

TRU Accessibility **ACTION PLAN**

2025–2028

Thompson Rivers University campuses are on the traditional lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops campus) and the T'exelc (Williams Lake campus) within Secwepemcúl'ecw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc. The region TRU serves also extends into the territories of the St'át'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Nuxalk, T̓silhqot'in, Dakelh and Syilx peoples.



Accessibility statement

This guide meets PDF accessibility standards. For alternative formats or to report errors or provide feedback, please email us at accesscommittee@tru.ca.



TRU Accessibility Committee, Left to right back row: Adam Jensen, Pauline Streete, Keisha Morong, Shayne Olsen, Sarah Walz

Left to right front row: Gregory Brain, Pamela Gurney, Connie Georget

Missing: Amie McLean, Crystal Schock, Denise Dunstan, Kristen Johnson, Zafreen Jaffer, Tionna Lenart



Special thanks to consultant Darwin Bender for touring the Kamloops campus and assisting with drafting the TRU Accessibility Action Plan.

**Make it
accessible and
inclusive and they
will come**

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Message from the Provost and Vice-President Academic, Dr. Gillian Balfour

Kw'seltknéws: We are all related and interconnected with nature, each other and all things. This interconnection is central to TRU's vision and helps foster the understanding, empathy and diversity needed for creating a truly accessible and inclusive university.

Our Accessibility Action Plan for 2025 to 2028 is a roadmap for transformative change that ensures equitable access to education for everyone in our community. We are dedicated to removing barriers to full participation in university life, creating an environment where every student, staff, faculty member and guest feels welcome and supported.

Equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism are not only celebrated at TRU but are woven into the fabric of the university. We are committed to fostering an environment that promotes accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that diverse perspectives and experiences are represented and respected. Our goal is to create a space where every individual's voice is heard, valued and empowered.

We are dedicated to ensuring TRU embodies Kw'seltknéws, creating a vibrant and inclusive environment where everyone has an opportunity to learn, grow and succeed.

Message from Executive Director of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism, Pauline Streete

I am honoured to serve as TRU's inaugural executive director of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism. Since the establishment of this office, our work is the beginning of the journey towards embedding the tenets of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EDI and AR) at TRU.

Faculty, staff, students and guests are at the forefront of our thoughts when the office crafts initiatives to establish and strengthen the commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. Our long-term objective is to guide TRU to being a fully accessible, inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. This spans beyond reflecting on our core values and the notion of diversity of thought; it means living them by upholding the principles of equity and inclusion. Through this TRU Accessibility Action Plan, we are committed to taking concrete actions to eliminate barriers and prevent obstacles, ensuring every member of the TRU community has a fully accessible and inclusive experience.

I am committed to seeing this work at TRU.



Message from Accessibility Committee

Members of the Accessibility Committee fully endorse this plan and commit to deconstructing ableism to foster a learning, working and interacting environment that is safe and barrier-free at TRU.

The committee recognizes this may seem like a monumental task. However, to borrow and bring life to the words 'brick-by-brick'—we will see this plan through, action-by-action.



About Thompson Rivers University

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in Kamloops, B.C., provides education on-site, in Williams Lake and at regional centers in 100 Mile House, Clearwater, Barriere, Ashcroft and Lillooet, along with TRU Open Learning for distance education. TRU offers over 140 on campus and more than 60 online programs, including certificates, diplomas, degrees, trades and graduate programs in fields like nursing and law.

Student success is our priority. We empower students to achieve their goals through flexible learning options, personalized services, hands-on experiences and a welcoming, inclusive environment.

Vision

Community-minded with a global conscience, we boldly redefine the university as a place of belonging — Kw'seltknéws (we are all related and interconnected with nature, each other, and all things) — where all people are empowered to transform themselves, their communities, and the world.

Values

Respectful relations define our behaviour. We respect each other (Xyemstwécw), the land, knowledge, the peoples of our region and beyond.

Inclusion and diversity: Access is open. We welcome students, faculty, staff and communities from our region and around the world to learn from and with one another. We embrace diversity of thought and people. We commit to equity. We continually see the world and its inhabitants in new ways by re-examining our practices and their impacts.

Community-mindedness: We come together to help one another (Me7 Plúlkwt es Knuçwéwécw-kt). Mutual benefit guides us to connect meaningfully with people in the communities we serve, contributing to an interconnected world where we all share a common future and humanity.

Mission

TRU is a comprehensive, learner-centred, sustainable university that serves its regional, national and international learners and their communities through high-quality and flexible education, training, research and scholarship.

Curiosity: We seek out new ideas and embrace change, understanding they may involve risks. We break paths with creative, critical, yet thoughtful purpose. We push boundaries as a university and encourage students, faculty, staff and the community to do the same.

Sustainability: The natural world inspires us with wonder and reverence. We recognize how the health of our societies, cultures and ecosystems rests upon wellness of people, biodiversity and wise stewardship of precious and finite resources. As a world leader in sustainability we know that the well-being of generations to come is shaped by what we do today.



Accessibility story

TRU's **vision statement** and **core values** clearly emphasizes the importance of equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism. With inclusive excellence and the elimination of achievement gaps included in our **strategic priorities**, TRU is committed fostering an environment where human rights are respected and everyone feels safe to be their authentic selves.

To lead transformative change, reduce barriers and promote meaningful inclusion, TRU established the Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EDI and AR) in 2023.

Guiding framework

Accessible BC Act principles

The **Accessible British Columbia Act (ABCA)** was enacted in June 2021.

As of September 2022, TRU as a public-sector post-secondary institution, is included under the Accessible British Columbia Regulation.

In Part 3, Section 11 of the act, pertaining to Accessible Organizations, an organization must:

1. Develop a plan to identify, remove and prevent barriers for individuals in or interacting with the organization.
2. Review and update its accessibility plan at least once every three years.
3. Consider the following six principles when developing and updating accessibility plans:
 - Inclusion
 - Adaptability
 - Diversity
 - Collaboration
 - Self-determination
 - Universal design
4. Consult with the accessibility committee when developing new plans.
5. When updating its accessibility plan, an organization must:
 - a. Consider any comments received under Section 12: Public Feedback.
 - b. Consult with its accessibility committee.

Section 12—Public Feedback—requires organization to establish a process for collecting public comments regarding:

An organization must establish a process for receiving comments from the public on:

- c. The organization's accessibility plan.
- d. Barriers faced by individuals within or interacting with the organization.

Legislation notes: Organizations like TRU are not required to submit their accessibility plans to the government. However, TRU must make the accessibility plan available to the public.

About our committee

In response to the Accessible British Columbia Act (2022), particularly Part 3 : Accessible Organizations, the TRU Accessibility Committee was established in the fall of 2023 to identify barriers and gather information to improve accessibility within the institution.

TRU established the Accessibility Committee to:

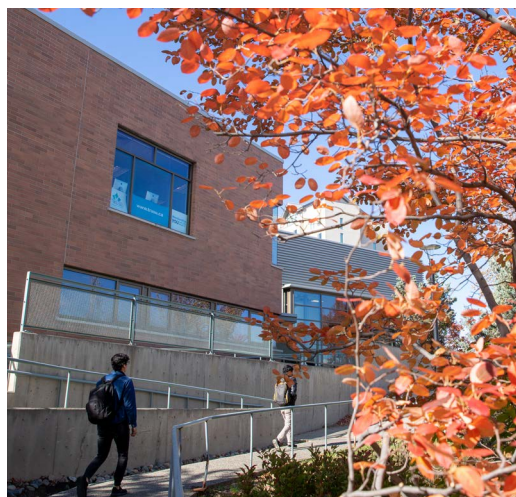
- a. Assist TRU in identifying barriers facing individuals in or interacting with the institution
- b. Advise TRU on how to remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the institution

The TRU Accessibility Committee is a diverse group of faculty, students and staff committed to removing barriers and promoting accessibility and inclusion at TRU.

Recruitment

The committee consists of up to 15 members, including two co-chairs—one appointed by a TRU executive and one elected by the committee. Each have a one-year terms renewable for up to two additional terms.

Members are selected through an open call for expressions of interest to all faculty, staff and students promoted via TRU Connect, an internal communication platform. Applications are reviewed by the associate vice-president of People and Culture and the executive director of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism. The committee includes representation from Thompson Rivers University Students' Union (TRUSU) and Indigenous members, ensuring alignment with the guidelines of the Accessible British Columbia Act.



Members

TRU's Accessibility Committee currently consists of two co-chairs and the following members.



Shayne Olsen

Shayne (co-chair) has been serving TRU as the associate vice-president of People and Culture since 2022. This department offers services to the university in several areas, including learning and development, wellness, recruitment, labour relations, benefits and other general human resources areas. Previously, Shayne held senior human resources positions with the Kamloops-Thompson School District and various private companies. Shayne holds a bachelor of business administration degree from Simon Fraser University.



Pauline Streete

Pauline (co-chair) is the executive director, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-racism (EDI and AR) at TRU. Pauline has held paid positions within the EDI space for 20 years. However, her years of volunteering for the Saskatchewan Caribbean Canadian Association, the South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre and other community-based organizations far exceed those 20 years, and demonstrate and reinforce her commitment to accessibility and inclusion.



Greg Brain

Greg has been a dedicated employee in TRU's Marketing and Communications department since 2022. He has a strong educational background, with diplomas in Computer Automated Systems Technician and Computer Systems: Operations and Management, both from TRU.

Despite living with kernicterus, a form of cerebral palsy that impacts fine motor skills, Greg excels in his career. His specialization lies in automation for websites and mobile applications, a field in which he has demonstrated considerable expertise.

Beyond his professional achievements, Greg is passionate about building electronic devices and robots. This hobby not only complements his technical skills but also fuels his creativity and problem-solving abilities. His enthusiasm for his work and personal projects makes him a valuable and innovative member of the TRU community.



Denise Dunstan

Denise is from the Nlaka'pamux Nation and has cerebral palsy. Denise received a social work degree from TRU in 2010 and a Master of Education from UBC in 2021. Denise has worked with youth programming for the past 25 years. She has been at TRU since 2019 as a learning strategist, Indigenous Transitions. Her passion is Indigenous education and diverse abilities. Denise has persevered in all areas of her life due to cerebral palsy and has overcome multiple barriers. Without her mother's advocacy and perseverance, she would not be the person she is today. Being asked to be on this committee is an honour and a privilege.



Connie Georget

Connie works as the coordinator in the TRU Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EDI and AR), supporting initiatives that establish and strengthen the university's commitment to creating a welcoming environment for everyone. She is also an advisory council member of the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources of BC and Yukon, where she co-chairs the membership and communications portfolios and mentors students and professionals. With over 25 years of experience in human resources, including significant involvement in health and safety, disability management, and modified return-to-work programs, Connie is deeply committed to promoting accessibility and is grateful to be part of this committee.



Dr. Pam Gurney

Pam has over 25 years of experience as a K-12 educator and district co-ordinator of Inclusive Education Services in School District 73. She is currently a faculty member in the TRU School of Education specializing in inclusive education. She is honoured to support neurodiverse people and improve life for everyone.



Zafreen Jaffer

Zafreen is in her second year of TRU's Master of Arts in Human Rights and Social Justice. She has a history of advocating for accessibility issues and developing policies and projects that support marginalized groups within society.



Adam Jensen

Adam was born and raised on Vancouver Island, B.C. Adam has been a TRU IT asset administrator since 2022, with previous experience in logistics and leadership at other organizations, including Canada Post. He has provided leadership on health and safety committees and is finishing his second year of a computing science degree at TRU.



Kristen Johnson

Kristen is a third-generation Scandinavian settler and a member of the Takla Lake Nation of the Carrier people. Kristen was born with hemiplegic cerebral palsy and is passionate about providing an inclusive and equitable experience for all students. She was born and raised in Kamloops, within the unceded traditional lands of the Secwépemc Nation. Kristen has worked at TRU providing student-facing services since 2012. She has a Library Information Technology diploma from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, a bachelor of general studies and an Indigenous Studies certificate from TRU.



Tionna Lenart

Tionna is a fourth-year TRU social work student. Advocacy and creating positive change are huge passions for her. She is excited to be a part of the Accessibility Committee and make TRU a more accessible and inclusive space for all students.



Dr. Amie McLean

Amie is a sociologist, writer, educator and parent whose academic interests are on equity and social justice issues in Canadian post-secondary education and work. Her perspective is rooted in anti-racist, anti-colonial feminist thought, with an expanding focus on disability justice. She has published on post-secondary funding policies for Indigenous students, neo-liberalization and trucking industry regulation, and the racialized politics of mobility among long-haul truckers. Amie previously served as co-chair of the Learning at Intercultural Intersections: Towards Equity, Inclusion and Reconciliation international conference and co-edited a resulting special issue in the *Journal of Intercultural Studies*. She sits on a wide range of committees focused on equity, diversity and inclusion and engages in community advocacy work related to these topics.



Keisha Morong

Keisha is the new EDI manager in the Office of EDI and AR, bringing 12 years of TRU experience from roles in Open Learning, Academic Advising and as program co-ordinator for TRU Gaglardi graduate programs. Before TRU, Keisha worked at Kamloops Immigrant Services and has been actively engaged with community groups like the Open Door Group, People in Motion and others. Working with such diverse and vulnerable populations at TRU and in the community, Keisha's passion includes taking an intersectional approach to equity work. She looks forward to both supporting and learning from the Accessibility Committee.



Crystal Schock

Crystal has been TRU's co-ordinator of Space, Planning and since 2022. She is a member of the Soowahlie Stó:lō Nation and her ancestors are from Swí:lhcha (Cultus Lake). She earned an Engineering, Design and Drafting Technology diploma from the University College of the Cariboo in 2000 and is completing a bachelor's degree in general studies at TRU, focusing on sustainability and Indigenous studies.

Crystal has primarily worked at institutional, health care and outdoor adventure facilities in a number of planning and administrative roles. She has family members who live with physical disabilities, and numerous friends and family who live with mental health challenges. As she has throughout her career, Crystal strives to make all services more inclusive.



Sarah Walz

Sarah has 18 years of experience in post-secondary student services and is TRU's acting executive director of Student Development and assistant dean of the Faculty of Student Development. Her main role is as director of Student Access and Academic Supports, overseeing the Accessibility Services team.

Her education began at the College of New Caledonia with diplomas in human kinetics and arts, followed by a bachelor's degree from the University of Alberta and a Master of Education in Higher Education Leadership from the University of Calgary.

Sarah is dedicated to ensuring equitable access to learning at TRU. She values inclusion and diversity and is proud of the role Accessibility Services plays in promoting equity at the university.

Accessibility survey

The TRU Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism conducted an accessibility survey from May 27 to June 12, 2024. The survey's purpose was to collect feedback from staff, faculty and students in key discussion areas. The survey was shared through TRU Connect and to the TRU community.

The accessibility survey was an initial consultation. The TRU Accessibility Committee gathers feedback on an ongoing basis by way of the **Accessibility Feedback form** available on all TRU webpages.

Consultations

The Accessibility Committee, a diverse body that includes persons with diverse abilities, was actively consulted in the development of the survey. The committee carefully considered and incorporated the guidelines and requirements outlined in the B.C. Accessibility Plan to ensure the survey and accessibility feedback form are inclusive and align with best practices.

Areas of focus

The survey and the TRU Accessibility Feedback form is built around the six principles outlined in the Accessible British Columbia Act. The survey and the Accessibility Feedback form are designed to explore six key areas identified as significant. These focused areas also align with the objectives set forth in the act.

These six areas include:

- Education examples include technology, curriculum access, course materials, co-op courses, exams, assessments, etc.
- Transportation refers to how you navigate space, access to parking, transit stops, pathways between buildings, etc.
- Information and communication examples include delivery of information in multiple medias as communications, print and web.
- Built environment examples include physical space, design features like the lack of sound and lighting controls to accommodate individual preferences in office spaces, stairs in a classroom without corresponding ramps, ergonomic workstations, washrooms, etc.
- Delivery of services examples include access to Student Services, counselling, medical clinic, employee benefits, IT Services, faculty support, organizational development, professional development, food services, recreational activities, procurement, bookstore, etc.
- Employment examples include providing of employee accommodations, hiring process, interview process, testing process, etc.

Feedback

TRU provides an Accessibility Feedback form at the bottom of all its webpages, enabling users to report accessibility barriers. This feedback is recorded, reviewed and addressed by the Accessibility Committee.

The form focuses on barriers identified in the initial survey, serving as a link between survey findings and ongoing monitoring efforts. Notably, it allows respondents to submit feedback in accessible formats that best meets their needs and encourages suggestions for removing barriers. This highlights the value of community input in identifying, planning and addressing accessibility challenges at TRU.

Findings

The survey led by the Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism received 61 responses. The summary indicates that nearly 50 per cent of respondents have either experienced or are aware of barriers in the areas of education, transportation, information and communication, the built environment and/or delivery of services.*

Area of focus	Yes, I have experienced barriers	Yes, I am aware of barriers	No, I am not aware of barriers	Prefer not to answer	Number of responses
Employment	15%	24%	54%	7%	59
Delivery of Services	32%	25%	40%	4%	57
The Built Environment	31%	24%	41%	3%	58
Information and Communication	18%	26%	24%	2%	57
Transportation	25%	23%	49%	4%	57
Education	28%	24%	43%	6%	54

*Results as of September 2024. Feedback is ongoing.

Actions

The Accessibility Feedback form is designed to collect feedback on accessibility barriers from individuals at TRU, ensuring their experiences and needs are captured effectively. When respondents provide their contact information, the Accessibility Committee actively follows up to address their feedback and concerns. Similarly, the feedback form collects data in the same six areas as the survey, allowing for a consistent and thorough analysis of individual experiences.

Area of focus	Focal area response	Action taken
Employment	3	Yes
Delivery of Services	8	Yes
The Built Environment	3	Yes
Information and Communication	2	Yes
Transportation	1	Yes
Education	1	Yes

Three-year plan

Priorities

- Information and communication:** This is a key focus area for TRU. The university will keep raising awareness about the Accessibility Feedback form and actively gather input on the six focus areas. The Accessibility Committee will educate students, staff, and faculty on the importance of removing barriers. They will also manage feedback, categorize responses and ensure timely and appropriate follow-up to all submissions.
- Delivery of services, education and employment:** TRU is committed to maintaining and improving access to education and employment opportunities by addressing and removing barriers. We will incorporate accessibility and inclusion into all service aspects, ensuring that individuals with diverse abilities are supported. This approach will be applied to the development, promotion and execution of services, fostering an environment where everyone has equitable access to education and employment.
- Built environment and transportation:** TRU will pursue the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) Accessibility Certification™ to reinforce its commitment to accessibility and inclusivity. This demonstrates that TRU prioritizes the needs of all individuals, ensuring a fully accessible and barrier-free environment and public space. Achieving the RHF Accessibility Certification will provide assurance to prospective students, faculty and staff that TRU is dedicated to creating an inclusive space where everyone can learn and work without limitations. Additionally, the certification will list TRU in the **Rick Hansen Foundation Registry**.



Detailed plan

A detailed plan will be created using the six principles of the Accessible British Columbia Act to guide the evaluation of accessibility and inclusivity, as summarized above. The following key focus areas outline initial actions but are not exhaustive.

Information and communication are central to the success of any accessibility and inclusion plan. At TRU, this focus area encompasses various forms of media, including print and web design. The information and communication strategy is aligned with the guiding principles of the Accessible British Columbia Act. These principles ensure that information is accessible across multiple formats, including print, digital and other media platforms.

Actions

- Develop communication materials that support a variety of formats and mediums for TRU information, services and programs.
- Continue to increase awareness about the Accessibility Committee, the Accessibility Feedback form and the importance of identifying and removing barriers for students, staff and faculty.
- Continue to investigate, review and implement resources and processes to support multiple methods of communication, print and web efforts, projects and programs.
- Continue to engage and collaborate with agencies and organizations working in the accessibility field to gather insights and lived experiences from people with diverse abilities to inform future work.
- Continue to promote and improve diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism in publications and materials at TRU.

The **delivery of services** encompasses a wide range of areas, including student services, counseling, the medical clinic, IT services, faculty support, professional development, and the bookstore. The **education** area addresses key aspects such as access to technology, curriculum, course materials, co-op programs and exams. The **employment** area provides employee accommodations and ensuring accessibility throughout the hiring, interview and training processes.

Actions

- Continue to apply an accessibility and inclusion lens when developing delivery of services, education and employment opportunities particularly for individuals with diverse abilities.
- Continue to develop, deliver and promote integrated and adapted programming for students that accommodate diverse abilities.

- Continue offering regular training opportunities for students, staff and faculty on diversity, inclusion and accessibility to foster a more supportive and understanding environment.

Built environment and transportation connects with each of the principles in the Accessible British Columbia Act and impacts the everyday life of people with diverse abilities as they engage with TRU.

Actions

- Continue to ensure all TRU buildings and facilities are accessible and inclusive.
- Continue to support universal design.
- Continue to prioritize timely snow removal, particularly in locations of concern for people with diverse abilities.
- Continue to seek the advice of the Accessibility Committee on key projects and major developments.
- Continue to apply an accessibility lens to transportation projects and plans that navigate space, provide access to parking, transit stops and pathways between buildings.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring

An annual report will be produced and presented at the first Accessibility Committee meeting of each fiscal year.

Evaluation

The TRU Accessibility Action Plan is built around the six principles outlined in the Accessible British Columbia Act: Inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination and universal design. These principles guide the plan's focus areas, which include built environment, education, transportation, information and communication, delivery of services and employment.

The organization will review and evaluate the accessibility plan every three years, starting from its adoption in 2025. During each review, TRU will consult with the Accessibility Committee, consider public feedback on the plan and address any identified barriers to accessibility and inclusion at the university. The revised plan, highlighting the progress and status of key priorities, will be made publicly available.

How to give us feedback

Barriers restrict access and participation in university areas, services and activities. TRU values your feedback regarding accessibility and inclusivity barriers at and within its campuses.

At the bottom of each page on our website, you'll find a heading labeled **Accessibility feedback**. Clicking this link will open our feedback form, which we encourage you to complete online. If you prefer, you can obtain the feedback form in an alternate format through Student Services.

We are committed to responding promptly to all feedback that includes contact information, such as your name and email.

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Glossary

For the purposes of this plan, the following definitions apply:

Anti-racism: The conscious opposition to racist theories, attitudes and actions. Anti-racism is not just about being against the idea of racism. It is also about taking active steps to fight against it.

Source: **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.**

Barrier: A barrier is anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment.

For certainty and without limiting the previous statement, barriers can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies, and are affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

Source: **Accessibility British Columbia Act, Chapter 19, Part 1.**

Barriers are features of employment, delivery of services, built environments, information and communication, transportation and education.

Attitudinal barriers are those that discriminate against persons with disabilities.

Examples are:

- Thinking that persons with disabilities are inferior.
- Assuming that a person who has a speech impairment can't understand you.
- Technological barriers occur when a technology can't be modified to support various assistive devices.
- Information or communications barriers happen when a person can't easily understand information.

Examples are:

- Print is too small to read.
- Websites can't be accessed by people who are not able to use a mouse.

Diversity: The variety of identities found within an organization, group or society. Diversity is expressed through factors such as culture, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, education, ability, family status or socioeconomic status.

Source: **Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.**

Diverse abilities: This term is used to refer to individuals with disabilities, chosen because it more accurately reflects and respects the community being referenced. It is inclusive of physical, cognitive, developmental, learning and/or neurological differences or diversity.

Source: **Disabled World**

Equity: The establishment of conditions that are free from barriers or disadvantages and promotes the principle of accommodating differences among people.

Equity is linked to rights within Canada's **Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 15, Part 1:** "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability."

According to the **Canadian Human Rights Act**, "All individuals should have equal opportunity to make for themselves the lives they are able and wish to have, without being hindered or prevented from doing so without discrimination."

Inclusion: The practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcomed, respected and valued and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This practice involves changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential.

Source: **Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.**





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