

>> Let's go.

>> Welcome back to Culture's Compass, how the industry keeps beating. I want to remind all of you, we have the official hashtag of the conference and it's culture'scompassculture'scompass2020. I hope my colleagues can put it in the chat so anyone can post what they want about this conference in social media, Instagram, Facebook, whatever. We even have Twitter. So I'm also very very excited to announce that all our sessions are being watched closely by an outstanding artist. Michelle bucles. And she leads the unseeded territories -- unceded territories in Vancouver, BC.

She's creating a visual recording of the session that will be shared after the conference. Now, we are ready to move to our next session.

I'm excited to introduce four awesome speakers for the next presentation, accessibility online. Jaclyn Qua-Hansen is the co-ordinator and inclusion, diversity, at the Royal Ontario Museum and works with over 100 communities, partners to facilitate inclusive and welcoming experiences at the Royal and also co-ordinates accessibility for some of the Royal's exhibitions. Shawn Newman is the research and invite manager at Toronto Arts Council and Toronto arts foundation. In this role he leads all the research, impact and program evaluation products for TAC-run initiatives.

He holds a Ph.D. and has has a career as a dancer and choreographer. Cyn Rozenboom and administrator. Since 2017, she's acted as the executive director of tangle dark facility, a group boldly renovating how people see art with deaf and disability arts in Canada and enhancing access to the arts for artists, audiences, and enthusiasts. Heidi Persaud is an event co-ordinator for tangled art. Her interest focuses on arts administration and accessible event planning.

Heidi holds a BFA in arts administration. She's currently a member of the visual and digital digital art foundation program and committee at Humber College and last but not least, Lynn Fisher is the founder and director of creative users products accident a disability-led national arts service organization working on connecting communities, cultivating inclusion and make difference discoverable and vital in a world that's transforming to digital. She has a background working in the arts sector as a multidisciplinary artist and curator. So please welcome Jaclyn, Shawn, Cyn, Heidi and Lindsey.

>> Hi, everyone. Thank you Mikita. I'm Shawn Newman. I'm going to be kind of

moditating even though you know, there's a particular power dynamic with that term. So thank you for the introduction. That saves me a lot of time from having to do all that. But I think we will just go around quickly in a moment. I just wanted to thank everyone for attending today.

And on behalf of my fellow panelists, we're very grateful to be invited to speak about accessibility and just be part of this conference. I also feel it's important to really acknowledge that I'm accustomed to being live crowd casts from an Indigenous the unceded territories of zoom and also really to recognize that being where I am in Toronto, which is historical and contemporary lands of various Indigenous folks, nations and communities including wyandotte and the Mississaugas of the credit first nation and Anishnabe. I think it's important not just to give an acknowledgement for the lands pass a whole and this particular session. One of the things that land acknowledgements do, they really highlight the notion of access to space. And the colonial context in which we are situated in many way presumes a right to access and a right to space. And so there are so many links and commonalities between Indigenous communities and disabled communities, and those two categories and communities are not always mutually exclusive.

We really want to think about the ways that access to space is often seen as a right of a particular group of people. And if as a right, it then means that others not afforded that right. So I really want us to understand that land acknowledgements are not just a performative act buzz they really prompt us to think specifically about our relations to power and privilege and marginalization.

So our session today is going to be really just a discussion.

The five of us met last week to have a discussion about some of the ideas and things we wanted to talk about, and so we've got some ideas and some questions that, you know, I'm going to put forward to the group. There's a Q&A session as was said in the intro, at the end. If anything comes up in the moment that needs clarification, we're happy to respond to that. And so I'm just going to -- we're also going to try to give some descriptions of ourselves, some physical descriptions. I am a white man. I have a beard and glasses and I haven't had a haircut in months so I'm kind of going for the Farrah Fawcett look that I think is working in my favour. I'm wearing a black v-neck T-shirt that I love and the lighting in my place is not the best. I gesture a lot when I speak. I was a dancer and choreographer so physicality is important to my being so I apologise if it's distracting to anyone. I pass it to Jaclyn.

>> Thank you, Shawn. I'm Jaclyn Qua-Hansen. I'm a Chinese Filipino woman with black hair and a bright pink top with tiger stripes and passing it on to Cyn.

>> Hi. My name is Cyn. I'm a middle-aged woman with dirty blonde long hair with loss of grey streaks, blue eyes. I've wearing a blue fancy shirt and sitting in my backyard in front of a very leafy viny fence right now. And I will pass it to Lindsey.

>> Hi, Shawn. My name is Lindsey from creative youth works. And I am white female presenting person with long frizzy, curly, black hair and I'm wearing a black tank top.

And I'm sitting in the living room which is a mess, and I'll pass it to Heidi.

>> Hello. I'm Heidi Persaud from tangle art disability. I'm south Asian of guy an ease descent. I have medium brown curly wild hair right now. And the bushiest of eyebrows you'll ever see.

[ Laughter ] I'm wearing a beige crocheted top and yeah. I have brown eyes. Yeah.

>> Thank you, everyone. So I'm just going to give some additional thoughts before we move into the broader discussion. Just to help, I think, frame, not just accessibility and the ways we see it but to also bring the five of us, you know, kind of back to our discussions from last week. But also as a way to be audience, how we --

individually and possibly collectively think of accessibility. So I sort of gestured to the ways that accessibility really is a reflection of who belongs in a space, and in the context of this panel, space is also a digital space. Right? We can think about space in terms of environment, but space also brings us to think about certainly in my role at Toronto Arts Council in the funding program. Right? Or if in foundation in the community initiative. And we also -- but, conventionally -- and in many important ways, accessibility is thought of in terms of disability. And this is certainly integral and foundational, and the movement for accessibility in many, many ways now, right, really had its start in disability justice.

And what we're seeing in this world of the digital is a move towards finally, in many important ways, starting to incorporate and really understand the importance of that. At the same time, and I think especially now, in stem of not just the pandemic but the test towards confronting anti-Black racism and other forms of oppression and what they're also seeking is accessibility into our social structures, into our political spheres into cultural communities. And yet accessibility is frequently thought of, particularly on the part of organizations, but even in terms of society as

an addendum. Right? The ways that accessibility has been legislated in many parts of the country and the world, because it comes from a disability perspective, but then it's thought of as we create the thing, and then we try to think about how to make it accessible.

So we're really wanting to push the notion that accessibility from the ground up means you're working towards supporting everyone, that it's not about thinking -- not about creating a thing and then trying to figure out how to make it adaptable. If you build accessibility into the thing, it will be adaptable.

One of the other things that we've seen in this pandemic, right, is that in terms of thinking about accessibility, is that social distancing, right, has meant Cyn, you said last week, it's causing us to think about people first. And in quote/unquote new ways and I say new within quotation marks because it's not new to some of us. It is new to many of us, but again, disability justice and disability, disabled communities have been pushing for this for a long time. The digital, which is kind of the focus of this conference, has in many ways long been an enabling mechanism, but this is not to say that it just is. It also presents particular barriers and in some ways exacerbates already existing barriers. We really want to be attentive to the nuances of what the digital offers. And not just accepting it as this wonderful, beautiful utopian accessibility tool.

When with the outside of the pandemic, when we saw so many educational institutions moving their educational platforms online, there was talk that education is now available to everyone. That's not true. One being there are many communities in Canada that don't have access to internet or broadband internet and here's a connection between disability, accessibility, and Indigenous communities. Many even those communities that lack internet are Indigenous. So what we're seeing now is a sudden centring of accessibility in many parts of the arts and cultures sector where previously it had only been marginalized. The last thing I want to say before moving into the discussion is thinking through accessibility revealing underlying assumptions about who the audience or consumer is. Right? So if we're thinking about the product or thing we're creating, and we get feedback that certain people are not invited or welcomed into it, then it's telling us who we are imagining this person to be or this group of people to be.

And that's a really, really important piece that arts organizations, in particular, I think, you know, need to really start thinking about and be attentive to. So I just

want to now turn it over to the group.

So with the focus on the digital, and you know, the idea that there are particular barriers or additional concerns, you know, with the sudden shift to the digital in arts and culture, you know, what changes the dynamic between accessibility and disability?

Are you seeing? Or is there any? What is this shift to digital for the arts and culture doing to disabled artists, audiences, consumers? Cyn.

>> I don't have a full answer, but I will mention one of the things about these digital spaces that we're now inhabiting often, it does remove or lessens a lot of the physical barriers for people who might have, you know, might be -- the mercy of say wheeled trans or whatever.

That's just one type of barrier, though, and it doesn't -- I think in the digital space doesn't solve all of them.

That's certainly a big one at tangled art plus disability we have a number of wheelchair use sores their board. Suddenly they're able to meet in a way they were unable to before.

>> So when I work at the ROM, one of the things I always ask myself whenever we put something on is who is unable to access this content? And I think the knee jerk reaction, the first thing you think of is the physical barriers to access. In your introduction, you brought up some very important other barriers we should be considering like even if it's all physically accessible, do people feel welcome in the space? Can people like --

people have the financial means to have broadband internet that won't cut out? Or to have to be in a space where they won't be strapped by all sorts of other things going on in the house?

So I think digital media does help address some of those things, just from a welcome and inclusion perspective. It removes the barrier of feeling like -- being in a space and feeling like you don't belong.

If you're in a really fancy place and the only one not in a gown or something.

You're like am I supposed to be here? Is it really for me.

Whereas if you're in your own home and everyone is in their pyjamas, it's fine.

Right? My concern really with this shift to digital and all these conversations about accessibility is that we will look at this and say, now we're accessible. Bam, everything's fixed. And that's not going to be the case. Moving forward, once you

start being able to enter these physical spaces again, will digital platforms still be a priority? Will it still be a platform that we're going to be using on an ongoing basis? I'm always cautious about arts organizations and people in general congratulating themselves on the progress they make, because I find that that's the limit further progress. So yeah, it's a very complicated and complex space we're in right now. There's so much potential to start actually looking at this platform and thinking about all the potential features that will make our content even more accessible to a greater variety of folks without taking it for granted that we are accessible and inclusive.

>> Sorry. Am I unmuted? Sorry to butt in ahead of you there, Heidi. I want to echo what you just said. It's a danger to think that accessibility is a static space that we can ever reach. That's never going to happen. There is -- I don't believe there's any space that will be fully accessible to all people all the time. It's a moving target that we have to negotiate -- it's more of an attitude, I think and something we have to embrace as something that we negotiate as we move forward, because yeah. You don't just get there and it's done. That's just not accessibility. Not to me.

Heidi, did you want to talk?

>> I was going to agree with Jaclyn and what she said about in regards to the digital sphere. When I think about it, I'm always thinking about the user experience either in real life or even on a digital platform, and I think one thing that is going to -- that the arts is really going to have to think about is how the user experience is or how we are portraying the user experience or allowing access to be part of the user experience, whether it's a good amount of content we put on in regards to images. Now that we are online, and it is technically accessible for all, it's not necessarily accessible for a variety of people, and whether or not we're going to have these conversations with communities and to include communities into these conversations is one thing we should be really thinking about.

>> I am going to jump off what you said about the user experience. I completely -- completely agree. Wasn't of my fall backs when I think about accessibility for exhibits is being able to engage as many senses as possible so even if someone can't physically see an exhibition, they can touch things or if people, you know, people learn best through hearing, maybe that's a feature of the exhibition that will help bring the experience closer to them. And then very conscious about the limits of the digital space, even though, you know, we describe ourselves. We're talking,

but if we were giving some kind of visual presentation, you know, how many of these kinds of events would take the time to actually describe each and every object as we go up, as it's put on the screen? And you know, I'm just thinking -- and again, I'm think about all these folks who, you know, may be learn best through touch, through experiences and it's something the digital space currently doesn't offer. So yeah.

>> Yeah. That's great.

Actually, Jaclyn, something you said earlier that I really loved about being in your pajamas and we're all now home, and there are things that, you know, there's a real sense now, I think, in a lot of organizations where people are more welcome to be just more comfortable in their homes and comfortable --

it's challenging notions of professionalism, right, that are so built upon ablist mechanisms and so many other, you know, forms of whiteness and all of those kinds of things. So this shift to digital is really, I think, in some ways, allowing us to be more -- understand people as more holistic beings than, you know, just the sort of --

the work kind of capacity.

Right? I'm interested in how the shift to digital, too, is --

because so much is now building on accessibility, where are disabled folks in relation to this conversation? Since like are they being centred? Are they being left out? What are the dynamics there. Lindsay, yeah.

>> I was saying, it's interesting, because I think there's a shift already happening in many ways for many different people who -- thinking about people with disabilities as life hackers. And really looking at disability, justice movement and disability arts practice, how people with disabilities are already using these technologies or how they have been using these technologies for, you know, years. I know the work we do and I'm sure the ROM, that livestreaming has always been a part of our access budget. For not always, but for a long time.

And it's always been considered an access entry point. And so what's surreal is that -- and what I'm hearing from other people in the community is that now it's -- you don't have to convince anybody -- any organization how important livestreaming is to access the arts now. And so I think there was a concern that that conversation is now mainstream, and yet people with disabilities are still not being invited to those conversations. And they're still not -- they're still being left out of the conversations.

So I feel like this was a real opportunity to acknowledge that, that these practices and technologies have already been being used in this way, and that we could, perhaps, take a pause to learn and be guided by people with disabilities and the ways that they're doing things so that -- in order to rebuild going forward. Yeah.

>> Yeah. I think that points to a really interesting idea. I had a conversation with a colleague just yesterday at Ryerson who -- is a business management person. He doesn't work in accessibility, but he talked about innovation happens on the margins. Right and how innovation doesn't happen in the mainstream. And I said to him, I'm so glad to hear that you understand that, because guess what? That's exactly what accessibility and disabled folks are talking about. Right? And folks who are already situated on the margins, right, are having to do this work of hacking life, of adapting to disabling environments. And so what are the things that are already in place that are already being practised? And yet as Lindsay is saying, why are those folks not centred in terms of leading the mainstream conversation? Or practice.

There wasn't really a question in that. But...

I guess the kind of building off of that is because of now, this mainstream shift towards accessibility and the digital, we've seen, you know, just certainly in the arts and culture industries, just an explosion in the number of events, of projects, of things going online and which is at once both really exciting but also kind of can be stressful, right? There's so much to go and see and all happening simultaneously. So I'm wondering, you know, are there issues that arise with this kind of influx of content?

>> Yeah, I think we -- and I think we kind of touched on this in our discussion last week. It can be overwhelming, you know.

It's just this sensory overload.

And there's like a weird digital [not audible]? Now we have a thousand digital events and can we get to them all? How we don't have a excuse because it's on our couch.

It's exciting on one hand because we have access to all sorts of content we didn't have before. Like I got to watch an opera at the Met because I've never done before because it was New York and expensive and now it's free on my laptop. It's exciting. At the same time, I don't know, it's overwhelming, but it's also in a way, allowing us

to engage with content on our own time. A lot of these livestream activities are often archived to view later on. So Stratford, for example, its plays are up for an entire month after their big livestreaming.

And that increases accessibility for events in a way, because if you're not feeling up to joining an event one evening, you have a whole week or a whole month to enjoy it, you know? Or if you're busy, and you can only attend two out of the ten events, all going one night.

You can kind of space it out.

So you know, it's interesting to see how this, I think, will -- this form of accessibility will be carried forward. When we start returning to physical events. We might still have these livestream digital events, but once the pandemic is over and we're starting to have in-person events again, and it's like how do we kind of continue to provide this kind of access and allow people to experience content and experience socializationsocialization in their own spaces in their own time.

>> One thing that concerns me about this proliferation of all this is that it's still relegating most of us to being consumers of culture instead of active participants in creating it. And I think that there's an underlying assumption there that I would love to see challenged somewhat in our society, that we don't always need to be producing stuff for other people to consume. Especially with arts professionals, the idea is you have to make stuff and that's how you validate stuff.

You make something that's brilliant and then everybody will applaud you because you're great. We're all creators of this culture together.

I think that we need time to actually bring ourselves to the conversation and change things around us. And that might --

when we're just sort of bombarded with stuff coming at us, we're not necessarily expressingexpressing, and integrating ourselves. Those are bottom up instead of having it all falling on us. I touched this the last time we had that conversation.

It felt overwhelmed when everything was starting up and people were just hosting a lot of events. Now that we're not doing it physically. I felt like the content was heavily overloaded and that this would have been a good time to just take a break and to really reevaluate what works and what doesn't work, and what we can do to maybe accommodate artists in general and how do we just make things be a little bit more easier for us. Or just like just accommodate us in general.

I felt like I always had to be online and questioned whether or not my graphics card was strong enough with the sheer amount of things I want to do.

>> Yeah, for sure. And Cyn has just brought her cat to the meeting everyone. I want to thank you for that, because you can never have too many cats in your life. I have to say. So I think this is really interesting what you're all speaking to, because with the proliferation of content, Jaclyn, what you were speaking to really and the notion that we can engage in our own time, right, really disrupts a lot of the sort of pressure that we saw preCOVID and certainly are at risk of trying to return to in terms of needing to be productive and fast paced all the time. And it's allowing us to really think of a time differently and how we spend it and how we behave in it. And then Cyn, with what you were saying, too, thinking about the proliferation of content that is available, you know. With organizations and even individuals offering all of this up, right, is it offered up as a way in term of providing options which from an accessibility perspective is important, right?

We want to -- accessibility is really about allowing the individual to have options and agency. But is the expectation or the push to deliver content actually about trying to retain discoverability, right, or retain an audience and the need to be quote/unquote relevant.

>> Yeah. Shawn, thank you for saying that. And what has been disappointing for me is with creative usage is BC, before COVID, we were -- our primary activity is researching around what is happening across Canada that are accessible to deaf communitycommunities, blind communities and neurodivergent communities. And what we -- so we had to shift when COVID happened to keep up with all the new sort of format of activity, but we didn't find that things -- even though things are accessible now through online, they're not actually accessible to Deaf communities. They're not accessible to blind communities.

They're not necessarily accessible to neurodivergentneurodivergent.

Not many ways. Not just because there isn't ASL interpretation or audio description, but who is organizing those events? Who are being represented in those events are not representative of those communities. So at the beginning, it was hopeful that this was a new day, but I'm feeling like -- it's been frustrating, actually, trying to find those things that are happening to connect people to them. And then to find out what people are doing, to remind people that, yeah, there already is communities. They can't, even though they're online, they can't access

them. I think that relates to this feeling of, yeah, the speed that we're doing things, we're not actually taking the time to think about who you are we prioritizing here. And who are we leaving out?

>> And again, Lindsay, that comes back to the idea that it reveals underlying assumptions the consumer or the audience is.

Right?

>> Yeah.

>> It's also, I think, kind of speaks to what best happens often throughout human history where the dominant culture appropriates. The work has been done by the marginalized folks, and you know, we talk about accessibility and using all of these innovations, these platforms that disabled folks have been use figure air long time because they're life hackshacks. Platform still centres the abled user. When they talk about let's put things online, it's no so that disabled folks and deaf folks can access it.

It's so all these able-bodied users who have physically been coming to our space with access the content. You're right, Shawn and Lindsay that saying that disabled folks are still left in the margins and that a lot of the moving content online is still about remaining relevantrelevantrelevant in the currently COVID world. And maybe that's why I'm concerned that moving forward, once you start moving back to physical spaces and everything, that a lot of these innovations will be tossed aside, because now it's like oh, OK. We can go back -- our useful audience can access our content again in the old ways. Yeah. I think -- I'm thinking about what you said, about how we're still expected to be consumers of culture rather than active participants.

I think there is space for the digital platform to allow for greater participation from various audiences. I don't know if it will actually be a priority to explore that kind of potential, or if they'll be satisfied with here is the content is available in a digital space while COVID is going on. That would be awesome. I think about these physical community murals, for example, that bring people together and get a whole group of folks together for communal art making and if there's a way to do it in the digital space and figure something out. I don't know. It would be awesome.

>> Yeah. Lindsay.

>> Has anybody ever heard of the belly curtain choir?

>> I want to know.

>> Great activity to participate in. It happens every year and they're doing it online. It will be interesting.

>> I'm writing that down to look at.

[ Laughter ] so we've got some questions kind of rolling in.

Before we turn to those, I want to ask one last question, because you know, with this discussion around, you know, sort of the mainstreaming and yet continued marginalization of disabled folks. So is accessibility now sexy in a way that maybe it wasn't before?

And you know, do you have examples of this? What does this say about our preCOVID BC, before COVID society? And also, I'm interested to know if you think that publics, policy makers and politicians are picking up on this, or if it's actually something that seems maybe to resonate a bit more deeply than just being this sexy thing?

>> I don't know if it's sexy.

The word -- one thing I really notice, and Shawn, I'm referring to a question that you actually haven't asked yet. I'm going to go to that. Just seeing everything with disability justice work and arts practice into the sort of arts world, I'm seeing -- what I'm seeing exciting happening on social media is that in the midst of this rapid amount of information related to justice work on anti-Black racism and the pandemic, I'm seeing people online really collaborating and forming volunteer collectives to advocate for like more captioned content, for example. So there's actually groups online that are basically volunteering their time to make all this content accessible. I think that's pretty sexy.

[ Laughter ] and yeah. We could follow that example, you know.

Are we doing this because it's for economic reasons or because it's a check box? Or are we doing it because we're actually -- like you said, we're imagining people need this information. They need to access it, to be part of that conversation, to be part of that change.

>> Yeah. I want to say, I think of sexiness as like something that's flashy and kind of, you know, du jour.

There could be something very authentic about it and very real.

>> I think this pandemic is making us rethink what accessibility means for our organizations. And whether that translates into lawmakers actually starting to mandate some of these things is a whole different discussion. Because they want to

focus now on opening things up and rebuilding businesses and everything, it probably won't be for them in the short term. It's definitely something we need to work through. At the ROM, my goal for accessibility and exhibitions has always been touching things, offer things to feel to touch. That makes it more accessible and fun. That won't work in the post COVID world. So starting to think about, all right, how do we actually make things accessible in a different way? Right? Or all the conversation's now about how digital content is accessible in some ways but not accessible in other ways. How do we keep moving these innovations forward and make it accessibleaccessible? These are more questions of concerned institutions because it will be very different for each institution depending on the kind of content.

>> I think just -- I think accessibility right now is a bit -- it can be used as a bit of a buzzword in terms of something that we societally agree is desirable, but not always are people -- I guess the worry is that it becomes something, again, that feels like it's a bunch of checkboxes and you do it and it happens as opposed to an attitude and a spirit of wanting to open your space and include people, which is a lot harder to share or -- you know, I find sometimes people are all about access until the reality of what that actually means. Someone in the face. They're like I don't want to do that, you know!

That's inconvenient or that's not how I envisioned this to be, which gets in the way. I had another thought but I lost it.

I'm going to stop.

>> Heidi, you look like you're about to say something.

>> I was really thinking about it. I'm like do you know what?

Access is kind of sexy. But no, I'm stroking around with that.

It is being used as a buzzword in regards to -- I see it sometimes like or I hear it being thrown around a lot, but if the intention is and sincerity isn't there, there's a lot to be questioned in regards to why, you know, or how or if it's just -- I don't know. I'm just thinking about it really hard. But I don't know. When I think about it, I think the authenticity of access is something that we should be striving for.

>> I'll jump on that too. And also kind of related to one of the questions here about the --

in the chat here about budgeting. I think authenticity is really key. If you actually commit to bringing people into your space, that should drive what you spend

money on. And you should commit to that.

It's really about a priority thing if you say we want to engage deaf and hard of hearing individuals, then you have to think long-term and realise that there are so many years of distrust and broken promises and people who will do a one off thing and never follow through that just increases the sense that you're just tokenized. So yeah. If you start with the intention and go from there, that's like the most important thing, which doesn't help maybe, but it's the truth.

>> Yeah. So sorry. I just want to jump in. The question that Cyn is talking about is from Kyla. Do you have any tips for arts organizers trying to balance their expenses related to programming with offering accessibility services such as ASL interpreters, live closed caption or Braille printing.

Sometimes the expense can be prohibitive given the limited budget some are working with.

One thing I want to add before you -- I'm going to added it in.

To me, it's a question of values as an organization. Because it's actually the directive to just be delivering information or content, or say a number of event versus actually making sure that the people -- that it's about the people you are reaching. And yes, in our current context, there are costs often associated with accessibility, but part of that stems from the fact that often these projects or initiatives are not built up from an accessibility perspective. And frequently, trying to make something accessible that wasn't designed accessibly is far more expensive than doing it at the outset. In terms of nonprofits, especially when it becomes a matter of if you rely on grants and all of that kind of thing, really trying to embed those in the operational costs. Right?

Which is different if you operate on a project-funding basis. When they become part of your operational costs, then within the context of annual operating funding, right, that is a legitimate business expense from my perspective. I'm not necessarily speaking as a TAC employee here. I'm just make the case. I think it has to do with values and if the value really is about reaching people rather than the action of delivering content. And I think that can help to kind of rethink the concerns around finances.

Sorry. Heidi, Jaclyn.

>> Shawn, I absolutely agree with you on that. It's really when you define your values and work with them, it starts to go into place, and even when you start to

inviting people to the conversation in regards to asking for consultation and finding out from various groups of how to create more accessible events or how to bring people into or to open up the space for a wider audience is an important way of thinking about it. Yeah.

>> I was just thinking that Shawn, your earlier question about lawmakers now finding accessibility sexy could help with that. Agree with the values and making things with the audiences in mind, but I also acknowledge that there are lots of limitations and at the end of the day, it's how do we put things on at the least cost for the most number of folks?

And I think that's where lawmakers can come in. We've seen the things that have changed and that have improved ever since the AODA came onboard.

It's not that things are perfect, but there are some accessibility accommodations that probably might still be very far back if it hadn't been -- if it's not a legal issue. Right? And with regard to, I think, balancing expenses for those with limited budgets, I find that my personal approach at least is to find hacks wherever you can. So having Braille might be really prohibitive in your budget. But maybe you can record someone reciting the labels outloud or stick it on or something. It's not the best way, but it's --

there's always ways of, I think, skirting around things, and certainly if you start deciding your project from get go with accessibility in mind, you won't have to worry as much about these things later on and hopefully make things cheaper for you.

>> Cyn.

>> It comes back to, again, to the priority of it. But access can be expensive. But if you prioritize -- any access budget that I work on, our budgets will go from 10% of our budget to 25% of our budget to be spent on access because that's so integrated into the tangled arts mandate, obviously. If you as an organization or an individual say I'm going to prioritize this, you have to be able to say, OK, I'm going to set this aside and just -- I'm going to make that a priority.

Budgets are always flexible.

You choose one thing over another.

I think even -- but to be honest about your true values as well.

You might not be in a situation where you can accommodate everybody or all the things that you want to do, which case maybe look at what you can do, and go

there first, and then build on that. I think it's more important to be committed and look the long term rather than trying to do a big flashy show and do everything all at once.

That's going to fail.

>> Yeah. And actually, Cyn, that's speaking to what I was going to say. And kind of thinking through what Jaclyn said. And kind of throughout this talk, accessibility is not necessarily or always just about the perfect fix. Accessibility is about lessening barriers. So like Jaclyn was saying, maybe an audio recording is not the best fix for everyone, but it's a fix for some people. And so what are the ways that your organization or your project can be working towards a quote/unquote fully accessible kind of mandate, recognizing there are many steps along -- many different ways we can lessen the barriers. If we try to think about the sort of quote/unquote right answer, right, then we think in a really binary oppositional way, and there are a whole bunch of options in between that still are good moves. Right? So I'm going to return to some of the questions. Maria is asking, I work with seniors. Some of whom don't have digital access because they don't want it. Are we obligated to engage them? I find that they feel worse knowing that others are active and online activities?

>> Short answer yes. I think you are obligated to reach seniors, folks who don't have digital access. I don't think that you need to use digital content to reach them necessarily. And I think this is where, you know, what you were talking about earlier about thinking about your audience comes into play. So like, all right. We have all these wonderful digital content going on, like, you know, what do we do for folks who aren't on digital platforms, who don't have an iPad or like, you know, don't know how to work a laptop.

And it's something that I have been thinking about when everything was moving online is that a lot of seniors who don't have digital access may not always be able to have close contact with people who would usually be able to help them access this digital content.

It's usually a family member or support worker. Here's your laptop. Here's how we can look at this digital thing together.

But because of COVID, they would be limited in that. And I think there are other ways to engage with them, and I saw like -- was it workman arts who sent these art supplies in little Ziploc bags so they patients can do art activities even with social

distancing. There are always workarounds and I like using workarounds because that's how we engage as many different audience members as possible.

>> Heidi, again, it looks like you're maybe going to speak. Am I correct or no? No.

OK. So just in interest of time, I'd like -- there are two more questions submitted by Kristen and Keenan. I'm going to try to tie them together. Crist cent asking in what ways can we encourage businesses and organizations to continue these online ways to engage and allow people to help co-create those experiences rather than [not audible] of it and what is one concrete step that organizations can take right now to quote/unquote bring disabled -- disabled folks to the table?

I see connections to these questions. Co-creating is one way of bringing people to the table. I wonder if we can think about and talk -- if you could speak to this idea of encouraging businesses and organizations to work from a cocreation model instead of a service model providing something to people in community without actually allowing them to be part of the design matrix, I guess.

>> You know, I would say that we take advantage of this opportunity where we've had to slow down in many ways. And I feel like it's pretty simple to start talking to people and start like connecting with people, people who you haven't before COVID, you never had --

either you didn't have the time or you weren't prioritizing those people. But now it's a different time to reach out and to expand the people that you're creating with or that you're having conversations with. I mean, I know myself created users were trying to do that as well. And it's a really exciting time to be connecting with people, because there are so many stories and experiences that people are really eager to share. And that will really help inform what you want to do going forward. So yeah. Have a focus group online and invite people.

[ Chuckles ]

>> One thing that's really helped us at the ROM at least is our partnerships with a whole bunch of community organizations, and you know, a lot of these partners are really generous with their time and their lived experiences and expertise, and giving us feedback when we ask for it.

We're like -- I've reached out to some of them, and I'm like here's an exhibition we want to do.

Here's one of the things you want to do with it. I realise this could be a barrier for your audiences. How do we fix this?

And you know, lots of times, it's a quick phone call that helps us understand better how to make things more accessible.

And you know, there's one concrete step our conversations can take. If there's capacity and opportunities, it will be great to hire disabled folks to do things, whether it's sitting in a department that actually makes decisions in how to create accessible content or whether it's bringing them in as artists or creators or something to produce this content in an accessible way. If that's, you know, if that's something that is a possibility, it's always great to start breaking down these systemic barriers and really starting to change from the inside out.

>> Uh-huh. We're just about out of time. I just wanted to also throw out the idea, too, that it's important, right, in seeking community and seeking folks to co-create with that there be some preparatory work done in advance, that it's not turning to people to say teach me. We're in a digital age.

There are lots of resources out there you can use. Approach community with a hey, this is what we have learned on our own and this is what we're thinking.

So what are your thoughts?

Because when you turn to marginalized folks as the first point of content, it reproduces the motion that they have to do all the work. It will actually be so much more beneficial for you and your organization if you're able to initiate that work yourself and bring people in to then develop things together. I think that that's probably all the time we have.

So thanks you, everyone. Thank you to my fellow panelists and Humber. I hope that this has been great and exciting and interesting and please reach out -- I'm happy to receive any inquiries about from anyone who is participating or anything on to my colleagues here if needed.

>> Thank you so much. Thank all of you guys, Jaclyn, Shawn, Cyn, Heidi, Lindsay. It's a sexy conversation. Now we're going to have a short 15 minutes break. So much, thank all of you guys. Jaclyn, Shawn, Lindsay, it was a sexy conversation. Thank you so much. And now we're going to have a short 15 minutes break.