

Launch of *Breaking Barriers*, National Accessibility Plan

May 29, 2023

English transcription



Aimee Louw

Okay, thanks so much for coming. I'm really excited to welcome you to the launch of the National Accessibility Plan. My name is Aimee Louw. I work here in Montreal at CBC News, and I do a community column there for the six o'clock news cast. So, I'm going to do a short visual description. So, I have a dark brown, curly hair, it's tied back, kind of shaping my white face. And I have an orangey, red blazer on with large buttons. So, I'll throw to Gabriel.

Gabriel Garon

I'm host and producer of the *Téléjournal* in Ontario.

I'm very happy to be here as well this afternoon. I'm a white male, end of 20s, round glasses, a shirt, and a blue jacket. Today, it is a crucial moment today, as a public broadcaster, to present the accessibility plan. So, thank you very much for being with us today.

We want to make the event as accessible as possible. We're very happy to have it in four languages: French, English, ASL, and QSL. So, the event is being live-streamed. And on the screen to our left, we have the English version with ASL as well as English captioning.

Aimee Louw

On the right screen, we have the French version with QSL and French subtitles. Online, I just invite you to choose the right link. There were three links. So, one link has French, LSQ, and French captioning. One has English, ASL, and English captioning. And then the third link is bilingual with no captions or sign language at all.

Gabriel Garon

For those in the room, there's a sensitivity room here at the exit on your left. Before starting, to get into the heart of the subject, I would like to thank all those who are present here, employees, members of CBC/Radio-Canada. Thank you to those who are joining us virtually. Your presence is a demonstration of support towards the cause, and it's very touching to see you all here today.

And I also wish to take the time to note that the offices from CBC/Radio-Canada are situated on First Nations, Inuit and Metis lands.

Aimee Louw

For us in Montreal, the event is taking place on traditional Kanien'keh-ka territory. And I want to acknowledge the contributions that Indigenous peoples share and offer in terms of ways forward and inclusivity. And I also want to invite us all to consider ways that we can further decolonization in our work and our--and our personal lives.

So today, I hope that we're not just launching our Accessibility Plan, but that we're also launching a way of working together that couples creativity and inclusivity, and that we use these things as one in the same. I know in my role, there's work I can do in terms of making my content more accessible and learning and putting those things into practice, and I'm sure that there's that same opportunity for anyone and everyone in the roles that you do

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occupy. So, I want to thank you for coming out to this launch, and let's give a round of applause for everyone who made this--this launch and the plan possible.

[applause]

Gabriel Garon

Without further ado, I'd like to welcome Catherine Tait, our CEO, whose commitment towards inclusivity and accessibility have opened the way to the launch of this event.

Catherine Tait

Who's making all the noise over there? I hope the microphones are powerful. Hi everyone! It's a pleasure to be here to talk to you of accessibility. In this spirit, I would like to specify what I look like and how I am dressed. My hair is red, and I'm wearing a white and blue jacket and blue glasses. We mark an important moment in the evolution of CBC/Radio-Canada to launch our first National Accessibility Plan. As the public broadcaster, we've long been committed to accessibility. But today, we are amplifying and strengthening this commitment like never before. Our ambition is to become a world leader in accessibility, both as an employer and as a broadcaster. And to achieve this ambition, we need the contribution of people with disabilities. Why is this important? Because one in five Canadians has a disability. These disabilities, whether they are visible or not, are experienced in a unique way by each individual. Serving everyone in the country can only be done if we reflect this diversity in our workforce and in our content. That's the goal behind programs like *La cour est pleine* or the brand new podcast *L'insolence du quotidien* launched today on Ohdio. And many other stories we can wait--we can't wait to share with you. These are the driving force behind programs like CBC's Push and You're My Hero.

We want to better represent people with disabilities across all our programming: entertainment, news, and sports. That's why I'm delighted that we recently renewed our partnership with the Canadian Paralympic Committee, and we will return as Canada's Paralympic network for the Paris 2024 and Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Games to showcase how sport supports a more inclusive society. Accessibility is not an--is not only an inextricable part of equity, diversity, inclusion, it's also essential to our mandate to serve the public and to live up to this mandate. And to better serve Canadians with disability, we have to transform our workplace culture. Just as we've made enormous progress since the launch of our EDI strategy back in 2021, this plan aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers specific to people living with disabilities. We want to make CBC/Radio-Canada the barrier-free public broadcaster that Canadians deserve.

The National Accessibility Plan we're unveiling today was developed with the input of hundreds of people with disabilities across the country and with the contributions of our colleagues with disabilities across the entire organization. Many of--many of these colleagues were also part of the working group that led the project from day one. So, thank you to everyone who worked so hard on this plan, including the members of the Accessibility Steering Committee and Disability Advisory Councils.

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I want to give a special shout-out to Rachel Desjourdy, our accessibility lead who has masterfully led this process. Rachel, this is your baby, and you own it, girl. Really, it has been nothing but a pleasure to work with Rachel over the last months. Last March, at an accessibility event in Ottawa, our colleague Kéven Breton summed up the importance of giving people with disabilities a place at the decision-making table. He said, and I quote, "Give us the keys to the car." I love this metaphor because CBC/Radio-Canada is the best vehicle for advancing the cause of accessibility in this country. And our Accessibility Plan is the key to getting the engine running. I'm not just talking about installing access ramps or adding subtitles to our programs. I'm also, and above all, talking about giving every Canadian the power to influence their own society by contributing to the best of their talents and abilities.

I'll hand things over to those who are going to make this plan a reality. Thank you. Over to you two. Thank you.

Aimee Louw

It's great to hear your thoughts on this. And I'll invite Rachel Desjourdy up on the stage. So, for anyone who's had the pleasure of working with Rachel, we all know how passionate she is about accessibility and involving as many people as possible in this process. So, I just want to thank you for all your work on this, and I'm going to invite you to introduce yourself.

Rachel Desjourdy

Hi, everyone. I'm Rachel Desjourdy. I'm the accessibility lead at CBC/Radio-Canada. I have very, very blonde hair, blue eyes, and I'm wearing a shocking pink dress today-- [laughter] --and it's really a pleasure to talk to you about the National Accessibility Plan.

Gabriel Garon

Thank you very much, Rachel. First, I would like to congratulate you as well. We met a few times during public consultations throughout the country, so I saw the work--the dedicated work you've done over the last few months. Congratulations on this!

I want to talk of the--why are we launching a National Accessibility Plan?

Rachel Desjourdy

Excellent question. For me, over the last months, we had the opportunity to discuss with hundreds of people with disabilities over the country, and as members of people and creators, members of our employees, our personnel, and we got to know the obstacles that they live with on a daily basis. And so--and to answer and to eliminate and prevent these issues, we need a road map. And this accessibility plan, which is a concrete action plan, and it's our map on how we will accomplish--how we will become a broadcaster who is a leader in accessibility.

Aimee Louw

Outline a bit of the plan and tell us, you know, a few of the key points?

Rachel Desjourdy



Absolutely. So, when you look at the Accessibility Plan, of course it talks about barriers and different categories of barriers, but there's three key ideas. And the first idea is we want to become a more accessible and inclusive employer. And with that, we have commitments, actions that we've taken. An example of that is we've committed to reviewing our accommodation practices to make sure that employees and managers have the tools they need to be more inclusive in the workplace.

The second key theme is around reflecting disability in our stories and storytelling. An example of one of our commitments there is programs and opportunities to work with creatives with disabilities in the media industry, such as AccessCBC, Synergies that provides networking, production, other mentorship, development opportunities.

And then the third piece is how can we champion accessibility in all that we do? And an example of a commitment we're making there is really uptrain--providing a lot of training for our workforce so that whether you're a journalist, whether you work in finance, whether you're a technician on a production set, you know exactly what it is that you can do to drive accessibility in your work.

Gabriel Garon

So, this is an ambitious plan. How do you expect to get to these results?

Rachel Desjourdy

So, everything is in the process, so before today, we ensured that this is anchored in our reality. So, we have created, we have built this plan in collaboration with colleagues in all the sectors of the organization, so information, communications. And what we have been able to achieve and understand is how to create a plan that reflects reality. Of course, this means that everybody jumps on board. And I encourage each of us to ask one self the question: "In my role, what can I do to make accessibility real?" And so, it's much about raising awareness and then to take up the different goals and targets that we've set.

Aimee Louw

Concrete steps, but also a shift in culture and--and understanding how we work together, so I want to thank you so much for--for bringing those points to our discussion today. And I want to share the website so that everyone can check out the--the accessibility plan. So, it's: [strategies.cbrc.ca/accessibility].

Gabriel Garon

So, thank you very much, Rachel. Before we move to the discussion with our panellists in a few minutes, we would like you to meet some of the people who were present at the public consultations throughout the country, and they share their vision with our broadcaster.

Aimee Louw

From--people from the general public. And the idea behind it was write a love letter to CBC/Radio-Canada.



[VIDEO]

[voice-over] We asked Canadians across the country to help us imagine what an accessible, barrier-free public broadcaster could look like. Some of them wrote us a letter.

Alexandre Vallerand

My name is Alexandre Vallerand.

Rita Paynter

My name is Rita Paynter.

Monique Beaudoin

My name is Monique Beaudoin.

Bianca Nkomo

It's me your love, Bianca Nkomo.

Ralitsa Rodriguez

My name is Ralitsa Rodriguez.

Pierre-Olivier Beaulac-Bouchard

My name is Pierre-Olivier Beaulac-Bouchard.

Lionel Migrino

My name is Lionel Migrino. Dear CBC/Radio-Canada.

Ralitsa Rodriguez

I'm writing a love letter to you.

Rita Paynter

I love you because you are inclusive of Aboriginal people. Inclusion should include everyone.

Alexandre Vallerand

I love my public broadcaster and what is on air, but I wonder if you represent all the communities living here, including mine: people with disabilities.

Lionel Migrino

I want people to see me as me, and I want you, CBC, to see more of me!

Monique Beaudoin

I would like to be able to watch TV more often, but it is not always possible for me since the information displayed on the screen is not always said verbally and I don't know who is speaking.

Ralitsa Rodriguez



Because, as a Deaf person, you do not communicate with me.

Bianca Nkomo

Nobody should be left out, nobody should experience any kind of barrier. There are so many beautiful stories being told and I don't see a viable reason why there is anybody at all in this age of technology that shouldn't be able to enjoy that.

Pierre-Olivier Beaulac-Bouchard

The presence of LSQ on television helps my community to build its pride by promoting sign language as a way to build our culture and identity. We must make LSQ flourish and share it.

Bianca Nkomo

Representation matters, and it is all about normalizing certain things. It enables it to become just a normal part of society, which honestly should have been in the first place.

Rita Paynter

The more exposure we have, the more we learn about each other, then the more we can help each other have better journalism.

Monique Beaudoin

The more we will see people like us, the more people will say to each other they can be on TV, they can do activities." You, CBC/Radio-Canada, I wish you a long life. As you progress, inclusive accessibility must be a core part of all your activities and accomplishments, to better reflect the Canada of today and give us the place we deserve.

Alexandre Vallerand

We deserve to be here!
We deserve to be here!

Lionel Migrino

We both know that you can do better, so prove to me that you can be a champion of inclusivity and accessibility.

[voice-over] To learn more about our Accessibility Plan visit strategies.cbrc.ca/accessibility

[END OF VIDEO]

Aimee Louw

That's really awesome seeing those diverse perspectives presented in that way. Very creative idea. So, we've just welcomed our panellists on stage here.

Gabriel Garon

So, to respond to what our audience has to say, we'd like to invite you to take part in a discussion about accessibility and representation in CBC/Radio-Canada content with some of our staff.



Aimee Louw

First, we have Gaitrie Persaud, and she's the lead in Silly Paws. So, this is a CBC Kids program--the first CBC Kids program that's in ASL. Gaitrie, why don't you introduce yourself.

Gaitrie Persaud

Hello, everyone. My name is Gaitrie Persaud. I am wearing a satin blue dress right new that has a feather trim on it. And you'll also see I have rhinestone shoes on. - I do love to shine. -

[laughter].

Aimee Louw

And joining us as well is Natascia Lypny. So, she's a features producer for CBC Saskatchewan. Natascia, you've done lot of work on accessibility in your region. Feel free to introduce yourself.

Natascia Lypny

Yes, hello. I'm Natascia Lypny. Thank you so much for having me here. I am a white woman with long wavy brown hair, early 30s. Though, I like to say that sometimes I do look maybe late 20s. [laughter]. If I'm lucky. And I'm wearing a bright teal short-sleeve dress.

Gabriel Garon

Joining the discussion, Kéven Breton, Radio-Canada sports journal and host of [French spoken *Ca me regarde*, AMI-Télé]. Hello, Kéven. Can you quickly describe yourself?

Kéven Breton

Yes, I am a white gentleman in a wheelchair. I wear glasses. I have a beard. Somewhat under-dressed today in comparison to some of our other panellists.

Gabriel Garon

Well, that was a very honest description, thank you. Jérôme Bergeron, first administrator of the National Accessibility Plan and journalist. Hello to you.

Jérôme Bergeron

Hello. Well, I'm at the end of my 20s. Will soon be in my 30s. I'm wearing a navy suit today, as well as a flowery tie to remind us that summer is with us.

Gabriel Garon

Well, thank you very much, Jérôme. And thank you, all four of you, to be with us. So, I'd like to start by addressing my first question to you, Kéven. We heard Ms. Tait quote you at the beginning of the event with, "Give us the keys to the car." So, when you see a plan like this one made public today, how do you react? You feel these keys are about to be handed to you?

Kéven Breton



Well, thank you, Catherine, for quoting me. This is a good trademark. We could trademark, "Give me the keys to the car." This might be a nice title for a podcast. And when--what I mean by that is to give control to people with disability and to be able to be represented honestly with the broadcaster. And yesterday, we welcomed Monika Ille, and she said, "We used to speak of Indigenous people, and now we listen to Indigenous people." And I believe that people with disabilities are doing such work. And for quite some time, we've been interested in the narratives of the different people with disabilities. And actually, to this effect, go see Oscar-winning actors in Hollywood, and they often portray people that have disabilities. This said, it's not so obvious to see actors with disabilities, people who produce these wonderful movies and shows that actually have disabilities. So, this brings me back to the idea of giving control to people with disabilities.

There's an excellent series actually with Sean Towgood called *You're My Hero*. This is a wonderful example of a project that was created and developed by a person with disability, and it's a project from the heart. It's a wonderful project. I am currently working on [French spoken *Rare, la loterie génétique*], which is a project calling upon people with disabilities, and this speaks of orphan diseases, rare diseases. And there's a wonderful opening here at the CBC/Radio-Canada, and I think it's going to be another wonderful project. And this is why we should be given the car keys.

Aimee Louw

Well, I'm really looking forward to the show. Authentic representation, not just stories about us. That really resonates. So, I'm going to throw the next question to Gaitrie. So like I mentioned, you--or you play Simmi in *Silly Paws*, and I wanted to ask your thoughts on why you think it's important for children to see their languages, their culture, their way of communicating presented on screen?

Gaitrie Persaud

I absolutely love hearing that question. So first off, when I was growing up--as I was born, I was hearing; however, when I was quite young, I became deaf. And when it came to captions, that wasn't available when I was young, and I never saw myself on TV. So, at a certain point when I did decide to become an actor, the first show I was actually involved with was *Blue's Clues*, and that was the first time I got to have the chance to be involved with a production. And it was a hearing-hosted show with Steve, but I got to play the deaf librarian Camilla. And at that moment, it was one of those times where I had someone come up to see--come up to me and say, "Finally, I get to see a brown woman signing who is deaf who is a strong character."

Seeing that moment, I realized how much of a role model I was becoming, and it was such an inspiring thing that people could see themselves here in the show with my performance. And I've also noticed that particularly here in Canada, we are lagging behind the States when it comes to access. As you mentioned, *Silly Paws* really is the first show of its kind, and it's been such an inspiring journey and growth. To be able to see sign finally on stage, or on the screen so to speak, and not to have it be secondary to a hearing lead, to have your host, to have your lead character really saying, hey, everyone, and communicating in their



language, whether it comes to deaf children and communicating with them directly, whether it comes to hearing children who are learning sign language, but also for parents who have deaf children because they may be concerned at first. But they can see and realize that when it comes to deaf children, we have communication. We have language. We have an ability to really be able to stand on our own two feet. And so, I'm really thankful to really be able to be that person that I wished I had in my youth for the deaf community.

Gabriel Garon

Well, this is amazing, Gaitrie. I think representativity is one of the key aspects of this plan, so it's amazing to hear your thoughts on--on this aspect. Thank you so much, Gaitrie. Now, let me now turn to Jérôme. You have been behind these many public consultations throughout the last few months to meet Canadians across the nation, so what do you keep from them?

Jérôme Bergeron

I was impressed with the engagement of Canadians with disabilities. We went everywhere in the country. We're east, west, going from the north, going Yellowknife, Toronto, Sudbury, Montreal. Went in the east as well on the Halifax side. And so, we consulted Canadians who--but also employees with disabilities. And what I really got out of these consultations with our audience was to what point it's important for them to better see themselves on screen. And it's interesting as well with these consultations that we met people with a wide variety of disabilities. Disability is not just a typical--stereotypical person. We can see here today, we're presenting people on the panel, we're all different. And there's truly a large variety of disabilities, and what--what stood out--struck me was to properly represent this diversity. And according to Statistics Canada, 25% of the population--or 22% of the population are living with a disability. That's six million people.

So, we can understand now why these people, and I say "they," I should include myself as a person who--with disability. We want to be seen more--see ourselves in the content offered by our public broadcaster. One thing that struck me, in Regina, we met a man who is about to retire, who is living--who is deaf, and he said, "I wish only one thing, that kids with disabilities, deaf children, may see themselves on the screen, and allow themselves to dream." Because when a child dreams, there is nothing better for a society than to let this child dream and participate in advancing society. So, that's what marked me. And it's an emotional subject as well. It comes--it gets people. And I'm happy to see today that we are launching this plan. And I have the impression that when--once we've worked to develop this plan, or when we were working on this plan, Rachel and myself, we kept this mind--this in the back of our head.

Each time we were writing this report--this plan, we were going to talk to people in different parts of the company. So, we're bringing the opinion of those 900 people that we've met over these last few months, be it online or in a survey online--online survey or in-person. We've kept these people present because they took time to come and meet with us. And I think it's important to remember that when it was time to develop the strategy.



Gabriel Garon

Thank you very much, Jérôme. I think it's important as well to remember that it's a national plan on accessibility that was created by and for Canadians so that we feel represented. So, thank you very much.

Aimee Louw

There's so many different experiences that--that go into our storytelling and our work here, and so I wanted to ask you, Natascia, you've been involved with a stakeholder meeting in your area, in Regina, so can you tell us a little bit about what that brought for you?

Natascia Lypny

Sure. Thanks for the question. So, about two years before you were travelling across the country, Jérôme, we did something similar on a much smaller scale at CBC Saskatchewan. In the middle of the pandemic, we invited people from across the province from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to a virtual stakeholder meeting. And the idea was similar to what you and--and Rachel undertook. It's simple, we need to hear from people. We need to hear what their experiences are, and more importantly, what their experiences are interacting with CBC, or maybe avoiding CBC, and what they want to see from their public broadcaster. It was a simple format, but very, very effective.

A few of our staff members were involved from a variety of roles, and we just opened the floor for about an hour and a half. Those minutes from those meetings were then shared across both of our newsrooms, in Regina and Saskatoon, and I think it's safe to say they've--they've had a lasting impact. And we see to this day, two years later, that people are considering that feedback in how they approach their journalism and their programming, how we decide on stories, who we're including in the stories, are we considering a disability lens or angle that we may have missed before?

Are we including people with disabilities in stories that are not about disabilities at all, which is something we repeatedly hear that's crucial? And how we can better connect with creators with disabilities and engage them as well, get pitches from them, et cetera. And we continue to connect with these stakeholders. I emailed them about this this morning, certainly, and seek feedback from them on--on certain projects. So, there's that continued feedback loop with that group.

Aimee Louw

I mean, it's nice to hear that it was a simple format, that it didn't have to be a huge heavy lift to go and meet people and ask their--their thoughts on our--on our programming. And, you know, hearing about the ongoing kind of relationship that you built, that's really positive as well, I think, in terms of just like, you know, learning as--as we go.

So, I'm going to throw it now to Gaitrie again. And this is something that you hinted at earlier, so you've performed in Canada and also abroad, so tell us a bit about what you think we need to do here in Canada to, I guess, compare, measure up, or just generally, yeah, approach what other--what other countries are doing in terms of accessibility?



Gaitrie Persaud

Absolutely. So, I have also worked in America a number of times, and as I mentioned, they are far ahead of us. We here in Canada are lagging behind when it comes to accessibility. And there's a lot of issues that do come up with that. When it comes to that, focusing on priorities. When we think of accessibility, something that they have in America and they've already understood is that we don't just have an interpreter, we a deaf performer. It comes to an idea also of having the right amount of cast members in for this. So, when it comes to someone who is performing, they also need to have--be able to have the ASL coach.

And so, when it comes to our rights as a disability performer, or sorry, as a disabled performer, or as a deaf performer, there are a number of things that do come up. And people, when they focus on accessibility, they might just kind of think on the baseline of, "Oh, an interpreter means accessibility," but they don't think about when it comes to the needs and the story and what actually truly makes it accessible on stage or on screen. And it's sad because we're also seeing a number of deaf schools that are closing here in Canada, and folks are then being transferred into mainstream schools where they don't have access to ASL which is their first and natural language. So similarly, as for those of you who are French-speakers here, can you imagine being deprived of that language when you're put into a school system that you're being told is better education. And you almost end up brainwashed to think that ASL is not as important a language when it truly is our voice as deaf Canadians.

Aimee Louw

Well, thank you for that. Yeah, you raised the important point that, you know, this is a culture. It's not just a--an accommodation. It's really a language, a culture, a way of communicating. Thank you.

Gabriel Garon

Thank you very much, Gaitrie. I'll turn to Jérôme again. I--once again, on content, how can we make our content more accessible at CBC/Radio-Canada?

Jérôme Bergeron

Well, it's certain as a public broadcaster responsibility to ensure that content is more accessible. What I would like to remind people of is the accessibility is useful for everybody and not just for people with disabilities. I have statistics here. We can go to subtitling, for example, that we offer 24 hours--24 hours a day on TV. We know that on the English-speaking audience, there's 23% that turn on subtitling, whereas depending on different researches, 10% to 20% of Canadian population that have a loss of hearing. So, it allows us--you know, it's not useful just for people who are deaf, but it can help also those who have problems understanding. And it's important to always keep that in mind that accessibility is not just for one person, it's truly for all of society. So, why not make sure that the subtitling that's offered on TV be also available online content on social networks?



That is where there is a lack. We see that some of our content on the web is not subtitled. There are great initiatives as well on transcription side. Today, we launched *L'insolence du quotidien* which is available with transcripts. It won't only help those people who have a hearing problem, hearing or are deaf, but what we have to remember is that audio description is so useful. When we listen to TV, or when we watch TV, what I apply sometimes, describe what you see. It makes for good TV. You can see behind me, the--the fire is lit. We can see the flames coming out of the windows. So, it allows people who don't see well or who may have vision issues that they can understand what's going on.

It's useful for that--those people, but it's also useful for Jérôme who's cutting his--who's preparing--prepping his meal in the kitchen, and the TV is in the living room. So, having this audio description allows people to properly understand what's going on. And also, to describe what we can see on cards or tables or anything on TV. So, it's a slight thing that we can easily add. We just have to review our work method because we have--we're often--we do things out of habit, and that makes things much more accessible. Our websites, we can--we have to always improve them. We have to ensure that we respect standards in terms--in terms of accessibility. But we can feel that we're always in the right direction. We've got teams that are motivated to do it. That's what remains to be done over the next few years.

Gabriel Garon

I think you quite well expressed it. Make our content accessible doesn't only mean making it accessible for a few people with disabilities but to make our content accessible for everybody. So, thank you very much for your point of view, Jérôme.

Aimee Louw

Chopping your vegetables, it's true. That's how we take media in, right? We're not just always right in front of the screen and yeah, so thanks. So, we're going to share another video now. And this one highlights the perspectives of people from without our own organization. So, here, employees with disabilities share some of their thoughts about working here at CBC/Radio-Canada.

Gabriel Garon

So, these are employees who are--with disabilities who work here at CBC/Radio-Canada who are sharing the progress that's accomplished, but also the challenges--the challenges that still exist in the organization. And also, those advances that have been brought by CBC/Radio-Canada. We've all asked them to write us a letter.

[VIDEO]

[voice-over] How to become a truly accessible organization that values the inclusion of people with disabilities? A few colleagues addressed a letter to the public broadcaster in an attempt to answer this question...



Boris Tia

Dear CBC/Radio-Canada, My name is Boris Tia and I'm a Senior Advisor in Strategic and Competitive Analysis. I felt considered, valued and listened to, when you involved and consulted me in the development of our first National Accessibility Plan.

Ashleigh Brady

My name is Ashleigh Brady, and I'm a Lighting Technician at CBC in Toronto and I use a cochlear implant processor to help me receive sounds and speech. My colleagues and I have developed a subtitle system to assist me in using the intercom which is something I have never had before when I was freelancing outside of CBC.

Jérémie Bergeron

I'm Jérémie Bergeron, reporter for RDI in Toronto. With my moderate to severe deafness, I was often told that I could not do this profession. That with my accent, which many have described as a "deaf accent", I could not be on air. But that's CBC/Radio-Canada : embracing diversity. Representing the country in all its richness even in the differences of accents.

Jason Boychuk

It's me, Jason Boychuk, Senior Developer, Digital Development for CBC Sports. Employees resource groups like the Abilicrew have changed things for the better by raising awareness of disability issues in the workplace. We've helped shift attitudes to be more considerate of others in the workplace with disabilities.

Véronique Tessier

I am Véronique Tessier. I am a Switcher-Director for the Téléjournal. It was my dream to come and work with you. As a child, I was told that I couldn't because I had to speak well, write well and communicate without fault. At the end of the first week of my internship, a colleague came up to me and said, "You're dyslexic huh?" Then he laughed and said "Just like me!" Finally, I could tell myself that there is someone like me. And it's not just anyone, it's Charles Tisseyre!

Charles Tisseyre

Talented people with disabilities of any kind should have their place at Radio-Canada. People with disabilities are no less creative than others.

Issa Kixen

My name is Issa Kixen. I am an Associate Producer and I work in Current Affairs in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The one thing that I really love about working with CBC you know, whether it's a chronic illness, a disability, mental illness. If you are going through something, they want to provide the best way to help you work.

Jason Boychuk

If I could wave a magic wand, anywhere, any work place in the world where someone could feel free to be comfortable disclosing their disability before the interview.



Issa Kixen

You can work with people with disabilities rather than working around people with disabilities. I mean...I'm here!

Jérémie Bergeron

It has not always been easy, sometimes we confront intolerance and ignorance. We will always have to keep raising awareness if we want to continue working in an inclusive work environment.

Ashleigh Brady

I would love to see if CBC can support other people who have disabilities, and pay attention to what they need.

Boris Tia

I was pleasantly surprised when I joined CBC/Radio-Canada to see how many people there were like me. And that helped me feel more included.

[voice-over] To learn more about our Accessibility Plan visit strategies.cbrc.ca/accessibility

[END OF VIDEO]

Gabriel Garon

So, before moving on, I would like to thank the employees that we saw in the video. Thank you so much for sharing these testimonies. It was wonderful to hear you. Thank you. And in the video, you've heard our colleague Jason speak of a group, a support group for employees with disabilities at the level of the CBC, and we're very happy today to say that we have a similar group is created in French language. So, for those of you who would like to be involved, you can write to the address: capaccessibility@radio-canada.ca. Now, let us pursue the discussion.

Now, we've spoken of representation, but what about working at the CBC/Radio-Canada. So, I'll start with you, Kéven. Among the comments we received during the consultations across the nation, several people have said, "I didn't even know I could get a job at CBC/Radio-Canada." So, what's your response?

Kéven Breton

Well, this is back to what we were saying earlier, the power of representation. You've all mentioned this. Now, I understand these people because when I was younger, I did not see sports journalists with disabilities. I didn't see people with disabilities in the media generally speaking, so I understand these comments. Furthermore, it hasn't been so long that people with disabilities have been on the job market, so to speak, with access to education and getting certificates to be able to get loans to study, and also to get jobs, such as at the CBC. So, it's quite recent. Now, this said, the doors of educational institutions are



much wider open towards people with disabilities. And there's also greater openness on the part of the various media to hire people with disabilities as we see some of the different role models, people with disabilities accessing, you know, interesting positions. And at the CBC/Radio-Canada, we've noticed, actually, maybe we're a bit of a leader in the field, where we've seen that, you know, maybe we're missing something here. So, it's a great pleasure for me as somebody with disabilities to bring a different perspective in the sports room. I believe my perspectives are a little bit different and benefit all of my team. And so, I would say that CBC/Radio-Canada has been moving forward.

Aimee Louw

Maybe it's a small observation about the shoot or something like that, but it really can advance the work that we're all doing. Natascia, tell us a bit about how you learned some of your inclusive journalism practices? Like, I know you went to journalism school. Was it there that you picked those approaches up, or how did it come about?

Natascia Lypny

So, I wish it was in journalism school. I was there a few years ago now, but I hope that this content is being added, or will be added soon, to journalism programs. That wasn't the case for me. So, a lot of this has been learning on the fly, has been doing my own research as a producer to bring these elements to projects. I'm thankful that we have a couple excellent groups at CBC that I've been able to consult with for tips on accessibility features for stories, as well as how to approach our reporting. But I think more importantly than anything else, it comes back to that consultation. I mentioned that stakeholder group earlier. So regularly, when I'm working on a project, I will turn back to those stakeholders or simply ask the people who you're interviewing: "What can we do to make us working on this story together...", that's key, this is with them, not about them, "...working on this story together the best experience possible for you?" And when we present the story, how does it need to be presented so that you, your family, your community can consume this story in the most accessible way and share it? Because if we're missing that audience, what's the point of what we're doing here? We don't get everything right. We've made mistakes. Sometimes we miss things that afterwards, we're like, "That should have been obvious," but every single time we're learning. So, if you're working with CBC, or you're another journalist who's watching this and this seems very, very daunting, take it step by step. People are willing to have these conversations if they see that you're making the effort. And it is so worth the effort, and it will build and build over time.

Gabriel Garon

So, Jérôme, I would now like to ask you as a journalist, when you think of the youth, when you think of the future of journalism and those who would like to work at the CBC/Radio-Canada and who meet with accessibility challenges, do you think we're in a better position today and that we are eliminating them?

Jérôme Bergeron

Well, I've certainly seen the organization evolve there. Far less challenges now than there were when I first began working here. And the obstacles, I would add, are really not



intentional. Some of them are directly linked to technology. For example, I need hearing aids. And when I'm on the field, well, sometimes it's not always easy to hear the host or the production team, and there are delays or Telex. And essentially, technologically speaking, I was not able to understand 100% the messages that I was receiving. It's not that we didn't want to find solutions but there was no solutions back then ten years ago. But since then, becoming aware of the issue, we've been able to adjust the technology so that I may hear as I should when I'm on the field. And this really made a difference for me as a journalist. And when I was also conducting interviews, it added ease to the whole unfolding of the interview because I could hear instructions from my team and so on much better than I could before. So, what I would say to youth, keep believing in your dreams. We need you. We need a diversity of voices. And we need different perspectives with respect to the news. So, welcome, move forward, and surround yourself with champions. And thanks to a champion actually at the CBC in the news room that I was able to raise questions with regards to these technological challenges that I was just describing, and we were able to find solutions. And so, there is room to meet the challenges. And this is true for all the teams throughout the organization, for people behind the cameras as well. And I believe that we are increasingly making room for everybody as time unfolds.

Gabriel Garon

Well, wonderful. What I understand is that we understand, raise awareness, and find solutions. Thank you Jérôme.

Aimee Louw

It's so important when you are in the field to make sure you have all the info you need to best report, right? It makes me think of the little microphone stand that some colleagues built for my wheelchair. It's such a simple design, but before that, we were worried, how am I going to best mic myself so I'm actually heard on the news, you know? And it was just an afternoon we spent in the workshop building this thing, and now, it comes with me on all my shoots, and it's really helpful. So, you know, it's just like you said, that *volonté*, the willingness to figure out these little design hacks.

So, listen, it's been amazing taking in all your points of view. I would love to just continue talking, brainstorming this whole day, but we do have another video that we're going to show shortly. But first, I just want to thank our interpreter here who's been working nonstop behind the screen to my right for the entire event so far, so thank you so much.

[applause]

Gabriel Garon

Okay, well as Aimee was saying, we are coming to the conclusion of this launch, but we have a video to present to you : this is with Michel Bissonnette, our vice-president at Radio-Canada, and Barb Williams of CBC,....

Aimee Louw



.... to share their points of view about accessibility and why it's important to them as leadership.

[VIDEO MICHEL BISSONNETTE AND BARB WILLIAMS]

Barb Williams

It's such a pleasure to be here and be a part of this important launch at CBC/Radio-Canada. You know, for CBC it's important we're a leader in this space. We are committed to equity and inclusion and accessibility is such a critical piece of that. And all of that work that we do. It is central to every decision we make every day at CBC. It's not something extra, it's not something we add on later. It's at the heart of everything we do and everything we are. So what does that really mean for us at the CBC? Well, it means inside we need to be sure that our buildings are accessible to all. We need to be sure that we're making accommodations where they are required. We need to be sure that our digital products, our websites, can be used by everyone. And what does it mean for our audiences? Well, it means that our shows need to have characters in them that have disabilities. It needs to mean that our shows reflect everyone who lives in Canada and that we're an inclusive storyteller here. And that includes people with disabilities. I'm sure that's the same for you, Michel.

Michel Bissonnette

Yes, I think that when you launch a plan like this, the first step is definitely raising awareness, a collective awakening for all employees. And then, it's a question of approach. So every time we create content, how do we ensure that our content is accessible to the greatest number of people? We must not underestimate the importance of including people with disabilities in our entertainment shows so that the stories can reflect reality, and everyday life, and the more people with disabilities are present in our content, the more we will reinforce our relevance as a public broadcaster. When we organize activities, whether internally or externally, how do we ensure that everyone can participate? And certainly, when there are people with disabilities in the organization, what can we do to ensure that they can reach their full potential? Take note, we need all the talent at Radio-Canada and CBC.

[END OF THE VIDEO]

Gabriel Garon

And so, we come to the end of the launch of our Accessibility Plan. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of today's event. Thank you to our incredible panellists. I would really--we really need to give them a round of applause.

[applause]

And we would like to extend our warmest thanks to the members of our senior management who I see here today. Thank you for your leadership, your dedication to accessibility and inclusiveness, and it's great to see you here. Our recognition as well to the Accessibility

Launch of *Breaking Barriers*, National Accessibility Plan

May 29, 2023

English transcription



Steering Committee, the English and French Advisory Councils for people with disabilities, and other staff members who have played an essential role in the design and implementation of this comprehensive accessibility plan. Your commitment to creating a more accessible future for CBC/Radio-Canada is simply exemplary, so thank you very much for having contributed to it.

[applause]

Aimee Louw

As well, it's been an awesome opportunity to exchange with you. I hope that we get to continue the conversation too. I know we'll have tricks and things to share with each other, so I look forward to that. And I want to thank the people who started the first ERG here at CBC Abilicrew because they're, like, the big siblings of a lot of us, including me, so yeah, thank you.

[applause]

And a big thank you to everyone behind the scenes, comms teams, technical people, managing the cameras, thank you so much for all your work on this event today.

[applause]

So, let's give us all a round of applause and say let's make our public broadcaster the most accessible ever! Woo-hoo!

[laughter]

[applause]