

# The Connect Film Project

## Intention

The purpose of Co-Directors' Connect Film Project is to eliminate unseen barriers and re-conceptualize inclusivity, working in collaboration with team members of Creative and Access who have various backgrounds in film. This film project shares a story in formats that are truly accessible and create equitable viewing experiences for audiences of all ages and all abilities.

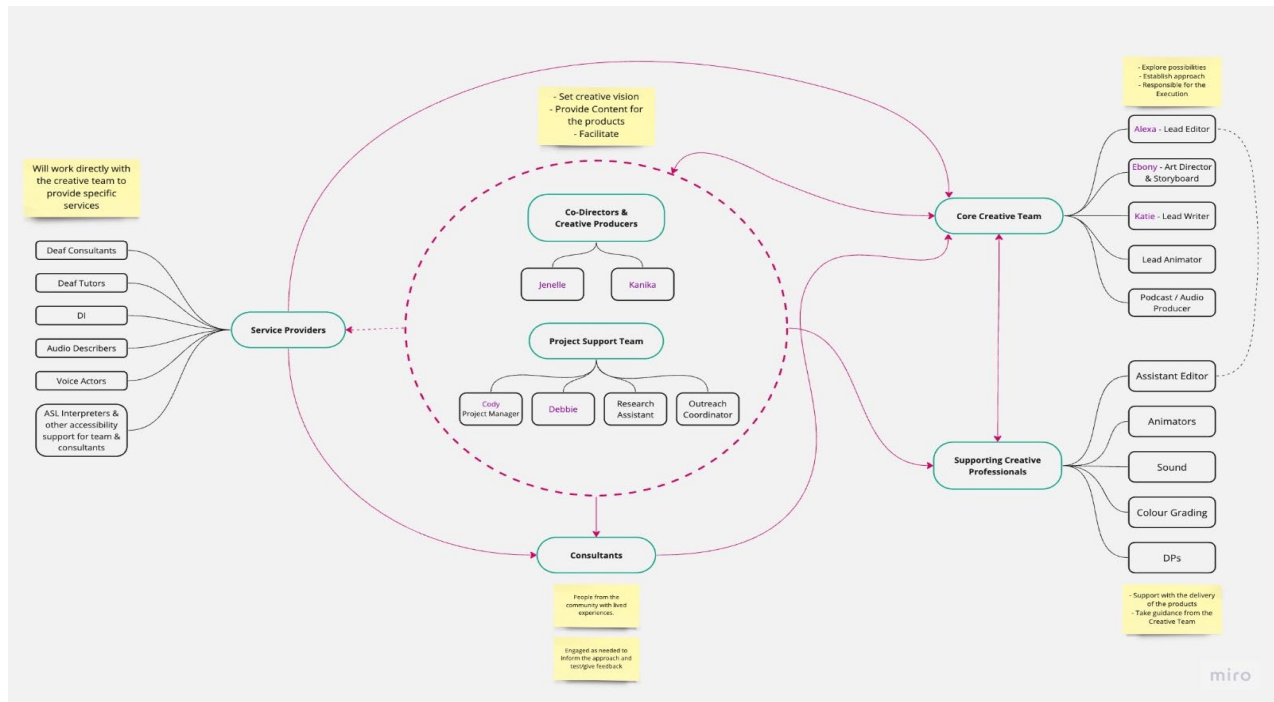
*Notes: Narratives of co-directors, Access, and Creative team members with some [Resources](#) and [links](#) are embedded throughout the report. The Creative team's contributed resources are free for download in PDF only (ALT-text and other accessible texts in the resources are not available).*

## Process

Co-Directors value the initial concept of having access in film at the very beginning of the filmmaking project. While working with the Just Keep Going Reel's Access team, Co-Directors started with their Creative team to recognize and navigate different challenges and successes of teamwork during their creative process in regards to simple-to-complex power dynamics. Effective flow of communication amongst co-directors and team members has been briefly explored. The entire Connect Film Project team has then been contributing their creatively knowledge and skills to different experiments and treatments through onsite and online collaborations that in turn bring forth a success of the end product: an accessible film as a prototype. This prototype is duplicable for the public as well as for every interested artist, producer, filmmaker, writer, editor, translator, interpreter, researcher, colourist, scholar, etc.

## Teamwork Approaches

The main challenge of having a team ecosystem during the Film project is working with many artists virtually across the country.



Team ecosystem (2023). Just Keep Going Reel 2025.

ALT-TEXT: Flow chart showing the team ecosystem

The film project deals with multiple intersectional identities that take time to learn and develop equity for. The tension in regards to power within the team ecosystem switches between non-traditional and traditional preferences. That is, a blurry boundary of its evolution between non-traditional equal collaboration and complex hierarchical system with work-on-demand attention has been clearly noted.

- **Co-Directors:** As someone with very little knowledge of film, we did not have the experience needed to lead a team through the post-production of a film—especially one as complex as this. In hindsight, we should have recognized our limitations earlier and sought out more appropriate resources. Doing so might have alleviated some of the chaos our team faced. Balancing multiple roles simultaneously—like being both the subject of the film and troubleshooting production issues or facilitating a workshop while coordinating all logistics—was exhausting. We did not fully realize how much it was taking out of us. Constantly switching between responsibilities like that is not something we would recommend.

While the project has managed to come together, it is not without conflicts since the film is inspired by the difficulties of connecting virtually. The teamwork approach previously has been simply fostering and managing the connections among the team to keep everyone equitable and efficient. The experience of approaching the teamwork, both with ease and tensility, deepens every member of the team an understanding of access.

To the Connect Film Project team, access is something far more expansive than compliance or accommodation. It is also about creating space—for communication, for understanding, and for difference. Access amongst the team requires ongoing dialogue, adaptability, and a willingness to rethink how every member can create and collaborate. The team ecosystem, with the considerations of *power dynamics*, *communication flow*, and *team collaborations*, is not a one-time solution, but a continuous, intentional practice.

## **Power Dynamics**

Co-Directors and team members must recognize power within team collaborations and communications, in terms of who hold or lack the power, and how it would shape access.

Co-Directors have promoted that assigned roles do not matter because each member has different knowledge, skills, and talents to make the film accessible in their contributed creative ways. Because of cultural, lingual, and societal differences, majority of the team resisted freedom of creativity and preferred the traditional hierarchic power to maintain control. Very few members recognized the importance of seeing others in the team as equal while letting their own creativity shine through.

- **Co-Directors:** There were so many “ah-ha” moments while working on the film project with the team from planning, meetings, hosting, and researching. Cultural and language differences are a part of the “ah-ha” moments when discussing the access needs. Access needs can be as follows: knowing how and when to use sign language interpreters; identifying and planning where artists’ positions should be during filming with an intended incorporation of accessible features; knowing when to take a lead and when to let it go; and, unbiasedly trust team members to keep the conceptualization of accessibility intact in their forethought.
- **Artistic Director:** Artists have the time, space, and support to create without constantly fighting to be heard. Inclusive teamwork will succeed when dialogues are involved. We each have a different working style that may constrict each other’s access needs, so we need to collaborate to learn about each other and explore how to work together in the best possible way. We are all amazing people!
- **Editor Lead:** Working on this film project was both a joyful and challenging experience. Our team had many different dynamics, and we had to figure out how to work, communicate, and bring our ideas together. It was not always easy, but the process taught me a lot about navigating spaces of creativity with others.

- **Writer:** It was as if I was working on a film production from end to start - going against the grain of what I was taught in school and practiced in the industry until this point. It was a fantastic challenge and I would gladly participate in such a project again.

## **Flow of Communication**

Although working remotely and virtually sounds appealing, the reality posts an almost discouraging challenge when communication amongst the team members is involved. To communicate on a regular basis while maintain and balance own artistic practices is the common challenge for the Film team. Co-Directors and team members of Creative and Connect Interpreting Services address the challenge by thinking differently of how we collaborate, communication is the key. Everyone has arranged online and onsite meetings to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Also, the meetings promote the team to effectively communicate one's creativity (art style, knowledge, skills, ideas). In the end, team members cooperatively capitalize various findings from either independent and collective research, experiments and/or treatments—all to push the boundary and see how far the film project would transpire.

## **Team Collaborations**

The care and intention from the Creative team and Connect Interpreting Services clearly stand out the most in the film project. During team approaches of creativity and thinking process, members consistently support each other through check-ins. That supportive atmosphere enables their experience more meaningful and rewarding. Team members experience, witness and practice lasting impact of efforts that in turn give them a means to remember how prioritize thoughtfulness and responsiveness is important. Everyone on the film program finds a common ground to work together by, for example, accommodating to and reciprocating with individual needs.

- **Co-Directors:** While looking back, there were five people involved prior to the beginning of the Connect Film project. Although the number then increased to about 15 or more people, some stayed, a few chose to leave for various reasons, and others were hired in the middle of our work-in-progress project. One of the long-time contributors of the project described our collective experience as a “good chaos”. It indeed was!

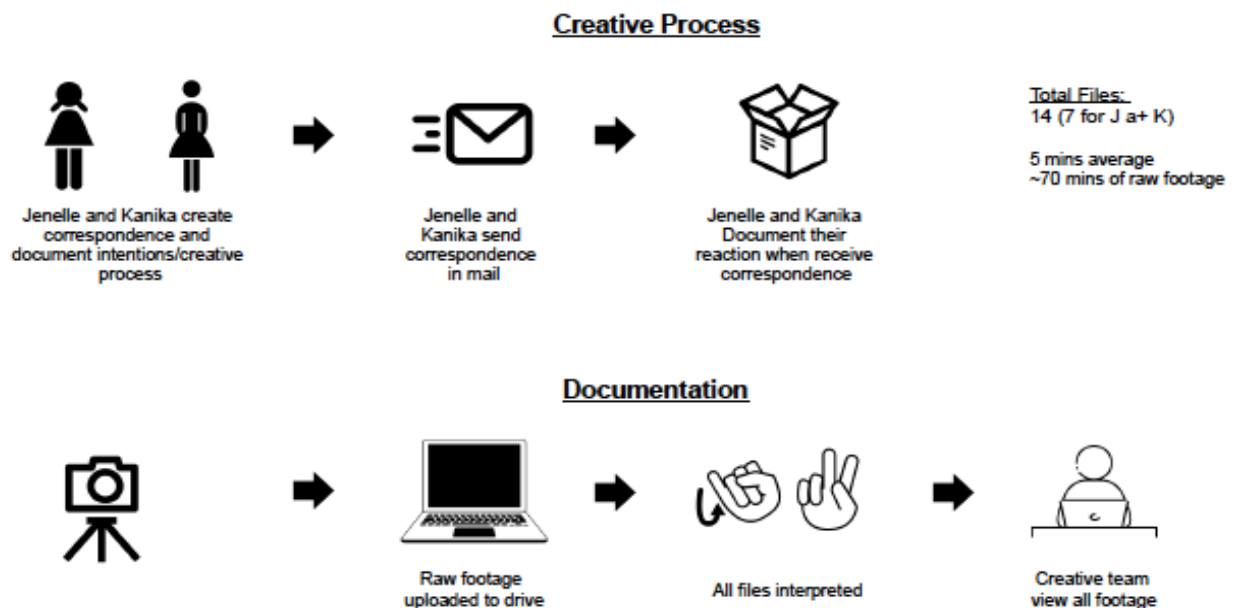
Fall Retreat 2023 is the example of authentic team collaborations in a relaxed setting. Every team member gets to see and respond to each other's individual and collective access-related needs that encourage them to address and adjust specific challenges. They do so by collaborating and re-approach the meaning of access while they work on making a film. Fall Retreat 2023 is the example of authentic team collaborations in a relaxed setting. Every team member gets to see and respond to each other's individual and collective access-related needs that encourage them to address and adjust specific challenges.

They do so by collaborating and re-approach the meaning of access while they work on making a film.

- **Editor:** Working on this project was a transformative experience. I had the opportunity to collaborate with incredible artists, immerse myself in hours of documentary footage, and explore the richness of the Deaf community. I even began learning American Sign Language (ASL). The most meaningful challenges came from navigating communication across languages and access needs—fitting, given the film’s (main) themes. Creative collaboration can be messy, but it is also deeply rewarding. This project reminded me that growth often comes from discomfort, and beauty can emerge from the chaos of the edit room.

## Clear Cut Process

Co-Directors, Access Team (Connect Interpreting Services), Post Producer, Consultant, and Project Manager confer while the Manager communicates with the Creative Team.



Long but Straightforward Creative Process (2022). Just Keep Going Reel 2025.

ALT-TEXT: Two lines of black and white images of people, envelope, parcel, camera, computer, and sign language.

After roles with clear yet evolving definitions of access and communication, and team collaborations are well established, work plans with flexible timelines are then set up for the Creative team to successfully execute.

Akin to the following work plans, Writers design detailed storyboard and paper edit based off the raw and translated footages from phases 1 and 2; produce several outline animation filters and transitions; Editors and Animators collaborate to assembly and

embed rough film cuts; community consultations and community access members are invited in the process; and Co-Directors, Connect Interpreting Services, Writers, Project Managers, and Editors go through the editing, revising, and finalizing process in a considerably manner.

## **Footages**

Just Keep Going Reel has a growing number of footages. The Project Manager/Post Producer and Editors created a log called “Connect Clip Master Log” via Google Spreadsheet. to ensure everyone has access either for their relevant assignments or for reviews.

### **Connect Clip Master Log**

In one place of the Connect Clip Master Log, there are approximately seventeen (17) separate sheets (tabs); they are well categorized. For example, first tab: Artists’ First Meeting, second tab: Artists’ Next Meeting in April, third tab: One Artist’s Own Shooting, and so on. As seen in the sample in the next page, each footage is organized into names, information, types and/or styles of camcorders and motions, video length, location, quick go-to-links, and transcripts. Outside of making a film documentary project, shot types are specifically designed for the Creative team at their disposal. Shot types are coded as follows:

- MW – Medium Wide Shot
- OST – Over-the-Shoulder Shot
- CU/W – Close-Up / Wide
- TS – Tracking Shot or Two-Shot
- HA – High Angle
- MS – Medium Shot

## Sample Connect Clip Master Log 2022 – 2023

CLIP NAME	Content	Shot type	Motion	Length	Location	Link	Transcript
C1578	child looking at lights	M/W	Handheld	0:17			No
C1580	Parent playing with child on the ground	W/TS	Handheld	0:24			Yes
C1581	Visitor arrives at home and interacts with child	OST/CU/W	Handheld	4:27			Yes

Owned by Just Keep Going Reel 2025.

ALT-TEXT: Chart showing three clips and their shot type and duration. Motion and transcript indicated.

## Data Management

The Editor then developed the following loss-prevention instructions for the log in case of more footages.

### Data management of The Connect Project

#### IMPORTANT NOTES

- **DO NOT keep proxy files and originals on the same drive**, the Adobe system might automatically confuse file names between the two as both proxies and originals have the same name
- **DO NOT rename the original files** or/and proxy files
- **DO NOT move, delete or modify ORIGINAL FILES** (Master A, Master B, Extra B drives)
- Keep naming structure cohesive and understandable for all members of the post production team; include name of the project, date of the version, last name (e.i TCP\_RoughCut\_2102\_Editor)

Sample Data Management (2023). Just Keep Going Reel 2025.

## Animations

Animator Lead has produced different experimental tools in a reflective approach (experiments, treatments, library of effects). Rotoscope, handmade animations, and one-word vocabulary including the use of artificial intelligence (AI) were all experimented.

- **Resources**
  - **Animator\_INITIAL\_NOTES\_2023**
  - **Animator\_INITIAL\_EXPERIMENTS\_TREATMENTS\_2023**
  - **Animator\_EXPERIMENTS\_TREATMENTS**
  - **Animator\_Library of effects\_SAMPLES**

The works of **Animator\_Library of effects\_SAMPLE** are part of fillers and filters. Although they are primarily open to the Creative team, they are also open to the public for the knowledge-sharing purpose.

## Translations

Co-Directors instruct Connect Interpreting Services and Writers to work together to provide transcriptions. The transcriptions are used for the Creative team (as well as for Co-Directors as their references). There are several different approaches of doing translation which are, for example:

- Review every footage that has ASL and then type ASL into a written language (English).
  - *Translated transcription between two different languages is a long and hard process because there are cultural and linguistic differences. Different interpretations are involved.*
- Live transcribe if voice.
- Listen and type spoken words into written words – verbatim.

One of Co-Directors reviews the transcriptions to either clarify or correct a few words/lines. Lead member of the Connect Interpreting Services reviews and/or speaks words to ensure the accuracy of lines for sound and tone.



## Storyboard + Paper Edit

Co-Directors then instruct Writers to produce different treatments (paper edit trailers). One Writer successfully has produced three different paper edit trailers plus one team collaborated storyboard.

- **Resource**

- [B&W\\_TCFP\\_DOC TREATMENT.printableStoryboard](#), is used in printable PowerPoint format.

## Accessible Features

Editor Lead developed several treatments of accessible features.

- **Resource**

- [Editor.Creative.AccessibleFeatures\\_Treatments](#) is an experiment for audiences' reactions and to identify their interests and/or preferences.
- **Editor Lead:** Accessibility can be expressive and built into the heart of the work. It reminded the hearing world that access is not an add-on; it is essential. When done with intention, it strengthens the entire project.
- **Artistic Director:** We wanted to include as many accessible features as possible for diverse disabled audiences. The ideas were endless; we explored, tested, and reworked them. Some features did not work, but other features surprised us. Through trial and error, we streamlined our vision without losing our creativity.

Co-Directors reviewed the treatments and chose several top accessible features, including a request for additional creative approaches of captioning.

## Assemble + Edit

After the review and revisions of the storyboard and features with Co-Directors' suggestions and their heavily emphasis on an incorporation of animations, chapters in different versions are created by the Writers. Editors received the storyboard with different suggested accessible features. Another animator was later hired to work with the Editor Lead to help fill in specific blanks (transitions) for comic relief: Title Cards, Mini-Interpreter, and some Stand-In Characters.

Although the Animator finds creating animated accessible features challenging, the Post Producer cognizes:

*How much accessible features are a kindred spirit to visual effects (VFX). In current films, the great VFX come from people either directors with a background in it or from a team that has been given the time to be a part of the creative*

*process from the beginning. When you try to fix something in post you are limited by every decision you have already made so your solutions are limited. If you have framed everything in your film as if your creature was a unicorn but in post decide it will be a dragon you are not going to be able to create the effect as best as possible. The same goes for plans to introduce an ASL interpreter, if you have not given your frame the right amount of space you will not be able to create an elegant image. If you are intending to make an accessible film, it has to be considered from the beginning to truly make it effective.*

## Focus Groups

Just Keep Going Reel's Connect Film Project embraces the importance of an active inclusivity of various community contributions from focus sessions, online surveys, and emails to practice the meaning of access. To be clear, access is not something that is finished. It is an ongoing process. It is also about staying open to feedback for the purpose of adapting to a project work when needed and ensuring it remains responsive over time.

- **Co-Directors**: Everyone benefits from accessibility. Adopting an “access-first” mindset can lead to the creation of wonderful unexpected things. Access is not something that can be treated in isolation or tackled piece by piece. It must be approached holistically, allowing innovations to emerge naturally.
- **Connect Outreach Coordinator**: From including the community inputs in the project, I gained an understanding of how intersectionality shapes access. While considering physical or sensory accommodations, I also had to think about how race, language, culture, and other factors shaped what participants needed.

Deaf individuals and people with a disability, all from various backgrounds, were invited to apply and become community access participating members. Feedback emerged during an experimental process of the integrated accessible documentary film when they worked closely with the Connect Film team. Every contributing member was compensated.

### Focus Group Session 1 (June 2023)

The first focus group session took place at the generous community organization in Toronto Ontario ([Silent Voice Canada](#)). About ten contributing access community members were Deaf (8), Hard of Hearing (1), and DeafBlind (1). Co-Directors, Access team, and Project Manager collaborated with them through the use of the rough-cut film with the incorporation of several accessible featured related treatments.

### ***Viewing and Feedback Procedure:***

- One full start viewing for a quick first impression (thumbs up/down).

- Stop at the end of each clip/version for note-writing.
- Full stop after the entire viewing of each accessible feature (including all treatments/versions) for discussions.
- Before wrap up, review/run through with quick votes (thumbs up/down).

Community Access Members have provided productive feedback that would benefit other project managers, filmmakers, editors, and cultural (signed + spoken) language experts to consider when developing an innovational, accessible film work. The following feedback as categorized (Subtitles, Visual Musical Cues, and Window):

### ***Subtitles***

- One of the Community Access member has suggested the Creative team to visit the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) for traditional print, font, and size specially when it comes to the use of colours: contrast.
- As long as two lines are not overlapped and, on another background.
- Try not to avoid listen to audio interpretation when transcribing.
- When translating a person signing, hire a Deaf Interpreter or Deaf translator to do transcribe in a way the sign language can be appropriately captured.
- Hire DeafBlind or Deaf Low Vision member as a consultant during live editing

### ***Visual Musical Cues:***

- The cues of colour, mood/emotion, and speed are excellent.
- Music instruments (e.g., piano keyboard) are a fantastic method to show Deaf audience the chosen music's beats.

### ***Windows:***

- If placing an artist beside a window, be sure to soften the window in the background.
- Windows in all films always are too glare in any languages.
- Try to avoid using windows at any cost.

The feedback helped the Creative team with video revisions and refinements accordingly. See the actual example of the Project Manager's collaboration with the team.

- **Resource**
  - **Sample.For FINE CUT.pdf**

The Creative team then produced a completed fine cut film (prior to the clean cut with colours, music and such).

### **Focus Group Session 2 (July 2023)**

The second focus group session took place online via the Zoom platform. Over thirty-five (35) contributing access community members from across the country were Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Hearing with Low Vision, Blind, and individuals with a neurodiversity, including access supporters (friend, parent, caregiver). Co-Directors, Access team, Project Manager, and Project Assistants collaborated with the community in the breakout rooms after viewing the final rough-cut film (with the chosen accessible features).

#### ***Viewing and Feedback Procedure:***

To gather the contributing members' feedback about the film, they were divided into three groups with a moderator and notetaker in each. The moderator asked the participants three questions about the film:

1. What were your first impressions?
2. What access features were you able to catch on?
3. How we can improve the accessibility points?

Most Community Access Members adored the film because of its visually inclination. They offered some following notes for areas of improvement that producers, project managers, editors would appreciate in consideration of visual effects (VFX):

- Introduce accessible features at the beginning of the film (to train the audience how to readily perceive the features).
- Tweak presentation of music and avatars.
- Set up a toggle button to turn particular access features on/off.
- Allow time and space for more audience interpretation of on-screen action.

Although there are no suggestions for major changes, feedback represents refinements (corrections and/or additions of audio description, captions, and colour) are to be made in the next phase of the editing process.

Each Community Access Member then completed the online survey before logging off at the end of the event. The results are as follows:

- 89.2% of survey respondents would recommend the film with particular accessible features to friends/relatives.
- 64.9% of the respondents felt the accessible points in the film were better than they expected.

Overall, those feedback contributions from the focus group sessions certainly helped measure inclusion and engagement. The feedback thus can be used to inform an evolution and refinement of the Connect Film Project.

## **Outcomes**

The production of an accessible film from the beginning of the project is a significant template that in turn will inspire innovative creators to further push the boundaries of how to convey characters or artists' tones in their captions or showcase ambient sounds in a way that feels inclusive.

The Project Manager explains that directors, artists, filmmakers, editors, and access team members "will always be trying to capture an emotion, a sound or visual as a seed to blossom in the audiences' mind. For us to innovate, we have to be open to those moments of misinterpretation and learn from them. This also needs to be a two-way relationship, so the audience will need to be open to how we interpret things since we were trying to capture more than just the literal information."

To discuss or acknowledge access, knowledge mobilization (or knowledge-sharing in this case) is one of the possible ways to do so. Through the use of the Connect Film Project, the experience of experimenting, consulting, producing, and viewing enables all members of the project and public-viewing audiences to truly understand what the film project has to offer: a unique friendship formed through exchanges of artworks, barrier-free workshops, and/or creative treatments of accessible features.

The following outcomes of the project were semi-public viewing of the final fine cut film for the community engagement: George Brown College's Peer Mentor + Deaf Inclusion, Spring Institute's Disabilities and Futures, and private audience viewing as led by a virtual workshop facilitator (for an accessibility analysis).

## Feedback + Analysis Resource

- George Brown College's Peer Mentor + Deaf Inclusion
  - **Participant's Feedback:** *"CHAMP! I enjoyed watching the beautiful, heartwarming film. I appreciated the visual features such as animated interpretation (avatars), captions (subtitles), and visual music cues."*
- Documentary Audience Impact and Accessibility Analysis (a report as a resource shared by the virtual workshop facilitator)
  - **Resource**
    - **Film\_Connect Documentary Focus Group Analysis.PDF**
- Spring Institute's Disabilities and Futures (unrecorded panel talk)
  - <https://spring-institute.com/participants-2/participants-2025/>

## Lessons

Many projects typically forget about access as resulted by rushing to get end products readily available to the public in respect of funders, festivals, and communities. The Writer of the Connect Film Project observes that:

*There is not enough attention on access in the arts, education, sports, politics, or any sector. We are not taught enough about access from a young age which therefore corners many adults to stay away from the topic in fear of saying or doing the wrong thing. Generations of trauma cannot be solved with one project. This is the smallest drop in the bucket that we can offer to an ongoing problem that will only hurt our society in growing larger.*

As shown in the Connect Project, Just Keep Going Reel embraces accessibility and inclusivity. The process from the beginning to the end of making the film, slowing down to let artists' innate creativity flow, seeking feedback directly from focus group participants, and taking time to reflect on individual and/or collective propositions are the centred practice. Safe spaces for one-on-one approach with co-directors and with a whole team in response to discomfort and challenges are also considered as an inclusive practice.

## Safe and Inclusive Journey

- **Connect Interpreting Services:** This project has been a beautiful journey, as a witness to the highs and lows of this project, the end film is a beautiful testament of the incredible strength and resilience the team members have to remind themselves of the end goal, therefore the potential impacts to the wider society. It has been a brilliant gift to witness the talents, skills and expertise each member of the team brought with them. It's been truly an honour to be a part of a project

that has kept at the forefront of its mind that "Connection" is what it is all about. It has been a joy to watch friendships and connects grow throughout the team.

- **Project Manager:** One important lesson I learned about access from working on The Connect Project is that accessible features should not be treated as an afterthought. Instead, they need to be integrated into the creative process from the very beginning. Content creators must continually experiment with different accessibility options and consider how these can enhance the viewer experience, rather than adding them as a last-minute fix in post-production. The Connect Project showcased how far experimentation can go, achieving accessibility in various forms, from visual descriptions to animated interpreter and subtitle features.

### **Traditional or Untraditional Accessible Features? That is the Question...**

**Connect Film Project team speculates:** *We learned that although new and innovative accessibility features are important, many people still prefer traditional ones. This emphasizes the importance of listening to the audience and considering their feedback to make improvements. We discovered that access is not just about adding features, but about finding a balance that serves the needs and preferences of the diverse audience.*

### **Tips from the Connect Film Project team:**

- **Co-Directors:** The process of trying something new will make people uncomfortable. Be mindful, respectful and considerate. Surround yourself with a team of like-minded people as you disrupt to create new possibilities. Always remember that progress is better than perfection.
- **Writer:** It is okay to be wrong. You will say and do the wrong thing. Try anyways. Sit in that discomfort!