



CASE STUDY | THE PATH TO AN INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY

A LOCAL DEEPENING COMMUNITY INITIATIVE
KAMPLOOPS, BC

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In 2012, Tamarack launched a campaign to host 1,000 conversations in communities across Canada to gain a better understanding of how to build deeper and stronger communities. Emerging from these conversations were an array of incredible stories from people who recalled communities coming together in times of need and opportunity.

These local projects are both highly aspirational and profoundly practical. At their heart, they create opportunities for communities to think and act differently together: recognizing that no one sector, working alone, can be effective at addressing complex community issues. Municipalities across Canada are now starting to think about accessibility and inclusion. This Case Study provides an example of how Kamloops used the Community Conversation process for the development of a Municipal accessibility and inclusion policy.

HISTORY OF THE KAMLOOPS PROJECT

Since the 1990's, the City of Kamloops has been an advocate for community accessibility. Over the last 20 years, many projects have been implemented within the city to understand community priorities related to accessibility and inclusion. The City recognized that, while there has been a lot of great work done to address accessibility and inclusion, there needed to be a formalized policy to support future planning for improvements and resources for access and inclusion.

KAMLOOPS PROFILE

Kamloops is a city that has a growing population of almost 92,770 within the city, and 128,473 including the city and regional district. It is located in south central British Columbia in Canada at the confluence of the two branches of the Thompson River near Kamloops Lake. It is the largest community in the Thompson-Nicola Regional District and the location of the regional district's offices. Kamloops is home to 82 parks, over 200 lakes within an hour's drive, close access to two ski hills and 13 diverse golf courses.

TIMELINE

March 2016:
Project team developed

March - October 2017:
Hosted Community
Conversations

February - June 2017:
Data synthesis

January 2018:
Report writing and
implementation

The City of Kamloops received an age-friendly planning grant to partner with the Tamarack Institute to implement a community engagement process with staff and the community to help shape the development of an accessibility and inclusion policy for the City. The community conversations looked at the scope of municipal initiatives achieved to date related to improving accessibility for all residents. Secondly, the City, sought to prioritize the outcomes of those initiatives into policy and procedures throughout the city. Thirdly, the results from the conversations helped to shape the priorities with the community to determine the collective action the community should take to promote and transform Kamloops into an ever more inclusive and accessible community.

As part of the Community Conversation Process, Tamarack provided support in the following ways:

- Supported the creation of a local project team;
- Facilitated training on ways to host community conversations;
- Developed a conversation guide for the Project team to use when they engaged with the people they serve; and,
- Supported staff in organizing the conversations responses and identified the common themes and trends to help shape the policy statements for Staff.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- **TO DETERMINE** what collective action the community wants to take in promoting and continue to transform Kamloops into an inclusive and accessible community.
- **INCREASE THE CAPACITY** of the community to host a series of community conversations.
- **PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY** for citizen-led input and development in community space and create a sense of shared ownership of this space between residents and the municipality.

PROJECT TEAM

The project was a community driven initiative designed to create solutions based on local priorities with the goal of enhancing municipal policies and plans to facilitate actions and targets engaging all people as a catalyst for community action.

Participants and partners for the project extended across all three sectors of public, private, and non-profit organizations. Individuals with lived experience were instrumental in the identification of barriers, limitations, and successes related to inclusivity and accessibility of the community.

The following partners were involved in either the project team or community conversations:

- Interior Health
- Interior Health Authority
- School District 73 Thompson/Cariboo
- Urban Aboriginal/Metis organizations - Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society, White Buffalo Aboriginal
- Oncore Central Services (Seniors serving organization)
- Centre for Seniors Information BC Interior Society
- Kamloops Senior Village
- Kamloops Multicultural Society
- Kamloops Immigrant Services
- Community Living BC
- Inclusion BC
- Kamloops and District People In Motion
- Kamloops Brain Injury Association
- Kamloops Alliance Church
- Chris Rose Therapy Centre for Autism Society
- BC Transit and First Canada ULC
- Canadian Mental Health Association - Kamloops Branch
- CNIB - Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Kamloops Adaptive Sports Association
- Boys and Girls Club of Kamloops
- Kamloops YMCA - YWCA

“
Get people to see with
the eyes of those of us
who are differently able
-- how would they feel if
they were unable to get
into places they needed
to.”

THE PROCESS

From March to October 2017, the City went through a comprehensive public consultation process to provide people with disabilities and other Kamloops residents the opportunity to share their thoughts on what government, businesses, and communities can do to reduce barriers and increase accessibility for people living with disabilities. The consultation process was designed to give residents and staff the opportunity to participate in a variety of ways.

Participants were encouraged to be honest and open in their comments, both about what was working and where improvements could be made throughout the city. The intent of the consultation process was to get people talking about issues important to the disability community.

The consultation process included:

- **An online survey** that asked residents what the City is doing that is good, what needs improving and whether you are willing to help. The survey was filled out by 550 people. The survey was distributed through the various community partners that work with people with disabilities; the Mayor’s Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities; the Seniors Advisory Committee; a press release; an advertisement in the local newspaper (Kamloops This Week); the Seniors Connector; The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter (a newsletter for people with diverse abilities); Facebook; Twitter; on the radio; and, posted to the City of Kamloops’ website. Hard copies of the survey were provided when required.
- **Community Conversations** were held in eight locations with a total of approximately 60 people attending.
- **Consultations** were held with every department in the City of Kamloops organization – Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, Development and Engineering Services, Finance, Public Works and Utilities, Human Resources, and Communications and Community Engagement
- The City of Kamloops held **an open house forum** for residents to learn about what the City had heard and the themes that emerged from the Community Conversations and survey.

THE OUTCOMES

During the analysis of the community conversations, it was clear that there is a lot of passion, concern, and hope from people with disabilities and their families, friends, neighbours, and colleagues. The opinions, ideas, and solutions that were captured from the residents were rich, diverse and insightful about activities and processes to increase accessibility in Kamloops.

There were four themes that emerged from the consultation process:

1. ACCESSIBLE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Goal: City services and programs are accessible for a full range of abilities

- Develop, deliver and promote accessible services and programs
- Develop and provide accessible information
- Provide Accessibility awareness training
- Continue to partner with those with lived experience, organizations and departments

2. ACCESSIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Goal: Kamloops continues to increase and improve accessibility in our community

- Accessible Public Spaces
- Infrastructure is accessible (Curb Letdowns, Audible Traffic Signals)
- Project Designs
- Put an accessibility lens on municipal planning

3. ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

Goal: Kamloops continues to maintain and improve accessible transportation options

- Promote accessible transportation that is offered
- Work with transportation to provide accessible services and new technology
- Explore options for affordable transportation programming

4. ACCESSIBLE EMPLOYMENT

Goal: Continue to support labour participation for people with disabilities

- Develop and promote accessible information for employment opportunities
- Partner with accessibility focused organizations

The primary reason for initiating conversations with the community was to help refine existing policy and develop new policies that support future planning for improvements and resources for access and inclusion. The conversations and the identification of themes as brought forth supports several existing policies and procedure already in place and highlight areas throughout the City that can be improved upon.

- Addition of an accessibility awareness workshop to the City of Kamloops Corporate Training Courses offered throughout the year to staff.
- Addition of accessibility and disability terminology and etiquette information to the orientation process for all new City of Kamloops employees.
- An accessibility audit for all City of Kamloops facilities and infrastructure will be conducted.
- Organization-wide effort to create or rewrite documents conforming to "plain language" principles to ensure access and understanding for all residents.
- The City of Kamloops will implement an update of the Official Community Plan with an accessibility lens to all pertinent sections.
- Partner with various organizations like the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce and Kamloops Business Improvement Associations to develop strategies to increase accessibility in the downtown core, like an accessibility campaign that promotes commercial activity.
- An accessibility lens and web accessibility standards will be applied to the new City of Kamloops website, and continued expansion of the Accessible Kamloops section of the website.
- New partnerships developed between local non-profits, business, and the school district to build removable ramps for businesses with single-stair entrances.





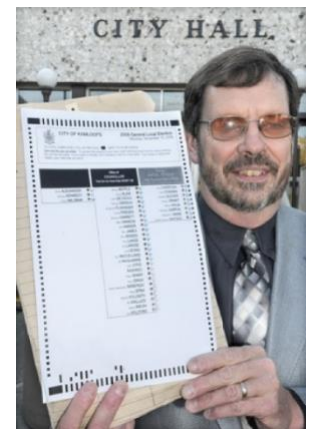
Ask for volunteers who have mobility challenges to test and rank community accessibility.... document and record challenges and issues as well as good situations. Share in public service messages with community.



disabilities, and collaboration with the City's many partners will empower those most needed to drive the change required to meet the demands of the future.

Including the City of Kamloops staff in the engagement process has increased awareness and knowledge that all projects, programs, and services going forward are planned, communicated, and delivered with an accessibility lens. Further, when possible, the city will communicate and consult with as many residents as possible to make sure that the residents voice is included in planning.

As part of the ongoing going process of making sure the accessibility lens is being applied, periodic reviews and the creation of an annual review will be implemented to ensure that the goals, strategies, and action items within the plan are still relevant and meet the needs of the community. The review will also provide an opportunity to note which action items have been achieved, are ongoing, or remain.



SUSTAINABILITY

Using a community engagement process, such as Community Conversations, has allowed for the development of an accessibility plan which in turn created its own sustainable momentum. The process allowed for the building of new relationships, curation of new partnerships, and a greater awareness and understanding of the work that the city is doing around accessibility at the community level.

Sustaining and creating new projects will continually demand direct participation of seniors and persons with

Other forms of measurement to assess outcomes include:

- Ongoing consultation with the Mayor's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities
- Ongoing consultation with local organizations regarding the City of Kamloops accessibility initiatives and the efficacy of initiatives of local organizations
- Ongoing communication with community and residents through the City of Kamloops feedback mechanisms - Facebook, email, telephone, face-to-face
- Monitoring and review of statistics for changes in the number of programs and services being delivered for persons with disabilities and/ or mobility and any challenges they are facing with city programs and services

CHALLENGES

- During the community consultations residents often came to the conversation with conflicting approaches or solutions to challenges.
- Sometimes the scope of what would be considered an ideal solution to a challenge is simply not a realistic possibility, and this can challenge the individual in a way that makes them feel their needs are not being met due to a lack of compassion and empathy rather than insurmountable limitations.

The City of Kamloops and partners will remain committed to engaging in those difficult conversations and work towards solutions that will satisfy individuals, but also empower them to be a part of the process.

NEXT STEPS

A report has been drafted that outlines the actions based on the four themes and have been successfully reviewed with all City departments and community partners for final comments and feedback, as well as agreement on timelines and actions. Once the plan is finalized a presentation to Council will be made to City Council and then roll into implementation.