

Making Museums More Accessible



Training presentation for the Association of Nova Scotia Museums

By: Kiera Sparks Lucas

About me

My name is Kiera Sparks Lucas. I am 21 years old and live with cerebral palsy, which means that I use a walker, wheelchair and sometimes a cane to get around.



I am a motivational speaker and accessibility consultant and write accessible travel blog called Kiera's Accessible Adventures. When not writing my blog I make magnets, which I'm getting ready to sell on my website, and run my own program called Mentors for Mental Health at the Club Inclusion, a rec center in Halifax for people with disabilities.

My museum experience

I had the opportunity to work with the amazing staff crew at both the Museum of Natural History and the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic as staff member. I was hired through an Easter Seals job employment program called Next Step.

During my time at the museum, I had an opportunity to provide some accessible feedback to both museums from a visitor and staff point of view. I helped both museums become more accessible by doing a walk through and so people could see how accessible things really were and provided advice to make the museums more accessible.

Next Step

I was hired through the Next Step program, which provides people with disabilities job coaching support as they transition into the workforce. Job coaches are a great idea for anyone looking to hire people with disabilities because:

- they help employers learn to work with people with disabilities and support their needs
- they help people with disabilities learn the job and provide support until they are comfortable
- once everyone is comfortable they go away, but they are still available to come back anytime, for example, when you are learning a new task

Next Step

Next Step Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yz_8ysz47UA



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN INCLUSIVE EMPLOYER?
Join us for The Next Step Reverse Job Fair hosted by New Leaf Enterprises
on November 5th, 2021 from 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm!

To register contact our Job Developer Carlton at
c.mcdonald@eastlseals.ns.ca with your name, business, and position

Some things that I commonly see at museums that are not accessible and ways NSM'S can do better

Washrooms: Many washrooms are not accessible, even when they have a wheelchair accessible stall. Some common issues are:

- not providing enough space for people to turn around with equipment and mobility aids
- having doors swing inside the stall taking up space and making it hard to get out
- having sinks and soap out of reach or having cupboards around the sink so a wheelchair user can't get close enough and put their legs under the sink
- not having push buttons to open doors, especially when they are heavy

I often have to physically push my walker into the stall. The best solution to is to have at least one separate one-stall bathroom that is large, has a push button to open the door, has lower soap and paper towel and nothing under the sink so that a wheelchair user can roll under. Sliding lock are also helpful.

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Doors: Accessible buttons should be on ALL the doors. They should be reachable for someone in a wheelchair. Large buttons are best. This allows people to access the door independently even if they have limited hand mobility. It also makes sure if there is an emergency like a fire they can open the doors, no matter where they are in the building. If doors have a step or a lip, there should be a little ramp up. Even a small step is a problem for wheelchair users.

Surfaces: It is very hard to push a wheelchair or walker through carpet. Outdoors, gravel is hard to wheel through. Hard smooth floors and surfaces are best.

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Audio / Braille: Having audio/braille descriptions in gallery spaces are important for people who can't read or can't understand text (such as myself) or can't see the text. This can help make people feel more independent and learn about the museum.



Accessible parking

Museums do a good job of providing accessible parking, but it is important to make sure there are curb cuts nearby so that people can easily get on to the sidewalks. It is important that they are not blocked by cars, loading trucks, etc.

Please keep in mind that not all disabilities are visible. If someone is using a disability parking spot and they have a parking tag you should not question it.

Why accessibility is important

Accessibility is important because it allows people to have as much freedom and independence as possible. Accessibility is important for everyone, not just the disability community.

You could have a disability from birth like me, but there is also a good chance you could get one over time:

- You could have an accident that leaves you with a permanent disability - ex. From a car crash
- You could have an accident that leaves you with a temporary disability - ex. Break your leg and need crutches
- You could get older and need more mobility supports - ex. Seniors that use walkers
- Parents with strollers also benefit from accessibility

Final Thought

Today I want to leave you with the message that even if you don't have a disability of any kind, as an abled-bodied person you should still treat people with disabilities (visitors and staff) the same way you want to be treated, not as different .



QUESTIONS?

