

- **Listening**
- **Learning**
- **Leading Change**

Accessibility Plan: Updated June 2025



Pictou-Antigonish
Regional Library



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UNIVERSAL
ACCESS



AUDIO
DESCRIPTION



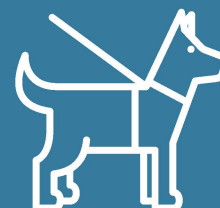
ASSISTIVE
LISTENING



SIGN LANGUAGE



PHONE
VOLUME



DOG LEASHED



BLIND



BRAILLE



INFORMATION

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ACCESSIBILITY



CLOSED
CAPTIONING



FINGERPRINT



TTY



HEADSET



LARGE PRINT



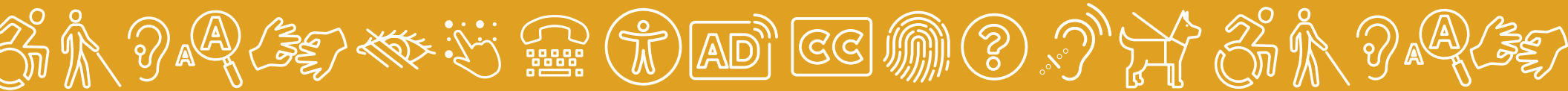
LOW VISION



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 updated Accessibility Plan. Thank you to the Accessibility Advisory Committee for their work on behalf of all library users and the greater community.

We have achieved significant results over the past three years in making our libraries, services, and programs more inclusive and welcoming to persons with disabilities. However, the Library Board understands there is more to do and is fully committed to creating a barrier free experience by 2030. We are pleased to play a leadership role in the community and know that it is only by listening to citizens with lived experience that we can make a long-lasting difference.

Clyde Fraser, 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 2022. We are now required to update the plan for spring of 2025.

The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Board, and its Accessibility Advisory Committee, is pleased to present this updated plan. The Plan's strong vision and core principles remain. Throughout the Plan 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 a summary of how we have done in implementing the plan, then key recommendations moving forward to the next update. The Committee and Board see the Plan as a "living document".

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

How have we done?

The plan was presented to board members and employees and is part of the orientation for new staff. However, since the municipal elections in 2024, there are several new board members.

Promotion of the plan was made to the wider community through print, radio, and social media. Training and education time have been made available to employees as opportunities arise. To date we have not developed a core set of training and education policies and programs for the board and employees.

Actions:

- The revised plan will be presented to the board for review and approval. It will also be provided to all municipal councillors within the regional library area and promoted to the wider public through various media.
- Develop a core set of training and education policies and programs for the board and employees.
- We will continue to 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

How have we done?

We now consider accessibility in all printed and virtual communications and appropriate employees stay current on trends and new practices. We have not yet prepared a checklist of best practices when creating communication pieces.

Actions:

- We will continue to ensure accessibility is considered during the development of all information and communications, print and virtual.
- Time will be provided for all staff to stay up to date and informed about trends and new practices in communications accessibility.
- A checklist of best practices will be developed to guide employees in the development of any new materials such as brochures and social media posts.



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.
- The Board commits to advocate and work with other organizations for convenient and appropriate transportation to and from libraries for both persons with disabilities and the overall community.



● Specific Actions

How have we done?

Antigonish Community Transit and Pictou County Transit now have stops at all branch libraries with the exception of River John. We are working with several taxi companies to ensure reliable service to library events, however, there is more to do in this area.

Library site specific barriers have been assessed and either solved or being worked out. The Antigonish accessible drop off and parking remains the most significant challenge.

Research has been completed on offering virtual programming and equipment purchased. We now must train staff in its use.

We do not yet have a consistent annual budget for transportation to and from library events for persons with disabilities.

Actions:

- Work will continue with local transit authorities, taxi companies, and other organizations to provide reliable, safe, and respectful service to and from library services and programs.
- Solutions to site specific barriers will continue to be sought and resolved.
- Staff will be trained in the new virtual programming equipment so as to offer remote participation in library events.
- The board will create a transportation budget for persons with disabilities to attend library programs.

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

How have we done?

Appropriate employees are undertaking orientation to the new provincial building standards.

Accessibility audits were completed for Antigonish, River John, Stellarton, Trenton, and Westville libraries. An Accessibility Committee member was present at each audit site visit. The audits were provided to the appropriate municipality or owner. Work is ongoing to eliminate barriers as recommended in the audits.

The new library in Pictou is now complete and is fully accessible. New Glasgow Library is now under renovation and will meet or exceed the new building standards. Planning is underway for the River John Library to meet standards, especially for parking, drop off, and entry. There are a few significant barriers such as the washroom in the Trenton Library and functional, safe, accessible parking at the Antigonish Library. These will require significant planning to eliminate.

Actions:

- Continue to address barriers as identified in the audits as funding becomes available.
- Ensure the New Glasgow Library redevelopment meets or exceeds the new provincial accessibility requirements.
- Continue to work towards barrier free parking, drop off, and entry with the Friends of the River John Library.
- Work with the municipalities of Antigonish and Trenton to resolve the major outstanding accessibility concerns of washroom and parking.

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

How have we done?

Current collections have been reviewed to ensure materials are readily available in the right format for persons with disabilities. We have reviewed our existing loan and support of technology and equipment services to ensure it meets the needs of persons with disabilities. Through grants, donations, and the board's own funds we have met demand for accessible technology. Staff knowledge in the use of accessible technology is not as widespread as needs be. We continue to promote the various formats and technology available but this is an ongoing effort. The other regional library members of Same Page, our online catalogue, are fully committed to accessibility. We have not yet revised and updated our regional library collections development policy.

Actions:

- We will continue to ensure accessible technology is readily available for those who request it.
- The regional library will provide appropriate orientation, training and education to support access to all collections and technologies.
- Promotion of collections and services to persons with disabilities will be ongoing through appropriate and accessible means.
- The Library Collections 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

How have we done?

We have not completed a checklist of potential service barriers and solutions. We have made good progress in providing programs that are inclusive for persons with disabilities. We have not assigned “development of services and programs to persons with disabilities” to a manager’s job description as the board has not had the financial means to do so. We have made accessibility part of new employee training and orientation.



Actions:

- 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.
- Continue to 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.

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

How did we do?

There is policy work needed, particularly to the General Policy and Staff Manual, to encourage recruitment, selection, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities in the workforce. While managers have accessed training opportunities regarding employing persons with disabilities more needs to be identified and done.

The Board has made occupational therapist consultants available in all locations and in specific instances where the persons health support team has recommended it.

Actions:

- 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.
- Seek Board approval for changes to the regional library board's Policy Statement and Staff Manual.
- Continue to provide training and educational opportunities to regional library managers regarding advertising, selection, and employment of persons with disabilities.



"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
- **Jes Davey** – Regional Library Staff
- **Amy Eisan** – Community Member
- **Nicole LeBlanc** – Library Board
- **Mary MacLellan** – Community Member
- **Karen MacNeill** – Regional Library Staff
- **Ian Nemecek** – Community Member
- **Keri Shepardson** – 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



