty years of enactment.

To situate the ORL within the landscape of libraries undertaking accessibility initiatives, the research team undertook a comprehensive field-scan of libraries in North America. The questions that guided this field-scan related to accessibility approaches included:

- What does accessibility within a library context mean?
- What principles guide an individual library's approach to accessibility?
- How are these principles being translated into tangible applications within library facilities, programming, and collections?
- How are these principles and efforts in line with current accessibility standards and best practices?

The resulting data is captured in the visualization below. Table 1 is framed as a resource for the ORL to be use in order to identify a library, its location, related legislation, and a direct link to their website addressing accessibility.

NORTH AMERICAN LIBRARY FIELD SCAN

LIBRARY	LOCATION	LEGISLATION	WEBSITE
OKANAGAN REGIONAL LIBRARY	31 BRANCHES IN THE OKANAGAN VALLEY, BC CANADA	ONGOING CONSULTATION & DEVELOPMENT	WWW.ORL.BC.CA/USING-THE-LIBRARY/OUR-SERVICES/ACCESSIBILITY-SERVICES
VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY	22 BRANCHES IN VANCOUVER, BC CANADA	ONGOING CONSULTATION & DEVELOPMENT	WWW.VPL.CA/ACCESSIBLE-SERVICES
FRASER VALLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY	24 BRANCHES IN THE FRASER VALLEY, BC CANADA	ONGOING CONSULTATION DEVELOPMENT	WWW.FVRL.BC.CA/OUTREACH_SERVICES.PHP
EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY	21 BRANCHES IN EDMONTON, AB CANADA	NO CURRENT PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION	WWW.EPL.BIBLIOCOMMONS.COM/INFO/ACCESSIBILITY
CALGARY CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY	21 BRANCHES IN CALGARY, AB CANADA	NO CURRENT PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION	WWW.CALGARYLIBRARY.CA/YOUR-LIBRARY/ACCESSIBILITY/
TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY	100 BRANCHES IN TORONTO, ON CANADA	ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS DISABILITY ACT (AODA), 2005	WWW.TORONTOPUBLICLIBRARY.CA/ACCESSIBILITY/
LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY	16 BRANCHES IN LONDON, ON CANADA	ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS DISABILITY ACT (AODA), 2005	WWW.LONDONPUBLICLIBRARY.CA/ABOUT-MY-LIBRARY/ACCESSIBILITY

Table 1: Overview of North American libraries within the accessibility field scan.

LIBRARY	LOCATION	LEGISLATION	WEBSITE
HALIFAX CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY	HALIFAX, NS CANADA	ACCESSIBILITY ACT, 2017	WWW.HALIFAXPUBLICLIBRARIES.CA/ACCESSIBILITY/ACCESSIBILITY-BRANCHES/
SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL LIBRARY	5 BRANCHES IN MANITOBA CANADA	ACCESSIBILITY FOR MANITOBANS ACT (AMA), 2013	WWW.SCRL.MB.LIBRARIES.COOP/
NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY	92 BRANCHES IN NEW YORK CITY. NY USA	AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA), 1990	WWW.NYPL.ORG/ACCESSIBILITY
LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY	72 BRANCHES IN LOS ANGELES, CA USA	AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA), 1990	WWW.LAPL.ORG/ABOUT-LAPL/ADA
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY	27 BRANCHES IN SAN FRANCISCO, CA USA	AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA), 1990	WWW.SFPL.ORG/INDEX.PHP?PG=2000002501
CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY	79 BRANCHES IN CHICAGO, IL USA	AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA), 1990	WWW.CHIPUBLICLIB.ORG/FAQ/SERVICES/#PEOPLE-WITH-DISABILITIES
AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY	20 BRANCHES IN AUSTIN, TX USA	AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA), 1990	WWW.LIBRARY.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/ABOUT-LIBRARY/ACCESSIBILITY

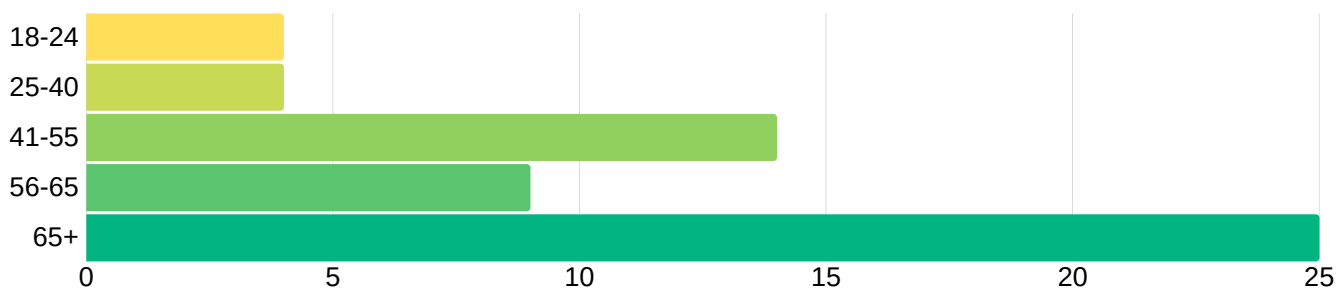
Table 1: (Cont'd) Overview of North American libraries within the accessibility field scan.

CHAPTER 5

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AROUND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE OKANAGAN

This Chapter summarizes the key findings from volunteer participants who participated in an intercept survey conducted at 8 of the Okanagan Regional Library Branches. A total of N=56 participants who ranged in age from 18-65+, with the majority of the participants in a demographic over 65 years of age (n=25).

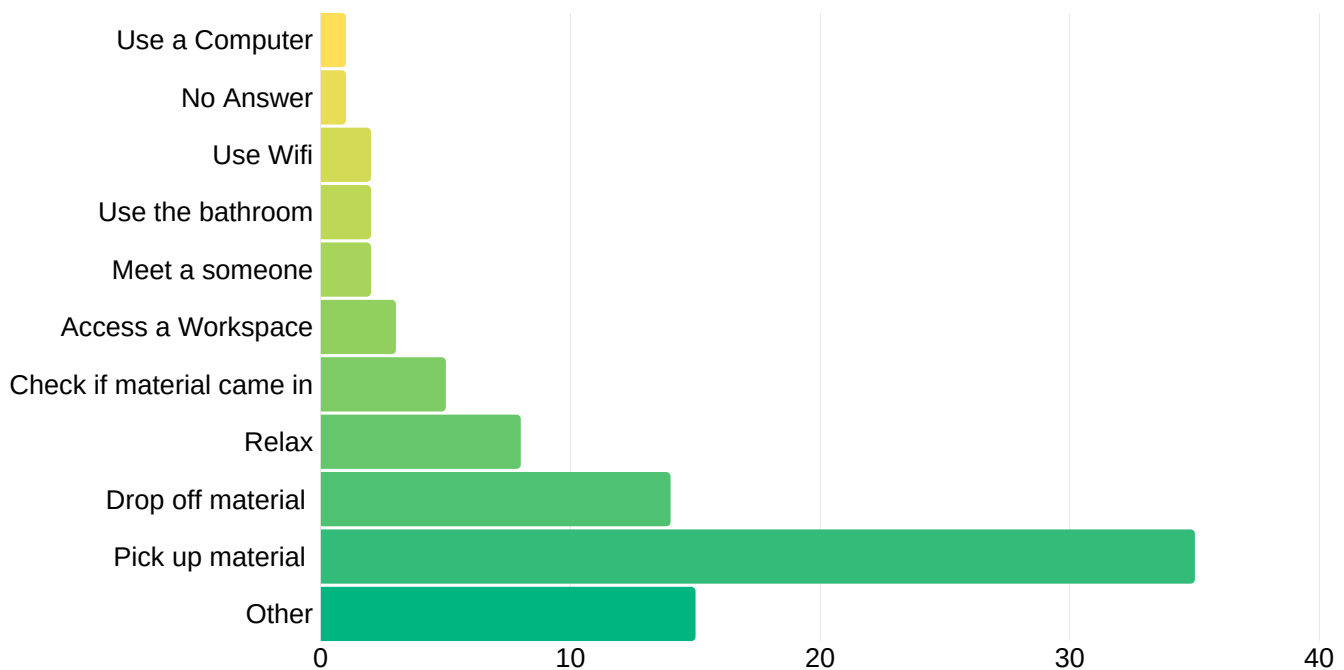
Age Demographics



Additionally, the data in this Chapter capture the qualitative input from participants from two community focus groups (their demographic information was not recorded in order to protect their identity in compliance with the research ethics protocol).

According to the members of the public during the intercept survey, the branches of the Okanagan Regional Library are important community spaces that provide resources in addition to reading material, such as social space, internet access, information, and educational programs. Participants frequently anecdotally remarked to the researchers how well loved and essential the library is within their own particular community. To support the ORL in knowing what was a key function of the library during July 2019, this snapshot captures the range of roles libraries play across communities.

What brought you to the Library today?



Digging deeper, and drawing from qualitative data from Public Intercept Surveys and Focus Groups, the research team found that the public's understanding of accessibility in public spaces could be divided into two categories. **Cultural Knowledge** and **Accessibility**.

Theme 1: Cultural Knowledge

The first area relates to **Cultural Knowledge** and is defined through the data as lived experiences related to everyday life with public bathrooms that ranges from the **expectations** people have of how they are designed to the **values** of how this space functions in a Canadian context.

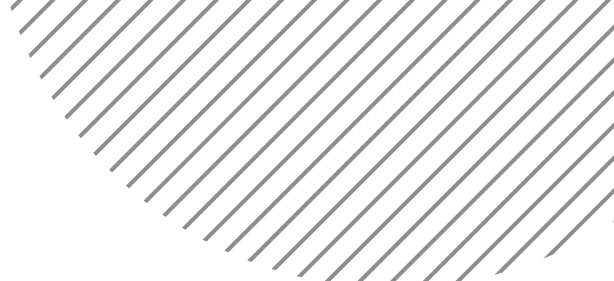
First, **expectations** refer to the tangible aspects of a particular space or experience. Within a public bathroom, this can refer to expected fixtures and preferred design features. When people use a public bathroom they expect there will be a flushing toilet, a sink to wash one's hands, something to dry one's hands with, and somewhere to dispose of waste. People discussed activities such as changing a baby's diaper that are not directly related to the basic activities conducted within a bathroom but are nonetheless important and necessary. Additionally, people highlighted the simple features and light colours that reinforced perceptions of cleanliness and security.

- "The less we have to touch with our hands, the better we like it."
- "I wouldn't care for a dark colour [...] lighter colours give you a sense of cleanliness."
- "The plainer the better."

Second, the **values** aspect of **Cultural Knowledge** associated with the public bathrooms refer to the intangible knowledge and perceptions of a particular space or experience. In discussing the public washroom with members of the community, participants highlighted the importance of cleanliness and hygiene, safety, and privacy. Participants highlighted the importance of sustainable design practices such as energy and water efficiency but not at the expense of "Giving up the[ir] privacy."

Participants consistently discussed how components of accessibility, such as the accommodations available in public washrooms, include experiences that are separate from the realities of living with a disability. For example, age related challenges were routinely mentioned, highlighting additional areas that may not be designed with the needs of users in mind. For families with children, this can look like high fixtures including sinks and soap, sensors that go off when children move, and a lack of change tables.

- "You can change a baby almost anywhere "but once you need that toilet though you don't have a lot of other options."
- "You need to change [babies], I also consider that accessibility, not disability."



For participants in the demographic of 65+, they expressed mobility concerns such as heavy doors, space orientation, and allowances for mobility aids, and simple and easy to operate fixtures like locks, door knobs and sink taps.

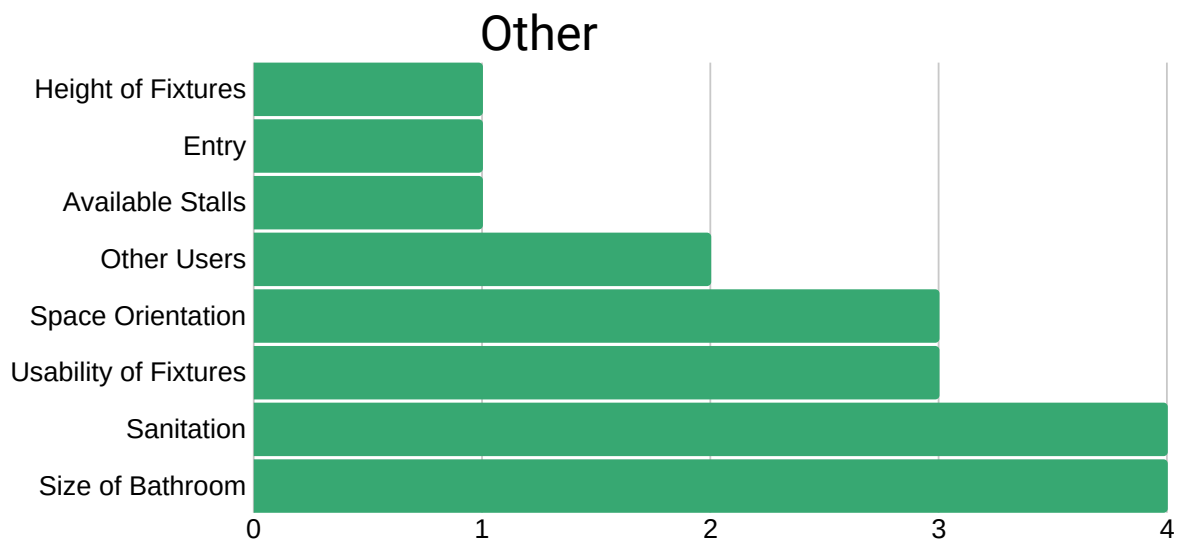
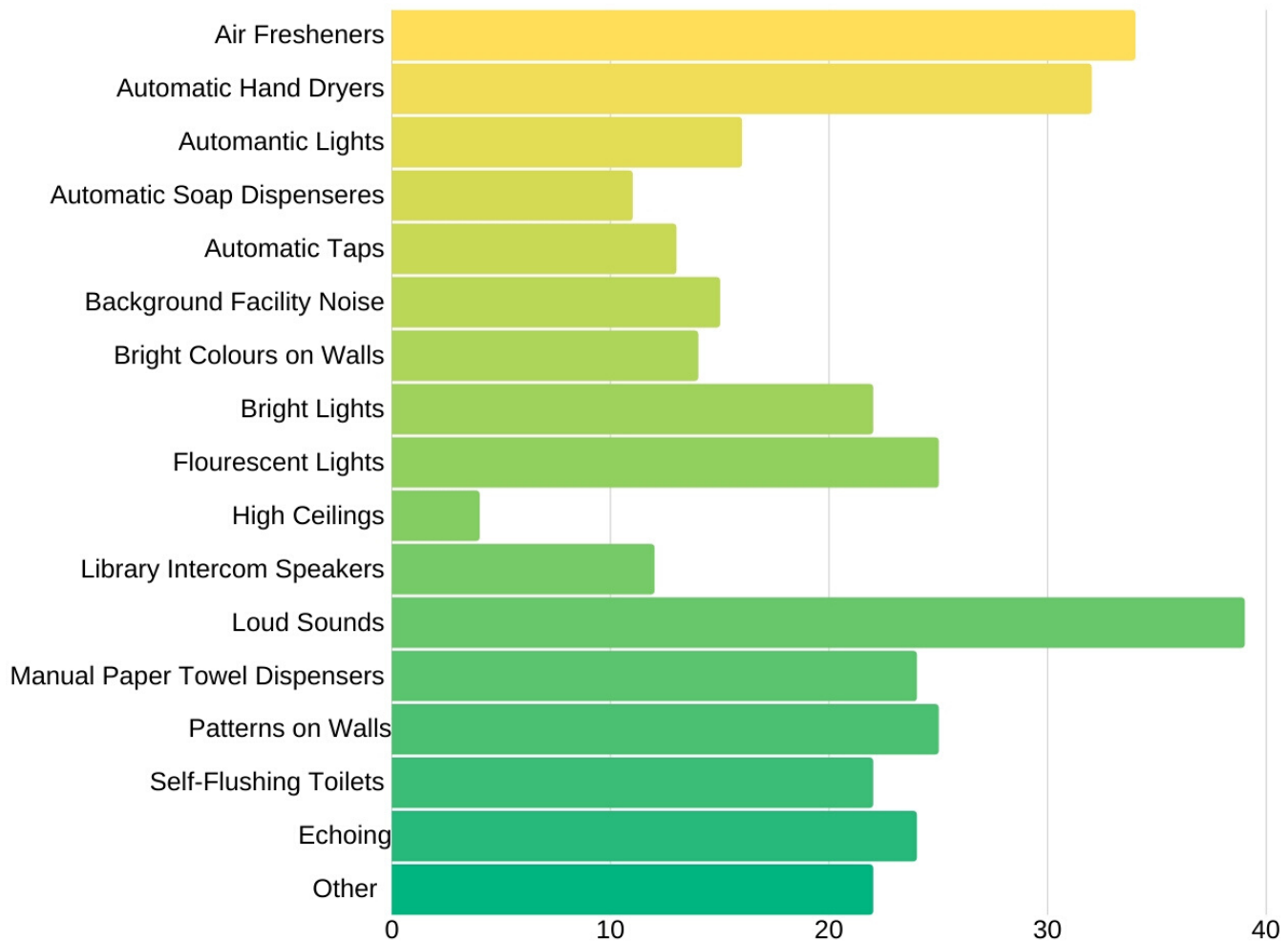
- “I notice ramps more now where I didn’t notice that five years ago. It takes time.”

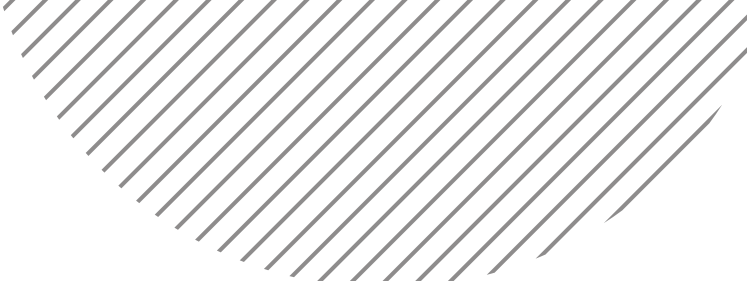
Furthermore, multicultural approaches to public washrooms were discussed connecting global expectations and experiences across Canada, the United States, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Australia.

And thirdly, the **lived experience** was articulated by a majority of participants across all datasets who stated that automatic hand dryers, air fresheners, loud sounds, self flushing toilets, and fluorescent lights would be a barrier to someone experiencing sensitivity to sound, touch, smell, vision, or any other senses. Across the qualitative data, these spaces were consistently described as being intimidating, scary, frustrating, and triggering. In addition to this, multiple participants expressed frustration when spaces that one would expect to be accessible such as hospitals, were not accessible “because they’re built to code!”. This sentiment crossed over to other areas such as schools, pools, malls, downtown city centres, sidewalks, and cultural spaces like museums and art galleries. These findings highlight how inaccessibility contributes to multiple intersections of discrimination and forms of segregation for individuals with disabilities.

This insight into the lived experiences, values, and expectations greatly informed how **sensory accessibility** is and is not understood in the Okanagan in relation to the new language of the *Accessible Canada Act*. A key finding that this project helped to make visible is that when speaking about **accessibility** and navigating public bathrooms with a disability, people spoke about specific barriers related to the physical structures, fixtures, design features, and space orientation. From the Public Intercept Surveys, when library patrons were presented with the language of the act, the baseline understanding of barriers with limited. For example, 18 out of 56 participants from the Public Intercept Surveys had never heard of the term “barrier” in relation to accessibility before. Pushing this further, participants selected from a list of possible barriers as well as offered up others that were not evident in literature used to inform the design of this survey question.

Please select any of the following that you think might be a barrier in a public bathroom for anyone experiencing sensitivity to either sound, touch, smell, vision, or other senses.



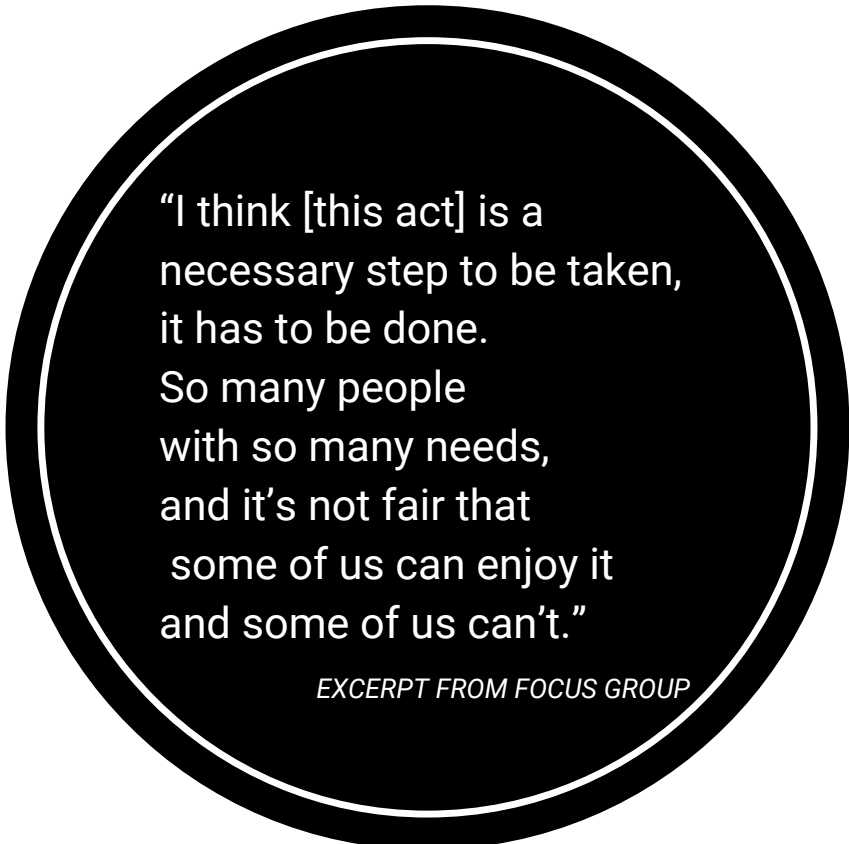
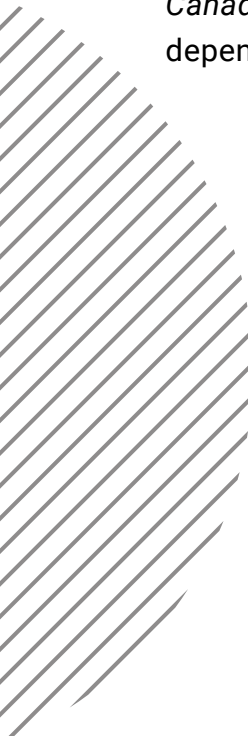


From the **Community Focus Group** conversations, when presented with the definition of “barrier,” a majority of participants reacted with shock and surprise stating:

- “That’s a pretty inclusive definition. We have a LONG way to go if that’s the new definition. Attitudinal, my goodness.”
- “Absolutely. Dead on. That’s a great definition.”
- “Wow.”
- “I think that’s a good definition.”

Comparing the quantitative and qualitative data suggests that the language of the Act, while inclusive, exhaustive, and even impressive, does not reflect the baseline understanding and awareness of the public in the Okanagan.

These findings shifted when people spoke about the lived experience of navigating these spaces. People spoke frequently about their informal and formal approaches to access. These included suggestions for better signage, experiences with the inaccessibility of British Columbia’s Building Code, and resources like auditors to determine the accessibility of public spaces. The recourse to auditors is in fact a new action within the *Accessible Canada Act* at the federal level. How this will be implemented in British Columbia will depend on how Bill M219 becomes actioned across the province by 2024.



“I think [this act] is a necessary step to be taken, it has to be done. So many people with so many needs, and it’s not fair that some of us can enjoy it and some of us can’t.”

EXCERPT FROM FOCUS GROUP

Theme 2: Accessibility

The second thematic area that emerged in the data was that participants emphasized the complexity of providing access to bathroom facilities as a basic and necessary human need. They consistently highlighted the importance of ensuring all public spaces are inclusive, fair, and equitable. The findings related to accessibility are broken down further here in relation to how participants discussed accessibility. When discussing accessibility during focus groups, participants were clear that “**accessibility** covers not just paraplegics but it covers blind, deaf, cognitive, psychiatric disability, limb loss, it covers a broad range of disabilities.” This was elaborated on to clarify that there is an important emphasis that needs to be placed on disability pride as “we don’t care to be labeled disabled. We like that. I’m proud to be disabled [...] I am proud to be who I am.”

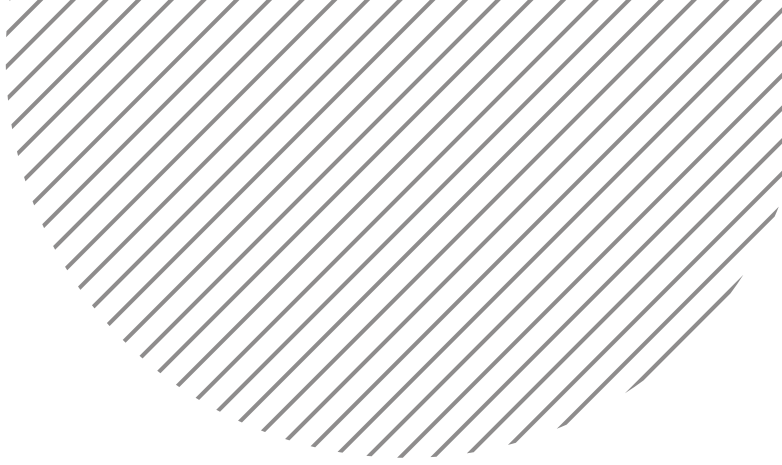
When unpacking the language of the *Accessible Canada Act* during focus groups, the following series of quotes captures how people discussed **barriers**, **lived experience with barriers**, and **approaches to access** that are both formal and informal.

For example, when discussing **Barrier**, participants noted:

- “Something that prevents you from being able to do something. That blocks you from being able to do something.”
- “a barrier to any space, any public building, any public boardwalk [...] a barrier is something that doesn’t include a lot of people. It’s a dissuasion to a lot of people.”
- “The barriers are real and they’re strange.”
- “Disability: Something that throws up a barrier”
- “something in the innate way you are that throws up a barrier [...] and prevents you from being able to do what everybody else does as easily.”
- “Even though we’re proud to be disabled, we’re marginalized [...] we can’t access everything that you guys can, the able-bodied can access. Now we will be able to.”
- “Sure I can fit my chair in but I can’t move right?”

In response to discussing barriers in relation to lived experience it was most notably linked to

- **Structural:** wheelchair inaccessibility, ramps into businesses/buildings and buses, 3D signs + tactile with Braille + numbers that comes out of the wall, doors opening the “right way” either into the room or the hallway, can you easily move when you’re in the bathroom?
- **Smell:** “refuse to use bathrooms just based on the way they smell,” a smell covered up by cheap air fresheners “it’s really bad.”



Additionally, the language used to describe the space with a barrier included: intimidating, trigger, scary/scare, frightening, comfort, predictable, stark, cringey, warm, loud, splashes, messy, unclean, disturbing, icky. Language used to capture the **lived experience** of navigating these spaces ranged from:

- Inaccessibility, limitation, mobilities, trigger, intimidating, frightening
- Different abilities, diverse abilities, special need(s), innate way that you are, sensory issues, challenges, sensory person, visually sensitivities, any sort of slight visual impairment, chemical sensitivities, mobility problems, sensory sensitive, less verbal, less self-aware, less forceful, visual and auditory inclusivities, accessibility expert, a certain form of Autism, physical needs, able-bodied, blindness, hearing loss, visuals
- Stakeholder, activities, tour companies, businesses
- Autism Spectrum, ASD, the spectrum, a certain form of Autism

CHAPTER 6

UNDERSTANDING OF LIBRARY WORKERS KNOWLEDGE + NEEDS

This Chapter is organized into first understanding how participants from the Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) understand and discuss accessibility issues to present their baseline **knowledge**, and second summarizing the self-identified **needs** of frontline library team members to meet the accessibility needs of patrons.

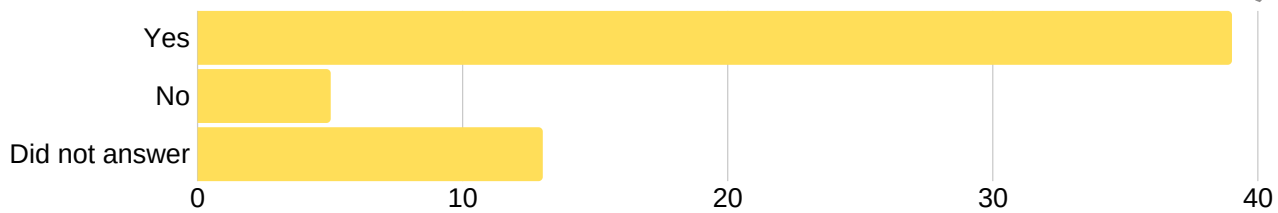
Baseline Knowledge

According to the staff members of the Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) who participated in the Online Staff Questionnaire (N=52), the branches of the library are key public and community spaces that need to be accessible and open to everyone. As such, the ORL staff view their role as being welcoming, friendly, open minded, understanding, non-judgmental, and receptive to the needs of their community. As a starting point, the data shows that of the that the majority of participants (n=40) feel that there are accessibility barriers for library users in their branch.

"It's hard to say: when you don't have any accessibility issues, you take for granted the ability to walk in and use any washroom."

EXCERPT FROM
STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

Are there Accessibility Barriers for library users?



Based on the qualitative data collected in the online questionnaire, a majority of ORL's frontline staff's understanding of and approaches to accessibility primarily related to physical access and mobility concerns. For example, the research team found the **working definition of accessibility** refers to whether or not people are able to enter and maneuver in a space with ease and use resources and materials without difficulty regardless of their physical ability. Staff did highlight current approaches, initiatives, and available resources for accessibility that include: American Sign Language story time, Braille book formats, audiobooks, large print books, DAISY Discs (talking books), and sensory story times.

When asked more generally about accessibility, participants consistently used language such as:

- Maneuver, move around and through, get in and out, enter and exit, access and use space/services/resources

This language indicates a more unified understanding of physical access to space as opposed to less visible needs of patrons that the *Accessible Canada Act* now includes.

"Unfortunately, I don't think we can cover everyone's needs without excluding the needs of others. I think the trick is figuring out what improvements we can make for each diverse group that won't create issues for each other."

EXCERPT FROM
STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

Key Language

When describing patrons' experiences of navigating various ORL branches, staff used terms like:

- Ability, disability, capacity, capabilities, mobility, wheelchair bound/confined/user, challenges, Mobility Aids, devices, walkers, canes, powered/motorized wheelchairs

Again, participants were once again thinking of access in relation to the physical space.

From the qualitative data, the top barriers and accommodations that ORL staff identified and described included: stairs, tripping hazards, convenient access to:

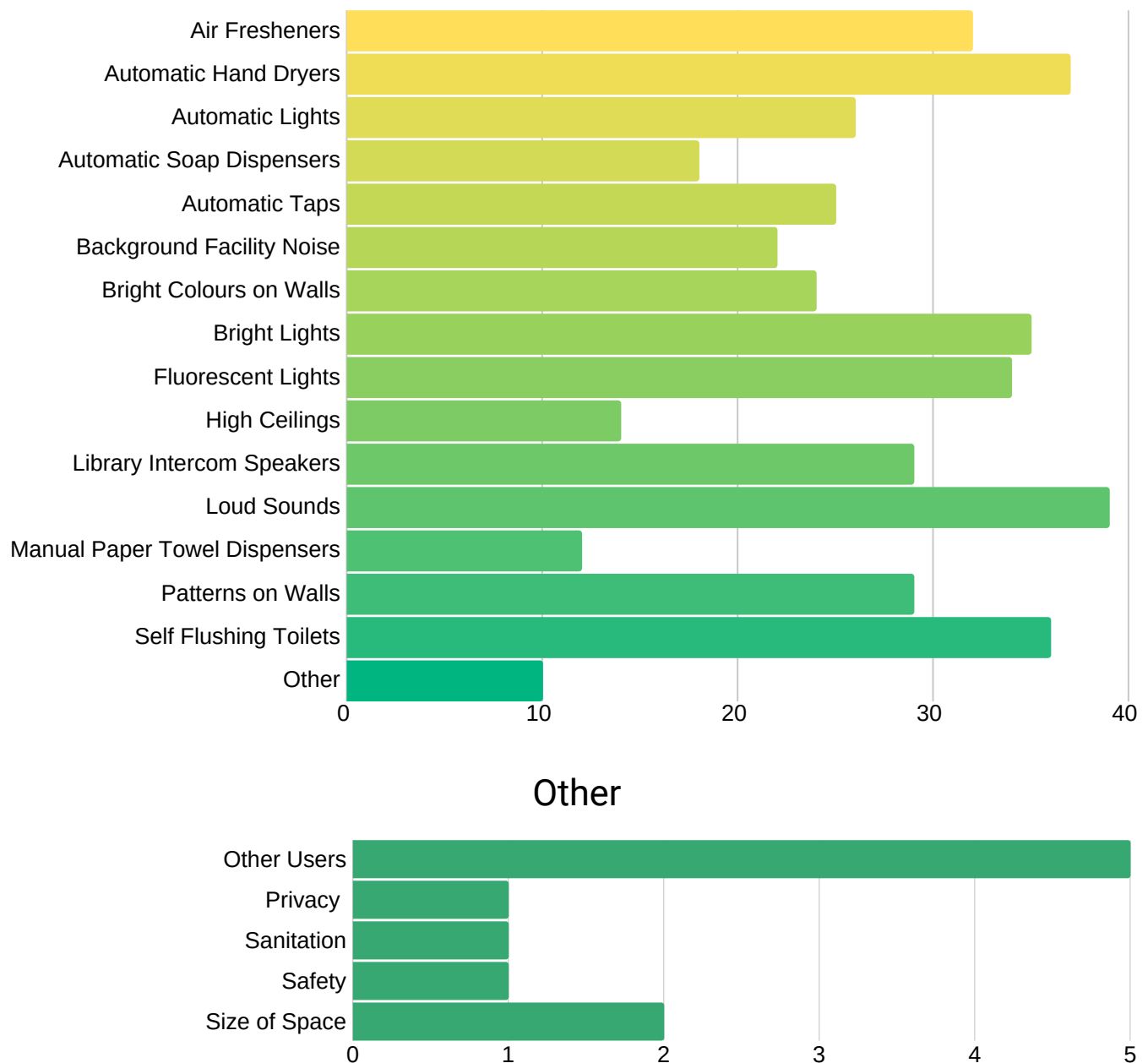
- 1) Shelves and material;
- 2) Counters and tables;
- 3) General configuration of space;
- 4) Accommodations: street level entrances, ramps, automatic doors, disabled/handicap/family bathroom, elevators, grab bars, clear paths/exits/way finding, wide doors/entrances, adjustable features

"We need to make sure that
our materials and service
(physical and intellectual)
can be accessed
by all."

*EXCERPT FROM
STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE*

When ORL Staff were asked specifically about features/fixtures in public washrooms, the data shows:

Please select any of the following that you think might prevent someone with sensory sensitivity from using the bathroom.



Pushing this further, participants who discussed barriers tended to describe barriers within a public bathroom as those related to the following categories:

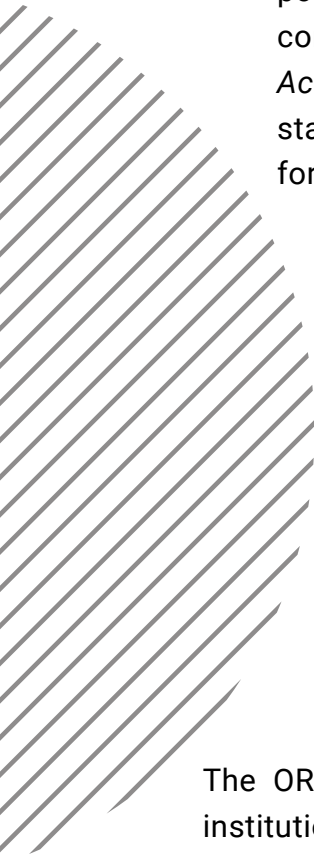
- **Light:** fluorescent, harsh, abrasive, bright
- **Scent:** fragrances, odours, ventilation
- **Noise:** too loud, unpredictable, echo
- Bright murals and busy walls

Unpacking this further, participants were active in providing feedback about the importance of **visible and supportive signage** in their branches to communicate information, way finding, and programming. They remarked that signage in multiple languages, simple and concise wording, and diverse formats like tactile lettering, was key to effectively communicating with the patrons who access library services.

The Needs

From the Online Staff Questionnaire, overall, participants recommended and requested more **training and information** on how to better understand and assist the diverse patrons that access the library especially in relation to accessibility. They noted:

- "When educated and trained, we are able to make strides in becoming more sensory inclusive and accessible in general. Education is key."
- "We are always interested in learning more. We continue to work with groups such as Okanagan Accessibility, the CNIB, Project Literacy, CMHA, Interior Health, and other local groups who can help advise us on creating a more accessible library. We welcome information and learning more about sensory inclusivity!"
- "I think the ORL is doing a pretty excellent job at being inclusive for all users! We all wish to be compliant and help wherever needed, and the staff I know are open to suggestions for how to help make our branches more accessible, wherever needed."



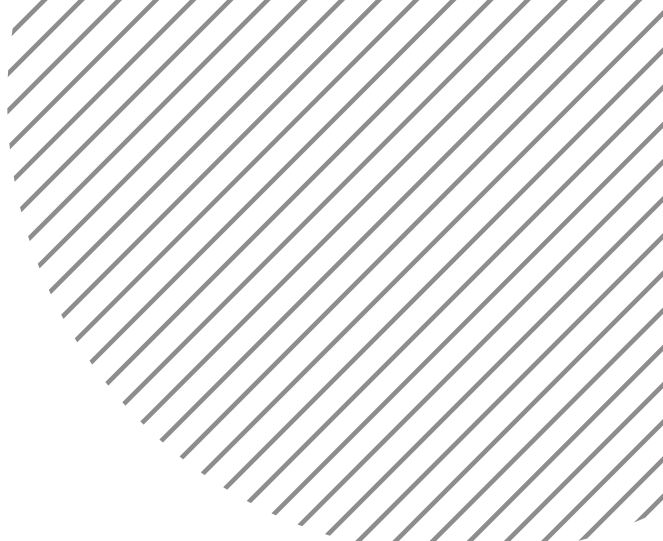
Participants from the ORL Staff also identified **limitations** in budget, organizational policies, time, and physical capacity in order to address the needs of their community and ensure they would be operating at the standards outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act*. Multiple staff members expressed anxiety regarding the new standards proposed by the Act highlighting that libraries were already “competing for scarce resources” for daily operations.

- “Our branch would need a major physical overhaul and a change in programming approaches to anticipate all of the accessibility requirements outlined in the proposed legislation. We can still improve our practices and set-up within our current environment, but it will be challenging to approach the proposed standard.”

There was additional emphasis placed on a **need to consult** and learn from patrons, including those with disabilities, children and youth, community members, and other staff.

The ORL staff highlighted **key values** of the Okanagan Regional Library as a public institution which include:

- **Equal Access** – a space that is open to all, no limitations, inclusive, no discrimination, everyone and anyone can participate
- **Safe** – regulated, an expected level of privacy, awareness of social expectations within the environment
- **Clean and Easy to Navigate** – especially in relation to the bathrooms
- **Facilitate Community Wellbeing** – accessing the library should create a sense of ease, comfort, emotion, no stress, without difficulty, convenience



In an effort to contextualize these values, participants identified multiple social dynamics and areas where the library emphasizes social inclusion already in place that include:

- No discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, income and social class, ability, appearance, or any other challenge.
- Inclusion for immigrants (ex. literacy and language learning programs).
- LGBTQ+ safety and support (ex. pride stickers).
- Central and accessibility location (ex. near public transportation).



“I believe that accessibility and sensory inclusivity at the library is extremely important and I hope to see some changes being made so the library can be a welcoming and positive facility for everyone to use equally.”

EXCERPT FROM STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION + RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

General Findings

Currently, accessibility is still generally understood through physical terms. Any understanding of less visible disabilities were only articulated by those who face the challenges of using public spaces that have automatic fixtures that act as triggers for themselves or loved ones. The majority of participants were not familiar with sensory accessibility but their willingness to discuss it captures a shared value to ensure equitable access to all in the Okanagan.

Findings related to the Legislation

British Columbia is only one of four provinces or territories in Canada developing accessibility specific legislation at a provincial level, and it did so only in 2018, with an action plan to ensure a barrier-free British Columbia by 2024 (Bill M219). Unlike more established legislation around accessibility in Ontario and the United States, for example, British Columbia's action plan has yet to address concerns or contribute substantial change. If and when the *Accessible Canada Act* applies to organizations like the ORL (however, it is important to note that the *Accessible Canada Act* only affects Federal buildings and programs), it will directly impact the work of the ORL through provincial legislation. In anticipation of this, the final recommendations of this report speak to this future in order to support the ORL to meet the needs of its community member and comply with future legislation.



Findings related to the Library Patrons

Two themes emerged from the input provided by the library patron participants. The first theme relates to cultural knowledge which captures the expectations and values people have of public bathrooms. A primary concern for participants was the multi-functionality of public bathrooms that accommodate a variety of users and user needs (e.g. areas to change diapers), abilities and mobilities (e.g. allowances for mobility aids and each to operate fixtures and doors), and sensitivities (e.g. sensory—light, sound, smell), as well as perceptions of cleanliness and security. These concerns led to discussions around value of how public bathrooms function in Canadian society which addresses issues of privacy, cleanliness, hygiene, safety, and how these are balance against water and energy efficiency. The second theme relates to accessibility to bathroom facilities as a basic and necessary human need and highlighted varied understandings of barriers in relation to lived experience. Participants most notably linked ‘barrier’ to issues of ‘structural design’ or ‘smell’ which captured the lived experience of navigating these spaces. Library patron participants were interested in thinking about how to make these spaces better for Canadians in general and viewed the library as a place they go and learn.

Findings related to the Library Staff

The library staff participants primarily understood and approached accessibility relate to physical access and mobility concerns, indicating a more unified understanding of physical access to space as opposed to less visible needs of library patrons that the new legislation addresses. When discussing public bathrooms in the library, staff tended to describe barriers similar to those capture by the library patron participants; that is, sensitivities (e.g. sensory—light, sound, smell), as well as other visible features such as walls or murals. Library staff participants provided feedback on the importance of simple, visible, and supportive signage in their branches to effectively communicate with the patrons who access library services (e.g. simple, concise wording; multiple languages; tactile lettering). Overall, library staff participants recommended and requested additional training and information on how to better understand and assist the diverse accessibility needs of the diverse patrons that access their library. They discussed how additional training and information would allow them to enhance the knowledge they currently possess and the community partners they engage with around accessibility and inclusivity. Sensory inclusivity was an area of discussion that generated much interest. Staff highlighted the key values of the ORL as: equal access, safe, clean and easy to navigate, and facilitate community wellbeing.



Conclusion

To answer the core questions of this sensory ethnography about accessibility in public bathrooms in the Okanagan, the following answers emerge:

(1) Where and how do misinterpretations and misrepresentations of sensory knowledges and experiences exist in public space?

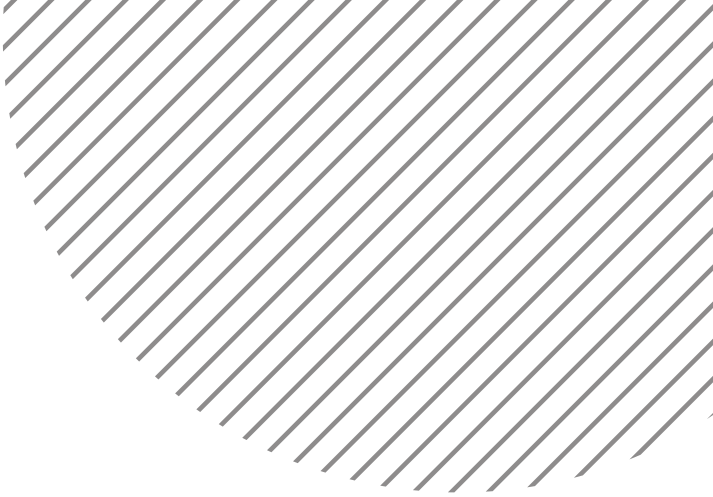
The *Accessible Canada Act* introduces new language around accessibility and barriers that is new knowledge to residents of the Okanagan. Therefore, the ORL has a rich opportunity to create learning opportunities to introduce this language to the community and support library patrons and staff to understand accessibility beyond the physical.

(2) How do permanent fixtures and design features influence the general and sensory accessibility of these spaces?

Participants in the Public Intercept Surveys, Focus Groups, and Online Staff questions actively engaged in thinking through what makes for a barrier in their public library. The majority of participants were not familiar with sensory accessibility but their willingness to discuss it captures a shared value to ensure equitable access to all in the Okanagan.

(3) How do people in the Okanagan approach accessibility, especially when it is related to less visible disabilities?

Currently, accessibility is still generally understood through physical terms such as ramps, automatic doors, and access to services such as braille signage. Any understanding of less visible disabilities were only articulated by those who face the challenges of using public spaces that have automatic fixtures that act as triggers for themselves or loved ones. However, participants were excited by the new legislation and actively wanted to think through ways to ensure the Okanagan is accessible to all residents.



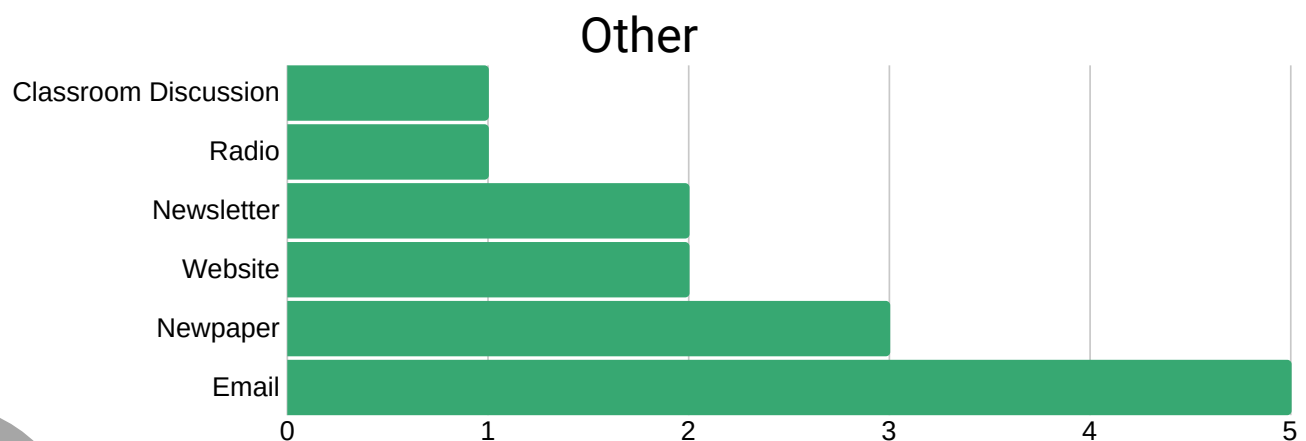
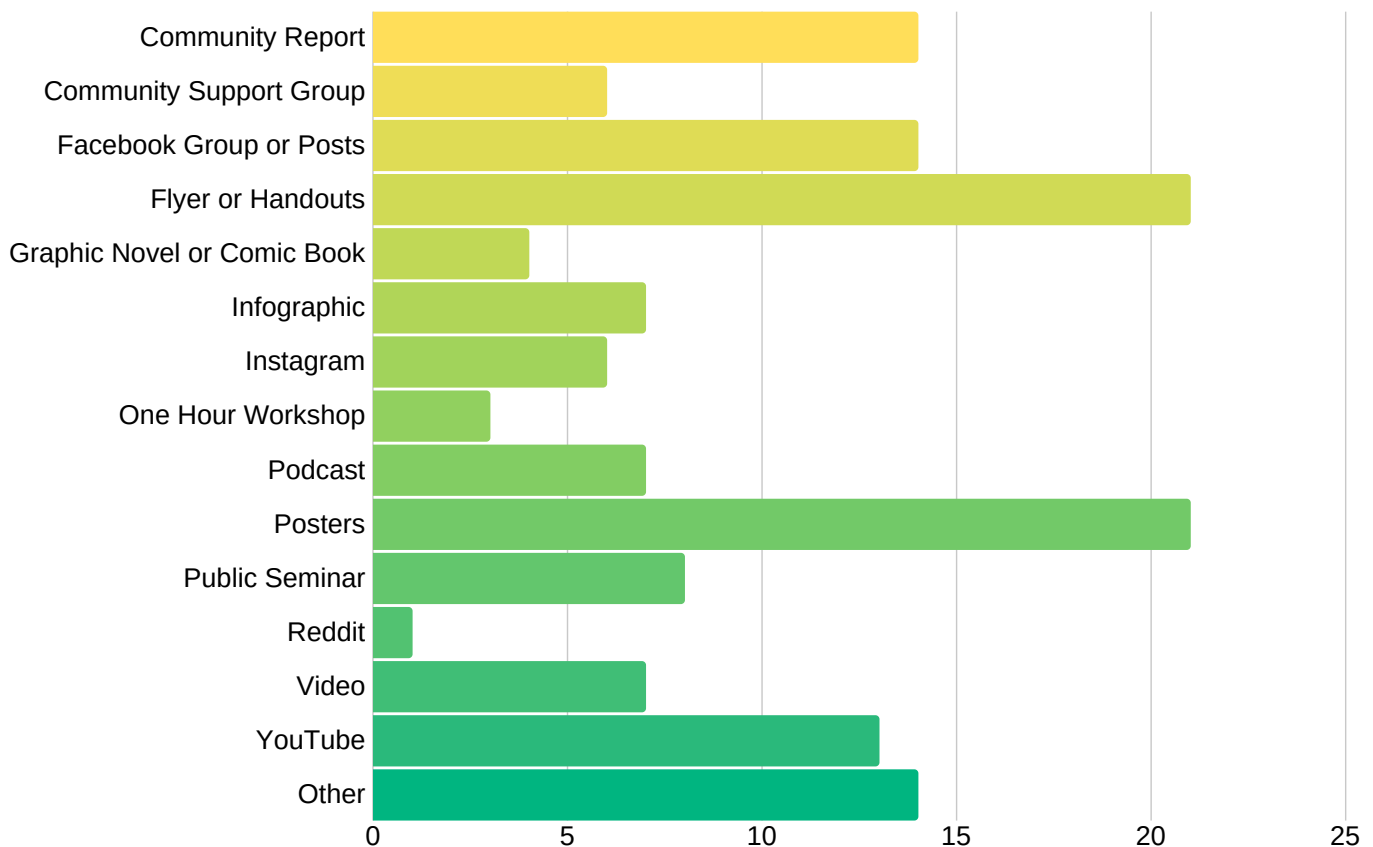
Finally, to circle back to the main questions the Okanagan Regional Library sought to have answered in this study:

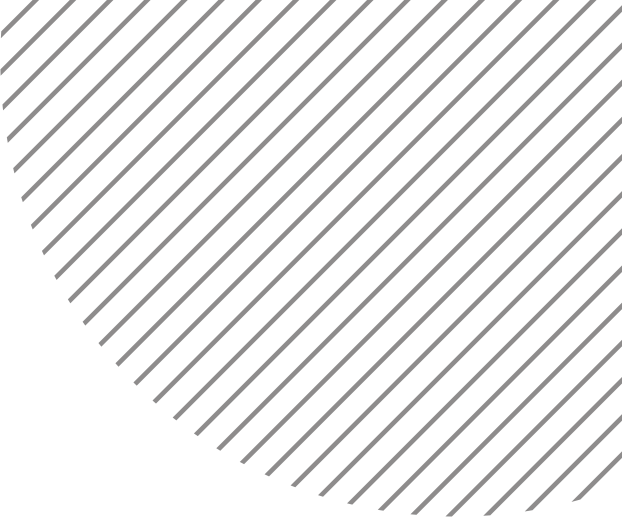
- **What are the barriers that exist to accessing knowledge and disseminating knowledge?**
- **How does knowledge get into the hands of community members?**
- **What knowledge do community members want?**
- **What does ORL need to do in imagining/thinking outside/beyond physical barriers and space?**

In comparing all of the data sets, the research team determined that the public readily understands issues of access when they can physically see a wheelchair or physical disability. The ORL can play an active role in educating public by implementing new spaces, practices, and protocols around less visible disabilities such as fostering scent free environments, including bathroom facilities free of automatic features that act as triggers for those with sensory disturbances. The ORL is well recognized and respected by patrons as information hubs to each community in the Okanagan where a branch exists. Therefore, the ORL has the opportunity to create community dialogue and be a leader in British Columbia for how to expand upon their inclusivity actions already underway in relation to the *Accessible Canada Act* and British Columbia's plans for a barrier-free province by 2024.

Finally, the participants of the Public Intercept Survey and Focus Groups were active in providing the means through which they would like to learn more about this study, as well as further actions the ORL has in place to respond to the provincial and federal laws concerning accessibility. The research team is committed to working with ORL to make this report Open Access, and to designing a poster to share in branches as well as through emails to patrons.

We plan to share our findings from this project back to the libraries. How would you like to learn about this?





When speculating on the future of accessibility in public spaces, members of the public **recommended** and **requested** that the ORL:

- Focus on designing predictability into spaces so that library patrons know what to expect (this could be in the form of accessible signage (or sticker) about what features are present in the bathroom)
- Provide options and the ability to control certain aspects of the space, even if it is not a public bathroom
 - “being able to control it would make all the difference.”
- A desire to approach access with an awareness and willingness to address issues and make necessary adjustments to the less visible impairments facing residents of the Okanagan.
- To consult with other communities, organizations, public institutions, and people with disabilities to understand what best practices and resources are available for addressing the complexities of the public bathroom.

“Make it as better as possible to please or to satisfy most of the needs and that’s how it has to be done [...] it would be a very bad approach to say ‘no we can’t please anybody so we’re not going to please anyone’. You have to do your best to cover every single need or all the needs that you can possibly and deal with it every time and improve, improve, improve. Start from one to the next, to the next, to the next [...] we cannot have perfect from zero.”

Recommendations

Culture

With new accessibility specific legislation and action plans, the Okanagan (and British Columbia in general) is experiencing a culture of change. Based on the findings from this research project, patrons of and staff of the ORL are not adverse to this change. Rather, many expressed a willingness to actively discuss what sensory accessibility is and think through what it means for their community. This openness provides the ORL an opportunity to ensure equitable access to all in the Okanagan. The ORL is recommended to continue to consult with other communities, organizations, public institutions, and people, including those with disabilities, children and youth, community members, and other staff, to understand what best practices and resources are available for address the complexities of the public bathroom. The ORL is further recommended to continue to approach access with an awareness and willingness to address issues and make necessary adjustments to the less visible impairments facing residents of the Okanagan. In doing so, ORL can participate in shaping this new culture of sensory accessibility in the Okanagan and beyond.

Training

Additional training and more information were recommended and requested by ORL staff around sensory accessibility and inclusivity. It is recommended that the ORL continues to engage with its staff to determine what they understand about sensory accessibility and inclusivity and where additional resources could be brought into contribute to knowledge building for the organization as a whole.

Public Education

Based on the findings from this research project, the public readily understands issues of access when they can physically see a wheelchair or physical disability. The ORL can play an active role in educating public by implementing new spaces, practices, and protocols around less visible disabilities such as fostering scent free environments, including bathroom facilities free of automatic features that act as triggers for those with sensory disturbances. The ORL is well recognized and respected by patrons as information hubs to each community in the Okanagan where a branch exists. Therefore, the ORL has the opportunity to create community dialogue and be a leader in British Columbia for how to expand upon their inclusivity actions already underway in relation to the Accessible Canada Act and British Columbia's plans for a barrier-free province by 2024. Examples of this could include designing predictability into spaces so that library patrons and staff know what to expect when they visit a branch; providing options for patrons and staff to control certain aspects of the space, even if it is not the public bathroom.

Strategic Actions to Meet Recommendations

Key actions for the ORL to take as proactive steps to be barrier-free by 2024 and compliant with the proposed British Columbia *Accessible Act* (Bill M219):

- Conduct an accessibility audit at each branch. This can be done in collaboration with UBCO to develop a new project to create an audit instrument that can be adapted in the future as an open access resource for libraries.
- Create formal accessibility strategy for ORL based on findings from the accessibility audit.
- Write a formal accessibility statement and post online and in ORL branches.
- Take strategic steps to improve web accessibility that will ensure online access to ORL is barrier-free by 2024.
- Improve signage at all branches by creating a way-finding plan in multiple languages and universal formats.
- Create scent free and automatic fixture-free spaces in existing bathrooms.
- Share findings from this report with the public as a poster/flyer.

APPENDIX I



The University of British Columbia Okanagan
Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC V1V 1V7

Phone: 250-807-8832
Fax: 250-807-8438

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Fiona P. McDonald	INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT: UBC/UBCO IKE Barber School of Arts & Sci/UBCO Admin Unit 1 Arts & Sci	UBC BREB NUMBER: H19-00118
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:		
Institution	Site	
UBC	Okanagan	
CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Christine Schreyer Madelaine Lekei		
SPONSORING AGENCIES: UBCO I.K. Barber School Endowment - "(Lekei) The Enabled Environment: Understanding Bathrooms as Sensory Inclusive Public Spaces in the Okanagan"		
PROJECT TITLE: The Enabled Environment: Understanding Bathrooms as Sensory Inclusive Public Spaces in the Okanagan		

CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: June 7, 2020

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:	DATE APPROVED: June 7, 2019	
Document Name	Version	Date
Protocol:		
URA Application (UBCO)	1	January 25, 2019
Okanagan Regional Library Letter of Research Agreement	1	May 13, 2019
Consent Forms:		
Informed Consent_Public Intercept Survey Take Home Copy	1	June 4, 2019
Informed Consent_Public Intercept Survey	3	June 4, 2019
Informed Consent_Focus Groups	3	June 4, 2019
Informed Consent_MP Interviews	3	June 4, 2019
Informed Consent_ORL Management Interviews	3	June 4, 2019
Informed Consent_ORL Staff Online Questionnaire	3	June 4, 2019
Advertisements:		
Recruitment Materials_Facebook Post Focus Group	2	May 17, 2019
Recruitment Materials_Library Focus Group Poster	2	May 17, 2019
Recruitment Materials_Intercept Survey Poster	2	May 17, 2019
Recruitment Materials_Focus Group Postcard	2	May 17, 2019
Recruitment Materials_Social Media Communications Plan	1	May 14, 2019
Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:		
Scripts & Questions_Focus Groups	3	June 4, 2019
Scripts & Questions_ORL Staff Online Questionnaire	3	June 4, 2019
Scripts & Questions_ORL Management Interviews	3	June 4, 2019
Scripts & Questions_Public Intercept Survey	3	June 4, 2019

APPENDIX I

Scripts & Questions_ MP Interviews	3	June 4, 2019
<u>Letter of Initial Contact:</u>		
Letter of Initial Contact_ MP Interviews	3	June 4, 2019
Letter of Initial Contact_ Focus Groups	3	June 4, 2019
Letter of Initial Contact_ ORL Interviews	3	June 4, 2019
Letter of Initial Contact_ ORL Staff Online Questionnaire	1	June 4, 2019
<u>Other Documents:</u>		
Response to Provisions and Edits 2019 06 04	1	June 4, 2019
<u>Other:</u>		
www.ce2lab.ok.ubc.ca [Currently this website is under construction at UBCO and it will be live by late-June 2019 as this is the lab co-directed by Fiona P. McDonald] www.madelainelekei.ca/enabled-environment www.fiona-p-mcdonald.com		
The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.		
<i>This study has been approved either by the full Behavioural REB of the UBC Okanagan or by an authorized delegated reviewer</i>		



APPENDIX II

Wednesday, July 3, 2019 at 8:22:51 PM Pacific Daylight Time

Subject: Amendment/Renewal has been approved
Date: Wednesday, July 3, 2019 at 3:38:38 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From: ors@ors.ubc.ca
To: McDonald, Fiona

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Okanagan Research Ethics Board
Office of Research Services
3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC V1V 1V7
Phone: 250-807-8832 Fax: 250-807-8438

To: McDonald, Fiona P.
UBCO Admin Unit 1 Arts & Sci
Date: July 3, 2019
Subject: H19-00118-A001 (Amendments to Study)
Sensory Public Bathrooms
Principal Investigator: Fiona P. McDonald

This is an automatically generated email sent to the Principal Investigator and Primary Contact; Please do not reply.

The Post Approval Activity (PAA) for the application identified above was reviewed by the Research Ethics Board and has been approved.

For Renewals & Amendments:

Please click on the following link to view your approval certificate: [RISe](#)

- This link will take you to the RISe homepage whereby you must log on using your CWL login to access the above mentioned application
- Once you have gained access to the PAA Homepage, click the "View" link located next to the subheading, "PAA Approval Certificate" on the right side of the screen

Or you may take the following steps to view your approval certificate:

- Log on to RISe (<http://rise.ubc.ca/rise>) using your CWL login
- Locate and click the above application title under the "Human Ethics" tab then click on the "View" link located next to the subheading "Current Approval Certificate" on the study homepage

For Acknowledgements:

Please click on the link (<http://rise.ubc.ca/rise>) to view your approved acknowledgement

APPENDIX II

- This link will take you to the RISE homepage whereby you must log on using your CWL login to access the above mentioned application
- Locate and click the above application title under the “Human Ethics” tab, that will take you to the study homepage. Then select the “Post Approval Activities” tab on click on the name of approved acknowledgement to view the PAA homepage for that acknowledgement
- Once you have gained access to the PAA Homepage, click the “View” link located next to the subheading, “PAA Approval Certificate” on the right side of the screen

If you have any questions regarding this notification, please contact your REB Administrator.

APPENDIX III



To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Support of research project

This letter is written in support of the sensory accessibility research project that Undergraduate Researcher, Madelaine Lekei will be leading.

The Okanagan Regional Library (ORL) is working together with UBC Okanagan, Ms. Lekei and Dr. Fiona P. McDonald in this regard. This project will look at how fixtures in public washrooms and community spaces affect and influence accessibility of those suffering from sensory impairments. To assist with this project the ORL will be providing access into many of our library facilities to Ms. Lekei and Dr. McDonald to conduct interviews with public and hold public forums. We also will provide all ORL staff the opportunity to conduct an online survey on this subject matter.

We congratulate Madelaine on her successful application to the Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Science Undergraduate Research Award! We look forward to her findings and insights into how our facilities positively or negatively affect those less visible or underrepresented in our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica Gaucher". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Monica Gaucher
Director of Public Services

Okanagan Regional Library
1430 K.L.O. Road
Kelowna, BC
V1W 3P6
250-860-4033 ext. 2484
mgaucher@orl.bc.ca

APPENDIX IV

RESOURCES

General Resources

Project Enable

Description: "Project ENABLE provides free, foundational training, designed specifically for public, academic or school librarians worldwide, to help them gain the knowledge and skills needed to create inclusive and accessible libraries that meet the needs of all students."

Link to Resources: <https://projectenable.syr.edu/TRAINING>

British Columbia Libraries Strategic Plan 2016-19

Link to Resources: <https://bclaconnect.ca/wp-uploads/2016/10/BCLA-Strategic-Plan-Refresh-January-2016.pdf>

Tool Kits

Accessibility Information Toolkit For Libraries

Description: "This Toolkit provides resources and examples of accessibility "best practice" for Ontario's University libraries. It also explains our institutional obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)."

Link to Resources:

[https://ocul.on.ca/accessibility/sites/default/files/OCUL%20Accessibility%20Toolkit%20-%20ENG%20-%20v2.0%20\(May%202014\).pdf](https://ocul.on.ca/accessibility/sites/default/files/OCUL%20Accessibility%20Toolkit%20-%20ENG%20-%20v2.0%20(May%202014).pdf)

Accessibility Planning and Resource Guide for Cultural Administrators

Link to Planning Resources: <https://www.arts.gov/accessibility/accessibility-resources/publications-checklists/accessibility-planning-and-resource>

Link to Design for Accessibility: <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Design-for-Accessibility.pdf>

Americans with Disabilities Act Anniversary Tool Kit

Link to Resources: <https://www.adaanniversary.org/>

APPENDIX IV

RESOURCES

Tool Kits (cont'd)

American Library Association

Link to General Accessibility Information: <http://www.ala.org/support/accessibility-defined>

Link to Patron Accessibility Challenges: <http://www.ala.org/news/member-news/2018/02/understanding-accessibility-challenges-patrons>

Link to Digital + Website Accessibility Information:

<http://www.ala.org/support/style/accessibility>

Link to Trustee Tips: <http://www.ala.org/asgcla/resources/tipsheets/trustees>

Association of Specialized Government and Cooperative Library Agencies Resources

Link to Resources: <https://www.asgcladirect.org/resources/>

Canadian Accessibility Standards

Link to Resources: <https://accessibilitycanada.ca/legislation/british-columbia/>

Link to Open Access Textbook: <https://opentextbc.ca/accessibilitytoolkit/>

Canadian + British Columbia Accessibility Auditing and Consultation Services

Link to Resources: [https://www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible?](https://www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible?gclid=CjwKCAjwibzsBRAMEiwA1pHZrrQN-Pd9H8qalgL7nsStMs5gu7qODT0_6Ubrm6pIIyMBI004SCo8BoCIb8QAvD_BwE)

[gclid=CjwKCAjwibzsBRAMEiwA1pHZrrQN-](https://www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible?gclid=CjwKCAjwibzsBRAMEiwA1pHZrrQN-Pd9H8qalgL7nsStMs5gu7qODT0_6Ubrm6pIIyMBI004SCo8BoCIb8QAvD_BwE)

[Pd9H8qalgL7nsStMs5gu7qODT0_6Ubrm6pIIyMBI004SCo8BoCIb8QAvD_BwE](https://www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible?gclid=CjwKCAjwibzsBRAMEiwA1pHZrrQN-Pd9H8qalgL7nsStMs5gu7qODT0_6Ubrm6pIIyMBI004SCo8BoCIb8QAvD_BwE)

CFLA Guidelines on Library and Information Services for People with Disabilities:

Link to resources: <http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/guidelines-on-library-and-information-services-for-people-with-disabilities/>

APPENDIX IV

RESOURCES

Tool Kits (cont'd)

Developing an Ethical Framework for Library Accessibility

Link to Resources: <https://librarypublishing.org/resources/ethical-framework/ethical-framework-accessibility/>

General and Web Accessibility

Description: Making digital resources usable and accessible in research libraries.

Link to Tool Kit : <https://accessibility.arl.org/external-resources/>

Link to Best Practices + Standards: <https://accessibility.arl.org/standards-best-practices/>

Link to Librarian Competencies: <https://accessibility.arl.org/2015/08/accessibility-librarian-competencies/>

Usability: Improve User Experience

Link to Resource: <https://www.usability.gov/>

Examples of Library Accessibility Frameworks

Calgary Public Library

Link: https://calgarylibrary.ca/?gclid=CjwKCAjw_uDsBRAMEiwAaFiHa-hblvlcA7vGhx72QCIZKLnlgTcROpnxDuKX5fMiEIL_pYrrF2FJqxoCd-UQAvD_BwE

London Public Library AODA Report

Link: <http://www.londonpubliclibrary.ca/aoda-accessibility-users-disabilities-customer-service-response>

New York Public Library

Link: <https://www.nypl.org/accessibility>

APPENDIX IV

RESOURCES

Examples of Library Accessibility Frameworks (cont'd)

Queen's University Accessibility Framework and Strategic Plan

Link: <http://www.queensu.ca/equity/accessibility/framework>

London Public Library AODA Report

<http://www.londonpubliclibrary.ca/aoda-accessibility-users-disabilities-customer-service-response>

New York Public Library

<https://www.nypl.org/accessibility>

Accessibility Checklists:

Link: https://projectenable.syr.edu/data/ADA_Accessibility_Checklist4.pdf

Link: <http://disabilitylawcenter.org/wpcontent/uploads/publications/ada%20checklists/ADA%20Library%20Checklist.pdf>

Link: <http://accessadvocates.com/ada-compliance-library/>

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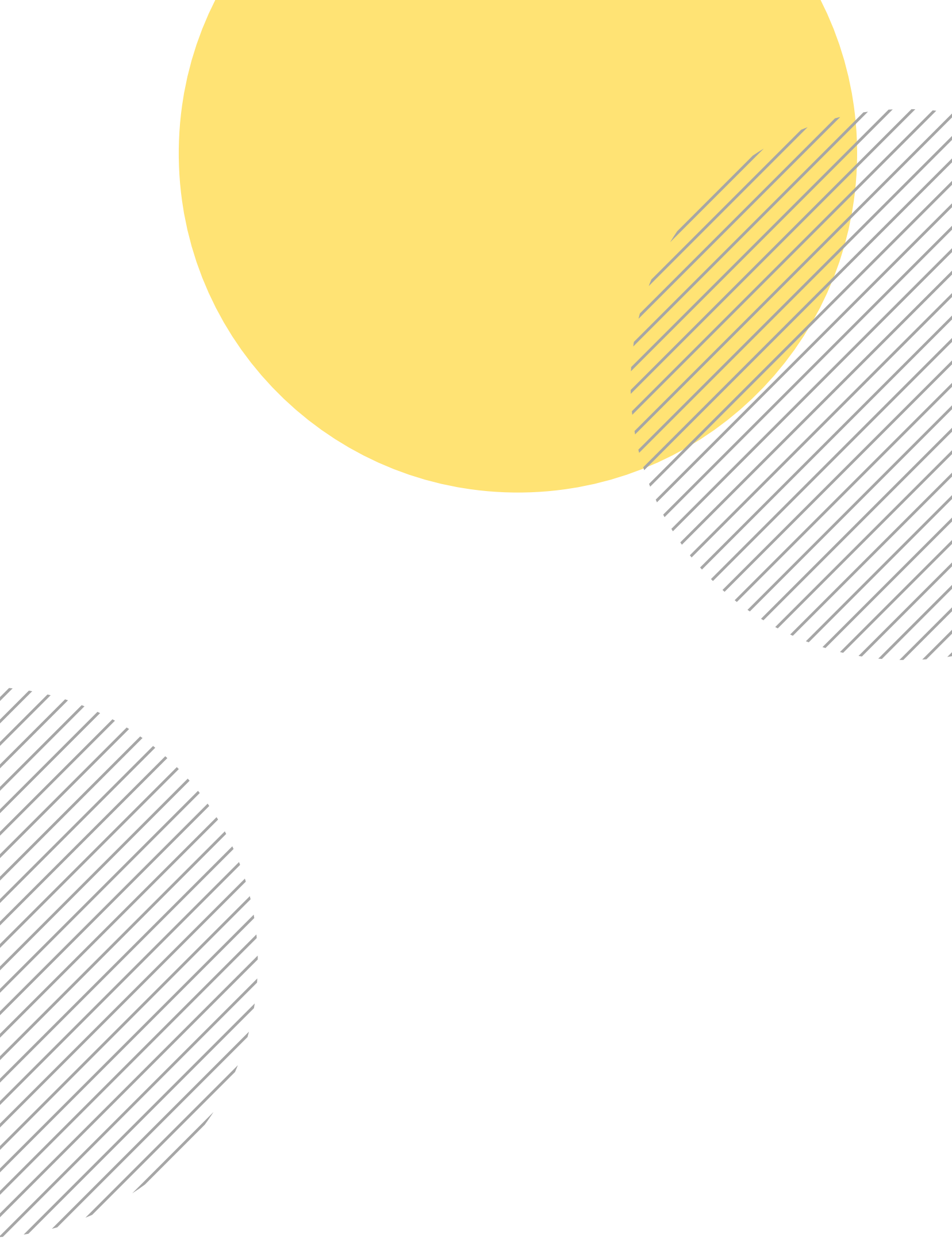
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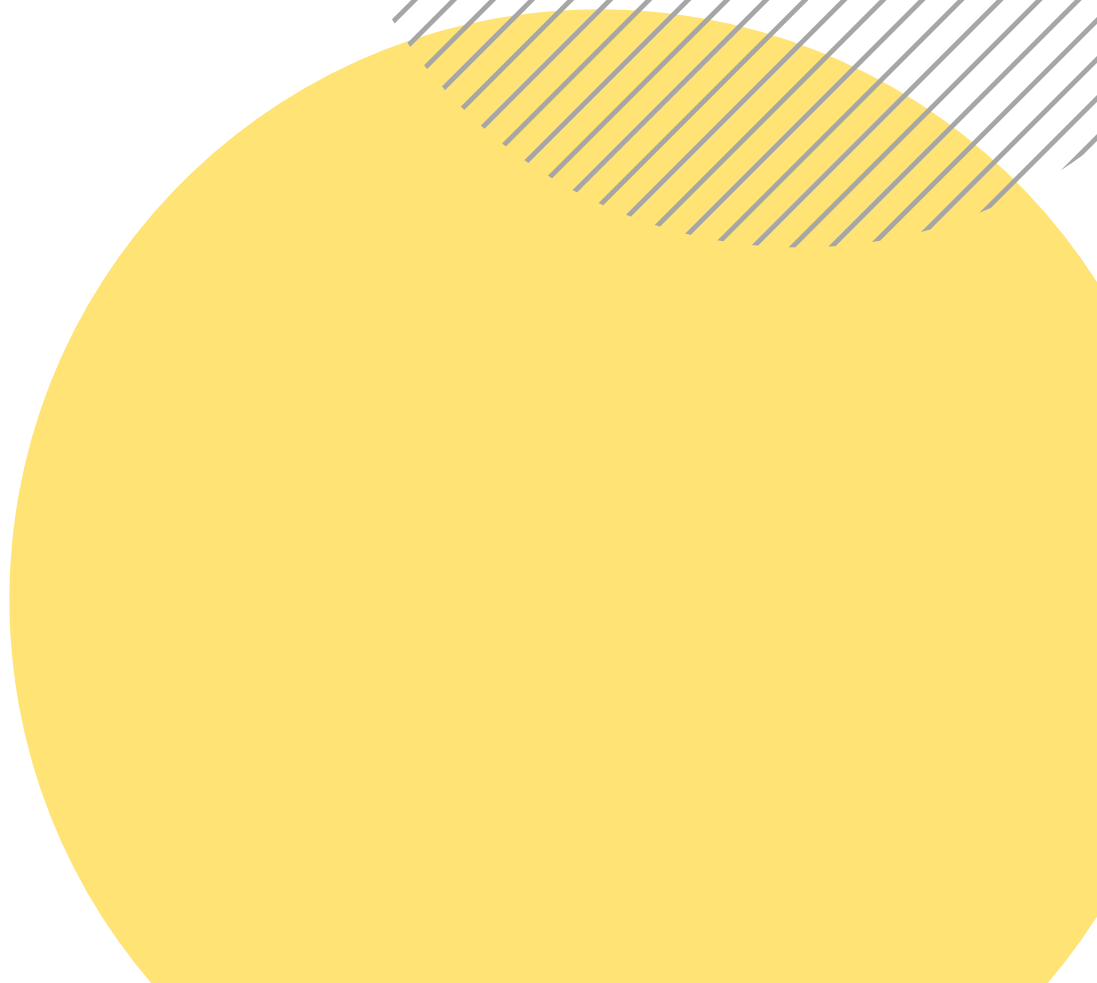
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"We have a
long way
to go."

EXCERPT FROM FOCUS GROUP

