



August 2019

Destination BC is committed to accessibility and inclusivity. We want to ensure that British Columbia is a welcoming destination for everyone. We are building capacity to support more inclusive and accessible tourism products, services, experiences, and employment opportunities in the industry.

Our 2019 initiatives to support people with disabilities, and increase accessibility and inclusion are:

- Destination BC has developed a *Three-Year Strategic Framework and Action Plan* to make tourism more inclusive and accessible. Year one (Fall 2019) initiatives include:
  - improving travel information on HelloBC.com, showcasing current accessible tourism experiences through the development of itineraries and applicable accessible icons that will appear in business listings;
  - providing new learning resources on our online [Learning Centre](#) to assist tourism businesses and organizations in building an understanding of accessible travel;
  - building capacity to support more inclusive and accessible tourism products, services, experiences and employment opportunities in the industry over the coming years;
  - research on global certification programs;
  - creating a business recognition program and award criteria for the 2020 BC Tourism Industry Conference; and
  - supporting the Provincial Government Accessibility Secretariat on an ongoing basis.
- Year one initiatives will focus primarily on physical and sensory challenges (mobility, vision and hearing). Years two and three will include work on supporting cognitive, and other inclusion challenges.

### **People & Development**

- Destination BC is an inclusive workplace, founded on the highest degree of collaboration and innovation. Destination BC believes that diversity is a strength and welcomes applications from all qualified job seekers. All recruitment advertising clearly states that Destination BC is an inclusive workplace. We are committed to ensuring workplace accommodations are in place to enable our people to do their best work.
- Destination BC proudly participates in the BC Public Service's Work Able Internship Program. Through this program, Destination BC offered a twelve-month internship opportunity to a differently-abled individual in a project-based role. Destination BC is in the process of securing an additional twelve month Work Able Program internship program for 2019/20.

In 2019, Destination BC will continue to uphold its commitment to accessible hiring through inclusive hiring practices, and providing employee learning and development opportunities on accessibility, and diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

- Destination BC's CEO (Marsha Walden) is a member of the Presidents Group (<http://www.accessibleemployers.ca>), a CEO task force led by the Honourable Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Services and Poverty Reduction, to increase employment opportunities for people

with disabilities. Destination BC's People and Development Team (human resources) is working with the Presidents Group to better identify ways to recruit people with disabilities.

- Destination BC's People and Development Manager (HR) is a member of the Presidents Group Community of Practice, comprised of 25-member organizations from across British Columbia. This Community of Practice launched in June 2019 with the goal of sharing, developing and applying best practices, and removing barriers in terms of inclusive employment practices.

### **Corporate Communications**

- Destination BC continues to promote accessible hiring within the tourism industry, and to share information about the work of the President's Group, and accessible and inclusive tourism practices on its corporate social platforms (Twitter / LinkedIn / YouTube), its corporate newsletter and website, and in presentations and speeches given by Destination BC staff.
- Destination BC's refreshed corporate website, <http://www.DestinationBC.ca>, was developed with ADA (Americans with Disabilities) compliance in mind--this guided the User Experience (UX), design and development phases of the project. The obligation to be ADA compliant includes compliance with current, and generally recognized, guidelines for website accessibility (e.g. the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 and Levels A / AA) as well as any applicable website accessibility laws and regulations.
- Part of building an accessible website is to ensure that assistive technology tools, such as screen readers, can access the information on a web page. In order to accomplish this, Destination BC is using the W3C standards for accessibility as a guideline. This takes into consideration the website layout, mobile friendliness, fonts, colours, meta data, use of alt tags, use of 'predictive text' in search and filter fields, keyboard control of navigation and content, and simplified navigation to name a few.
- In a future phase of the website, Destination BC will introduce voice search.

### **Destination Development**

- As part of the Destination Development strategic planning work, Spinal Cord Injury BC representatives have actively participated in meetings and consultations.
- Opportunities to enhance accessibility and inclusion have been identified in various Destination Development strategies, as they relate to:
  - Transportation (roadside amenities, transit providers, ferry);
  - Tourism workforce (hiring and advancement practices, physical work environment);
  - Tourism experiences and attractions (both private and public-owned); and
  - Tourism accommodation.

### **Global Marketing Partnerships**

Destination BC, through consultation with Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (RDMOs) and a number of private organizations, has created two itineraries with accessible tourism experiences, to date.

- Accessible Okanagan: Wineries, Lakes & Indigenous Cultures; and
- On the Coast Barrier Free (Vancouver, Coast & Mountains and Vancouver Island regions).

The itineraries are promoted to key account tour operators and travel media in our overseas markets as part of a suite of itineraries which include all regions of the province. Additional itineraries will be created in future.

### **Consumer Marketing**

- Information on accessible travel in British Columbia is available on <http://www.HelloBC.com>, including links and information on transportation, accommodation, things to do, and more, including:
  - New accessibility section added: [Need to Know & Accessibility](#)
  - New travel planning articles: [Get Back to Nature: 10 Accessible Hiking Trails in BC](#) and [4 Accessible Sports to Experience in BC](#): (Note: hiking story promoted via our annual spring BC resident campaign.)
- Destination BC's new consumer website, <http://www.HelloBC.com>, has been developed with ADA (Americans with Disabilities) compliance in mind – this guided the User Experience (UX), design and development phases of the project. The obligation to be ADA compliant includes compliance with current and generally recognized guidelines for website accessibility (e.g. the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 and Levels A / AA) as well as any applicable website accessibility laws and regulations.
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- Destination BC works closely with the Regional DMOs to identify and amplify accessible content that they and others across the tourism network have produced through our consumer marketing channels. Examples include:
  - [Sit-Skiing in Northern British Columbia](#), produced by Tourism Northern BC and published on Destination BC's YouTube channel.
  - [7 Ways to enjoy a weekend in Prince George](#) (featuring The Great West Life Mobility Trail), produced by Tourism Prince George and published on Destination BC's Instagram channel
  - New photography produced by the Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association added to the [BC Content Hub](#) (Destination BC's Digital Asset Management System), for access and use by tourism industry partners across the province.

### Industry Learning Centre

- Launched in December 2018, the industry Learning Centre on Destination BC's corporate website, <http://www.DestinationBC.ca>, that provides tools and resources for tourism businesses and organizations across a variety of subject matters from visitor experience to digital marketing. Video content on this site is captioned to support accessibility.
- Featured on the site is go2HR's 'Service For All', an online training program designed to support front-line staff in serving customers with various needs, including persons with disabilities.
- Planned for 2019, is a new learning resources for tourism businesses and organizations to build an understanding of accessible travel.

### Visitor Services Network Program

- Destination BC has encouraged its Network of over 110 locally-run Visitor Centres to make their premises accessible. Over a number of years, Destination BC provided funding specifically for retrofitting premises to accommodate people with disabilities. Currently, 95% of the Visitor Centres in the Network Program are wheelchair accessible.
- Destination BC provides funding for Visitor Centre staff and volunteers to take go2HR's 'Service For All' online training program.
- Destination BC encourages communities to be creative and forward thinking about providing visitor services to visitors via mobile kiosks, roaming ambassadors, state-of-the-art touch screen kiosks and

via social media, making valuable information more accessible to all visitors, when and where they want it.

### **Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (RDMOs)**

- Destination BC funds RDMOs to provide services and represent Destination BC across the province. In 2018/19, all five RDMOs signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Spinal Cord Injury BC to work on a coordinated approach to the development and promotion of accessible travel and tourism products and services in their regions.
  - Kootenay Rockies Tourism collaborated with Spinal Cord Injury BC to host interactive Universal Design workshops free of charge. The workshop provides participants an introduction of skills and knowledge to incorporate universal design into programming, facility design, construction and maintenance programs for parks, recreation, business and civic facilities.
  - Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association has hired a Regional Accessibility Specialist, in partnership with Spinal Cord Injury BC. More information can be found at <https://totabc.org/programs/accessibility/>