

Advancing the Accessible BC Act

A Community Belonging Project Shares
Recommendations for All Municipalities



Welcome and Introductions



Sundance Topham

Chief Administrative Officer,
City of Powell River

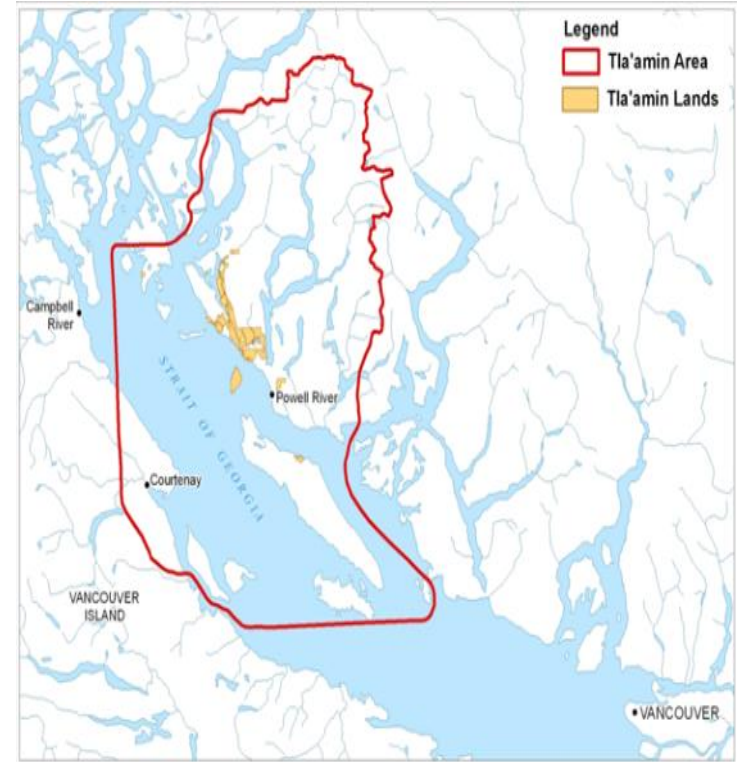


Vanessa Manuel

Executive Director, BCHC

Land Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge that this work takes place on the traditional and treaty territory of the Tla'amin People and strive to respect the central relationship of Tla'amin people with this land in all we do.



Housekeeping

- **Post questions in Q&A**
- **Recorded Session**
- **Survey link in chat**

About BC Healthy Communities

- A team of planners, public health specialists and community engagement practitioners, operating at the intersection of planning and public health
- Province-wide not-for-profit facilitating the ongoing development of communities where it's easier for people to be healthy and well



Presenters



Tabatha Berggren

Project Advisor,
Community Belonging Project



Jason Gow

Director of Planning Services
City of Powell River



Hugo Wu

Planner
City of Powell River

Agenda

01 Background and Purpose

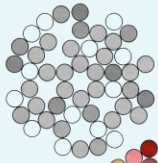
02 Community Belonging Project Overview

03 Process of the project

04 Findings and Recommendations



Exclusion



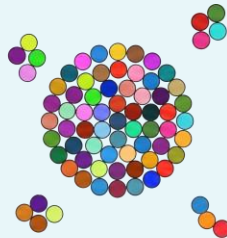
Segregation



Integration



Inclusion



Belonging

“A desire to belong is not a special need.”

– Carter, E.W., 2021

Background

2021 – Accessible BC Act passed as law

In 2021, the Accessible BC Act was passed as law, and in 2022 it came into force for all municipalities.

2022 – Provincial report published

Also in 2022, a provincial report was published called “I just want to see my child thrive”: Parents pushing for equity and inclusion in the childcare system in BC.

2023 – MOU signed

An MOU with the Community Belonging Team was signed by the City of Powell River on November 27, 2023.



Funding & Support

Funding and support were provided by:

BC Healthy Communities Child & Youth Well-being Fund provided by VCH

VCH One-time-Only Health Promotion and Capacity Building Project Grant

University of Victoria, School of Child and Youth Care (funding and practicum student)

In-kind from Janet Newbury and Alison Gerlach (Researchers)

Our Team and Purpose

- **Tabatha Berggren:** Project Advisor
- **Chianne Benckhuysen:** Project Advisor
- **Frankie McWade:** Project Advisor
- **Meriko Kubota:** Senior Policy Lead (VCH)
- **Morgan Skinner:** Research Assistant (UVic)
- **Alison Gerlach:** Researcher (UVic)
- **Janet Newbury:** Researcher (UVic)

“Design programs and services with and for the people facing the most barriers, and everyone benefits.”
– Project Advisor



The purpose of this work is to better understand and support the participation and belonging of young children with visible and invisible disabilities and their families, living in our region.

Process

Engagement with City of Powell River departments through interviews with City of Powell River staff: Planning, Economic Development, Communications, Parks and Rec, Transit and RCMP

City-run policies, programs and services documents shared for the environmental scan

Equity site visits by Project Advisors of City facilities (i.e. rec complex, playgrounds, City Hall, airport, etc.)

Unexpected and welcomed additional steps

Policy Impact Forum

Development of a short film

Policy Impact Forum with City Staff

PURPOSE OF THE FORUM

The purpose of the Forum was to hear from City staff **before** finalizing recommendations to the City, so that they are relevant and reflect staff's realities and experiences. Questions explored were:

- Is anything missed or misrepresented?
- What is already working well?
- What is within reach?
- What is aspirational, and what are the conditions required to get there?

“

I'm looking forward to what we can do to make this a place where every resident, no matter their age, gender, or ability, can thrive.

– Lisa Bhopalsingh
City of Powell River CAO, April 7, 2025

Environmental scan

2022-2023 qathet Region's Vital Signs Report:

- 41% of the youth survey respondents identified as neurodivergent and 40% identified as a person with a disability.
- In the community survey, 27% of respondents identified as “disabled or a person with a disability, autistic or as a person with autism, neurodivergent, Deaf or deaf, mad, and/or having a disability, mental illness, or chronic/long-term condition.”
- Of these respondents, **65% reported regularly or occasionally experiencing ableism in the community.**
- **In the youth survey, 100% of respondents reported witnessing or experiencing ableism at school, 46% with friends, 46% at home, and 39% at work.**

Representative for Children and Youth:

As many as 80,000 BC children and youth with disabilities are currently not receiving any support.

Source	Mentions disability	Mentions children	Mentions disabled children
Accessible BC Act	✓	✗	✗
Local Accessibility Plan	✓	✗	✗
Active Living Guide	✗	✓	✗
City Website	✓	✓	✗
Official Community Plan	✗	✓	✗

Structural analysis of central findings

1 Start by being clear about **values and assumptions**

2 Be deliberate about **language** choice

3 Make **disability visible**

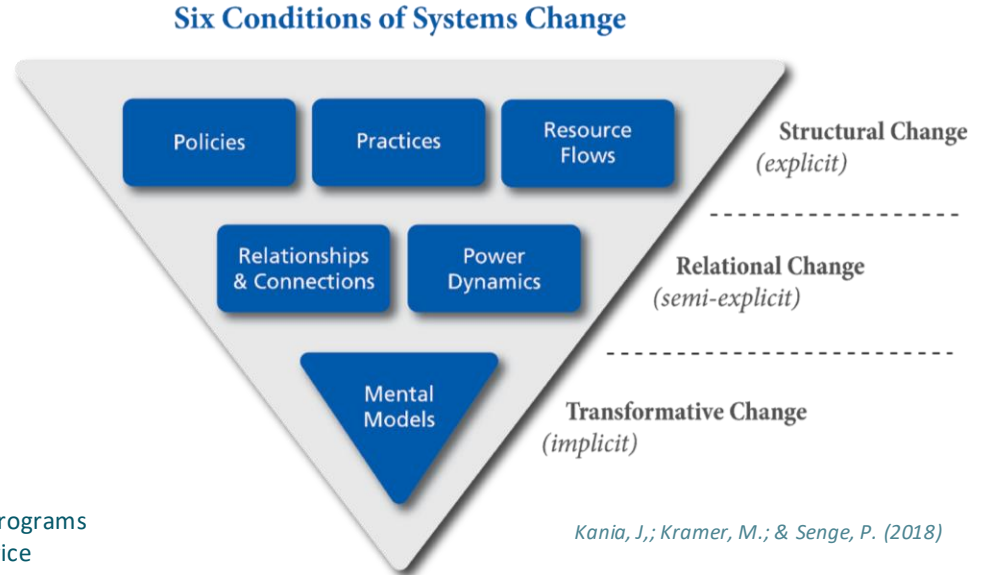
4 Plan for equitable **community engagement**

5 **Train people** and shift the culture

6 Make **explicit changes:**

- Built environment
- Information and communications
- Employment and staff engagement
- Services and programs
- Customer Service
- Governance, policies and bylaws

7 Return to the top/ support **ongoing learning**



Brief overview of recommendations — 1 of 2

1

Start with values:

Being clear about values can help to be accountable to them in decision-making, as well as enabling people to say “yes” to changes along the way that align. Belonging was identified in this research as an important foundational value for accessible planning and service delivery.

2

Be deliberate about language:

Throughout the review of internal City resources, disability was rarely explicitly discussed. Language is a valuable tool to let people know that they are being seen and are valued part of a conversation, process, or service.

3

Make disability visible:

Policy Impact Forum participants spoke to the value of having people with disabilities in decision-making and leadership positions. They also recommended partnering with other community organizations, and updating policies to support staff in their work in this area.

4

Plan for equitable community engagement:

Centering the voices of people most impacted by decisions is at the core of equitable community engagement. Extending different - and sometimes additional – resources can be required to eliminate barriers and ensure opportunities for equitable participation.

Brief overview of recommendations — 2 of 2

5

Train staff and shift the culture:

Creating and maintaining a disability-informed workforce, reducing staff turnover, and being an inclusive employer by hiring people with disabilities can make a significant positive impact on everyday actions over time.

6

Make explicit changes:

Address ableism with concrete changes consistently across the following areas: Built Environment, Services and Programs, Information and Communications, Customer Service, Employment and Staff Engagement, and Governance, Policies and Bylaws.

7

Support ongoing learning:

Build in opportunities for reflection by treating these recommendations as a cycle

Implementation recommendations for the City of Powell River — 1 of 2

Internal organizational implementation recommendations:

Culture shift

- Explicit and shared commitment to accessibility and belonging

Operational changes

- Training
- Service design and delivery

System-level changes:

- Integrate into new and existing policies, as opportunities arise
- Develop an equitable community engagement strategy, so people with direct lived experience can have a say
- Integrate into Official Community Plan renewal

Implementation recommendations for the City of Powell River — 2 of 2

Knowledge mobilization recommendations:

Throughout the organization

Throughout the region

With municipalities and organizations across British Columbia and Canada



Three final deliverables

1

Summary report

2

Client services handbook

3

Video by the Diversa Collective





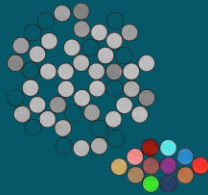
Questions and Discussion

Thank you

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments.



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