

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE

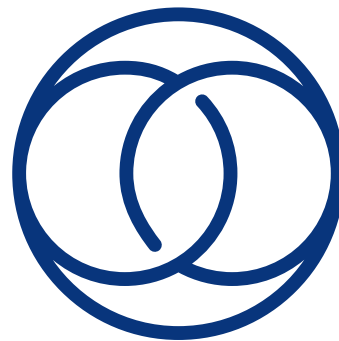
ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023 - 2026

YEAR ONE REPORT



NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE





North Island College is honoured to acknowledge the traditional territories of the combined 35 First Nations of the Nuuchahnulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish traditions, on whose traditional and unceded territories the College's campuses are situated.

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE

Accessibility Plan YEAR ONE REPORT 2024

This document is available in alternate formats.

Please contact us at 250-334-5000 x4327 or email accessibility@nic.bc.ca

More information about accessibility at North Island College (NIC) can be found at www.nic.bc.ca/about-us/accessibility-at-nic or by emailing accessibility@nic.bc.ca

Need Support?

If you are looking for individual support or advice on disability services and/or accessibility at NIC, please contact sherri.wilson@nic.bc.ca (employees) or [Accessible Learning Services](#) (students).



The [North Island Students' Union](#) (NISU) is a student run organization that focuses on Advocacy, Community, and Services. All credit earning students are members of NISU. NISU administers the student extended Health and Dental plan and can help students navigate Health and Dental questions. The Students' Union can help students understand NIC policies, deal with conflict in the classroom as well as provide events and connections for students. Visit nisu.ca to learn more and email theoffice@nisu.ca for support.

How are we doing?

NIC recognizes that feedback is vital to the process of identifying and removing barriers to participation as well as improving how we deliver our services to persons with disabilities. Please submit feedback via email at accessibility@nic.bc.ca or call 250-334-5000 x 4327.

You may also send feedback via regular mail:

Sherri Wilson, Human Resources Advisor, Employee Wellness & Culture
North Island College
2300 Ryan Road, Courtenay, BC V9N 8N6

Accessible BC Legislation

The [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) was passed on June 17, 2021. This legislation is designed to support over 926,000 people living with a disability in BC and ensure meaningful participation in their communities.

The Accessible BC Act came into effect on September 1, 2022. The regulation requires post-secondary institutions and other public sector organizations to meet the requirements of the Accessible BC Act by September 2023. These requirements include the establishment of an accessibility committee, the development of a plan and a mechanism to receive feedback on accessibility at NIC.

NIC welcomes the Accessible BC Act and the opportunity to identify the significant work that is already being done at our institution to support students and employees with diverse abilities and to build on our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Definitions

Accessibility means that all people can take part in their communities through work, play and other daily activities. Accessibility is about removing barriers and increasing inclusion and independence for everyone.

Barriers includes anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society 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.

Disability means an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier. Impairment includes a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or cognitive impairment, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

(Accessible British Columbia Act, 2021)

Accessibility Plan YEAR ONE REPORT 2024

OVERVIEW

2023/24 was the inaugural year of NIC's first ever Accessibility Plan. The Accessibility Plan was launched in September of 2023, and the Year 1 plan initiatives put a focus on raising the profile of the Accessibility Committee, developing the resources and feedback mechanisms to support the removal of barriers for those with diverse abilities working or studying at the College, and engaging the College community on the topic of accessibility.

The Accessibility Act was passed by the BC legislature in 2021, and the corresponding regulation passed on September 1, 2022, required that public post-secondary institutions meet the requirements of the Act by September 1, 2023. These requirements included the establishment of an Accessibility Committee, the development of an Accessibility Plan, and the implementation of a mechanism to receive feedback about accessibility at NIC.

This relatively short-time frame, from passing of regulation to the requirement to be compliant, meant the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) had to be established quickly and to work efficiently and effectively in building and launching an Accessibility Plan. The short time horizon didn't allow the opportunity for more fulsome, broad-based consultation within the NIC community that usually accompanies plan development processes.

Accessibility Plan YEAR ONE REPORT 2024

OVERVIEW Continued

Luckily, or deliberately, NIC's AAC is composed of a diverse group of employees, students and student representatives with expertise, lived experience and a passion for accessibility issues. They were instrumental in building a viable 3-year plan and identifying the key priorities and initiatives that would move NIC forward. AAC members have also been active participants in the achievement of Year 1 initiatives and will continue to guide and support the achievement of the Plan initiatives in the years ahead.

However, it is not the role of the AAC to complete these Plan initiatives alone. Rather, it is the responsibility of all members of the College community to become involved and do what they can, within the span of their respective roles in the organization, to move the College from commitment, through compliance and to competence, when it comes to accessibility. No matter what department you work in, there are things that can be done or ways you can contribute to improving accessibility at NIC. Whether that means looking at departmental processes and systems, identifying and reporting improvements to our physical infrastructure that require action, or examining how you engage with and provide support to other employees, students or community members, there is always more than can be done to support those students and employees that have diverse abilities to grow and succeed at NIC.



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR ONE REPORT

YEAR ONE HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some of the highlights from Year 1 of NIC's Accessibility Plan:

1. Promotion of the Accessibility Advisory Committee

The AAC provided regular communication to the campus community about accessibility initiatives, including hosting information events during National Accessibility Week at each campus.

2. Establishing a connection with other community-based accessibility committees

Members of the AAC established connections with other community-based accessibility committees, many of whom were in the process of developing their own accessibility plans. These connections will help the AAC learn from the work of others, and help identify possible collaboration opportunities for the future, as NIC is part of the larger communities in which our campuses reside.

3. Accessibility Policy

The AAC reviewed and discussed the need for a standalone accessibility policy at NIC. In the end, with the establishment of provincial legislation, an active Accessibility Plan for the College, and likelihood of the development of an over-arching diversity, equity and inclusion policy on the horizon for NIC, the AAC determined that accessibility policy was not necessary.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR ONE REPORT

YEAR ONE HIGHLIGHTS Continued

4. Medical Accommodation Process for Employees review

Through consultation, a draft accommodation policy for employees was developed during the year by Human Resources. This policy will be finalized in Fall of 2024 and a guidebook for participants in the accommodation process will also be developed to support the accommodation process. Further, NIC has recently been awarded a grant to have a 3rd party assessment of our disability management program conducted, to help identify improvements. The grant was provided by the National Institute for Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) who will also undertake the assessment in late Fall of 2024.

5. Increasing awareness of resources and feedback mechanisms

The AAC supported the development of NIC's Engage site for Accessibility, where the Plan and other resources are housed, and the new email address accessibility@nic.bc.ca is utilized to gather public feedback and answer questions about accessibility at the College.

6. Alternate formats and methods

The AAC undertook some preliminary discussions and research about alternate formats of documents and has plans to get more information on this topic in Year 2 to inform recommendations for the College. As technology is advancing very quickly in this area, more time is required to examine this more closely. The AAC also reviewed examples of best practice guidance in meeting/event accessibility.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR ONE REPORT

YEAR ONE HIGHLIGHTS Continued

7. Building Audits

Facilities staff provided an overview of accessibility audits that were conducted in 2023 on Discovery and Tyee buildings at the Comox Valley campus, including discussion of key findings and recommended priorities that should be pursued (subject to availability of funding). During the year, AAC was advised that the College had received an additional \$350,000 in funding from the provincial government for making accessibility capital improvements to our infrastructure. These funds will be used to undertake additional building audits and address priority accessibility needs identified through such audits.



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR ONE REPORT

YEAR TWO PRIORITIES

As we move into Year 2 of the Accessibility Plan, the focus for the Committee will be to support and foster integration of accessibility principles and methods further and deeper into day-to-day College operations.

Some of the initiatives and priorities that are planned for the year include:

1. Providing opportunities for employees to increase awareness and understanding of barriers and how to enhance accessibility in their work. This will involve the development of a resource guide that will be made available for NIC employees to access.
2. Developing employee training programs to improve awareness, understanding and responsibilities related to accessibility for persons with disabilities, including the development of a guidebook for participants in the accommodation process for employees with disabilities.
3. Reviewing current employee recruitment processes and systems to enhance accessibility for prospective employees seeking to work at the College.
4. Undertaking an assessment of our workplace disability management program, to be conducted by the National Institute for Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) utilizing available grant funding from NIDMAR. The College will receive a report with recommendations as to how to improve our disability management processes.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR ONE REPORT

YEAR TWO PRIORITIES Continued

5. Develop an easy-to-use accessibility lens tool to help departments identify and mitigate potential barriers to accessibility in their delivery of programs and services at the College.
6. Reviewing emergency response plans and processes to ensure accessibility compliance, to be led by Facilities, Safety and Security.
7. Improving wayfinding signage on campus to improve accessibility within our campus grounds and facilities, based on recommendations from recently completed building audits that used the Rick Hansen certified process. Implementation of this work will be dependent on available Ministry funding.

The Accessibility Committee is incredibly grateful to the dedicated efforts of so many for how much progress we've been able to make in year 1, and how much more progress we are hoping to make in year 2. With the dedication to building a campus that is inclusive, accessible, and creates exceptional experiences for members of our community that we have seen from NIC this year, we're confident years 1 and 2 will be just as impactful. Our journey to an accessible community will continue, and we're excited to do this work together.

The background is a solid dark blue color. It features a repeating pattern of stylized, light blue line art. The pattern includes jagged mountain peaks, simple evergreen trees, and sun-like symbols with radiating lines. These elements are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and texture across the entire page.

DIVERSITY EQUITY INCLUSION

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE
Accessibility Plan Year 1 Report

www.nic.bc.ca