

## University of the Fraser Valley Accessibility Plan, Phase 1: 2023 to 2025

### Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) is situated in the traditional territory of the Stó:lō peoples (people of the river), who have occupied the land long before Canada was formed. The Stó:lō have an intrinsic relationship with S'ólh Tém:éxw (Our Sacred Land) and spoke Halq'eméylem. UFV supports and honours the contribution that Indigenous peoples have made and continue to make to our community. Incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and learning is important to the university.

### UFV's Commitments to Accessibility

In fulfilling UFV's [Mission](#) of engaging learners, transforming lives, and building community, UFV is committed to providing accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environments that ensure respect for every person's human rights, dignity, and independence. To achieve this, UFV commits to removing and preventing barriers to ensure equal access to our education, services, and campuses. This requires identifying and dismantling ableism so that all students, employees, and visitors can fully and meaningfully participate in all facets of our university and in our communities.

This commitment is guided by UFV's [Vision](#) to "be known as a gathering place for learners, leaders, and seekers. We will pursue diverse pathways of scholarship, leading to community connection, reconciliation, and prosperity, locally and beyond," and UFV's [Values](#) of integrity, inclusivity, community, and excellence.

### The Accessible British Columbia Act

In June 2021, the [Accessible B.C. Act](#) ("the Act") became law and established a legal framework to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to the full and equal participation of people with disabilities. The new legislation is a significant step in the journey to becoming a truly accessible province. Subsequently, the provincial government announced that all publicly funded post-secondary institutions will be required to establish an accessibility committee, develop an accessibility plan, and establish a feedback mechanism by September 2023. As an institution, we respect and uphold the requirements set forth under the Act.

In 2022, UFV launched the Accessible BC Act Steering Committee ("the ABCASC") to lead UFV's response to the legislation. The ABCASC is developing the foundation necessary to build on existing plans and approaches to continue UFV's goal to be a fully accessible institution.

## Definitions

**Ableism:** “A view or attitude that treats people without disabilities as “normal” and those with disabilities as “abnormal,” “inferior,” or “other.” Ableism can be both intentional and unintentional.”<sup>1</sup>

**Accessibility:** “Having programs, services, and environments that enable everyone to participate fully in society without barriers.”<sup>2</sup>

**Adaptability:** The ability to evolve in response to changing services, technology, and attitudes.<sup>3</sup>

**Barrier:** “Anything that hinders the full and equal participation of a person with an impairment. Barriers can be (a) caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies, and (b) affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.”<sup>4</sup>

**Collaboration:** The exercise of working together and sharing responsibility for promoting access and inclusion.<sup>5</sup>

**Disability:** “An inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.”<sup>6</sup>

**Discrimination:** “Is any form of unequal adverse treatment of a person or group, whether intentional or not, on the basis of one or more prohibited grounds set out in the [British Columbia Human Rights Code](#), namely: age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical or mental disability, place of origin, political belief (applicable to employment advertisement and employment), race, religion, sex (including gender identity), sexual orientation or criminal conviction unrelated to employment or program of study; and which has the effect or purpose of unreasonably interfering with that person’s or group’s access to the employment or educational opportunities, benefits and advantages available to other members of society.”<sup>7</sup>

**Impairment:** “Includes a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment with is permanent, temporary, or episodic.”<sup>8</sup>

**Inclusion:** “Is an attitude and approach that embraces diversity and differences and promotes equal opportunities for all. Inclusion is not just about people with disabilities. When our communities include and embrace everyone, we are ALL better able to reach our full potential.”<sup>9</sup>

**Intersectionality:** A term coined by black feminist legal scholar Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the ways in which people's lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations (such as race, gender, class, ability, etc.) and these can come together to produce different experiences and interdependent systems of Discrimination (definition above) or disadvantage.<sup>10</sup>

**Self-determination:** “Empowering people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.”<sup>11</sup>

**Universal Design:** The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.”<sup>12</sup>

## UFV’s Accessibility Plan

UFV’s Accessibility Plan (“the Plan”) is not intended to replace other commitments and Plans UFV has made to address accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion. These existing initiatives and commitments will inform our work.

As UFV develops and grows the Plan, it will reflect a commitment to the principles of inclusion; adaptability; diversity; collaboration; self-determination; and universal design. It will also reflect key values including accessibility, the priority and value of first voice, and the need for intersectional, inclusive, and collaborative approaches and responses to the needs of our communities.

Although the Act requires organizations to update their Plans every three years, the Plan is a living document that will evolve over the next 18-24 months as the BC government publishes its accessibility standards and as UFV receives feedback about existing barriers which affect physical and digital environments, learning, and work at UFV. Actions taken to date can be found on the [Accessible UFV](#) website.

## Phase 1: Accessibility Plan - Priorities for 2023 – 2024/25

The goals of UFV’s Accessibility Plan are to ensure a solid foundation on which to build and enact change; to enable the creation of a robust plan; to ensure ongoing, meaningful consultation with persons with disabilities and the broader UFV community; and to chart a path forward to further identify, remove, and prevent barriers as we strive to fully demonstrate our values and commitments to being a fully accessible and inclusive university.

Over the next 18-24 months the following priorities have been identified:

<b>Launch the Accessibility Committee (“the AC”)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send out a call for expressions of interest to the UFV Community.</li> <li>• Once the committee is formed, provide an orientation on the <i>Accessible British Columbia Act</i> (“the Act”) and other relevant information.</li> <li>• Establish a community agreement and a common baseline understanding of associated terminology.</li> <li>• Develop a work plan and guiding principles.</li> <li>• Establish a conduit for AC communications, recommendations, and questions back to the Accessible BC Steering Committee (“the ABCASC”).</li> </ul>

- Review the AC Terms of Reference and recommend changes to the ABCASC.
- Provide feedback on the Accessibility Plan.
- Provide opportunities for discussion, self-evaluation, and feedback related to the launch and work of the AC.

#### **Establish a baseline for UFV's accessibility work**

- Identify institutional policies, initiatives, and projects that are already developed or underway.
- Identify achievements to date.
- Identify barriers found to date based on audits and/or research conducted at UFV.
- Gather existing and new data to inform understanding of current practices, experiences, gaps, etc., encompassing all areas of the institution.
- Identify improvements that could be made to policies, procedures and practices related to accessibility.
- Monitor, respond to, collect, and share feedback provided through the feedback mechanisms.
- Analyze information gathered and share findings with the UFV community.

#### **Community Consultation and Engagement**

- Develop a communication/engagement framework to guide community communication and consultation to ensure transparency in the process.
- Provide multiple avenues for community consultation and engagement.
- Learn from members of the UFV community about barriers to accessibility through formal and informal means, such as focus groups, interviews, climate surveys/barrier surveys, sharing circles, conversations, etc.
- Determine an approach for assessing the effectiveness of the community consultation framework.
- Analyze information gathered and share findings with the UFV community.

#### **Capacity Building: Preparing for Change**

- Develop a communications plan that amplifies the voices of those with disabilities to increase awareness at UFV about accessibility issues.
- Encourage personal and social responsibility and collective problem solving around achieving UFV's accessibility goals.
- Identify, create, and promote opportunities for learning about accessibility and through training and information-sharing.
- Identify resources that can support UFV's collective and individual work and make them widely accessible.
- Consider mechanisms for assessing the outcomes of capacity building work.

Contact Us:

Email [Accessible UFV](#), phone 604-557-4045, or provide comments through the [Accessible UFV](#) website regarding the Plan and barriers to individuals in or interacting with UFV.

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## References

- <sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, "Consulting persons with disabilities - Annex: Inclusive language considerations," <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada-regulations-guidance/consultation/inclusive-language.html>
- <sup>2</sup> Government of Canada (Employment and Social Development Canada), "Towards an Accessible Canada", modified 2023-01-23, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada.html>.
- <sup>3</sup> British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/about-the-bc-government/accessible-bc/disability-consultation/2019-consultation/framework-for-accessibility-legislation.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Government of BC, *Accessible British Columbia Act*, 2021, [Accessible British Columbia Act \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/about-the-bc-government/accessible-bc/disability-consultation/2019-consultation/framework-for-accessibility-legislation.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid 4.
- <sup>7</sup> UFV Policy 18: Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Prevention, created 2015, [Discrimination,-Bullying-and-Harassment-Prevention-\(18\).pdf \(ufv.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/about-the-bc-government/accessible-bc/disability-consultation/2019-consultation/framework-for-accessibility-legislation.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Inclusion BC (<https://inclusionbc.org/about/>)
- <sup>10</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberle () "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid 3.
- <sup>12</sup> Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, <https://universaldesign.ie/what-is-universal-design/>