

Spinal Cord Injury BC's Access BC Program Highlights

A summary of how Access BC
(a program of Spinal Cord Injury BC)
is helping to improve accessible
outdoor recreation and tourism
opportunities for people with
disabilities and their families in BC.



Spinal Cord Injury BC

About Spinal Cord Injury BC

Since 1957, Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCI BC) has been dedicated to helping people with spinal cord injuries and related disabilities and their families, adjust, adapt, and thrive. Our vision is that all British Columbians with spinal cord injuries have the support and knowledge they need to live well and be active participants in their communities. From removing driving speed restrictions for drivers with physical disabilities to making Vancouver's buses accessible, from informing the development of accessible building standards to improving the accessibility of our province's outdoor recreation spaces, SCI BC has and continues to be a constructive partner in making BC more accessible to and inclusive of all.

Access BC: A Program of SCI BC

Access BC was developed out of a need to improve accessible outdoor spaces and recreational and tourism opportunities in BC. It aims to create inclusive spaces through educational workshops, universal design training, accessibility audits, and key partnerships with tourism and government agencies throughout the province.



Access BC Origins

Beginning in 2007, SCI BC was a driving force behind the Measuring Up the North project, an initiative that engaged 41 local governments, disability and seniors' organizations, businesses, and citizens in Northern BC in active dialogue, assessment, and planning for the development of universally designed and inclusive communities. This three-year project gave us valuable experience working with communities and organizations in the region and was the catalyst for launching our Access North program.

Introduced in 2017, Access North continued our work in Northern BC by providing vital accessibility audits, sharing important disability perspectives, and training in universal design. The success of this program provided the impetus for us to broaden the scope of our work to reach the rest of the province and to rename the program Access BC.

Recognizing that accessible tourism and accessible communities go hand in hand, Access BC developed key partnerships with regional tourism associations, governments and other public and private sector stakeholders. Going forward, we will look to leverage these partnerships to advance opportunities of mutual interest that will build stronger, more inclusive communities that support accessible tourism and sustainable economic development. Working together, we can help make BC the best place for people with disabilities and their families to live, work and be active.

What follows is a list of Access BC program highlights over the past five years.

Access BC Program Highlights: 2016 – 2021

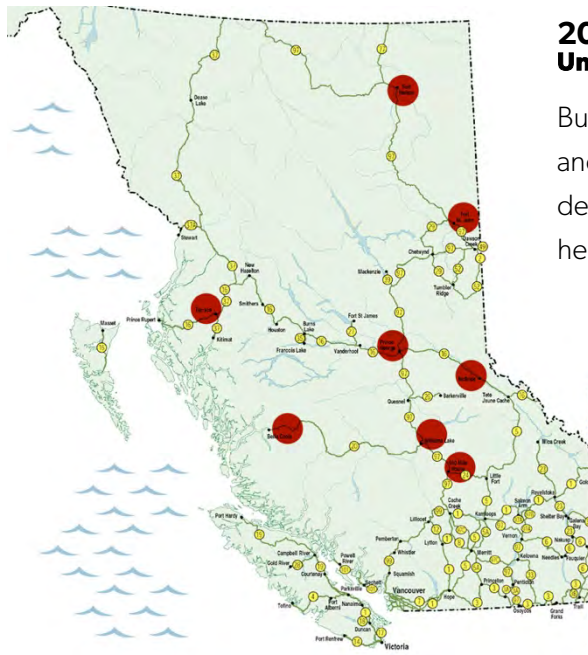
2016

Accessibility Audits:

Through a partnership with the Province of BC's Job Creation Partnership program, we audited the accessibility of over 450 parks and other outdoor recreation spaces and provided recommendations for priority accessibility improvements. We shared this information through a [publicly accessible website](#) so everyone can see which parks have the amenities they need to make use of our outdoor spaces. We also worked with BC Parks and other stakeholders to create a tablet-based accessibility audit tool (see more on this later) to complete the audits, and to provide our partners and stakeholders access to the audit database. Further, we provided universal design training for staff from various levels of BC government to help them better understand why universal design is important and how to implement it in their facilities.

Accessible roadside rest stops:

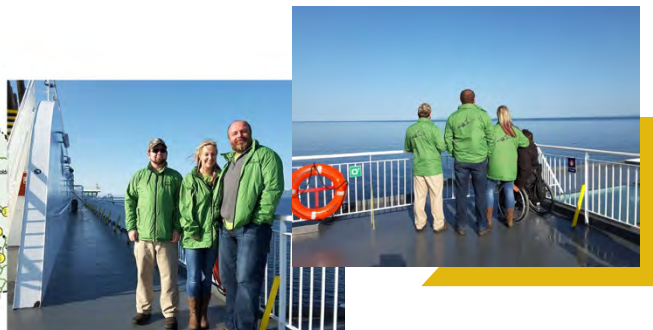
Working with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Access BC performed and reported on accessibility audits of all roadside rest stops along 3,200 km of the Great Northern Circle Route.



2017

Universal Design training for Rec Sites and Trails BC:

Building on a longstanding relationship with Rec Sites and Trails BC, our Access BC team provided universal design and accessibility training for staff in workshops held in Prince George, Penticton, and Kamloops.



2018

First universally accessible playground:

Working with BC Parks, SCI BC's Access BC team provided input and guidance in the construction of an [accessible playground at Purden Lake Provincial Park](#). Access BC continues to work with BC Parks to help with further accessibility-related improvements to the playground.

City of Prince George:

SCI BC's Access BC team conducted audits of all civic facilities and parks spaces in Prince George, and prioritized recommendations for accessibility improvements to City staff. Consultation with City staff on new projects is ongoing.

Accessibility training and resources for the Okanagan:

The Access BC team provided training and resources to and with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA), including product and content development for The Quaaoutlodge Lodge, Tourist Information Centres and wineries in the Okanagan Region.

Bringing access to the Kettle Valley Rail (KVR) Trail:

In May 2018, SCI BC's Access BC team initiated accessibility audits and reporting of the Okanagan's KVR Rail Trail. Our work focused on a 40 km section between Little Tunnel and Penticton, including the Kettle River Heritage Museum and Midway Area Trail systems. In addition to cataloguing the accessible opportunities for the trail section, we also provided recommendations for short and long-term accessibility improvements.



Creating Access BC Resources:

We developed a number of resources to share our accessibility knowledge with the public. This includes a website, travel guide, videos, and more:

[AccessibleBC.ca](https://accessiblebc.ca)

A website that allows people with disabilities and their families to explore and plan outdoor recreation and tourism-related adventures in BC.

[Accessible travel guide](#)

An invaluable resource designed to help travelers with disabilities get the most out of their adventure, regardless of their level of mobility.

Videos:

We produced two informative videos to showcase the work of [Access BC](#) and our favourite accessible [Northern locations](#).

Partnering with University of Northern BC researchers:

SCI BC became the community partner on a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership Engage Grant held by the University of Northern BC's Dr. Mark Groulx. The objectives of the project, entitled *Advancing accessible and inclusive nature access in British Columbia through*

interdisciplinary partnerships, are to (i) evolve and expand SCI BC's current accessibility evaluation protocol through a review of global best practice and (ii) support greater evidence-based decision-making by mobilizing results from accessibility research within relevant policy, planning and management communities in BC. This project is of direct relevance to BC Parks accessibility audits, our partners and community stakeholders with learning's being applied to our work. In addition, students working on this project will be given the opportunity to partner with our staff or trained volunteers for ongoing accessibility audits using Access BC's tablet-based accessibility audit tool.

2019

Para Nordic World Championships:

We led universal design and accessibility education, audits and recommendations for the 2019 Para Nordic World Championship staff, volunteers and hospitality industry in Prince George. This work ensured this world-class event was accessible and inclusive of all.

Supporting new accessibility legislation for Canada and BC:

In partnership with SCI Canada, SCI BC (represented by Chris McBride, Executive Director and Chair of SCI Canada's Executive Directors Council) was a lead partner on the Canadian Access and Inclusion Project and a member of the SCI Canada-led Federal Accessibility Legislation Alliance. Consisting of 90 disability sector non-profit organizations, this national alliance informed the federal government on the development of Canada's historic new accessibility legislation, the Accessible Canada Act. Introduced as Bill C-81, the Alliance worked with government to help strengthen the Bill and move it through to Royal Assent. SCI BC was also part of the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Roundtable on accessibility legislation and served on the Minister's the Accessibility Legislation Consultation Advisory Committee and Accessibility Legislation and COVID-19 Advisory Committee.

Access BC Days:

To celebrate and raise awareness about accessible recreation and tourism opportunities in BC communities, we worked with our regional tourism association partners and other stakeholders to host Access BC Days. The first Access BC Day was held in Prince George. Over 100 community members, children, and representatives of local, provincial, and federal governments came out to celebrate advances in access and inclusion throughout the North.



go2HR:

Access BC established a collaboration with go2HR, in which we provided recommendations, resources and expertise to their [SuperHost "Service for All"](#) customer service training program. The training is essential for developing an inclusive environment for customers and employees with disabilities. The course is available on the go2HR website. We continue to collaborate with go2HR by providing expertise through the lens of access and inclusion in the development of their new Justice Canada curriculum for Safe Spaces.

2020**Travel Penticton Accessibility Week:**

In partnership with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) we took part in [Travel Penticton's Accessibility Week](#). Access BC's Access and Inclusion Liaison, Sonja Gaudet, and Regional Development Liaison, Nancy Harris, worked with Travel Penticton throughout the week to research and gather data that will help with development of an app (based on our accessibility tool) to share accessibility information around the world.

"Strong communities are strong tourism, and communities start with relationships."

**Visitor Services:**

Our Access BC team delivered informative presentations to BC visitors' services annual conference and consulted with visitor service centres around the province. We provided resources and information on accessibility and facilitated inclusion training.

Neil Squire Society's Working Together Employment Program:

As part of the BC SCI Network, Spinal Cord Injury BC and the Neil Squire Society work closely together to make BC the best place for people with disabilities to live, work, and be active. Neil Squire's Working Together program supported the creation and ongoing employment of three Access and Inclusion Liaisons to represent six tourism regions across BC and further the goals of Access BC. See below for more info about the team.

Tourism PG:

We worked with Tourism Prince George and local government in the Prince George area to gather and provide information and resources that expand accessible experience and accommodations. This work continues presently and is led by Access BC's [Nancy Harris](#).

2021

Accessible Mapping Projects:

We formed a [partnership with AccessNow](#) (a crowdsourced accessibility map app) to share accessibility information related to outdoor recreation and tourist destinations in BC. In 2021, we began visiting these regions with our tourism association partners to record data and report back. Eventually, this information will be publicly shared and available for anyone. In the summer of 2021, the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association provided SCI BC funding for an “Accessible Mapping & App Integration” project through which SCI BC will collect accessibility information in the Okanagan that will be shared publicly through the AccessNow app.

SSHRC & UNBC Access BC Tool Grant:

Dr. Mark Groulx and his research team at the UNBC’s School of Environmental Planning earned a [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council \(SSHRC\) grant](#) valued at over \$100,000. This grant will allow Dr. Groulx to further his research on the development, improvement and implementation of an accessibility digital app co-developed with Access BC. The tool allows users to capture accessibility data for outdoor and tourism environments based on a set of recognized standards and ultimately aims to improve these spaces through shared knowledge, reporting and transparency with stakeholders. As part of this research, Access BC and Dr. Groulx led accessibility site audits in [Valemount](#) and at [Alice Lake](#). Once completed, the Access BC accessibility assessment tool will be made freely available to users.



Parks Canada & BC Parks:

We work in collaboration with Parks Canada and BC Parks to further develop the advancement of our online accessibility auditing tool by providing expertise via our Access BC staff and sharing data collected via the tool.

Education, Training and Awareness:

Throughout 2021 and 2020 we delivered several educational workshops and training sessions on accessibility, inclusion, and universal design. This included one session with BC Parks and two sessions each with Parks Canada, Rec Sites & Trails BC, and BC Winter Games staff and volunteers in Fort St. John. In addition, we also delivered the workshops in the following regions:


8
in Northern BC


4
on Vancouver Island


5
in Kootenay Rockies


2
in Cariboo Chilcotin Coast


4
in Thompson Okanagan

SCI BC staff members and Community Development:

Beyond the roles they play within SCI BC, many staff members from our organization provide leadership and guidance for many other access and inclusion organizations and initiatives that support Access BC's work. These include:

Alison Duddy (Volunteer Peer Coordinator & Access and Inclusion Liaison) serves on Quesnel's accessibility committee

Lori Slater (Volunteer Peer Coordinator & Access and Inclusion Liaison) served on Ft St John Accessibility Committee

Vivian Garcia (Peer Mentor) serves on New Westminster Accessibility Committee

Marnie Smithies (Peer Mentor) serves on City of Delta's new Mobility and Accessibility Committee

Brandy Stiles (Peer Coordinator) serves on the City of Prince George Advisory Committee on Accessibility

Heather Lamb (Information Resources Specialist) serves on City of Prince George Advisory Committee on Accessibility; Canadian Standards Association Technical Committee on Accessibility; newly formed CSA committee on Accessible Housing

Nancy Harris (Access BC Lead, Regional Development Liaison & Vancouver Coast Mountain Liaison) serves on Accessible Standards Canada Standards Development Technical Committee for Outdoor Spaces; Technical Committee for outdoor spaces; Destination BC Destination Development Advisory Committees (Northern BC Tourism Association – Northeast, Northwest, Haida Gwaii; Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association; Tourism Vancouver Island; Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association)

Jocelyn Maffin (Resource Centre Manager) serves on City of Nanaimo Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness, Global Consumer (SCI) Organizations Network Board, Nanaimo Inclusive Trails Master Plan Project, BCWBS' Strategic plan development group

Chris McBride (Executive Director) Co-Chairs Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Accessibility Legislation and COVID-19 Advisory Committee; Chair of SCI Canada's Executive Directors Council; Right Fit Steering Committee; International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS) 2021 Meeting Canadian Scientific and Planning Committee; member of the Canadian SCI Alliance of Networks leadership group; Executive Lead, Community Partners for the Canadian Disability Participation Project; member of the executive directors leadership group for the BC SCI Community Services Network; lead for SCI Canada's Peer Support Working Group

Access BC and Tourism

SCI BC has established MOUs with BC's five regional tourism associations, the Tourism Industry Association of BC, the North Central Local Government Association, and other local government and associations.

Through these MOUs, the Access BC team works with community partners and stakeholders to establish a coordinated approach to the development of accessible travel and tourism services in the associations' regions of BC.

This work helps promote the adoption and development of accessible tourism industry practices and provides the tools necessary to implement these practices with long-term sustainability. Such tools include, audits and assessments of relevant regional sites, universal design and accessibility education, and awareness and resource development processes. This work directly supports the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture's *Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia 2019-2021*.

An example of this successful partnership is our MOU with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA). Established in 2018, SCI BC supported TOTA's successful bid for the region's Biosphere designation, which includes accessibility as a component of sustainability, and their nomination for the World Travel and Tourism Council's 2018 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, for which they received the Destination Award. Former SCI BC Peer Coordinator and Neil Squire Working Together client, Sonja Gaudet was the first to be hired into a jointly funded Access and Inclusion Liaison position.

Tourism Liaisons

Through support from our MOUs and our BC SCI Network partner, the Neil Squire Society, Access BC has established six Access & Inclusion Liaison positions to work alongside the Regional Development Liaison and help advance the vision of Access BC. These positions are almost entirely held by people with SCI and represent six unique tourism areas across BC.



Nancy Harris,

Access BC Lead,
Regional Development
Liaison & Vancouver
Coast Mountain Liaison



Sonja Gaudet,

Access & Inclusion
Liaison, Thompson
Okanagan Tourism
Association



Lori Slater

Access & Inclusion
Liaison, Northern BC
Tourism Association



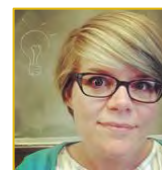
**Agasha
Mutesasira,**

Access & Inclusion
Liaison, Kootenay
Rockies Tourism
Association



Alison Duddy,

Access & Inclusion
Liaison, Cariboo
Chilcotin Coast
Tourism Association



Jocelyn Maffin

Access & Inclusion
Liaison, Tourism
Vancouver Island
Association

Each regional Liaison has specific individual responsibilities around access and inclusion, but collaborate together to ensure consistent, accurate messaging and services are provided. The Liaisons meet on a regular basis to share ideas, develop resources, establish best practices and improvements, and support one another in educating tourism and community stakeholders about access and inclusion. Priority goals of the team are to identify and create accessible experiences, services and products in each region, and promote the province of BC as an accessible and inclusive destination.

What's Next?

As a provincial, non-profit community service organization that has worked tirelessly over the past six decades to improve access and inclusion for British Columbians with disabilities and their families, Spinal Cord Injury BC is genuinely excited about the Accessible BC Act and the province's commitment to

increase accessibility and inclusion for all in British Columbia. In this context, we are eager and motivated to continue expanding our Access BC initiatives to all regions of the province as we help make BC the best place for people with disabilities and their families to live, work and be active. To date, we have achieved our impact with minimal support. Further advances will require additional, dedicated funding that will allow us to expand the scope of our impact and leverage the invaluable partnerships we have developed.

We believe a base investment of \$300,000 per year over the next five years will enable us, with our partners, to significantly move accessibility and inclusion of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities forward in the province, bringing with it a broad spectrum of psychosocial, health and tourism benefits (accessible tourism contributes \$81.7 billion to the global economy). Priority initiatives to be undertaken with this funding include:

Expanding regional tourism Access & Inclusion Liaison positions: We're working with our regional tourism association partners to expand the scope of accessibility positions within each regional association. Over the past years, we have added cost sharing arrangements for positions with the Northern BC Tourism Association, Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, Kootenay Rocky Tourism Association and Tourism Prince George. Sustaining these roles and meeting the demand for additional roles for all regions of the province requires investment.

Leveraging additional opportunities and funding through partnerships: With our tourism association, government, non-profit and private sector partners to develop and deliver:

- Accessible tourism products/experiences and promotional materials
- Universal design and accessibility education and training for all stakeholders
- Best practice models and evaluation for accessible tourism-related practices
- Accessible employment and customer service resources (e.g., with go2HR)
- Will position BC as a global leader in accessible tourism

Thank You to Our Supporters



Centre for Technology Adoption for
Aging (CTAAN)
Travel Penticton
Wilfred Laurier University
Parks Canada
BC Parks

Rec Sites and Trails BC
City of Prince George
Go2hr
Municipality of Burns Lake
Northern Rockies Regional Municipality
Destination BC



**We know
British
Columbia is
beautiful.**

**Together,
we're making it
accessible.**



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