

0:00 - 1:40

**Wisdom Tettey:** Hello, everyone and welcome back again. I'm Wisdom Tettey, and I'm the convener for the dialogues. I'm a Black male, I've got short hair, I've got glasses on. And you'll hear this voice at the end of the next session so that you'll know who is speaking when I do that. I wanna start off by just sharing a common understanding of expectations in terms of how we conduct the deliberations this afternoon. We are expecting that everyone will be respectful, that we'd have a collegial conversation. We wouldn't have any tolerance for hate, or disrespect, or treating anyone in a way that is denigrating. If we come to that, we'll have to remove the individual who's responsible for that, you know, remove them from the session. I'm very hopeful that we don't have to get to that because you all come to this with a shared commitment to having a meaningful conversation that moves our society forward. The next session is on "Inclusive Infrastructure Design and Planning", looking at everything from procurement to technological systems that we have as well as the built environment. And so when we talk about infrastructure in this context, we're not limiting ourselves to built environment, we're looking at the range of, you know, services, you know, physical and non-physical context that shape our work and our studies. So with that, I'm gonna turn over to my colleague, Ben Poynton, who's going to moderate the session. And so Ben, with that, over to you.

1:42 - 4:41

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Wisdom. And thank you to all of our amazing speakers throughout the day today and the moderators. I've enjoyed greatly the rich dialogue we've already had. So my name's Ben. I work at the University of Toronto as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Officer. I use he/him pronouns, identify as cisgender and I'm a white settler to this land, having moved here quite freely from the UK a number of years ago. I'm speaking to you today from the University of Toronto campus, which is situated on the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. I appear to you on screen as a young-ish white cismale with short brown hair, beard, and I'm wearing blue checked shirt and glasses. So as Wisdom mentioned, this session examines the nature of the built environment, the kinds of technological systems that are in use in our institutions, the assumptions and procurement practices that shape them, and their impact on work, learning, scholarship, and community engagement. Today, our great panelists will examine the benefits of inclusive and universal design principles, systems, and practices, address the resistance to change within those systems, and explore effective ways to advance institutional commitment to inclusion that correct inequities and create a supportive, healthy learning and working environment for us all. To me, these systems and processes can be defined almost as those hidden structures that make and remake our institutions that oftentimes we don't know much about and oftentimes, don't open up to or aren't opened up to much critique. They're important because they impact the physical structures, institutions build, the pedagogical tools that we use, the online systems we consume and create content in, and the spaces wherein institutionally-significant decisions are made. I think some of the biggest questions myself and the panelists have been grappling with as we prepare for this session is really considering some of the theoretical and practical implications of ableism that have been mentioned

throughout the day, how can we take those into consideration to reimagine institutional infrastructure that welcomes disability and foster belonging. So I'm just going to briefly mention the panelists, introduce their names and their titles, and then invite them to begin their talks with you today. So to begin with, we have Catherine S. Fichten, a professor in the Psychology Department at Dawson College, Montreal, and an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University. We also have Dr. Mahadeo Sukhai, who is Vice President of Research and International Affairs and Chief Accessibility Officer for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. And Kate Clark, who is research professional with Dalhousie University's School of Planning and founding member of the Planning for Equity, Accessibility, and Community Health, PEACH, Research Unit. So with that, I'd like to turn over to Catherine for her talk.

4:43 - 13:53

**Catherine Fichten:** Thank you, Ben. I have a PowerPoint. Since I'm faculty, I'm used to having PowerPoints. Okay, as you can see, the topic from my talk today is "Influential Trends Related to Emerging Technologies and Digital Accessibility for Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities". By the way, I am a white woman, a white old woman with glasses. I co-direct the Adaptech Research Network, which has been in existence since 1996. And our goal, next, please, has been to study aspects that facilitate success for students with disabilities. Our team consists of faculty, students, researchers, and service providers. Our research is on post-secondary students with and without disabilities. Focus, as I mentioned, is on technologies, and we're based at Dawson College. My goals today are to reflect on trends from the past and what I think is coming. Next, please. So one of the changes that has happened in the past decade is the nature of students with disabilities has changed. Self-reported disabilities of students, between 11 and 25%. The students with non-visible or non-apparent disabilities is the majority of students. There's a totally invisible, the whole graph there, which shows that students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, 39%, and this is from a Quebec University group that collects data on all Quebec universities. Mental health-related disabilities, 16% and learning disabilities, 12%, otherwise known as specific learning disorder. One of the things that you should also be aware of is that 2/3 of these students do not register for campus access services, and this has incredible implications for technology. Next, please. So this is what has happened in terms of the impact and evolution of the accessibility of general use technologies, which is really the most exciting and the most important change in the past decade. There are built-in accessibility features of many, many technologies, and these can harness the potential of general-use tech as assistive technology for all students. Office 365, it has Accessibility Checker Corrector, it's got Immersive Reader, it's got magnification. Adobe Acrobat Pro will do OCR, has keyboard alternative to mice, and has high-contrast abilities. There's a proliferation of audiobooks so that people don't have to wait until specialized digital library has the book. They can just get the book the day it appears like the rest of us. EPUBs, which are becoming more and more popular both for textbooks as well as for journal articles, which is really important for post-secondary students with disabilities. And of course, mobile technologies. Next, please. Another thing which has been really exciting is the use, the increased use of artificial intelligence in general-use technologies. There is video captioning, otherwise known as cptions,

for obvious reasons for Zoom and Teams, but it's getting better and better. And I have to say, as a woman with, who's hard of hearing, I prefer with the captions to CART because CART always, by definition, has a delay. And if I'm listening and also reading captions, the automatic captioning that comes from Zoom, Teams, and other places actually serves my needs better. Office 365 has a lot of text-to-speech, dictation, and word prediction. There's voice search for search engines such as Google. You can control your computer using voice commands. For example, many of us use Siri if we have Apple computers. And one of the things I noticed recently is that Google Lens is now part of Google Search on my smartphone, which is really terrific because it'll tell me what I'm looking at and name it. And it's fairly good. There's a lot of artificial intelligence-based psychological support apps as well. Next, please. I'd like the one that says "Interesting Emergent Tech". Go back one, please. Okay, perfect, thank you. No, one down, please. Okay, not quite what I'm looking at, but that's all right. So one of the things that one should know is the continuing barriers. So even though I'm really enthusiastic about the use of AI and of general-use technologies, barriers continue. And these include data analysis software and peer review journal databases still have difficulties, especially for students in STEM. Some assistive-technology software and hardware are still expensive, such as JAWS. The design of academic evaluations can create barriers. So if I put a very speeded test for my students, that can cause problems. Inaccessible documents and course packs that are produced by folks like me, faculty, can really cause problems. We underline, we scrawl, we scribble. Makes it really difficult for tech to read. And there's always a problem with French language software not being up to date. Next, please. There's also interesting emerging tech. Virtual and augmented reality are upcoming. How well this is going to work for students with disabilities is really totally unknown, but this is, it's here to stay. There's also telecollaboration. This is already working, where students can have remote access to real-world field trips, for example. So if there's a student who uses a wheelchair, they can be there as long as somebody has a tablet and shows them the bug, or the plant, or whatever they're supposed to be looking at. Smart glasses are really exciting. Not only do they have heads-up displays, but they can talk to you. And pretty soon, the sign language interpreter is going to be there on the smart glasses as well. Smart gloves are coming along to help with sign language. Indoor navigation continues to be a problem. This is very important for people who are blind. And they're trying, but it's not going very far at this point. And the potential of robots in STEM, they're not being used, but they should be used because they could be doing experiments in physics, and chemistry, and so on. Next, please. So in summary, there are many beneficial tech-related changes. This is really very exciting. Many barriers remain. This is, I don't think a surprise to anybody. I think the future is really exciting. And if anybody wants more information about our research, Adaptech Research Network, W-W-W dot A-D-A-P-T-E-C-H dot O-R-G, or you can email me Catherine Fichten, Catherine, C-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-E, dot Ficten, F-I-C-H-T-E-N, @mcgill, M-C-G-I-L-L, dot C-A, thank you.

13:56

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much.

13:57

**Catherine Fichten:** I'm done.

13:58 - 14:19

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Catherine, for that presentation. I think you've provided us with some really interesting research posts on, both on the sort of populations of students that you've studied but also some of the coming changes that you've noticed within technology. Now I'm going to ask Mahadeo now to, turn to you to provide your five-to-seven minutes of speaking time, thank you.

14:20 - 21:50

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** Thank you very much, Ben. And good afternoon, everybody. My name is Mahadeo Sukhai. I am coming to you from Kingston, the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Huron-Wendat people. I am a brown-skinned cisgender man with dark hair and extremely thick glasses. And I'm presenting to you from my home office in Kingston. I don't have slides. I wanna have a conversation with you for five minutes or so. I'm gonna talk to you about accessible procurement. I'm gonna talk to you about what accessible procurement is, and what it means, and why we need to pay attention to it. And before I do that, I wanna touch on something with respect to the purchase and implementation of systems and platforms within post-secondary institutions and frankly, within all organizations. But we're talking about post-secondary institutions specifically. Learning management systems are primarily intended for use by students, all students, but the people who put information within those systems are faculty and academic staff. And so the student bodies intended to use the LMS in the sense of consuming the content that's put on the LMS. But the other users are those individuals who are the ones who are curating the content, and designing it, and loading it into the system. And so if an LMS is vetted for accessibility from the perspective of the student-facing interface but not vetted for accessibility from the perspective of the instructor interface, then that becomes an example of systemic ableism within the space. Because what we end up assuming by conducting a process in that way is that students with disabilities will interact with the system, but academic staff and faculty with disabilities won't interact with the system. And in fact, it's possible one can go farther and suggest that there's no such thing as academic staff and faculty with disabilities. And that's a problematic assumption. And Catherine has provided really good data on the distribution of students with disabilities within post-secondary institutions. If an institution's done an employee census, you're probably gonna find somewhere around 5 to 8% of your staff identifies as persons with disabilities. Sorry, 5%, 5 to 8% of your staff and faculty identify as persons with disabilities. And so there's a complement of persons with disabilities who are working as instructors, as faculty, as academic staff behind the scenes. So when we think about purchasing goods, and services, and technologies, and spaces for use within the post-secondary environments, I think it's really important for us to think about the fact that the entire community includes persons with lived experience with disabilities. And 95% of those individuals may have non-apparent disabilities. And so it's always best to design upfront for accessibility and inclusion where and when possible. And so this is where the conversation around accessible procurement comes in because the concept behind accessible procurement is just that. As we consider the purchasing and implementation

of, again, goods, and services, and technologies, and platforms, and systems, and spaces for use within the post-secondary environment at all levels for staff, for faculty, for students, for all of the above, then we need to consider accessibility principles in the procurement of these pieces of technology. So what does that mean? That means that we need to consider whether companies who sell stuff to us are willing to talk to us about accessibility and inclusion. Do they have somebody who's responsible for accessibility? Do they have documentation on the accessibility of their material? If we're asking somebody to come in and facilitate a, for example, at the governance level, if we're asking somebody to come in and facilitate a governance workshop for us, are those folks capable of delivering accessible and inclusive facilitation? If we're purchasing an LMS, is the LMS going to be accessible? Do we have documentation that backs up that LMS is accessible? But it's more than just the collection of documentation. Sometimes it goes so far as to the audit of the system, the audit of the service, the audit of whatever it is we're looking to purchase in order to make sure that our accessibility standards are met. It's not simply enough to say you're gonna be WCHE 2.1 AA compliant. It's not simply enough to hand over a VPAT. It's not simply enough to say, "I know how to run an inclusive workshop," and then deliver an inaccessible PowerPoint. The question becomes, you know, do we need to audit this material ourselves? Do we actually need to conduct an accessibility review as part of our procurement process? Accessibility needs to be embedded within the procurement scoring matrix, and it needs to be scored as part of that and scored with emphasis as part of the procurement scoring matrix. The other part of the procurement lifecycle that's really important to keep in mind and consider is the part around implementation and then ultimately training, particularly when it comes to the purchase of systems, and platforms, and technology. One of the things that we've identified in the work that we've done at CNIB in researching accessible procurement has been that often as part of the procurement lifecycle, the conversation around implementation and training sometimes will get left out. And then you will have this piece of technology that's been purchased that is purported to be accessible, but the vendor relationship and the training to ensure that staff with disabilities know how to use the system just isn't there. And so you've purchased this thing that doesn't actually have the supports set up and established for staff to be able to use. All of that said, there comes a point in time where sometimes one can't purchase something that's gonna be accessible. And when that happens, it becomes important to start to think about that upfront and to think about what are the workarounds and alternative solutions that can be put in place that staff, and faculty, and students with disabilities are not disadvantaged when they're using the system. And in thinking about accessible procurement, we always think about the end-user experience and ensuring that the end user has an equitable experience throughout whatever process, or system, or tool is being developed and designed. I'm gonna stop my remarks there only to say that I alluded to the fact that this is research that CNIB Research is conducting, and I will acknowledge the funder. We have funding from Accessibility Standards Canada to do work on accessible procurement with a final report due March of 2024. And what I've just summarized for you is some of the findings on that project to date. And so with that, I'll turn it back over to you then.

21:52 - 22:33

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Mahadeo. And I think you've made a clear, helpful distinction in thinking about who is thought of when we design or think about procurement of systems. Oftentimes, we do, institutions will forget that there are folks who are actually adding content to those pieces, and we forget, sometimes, about the accessibility for them. I think that reminded me of some of the conversation we had this morning about invisibility and not expecting disability to be in specific spaces and in specific context. So thank you for providing that to us. I'm gonna turn over to Kate now to provide additional remarks before we get into the broader Q&A, thank you.

22:34 - 28:49

**Kate Clark:** Thanks, Ben. So my name is Kate Clark. My pronouns are she/her. I'm joining this presentation today from Halifax, Nova Scotia, which is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. I'm a white woman with dark hair, long dark hair, and I'm wearing glasses. So as Ben mentioned, I'm a full-time researcher and research project coordinator with Dalhousie University's School of Planning. My opening remarks today, I also don't have slides, but I'm just gonna speak a bit about my background, my professional experience, which is primarily grounded in accessibility in the built environment and the state of accessibility planning in Nova Scotia and at Dalhousie as it's relevant to how I will be approaching today's topic. So I work as part of a research team called the PEACH Research Unit, which is a part of the School of Planning. And PEACH is an acronym that I think Ben already said, but it stands for Planning for Equity, Accessibility, and Community Health. So I'm educated as a planner, sometimes called city planners or community planners. And for anyone who's unfamiliar with planning as it's not talked about a whole lot is it's a field that's primarily interested in directing land use and the future development of communities with the goals of enhancing a wide range of social goods, which include economic growth, environmental sustainability, public health goals, and also social justice. So the research work that I take part in is very focused on addressing this recognized gap in accessibility awareness in planning practice and scholarship. Accessibility best practices are very prevalent in health fields like occupational therapy, for instance, which may be a remnant of seeing disability as only a matter of medical conditions. And we also see it a lot in design professions, like architecture, engineering, or industrial design, which address accessibility in individual buildings or technologies. And it can often be through the lens of accommodation, but it's often not given the attention it deserves at a holistic level or community-wide scale, which is, you know, the lens that planning policy and practices try to take. So this is relevant to institutional planning as well, of course. So to address this, our research engages directly with persons with lived experience with disability to identify barriers to various aspects of daily living. And we study solutions through planning tools. We also work to bring accessibility practices or best practices into the curriculum of planning courses at the School of Planning where we're situated. So a lot of our research is pointed to the need for a whole journey approach to accessibility, where we look at everything that's involved when navigating and utilizing the built environment and services in the built environment, which is often not achieved through compliance-based approaches to accessibility that look at each element of access individually, but rarely, how they all come together in a space. So this is something that applies for advancing accessibility in communities and in the whole life

of institutions as well. A little context on Dalhousie University, we're in the early stages of formally addressing accessibility through our institution. So Nova Scotia adopted its first provincial accessibility legislation through the Accessibility Act in 2017 and was the third province in Canada to adopt this legislation. This was an important step by the provincial government, not only because Nova Scotia has some of the highest proportions of people who are living with disabilities compared to other parts of Canada. I think the latest numbers are 22% of adults identify as experiencing disability Canada-wide, while this number is 30% in Nova Scotia. So the Accessibility Act, of course, requires all public sector bodies, including universities, to develop their own accessibility plans and adopt formal actions to meet the provincial goal of becoming fully accessible by 2030, which is approaching very quickly. Each accessibility plan addresses accessibility for six focus areas, which are the built environment, education, goods and services, information and communication, transportation and employment, which I think is very similar to Ontario's AODA, if anyone is coming from Ontario today as well. So Dalhousie began developing its accessibility plan in August 2019, and I was fortunate to be a member of the Goods and Services Working Group as part of that process to inform actions for that focus area. So this experience of being part of the accessibility plan making process informs a lot of what I can speak to today in regards to procurement and technologies as the built environment is kind of more of my area of research. But of course, as a researcher, I have personal experience of operating within institution. And even more importantly, through my research experience, our team has been fortunate to learn directly from many individuals with lived experience and disability through FirstVoice engagement. And from this, what we've observed in terms of accessibility in our institution is that real change towards accessibility and inclusion still requires more voices from the people who are currently excluded and related stakeholders to identify and really bring about solutions. So that's why I think conversations like the ones we're having today are really an important part of building our collective knowledge and motivating action by institutions and the people working within them.

28:54 - 29:59

**Ben Poynton:** Okay, thank you very much, Kate, for providing us with those helpful remarks. It's really interesting to hear what you're working on and also to hear what's happening within Nova Scotia in terms of the upcoming act and standards within it. So we have opened up now to our general Q&A section. Now we have a few coming in, but I think that one of the ones that I was really hoping for us to think about, and I think it's something that each of you can answer to, and I'll continue to take a look at the Q&As coming in, but really thinking about barriers that in an accessible infrastructure or a system that can't appropriately embed considerations of accessibility for historical reasons and the barriers that it creates. So what are some of the ways in which physical and technological design systems to prevent full participation in the life of institutions by members of the academy who identify as disabled, who have those experience of disability? So what are some of those barriers? What are some of the ways in which the physical and technological design and systems prevent full participation?

30:06 - 30:07

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** Ben, it's Mahadeo, may I go first?

30:08

**Ben Poynton:** Yes, please.

30:09 - 35:40

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** Okay, so it's a really good question, and I'm gonna back up for a moment and tell you a tiny bit about CNIB Research because the question that you're asking actually gets at the core mission of CNIB Research. CNIB's research in inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility teams or IDEA team are uniquely interconnected, and intertwined, and held under one executive portfolio. That would be mine. And CNIB Research is an academic-level research department that's housed in a non-profit organization. And our fundamental question effectively is the question that you just posed slightly differently, which is how do existing systems actually lead to barriers that that persons with lived experience with disability, in our case, particularly individuals who are blind, deaf-blind, and partially sighted, will experience? So with that sort of preamble, which I should have given during my seven minutes, I'm gonna zero in on something in particular. Catherine made a point about Accessibility Checkers in Office 365 products. Now, Office 365's Accessibility Checkers will catch approximately 40% of accessibility errors that actually exist within the document. And an Accessibility Checker in Office 365 is a lot like a COVID-19 rapid antigen test. If it's positive, then the error is real. If it's negative, then that doesn't mean there's no error. That just means that it's negative, and it could be a false negative. The tests are designed that the, the Accessibility Checkers are designed to capture certain things really well. They're designed to capture errors with respect to alternative text and image description. They're designed to capture errors in reading order. They're designed to capture errors in how tables are put together. They're designed to capture a few other things that have to do with screen reader, text-to-speech technology. What they're not at all designed to do is capture anything useful with respect to screen magnification, and color, and contrast, and font size, and things like these. And so, for example, you could take a research grant, which is typically a wall of text that doesn't have any of Microsoft Word's "Style Guide" attached to it. And you can run it through an Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Word, and it will tell you there are no errors. But in fact, that's not a navigable document for somebody who's listening to it versus somebody who's reading it visually. And so that's a particularly long-winded way of saying that the existing systems that we have, as good as they are, the problem is that we have a reliance to some degree upon kind of that automation of vetting for accessibility. And because that reliance exists in those tools, then we're prone, as a community, to creating things that might pass an accessibility check, but might actually fail the accessibility sniff test and the usability sniff test that would be applied by somebody within the disability community who's attempting to use the document. And so in one way of answering the question then is that the technological infrastructure that we have is fantastic infrastructure, but if the infrastructure, unfortunately, carries the biases of the community who might be able-bodied, then those biases are gonna get translated through that technological infrastructure into actual usage and practice. The Accessibility Checker is one part of that. The LMS example that I cited earlier that you picked up on in your response to my



comment is another example of that. And so these are the things that we have to look for. We have to think about ways that yes, this system is there. It's potentially easy to use, it's potentially friendly to all sorts of people, but is it friendly to everybody? Is it usable by everybody? And if it wasn't tested to make sure that it was usable by everybody and we don't actually have a workaround in place for those who it's not usable by, then we're creating, deliberately or inadvertently, take your pick, we're creating any number of barriers to persons within the community who are attempting to engage with the technology. The last example I think I would give in a case like this is the example of, for example, survey platforms. And so if there's a survey platform that's in use by an institution and the survey platform hasn't been rigorously vetted for accessibility, then we can run into a scenario where the survey platform that's authorized, and approved, and the REB says, "You have to use this is," is going to actually create a barrier for research participants who can't interact with the platform. And so having the tool is one thing, making sure we know how to use the tool in an accessible, inclusive way is a very different thing.

35:43 - 36:55

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you, thank you very much for that, Mahadeo. It's very helpful, and it sort of puts me in mind of thinking about who gets to decide what we mean when we talk about accessibility and the lens through which we interpret accessibility and disability. And oftentimes, the things that don't get thought about as well. And another example that comes to mind is across Ontario institutions and across Canada too, there's been an adoption of Facility Accessibility Design Standards that do a great job of thinking about how we can better design. Our physical space needs to be accessible, but they come with a relatively narrow conceptualization of disability, and this is some of the things that I think that have been talked about to prior to the session right now. So for example, they think about physical accessibility, they think about sensory disabilities, but there's some pieces missing around how can we design spaces to work for folks who are neurodiverse as well. So I think that there's something going into the conceptualization of disability and accessibility in addition to what you're mentioning. Catherine and Kate, is there anything you wanted to add on that question of what are some of the ways in which physical and technological design systems inhibit or prevent full participation?

36:56 - 40:26

**Catherine Fichten:** Okay, absolutely, and I'd like to get back to Mahadeo as well. Accessibility and usability, of course, are not the same. Just because it's digital doesn't mean it's accessible. And just because it has a checker doesn't mean that it works for everyone. Although I have to say a lot of things work better for people with visual impairments or with partial sight because especially in America, they've been suing everybody. And as a consequence, things have changed. And in Canada, we get the beneficiary results of those changes. It would be nice if we could have our own changes, but you can see the difference between French and English. French is well behind English tech. And part of it is that nobody is suing on behalf of Francophones. That being said, I find that McGill is sending me updates to Office 365, I would say, every two or three weeks. I know this because half the time, I can't use something brand

new because all of a sudden, it's changed. So I'm hoping that usability is something that Microsoft is concerned with. And if it's not, it should be. But I think Dawson College, where I teach, has Office 2016, of all things, probably because it's cheap. McGill has Office 2022, I guess, because it can afford it. And one of the things that I find is when I send over a PowerPoint or an Office document to my colleagues at Dawson, they say, "Oh no, you can't do that. It doesn't say X, Y, or Z." Accessibility in Office 2016 is very different from accessibility in Office 2022. So let's keep in mind that things are changing, but my real concern has been students with disabilities, especially those with print impairments, are able to obtain textbooks, admittedly two, three, four, five, six weeks into the course which are accessible. But what happens with reference books? We've had issues with "American Psychological Association Publication Manual". Most people don't have to buy this. This is a reference book. But students who have disabilities are expected to buy it because of a large number of publication and copyright rules. The same thing is true for "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual". I'm a psychologist, right? It's a big, thick, fat book. It's a reference book. The library's not allowed to own a digital copy because the library is not a student with a disability. Students with disabilities have to purchase this thing, which nobody else has to. Also, when it comes to textbooks, I can sell my textbook to the incoming class. I, being a student. A student with a disability can't do that. So there are a lot of things that are leftovers from olden days that are still causing real barriers. That's it.

40:27 - 40:53

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Catherine. So I interpret that as, I'm thinking about a lot of the sort of legal and proprietary issues that we don't always necessarily think of when we're trying to provide greater access. Kate, is there anything you wanted to add on that question of, that we mentioned earlier about the ways in which physical and technological design systems prevent full participation? I imagine there's something you have learned in engaging with folks with lived experience and disability in your work.

40:57 - 43:58

**Kate Clark:** Yeah, I can just quickly add a bit about the built environment. I think Catherine and Mahadeo have talked very extensively and knowledgeably about technologies. And so perhaps, you know, it's a little, you know, yeah, more obvious, I suppose, when I say that the built environment is, of course, a, like, there are numerous barriers that to participation in the life of these institutions that come from or that originate in the built environment. So I love that someone is talking about historic buildings and the additional barriers that come with that because that is certainly something that we see at Dalhousie as one of the oldest post-secondary institutions in Canada. I think we have a building that is still in use that was originally built in 1887. And, you know, and from that point onwards, of course, there are numerous institutional buildings that were built at times when the users that they had in mind were very limited to primarily male, able-bodied adult people. And so their existing footprints and design elements are just not suitable for the diverse society of people who we are welcoming to institutions today and should be welcoming to institutions today. So I guess my comments would be around, similar to what Ben pointed out, about the narrow way in

which we often define accessibility, especially accessibility in the built environment. It's been a trend that mobility disability and, you know, more physical manifesting disabilities are kind of considered more in the forefront, thinking about how people who use mobility devices such as wheelchairs and that kinda thing can get through a door or into a classroom and or even, you know, get to the building. Coming back to my kind of whole journey approach, you know. It's important that people can benefit from learning in the classroom, but to get to the classroom, you have to get through the building, you need the supports in the building, like accessible washrooms and services, and then you also need those routes to the buildings to be accessible and so on and so forth. But with the design of the built environment there, of course, design elements that are not only related to mobility disability, but thinking about the navigation of that space for individuals with sensory disabilities or learning disabilities through, you know, signage systems and other kinds of systems that we put into our built environment are either going to enable or exclude participation from a variety of individuals. So that's it.

44:01 - 45:13

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Kate. That's a great addition to the answer to the question so far. So I'm going to move on to some of the questions that have come in and one which I think is particularly difficult to answer, so I thought you'd love me to answer it, ask it to you. And it's, you may not have an answer to it at all, but any ideas that you have. These are very difficult, or achievable, or easy to achieve, I want us to think as broadly and as creatively as we can. So one of the questions is around the levers that institutions have if they're already involved with a system that they know to be or found that's inaccessible because oftentimes, the difficulty is with change again. Some of that comes back to what you mentioned, Catherine, about those books that you mentioned. But I'm wondering if there's anything that you have seen or would like to, I use, sorry, your ableist term that's saying seen if there's anything that you have noticed or regarded that you would like to let us know about? Or is there anything that you haven't regarded or that isn't being done that you think should be done? So in the context of things institutions can do if they're already involved with the provider and they want to be able to make changes to those systems.

45:15 - 46:54

**Catherine Fichten:** Thank you for that question. I actually feel very strongly about this. As faculty, one of the few things that I can do is when the book salesperson comes along and says, "Here is our book and how wonderful it is," my first question is, "Is this accessible? I'm really glad that you have an LMS to go with it. Is the LMS accessible?" And they said, "Duh, I don't know." At which point I say, "Thank you, but I'm not interested." And I think if more of us took the criterion of accessibility into account when we select our textbooks, I think life would be a little easier. And the same thing goes for LMS. And by the way, we have data which shows that students, this has nothing to do with disability. These are just students across the board. They really desperately dislike having to go from one LMS to a website to another LMS to another one. They don't know where to find their homework. They don't know where to find assignments, where to find their textbook. They really don't like to have multiple different learning management systems. And on top of that, a lot of these learning management systems

are not accessible. So I guess one plea that I have for anybody who works at a university or a college is, for heaven's sakes, keep the number of learning management systems down to one or two. You'll be doing all your students a favor, especially students with disabilities, but really everybody.

46:56 - 47:23

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Catherine. That puts me in mind of general sort of good practice principles of universal design to make things simpler, and intuitive to use, and not overly adding to a cognitive burden on students to have to move through different spaces and have to learn now how to reengage in something different. So just to get on that question of the levers the institution should have or could have in relationship to those service providers thinking about making changes.

47:26 - 47:29

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** Kate, would you like to go first or do you want me to? It's Mahadeo.

47:31

**Kate Clark:** Please go ahead.

47:32 - 52:10

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** Okay, so a couple of things. And one thing is a direct answer to your question that was posed, Ben, and another is to follow up on a point that Catherine just made. And I'm gonna answer the question first, and then come back to Catherine's point. If it is a piece of information in communication technology, so for example, if it is an LMS, right? That seems to be the one that we've gravitated to as kind of our example du jour. Or alternatively, if it's not an LMS, let's say if it's a finance system, or it's an expense management system, or it's something to do with human resources information, whatever. So a lot of those large infrastructure-related tools, right, are things where when you actually purchase something, when you procure it, you're assigning a service contract and you're building a relationship with the vendor. And so then the question that you're asking is in reality, how much do you wanna test that relationship with the vendor, right? And my perspective on something like this is if you feel that relationship with the vendor is strong and you've got a good sort of conversational dialogue set up, then I think, I think you should be able to test that relationship and you should be able to say, "Look, we need this to be accessible. It's not accessible now, what are you doing about it?" And then if you don't have satisfactory answers to that question, then find all your friends in the post-secondary sector who are using that tool and ask them to encourage the vendor to do the same thing. The thing is that money ultimately is the lever that we have to tell vendors they need to get their act together. And, you know, the Canadian federal government is the largest money spender in the country. And so if some of the things that we need are things that they need and we get them to actually push for us, then that's even better. But that's not always practical because they may not want the same things we want. But at the end of the day, if everybody in the post-secondary sector got together and said to a particular provider or a particular piece of ICT that we're all using, "You know what? "This is not working, you need to fix this because if this is not made accessible, we're going to go

find somebody else. There's lots of innovative people within the post-secondary sector who know how to do stuff. We can even create an open-source solution and do that as opposed to use your thing." And if there's enough folks who will go down that road with you, then it's not just you saying something, it's you plus all your friends saying something, and then vendors will have the opportunity to listen. Within the nonprofit sector, we have sort of much the same kinda thought process. And I would say that for any tools that we happen to be using in alignment with what the post-secondary sector's using, certainly you come to me at CNIB and you say, "You know, what do you think about X?" And if I tell you, "I think X is garbage," then let's go do business together and figure out how to figure out how to make X not garbage anymore, right? I think it's a really good question, but I think the answer ends up being there's a large network represented here. And perhaps it's time for that network to do things not in isolation anymore because at the end of the day, there's only so many solutions to the kinds of things that we need to do in the post-secondary sector. The other thing I wanna say in response to Catherine's point about the LMS and the accessibility of the system, absolutely agree, but then there's actually something else, and it comes back to the point I made about training. Just because a platform is "structurally accessible", in gigantic air quotes, does not necessarily mean that the people who are using the platform on the backend actually know how to use those accessibility features. And so you also need to make sure that you've got training for those people so that they know how to actually render things accessibly within the platform that is supposedly accessible. Because if they don't, then it doesn't matter how nice the platform is and how many bells and whistles are on there for accessibility and usability. If an instructor doesn't know how to make, how to make their course content accessible inside the LMS, then what good is the accessibility of the LMS?

52:15 - 53:52

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Mahadeo. I think that comes to some other discussions in the previous session about curriculum and the different ways in which we would suggest that especially those who're designing curriculum using these tools, "Do you need support and resources in order to know how to use them accessibly? How to create that accessible content?" Just before I move on, I wanna make sure if that anybody wanted to add any more to that, you have the opportunity to do so. But I can move on to the next question unless others wanted to continue the dialogue here on that question. Okay, thank you. So we do have questions coming in. Thank you, keep them coming in. One of the things, I think, is the questions we have that is directly related to this though that I wanted to answer, it seems like a nice segue into it, is what are some of the immediate steps that leaders, institutional leaders, the administrators can take within the sector and themselves? So Merrick mentioned this morning his role as the leader of the chair of University of Canada. I think that, so thinking about what those sectoral representatives can do to facilitate a move towards a fully inclusive and sustainable procurement model. So I think that stays on from some of the things you were mentioning just now, Mahadeo, about the collaboration between entities. So what are some real practical steps and immediate steps that could be taken by leaders in institutions and across the sector to facilitate that move towards this fully-inclusive kinda education model?

53:53 - 57:03

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** So yeah. I love that question. I think it's a great question. First of all, does everyone have an accessible procurement policy? If you don't have an accessible procurement policy, I am gonna highly recommend you get an accessible procurement policy. If you're looking for a good template, feel free to call me or send me an email. I'm gonna do what Catherine did earlier, and I'm going to spell my email address for you. M-A-H-A-D-E-O dot S-U-K-H-A-I @ C-N-I-B dot C-A. So we have a procurement policy. We've built an accessible procurement policy in 2019 before the pandemic. And as part of the work that we're doing with our accessible, Accessibility Standards Canada funded accessible procurement grants, we're actually giving that policy a very, very stern shakedown based on what's out there nationally and internationally as well. And so step one is make sure that you've got a very strong accessible procurement policy that speaks to the entirety of the accessible, that speaks to the entirety of the accessible procurement lifecycle, right from requirement setting all the way out to training, and implementation, and all points in between. That's one thing. The second thing is then you need to socialize that policy absolutely everywhere among all of your vendors so that they're aware that this is the case and now you're going to be holding their feet to the fire with respect to what this is. If for example, everybody within Universities Canada got together and had an accessible procurement policy that was 95% identical and with a little bit of separation based on your own needs as an organization, then a vendor has no place to turn within the sector, right? You've basically said, "It's going to be this way." Everybody said, "It's going to be this way. We need this to happen. You need to help us, or we're gonna find somebody else, right?" And so I come back to the answer that I gave to the previous question where once everybody's got accessible procurement policies that are very high quality, and you've socialized that internally, and you've built a network of allies in, you know, Universities Canada and among community colleges across the entire post-secondary system so that everyone is basically using the same language in seeking accessible procurement, and that policy is, you know, end to end, from requirement out to training and implementation, then you start to say, "As a collective, this is what we're going to be living and dying by." And you have to then really stand by that. You have to say, "This is our policy. It's going to be done this way. It needs to be done this way for our students, for our staff, for our faculty, for the hundreds of thousands of people that work for us and that we serve," which is a substantial fraction of the Canadian population, right? And the more people, the more people who actually start using that lever consistently, the more effective it's going to be in the long term.

57:05 - 57:13

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Mahadeo, I'm sold. Well, I'll see what I can do and get on that as soon as possible. Catherine and Kate, is there anything you want to add to that?

57:14 - 58:20

**Catherine Fichten:** Okay, I'm still concerned about textbooks, being an academic. And one of the difficulties has been is that a lot of us try to use Canadian versions of

textbooks as opposed to using the American one. So we don't talk about Black-white prejudice, we talk about other kinds of prejudice. We talk about French-English relations as opposed to American wars. What this means in practice is that there is a relatively small run of textbooks with Canadian content. And whenever I talk to the salesperson, they say, "Yes, you can have an accessible version, but only for the American version. So what would you like? You want the American version, in which case you can have accessibility or you want the Canadian version, which suits you better and suits your students better, but no accessibility?" So this has been quite an issue.

58:23 - 59:21

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you. Kate, I don't wish to put you on the spot, but I wonder if some of this is around, I'm thinking in the building space is the sort of corollary of what has been mentioned is working with external parties in the built environment and the what happens there. So for example, an institution can have a really great accessibility built environment design funds, but then going out to architects, going out to construction companies to have that conversation isn't always the best, so. And there's a sort of loss of agency in that, in that moment of handing over the sort of responsibility to ensure that accessibility is properly implemented in those projects. So I wonder if there's anything in relationship to that that could be done? Or if any of that's come up at all? Or anything else down to the same question about steps leaders should be taking across institutions?

59:22 - 59:33

**Catherine Fichten:** This should be asked of my husband, who is an architect, and who designed many of Montreal's University buildings. But there are standards.

59:34

**Ben Poynton:** Yeah.

59:35 - 1:01:13

**Catherine Fichten:** And of course, there's the minimum standard, which everybody must agree to. And then Mahadeo, you might remember in Montreal, Joan Wolforth was a rather outspoken individual, who worked in Access Services, who really made a big fuss about making sure that buildings were accessible. And you know what? They became accessible. The building that I work in, Joan used to work in. and until about two years ago when one of our design people decided to build some internal spaces that have only stairs, which I have been boycotting, but nobody really cares that I boycott it because that has problems with mobility issues. But I think if you have a very keen person in your university or your college and they have access to experts, experts who are themselves have the lived experience, which in the case of my husband, he did, then you can have excellent buildings, the new ones. The old ones are a problem. Old buildings like the ones that Kate has, they're a real problem. At least this is what my husband tells me. It's hard to modify them. It's hard to... All one can do is move the classrooms.

1:01:16 - 1:01:17

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you, Katherine. Go ahead, Kate.

1:01:18 - 1:02:19

**Kate Clark:** Yeah, I think those are some excellent points about what we're looking at when we're talking about procurement and purchase of facilities. And you know, that can be anything from, you know, signage systems to emergency systems and all kinds of things. And I think that the question itself that we're answering about, the immediate steps that can be taken in procurement processes to move towards inclusive and accessible institutions, is kind of the same for facilities as it is for the purchase of services or purchase of goods, like the textbooks Catherine's referring to and that kind of thing. I think there are similar tools that will serve in the same way. The immediately steps- Oh, I'm sorry, I'm getting some feedback. Procurement processes to move towards... Oh, okay, sorry, my apologies.

1:02:20 - 1:02:22

**Ben Poynton:** Keep going, keep going. We heard you twice there, go ahead.

1:02:23 - 1:04:21

**Kate Clark:** Okay, so I suppose to answer the question, I will also echo things, not that echo, but with these comments I'm echoing Mahadeo about the distribution of kind of the responsibility of asking the questions of vendors. Something we heard a lot with the development of Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan was that the onus for asking about accessibility elements for services or goods and services was really put on the end user, like the person who was placing the order or requesting this particular item or facility to be procured. And I think having the policy within the procurement office and the training for all the people involved with the procurement process would just distribute the responsibility to... So that it's not all coming from one person, and it becomes a collective expertise and a collective purpose that everyone is serving towards, towards accessibility and inclusion. And then I'll just add one more thing that in that process, we also came across kind of, we were talking about immediate steps. Although it sounds very boring, record-keeping and accountability by record-keeping is something that was kind of highly recommended in procurement offices. So just having tools, like checklists of what questions to ask and recording the answers of those so that we kind of establish a evidence and hard evidence of kind of what is out there, what the responses are by vendors, and having something to refer to as we move forward to decide if we're gonna continue working with certain vendors, or if we're going to continue to pursue certain products, and that sort of thing.

1:04:23 - 1:04:24

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** Ben, it's Mahadeo, I'm just gonna add.

1:04:25

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you, Kate. Go on, Mahadeo.

1:04:26 - 1:05:30



**Mahadeo Sukhai:** So just to add one thing following up on what Catherine and Kate have said. So inclusive procurement, how you tackle this depends on what you're buying. And so if you're buying an information communication technology solution that's out of the box and literally out of the box, like a photocopier, right? Then the strategies that we've talked about aren't gonna work necessarily because it's much longer-term process to get somebody to build an accessible photocopier than it is to get somebody to actually conceive of accessibility in the context of an LMS, right? So just that's one thing to keep in mind. And I think I just wanted to make that point rather clear so that everyone had an opportunity to digest that. And I'm also entertained by the three emails that have come in asking me for consultation on their accessible procurement policy. So that's actually quite impressive how fast people hopped on my offer.

1:05:32 - 1:07:17

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you, Mahadeo, and Kate, and Catherine for your contributions. One question that's come in that I'm really interested in, and it's something that I deal with on a fairly frequent basis, is, and I think this comes back to the discussion earlier in the day about accessibility being a dialogue. The question is around access requires ongoing negotiations. So in situations where you're working with a vendor, they have promised all of the accessibility that they can provide to you. You have done a relatively good job of assessing their capability to do it, but then it's still, you've entered into that agreement and access has broken down throughout. So this comes back to, I think, something that Kate just mentioned around the record-keeping. I really like that as an idea in terms of sorta noting what decisions were made by whom, at what point, and actually having an institutional record of some of the issues so that the institutional memory doesn't stay with one person, and then you continue to make the same mistakes over again with, working with the same organization if the same opportunity comes up again. But I'm just wondering if there's anything that you could think of or any ways in which you can provide an answer to the question about who ultimately could be responsible in institutions when those agreements break down, when promises were made and not kept. What are some of the things that you think could be in place or should be in place for really helping to hold institutions and vendors accountable for the accessibility promises that they've made? And Mahadeo, you've got lots of questions about your contact information. So when you have a moment and wouldn't mind re-sharing.

1:07:18 - 1:10:42

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** I certainly don't mind re-sharing. I'm gonna re-share it now, in fact. So M-A-H-A-D-E-O dot S-U-K-H-A-I @ C-N-I-B dot C-A. I will also tell you, you're more than welcome to reach out to Ben and he knows how to find me, but then you might flood Ben's inbox. So Kate said something really neat about record-keeping, and I'd like to share a case study and also answer the question as was posed, "Who's institutionally responsible?" So there was an ICT web-based product that we purchased at CNIB a year ago. We're still in the middle of a global ongoing public health situation. So I lose track of time. But I think it was about a year ago. And what we actually negotiated with the vendor was something that they came to us because they had a multinational company that came to them and asked for a solution. And they proposed this to us

because we were concerned about accessibility and usability post-implementation. And so what they actually did was they created a log. It was effectively a Google Sheet that they had access to and we had access to, where every accessibility issue that we identified that was reported in actually was logged on that sheet for them to deal with in real time. And so we had access to it and they had access to it. And it was a brilliant solution. And it's actually worked quite well. Now when you do something like that, there's institutional responsibility on a couple of different levels. So there's who's buying the thing? And ultimately attached to who's buying the thing is which executive-level sponsor is signing off on the paperwork that says, "Yes, I'm gonna buy this thing"? And then you've also got, you know, how is this thing being implemented? And does that implementation cut across multiple parts of the organization? So in that particular case, the tool was purchased by our HR Team, our People and Culture Team. And the accessibility issues were handled by our IT Team, and my team was in the middle sort of making sure that everything was flowing properly, and record-keeping was happening, and, you know, accessibility testing was going on, and so on and so forth. And we were also responsible for the training and implementation of the technology. So you had multiple executive pieces of responsibility, but ultimately, it was, okay, who purchased this thing? Who was the executive who purchased it? And should there be a problem? I go back to that person, I say, "You've got ownership of this file. You need to go back to the vendor and talk to them about X, Y, and Z." And I think this is one of the places where frankly having a chief accessibility officer or equivalent within an organization becomes very handy because then you have an institutional accountability that the organization has around accessibility and that body, if nobody else, gets to hold the vendor's feet to the fire with the blessing of whoever signed off on the paperwork.

1:10:44 - 1:11:09

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Mahadeo. I think that institutional accountability piece is really key in figuring out ways of assigning who it should be as you mentioned. Catherine and Kate, is there anything else you wanted to add on that sort of piece of troubleshooting and thinking about accountability if and when the access breaks down when you've entered into those agreements? If not, we can move on.

1:11:10 - 1:13:09

**Catherine Fichten:** I don't think I have anything on that one, but I got keen on something that Mahadeo said. People keep asking me, "How do I go about organizing an accessible conference?" If anybody has a listing of what it is, needs to go into such an organization, I would love to know about it because each conference that I go to and I collect information, none of it really takes care of everything. And because I have a mobility impairment, as old folks often do, it really, just like when I say just because it's digital doesn't mean it's accessible. Just because there are no stairs doesn't mean it's accessible either. For example, if we decide to have a conference in our convention center, there is absolutely no problem with stairs. We have loads of elevators. The only thing is that I would have to walk about three blocks to get from session one to session two. So I guess things to remember might be that just because there are elevators doesn't mean it's accessible. And if anybody has a conference how-to, please, please let me know because I keep telling people whatever my wisdom has, but it's not

enough. There are people who have difficulty with walking, people who have difficulty holding things, people who have difficulty with tech, people who have difficulty with vision, areas for dogs to poop. There's a whole bunch of things that need to be taken into account. And I don't have in any complete listing. Anybody has, please share with me.

1:13:10 - 1:14:23

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you, Catherine. They exist, and someone shared a resource that I was aware of prior to this, which is the "Accessible Campus" resource, which I can share with you and try to share with the group. I think is already in the Q&A. And there's lots being shared right now. I think that just going back to what Anne McGuire had said in a session previous to this in the "Concepts of Universal Design" is that, one thing I would offer is that universal design can imagine, and these shakers can imagine a whole host of different forms of access, but I think I'm hopefully not misquoting Anne as saying that what happened if someone comes in wasn't considered or thought of even, given the wide expanse of difference we had thought of in designing. So how can we think about within both the things that we're procuring as well as the maybe events that we're hosting that we can allow for that dialogue, allow for the folks to present specific access needs, and how can we mobilize the collective through collective access in forms of disability justice to help to maintain access or grant access? And even when issues like that happened that you've experienced. Mahadeo, I noticed you've come off mute. If there's anything? I'm assuming.

1:14:24 - 1:14:38

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** I was gonna say that there's a few things that my team's done at CNIB and a couple of other things that I've been a part of within accessible conference spaces. So Catherine, I'm happy to share some thoughts with you as well.

1:14:42 - 1:16:01

**Ben Poynton:** Okay, thank you. I'm just gonna, there was a few questions that I wanted to refer to. There's been lots of questions around the development of sort of procurement scoring systems, tools, and resources for how to do some of the assessment. So folks can take those resources and can apply them into their own spaces. I think that there's strengths and weaknesses of those approaches. Checklists are not gonna cover any everything and procurement matrices aren't gonna cover everything, but those are beginnings. But one of the questions I was hoping to think about is whether or if there is potential, and it would be a good idea to think about sector-wise resources of those accessible tools that exist. Thinking of if there's an opportunity after the event, if there's a space for further engagement about how would we gather all of the resources we're talking about today. Does it make sense for there to be some form of sector-wide resource sharing, sector-wide knowledge sharing in order to access and gather some of those tools to think about accessibility in the space of infrastructure and procurement?

1:16:04 - 1:16:06

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** Ben, it's Mahadeo. Can I ask a clarifying question?

1:16:07

**Ben Poynton:** Of course.

1:16:08 - 1:16:15

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** So is the question then what's the value of sector-wide resources? Because the answer is high, extremely high.

1:16:16

**Ben Poynton:** Yeah.

1:16:17 - 1:17:40

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** If the question then is are there accessible tools that currently exist that people know of? I think that's a great crowdsourcing question, and it's a great question to pose to the entire community, including the post-secondary adjacent community and say, "Do you know of tools, right?" What's the best LMS from an accessibility perspective? What's the best finance system from an accessibility perspective? What's the best HRIS from an accessibility perspective? What's the best, you know, you name the thing that you're going shopping for, right? And Catherine's all about textbooks. So what's the best biochemistry textbook from an accessibility perspective? I think it's absolutely worth it to do that level of curation. Somebody's gotta do it. And then somebody's gotta take that information and make it available to everybody because then, otherwise, what ends up happening is everyone's operating in a silo, everyone's reinventing everyone else's wheel. And, you know, Mount Royal's gonna do something that Saint Mary's has already done. Saint Mary's might do something that Queen's has already done. Queen's might do something that University of Toronto has already done. It just keeps going, and going, and going, and going. And that doesn't advance the cause. That gets us trapped in a never-ending loop of who did it first.

1:17:41 - 1:17:52

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you, that more or less was a good clarification and an answer. I suppose my next question is how does that happen? And does any other panelists have any thoughts on how we do that?

1:17:56 - 1:17:57

**Kate Clark:** May I go? It's Kate.

1:17:58 - 1:17:59

**Ben Poynton:** Yeah.

1:18:00 - 1:20:03

**Kate Clark:** Thank you. Yes, I agree with Mahadeo's assessment that it would, of course, be a beneficial thing to have a sector-wide resource so we're not always reinventing the wheel, as you put it, which is indeed the case. One of the benefits of being the third province to go through accessibility legislation, of course, is that we've

been able to look to the other existing tools and learn from them. So as Canada and other provincial governments begin to adopt accessibility legislation, as we hope everyone does, having a place that where all of these tools are, of course, compiled and that they can look to, to learn from, will just advance accessibility and inclusion across institutions. In terms of how, I think crowdsourcing was an apt way to put it, given that I think that there would have to be a lot of actors involved in creating something like a sector-wide resource. And I don't necessarily have an answer. I have more questions to the question. But I guess, what I see are some challenges to creating a sector-wide resource like this would be who is going to maintain it? Who is going to, you know, host it and ensure that the materials themselves are accessible? Because the content of a resource like this, of course, would always be changing and evolving with technologies as new technologies as they emerge and new best practices as you know, they are studied. And so keeping up with the movement of this knowledge and sharing that knowledge, I guess, is where I am, I don't know how to answer it. But I think it needs to be answered.

1:20:05 - 1:21:27

**Catherine Fichten:** I think it's, on principle, a great idea, but in practice, I don't know about your universities, but my textbook changes every two or three years. So my textbook right now might be accessible, but it's obsolete in three years. On top of that, there is a movement for open source at, certainly, at my institution and many others. And open-source textbooks are as accessible as people are willing to make them. And they don't often come with LMS systems. And sometimes the university has an LMS system which is across the board. So Mahadeo, I like the idea of not coming up with the same solutions over, and over, and over again. On the other hand, certainly in my neck of the woods, it's very difficult within the tech realm. All I have to do is take a look at Dawson College with Office 365 2016 and McGill Office 365 2022, and their difference is enormous. I have to work with both sections, and the difference is it's ridiculous. So yeah, I'm not sure what the solution is. But it's a great idea.

1:21:28 - 1:24:04

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** So it's Mahadeo, I'm gonna add something then. So Catherine just made a fantastic point, and that is that accessibility changes over time. I'll tell you a story. We were implementing a new expense management system within the organization, and I'm gonna go ahead and name names. In this case, it was SAP Concur. And the conversation to implement SAP Concur started at CNIB in June of 2020. And a full-blown accessibility test was conducted in June of 2020. And we'd had the documentation, and everything was signed off on. And then because of the pandemic, we actually decided to delay the implementation of this tool until April of 2021. In between June of 2020 and April of 2021, there were several major upgrades to iOS, the operating system for Apple iPhones and at least one major upgrade to the Concur app that nobody told us about, rendering the accessibility test that we conducted in June of 2020 null and void. And so we had to do it again. But we had to do it again in a hurry once we figured out that all of this had happened and the original test was no longer applicable. And we ended up delaying implementation a tiny bit to make sure that we could deal with that. And that's a cautionary tale, I think, a little bit to the

point that Catherine just made, which is that things change. And so a resource list is a fantastic idea and whether it's curated by somebody within the post-secondary sector, it's curated by a friendly third party, whoever curates it also has to keep it live. It has to be curated in an evergreen manner because things change all the time. And it's worth it to just acknowledge that will a resource be beneficial to the sector? Absolutely no question about it. But then the detail of how to do that, recognizing that there's about a million moving goalposts, and there's my one FIFA World Cup analogy for the day. There's a million moving goalposts, and those goalposts all need to be tracked in doing of it. So is it impossible? No, but it needs to be thought through at upfront at the point of planning and design. It's a good problem. And anybody who wants to solve it, again, I'd love to be involved in the solving because it is a good problem, and it's a problem that's shared with the nonprofit sector.

1:24:07 - 1:25:33

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you very much, Mahadeo, and thank you to the other panelists for their contribution to that question. I wanted to sort of switch focus a little bit because we have been, throughout the day, talking about issues of intersectionality, how colonization plays up in thinking about disability as well as how issues of whiteness play up in thinking about accessibility and disability. So partially in response to that question that came in, or a comment that came in around events, and thinking about the needs of chest-feeding parents, and just in the context of accessible procurement and infrastructure, I'm really hoping to get some thoughts from you on issues of intersectionality and how they play out in those spaces, I'm thinking. And my own experience has been at the University of Toronto, a push to have a Facility Accessibility Design Standards adopted, and we've done work to make sure that we're including gender access as part of questions around washrooms. I'm also thinking too about research that's been done over the years into adaptive technologies and the assumptions they make about who's listening, who's not. And we've seen in some of those technologies that, for example, text to speech, they'll predominantly be a Western white voice up or appearing to be a male Western white voice who provides the speech. So I just want to just get your thoughts on how we can really think intentionally about intersectionality in this space.

1:25:37 - 1:25:38

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** It's Mahadeo, I'm gonna go first.

1:25:39

**Ben Poynton:** Go ahead.

1:25:40 - 1:27:13

**Mahadeo Sukhai:** It's a great question. So it's really important to raise the question, and I think it's a very, very good example of all of the hidden isms in the work that we do because many people would not have thought twice about a Western sounding voice for JAWS, right? As opposed to, you know, a South Asian voice or a Chinese voice, right? And so I think that in the context of procurement, it's not just accessible procurement, it's really idea procurement. It's inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. And the

elements of procurement that end up becoming appropriate and relevant to think about from a gender perspective, from a culture perspective, from a language perspective, from a race or ethnicity perspective, from a religion perspective, from a newcomer perspective, and so on, those are all things that need to be done when really fleshing out a truly inclusive procurement policy. And so I would say that nobody, not even us at CNIB, has gotten there as yet. And a lot of people are gonna say, "Well, how do we even think about this?" But I do think it's a conversation worth having, and it needs to take a community to have it.

1:27:16 - 1:28:44

**Catherine Fichten:** Jutta Treviranus, who is at OCAD University, has been talking for many years about people at the edges, the edges of a bell curve. And one of the interesting things, Jutta is also a computer programmer. So she's been talking about the training of artificial intelligence. And to my mind, that debate becomes very, very important. You all remember the stupid situation where the AI for facial recognition wasn't trained on enough black faces. It had recognized everybody with a black face as a monkey. Since then, there have been issues of people crossing the street in a wheelchair not being recognized as people crossing and automatic cars hitting them. So I think one of the important elements, especially given how much AI is taking over our lives, is to make sure that people with a variety of intersectionality criteria are there to train these AI systems, certainly people with disabilities, but also people across the board. And look, we all have pronouns. We're getting there.

1:28:50 - 1:30:16

**Ben Poynton:** Thank you, I'm conscious that we have about a minute and a half left. So I don't wanna ask too big of a question in the last couple of minutes, but I really just wanted to thank you all for your contribution. And I've really enjoyed the dialogue this afternoon. I think we've really sort of hit upon some incredibly important aspects of infrastructure accessibility, inclusion, universal design. We've troubled many of the assumptions that I think that exist. I think that we have really delve deeply into thinking critically and creatively about how we can look at our processes, systems, policies that support the things we buy. And I said at the beginning, but I think it's important to continue to mention that the things that we buy, and the systems that we use to buy them, and the the built environments we create are incredibly important aspects in the processes that sort of, these hidden processes, they need to be exposed a bit more, and we do need to think about how we can really rethink them, reimagine them so that they, we stop recreating institutions that are inaccessible. So I just want to thank you all for your honest engagement in the topic today. I think you've led us really well into the final session, and I hope it's okay me to hand over to Wisdom for the remark before we head into the rest of the session. But thank you, Kate. Thank you, Mahadeo. Thank you, Catherine.

1:30:18 - 1:32:48

**Wisdom Tettey:** Thank you, Ben. Thank you, Catherine. Thank you, Kate. Thank you, Mahadeo. It's been another fascinating session to listen to. And, you know, I think, you know, there are a number of things you folks left us with that basically say this work is

never done. You know, there's not like a blueprint and say, "This is it." You know, the notion that this requires continuous improvement because the environment is changing, technology is changing, so there's movement. It's a question of how do we keep pace with movement in a way that does not leave behind those who may have different kinds of experiences and needs. And I think that is an important one to take away. The other piece has to do with the power of the sector acting in unison, right? I think that that pertains to how we engage with whether it's vendors or with other folks that we interface with in a way that changes the, you know, their proposition, right, in a way that makes it business savvy on their part to be responsive to the needs of our community. And if we can mobilize to do this together, that would be great. At the beginning of today's deliberations, I think Mary Gertlab made a point about what is going on within Universities Canada. And I assume that College and Institutes Canada would have similar conversations. So how do we mobilize together as a sector that, you know, enables us to drive these things in way that we couldn't do as individual institutions? And the last thing I think you folks left us with is how do we begin to put together repository of resources that we can share, that we contribute to building and sharing, right? So this notion of co-creating this, co-curating what is important, suddenly, we can work out the details about who does it, and who maintains it, and so on. But we do have sector-wide organization that if they took this on as a focal point of action, can get us moving in some way. And, you know, I think, Mahadeo, your point about it's hard, but the fact that it's hard doesn't mean it's impossible, right? And our sector has some of the smarter people around, let's put our heads together and drive this thing in a way that is, you know, enabling and positive. So thank you also very much for an enriching conversation. We'll take a five-minute break, stretch break, but also to allow us to transition to the next session, which will focus on how we pull all of this together. So thank you, folks. We'll be back in about five.