



AT Banter Podcast Episode 274 - Two Canes Consulting

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Steve Barclay, Lis Malone, Sarina Cormier, Rob Mineault, Natalie Shearer, Ryan Fleury

 Rob Mineault 02:22
Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter,

 Steve Barclay 02:27
Banter, banter.

 Rob Mineault 02:30
This is of course -- that was really loud -- This is of course the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault, and joining me today .. If we were the Justice League, he'd be Superman. Mr. Ryan Fleury.

 Ryan Fleury 02:51
Hello.

 Rob Mineault 02:53
And also joining us in the room. Batman. Mr. Steve Barclay,

 Steve Barclay 03:00



I'm Batman.



Rob Mineault 03:01

And of course, being our anchor, being our backbone, being our Aqua Man. Liz Malone.



Lis Malone 03:11

That's caboose to you, sir.



Rob Mineault 03:13

Well, you know, so I didn't I didn't want to just go for the easy Wonder Woman reference because I don't I maybe you didn't want to be Wonder Woman.



Ryan Fleury 03:22

Catwoman?



Rob Mineault 03:24

Catwoman is not in the Justice League. What's wrong with you?



Ryan Fleury 03:27

Sorry.



Rob Mineault 03:31

Anyways, before we go into any other rabbit hole, Listen, you guys try to do this intro for six years.at. Alright, man, hey Ryan.



Ryan Fleury 03:52

No, I'm Superman.



Rob Mineault 03:54

Okay, sorry, Superman. Could you tell the fine folks at home what, what the heck we're doing today and who we're talking to?

R

Ryan Fleury 04:01

Sure. Today we are speaking with Natalie Shearer and Serena Cormier, from Two Canes Consulting.

S

Steve Barclay 04:08

I thought we were standing up for the citizens of Gotham.

R

Rob Mineault 04:11

That's next week's show. Well, guys, listen, we want to thank you so much for joining us. And we're excited to talk to you. So maybe we could just start in just giving us a little bit of background on who you guys are and maybe a little bit of how you met.

N

Natalie Shearer 04:29

Yeah, yeah. Um, so Hi, I'm Natalie. I'm one half of Two Canes Consulting. So a bit of my background with having not one but two disabilities. So I was born with severe hearing loss in both ears. And funny story, we didn't find out. I had severe hearing loss until I was three and started attending preschool. For some background. I come from a very large and expressive family, they could all be audiologist because they're very in your face, they over enunciate everything. So my hearing loss wasn't detected until I went to school and was around other people that weren't quite as loud. So I started wearing hearing aids when I was three. I've worn them ever since. And we never really knew what the cause of hearing loss was until I was about 14. And I noticed I was experiencing loss of night vision. So I think one night I sort of just looked up and realized, oh, I can't see stars. That's kind of weird, but okay. And it was just like little things like that, that I was like, Oh, I'm kind of starting to suck at sports. That's weird. But okay. So then by the time I was 17, I was diagnosed with a form of deaf/blindness called Usher Syndrome. And so fast forward a bit. I don't know how old I would have been. But I was working at a hospital in Oshawa. And I'd registered with the CNIB, which is the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. And I had started Braille instructions. And my instructor mentioned that she had another client around my age with the same form of vision loss, which is called Retinitis Pigmentosa. And that was Sarina. And so that sorry, it's a story of how we met. I'll let Sarina sort of continue with it.

S

Sarina Cormier 06:33

So I have Retinitis Pigmentosa. And I found out I was quite a bit older than Natalie was when she found out - I was in my early 20s. I think like 22, again, starting with night blindness, but I actually have a very rare form of Retinitis Pigmentosa. So I'm losing central vision before and losing peripheral vision. So Natalie and I sometimes call each other like the ying and yang because I'm like, she's losing peripheral, and I'm losing central. So we've been to meetings where somebody passes her something, and I have to indicate that that's happening. But if

somebody is like looking at me, Natalie has to indicate to me that that's happening. So anyway, it's kind of works in our business, because we made kind of this one whole, not to be super mushy or anything. So we we met through this Braille instructor, and we kind of hung out like and quickly became friends, it's hard to find people in their 20s, who experienced such a, like a unique perspective of accessibility and disability, especially around blindness in our case, so we kind of like, talked to her complained a lot about accessibility issues. And it made up a lot of our conversations, but in a light hearted way, like we would kind of get together and be like, Oh, I was at this bar last night, and I put my drink down where I thought there was a table and there was no table. And we kind of laughed about it. But it also had this like serious undertone of frustration. But we've had some pretty good stories. One time Natalie, I say this to almost everyone me because I think every meeting, every meeting, the story comes out every single one. Anytime we have a business thing, I'm like, I have to drop this story. So she was on a bus, like a city bus. I think it was in Oshawa, and she sat on a man's lap. And I just like couldn't even put myself in that situation because it would just be like so unbelievably awkward. Natalie, I don't even think was using a cane. So she had at that time what would be an invisible disabilities. So they would not have, they would have not known why she sat on their lap. Anyway, I laughed to myself about that one. So out of these shared frustrations, we created Two Canes Consulting, we basically thought like we kind of laughed about it, we're really serious about it at first about creating a company to kind of resolve these issues. And at the end of the day, we decided to just go for it. I kind of as a favor for a local company here did a little workshop. And I was like, You know what, let's actually do this. And we created the company out of it. And that was in 2019 and Two Canes Consulting was born.

R

Rob Mineault 09:14

Wow. And so how long we were you guys kind of just like friends before you guys decided to start the business?

S

Sarina Cormier 09:23

I don't even think it was a year. No. Yeah, it wasn't a full year. Yeah, I mean, we went from acquaintances to like to friends to business partners in very quick succession. We also decided to start the business. Like the same month Natalie had her second child like she literally had a newborn and we're like, let's start a business. Now.

N

Natalie Shearer 09:47

This is great. I'll have a lot of free time on my hands. I'll be getting a lot of sleep. Perfect timing.

R

Rob Mineault 09:53

Absolutely. So tell us a little bit about Two Canes Consulting and just exactly what you guys do there and what you actually offer businesses.

S

Sarina Cormier 10:01

Samira Gormier 12:02

So, Two Canes Consulting is a general accessibility consulting company. So what I mean by general to start off is, we provide a wide range of accessibility services for a wide range of needs. So I know some accessibility consulting companies focus on one need, like deafness and hearing loss or like a specific accessibility service like captioning or video production. For Accessible Media, those sorts of things, we try to provide like a wide range of services across industry and across needs and across disability. So although we have this lived experience of Natalie, with hearing loss, and then the both of us with vision loss, so we're like, especially passionate about services for those things, we don't stop there, we kind of offer this wide range of services. So our company kind of grew over time. When we started, we focused on kind of workshops and training. And then we gradually grew to offering more and more and a wider range of services. So we grew from that to now we offer anywhere from staff training, AODA training, we have a very popular digital accessibility training where we audit people's actual own digital media or social media that they use. And then we provide them a specialized customized training on how to actually make their specific digital media accessible and providing like step by step approaches for that. So that's kind of our training side. But then we also offer website audits and remediation, as well as we've recently developed a partnership doing audits of the build environment. So physical space audits, and then we've actually been able to do some really cool projects where, like companies kind of have these like unique needs that wouldn't otherwise be any under any of our services. So for example, one company wanted us so they teach life skills to people with developmental needs, or intellectual disabilities. And they had this book that actually, like this workbook that required people with high visual acuity or like people with good level of vision, so we actually provided suggestions to revamp their teachings to make it more accessible. So we've kind of do like general accessibility consulting as well for like special projects. Um, yeah, that's kind of the gamut of our process right now.

N

Natalie Shearer 12:36

I'll just add that I think what we both love so much about it, and what really drives us is that no two contracts we've ever signed, no two clients we've worked with have been even remotely the same. It's like every, every bit of work that we take on is just completely new, it's just a new problem to solve. Just within the last couple of weeks, we've had a few meetings with future potential current clients on very different projects. One was creating audio tours for a museum, another was a digital marketing firm, another was looking at their HR practices. So it's just it's never the same. Never the same today, it's definitely not a nine to five job where we go into it knowing exactly what we're doing. It's always just a new problem to tackle which, which is exciting for us.

R

Rob Mineault 13:34

Yeah, and that's always the challenge around accessibility, because it is such a vague term for a lot of businesses, especially those who don't really have any experience in that. And I know, of course, you're Ontario, so the AODA, that's a sort of a thing that a lot of businesses are aware of, and I'm sure that they're working towards addressing and I want to sort of talk about that downstream a little bit. But I'm just curious, what's in your guys's experience when a company reaches out to you? Are they really like just like lost in the weeds in terms of accessibility? Like they don't even know where to start? Or what that means in terms of their services? Or even their workplace, their physical space?

S**Sarina Cormier 14:26**

Um, that's a good question. I would say that's true most of the time, but not all the time. Like we have had clients who, like have a good knowledge of accessibility, but they don't know how to make changes. Like we work with one company recently that is aware of what how their website is not accessible, and they actually even had some coding knowledge. And they knew kind of roughly what needed to be changed on the back end of their website. But they didn't know have sort of the expertise to actually, like make those changes functionally, but they were like well versed in the AODA and accessibility. But I would say that's more rare. And what you don't know you don't know. And I think we've said this all the time, like, we always say that to clients. And that's so true when it comes to accessibility, because in our opinion, the AODA doesn't provide a lot of resources to companies, or if they do. So for example, I'm kind of long winded here, but hopefully this will help describe it. So the AODA follows WCAG, which is the web content accessibility guideline for international standards for accessibility on the web. So they have this acronym, POUR. That's supposed to help companies make sure that their digital content or web content is accessible. But if you read it, like it's not tangible, makes no sense. You can kind of like look at that document, and then look at your website and say, oh, this is what I have to do. So we find that companies could read all this and like, know that they need to make changes. But the way that these acts are laid out, it doesn't provide any like instruction and a meaningful way to help a company actually go and do that.

L**Lis Malone 16:18**

The point that you bring up about, you just don't know what you don't know. And I applaud that so much. Because I think that is such a key mantra in the disability accessibility space. And here in the US, there's no one who ever sits around and reads five titles of Americans with Disabilities Act. So I'm kind of curious, though, when you do work with some of these organizations and companies? Is it that they're seeking you out? Is it that they're receiving complaints, either from customers or from employees? Or are they just genuinely realizing that they're not being very inclusive? So I'm just kind of curious to what kind of ratio you're sort of seeing in your landscape?

N**Natalie Shearer 17:05**

I would say, like a genuine desire to be inclusive is I think it's universal. With all the clients we've worked with so far. They all genuinely do want to make a difference. I don't believe any have ever cited formal complaints being made or a lawsuit or anything like that. So yeah, I'd say 100% of clients we work with really do care. And I think most people do care. I mean, I might be naive, but and, yeah, just echoing what Sarina says, they often they just, they don't know what they don't know. And that's something that we sort of learned when we started. The first year was definitely jam packed with training for ourselves on different areas of accessibility, I think lived experience is, is a big part of it. And I really allows us to humanize the experience of having a disability and how we're impacted by those barriers. And it sort of helps with the AODA as well. Instead of just listing off like these are the different standards, we're able to say, well, this is how this is this barrier would impact somebody with vision loss. And we've we've developed a lot of connections and partnerships with other disability advocates to to learn more about their experiences as well. Sarina, I don't know if you have anything else.

S**Sarina Cormier 18:36**

Yeah, no, those are all like, Yeah, really good points. The only other thing is we've tried to use our trainings to make accessibility accessible, if that makes sense. So like our digital training, we actually took the model from WCAG. Like that acronym, I said, That makes no sense and doesn't help anyone. We took that. And we actually recreated it under our company, so that people can actually follow it as an algorithm. And at the end of it, ideally, their web, their web content, or social media would be accessible. So we've kind of tried to make things more tangible in that way. And I think that comes out of our lived experience in some degree anyway.

R**Rob Mineault 19:18**

Right. Well, actually, and speaking of lived experience, I'm sort of curious to get your guys's thoughts on how, how important do you think it is, for say, companies that are going to be consulting about things like inclusion, inclusive hiring practices, accessibility, that those companies have representation from the disability community on staff that are involved in the process? I mean, obviously, you guys are and I feel like I feel like that's a real benefit for the whole process when you go in and you're interfacing with a company, because you can you know, you're living the experience.

S**Sarina Cormier 19:57**

So we don't do any service without user testing, and making sure that the user experience is important. So I think that is like one of the most important things when doing accessibility consulting, because something on paper could be, like accessible. And you could meet the criteria on paper, like under legislation, under law, but it doesn't actually mean that it's accessible for a human using it. And sometimes the only way to know that is actually to test it. So I think those things to us are integral to every project we've done. And luckily, we have the lived experience, but a company without staff with the lived experience would have difficulty with something that we find so crucial. So I think that that in itself makes it kind of critical or important to have that person on staff. I mean, you can hire that out for sure. But I think that having a representation also instills the value of your company. I think the more diverse of a workforce, the more innovation you create in your business. So I think there should be representation in of disability in every company in the whole world, not just those that are for accessibility. But as we know, like statistics wise, people with disabilities who are like gainfully employed is a very, like jaw droppingly low statistic. And that's not just an accessibility companies, but kind of worldwide, which is a shame, we can offer so many things.

N**Natalie Shearer 21:33**

I'll just quickly add the the slogan, I guess, "nothing about us without us". It is so important that folks within a certain community that a product or service, or space is being created for they should be part of the creation of it. And I think, I mean, this is a whole other kettle of fish. But when we talk about representation, I know disability is sometimes left out of the discussion when talking about equity, diversity inclusion. So I think it is really important that it that it's

part of it. But also recognizing, and this is something Sarina and I always acknowledge, as well is that we do have privileged within within the accessibility space as to white women. So it's also looking at the intersectionality. Knowing the barriers that we face, that folks from racialized communities from indigenous communities, other equity seeking groups, they they face additional barriers. So that's something that we're always working to educate ourselves on as well, because our lived experiences. While they're valid, they aren't necessarily universal. So representation is important, but also looking at intersectionality.

S

Sarina Cormier 22:52

Yeah, cuz our lived experiences are still based in a level of privilege that we know that we have.

R

Rob Mineault 22:58

Right, so do you guys have like, your members in various disability communities that you serve, say, contract owner or help run focus groups or, or run through accessibility? Or is it mainly just you guys?

S

Sarina Cormier 23:13

Right now we have two kinds of contractor partnerships. Both of those people are people with lived experience and live with disabilities. And our goal at the beginning of the company was to try to make our entire company people from this community. I mean, yeah, we try our best to do that, for sure. And so far, that's what we've been able to do. The people that we contract out or work with that way, and also the people we partner with so far, have all identified as having a disability and being part of this community. It's funny that you bring up focus groups, so because Sarina texted me the other night, kind of out of nowhere, we seem to do this a lot. Like we come up with just ideas for the business, and we'll just text each other at 11 o'clock at night, like, hey, what do you think about this and she she brought up the idea of a focus group, just bringing together folks within the the disability advocacy community to talk about sort of some of our pain points and what we think needs to change. I think, especially as we move into this new I don't know, is it too soon to say post COVID It's not really post COVID yet, right? But it's a new normal.

R

Rob Mineault 24:35

Almost.

N

Natalie Shearer 24:36

Yeah. Everyone knock on wood right now.

L

Lis Malone 24:40

Rob knows it's definitely not well, he he's a little post COVID Right.

R

Rob Mineault 24:43

Well, I'm definitely post COVID Very recently post COVID. That's right. Yeah, I caught it a couple of weeks ago and but now now I'm immune. So it's great. Loving it.

L

Lis Malone 24:55

So the this idea about doing a focus group. I wish you a ton of because we talk about this all the time about bringing together or just the thought of trying to get some sort of consensus from the disability advocacy community that it is sort of like herding cats. I mean, Ryan, you probably have some thoughts on this too, because we feel like sometimes we can't even get people within the blind community to re upon anything, let alone across the entire spectrum.

R

Ryan Fleury 25:23

Yes, you know, yes, there are many, many times the blind community can't agree on A, B, or C. But I do think that we can reach a generalization of the steps we need to take to accommodate the majority of people because we are all individuals. And the way I use a screen reader isn't the same way that you might, Lis. Or, you know, Braille versus no Braille. There's there's so many different tangents, right? So in order to please everybody, I think is an impossible pipe dream. But I think we have to do the best we can. And we'll start there.

L

Lis Malone 26:02

See, I like a white cane. He likes a snazzy electric blue cane. No, no, I'm sorry. That was black cane. Black cane. I'm sorry. Yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 26:10

But no, but I do think that like, the representation piece of that is so important, because I don't know how many times we've had different assistive technology companies that are that are developing some sort of new tech, where they haven't even talked to anybody in whatever community they're, they're trying to service and the products terrible, like nobody, nobody's looking for that. It's actually, you know, unusable. It's not practical. It's too heavy. Like there's there's all kinds of ways something goes sideways when you don't when you're not consulting the community. So I do really agree that that's, that's got to be sort of an integral point of all of this.

N

Natalie Shearer 26:56

I know social media platforms are so guilty of this, I don't know if any of you remember, I feel like this was a few years ago now. So Twitter released these, I forget what they even called. But instead of turning out tweets, they were they were just like audio clips with no means of like

instead of typing out tweets, they were they were just like audio clips with no means or like alternative format. So they were just completely inaccessible for for folks within the Deaf community and hearing impairments. And I believe it was rolled back, like within a month of it being pushed out. And all I could think of was like, did they consult anybody on this? And how much did it cost them to skip that like, initial step of consulting the broader the broader community before rolling out this update? It happens a lot. And I don't know, how does this affect each of you? Because I know when I work on Microsoft teams a lot and they like to do updates every so often. It's like the the format of everything just changes every time. And it usually takes me a full day to figure out like where all the buttons are just scanning my screen. And I I always wonder who decides it's a good idea to change around the format every time they do these, these software updates.

R

Rob Mineault 28:22

Oh, yeah. Oh, totally. The companies are notorious for doing this. I mean, even Twitter to go back to the Twitter example. And the ability to all take photos. Of course, they've that functionality is in Twitter, but you actually have to dig into the settings and and turn it on. It's not turned on by default. There's all these these crazy design choices that a lot of the the large, especially like you said, the social media platforms are notorious for this. They'll just make changes, sweeping changes. And they don't really give all that much thought to accessibility, except maybe like three weeks later when they realize that oh, they've just broken some sort of feature that used to be accessible, but now it's not.

R

Ryan Fleury 29:12

Tik tok's the worst. As a blind user, navigating that app is just a nightmare.

S

Sarina Cormier 29:19

I haven't even tried Tik Tok yet.

R

Ryan Fleury 29:22

It's useable but yeah, it's usable, but there's buttons and tabs that have no labels on them. And, you know, it's kind of like people using Twitter and just you know, typing emojis. Right, thanks. Doesn't mean a thing to me.

L

Lis Malone 29:37

Ryan is currently taking dance lessons so he could start recording some Tik Tok videos.

R

Ryan Fleury 29:42

Got the hula hoop ready.

L**Lis Malone 29:44**

We're very excited. It's gonna be an AT Banter debut.

R**Rob Mineault 29:49**

Well, so and I don't know if you'll be able to really, if this is a really fair question for you guys, because seeing that you started in 2019 but I'm just kind of curious to hear what your experience has been through COVID? What kind of changes you've kind of seen reflected in workplaces? And, and the kind of reception that you get now from businesses? You know, are they more receptive to things like inclusion and inclusive hiring practices now that things like working from home are a little bit more standard? Have you guys been a lot more busier since COVID?

S**Sarina Cormier 30:33**

So I think certain parts of our business definitely increased, like we did a bit of a shift to providing definitely more website audits, because, like having that online presence became so much more important and COVID. So we have done more work around that. And then we've also done, like, our digital media training has become way more popular now than it was before COVID. So our business shifted a little bit to those things. What I say that companies generate, like, so I think that the companies that come to us have come to us because like Natalie said earlier, they already value inclusion and accessibility. I don't think that COVID made them value that more, and then the companies that might come to us, but maybe don't hire us, or we don't hear from I think that a lot of companies are struggling financially right now. And I think that that's a bit of a barrier for investing in accessibility financially. A lot of, as we all know, a lot of options are pretty cost effective and simple. But some do require a lot of work to make some changes that are necessary. I think that that's been a challenge for companies even if they want to make their space more accessible. Some companies are just struggling to stay open right now.

R**Rob Mineault 32:03**

Yeah, I could totally see that.

N**Natalie Shearer 32:05**

Yeah, yeah, I agree with that Sarina, I know, burnout is really high right now. turnover is really high. So there's a lot more internal turmoil within companies, that makes it a bit trickier coming in as sort of an external consultant. And making that business case for accessibility. And, really, in a lot of cases, accessibility and inclusion is part of that solution. To help overcome these things like burnout and and thriving and remote first sort of work environment that we see sort of spreading across industries, I do want to say, for me, the ability to work from home has been amazing, I do love it. And it, I see it as a great accommodation, because not having access to a

car and being able to drive before my commute to work. Using city transit was often an hour each way at least. And that was if I didn't miss my bus or stay a few extra minutes at work, and have to take the next bus. On the other hand, though, there's sort of like finding that work life balance when you work from home, which I know is something that a lot of people are struggling with. But I know from an accessibility standpoint, I think this was once seen as an accommodation that a lot of companies wouldn't have made before to allow folks to work from home or to work, sort of hybrid between home and office and the fact that it's reality now for more people I think is a great thing. It's just figuring out how to navigate it is the biggest thing for companies and keep employees happy and retention levels high. Yeah, I'll get off my soapbox.

R

Rob Mineault 34:01

No, no, it's okay. We all we we are routinely on soapboxes around here. It's just means we're all at the same height. So we are seeing a lot more large corporations developing these things like inclusive hiring practices, and, you know, putting, putting things in place like safe spaces and accessibility policies into their work environments. Do you see this starting to sort of trickle down from the large corporations into say, the small and medium businesses? Like what size businesses do you guys typically engage with?

S

Sarina Cormier 34:40

So definitely small businesses and more so small to medium I would say. We've only recently as well, I guess in the last couple months, really we've had some good meetings and submitted some quotes for some larger corporations, one of which was a Post Secondary institution, which is exciting for us for sure. We've done larger projects, for sure. But not not too many of larger corporations. And I think it is, but I really think it comes down to this financial investment piece. Like, you know, with the companies that we've worked with, that are really small companies, a lot of them had the awesome opportunity to use grants or alternate sources of funding to enhance their accessibility, because they, they wouldn't necessarily have the finances set up to do that within their own company. And I think that COVID has changed access to grants and what charity looks like. And, you know, funding sources, I think it's changed those things a lot. I think there's less access to that over the last couple years. So I guess in summary, I would say it's still mostly small to medium companies with a few kind of trickling of larger, larger corporations or companies agree, I think it will trickle down from larger corporations. I think maybe there's this perception that larger corporations will make the change to be more accessible once it's required of them, because they are, there are more requirements of larger corporations to be accessible. But again, I do think there are people who care within both larger and smaller corporations and do want to make a difference. We just happen to hear more from those those smaller businesses.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:35

I just want to jump in for a minute, Rob and ask, kind of referring back to the AODA, for those of us who aren't in Ontario, what is the state of the AODA and you know, the legislation? Is it being effective? Is it in place? How has that affected you guys?

S**Sarina Cormier 36:53**

Yeah, so the AODA is, it's in place, it's been in place since 2005, I believe, with the goal of Ontario being fully accessible by 2025. With which, as you can imagine, there's still a lot of work to be done. And COVID has presented some challenges as well. And so while it isn't a law itself, it's really considered a blueprint for organizations to follow, to make sure that they're compliant with the Ontario Human Rights Code. And basically, I don't want to say to ensure accessibility, because this is something Sarina and I both learned that being compliant doesn't necessarily mean, being accessible. It's the AODA should be seen as sort of the bare minimum of what companies do for accessibility.

N**Natalie Shearer 37:50**

Yeah. So I can add to that, like, when you say, is it effective. I would say right now, it's not. And I think that it's necessary that it's in place. And I think that we're lucky to live in a country and a province that has legislation for accessibility. There's lots of places in the world that doesn't, so I don't want to downplay it too much. But I will say there's challenges. So one is, it's difficult to ensure that companies are following it. That's number one. So there's not a lot of follow up to ensure that that this is actually something that companies follow. The second thing is, I don't think it's enough. So like, I really want to highlight that it is the absolute bare minimum. And in some cases, it's not even a bare minimum. So for example, for websites, our company, which is a company that specifically does successfully consulting, our website doesn't legally have to be accessible. So we can have a completely inaccessible website. And that would be fine under this Act, because it just doesn't. It doesn't sort of enforce enough rules, I would say, for smaller companies that employ less people.

R**Ryan Fleury 39:11**

Yeah, and I think that's one of the things that we've talked about previously, some of our concerns about bringing in an Accessible Canada Act and, you know, other provinces are looking at bringing in an accessible act as well. There's, there's so much history if we look at the AODA not that the AODA has got everything right. But there's, there's so many, there's so many blueprints out there, that we should be able to get it closer to right than we currently are. And it still surprises me that you say the AODA was, you know, in 2005, and here we are, you know, 23 years later, and you still don't have to have an accessible website. You know, we're still working on these ideas of accessibility.

R**Rob Mineault 39:55**

Wait, it's 2028??

S**Steve Barclay 39:57**

Oh, yeah, that was a hell of a nap. Yeah.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:03

Sorry. Again, can't do math. So yeah, you know, again, again, we've talked about our concerns about the Accessible Canada Act.

R

Rob Mineault 40:16

Yeah, well, yeah, well, it is interesting, because, you know, here in BC, we just, what was it last year .. or has it has been two years already, it could have been two years already. But we just brought in our own Provincial Act as well. And, you know, it got a lot of pushback from a lot of the community. Because really, at the end of the day, there, there was really no enforcement mechanism built into it, that was really going to be very effective and even two years downstream, a lot of the things that they said that they would be doing, still haven't been done. So you know, I know that for us here in BC, you know, we kind of look at Ontario for for the blueprint, because really, Ontario was was one of the first provinces to really try something like this. And here we are. I'm not doing the math, so however, many years later So you know, even this many years later, and there's still so much work to be done. And it seems like, you know, because I feel like a lot of the big problem with these Acts is that you have the provincial government changing every few years, and they all have different policies, and some things, they're slower on implementing than others. And so you really have this sort of roller coaster of implementation for a lot of this stuff. That makes it really challenging to get an all encompassing act, that's going to, that's gonna check all the boxes, like, you know, have effective enforcement and, and really be able to bring a lot of these accessibility changes into did the digital space as well as the physical space. That is hard to do.

S

Sarina Cormier 42:04

Yeah, it is true, it is hard to do. Like it's some of these things are not simple and to enforce them. It would also not be simple. And who knows if the people like like, is, yeah, I have a lot of theories as well. But it comes to representation. And if the people enforcing them understand what they're even forcing, and how would they enforce something on a large scale? I think that there's just like, so many reasons why it's not happening right now. But I mean, there's a lot of countries like outside of North America that do it really well. Like accessibility in Europe. When I've traveled Europe has blown my mind, just like basic things, like what Braille is on, like, I remember being in Milan. And there was a map of the city carved in or created in some kind of metal, and it was 3D. So you could feel the buildings and feel where you're standing and how high the buildings are compared to the person. And every street on this, like metal map was in Braille. And it was in the middle of one of the main squares, I forget the name, of course, but like just something like that. And like these kinds of things weren't rare. Like, it was really just these little things that were everywhere. And you don't need an Act for that. I think it's kind of just built into society, right? Like, there's no like act stipulating that you put a 3d map in the middle of the square made this with Braille and blah, blah, blah. But I just think it's like part of a little bit more integrated into life there.

R

Rob Mineault 43:52

Yeah, and I think that you're absolutely right. I think that, you know, trying to rely on all these changes happenina because of x or to legislate them is. at the end of the dav. a little bit

unrealistic. I mean, honestly, if Ontario was going to be able to do it, you would think that they would have ... it's been since 2005. And I mean, you can also point to the ADA in the States, you know, which has been around since the 90s. You know, again, they they still haven't, you know, the digital accessibility down there is a complete and utter mess. So, I think that you're right. I think that that is why organizations like yours is so important. I think that really what needs to happen is you need to sort of change the minds and hearts of businesses, you have to show them the business case of accessibility, and really try to try to just get them to be doing the right thing that at the end of the day, is going to benefit their business. It's going to benefit everybody.

S

Sarina Cormier 44:56

Yeah, exactly. And I think there will be more and more companies like ours. Even in the last few years, we've noticed more and more accessibility companies coming up. But we have decided to provide services outside of Ontario even in the States. So that's kind of a cool new thing that we've decided to start to offer if it became an option since the pandemic started. But I think companies like ours won't be rare in the coming years, especially as we see some of the deadlines on these apps come up, especially as we approach 2025 for Ontario anyway.

R

Rob Mineault 45:30

Right? Yeah, three years, that's gonna be interesting. Boy there's gonna be some sleepless nights for Ontario politicians, it's only three years. Listen, guys, before we let you go, tell our listeners where they can find you guys online.

S

Sarina Cormier 45:46

Yeah, so our website is www.twocanesconsulting.com. And you can find us on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Keep up with with what we're doing we're trying to be better about social media. So to check in, we like to chat.

R

Rob Mineault 46:30

Listen, it's been an absolute delight talking to you guys. Thanks again for taking the time out and chatting. Let's stay in touch, have love to have you guys on especially once we get closer to 2025 because then we're really going to see just how this whole full accessibility in Ontario is doing. So yeah, so don't be strangers and come back soon.


R

Ryan Fleury 46:52


I can tell you how it's gonna happen. You get a curb cut, and you get a curb cut and you get a curb cut.




... ..


 Sarina Cormier 47:01
Thank you so much for having us. This was a lot of fun. Awesome to virtually meet you guys.


 Rob Mineault 47:06
Awesome. Thanks so much. Thanks, guys. Best of luck,


 Sarina Cormier 47:09
Bye everyone.


 Rob Mineault 47:10
Bye. Bye. Oh, wow. Very cool. Very cool. It's it's always nice to hear like, I don't know, businesses, just like startups come out of like just two people meeting at the CNIB.

 Ryan Fleury 47:24
Well, and more people talking about accessibility and helping others to get there.

 Rob Mineault 47:29
Yeah, yeah, it is. I don't know, man. I don't I there's no, there's no chance that Ontario is going to be fully accessible in 2025. Right? Like, of course not. I don't know. Like, I don't even I don't know what the state of like, that's such an unrealistic. Like, I guess they came up with that in 2005. They just figured, okay, I'll take 20 years to to bring the province to be fully accessible.

 Ryan Fleury 47:52
It would take them that many years just to retrofit every elevator with Braille buttons.

 Rob Mineault 47:56
This is it's just this is just reminds me of my university days where you just you just, you know, yeah, I'll start working on the assignment tomorrow. And next night, it's like, Oh, my God.

 Ryan Fleury 48:09
It's a pipe dream.

R

Rob Mineault 48:11

Well, you know, I feel like that's probably why British Columbia didn't put in deadlines like because that was one of the big things that we criticized the act here in British Columbia, that they never .. They never put any deadlines. So it because at least a deadline gives you something to shoot for and miss. We didn't even we didn't even put a goal on the ice.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:35

So well, there's hope for the next generation. Is there? Well, I don't know maybe if they take a page out of Europe's book and look at some of the accessibility that's been implemented, you know, I don't know why we're still thinking about it and talking about it.

R

Rob Mineault 48:49

Wow. I was just assuming that the the earth will be a barren husk by then. Hey, Lis.

L

Lis Malone 50:30

Hey Rob.

R

Rob Mineault 50:32

Where can people find us?

L

Lis Malone 50:35

I do believe they can find us on the web at atbanter.com

R

Rob Mineault 50:41

And they can also drop us an email if they so desire. And if Ryan is close to the cowbell ... cowbell@atbanter.com

S

Steve Barclay 51:22

Hey, you know what? They can also find us on Facebook and Twitter.

R

Rob Mineault 52:57

Okay. Where are we at? That's it. That's all she wrote. All right. That is all she wrote. Well, thanks everybody for listening in. Big thanks to Metalia and Carina for joining us and we will

thanks, everybody for listening in. Big thanks to Natalie and Sarina for joining us and we will see everybody next week.