

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE

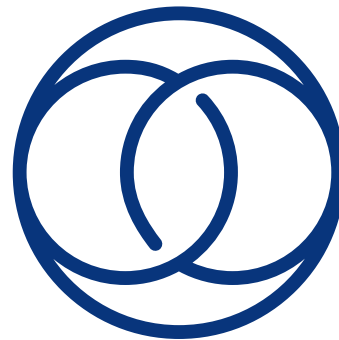
ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023 - 2026

YEAR TWO 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 TWO REPORT 2025

This document is available in alternate formats.

Please contact us at 250-334-5292 or email accessibility@nic.bc.ca

More information about accessibility at North Island College (NIC) can be found on the NIC website 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 250-334-5292.

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 TWO REPORT 2025

INTRODUCTION

In September 2023, North Island College (NIC) launched its first [Accessibility Plan](#), guided by the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) and developed by NIC's Accessibility Advisory Committee which includes both students and employees. Our shared vision is to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to access in every aspect of the NIC experience. This three-year plan reflects our ongoing commitment to creating a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming environment for everyone who learns and works at the College.

This Year 2 Annual Report outlines the progress made over the past year and builds upon the foundation established in Year 1. It highlights meaningful actions across the College—from digital enhancements and inclusive hiring practices to physical infrastructure upgrades and collaborative awareness initiatives. While some priorities remain in development, we are proud of the tangible improvements that are already helping to remove barriers and foster a culture of inclusion.

The College received dedicated routine capital funding through the Provincial Government specifically for accessibility-related upgrades. This funding supports major maintenance, rehabilitation, renovations, and infrastructure enhancements to remove physical barriers and improve access. Allocations include \$350,000 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year and \$300,000 for 2025-2026. As of this report, \$293,572.90 has been spent from the 2024-2025 funding, and \$35,718.30 has been spent in 2025-2026. These funds are designated exclusively for capital accessibility projects and are not available for other operational purposes.

Together, these efforts reflect NIC's ongoing journey toward greater accessibility. This report offers a closer look at the progress made in Year 2 and the collaborative work underway to create a campus environment where everyone can fully participate and thrive.

Accessibility Plan YEAR TWO REPORT 2025

YEAR TWO HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of Year 2 of NIC's Accessibility Plan

Assistive Listening Systems – Stan Hagen Theatre, Comox Valley Campus

As part of NIC's commitment to enhancing accessibility across campus spaces, assistive listening technology has been installed in the Stan Hagen Theatre. The project includes two systems: an Induction Hearing Loop, which supports Telecoil-enabled hearing aids, and Auracast™ Broadcast Audio, a next-generation Bluetooth system offering expanded listening options for people with varying hearing needs.

This installation enables broader participation in events, classes, and performances held in the theatre. NIC is among the first institutions in Canada to implement Auracast, positioning the College as a leader in accessible campus technology.

The project was led by NIC's IT Services Delivery team, with technical implementation by Advanced Listening. It aligns with objectives in NIC's Accessibility Plan and reflects our broader goal to remove barriers through inclusive design and innovation.

Read [Media Release](#)



Accessibility Plan YEAR TWO REPORT 2025

YEAR TWO HIGHLIGHTS Continued

NIC's New Website

The new website was designed with accessibility in mind, incorporating Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 to improve usability for all users, including those who rely on screen readers and other assistive technologies.

Library & Learning Commons (LLC)

Accessibility remains a central value in the Library & Learning Commons' approach to supporting student success. Over the past year, the LLC has continued to improve both its digital and physical services:

- **Digital Accessibility:** Implementation of EBSCO's new user interface offers improved compatibility with assistive technologies and enhances usability.
- **Proactive Support:** Accessibility-related questions were added to event and appointment forms to encourage students to share their needs.
- **One-on-One Appointments:** Notetaking support is now available during research consultations, enabling students to stay focused and retain key information.
- **Space Improvements:** A height-adjustable desk was added in the CV campus computer lab to support student workspaces that better accommodate a range of physical needs.

These updates are part of a broader commitment to making library resources and services available to all learners, regardless of ability.

Accessibility Plan YEAR TWO REPORT 2025

YEAR TWO HIGHLIGHTS Continued

National AccessAbility Week (May 25–31, 2025)

National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) is a time to recognize the valuable contributions of Canadians with disabilities and promote efforts to eliminate barriers and build more inclusive communities. NIC brought awareness by:

- “Let’s Talk Accessibility” campaign across campuses, inviting college community feedback on experiences and ideas.
- Faculty-led sessions: Liz Girard, Accessible Education & Training Instructor and Department Chair, hosted a workshop exploring the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), engaging participants in discussion on disability models and student rights.
- Library Displays: Accessibility-themed collections were featured at the Comox Valley, Campbell River, and Port Alberni campuses.

Read [Media Release](#)



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR TWO REPORT

UPDATE ON YEAR TWO PRIORITIES

Update on Year 2 Priorities:

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.

Progress Update: This objective is now being integrated with Priority #5 through the development of an “accessibility lens” tool. Together, these efforts will form a unified resource to support departments and will be included as part of Year 3 priorities.

2. Develop 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.

Progress Update: Development of this training initiative is underway to enhance employee and manager understanding of accessibility, disability inclusion, and related legal responsibilities. As a companion resource, a practical guidebook is being developed to help managers and employees navigate the accommodation process with clarity and confidence. Scheduled for launch in Fall 2025/ Winter 2026, these tools will help foster a more informed and supportive workplace culture.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR TWO REPORT

UPDATE ON YEAR TWO PRIORITIES Continued

3. Review current employee recruitment processes and systems to enhance accessibility for prospective employees seeking to work at the College.

Progress Update: Human Resources is working to simplify NIC's hiring process and improve the experience for applicants. A direct link to the Accessibility webpage will be added to the careers site, and job postings will include clear instructions and contact details for requesting accommodations. Updates to the application system will make it easier for candidates to find support and navigate the process.

4. Undertake 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.

Progress Update: In November 2024, NIC completed a comprehensive workplace disability management assessment covering key areas such as policies, resources, prevention, and return-to-work practices. The resulting report outlined recommendations for analyzing trends and collecting cost-benefit data—now identified as long-term priorities. NIC performed at or above industry average in many areas.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR TWO REPORT

UPDATE ON 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.**

Progress Update: Development of the lens tool is in progress and is being aligned with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives and will be introduced as part of a larger decision-making toolkit for departments.

6. **Review emergency response plans and processes to ensure accessibility compliance, to be led by Facilities, Safety and Security.**

Progress Update: The Facilities, Safety, and Security team is currently assessing plans and procedures to improve accessibility during emergencies.

7. **Improve 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.**

Progress Update: Several physical upgrades have been completed while others are ongoing:

- a. Several components of the fire alarm system were upgraded. Bells were replaced with models featuring integrated strobes, and additional strobe lights were installed in key areas, such as washrooms, to enhance visibility during emergencies.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR TWO REPORT

UPDATE ON YEAR TWO PRIORITIES Continued

- b. Extensive repairs and upgrades were completed on sidewalks and walking surfaces across campus. In many areas, uneven patio stones were replaced with smooth concrete pads to improve accessibility for individuals with mobility needs.
- c. Campus accessibility was further enhanced through the addition and improvement of sidewalk ramp let-downs, the installation and modification of automatic door openers, and an increase in clear wayfinding signage. Sharps disposal containers and power outlets were also added in washrooms to better support individuals who use medical equipment.
- d. New accessible office signage, including braille, was installed to improve navigation and inclusivity for individuals with visual impairments.



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR TWO REPORT

YEAR THREE PRIORITIES

Year 3 Priorities

1. Curate accessibility and inclusion resources and offer workshops, speakers and professional development (PD) opportunities to employees (Item 1.2 of the Plan).
2. Create training for current and new employees as part of on-boarding and transition into new roles. Training modules may include Duty to Accommodate, Human Rights, Accessible BC legislation, DALS and HR services and supports (Item 1.3 of the Plan).
3. Provide training for all managers in staff accommodations and the return-to-work process (Item 1.3 and 4.2 of the Plan).
4. Create an NIC handbook with information and guidelines about how to increase accessibility within daily operations and communications, e.g., accessible meetings, alternate formats, style guides (Item 1.3 of the Plan).
5. Students with disabilities may need additional support in all aspects of their journey and interactions at NIC. Offer students support to ensure they are prepared for the start of classes (Item 1.5 of the Plan).
6. As policies are developed and revised, use an accessibility lens to ensure they are inclusive and accessible (Item 2.1 of the Plan).

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN — YEAR TWO REPORT

YEAR THREE PRIORITIES Continued

7. Division leaders to add accessibility goals to annual strategic planning and share the goals (and progress) with AAC chairs to include in annual reports (Item 3.1 of the Plan).
8. Develop resources, supports and learning sessions to support instructors in the design of accessible learning experiences in alignment with Accessible BC Legislation (Item 3.2 of the Plan).
9. Develop tools and resources to support employees in integrating accessibility into all aspects of their work. This includes the creation of a resource guide with an accessibility lens tool, aligned with DEI initiatives, to help departments identify and remove barriers in programs, services, and decision-making (Items 1.2 and 1.3 of the Plan combined).
10. Review emergency response plan to ensure accessibility compliance. Determine gaps in CR and PA (year 1) and CV (year 2) and implement changes with relevant training (Item 6.1 of the Plan).
11. Ensure all new builds and renovations are Rick Hansen Certified (where possible). Tyee and Discovery buildings (CV Campus) were audited (F2022) using Rick Hansen Certified process (Item 6.2 of the Plan).
12. Review signage on each campus and add signage as required. Develop campus maps to help locate accessible features (Item 6.3 of the Plan).
13. Review existing and future audits to assess and remediate gaps in building accessibility on each campus (Item 6.4 of the Plan).

Accessibility Plan YEAR TWO REPORT 2025

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking Ahead

As NIC enters Year 3 of its Accessibility Plan, our commitment to fostering an inclusive college environment remains strong. We will continue to deepen awareness, improve systems, and embed accessibility into all areas of our operations—from physical spaces and digital tools to policies and everyday practices.

This progress is made possible by the contributions of students, employees, departments, and the guidance of the Accessibility Advisory Committee. We are grateful for the insight, time, and collaboration that continue to shape this important work.

Accessibility is a shared responsibility. Together, we are building a culture where inclusion is not just a goal but a lived experience—for every student, employee, and community member across NIC.



DIVERSITY EQUITY INCLUSION

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE
Accessibility Plan Year 2 Report

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