Inclusive Design: a Change in Perspective

May 31, 2017 at Accessibility Advisory Committee Forum, York Regional Municipality; delivered by Jess Mitchell

I would like to acknowledge today we are situated upon traditional territories. The territories include the Wendat (wen-dat), Anishinabek (ah-nish-nah-bek) Nation, the Haudenosaunee (ho-den-oh-sho-nee) Confederacy, the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nations, and the Métis (may-tee) Nation. I would also like to acknowledge the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation reside on Georgina Island, Fox Island and Snake Island

York Region is impressively diverse:

More than 200 distinct ethnic groups (imagine how many languages that represents)

Islands

Immigrants

Migratory birds

407

development

dense urban living

rural, rolling hills of farmland

street signs with Horse crossing warnings

major arteries into downtown from the North

Humber River

Ice fishing

Perch

# Slide 1:

## Inclusive Design thinking: a Change in Perspective

By Jess Mitchell from OCAD University

Inclusive Design Research Centre

Inclusive Design Institute

# Slide 2:

## What is Inclusive Design

## Notes:

Inclusive design is design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference.

My goal is for you to experience a perspective shift that helps you see ways you can think and work differently. That perspective shift might be in understanding the nuanced difference between universal design and inclusive design or it might be in understanding design and design thinking altogether.

I want to make a point here at the beginning of this presentation. I believe that inclusion is not a task. It is not itself an endpoint. It is something we practice, something we are committed to improving evermore. So, no, there is not 10 step process to complete inclusion or inclusive design or inclusive thinking. There are strategies, there are brain-stretching examples or problem areas, there are ways of being, doing, etc. There is a lot we can do – and we can continue to practice and learn from each other.

# Slide 3:

## 3 Principles of Inclusive Design

1. Recognize diversity and uniqueness
2. Use an inclusive process & inclusive tools
3. Have a broader beneficial impact

## Notes:

I want to start with the 3 principles of inclusive design.

First: recognize diversity and uniqueness in everyone and everything. Be curious – Wonder what it’s like to live in someone else’s shoes/location/home/culture. Each of us has a unique story and cannot be boiled down into categories. We require empathy, curiosity, and engagement to be fully understood. To understand why I do what I do, you need to know me.

Second: use processes and tools that let everyone participate. You might say this is a no-brainer. But we’ll talk more about how we can sometimes close the door or set the table for only certain people to participate.

Third: have a broader beneficial impact – in some ways this is unavoidable when you take the first two steps seriously. This will just happen – but it will also result in you re-examining and reconsidering policies, systems of discrimination, power structures, examining your own implicit biases.

We sometimes describe these much more lofty areas of change as something we stumbled upon in pushing the field of design to its edges. It’s true though… when you scratch at the surface of what you can change with inclusive thinking and design, you get to some large opportunities for change: in organization, in individuals, in corporations, in planning, in meeting, in speaking, in being in the world. This is the perspective shift that comes with Inclusive Design – this is the part that once you see, you can’t unsee…

# Slide 4:

## Sitting at the Table

## Notes:

We often talk about inviting those who are marginalized to join ‘us’ at the table – “we” invite “them” to the table. But we need to have an awareness of just what is involved in this act.

THEY might ask:

Whose table is this? Why did I have to be invited? Why wasn’t I there during the planning and construction of this table? Without this invitation would I be welcome?  
or

How can I be expected to participate in this table activity? I don’t know the rules of engagement. I don’t know the traditions, how things get done, who says what, this table doesn’t fit me. How will I be treated at this table?

or

Have you just invited me to be at the table for your own exposure or as a token? How is my participation going to make a difference? Will I be heard? Will I be seen? Will I be taken seriously?

# Slide 5:

## About this Table

* Who isn’t here?
* Is the table welcoming to all?
  + Have they been at the table before?
  + Do they know the culture of the table?
  + Is the environment the table is in safe, welcoming, open?
* How is listening and capturing going to happen at the table?
* Do those at the table have real ways to have an impact? Are they empowered to act on what is discussed?

## Notes:

A lot of damage has been done in the history of human rights – and sometimes more damage is done at the tables where we invite the marginalized. We must challenge ourselves to continue to learn about how to be inclusive, what equity is – these things are all intertwined and connected. Which is why we take every aspect of interaction seriously as an opportunity to either include or exclude.

About this table we must ask… Who isn’t here?

And one common answer to who isn’t here is persons with disabilities…

This is the case because failures for those without disabilities are magnified sometimes to the point of total exclusion for people with disabilities. If the bus is late and I have to catch the next one I’m annoyed. If I depend on WheelTrans and it doesn’t come, I’m stranded and vulnerable.

Let’s take a step back now…

# Slide 6:

## What is Disability?

## Notes:

Let’s start by asking what is disability…

I have 4 different graphics on this slide to represent disability.

The first is the traditional accessibility symbol of a stiff human-like shape in a wheelchair sitting upright.

The second is made up of a series of 8 symbols -- it is used by the National Park Service

The third has 4 images that represent the medical model of disability

And the 4th is the new, more active accessibility image of an active human figure in a wheelchair moving forward.

One way we describe people who are different is to talk about their difference as a disability. We sometimes hear disability described as a medical condition — someone is afflicted, they can’t do something — they lack an ability – and some of these logos show the ability they lack or their difference.

We can debate which graphics are most representative and which are most useful, but we are fundamentally defining people with the medical model. These pictures represent those “outside the norm.”

At the Inclusive Design Research Centre we re-define what disability and accessibility are.

# Slide 7:

## Mismatch

## Notes:

Disability is a mismatch between the needs of the individual, their goals, and the service or experience offered

Disability is not a personal trait and because it’s so context dependent, it is a relative condition not permanent.

Accessibility then is the ability of the service or system to match the needs of the individual

# Slide 8:

## All experience mismatch

## Disability is mismatch

## Mismatch is solvable

## Inclusive Design can solve for mismatch

## Notes:

This is the environmental model of disability. Thoughtful, inclusive design can result in products, services, and world that adapt to more people. Think of all the times in our lives that we are expected to adapt to our environment. Like when we all walked into this room.

We know we can change that – we can create spaces that adapt to us.

# Slide 9:

## How can we do inclusive design and inclusive thinking

## Notes:

1. everyone is different; all of our homes, families, cars, offices, — everything is different. Today is different from yesterday. the alternative to this is one-size-fits-all which we know never really does. That’s us compromising our own individual needs or preferences for something basic.
2. let me be me — I’m the best at it. Empower me to make decisions and I will!
3. beware the brilliant design decision or policy — ask questions to avoid introducing new assumptions

# Slide 10:

## Principle 1 + Action

## Notes:

* recognize diversity and uniqueness
* in people and places
* personalize
* wherever possible, let me be me
* ask yourself: were you brilliant or did you just exclude someone?
* beware of introducing new assumptions

Solve for the real problems, not the imagined problems of an average. And do that by understanding that people are unique and their contexts, needs, preferences are not static — we are far too complex to be categorized so simply. So, take on the hard puzzles and figure out how to make things work better, make things easier, simpler, solve problems unobtrusively and elegantly — perform magic!

Start with empathy — we are all unique.

Then, let me be me…

Ways to do this include empathy, listening, curiosity, learn, make mistakes – AND challenge your own implicit biases…

# Slide 11:

## Principle 2 + Action

## Notes:

Instead of fearing the edges or trying to forget them we should be focusing on them, solving for them.

* instead of thinking of solving for the majority, what happens if we solve for the 20%?
* instead of thinking of average people, what happens if we design for real people with real problems?
* to change the door, the key, the lightbulb we have to ask ourselves some fundamental questions:
  + what problem am I trying to solve?
  + what am i trying to accomplish?
  + for whom?
  + who did I leave out? what other assumptions were there?
* One-size-fits-one
* Asking for ideas (make it anonymous)
* HIPPOs, loudest

So, no, this doesn’t come for free — it requires you to change your perspective and your practices…

# Slide 12:

## Principle 3 + Action

## Notes:

* 1. Begin to address biases in ourselves and others
  2. See beyond the minimum
  3. Recognize all the DESIGN decisions you make
     1. Ask: who did you just exclude?

We do this through awareness, a check-in on perspective, and questioning assumptions. We can sometimes get stuck in ruts of thinking and doing. We’re presented with a problem, so we try to solve it as quickly and efficiently as possible. Well, what happens if we suspend SOLVING for CO-DESIGNING, EXPLORING, and THINKING BROADLY?

# Slide 13:

## This is innovation

## Notes:

When we do this, we uncover opportunities in our service delivery and our products that better meet more people’s needs ---- We create more matches.

I want to say a few words about inclusively designed services versus products. Services that build in reflection, refinement, curiosity, and an unyielding interest in those for whom the service does not work are inclusive. Services that refuse to uphold “policies” that are unfair are inclusive. Those of you familiar with public health will understand when I say John Snow tore the handle off the pump when he realized it was the source of the cholera. The modern-day equivalent for inclusion is to destroy the policy that contributes to inequity and exclusion.

# Slide 14:

## Trampoline

flush in ground with children playing on it. Some in wheelchairs.

## Notes:

BLOORVIEW rehab hospital has one of these and what’s so cool about it is that you have kids in their integrated school program playing together without barriers and kids in wheelchairs who have never had the sensation of jumping can feel what it feels like to jump.

# Slide 15:

## Path

## Notes:

A colleague of mine was included in a planning committee for a new public park. She uses a scooter and at the meeting she asked the committee to consider making the paved path a wandering one. She hasn’t touched a tree in ages because of the way we design our paths. We can recognize that this path isn’t inclusive, but would we all have thought of my friend who wants to touch a tree from her scooter?

# Slide 16:

## Chair

## Notes:

How does design effect us? In every way. I recently watched a video of a man remembering sitting in this chair when he was in grade school. Can you see any reason this might have been a mismatch for him? How did that effect his learning? Was he invited to the table? Was he welcome? Was he asked to adapt to the environment?

# Slide 17:

## StopGap

## Notes:

Luke Anderson of StopGap has built these ridiculously simple and attractive wooden wedges so people who need a ramp can get into the many businesses we have with one step up.

* What problem are you trying to solve?
* With this brilliant design idea who just got excluded?
* Is there a way I can bridge the gap I just created? A way I can solve for the mismatch or avoid it?

# Slide 18:

## Learning

## Notes:

This is a photo of a class in the Inclusive Design master’s program at OCAD University. Can anyone tell me who the instructor is here? When we create inclusive spaces, we will question many assumptions we have.

# Slide 19:

Contacting me:

Twitter: @jesshmitchell

Email: jmitchell@ocadu.ca

# Slide 20:

Images Used links

# Slide 21:

## Discussion Questions

1. how are you “accomplishing” or solving for inclusion now?
2. What are practical ways you can approach inclusion differently after today?
3. What are particular areas of inclusion and accessibility you’d like to address that are not changing?

## Roundtable Discussion

1. Are there best practices – if so, what are they? Are they different or are they generalizable?
2. How have you used creative solutions in terms of accessibility in your work with the Accessibility Advisory Committees