

• **Listening**

• **Learning**

• **Leading Change**

## Accessibility Plan for 2022-2025



Pictou-Antigonish  
Regional Library



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UNIVERSAL  
ACCESS



AUDIO  
DESCRIPTION



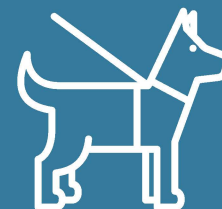
ASSISTIVE  
LISTENING



SIGN LANGUAGE



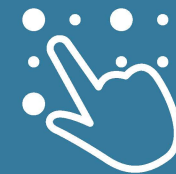
PHONE  
VOLUME



DOG LEASHED



BLIND



BRAILLE



INFORMATION

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ACCESSIBILITY



CLOSED  
CAPTIONING



FINGERPRINT



TTY



HEADSET



LARGE PRINT



LOW VISION



WHEEL CHAIR



SIGN LANGUAGE  
INTERPRETATION



"Accessibility is concrete resistance to the isolation of disabled people."

**Mia Mingus**, First Voice, Disability Justice scholar and activist



## ● Welcome

The Accessibility Advisory Committee is pleased to present our plan to reduce and eliminate barriers within the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library system.

We provide ways for citizens to engage with their public library who cannot normally do so because of any type of barrier. The plan commits the library board to listen to these voices and actively seek the advice of persons with disabilities. Everyone wins when people listen and then act.

Also, the Committee is encouraged the library board wishes to play a leadership role in the community about accessibility. By showcasing solutions and promoting understanding through education, we will create an inclusive and respectful future. With fixed timelines, we will measure progress, and ensure the library board achieves the goals of the Accessibility Act.

I wish to thank all members of the Committee for their diligent and honest perspectives.

**Julie Martin**, Chair | Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Accessibility Advisory Committee

On behalf of the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Board, I am pleased to receive this Accessibility Plan. My sincere gratitude to the members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee for their guidance and knowledge in the development and direction of the Plan.

We have much work to do to make our public libraries fully accessible to everyone. Barriers come in all shapes and forms, physical, sensory, cognitive, and especially in attitudes and perceptions of the larger community. This plan is a first step in removing these barriers and as a Library Board we commit to taking a leadership role in bringing about change.

**Dan Currie**, Chair | Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Board

## ● Introduction

In 2019, the Province of Nova Scotia included regional public libraries as public sector bodies under the Accessibility Act. This is part of Nova Scotia's strategy to achieve an accessible province by 2030. As public bodies, regional public library boards were required to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee and develop an Accessibility Plan by April 2021. Due to the worldwide pandemic, the April deadline was moved forward to 2022.

The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Board, and its Accessibility Advisory Committee, is pleased to present a three-year plan for accessibility. The Plan's strong vision rests upon a solid foundation of key principles. Throughout the Plan there are three key themes.

- To create a culture that recognizes accessibility as a right and for barriers to be identified and eliminated.
- To actively seek First Voices when designing or reviewing policies, services, programs, collections, and facilities.
- To lead by example and advocate for accessibility and a barrier-free community.

The plan is presented in several sections, each of which align with the proposed provincial accessibility standards.

- Education
- Information and Communications
- Transportation
- Built Environment
- Collections
- Services and Programs
- Employment

Each of these sections contains goals, commitments, and specific actions for both the short and long term. These not only provide a roadmap, but a way for the community to measure progress and hold the Regional Library Board accountable.

The Advisory Committee, the majority of whom are First Voice, struggled with the term "disabled". We acknowledge that people have many different abilities. There are others within the community who may, or may not, identify or prefer the terms "disability," or "disabled." Although we recognized that, we decided to use the term "persons with disabilities," because this is the most commonly used term at this point in time. We encourage the province to lead a discussion in the development of more respectful and barrier-free language.

## ● Vision

**Everyone will have full and equitable access to spaces, resources, services, programs, and employment opportunities offered by the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library.**





"First Voices shared deep conversations about inclusion, actions, and policies. This was only possible because of PARL's commitment to listen and adapt respectfully to the needs of First Voices in the committee make-up and process."

**Anne Camozzi**, First Voice, Accessibility Advisory Committee Member





## ● Principles

- **Human Rights** - In keeping with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, we recognize the many barriers which limit full participation of persons with disabilities. We uphold accessibility as a fundamental human right to be modelled in our library services.
- **Inclusion** - We commit to creating accessible, equitable, and inclusive learning, social, and working environments within our regional library, including services and programs, where community members and employees are treated with respect and dignity and their experiences are valued.
- **Creativity** – We will advance accessibility with creativity, adaptivity, and forward thinking. The regional library commits to being proactive and flexible in our approach.
- **First Voice** – The knowledge and expertise of persons with disabilities is central in our approach to advance accessibility. We will seek and listen to the input of individuals and communities served by the regional library. We commit to advocate for both the people we employ and those we work for.
- **Community-Led** – We recognize creative solutions come from new and established connections and are committed to consulting and working collaboratively with our communities to understand their needs.
- **Diversity** – We recognize the complex nature of disabilities and acknowledge the impact on accessibility of individual differences of identity, perspective, circumstance and experience. Disability is regarded as part of diversity and this will be reflected in public library policies, spaces, programs and services.

## ● Definitions

**Accessibility** – The prevention and removal of all types of barriers to allow equitable participation for people with disabilities, or others who experience barriers to access and full participation.

**Accessibility Audit** – A thorough, professional evaluation of how well policies, facilities, services (in-person and online), programs and other parts of an organization meet the needs of persons with disabilities. In some situations, these will be measured against an accepted standard.

**Adaptive Technology** – Technology that provides different/accessible ways of interacting with programs, services and online applications and communications.

**Audiobook** – A recording of a reading of a book.

**Barrier** – Anything that makes it difficult to participate in society fully and effectively. Barriers can be physical, attitudinal, technological, or systemic (policy or practice). Accessibility barriers may be related to areas such as employment, education, the built environment, transportation, the delivery and receipt of goods and services, or information and communications.

**Braille** – Braille is a tactile system of raised dots used by many who are blind or partially sighted. Each raised dot arrangement represents a letter or word combination, read by touch.

**Built Environment** – Physical structures, facilities, and spaces where people live, work, shop, socialize, etc. This includes associated areas such as entries, patios, sidewalks, lanes and parking spaces and the connections between these outdoor and indoor spaces.

**Closed Captioning** – Text hidden in the signals that create a visual picture, which cannot be seen unless decoded. Just like subtitles, the decoded text appears at the bottom of the screen.

## ● Definitions

**Disability** – The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act defines disability as, “a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual’s full and effective participation in society.” It is important to recognize that not all disabilities are visible and not immediately evident.

**Education** – Programs and learning opportunities that enable staff members and/or the public to possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to fully integrate the diverse needs of persons with disabilities.

**Equity** – The quality of being fair and impartial.

**Equitable** – Fair and impartial

**First Voice** – These are typically under-valued and under-represented perspectives. They refer to the knowledge of persons with disabilities, and others who experience barriers to accessibility. First Voices emerge from lived experience, community connections, knowledge traditions, and scholarly activities.

**Inclusive** – To value, welcome and respect all people.

**Same Page** – The name of the online catalogue used to access the materials and collections of the eight regional libraries in Nova Scotia called the One Library Card Alliance.

**Stakeholders** – An individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization.

**Virtual** – Something created by computer technology.



# Section 1: Education

## ● Goal

**The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library will provide educational opportunities and programs for the board, employees, and community, with a focus on accessibility, equity, and inclusion.**

## ● Commitments

- The regional library will engage with First Voice persons and stakeholder groups to better educate and inform the regional library board and its employees regarding accessibility, equity, and inclusion.
- Using the input of First Voice persons and stakeholder groups the regional library will educate and inform the larger community regarding accessibility, equity and inclusion.



## ● Specific Actions

### Stage One – Review: Year 1

- Determine the level of knowledge of the board and employees regarding accessibility, equity and inclusion.
- Engage key stakeholder groups within the community to support education and awareness work regarding accessibility, equity and inclusion.

### Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

- Develop a set of core training and education policies and programs for the board and employees, including all new staff during orientation.
- Ensure employees have appropriate training time and are encouraged to participate in educational opportunities regarding accessibility, equity, and inclusion.
- Work with First Voice persons and stakeholder groups to provide education opportunities for the public regarding accessibility, equity and inclusion.



## Section 2: Information and Communications

### ● Goal

The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library will provide information to, and communicate with, users and other stakeholder groups using accessible formats and platforms.

### ● Commitments

- The regional library will seek First Voice input on the appropriate accessible formats for information and communications.
- Information and communications in accessible formats will be issued at the same time as regular information and communications.
- Information and communications issued by the regional library will be in a variety of accessible formats and platforms that respond to community needs.



## ● Specific Actions

### Stage One – Review: Year 1

- Review all existing service brochures and determine best design standards and practices to eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities.
- Review virtual information and communications, such as social media, and determine best practices to eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities.
- Review the regional library website and determine standards and best practices for access and ease of use for persons with disabilities.

### Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

- Develop a checklist of best practices for future use as new service brochures are prepared in accessible formats.
- Adjust virtual information and communications, such as social media, to provide the best platforms for persons with disabilities.
- Redevelop the regional library website to conform to, and exceed, accessibility standards.

## Section 3: Transportation

### ● Goal

**The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library recognizes travelling to and from the public library can be a barrier for persons with disabilities in all seasons and conditions.**

**The regional library will work to eliminate this barrier for all services and programs.**

### ● Commitments

- Input will be gathered from persons with disabilities on transportation barriers and ways to overcome them.
- Partnerships will be built with local transit authorities and companies to ensure transportation to and from the public library is part of their service, including for programs and special events when transit is not normally available.
- Transportation for persons with disabilities will be included in the development, resourcing, and advertising of library programming.
- Virtual services for library programming will be developed and/or continued where appropriate.





## ● Specific Actions

### Stage One – Review: Year 1

- Investigate local options and costs for transportation to and from the library, including transit authorities and companies, to determine opportunities and limitations of their service.
- Determine library site specific barriers related to vehicles used by local transit authorities and companies.
- Research equipment, technology and staff knowledge required to ensure quality virtual access to services and programs.

### Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

- Identify funding sources, through operating or grant funding, to subsidize transportation for library programs and events.
- Develop a board policy for persons with disabilities to access funds in the most convenient, efficient, and equitable manner.
- Work to eliminate any site-specific barriers related to vehicles used by local transit authorities and companies, or personal vehicles.
- Ensure transportation opportunities are well advertised and outreach is made to the greater community.
- Install virtual programming equipment and train staff engaged in programming at the various library locations.

## Section 4: Built Environment

### ● Goal

**The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library will strive to provide a barrier-free experience for everyone who visits our built environment. While individual libraries are owned and maintained by entities outside the control of the regional library, all means will be used by the regional library to ensure cooperation and compliance.**

### ● Commitments

- We recognize the built environment is not confined to the facility but includes surrounding infrastructure such as parking, sidewalks, signage, lighting, transportation connections, and more. Barrier-free access includes all seasons.
- We understand accessibility to the built environment is an ongoing process of improvement and requires listening carefully to the needs of all persons with disabilities.
- We will seek input from First Voices to identify barrier-free solutions.
- We will work with partners to implement solutions and remove those barriers, and when necessary, ensure compliance through appropriate channels.

## ● Specific Actions

### Stage One – Review: Year 1

- Education regarding accessibility standards and approaches for the built environment will be provided to all managers of the regional library and also offered to interested Accessibility Planning Committee members.
- With agreement and participation of owners of the built infrastructure (municipal units and the River John Friends of the Library), accessibility audits will be completed for all facilities and include surrounding elements such as parking, sidewalks, etc. The Accessibility Committee will be a key stakeholder as part of this project, and will determine the scope of the audit report and review the results. A complete audit report will be provided to the library board and all stakeholders.
- The plans for the new Pictou Library, as well as any proposed library projects, will be separately audited for accessibility during the Construction Document Phase, and will include consultations with the disabled community. The audit report will be provided to the Pictou Project Committee, Library Board, and Accessibility Committee.

### Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

- Recommendations from the accessibility audits will be delivered to the respective municipalities or owners. Recommendations will include priorities, short term fixes, if appropriate, and potential costs and funding sources for capital improvements.



## Section 5: Collections

### ● Goal

**The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library will provide materials in formats accessible to persons with any physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities.**

### ● Commitments

- The regional library will seek input from persons with disabilities to ensure content meets their needs.
- The regional library will advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities for equitable access to collections and materials.
- Accessible formats will include, but not be limited to, large print books, audiobooks, machine readable e-books, braille books, and other specialized materials from third party organizations.
- Collections will be available through an accessible integrated library system and discovery layer, otherwise known as Same Page.
- Support will be provided by library staff to help people find information, programs and services in a format that works for them.
- To ensure persons with disabilities can access library collections, the regional library will offer technology, equipment, training and support.
- Library materials produced by and for the disability community will be acquired for the collection.

## ● Specific Actions

### Stage One – Review: Year 1

- The regional library will review current collections to ensure materials are readily available in the right format for persons with disabilities.
- The regional library will survey and review existing loan and support of technology and equipment services to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.



### Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

- The regional library will continue to seek funds to ensure appropriate technology and equipment are available in a timely fashion.
- The regional library will provide appropriate orientation, training, and education for staff persons to support access to these collections.
- The regional library will actively promote the collections to persons with disabilities through various appropriate and accessible means.
- The regional library will work with other members of the One Library Card Alliance to ensure Same Page is as accessible as possible.
- The Library Collection Development Policy will be updated to reflect the goals and commitments above.

## Section 6: Services and Programs

### ● Goal

**The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library will provide equitable, inclusive and barrier-free access to all services and programs.**

### ● Commitments

- The regional library will seek input from persons with disabilities on the accessibility of new and existing services.
- Opportunities will be sought to identify and develop new services and programs that directly benefit persons with disabilities.
- Programs will be added that educate the wider community about disability issues in an affirming and supportive manner.
- Programs specifically carried out by the library will be as accessible and barrier free as possible through the use of space allocation in programming areas, interpretation, closed captioning, and other means.

## ● Specific Actions

### Stage One – Review: Year 1

- Create a checklist of potential service barriers and solutions to these barriers. Compare all current services to this checklist and remediate any barriers. All new services will be applied against this checklist. The checklist will be reviewed and updated regularly and be part of a larger Accessibility Toolkit prepared for new and existing staff persons.



### Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

- Working with regional library partners, include programs for the wider community that affirm and include persons with disabilities.
- Include “development of services and programs to persons with disabilities” as a part of a manager’s job description and ensure accessibility is part of all regional library job descriptions.
- Ensure accessibility and the proposed Accessibility Toolkit are part of new staff member training and orientation.

## Section 7: Employment

### ● Goal

**The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library provides equitable employment opportunities supporting the careers of employees with disabilities.**

### ● Commitments

- Hiring policies and practices will encourage recruitment, interview, and selection of qualified persons with disabilities.
- Policies and practices will ensure that employees who have a disability will have the tools and support they need to be successful in their employment and will be supported in their career growth.
- The regional library will provide training to all employees on how to be supportive of colleagues who experience barriers, ensuring a safe and supportive workplace.





## ● Specific Actions

### Stage One – Review: Year 1

- Review the regional library board’s Policy Statement and Staff Manual to determine how to best encourage the recruitment, selection, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities in the workforce.
- Provide training and educational opportunities to regional library managers regarding advertising, selection, and employment of persons with disabilities.
- The Regional Library, at its own expense, will provide the services of an occupational consultant to ensure a safe and productive workplace.

### Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

- Seek Board approval for changes to the regional library board’s Policy Statement and Staff Manual.
- As recommended by the consultant, and in discussion with the employee, create a safe and productive workplace.
- Require managers to participate in learning opportunities regarding occupational and workplace innovations and improvements.

# Summary of Actions

## Stage One – Review: Year 1

Determine the level of knowledge of the board and employees regarding accessibility, equity and inclusion.

In Progress

Completed

Engage key stakeholder groups within the community to support education and awareness work regarding accessibility, equity and inclusion.

Review all existing service brochures and determine best design standards and practices to eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities.

Review virtual information and communications, such as social media, and determine best practices to eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities.

Review the regional library website and determine standards and best practices for access and ease of use for persons with disabilities.

Investigate local options and costs for transportation to and from the library, including transit authorities and companies, to determine opportunities and limitations of their service.

Determine library site specific barriers related to vehicles used by local transit authorities and companies.

Research equipment, technology and staff knowledge required to ensure quality virtual access to services and programs.

## Stage One – Review: Year 1

Education regarding accessibility standards and approaches for the built environment will be provided to all managers of the regional library and also offered to interested Accessibility Planning Committee members.

In Progress

Completed

With agreement and participation of owners of the built infrastructure (municipal units and the River John Friends of the Library), accessibility audits will be completed for all facilities and include surrounding elements such as parking, sidewalks, etc. The Accessibility Committee will be a key stakeholder as part of this project, and will determine the scope of the audit and review the results. A complete audit report will be provided to the library board and all stakeholders.

The plans for the new Pictou Library, as well as any proposed library projects, will be separately audited for accessibility during the Construction Document Phase, and will include consultations with the disabled community. The audit report will be provided to the Pictou Project Committee, Library Board, and Accessibility Committee.

The regional library will review current collections to ensure materials are readily available in the right format for persons with disabilities.

The regional library will survey and review existing loan and support of technology and equipment services to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

## Stage One – Review: Year 1

Create a checklist of potential service barriers and solutions to these barriers. Compare all current services to this checklist and remediate any barriers. All new services will be applied against this checklist. The checklist will be reviewed and updated regularly and be part of a larger Accessibility Toolkit prepared for new and existing staff persons.

In Progress

Completed

Review the regional library board’s Policy Statement and Staff Manual to determine how to best encourage the recruitment, selection, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

Provide training and educational opportunities to regional library managers regarding advertising, selection, and employment of persons with disabilities.

The Regional Library, at its own expense, will provide the services of an occupational consultant to ensure a safe and productive workplace.

## Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

Develop a set of core training and education policies and programs for the board and employees, including all new staff during orientation. Ensure employees have appropriate training time and are encouraged to participate in educational opportunities regarding accessibility, equity, and inclusion.

In Progress

Completed

Work with first voice persons and stakeholder groups to provide education opportunities for the public regarding accessibility, equity and inclusion.

Develop a checklist of best practices for future use as new service brochures are prepared in accessible formats.

Adjust virtual information and communications, such as social media, to provide the best platforms for persons with disabilities.

Redevelop the regional library website to conform to, and exceed, accessibility standards.

Identify funding sources, through operating or grant funding, to subsidize transportation for library programs and events.

Develop a board policy for persons with disabilities to access funds in the most convenient, efficient, and equitable manner.

Work to eliminate any site-specific barriers related to vehicles used by local transit authorities and companies, or personal vehicles.

## Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

Ensure transportation opportunities are well advertised and outreach is made to the greater community.

In Progress

Completed

Install virtual programming equipment and train staff engaged in programming at the various library locations.

Recommendations from the accessibility audits will be delivered to the respective municipalities or owners. Recommendations will include priorities, short term fixes, if appropriate, and potential costs and funding sources for capital improvements.

The regional library will continue to seek funds to ensure appropriate technology and equipment are available in a timely fashion.

The regional library will provide appropriate orientation, training, and education for staff persons to support access to these collections.

The regional library will actively promote the collections to persons with disabilities through various appropriate and accessible means.

The regional library will work with other members of the One Library Card Alliance to ensure Same Page is as accessible as possible.

## Stage Two – Development: Year 2-3

The Library Collection Development Policy will be updated to reflect the goals and commitments above.

In Progress

Completed

Working with regional library partners, include programs for the wider community that affirm and include persons with disabilities.

Include “development of services and programs to persons with disabilities” as a part of a manager’s job description and ensure accessibility is part of all regional library job descriptions.

Ensure accessibility and the proposed Accessibility Toolkit are part of new staff member training and orientation.

Seek Board approval for changes to the regional library board’s Policy Statement and Staff Manual.

As recommended by the consultant, and in discussion with the employee, create a safe and productive workplace.

Require managers to participate in learning opportunities regarding occupational and work-place innovations and improvements.



"The disability community is hugely diverse, intersecting across every walk of life. This committee provided the space for First Voice members to share their unique experiences and perspectives. A variety of Voices made this committee successful."

**Mary MacLellan**, First Voice, Accessibility Advisory Committee Member





## Committee Members

- **Julie Martin**, Chairperson – Community Member
- **Anne Camozzi** – Community Member
- **Jess Davey** – Regional Library Staff
- **Amy Eisan** – Community Member
- **Tammy Feltmate** – Municipal Partner
- **Catherine Kelly** – Province of Nova Scotia
- **Nicole LeBlanc** – Library Board
- **Mary MacLellan** – Community Member
- **Karen MacNeill** – Regional Library Staff
- **Ian Nemecek** – Community Member
- **Eric Stackhouse** – Regional Library Staff





"It is so important to think beyond the wheel, beyond the ramp, beyond physical and visible disabilities.

We were committed to developing an Accessibility Plan that presented thoughtful, adaptive solutions to a wide variety of barriers."

**Ian Nemecek**, First Voice, Accessibility Advisory Committee Member



"Society grows great when old men plant trees knowing they will never sit in their shade.

This Committee and this Accessibility Plan gave us the opportunity to plant the seeds of a more accessible world. Our Library is committed to making the meaningful changes required to help grow those seeds in our lifetimes."

**Julie Martin**, First Voice, Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair



