Practising Inclusive Design in Partnership with Disability Communities for Equitable Consumer Research

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Abstract

There are many factors that create barriers to inclusive research, from inaccessible prototyping tools to stringent project processes and limited accessibility testing at the end of a project. It's difficult to access consumers with disabilities because the Research platforms are designed to capture the 'average' consumer experience.

This project investigates how inclusive co-design applied through a disability lens can shape Consumer Research to involve individuals from equity-deserving communities who have been excluded due to systemic barriers. The co-design sessions are informed by Inclusive Design Principles, Community Based Research and Indigenous Knowledge Systems to reframe meaningful co-designer /co-researcher engagement.

Voluntary co-designers / co-researchers joined the project only after initial engagements with different disability communities. The project includes upfront commitments to pay equity, ongoing consent and attribution. Research stages evolved from the feedback to ensure clarity and relevance. My role as a researcher changed to a facilitator, making space for the co-designers / co-researchers to lead from their own lived experiences. Session topics were adapted to be relatable and to support imaginative and exploratory engagement. Applying inclusive co-design principles through a disability lens captures a wide range of perspectives across equity-deserving communities and supports re-envisioning the consumer research process.

Keywords: inclusive design, co-design, disability lens, co-researcher, co-designer, disability advocacy, equity-deserving communities, consumer research process, agency, attribution, pay equity, collaboration, disabilities, lived experiences.

Land and Personal Acknowledgment

My name is Angelique Gitanjali (गीतांजलि) Saunders (formerly Abranches). I reside on the land and waters in Halton Hills, where I live and work with my family. I hope to remain for generations in the traditional territory of the Anishinabewaki, Wendake-Nionwentsïo, Haudenosaunee, Attiwonderonk, and Mississauga peoples. This includes the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. My commitment to be here for generations is a commitment to these same lands and waters.

I am a parent along with my husband Peter to our two children, Morna and Pauline. Pauline has changed my world with her disability. From the day she was born, I began to see different systems at play that were constantly at odds.

I have lived experience with disabilities. I am a South Asian Immigrant woman who was born in Bengaluru, India, studied in Kuwait and moved during the Gulf Invasion to Toronto, Ontario. I have ancestral family and Catholic faith heritage from India (Goa, Mangaluru, Bengaluru, Mumbai), Kenya and Ireland.

Dedication

To God, for opening a door I never thought could be opened.

To my eldest daughter Pauline, for shifting my perspectives daily. Before she was born, we received her diagnosis of Down Syndrome.

To my husband Peter, for all his support, his editing skills and dedication to our daughters while I studied.

To both my daughters, Pauline and Morna for going along with “Mummy has school” for the past two years.

To Matthew Edwards and Jutta Treviranus, for their steadfastness in this project's direction

To the Co-designers / co-researchers, for their openness, their collaboration and the opportunity to come together for this project, and to the Disability Community groups: the Bliss Alumni and the Baby Bliss Bot Team (at the IDRC), the Centre of Independent Living Toronto (CILT) and the Halton Down Syndrome Association (HDSA).

I am appreciative of the village that has gotten me here: my Mum, my extended family, my friends, my colleagues past and present, my spiritual mentors, countless industry mentors, the IDRC and our Inclusive Design Cohort and Professors.

Thank you!

Foreword

In keeping with Inclusive Design practices, I will be using a more nuanced model of disability that moves away from the medical definition to view it as more personalized, based on each person's own lived experiences and current reality, as explained in the literature review. Due to this being qualitative research, I have not identified demographic information, as I worked directly through community groups to find voluntary co-designers / co-researchers for this project. Imagine this to be like a randomized sample set in guerrilla user testing. The demographic data is not illustrative for this end and therefore is not collected.

The co-designers / co-researchers who are part of this project received gift cards and were remunerated for their time, skills and creativity contributed to this project. Their ideas are recognized as their own and have been quoted with their names or anonymized as they chose. The use of "participant" and "user" is avoided to ensure an Inclusive Co-Design mindset that is people centered.

I intentionally did not describe or name the assistive technology being used, unless it came up topically and was contextually relevant. The information presented will be from the co-designers' perspectives and their lived experiences of disability. I also did not choose to ask about medical conditions or diagnoses, since this was personal information. If it is discussed, it would be again topically relevant to the discussion; the research itself is not about this.

Contents

List of Definitions

AAC Device – An Augmentative and Alternative Communication device that is used to support or replace speech for individuals with communication disabilities.

Bliss iBand - The Bliss iBand is a group of adults with physical disabilities who get together weekly to explore the possibilities of actively making music together with virtual instrument apps in their Apple iPads.

Blissymbolics – This is a constructed language made up of basic symbols that represent ideas and can be put together to generate new symbols for new ideas.

CILT - The Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) is a community-based resource organization run by people with disabilities for people with disabilities.

Co-Designer - A person who collaborates with others to design physical spaces, digital experiences, physical products or creative events/experiences.

Co-Researcher - A person who collaborates with others to create, define, understand and analyze how the research process can be planned and delivered together.

Communication Partner – A person who helps facilitate communication with someone who uses AAC or low-tech devices.

Communication Board – A low-tech, paper-based tool featuring symbols, pictures or words to enable individuals with communication disabilities to gesture or input what they want to say.

Consumer Research – The process of defining criteria to gather and analyze data about people's behaviours, preferences and attitudes toward products, services, brands or market trends.

HDSA – The Halton Down Syndrome Association (HDSA) is a Registered Charity working to improve the quality of life for people with Down Syndrome and their families in the Halton Region.

IDRC – The Inclusive Design Research Centre is an international community of open-source developers, designers, researchers, educators and co-designers who work together to proactively ensure emerging technology and practices are designed inclusively.

User Experience (UX) Research – The process of studying users, including what they want, need and do when interacting with existing or new websites or prototypes of a proposed digital experience.

Statement of Contributions

The Co-Designers / Co-Researchers on this project were as follows:

Hope-Adina Adler

Monica Desai

Carolyn Henry

Samantha Millar

Julie Millar

Maverick Smith

1.0 Introduction

As a User Experience Researcher who has been working with consumer recruiting panels, it has been difficult to gather and work with people from the disability community. There are many factors that contribute to barriers, from inaccessible prototyping tools to stringent project processes and accessible production code that is only available close to launch. Research done toward the end of projects really is focused on remediation and overall functionality. The other option is doing qualitative research as part of early project discovery. This too is a barrier, as the prototyping tool used currently is primarily visual and object-based and has no legible code for assistive technology. Therefore, it is only available to users who can directly view and interact with it. The other challenge is the participant panels accessed through research platforms that have more generic, non-descript screeners and filters that make it awkward and difficult to connect with people with disabilities and equity deserving communities. These panels are geared to finding the average audience, not niche audiences. Even though there are options for more specialized bespoke panels, it remains unclear how those who experience barriers to technology would even engage with these platforms.

Upon further examining these issues and discussing them with my Advisors, I recognized a variety of possible reasons that made it hard to access the disability community within research platforms. In some cases, people with disabilities remain hidden because the panel design does not allow them to identify themselves as having a disability, or they may choose to remain hidden. Even now, the system can filter for intersectionality, but how does it acknowledge it? Would marginalized communities receive equitable pay through these platforms? It seems like the individual's lived experiences are lost, their community stories are untold, and their labour and effort are most likely to be underpaid.

This line of questioning led to asking about the systems that were in place before the technology, before the research platforms were created. What were the system mismatches when reviewing research methods, platforms and tools in relation to critical disability theories, disability community knowledge and the lives of disabled people?

After reviewing research studies based on disability theories for context, it became clear that the mismatches in present systems did originate from earlier. And the present systems continue to be designed with the same barriers that prevent inclusion and replicate biased, misinformed perspectives of marginalized communities. There are different approaches that are emerging which are disability focused – like the authors Megan Hofmann, Devva Kasnitz, Jennifer Mankoff and Cynthis L Bennett, all disabled scholars who use their disability to tell their stories while aiming to underscore the importance:

> [Of] the core observations—ableism, oversimplification, and connection. We encourage […] researchers to learn and change with us: (1) we call for a commitment to recognize and repair ableism; (2) we caution against the oversimplification of disability and accessibility research; (3) and we, again [45], encourage researchers to take a disability studies perspective, catering the point of view, history and context of disabled people. (Hofmann et al., 2020)

2.0 Research Goal and Questions

RESEARCH GOAL

The purpose of the project is to explore how co-designing can evolve the consumer research process, so it brings in those who are statistically excluded by applying a disability lens to include marginalized communities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.) How is the consumer research framework impacted by applying a disability lens?

2.) How does co-design influence the stages of a research study and the artefacts created? What changes and what remains the same?

3.) What happens to the role and function of the researcher when partnering with Co-Designers / Co-Researchers?

4.) What do the Co-Designers / Co-Researchers need from inclusive co-design sessions, so the process is relevant to them?

3.0 Theory of Practice

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the literature review is to better understand the various contexts that exist within the field of Disability Studies and how the literature offers perspectives into the fields of Market Research, Accessibility Research and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) Research. Within each of these fields, there is a variety of disability theories, from the medical model to the social model to a more nuanced view of disability based on lived experiences and the embodied experience of disability (Beudaert et al., 2024). It is important to note how ableism is inherent within all the systems and the impact on these fields of study. It is critical to note the power dynamic at play within ableist systems and ensure this is resituated to those who have lived experiences with disability, so they can speak for themselves, offer their own perspectives and work toward the goals they believe are important.

In the field of market research, there are various articles that all point toward the ‘lack of access’ to ‘vulnerable’ communities that span across gender, race, social status, income, education, geographic location, disability, illness, family status, etc.

> To date, consumer researchers have scantly addressed normalcy strategies. Baker’s (2006) inquiry of the symbolic and experiential value of shopping for people with visual impairments is likely to be the most notable exception. (Visconti, 2006)

The fact that these communities are missed or ignored from the research negatively affects their participation in the economy and keeps them invisible to consumer-facing organizations and companies. These individuals continue to face systemic oppression, misrepresentation or exclusion due to multiple factors:

> Essentially, intersectionality proposes, issues of gender, race and class (among others) should not be seen as independent, or [think about it this from this perspective] if you are poor, black and female, you get it in three ways. (Sarena et al, 2019)

So many singular categories form silos instead of understanding the relational and interdependent variables that run through peoples lived experiences. These “vulnerable” communities could appear “typical” in one category, but not in others. So, it is hard to address these complexities when selecting groups for research purposes in consumer panels as it’s hard to be compartmentalized. While ‘vulnerable’ communities include people with disabilities, there is more specific terminology that addresses those with disabilities called “Consumers with Disabilities” or “CWD” within the Market Research field. (Beudaert et al., 2024). We can see that even with this categorization, there is the issue of how race, gender, socio-economic status, birth country, etc., can also be factored in by consumer researchers who learn to add the lens of recognizing systemic barriers and identifying intersectionality when working with marginalized communities.

How can the research process for working with the Disability community then become more accountable, be responsive and organically take shape in a way that is understood equally by those involved and those who will be impacted?

DEFINITIONS OF DISABILITY

There are a few models to draw on for definitions of disability, although they are highly debatable and nuanced, especially for those who are disabled themselves.

a. The medical model of disability is limited by defining just physical impairments and medical conditions. It can be problematic for those who have multiple impairments that are not interconnected and lack a single diagnosis.
b. The social model of disability views “disability [as] the result of economic, environmental and cultural barriers that prevent full participation in society, rather than a characteristic of the individual ... from a social model view, disability ceases to be something that people “have” and is understood instead as something “done to” people with impairments.” (Beudaert et al., 2024) The whole nature of being passive within a system of advocacy for rights of individuals with disability can be disempowering, as it is not situated from the perspective of the disabled person.

Hence, the vulnerable individual is traditionally portrayed as weak, soft, and ‘lesser than.’ These kinds of constructions of vulnerability both universalize vulnerability for that group and feed into the deficit-focused model of disability, where the abilities and adaptabilities of people with disability are overlooked. (Gaskin et al., 2017)

c. Crip authors use their own lens to confront and examine systemic barriers that many consistently face. This definition provides an understanding of how to live with disabilities without any presumptions or expectations. Those who call themselves crip authors “push back on notions of ‘successful living’ and forms of research participation which emphasize completing tasks or achieving design goals and instead take note of all bodily rhythms and behaviours as forms of engagement and communication.” (Hofmann et al., 2020)

> [C]rip authorship as provocations to explore the shaping of authorship by disability, whether that has to do with modality, access, language, organization, collaboration, funding, translation, or dissemination. In other words, we take disability as method, beyond content and author function. (Mills et al., 2023)

The definition of disability should be rooted in those who are disabled themselves, so there can be appropriate context and meaningful dialogues from their own lived experiences, all spoken and defined by them. “Recent studies are attempting to understand multifaceted, complex embodiments and feelings, and the unique intersectionality that influences varied individual experiences of [people with disabilities]” (Beudaert et al., 2024) These perspectives should inform anyone who works with disabled people to move away from linear progression of tasks and presumptive definitions based in ableist notions of what must be ‘completed’ from a research perspective.

4.0 Gaps and Approaches

WHAT ARE THE GAPS?

With that in mind and moving away from linear progressions for research, it is important to understand some of the methods that have been used by and for disabled communities and disabled researchers. When working with the disabled community and disenfranchised groups, researchers themselves must consider their positionality in society and think about how they need to bridge their perspectives, so they can understand the lived experiences of the community they seek to partner with. They can also think about their own unique lived experience and where it lies in relation to the social and economic systems within society. “[T]he complexity of intersectionality of vulnerability is exacerbated when researchers are unfamiliar with the lives of these groups.” (Carlini et al., 2023)

Consumer-facing organizations/companies should think about what can lead to more equitable and empowering community relationships that create sustainable pathways of new systems. Historical use of research has led to power dynamics that can create inequities and further disenfranchise marginalized groups. The ability to conduct research “on” an individual denotes some of the ableist and capitalist mentalities of existing systems. This is especially true when working with communities in different socio-economic, cultural and local contexts. It is crucial that power moves away from the research being done, to intersectional communities voicing their own stories, their own lived experiences. The research methods and frameworks listed below have one thing in common: they all shift the power from the research and the researcher to the community members with disabilities, to ensure it is by individuals for themselves and their own communities:

1. **Critical Participatory Action Research** starts with the community so that the control lies with those from the community who document the discussions and become change agents and speak to inequities they currently experience. (Wernick, L., 2023)
2. **Communication Accessible Research Methods** include different ways for collecting communication from individuals who require different devices. This can be done by researchers and participants, capturing information so it can be understood and recorded as data for further analysis in the research. (Beudaert et al., 2024)
3. **Engage Activist / Community Disability Groups** is where the impacted community leads the research in service of their community members. Their

goals and needs focus the research direction and ensure inclusion for a diverse group of members that represent intersectionality. It's not based on medical impairment or assistive device technology categorizations, which are often viewed as singular and not understood to be more nuanced. (Hofmann et al., 2020)

4. **Consumer Partnerships in Research Method (CPR)** is based on five principles: i) the consumer involvement goal for the research, ii) representation and outreach, iii) strategies for partnering in research, iv) researcher capability, v) transparency in reporting involvement, dissemination and evaluation. (Carlini et al., 2023)
5. **Emancipatory Research Principles** are as follows: 1. Use of the social model of disability as the foundation for the research approach. 2. Only doing research that will promote disabled people and their communities with "self-empowerment" and "removal of disabling barriers." 3. That disabled persons and communities be in complete control of the research production. 4. Representing those individual lived experiences with disability as political and trying to ensure they are portrayed within the "political commonality of individual experiences." 5. Foregoing unbiased researcher representation and committing to the "struggles of disabled people for self-emancipation." 6. Adaptive methods of data collection and analysis based on the differing needs of disabled people. (Melifont et al., 2024)

With any systems of knowledge creation, there can be power imbalances in inherent structures, classification schemes and research analysis methods that need to be accounted for, especially when working with groups that face inequities. The research methods themselves favour categorizing disability types, comprehension and performance into hierarchies that can accredit the researcher's knowledge and favour one individual's experience over the other, but not the individual's knowledge of their own lived experiences and expertise with their intersectional identity. The notion of rigour and accuracy for 'data' collection of human stories keeps us from asking who is 'leading' the research, who 'benefits' from the research and who will 'present' the final report and who will ‘implement’ the results. Will it be the people whose day-to-day lives are directly impacted? Will it be their communities that will also be impacted?

5.0 Applied Methods & Frameworks

It was important to choose models that understand the whole person, along with all their differences and lived experiences. It is already known that the oversimplified categories used to filter and tag data in technology systems are inadequate; the human experience in its entirety will always fall into the edges and peripheries of variables and unpredictability.

> [W]ho represents the “difficult 20%”? It is anyone that finds themselves at the margins, not served, too far from average, whose needs are not met. It is anyone that experiences a mismatch between what they need and what is available due to situation, birth, or accident. Any one of us could find our most critical needs to be part of the “difficult 20%” at any time, and when we least expect it.(Treviranus, 2019)

How can organizations and companies focus on research approaches that empowers diverse intersectional groups to bring their lived experiences to the forefront? How can there be a different intention that “uses intersectionality as a means of favouring the experiences of disability: identify the intersectional identities that connect with disability and include them within research—low-income, chronic illness, elderly, for example?” (Edwards, Matthew. Personal communication. 2025).

These research frameworks stood out because of their focus on community, individual relationships, and partnerships to co-design together and ‘worldbuilding’ (Morin, personal communication, 2025)

1. **Indigenous Knowledge Systems** can provide multiple perspectives to reflect the knowledge creation process as individuals and as a collective, diverse group, with each of our own stories and lived experiences. With Indigenous Knowledge Systems, the community leads the knowledge creation and analysis. This same community would be engaged in sharing out the results.

   > Indigenous knowledge systems are not simply bodies of cultural information. They are epistemologies—ways of understanding how

knowledge is produced, validated, and applied. Across many Indigenous traditions, knowledge is grounded in relationships: to land, to ancestors, to community, and to future generations. Knowledge is validated not only through abstraction but through continuity, stewardship, and lived accountability. (Clark, 2026).

2. **Community-Based Research Framework** involves individuals from the disability community who will be directly impacted by the research results. This study had key informant interviews, focus group interviews and literature reviews to better “identify key/guiding principles and areas of good practices with respect to CBR [Community-Based Research]” (Poon, B et al., 2024). Those involved in the informant interviews and focus groups were also involved in how the results were presented and had agency over the information produced.
3. **Inclusive Co-Design Principles** are as follows: 1. Recognize diversity and uniqueness. Each individual has unique differences that do not conform to or fit into the ‘hypothetical average.’ It is important to design for varying needs and allow for “interoperability of the design.” 2. Inclusive process and tools. These should from the start involve persons with disabilities as Co-Designers / Co-Researchers, so all team members benefit from working together throughout an iterative process that is equally understood by those involved. 3. Broader beneficial impact. While the individual needs are met by the design, it is important that there is broader impact that is beneficial to society and creates a ‘virtuous cycle’ of equity and inclusion in a new baseline. (Treviranus, 2018)

6.0 The Intended Co-Designer

Based on the research methods selected as part of my process, an important first step was establishing connections to the disability community to build relationships and spend time to better understand individual experiences. I always wanted to work with members from the disability community.

With my daughter Pauline, we belong to the Halton Down Syndrome Association. We have found our disability community has been essential since we can relate to each other’s experiences even with differences. Families come together, so all of us get to meet and socialize. My daughter has influenced me, and I really wanted to have the HDSA community involved, since to me it represents her in this project as she is still quite young.

Through the Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC) with the Bliss Alumni in Ontario, Shirley McNaughton introduced me to the Bliss iBand music group in 2024. I learned more about the group after attending Bliss iBand sessions where members of the community meet weekly to play music on their i-Pads and learn new songs with their choir director. I was able as well last spring to attend a community event, where I got to meet different members. It really has also helped me understand the Inclusive Design Program at OCAD University better by being connected to the Bliss AI project and meeting members from the Bliss Community internationally.

Last summer, I did a placement with the Centre of Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) through the Graduate studies program. I was able to join various community discussions and workshops, where I was introduced to different groups at CILT and grew to know some of the staff and community members personally. This community was very important to me, since it offers services and programs across disabilities. I have wondered many times why so many silos exist within the disability community; finding CILT helped me see a different reality.

After getting my research ethics board approval from OCAD University, I was able to connect with these groups to inquire about connecting with individuals and families who would be interested in this project. Community leaders from the HDSA, CILT and Bliss Alumni group all sent initial emails to community members to explain the project and inform them about being compensated for their time and work. In total, five disabled community members and three of their communication partners voluntarily joined the project.

7.0 Requirements of the Co-Designer

There are in total eight co-designers / co-researchers that joined this project: two from CILT, two from the Bliss Alumni group and Bliss iBand and one from the HDSA. Three of them had their communication partners/family members join in as co-designers. Two of the co-designers use an Augmentative and Alternative

Communication (an AAC device) to vocalize what they want to say; they have access to a device and to the low-fi physical communication board and a communication partner. Another co-designer who is vocal, did have a communication partner as well.

Each of them let me know their communication preferences and how they wanted to receive meeting agendas ahead of time to help them be prepared. There were a range of requirements and preferences of meeting tools, with Zoom providing the most options for saving transcripts, being able to chat, access live captions, and being able to save recordings locally for privacy reasons. Two co-designers preferred meeting on Teams as it worked better with their AAC device and allowed two people to join from a co-located room on separate computers. We also discussed ongoing availability, and the days of the week that would work best for group meetings. I introduced this project but did not have all the details at this time as the process would evolve the topic and how it would take shape.

I have not provided more identifying details due to the nature of the Co-Researcher Consent Document. While some will be named during the research, I did keep this higher level to respect their anonymity. Here is a reference list of the co-designers / co-researchers:

- Hope
- Anonymous 1 & 2
- Anonymous 3 & 4
- Anonymous 5
- Sam and Julie

8.0 The intended Audience

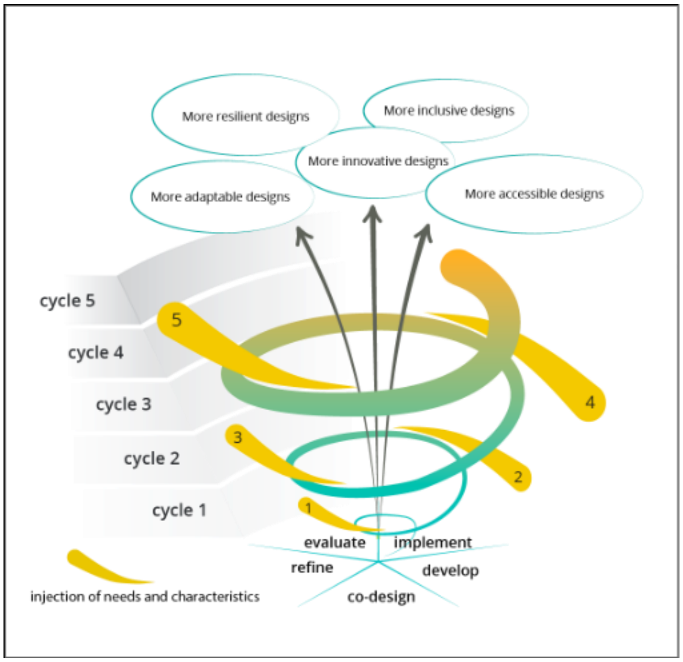
The main audience this is aimed at is Consumer-Facing Organizations and Companies – specifically those who make decisions to fund project initiatives and the project teams. The invitation to these companies is to form equitable partnerships with Disability Communities and other Intersectional Communities, and to involve them or even have them lead feedback and/or research on Policy, Product, Services, Design, Communication Strategies, etc. The current systems are not built to bring their stories to the forefront and there is a great need especially as processes and technology moves away from being connected to communities, individuals, and their lives.

9.0 Co-Design Process and Phases

Initially, I thought I could do one group co-design session. However, this can be seen as tokenistic and not really working with Co-Designers from the Disability Community. I learned that the IDRC projects often involve multiple touchpoints to build community and relationships (Shahi, 2025). I had to think about this process, which is described by Jutta Treviranus as the Virtuous Tornado (Figure 1). The virtuous tornado illustrates smaller to bigger spirals as it goes upward. Through each iterative cycles, it expands and include new needs and characteristics that are expanded on by further co-designs to become increasingly inclusive due to the process.

Figure 1

Virtuous Tornado



Note. From “Inclusive Design: The Bell Curve, the Starburst and the Virtuous Tornado” by J. Treviranus, 2019, https://idrc.ocadu.ca/ideas/inclusive-design-the-bell-curve-the-starburst-and-the-virtuous-tornado/. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC BY 4.0).

I also knew from my own experience with talking to the Bliss iBand community leader that growing and being part of a community would take time. After meeting with Co-Designers at the IDRC and attending Group workshops at CILT, I realized this could not be a one-time meeting. It would need to have separate phases to build connection, evolve the project process, and work together on project materials, goals, and outcomes. Here is the process that was used for this project:

Pre-Planning – Initially, I had to connect with the different organizations and email the Community contacts to explain what the research would entail. This involved providing them with a description they could circulate with their community. The emails I needed to circulate went through multiple edits with the Community contacts to make sure they were concise and informative about the project and process. Once the emails were circulated with each group, there were multiple follow-ups before I received responses.

Phase 1 - Meet and Greet – After each person was in touch via email, we met together first to see what questions they had. After this meeting, they were given the option of making the decision to join the project if it was still of interest. The Consent Form on Microsoft Forms was sent out after this meeting, and each person could take their time to complete it. They could choose if they wanted to be attributed as co-designers / co-researchers and have their names beside quotes from them. I wanted to make sure I did this step early, to find out about the way they like to work and communicate. I also asked questions about the types of materials they need in advance, so they would feel prepared for each session.

Phase 2 – Co-Design 1:1 Interviews - The first part of this session explored the topic of a current and dream meeting experience based on a personalized scenario. This topic was chosen because it reflects what happens in qualitative research studies and how data is usually collected through meetings and interviews. In user experience (UX) terms, this is meant to resemble talking about barriers and solutions. Each person received the same questions and discussion prompts, but different personalized scenarios based on their interests. The co-designers / co-researchers could relate more easily to the topic of meetings. I met with each of them, and sometimes this included their communication partner.

Phase 3 – Group Meet and Greet and Phase 4 – Group Co-Design Discussion – The second part of the process was meant to have everyone come together to discuss their own events that they had planned. The prompts and discussion materials went through iterations based on feedback from the group. Each person created their own event and explained the rationale for each step. It was a way to get everyone to think creatively before coming together for the group discussion. The goal here was to understand more about how they would want to organize groups' events and what they felt would be important outcomes. The secondary goal was to learn more about their organization and planning of events and how those could tie into how researchers structure their sessions for co-designing and collaborating.

Continuous feedback loops and iterations – The research process began to be iterated, as some of the pieces were hard to predict until each person learned about them. There was more feedback in the lead-up to the Group co-design discussion. Individuals also provided personal feedback on the final Group Discussion, which was a reflection on how they would add to their own topics. Observations of the overall research process were noted throughout to help pivot and adapt according to the co-designers / co-researchers the Advisors, and the Facilitator/Researcher.

RESEARCH DESIGN SUMMARY

1:1 Co-design sessions allowed for each of the co-designers / co-researchers to share their current experiences with meeting tools and dream up their own ideal virtual meeting experience. Next, focus group discussions involved each of them planning and organizing their own event. These discussions helped each person think about their events differently and how they could change them based on each other’s needs, imagination, and interests. At every stage of the process, they provided input and feedback to steer direction on the formatting of materials, group or individual topics and the meeting organization itself. The topic of meetings and events was used with the co-designers/co-researchers as it closely reflected the research process itself, specifically interviews, focus groups, and collaborative ideation.

10.0 Indicators of Success / Failures

These are my own initial indicators of success and failures, based on my experience with the co-design process. If there was additional time, it would be good to follow up and get feedback from the Co-Designers / Co-Researchers on what they would view as success or failures.

1. The parts that worked well during this project were the level of commitment and hard work done by each of them. They continued to stay engaged for the project during both the Individual and Group Co-Design Sessions.

2. At some points during the process, especially at the start, a few of the people who expressed interest were hesitant to join. At the time, explaining the project and providing additional context were challenging, as the project direction was still being planned. However, everyone who came to the initial meeting to discuss the project did join, despite any initial hesitancy.

3. Setting expectations for Group Members was not done in a way that addressed their different communication and sensory needs at the start of the project. It would have been good to begin the Group sessions by setting up some shared commitments for everyone and determining the important aspects of a virtual meeting space that would make everyone feel at ease.

4. Smaller group formations did not happen during the Group Co-Design session, partially because it was not planned. The activity outline could have set it up better as a partnered activity to help support collaboration. Having this come up naturally would have been preferable, but a back-up plan to do this in some way with choice would have been good to figure out in advance. There were some who volunteered to do this, but it did not materialize due to shortened times.

5. Finding a way to capture feedback from them before and after each session could have helped the entire process flow a bit better. A skeleton framework of essential co-design activities would have been an easy way to surface insights and build small and manageable feedback loops for them to review. Sharing lengthy transcripts toward the end or even after each meeting was overwhelming and just not accessible. They did provide feedback to and clarified the transcripts. However, high-level summaries of the discussions and learnings would have been better.

11.0 Key Findings from the Co-Design process

By using a Disability Lens on Consumer Research Methods through Inclusive Co-Design, this project actively prioritized equitable consenting processes (from the start) and nurturing community relationships.

a. It was important to ensure consent was ‘collected’ at the start of the project and revisited throughout the process. Keeping this open was important for individual agency. In the consent document, each person had the option to add their names to their quotes, be listed anonymously and/or be named as co-designers / co-researchers on this project. This allowed them to be recognized for their contributions. Ensuring each person’s desired level of anonymity was met was crucial to building trust. The work they did was compensated with gift cards, as each was a working member of the team that deserved fair remuneration.

b. Facilitating community connections was integral to the co-designers / co-researchers, from their experiences and to the event they planned. They all knew exactly whom they would invite. The opportunity to socialize and connect virtually or in person for added interactivity. Being creative, spontaneous, fun, and learning new things created interest and engaged each person by relating to their own interests and firsthand experiences. This goes back to Indigenous Knowledge Systems and how being connected to community is pivotal in knowledge creation (Clark, 2026) through a shared, communal experience.

Co-Designers/Co-researchers influenced most of the research stages, from the consent form to the meeting materials and the discussion prompts.

a. The co-design created space for them to ask questions about some of the research processes. For instance, Sam wanted to be a Co-Designer instead of a Co-Researcher, since that felt more known to her.

   When meeting 1:1 with Sam and Julie:
   Angelique: *That is what Co-researcher means to me. But if you have a better term, I'd like to hear that.*
   Sam *inputs the term "Co di" on the AAC device.*
   Julie: *Do you want to be a co-designer?*

b. Some of the prepared meeting materials were too unclear and caused the Co-Designers to come together and ask for what they wanted to see instead. One person's thoughts were similar to the entire group. That consensus led to pushing back and requesting a more suitable document that was adaptable to the varied needs and interests of the co-designers / co-researchers.

The role and function of the researcher were complemented by the co-designers / co-researchers in the inclusive co-design process since it meant working together as a team.

a. It meant sharing power and agency and reducing systemic biases. The researcher is forced to consider their positionality within the system and find out how they can make different choices that positively impact the co-designers / co-researchers and their communities. It is no longer about the stakeholder funding the research, but about how this research will affect the community and its individual members.

b. The research sessions were always meant to be mutual conversations. When conversations didn't feel forced, they led to more authentic discussions and the data captured became more insightful. The researcher cannot in this context be a subject matter expert and needs to learn from the group members even about the right discussion prompts and meeting materials, to yield genuine responses.

For the co-designers / co-researchers what was important in the research process was starting off with relevant topics, having agency to modify a topic so that it became relevant and finally having creative licence to explore and be imaginative

a. Finding parallel personalized scenarios for each individual meant creating modular scenarios that had the same discussion prompts. Even in group discussions, they were still applicable. Each person had a common reference point and could engage in discussions about questions or comments from the group. They became a conversation starter and enriched the responses from the Co-Design Session.

12.0 Evaluations of the Results

12.1 Lessons learned for Consumer Research

A. Research without a pre-determined solution

In Consumer Research, there is often some preliminary idea of a 'final' solution. However, it is never open-ended, unless it is a brand-new product; and even then, there will be a simple mapping of what the final solution might be. This solution will go through different rounds of iteration based on talks with the tech teams and other affected business units to make sure the risk is mitigated and the cost stays within budget.

With the co-design sessions, the direction of each phase of research builds on the previous phase. So, while there is no pre-determined solution, there is a direction that is actively guided by the collective knowledge and lived experiences of the group. As the group iterates together, the feedback is gathered and collected to help influence the next co-design phase.

The biggest distinction is that without a predetermined solution, the research and design phases become less leading. The chances for innovation are greater, since they are not affected by preliminary feasibility discussions that limit creativity. Also, co-designers / co-researchers from equity-deserving communities can create different opportunities that might not otherwise be considered, due to the traditionally limited, homogenous participant pools in Consumer Research.

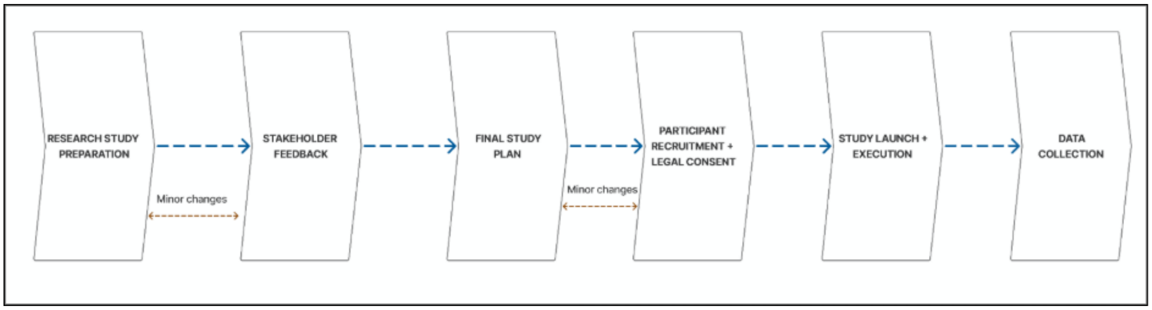
> We can adjust our metrics to value the human edges where we find the early warning signs of crisis to come, the greatest diversity, and the most generative ideas for truly innovative change. (Treviranus, 2026)

B. Non-linear processes

Consumer research tends to be linear, so the work is more outcome-driven (Figure 2), with a beginning, middle, and end. The initial stages of the research process in Consumer Research and Inclusive Co-Design are similar in preparing the plan, deciding on recruitment strategies, and engaging stakeholders to limit variables. Once the Co-Design session happens, this is where it departs from being a linear process, as there are several cycles of exploration and iteration. The co-designers / co-researchers become the key stakeholders and constantly re-engage to iterate the process, so it continues to be relevant. In the Consumer Research journey, what is not shown is the number of stakeholder decisions and meetings that happen outside of the research. So, while the research is happening, stakeholder discussions can change the relevance of the research itself.

Figure 2

Consumer Research Process

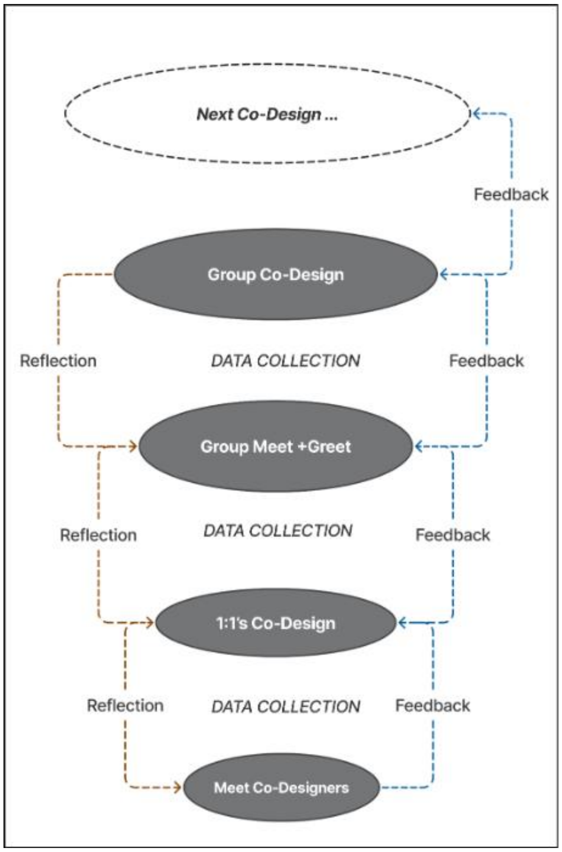


Note – Diagram created by author

Comparatively, in the Co-Design version of the diagram, there are smaller circles that widen for each co-design phase as they stack on top of each other and grow outward. Downward and upward arrows show how feedback and reflection are part of the entire process.

Figure 3

This Project's Virtual Tornado Co-Design Phases



Note – Diagram created by author

12.2 Lessons learned for the research stages

A. Self-Organization and Switching Roles

It was important that each co-designer/ co-researcher had a turn choosing the format of what they wanted to discuss and facilitate part of the Group Co-Design discussions. During the individual sessions, as a researcher, I always asked if there were any items to discuss before we got started. Then, once we did get started, I asked if there was a particular order in which they wanted to answer the questions. It became important to do this, so the Co-Designers knew they also had room to change the format to a way that worked better for them. It also brought in more critical thinking to not accept some of the given reasons and instead to push for what they felt was important to know or to acknowledge. For the Group Co-Design sessions, changing the order of things brought about the co-designers' understanding of each other’s cues. It also contributed to creating a supportive environment for learning more about each other. During the Group Meet and Greet, the group activity helped each Co-Designer/ Co-Researcher become more familiar with each other. As a researcher, I also contributed to this, as we were all doing so, and it helped me feel more connected to our new group.

B. Multi-modal and accessible documents

During the Co-Design sessions, the meeting materials were catered to what each person needed. Often, before an individual or group session, each group member received individual documents they could access. The goal was to keep everything personalized to build credibility and a working relationship, especially because the format of our meetings remained virtual. There were MS Word documents for greater access. Some visual learners preferred slides over a text-heavy document. At some point in the process, I stuck to just MS Word documents instead of creating multiple versions. For the first meeting and for greeting individuals, there was both a PowerPoint slide and a Word document. The Consent form existed as a Word Document and as a Microsoft form. It was a challenge for Sam, as the links could not open in her AAC device. In an email, she wrote the following: “Yes, it would be better as word document. I could not fill out the questionnaire by myself and ...I cannot follow links.” So, different document options were always important for the co-designers / co-researchers. Sticking to one format did not always mean it was the accessible choice for everyone in the project.

C. Diverse Communication Styles

For these sessions, each Co-Designer had their own preferred way of communicating, whether through their AAC Device, a communication partner, signing with their communication board and/or speaking for themselves. In the Group Co-Design Session, they had to adjust to the different ways each other vocalized or spoke.

This could change from meeting to meeting. It was not something that needed to be predictable. It also was a time to set expectations as a group that we had to navigate steps in sequence. The meeting platform used to transcribe and record the sessions could not distinguish who was speaking or vocalizing. Only one person per device was tracked and transcribed in the meeting recording. When reviewing transcript files, especially group sessions, the files had to be edited to show the names. The current research tools and meeting platforms are not designed to handle broad ranges in communication styles.

> ***Anonymous 1 and 2:*** *She would ask at the beginning of the meeting how they want to show, when they want to speak, for example, wave a hand. Or, you know, however, they want to indicate... And would send an email with topics, with a meeting invitation. I would ask if okay to record the meeting.*

D. The time factor and additional preparation

The Co-Design process took more time when the co-designers / co-researchers needed clarity for planning the next sessions. I did not realize how important the initial steps and time involved with getting to know the disability communities would be. Navigating community connections is a key step in building trust and figuring out if there is a fit. I really liked spending time doing this, as it helped me get a practical understanding of what was meant by Disability Advocacy and “Crip time.” These are foundational concepts that I read about and then practised for this project at the start. When going through the call for volunteer co-designers / co-researchers, this was important, as everything took time and being known to some members in the group was again a way of building trust and familiarity. Once they joined the project, it became important to take time to get to know each person and their role on the project. The next stage was ensuring there was enough time for the group to meet before beginning to collaborate. There can be anxiety in the process of getting to know people for the first time. Being available to bond together was essential to the group's learnings.

Initially, there was only one planned Co-Design group session. However, this became two sessions to give everyone a chance to get their questions answered before the Co-Design group session. During the first session, the additional time helped us learn more about each other and connect. This initial session became an informal group meeting through introductions and then a "Guess who?" icebreaker based on the following dream virtual meeting scenarios each person produced for the Individual Co-Design Sessions that were used in the Group Meet and Greet session.

> ***Hope:*** *I'm currently playing Red Dead Redemption and talking to the characters would be kind of fun, I think, because like one of them is this white guy named Dutch and he's weirdly a really good ally. Like, every time somebody's racist towards Black people or Indigenous people...It would be fun to interview the characters to find out more about their motivation and how they learned the nuances and politics of this time period....Maybe ...being able to choose how you want to have your tone come across as would be fun, instead of it just being like a normal conversation.*
>
> ***Anonymous 2:*** *She would speak with just Lady Mary. [From Downton Abbey]*
> ***Anonymous 1:*** *I would try to use my voice device to talk to her. Just talking to her would be fun for me.*
> ***Anonymous 2:*** *How would Lady Mary take over running the estate?*
>
> ***Anonymous 3:*** *So, I want to go to Salt Lake. I want to go to High School Musical. I want to sing and dance. ...Get ahead of the game. I don't dance. I run it all. Can I have this dance? And a night to remember. Walk away, Scream. These are all the different songs from the movie high school musical...And meet Sharpay and Ryan.*
>
> ***Anonymous 5:*** *Part 1: Facilitating those workshops would probably be my dream virtual online experience with training, because the way that so did those workshops was really accessible for everybody. Like, not only the facilitators, but also the audience and it... It seems it probably didn't do much, but it feels like it helped to deal with some of the systemic and institutional ableism that's present in, like, the helping professions, and by participating in those workshops. Part 2: I picked two disability ancestors, so I picked Alice Wong and Patty Byrne... I'd want to have in the meeting...[it] would be like an interview or discussion. I*

> *probably want to ask them what kept them going when they were experiencing systemic ableism. I'd want to ask them questions about like the history of the disability justice movement because they're like important people that actually shaped it.*
>
> ***Sam:*** *When speaking about the Prisoner of Azkaban, I would want them to be able to pull the thoughts from my head. [Special action I would do is] Use a wand. [To have fun] Ride a broomstick.*

12.3 Lessons learned for researchers

A. Learning and listening

The researcher needs to actively focus on listening to and learning from the co-designers / co-researchers as they are the experts with their own lived experiences. The role of the researcher assumes a hierarchical position in Consumer Research of being the one to ask questions, to probe for responses and lead the interview or session. Within these sessions as a researcher, I had to learn to take a step back to become an active listener. It was important to make room for feedback, so that they knew it was their turn to vocalize, gesture and speak, only if they wanted to do so. It was them sharing their own experiences based on the questions asked. I had to be careful to use the same language as the co-designers / co-researchers' responses, to build from their foundation. It was good to pay attention to their needs, gestures and vocalizations during the sessions. One of my advisors, Matt, had told me to pay attention to “Disability as a method,” to not change the transcript text and to keep it as close as possible to what the Co-Designer communicated.

During the meetings, the transcript feature sometimes worked well and sometimes not: “The transcript has their name, but often times it is the communication partner talking and their name saves as the main person speaking” (Angelique notes, 2026). With the meeting transcripts, I had to go back in and edit and rename the Co-Designers who were there, to capture them correctly as part of my research process.

B. Not becoming the barrier

The researcher needs to be actively aware of their own biases due to complex and interconnected social systems. In most research projects, the need for sticking to the plan and having control can be integral to the success of research outcomes. However, in Co-Design research, it's important that the researcher is actively aware of their own biases, so they can mitigate them or channel them differently. One of my strange assumptions was that I needed individuals who could actively use their AAC devices during the meeting. Initially, I was going to say 'No' to one of the Co-Designers, because they were instead going to use their communication board with their communication partner. I was mistaken. Due to my background as a UX Researcher, my assumption was that those who needed to vocalize would rely on an AAC Device because then it would be coming from them. That again was another bias, which meant I was limited in my understanding in the joint communication process that takes place when individuals can choose to vocalize through their communication partner, using a physical communication board, on their AAC device or whatever combination suits their needs in that moment.

C. Clear and Simple communication

The Co-Design process is dependent on frequent, easy communications that recap what just took place and anticipate what is needed for the next session. During the process, there was communication before a session, along with an attached document for discussion prompts about a topic. Initially, the consent document was sent out, and most could access it. The format of the consent document became too detailed for an online Microsoft form, so it had to be displayed in two pages. The first page was the fillable form and then the details that followed took up the whole next page. (Appendix B)

When the Co-Design process begins, especially virtually, it becomes more apparent how details in documents can be too numerous and why it's important to only send out necessary and needed communication. Sometimes the email attachments were a challenge to access, due to restrictions in MS Office for shared documents. Even though there were presentations and Word documents to help bring clarity during the virtual meetings, the process was not always intuitive.

For the co-designers / co-researchers, some of the explanations for activities were complex, jargon-filled and unclear. For the scenarios, I tried not to be too prescriptive, but that approach resulted in the criteria being too vague or too theoretical. The balance here was adding high-level ideas to provide them with different ranges that they could build from and make their own. They navigated the complexity by bringing their perspectives to our discussions, to find different ways to help the group move forward.

> ***Hope:*** *Would like more specific prompts as the questions are too vague. I'm curious also some of it is very vague and for my neurodivergence, I need a little bit more specificity to… figure out how to answer it adequately, so I think that would be helpful, like, even just a couple of bullet points underneath, like, a prompt or something would help.*
>
> ***Anonymous 4:*** *So, we can like maybe think of an activity...and then maybe just figure out how she would go about doing it that, right?...The main topic was not as relevant: meeting with the software company.*
>
> ***Sam and Julie:*** *She sent you back that document you sent her, but she didn't really answer your questions, what you were looking for. So perhaps when, you know, give an idea around an event.... to do it independently, [there] needs a little bit more prompting.*

D. Role of a Facilitator

The researcher in Inclusive Co-Design needs to be a facilitator rather than a “Researcher.” The hierarchy of the researcher should not matter in Inclusive Co-Design. Even when meeting with potential co-designers / co-researchers for the first time, there was a difference in my mind, knowing we would essentially be working together during these sessions. I knew I was there to talk about the project and not assume that my questions or prompts would be answered. I wanted them to ask me questions, to question the process and to come with their own perspectives. The role reversal began at the start of the Inclusive Co-Design project and continued throughout. It was especially true in the group co-design sessions, which had more of a workshop format.

> ***Personal notes:*** *All of a sudden the researcher has to wait on each individual to make their decisions and it's not just an automatic decision...even with the consent document, it's still up to the individual to make this decision whether they want to do this or not.*

12.4 Lessons learned from Co-Designers / Co-Researchers

A. Personalized and relevant scenarios for individual engagement

When beginning the Co-Design process, the scenarios needed to be personalized for each co-designer / co-researcher, so they were interested in responding. It had to be something they already were interested in and had experience with. For some, they could not relate easily to the topic, or it was not as interesting.

> ***Anonymous 5:*** *"So I changed question 4 because originally it was imagine you could be in a secret virtual meeting with Members, your favorite novel TV/movie theme to slide the scenario you would want to be a part....And I so I'll give you the revised question...I ended up making it, imagine you could be in a virtual meeting with famous people. Living or dead describe the scenario you'd want to be a part of."*

Early on, with the first 1:1 Interviews with the co-designers / co-researchers it was important to weave their stories into the meeting materials, so there was context for the questions being asked. With both my Advisors' help, I had to find parallel personalized scenarios for everyone. By doing this, I was able to create modular scenarios that still had the same discussion prompts for each Co-Designer/Researcher. When we all came together as a group, these were still applicable. Each Co-Designer/Co-Researcher had a common reference point and could engage in discussions about questions or comments from the group. The prompts became conversation starters and enriched some of the responses from the group.

B. Creative Expression

The co-designers / co-researchers were more motivated to respond to creative questions about dream scenarios and fun topics, rather than those about user interfaces or software companies. When presented with a scenario about meeting software, the Co-Designers felt very disconnected to it, even though they all actively use meeting software and knew their likes and dislikes about using it.

> ***Anonymous 5:*** *The definition 'Meeting software' was challenging since it was not explained. Would prefer to pick an online social meeting for Disabled communities instead, because that is more familiar because they know how it's run and how they work effectively*

When given an open-ended scenario for their personal events, here is what the Co-Designers came up with:

> ***Hope:*** *"I went with digital artist brush kit creation. For an event like this, it'd be good to do virtual, um, unless it's, like, specifically coordinated through an organization that can help provide a space where multiple people participate in an art event....Invite would say: Are you interested in making even more custom artwork? Are you looking for more unique ways to brush up on your art skills? Then you should come out to learn how to make your own art even more special. Can't find the right fresh texture, fear not, make your own." I will have a range of topics to choose from so that people can expand on them. Meeting platform: Zoom and Procreate.*
>
> ***Anonymous 1 and 2:*** *She would have a virtual event. And she's going to… because she's organizing a meeting of a Sullivan's Crossing Fan Club. That's a TV show or a… for people who might not know. And the topic she was going to choose were talk about favourite songs in the show, favourite characters, and what is going to happen in season three.*

> ***Anonymous 4:*** *She want[s] to host a cooking demonstration at Longo's in Burlington. She's going to send an e-invite [to] all her friends and family from the Halton Down Syndrome Association family group.*
> ***Anonymous 3:*** *[The event invite would read] Dear friends and family, I am inviting you for cooking dinner. The demonstration [at] grocery stores [is] on April 4 at 6:30 pm. Please RSVP at my email by April 1, 2026. This will be an important event where everyone can participate in making pizza.*
>
> ***Anonymous 5:*** *It would be a virtual event.... I am a project organizer who's been hired from an independent consulting firm that's founded and led by disabled people. It would be, like, the disability of community members and the appropriate company representatives. They would introduce themselves in the icebreaker, but then they would leave and then they would come to the next meeting. So, the first meeting would be all about the…disability community members talking about what they want....Would happen on Zoom, and we would use Google Docs.*
>
> ***Sam and Julie:*** *Sam is going to have a virtual… Book club. She's going to invite family and friends. And she'll send out an email. It'll say: "Come join my virtual book club ….People will be asked, for the first meeting, to share their favourite books and tell everybody about the book in that first meeting. The platform choice is Teams because then two people can join in the same room, otherwise the audio feedback can be a factor on Zoom calls. Zoom is problematic..."*

This just shows that creative discussions prompt greater creative expression and allow for bigger ideas that are more unique. It was important for the co-designers / co-researchers to be able to express their own individuality and interests during these sessions.

C. Community as a source of validation and a trusted network

The co-designers / co-researchers were asked about their experiences and how they connect with family, friends, online groups, and instructors. Based on each person's interests and ways of connecting to their community, a wide range of meeting types emerged, ranging from learning-focused sessions to social interactions. Within the co-design process, it is important to offer opportunities for community members to meet, connect and socialize, as this builds on the existing virtual meeting experiences they already have. Each Co-Designer experienced connections in different ways during virtual meetings. For one participant, feeling connected depended on being able to see people’s faces. For another, it meant listening in on the conversation but being off camera.

> ***Anonymous 1:*** *Likes to be able to see people. The gallery view is what [I] usually use.*
>
> ***Anonymous 5****: Ableist standards with meeting tools like...have your camera on in order to speak and...for participation. I prefer having the chat because it gives me like a minute to gather what I'm gonna say and not worry*

13.0 Sustainable Research Design Outcomes

This project is meant to invite those from consumer-facing organizations and companies to consider alternate methods like Inclusive Co-Design, Community Based Research, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. These frameworks can help companies and organizations redefine their relationships and commitments to equity-deserving communities. They can formalize their partnerships with different marginalized community groups to change how research is done to improve its equity, adaptability, and sustainability.

Each of the co-designers / co-researchers on this project had such creative ideas. I have tried to showcase the end-to-end interviews in Appendix A. There were so many different approaches and ideations around meetings and platforms and how they impact the research process. I do hope in the future we have an opportunity to be together, and that each of the co-designers can present some of their ideas. Their names are also listed on this document as co-designers / co-researchers to properly attribute them in the way they wanted, based on their choices in the consent agreement.

I hope the outcomes of this project have given them some context of how they can choose to engage in future research projects. I hope there is a pathway for a more sustainable network, and the Disability Community can be meaningfully engaged for projects through the Consumer Organizations and Companies of their choosing, based on mutual agreements they create and choose.

14.0 Limitations

Additional Time – If this initiative could have continued, the project ideally would have spun into Co-designing an event for the group together, since everyone would now know what each person was individually interested in. From there, the next part would have been reviewing the data in smaller portions as a group, sharing knowledge about how research is typically done and helping the group understand the parallel in event creation and how it related to the research planning process phases. It would have also been good to do learning activities on what Co-Design looks like and how to support the group's different access needs. Ideally, these meetings could have been in-person, if that is what the group felt comfortable with, or with a split option for hybrid and in-person. This suggestion was raised by some of them.

Working within the REB and University Process – With the Research Ethics Board (REB) application, I did not realize how involved the activities and sessions would be with each Co-Designer. I was glad that I had prior knowledge about what a more open REB application looks like, so I had some more flexibility. Initially, I found the process restrictive, as I thought I could list only one OCAD University Advisor; later, I learned this was just a formality for the process within OCAD University. I knew early on I wanted Matthew Edwards, who is a Professor at University of Missouri-Kansas City, to be my Advisor, along with Jutta Treviranus here at OCAD University. I also originally wanted to have other co-authors for the MRP but realized there was a way to recognize the co-designers / co-researchers in the List of Contributors at the beginning of this document. The consent form, which I thought covered all my bases, was too complex and the links could not be accessed by those who were on AAC devices. I could barely fit the information into MS Forms, which has its own restrictions. So, getting this right for the REB meant it did not always reflect what was needed by the people involved in the project.

Planning and Communication – Looking back at this process, I would plan out the communications better. I did not think to share notes after each meeting, though I did share both transcripts and meeting notes toward the last session. I had four different sessions and, looking back, I wish I did summaries and immediate transcripts to share. I also wish I plotted the outcomes from each session, so I would know what to share back with each Co-Designer. I am still learning about the Co-Design process, and I need more practice time really doing more rounds before understanding how to situate it better and provide incremental communication to each person on the project. I did not foresee this issue and, while there can be open-ended structures, the process would benefit from planning ahead and creating a lightweight template for an accessible method that is easy to understand.

Document Storage and Meeting Platform Design - We needed Microsoft Office and OneDrive to save our documents. However, sharing folders was impossible to do. So, there was no team space that could be accessed together. For every event and document shared, there are default privacy settings that made it hard for others to get in, unless they are signed into Microsoft. In our group, some did not have this ID saved and that became a barrier to them accessing the documents. Some could not initially get into Teams, too. I had to make sure I changed the settings each time. There was no way to keep these settings saved. The transcripts for the meeting recordings were not as helpful, since they did not distinguish between different voices that were signed in as one account. Teams and Zoom were not accessible to AAC Devices, where there is no way to run multiple applications at once. Those who used AAC devices had to open their documents, so the devices would vocalize what they had prepared. Sign-on, from what I could tell, seemed impossible for these devices.

15.0 Contributions to Inclusive Design

The importance of this work relies on its process, how Inclusive Co-Design can be practised and how consumer-facing companies and organizations can think about actively pursuing engagement with intersectional communities. Consumer-facing organizations and companies should facilitate community partnerships or work with organizations that can facilitate these connections meaningfully and respectfully. Often, these groups tend to be hidden in market research panels; or recruiting means finding those who already work or are known in the industry. To change systemic biases and barriers, we need to actively create critical learning opportunities by partnering with disenfranchised groups for change.

16.0 Next Steps and Future Work

Sharing the MRP with the co-designers / co-researchers: The plan is to share this paper with them once it is finalized. If there was more time, they would have provided more feedback. In advance of this paper, transcript notes were shared, so each of them would know in advance what was going to be shared.

Individual Presentations: I am hoping to do introductory presentations at TEDx OCADU and AccessU in May 2026. This focus is more on understanding the framing and the process involved in this master's research project. I did not share the study specifics and the quotes from the co-designers / co-researchers, as I felt it was important that the MRP be read as a whole, separately, so their individual voice is uniquely featured and attributed as they chose. This was especially important due to confidentiality and honouring their ideas and the importance of their stories coming to the forefront. This again derives from Indigenous Knowledge Systems, where information is always credited and belongs to those whose idea it is.

Presenting together (Tentative) – There is the potential of all of us presenting together at a future event. This would be a continuation of the thinking and work that has already happened in the Co-Design Sessions. It would be voluntary and up to each group member if they wanted to present. We would meet first to discuss how this could be done and see what’s feasible, so each person who wants to participate can add in their past or present in a way to preserve anonymity. We can also work to iterate on this through collaborating together; it could be the next Group Co-Design Session, based on interest, availability and anything else that is important to consider.

17.0 Conclusion

The premise of this project was to explore how Inclusive Co-Design principles and the disability lens change the Consumer Research process to be more inclusive of equity-deserving communities. Currently, these research methods are constrained by systemic biases that are designed to keep replicating average outcomes.

1. How is the Consumer Research framework impacted by applying a disability lens?
   This project applies Inclusive Co-Design Principles through a Disability Lens to improve the adaptability of research design and expand pathways to include equity-deserving communities. The co-designers / co-researchers were ethically engaged through community networks and their agreement to participate was confirmed regularly through ongoing consent, with their time and energy compensated through attribution and pay equity from the start. Considerations - Set expectations for the Group Co-Design session by asking how they want to collaborate and creating a collaborative space that connects them for the project duration

2. How does co-design influence the stages of a research study and the artefacts created? What changes and what remains the same?
   Research stages that are usually rigid were instead made to flex and adapt to the needs and concerns of the co-designers / co-researchers. While the initial research set-up stayed mostly the same, the rest of the process was driven by discussions that needed to be iterated on. Considerations - Include debrief time into Co-Design process. Summarize the learnings [data collection] together and review them, so the group is aware of their combined knowledge from every session.

3. What happens to the role and function of the researcher when partnering with co-designers / co-researchers?

The roles within the Research Project were, as a result, intentionally broad and all-encompassing. The hierarchy of how information is created was democratized between the researcher and the co-designers / co-researchers. Considerations: Have group members pair up, so everyone gets into the habit of working together for different combinations of ideas and building rapport across the group.

4. What do the co-designers / co-researchers need from inclusive co-design sessions, so the process is relevant to them?
   Their lived experiences matter so much that they shaped topics and questions to be relevant and open to creative, imaginative possibilities. Considerations - When engaging with equity-deserving communities, find out how the topic can be modified to be relevant to those involved. Also, there is work and thinking between each session – recognizing and compensating for this is extremely important.

With this project, there is an intentional shift toward ethical and human-centred design to create different reimagined outcomes for individuals, their communities and society. Consumer Researchers, Designers, Innovators, Coders, Engineers, Product Managers, Writers, Accessibility Professionals and Directors, are all invited to consider this model of engagement, because we need to build a different set of systems and not rely on existing ones that are disjointed, keep individuals isolated and exclude their communities. To actively reimagine different outcomes and innovative possibilities, we need to start with smaller foundational steps that can map out different long-term, sustainable pathways that actively and critically remove barriers. “Ethical design is not a separate task. It is not a moment in a process or a last-minute gut check. It is part of how good design happens.” (Woodley, n.d.)

We need to drastically shift perspectives to challenge existing systems and to recognize all individuals, their contributions, and their needs. As we slip into systems that are more machine-directed and with little to no human oversight, we need to ask critical questions of our societal and technological systems, so that safety, ethics, privacy, access, agency, care and attribution are foundational to what we create and there are lasting and sustainable positive changes. Those who continuously face systemic barriers should lead these outcomes in partnership with consumer-facing companies who pro-actively choose to be worldbuilders by laying the groundwork for new systems and equitable futures.

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Appendix A - Co-Designers / Co-Researchers curated responses

An account of the responses from the sessions with the Co-designers / co-researchers

Phase 1 – Meet and Greet

When meeting individually we talked about the details, duration of research sessions, what would be needed to be part of the project and more about consent. At this point, they had not committed to joining the project. They were all given time after the initial meeting to consider IF they wanted to join the project. It was only after they decided to join the project and provide their consent that we moved into Phase 2.

Phase 2 – Co-Design Interviews 1:1

A. Current Meeting Experiences *are about connecting to community and learning*

Each group member was asked about their experiences individually (or with their Communication Partner) and how they like to connect with family, friends, online groups, and instructors. Based on each person's interests and how they connect to community, there is a wide range of types of meetings that range from learning to socialization.

> ***Hope:*** *So yeah, like my family is like my daughter...so a little bit with her...I guess online friends and some local friends. I mostly call people on Facebook. I have a few group chats on there.*
>
> ***Anonymous 1:*** *I have family. And then friends. And instructors and any online friend groups.*
>
> ***Anonymous 2:*** *"With our brother on FaceTime, [I'm] there. When in class with the instructor, she makes signs and asks questions... [and] uses chat for the class.*
>
> ***Anonymous 1:*** *Nodding*
>
> ***Anonymous 3:*** *There's another organization called Super Ability Career. Um, they do, um, chat cafe. They just talk and see how they're doing. They do, so I get classes that does cooking...that we did Tabata and then they did Qigong*

Anonymous 5: *"During COVID, to keep in touch [with the family], we started playing... games online. They...have audio and video. So it was like a social visit. With Friends - Zoom, Text and WhatsApp. Like it ...because it's accessible with transcripts, captions, and chat. ...The university mandated everyone to come back in person, but the Graduate professor pushed back for the particular program and got it to stay online; subsequently it has been on Zoom...There's been these like social groups for disabled people, which are led by Organizations where disabled people are in charge of the organization...Every time I attend that group (based in the US), I just come away like learning new things about how to put disability, justice and equity into practice."*
Sam: *Online friend groups Zoom. Talk about ways you hang out / meet with people online. Family text messages, friends, text messages, instructors. I do not have any instructors.*

B. What worked really well *for meetings is interacting with others in an accessible way.*

Meetings that go well have a format that is accessible, the interface design is consistent across different platforms, the meeting is well run, participants are catching up with friends in a flexible format and doing different activities online socially.

Hope: *The user interface is like a lot easier and more intuitive... I find the connections are very smooth and when something goes off, it actually tells you and tries to reconnect quickly and it doesn't freeze very often.... FaceTime where you can do different things, gestures with your hand...I like when you just stumble upon it, you know.... For Zoom, it keeps up very quickly 'cause when there's multiple voices, especially. I need captions, so like I need that to be able to understand what people are saying.*
Anonymous 1: *Likes to be able to see people. The gallery view is what [I] usually uses. Virtual meetings [are] good because there is no need to worry about the weather or WheelTrans being late. What makes [me] laugh is talking about comedians. Oh* ***(Anonymous 1 Nodding)***
Anonymous 2: *The teacher will take suggestions from the class and finds video reels from YouTube of those that are suggested. Those videos are funny.*

> *(**Anonymous 1 Nodding**). The class topics are usually a surprise unless she or one of the other students requested a specific topic.*
>
> ***Anonymous 3:** Yeah, I use Zoom for my Mohawk College. Humber College - I use Blackboard and then Mohawk College I use Zoom for my CAC CICE class. I say I like Zoom better too. Uh, me like Zoom because I do virtual meetings. I just talk to my um my um friends on the chat cafe*
>
> ***Anonymous 5:** Zoom works really well for the paid version. You can get access to the chat and the transcript which are savable. Online games with family is on Google. There is an option to play cards with video or audio. You can take breaks and the game will continue.*
>
> *Sam: Online friend groups - Zoom. What makes it work really well? I like seeing people. What's easy about it? My mom signs me in. You find fun music. Maybe it makes you laugh talking to a friend.*

C. What did not work so well *for meetings was barriers created by default and built into technology systems*

When meetings don’t go well, it’s because different barriers happen, like the meeting gets dropped, there’s an overwhelming interface design, there’s an inability to log in on an AAC device due to its limitations, and there’s a lack of planning by the meeting organizer with accessible materials and timing.

> ***Hope:** I hate WhatsApp. I also don't like Slack... Not a good user interface. It can get really, really overwhelming, and like you can't really easily turn off extra notifications and then also if you have it on multiple apps, I expect it to be smooth throughout all three apps like. Devices I don't expect one to get messages that the other doesn't... I get it 'cause they're encrypted apps, but like if I have it in signed into the same server with the same password, I expect it to look at the same smooth things.*
>
> ***Anonymous 1:** What does not work well is when people [are] talking at the same time and those that don’t wait for their turn.*
>
> *(She shows how her hand or a pointed finger goes up in the meeting to take a turn.)*

Anonymous 2: *When speaking during the meeting, she would use her device or her word board with [me].*

Anonymous 1: *Oh, good ... Oh, yeah.*

Anonymous 3: *And now I have to wait, no choice. Sometimes the Zoom gets disconnected.*

Anonymous 5: *Ableist standards with meeting tools like...have your camera on in order to speak and ...for participation. I prefer having the chat because it gives me like a minute to gather what I'm gonna say and not worry about communication difficulty. I thought we left that behind when we figured out everything to be accessible when we were living in a pandemic. And now it's back to everything being inaccessible again."*

Sam: *Signing on is hard... My mom signs me in.*

D. Dream/Ideal virtual meeting invited different functionality for virtual meeting tools

When asked to dream up their ideal meeting experience with characters or people they admired, each Co-Designer imagined different functionalities for virtual meeting tools and being able to meet and speak with favourite characters and/or admirable people.

Hope: *I'm currently playing Red Dead Redemption and talking to the characters would be kind of fun, I think, because like one of them is this white guy named Dutch and he's weirdly a really good ally. Like, every time somebody's racist towards Black people or Indigenous people...It would be fun to interview the characters to find out more about their motivation and how they learned the nuances and politics of this time period....Maybe ...being able to choose how you want to have your tone come across as would be fun, instead of it just being like a normal conversation.*

Anonymous 2: *She would speak with just Lady Mary. [From Downton Abbey]*

Anonymous 1: *I would try to use my voice device to talk to her. Just talking to her would be fun for me.*

Anonymous 2: *How would Lady Mary take over running the estate?"*

Anonymous 3: *So I want to go to Salt Lake. I want to go to High School Musical. I want to sing and dance. ...Get ahead of the game. I don't dance. I run it all. Can I have this dance? And a night to remember. Walk away, Scream. These are all the different songs from the movie high school musical...And meet Sharpay and Ryan.*

Anonymous 5: *Part 1: Facilitating those workshops would probably be my dream virtual online experience with training, because the way that so did those workshops was really accessible for everybody. Like, not only the facilitators, but also the audience and it...seems it probably didn't do much, but it feels like it helped to deal with some of the systemic and institutional ableism that's present in, like, the helping professions, and by participating in those workshops. Part 2: I picked two disability ancestors, so I picked Alice Wong and Patty Byrne... I'd want to have in the meeting...[it] would be like an interview slash discussion. I probably want to ask them what kept them going when they were experiencing systemic ableism. I'd want to ask them questions about like the history of the disability justice movement because they're like important people that actually shaped it.*

Sam: *When speaking about the Prisoner of Azkaban, I would want them to be able to pull the thoughts from my head. [Special action I would do is] Use a wand. [To have fun] Ride a broomstick.*

Phases 3 and 4 – Co-Design Group Discussions

This part of the Group Co-Design had everyone meet all together. The idea of planning and hosting an event varied for each person based on their interest. What was central to planning and hosting an event was a topic or theme that was very familiar to each Co-Designer / Co-Researcher and inviting people or connections that are known or belong to the disability community, so that there's familiarity and a shared understanding of values. Platform choices were based on past reliable and accessible experiences. In-person events had more immediacy, interactivity, and socialization.

Hope: *I went with digital artist brush kit creation. For an event like this, it'd be good to do virtual, um, unless it's, like, specifically coordinated through an* *organization that can help provide a space where multiple people participate in an art event....Invite would say "Are you interested in making even more custom artwork? Are you looking for more unique ways to brush up on your art skills? Then you should come out to learn how to make your own art even more special. Can't find the right fresh texture, fear not, make your own." I will have a range of topics to choose from so that people can expand on them. Meeting platform: Zoom and Procreate.*

***Anonymous 1 and 2**: She would have a virtual event. And she's going to… because she's organizing a meeting of a Sullivan's Crossing Fan Club. That's a TV show or a… for people who might not know. And the topic she was going to choose were talk about favourite songs in the show, favourite characters, and what is going to happen in season three.*

***Anonymous 4:** She want[s] to host a cooking demonstration at Longo's in Burlington. She's going to send an e-invite [to] all her friends and family from the Halton Down Syndrome Association family group.*

***Anonymous 3:** [The event invite would read] Dear friends and family, I am inviting you for cooking dinner. The demonstration [at] grocery stores [is] on April 4 at 6:30 pm. Please RSVP at my email by April 1, 2026. This will be an important event where everyone can participate in making pizza.*

***Anonymous 5:** It would be a virtual event.... I am a project organizer who's been hired from an independent consulting firm that's founded and led by disabled people. It would be, like, the disability of community members and the appropriate company representatives. They would introduce themselves in the icebreaker, but then they would leave and then they would come to the next meeting. So the first meeting would be all about the…disability community members talking about what they want....Would happen on Zoom, and we would use Google Docs.*

> ***Sam and Julie:*** *Sam is going to have a virtual… Book club. She's going to invite family and friends. And she'll send out an email. It'll say: "Come join my virtual book club" ….People will be asked, for the first meeting, to share their favourite books and tell everybody about the book in that first meeting. The platform choice is Teams because then two people can join in the same room, otherwise the audio feedback can be a factor on Zoom calls. Zoom is problematic...*

What will you do so that each person can get a turn to express themselves at the event?

Since this part of the activity was focused on groups, it was good to hear how each Co-Designer / Co-Researcher thought about taking turns, so everyone could have a chance to express themselves if they wanted and would feel comfortable. Prepping people ahead of time with the questions, topics, and meeting agenda would be helpful, as this could provide a preview and way to also prepare and feel more comfortable. There was also a certain idea with spontaneity and fun for some that would keep everyone engaged in the event.

> ***Hope:*** *It would be good to take turns, like, in a certain order. I would probably pick in advance, like, the order for people to go in, and then let them know where they are. I think it helps with things. Uh, anxiety around doing art, especially. Um, and then they can share their idea, like, about what kind of brush set they would like to do….I would let people know the topics beforehand …like, an agenda that you can look at in advance…And when somebody has a question, make sure that they have all of their questions fully answered before continuing.*

> ***Anonymous 1 and 2:*** *She would ask at the beginning of the meeting how they want to show, when they want to speak, for example, wave a hand. Or, you know, however, they want to indicate. Then she would share her screen to show clips of the show. And she wants to dance to music. And would send an email with topics, with a meeting invitation. I would ask if okay to record the meeting.*

> ***Anonymous 3 and 4:*** *If anybody needs help, like another person would be available to help out, or they can come with a support person, and then if anybody has questions while she is demonstrating. Then she said they will have to wait till after the cooking demo is done, so that she can answer the question at her own pace, and so that she can give attention to them, but they can watch her and then they can follow the directions.*
>
> ***Anonymous 5:*** *Basically an online meeting of people from multiple disability communities ... It's being held on Zoom, we would have a community agreement that specified that you don't have to use the raised hand function, because that can be really challenging for some people, depending on their disability. We would model best practices, which include, like, saying your name, before you start speaking, so that people with, like, a range of disabilities can benefit from having you state your name and saying that you're speaking*
>
> ***Sam and Julie:*** *She's gonna randomly pick them out of the hat, and then that's how she'll choose the order of who presents first. It'll be a random… Cause she thought that was fun.*

Describe 1-2 activities people will do together.

Here's the ideas for creative activities that the co-designers / co-researchers came up with - brainstorming, acting out a scene, making pizza dressed in pajamas, each person reading from their favourite section in a book and collaborating on creating an agreement.

> ***Hope:*** *I have a hard time thinking of art on the spot to do. So, something where we could all, uh, comment on each other's things, or try to figure out what the person might like to do. And then the second activity would be the other half, which is actually executing the idea... so it's nice to have the opportunity to refine the ideas and to talk to people.*

__Anonymous 2:__ Have people pretend to be their favorite character to act out a scene. Ask people to vote if Maggie and Cal get married [Sullivan's Crossing]. People would pick a character, right?
__Anonymous 1:__ Ah, yeah. Oh.

__Anonymous 3 and 4:__ For her, like, activity itself, like a creative activity itself is making everybody's own creative pizza, depending on her toppings and stuff like that. Everyone can email their favorite pizza toppings, so I will have them ready. Think people should taste each other's pizza? Yeah. She says yes. Yeah. …it would be a Pajama Pizza Party.

__Anonymous 5:__ I would want to have a meeting where we come up with, like, an understanding of what accessibility is that we can give them, and that content is created in a safer space that's governed by a community agreement that we co-create.
__Sam and Julie:__ Perhaps have people read a section, a favorite section from the book, or give a little summary like they do on Goodreads.

How will you share out what was created by everyone?

Each Co-Designer had different ways of answering how the group work would be shared: either via social media or email. The Social Media platforms were not accessible to AAC devices. One Co-Designer did mention needing to have more privacy with the information the Disability Community created.

__Hope:__ Post it on Instagram? Like, everybody could, uh, send in their social media if they have an art one, or just their personal.... Hey, this person learned this in this class; this is their sketch. Shout out to them, here's their profile if you want to go find more art from them.

__Anonymous 1 and 2__: She had just said she would send the group a copy of the recording. She doesn't really use social media. She said that she might ask people for feedback and any topics for the next meeting when she sends it out.

> ***Anonymous 3 and 4:*** *She will take photos of the event and of everyone's pizza and then share it on the social media like it's mostly Instagram and get people to share their views if they want to do more events like this one. Or if they have any ideas of fun recipes where everyone can participate, and she would love to organize the events like that.*
>
> ***Anonymous 5:*** *So if I did, like, just a social group for people with disabilities, after the event, I would only share the materials from the events with the people that attended the event. Just to respect their privacy….it wouldn't have names attached… So it would be like, oh, these are the learnings that we got out of this event, and these are the contributions that we got out of this event.*
>
> ***Sam and Julie:*** *You could either keep your same book or choose a different one. So we start the process over again, so each book club, I guess, would be about, I don't know, depending on how much discussion is about a book. Tell everybody to think about their next book, so when the next meeting is decided on, then we would start again.*

Feedback loops and iterations

Throughout the phases, there were constant feedback loops, so that the process remained flexible and adaptable to meet the needs proposed by them. I leaned in on the Co-designers / co-researchers to inform and redirect sessions. What started off initially in one format would inevitably change for each Co-Designer or reflections through group discussions.

A. 1:1 Interview / Key Informant Interviews:

> ***Sam's prior feedback sent via email -*** *Yes it would be better as word document. I could not fill out the questionnaire by myself and I don't know what it means to be a co-researcher. I can't follow links [to MS Forms] so my Mom helped me.*
>
> ***When meeting 1:1 with Sam and Julie:***

> *Angelique: ”That's what Co-researcher means to me. But if you have a better term, I'd like to hear that.”*
> *Sam inputs the term "Co di" on her AAC device.*
> *Julie: “Do you want to be a co-designer?”*

A few discussion prompts were altered by one of the Co-Designers so it was relevant to their interests. During the meetings, the discussions were always set up so the Co-Designers could ask any initial questions and take the lead with how they wanted to respond to the prompts when it was of interest and it applied to them.

> ***Anonymous 5:*** *“So I changed question 4 because originally it was imagine you could be in a secret virtual meeting with Members, your favorite novel TV/movie theme to slide the scenario you would want to be a part....And I so I'll give you the revised question...I ended up making it, imagine you could be in a virtual meeting with famous people. Living or dead describe the scenario you'd want to be a part of.”*

B. Group Co-Design Discussion pt.1 (March 23. 2026)

When the topic and questions did not provide any concise context for the Co-Designers / Co-Researchers, they became unsure about responding. I received emails and there were many questions. There was also the issue of relevance. So the Group Co-Design Session was split into two sessions. The Meet and Greet helped everyone get to meet each other for the first time, and it was designed to answer individual questions. One of them was not sure if they did want to attend and be part of this activity, so I changed this event to be more informal to invite feedback that I could incorporate based on their needs.

> ***Hope:*** *Would like more specific prompts as the questions are too vague. I'm curious also some of it is very vague and for my neurodivergence, I need a little bit more specificity to… figure out how to answer it adequately, so I think that would be helpful, like, even just a couple of bullet points underneath, like, a prompt or something would help.*

Anonymous 2: *Well, one question we had, because we started… was thinking about how she would organize a trip for the people here to go to something like Canada's Wonderland, but then we read that it was about a meeting about redesign functionality for a software company. So, can we make up the project?*

Anonymous 4: *So we can like maybe think of an activity...and then maybe just figure out how she would go about doing it that, right? The main topic was not as relevant: meeting with the software company.*

Sam and Julie: *She sent you back that document you sent her, but she didn't really answer your questions, what you were looking for. So perhaps when, you know, give an idea around an event.... to do it independently, there] needs a little bit more prompting.*

There was also an idea that volunteering to help could make the activities simpler and easier to understand for other group members. One did want to partner with someone to come up with an idea for an event together.

***Hope**: I'm happy to work with anybody who wants an assist, because I like working in teams a bit better also."*

Anonymous 5: *"I was going to say I'm happy to work with people in terms of how to answer the questions, uh, either the questions as they are now, or the revised questions, or whatnot."*

They wanted to understand how much time was needed to go through the responses to each question, so they could plan what they needed to say in the Group Co-Design Discussion.

Hope: *So, like, I imagine the activities question will definitely take longer than most of the other questions. At least that's what I've found with, like, running my own meetings.*

> ***Anonymous 5:*** *“So, how detailed does it have to… does it have to be? Because we're going to be discussing it all next week.”*

When I created questions/discussion prompts, I thought about the research process and how the information is shared. I included a question about a big event and how group members would contribute – but this was not well understood.

> ***Anonymous 5:*** *“I was really confused by the last question on this. It says, how will you and your group members present your ideas at a big event. What does that mean?”*

D. April 6 2026 – Group Co-Design Discussion

The only Co-Designer/Co-Research who had originally went with the planned topic at the end wanted to change their topic to be something familiar and known.

> ***Anonymous 5:*** *The definition ‘Meeting software’ was challenging since it was not explained. Would prefer to pick an online social meeting for Disabled communities instead, cause that is more familiar because they know how it’s run and how they work effectively.*

E. Group Co-Design Reflections (after April 10.2026)

Listening to each other's ideas, each Co-Designer took into consideration some of the ideas generated by the group and thought about applying them to the event they planned in a way that appealed to them. Sharing information in advance of the meeting, organizing collaborative feedback, and reflecting on the process became takeaways. What stood out was for events, whether in person or virtual, a sense of community and being together were integral to this shared space.

> ***Hope:*** *It would be a good idea to actually send it in advance of the basics to learn, to format the app, make the new brushes, and how to save that into the system.*

The initial discussion was the following:

***Anonymous 5:** [Share] a playlist of music like a link to Spotify. Then depending on people's access needs during the meeting, the lyrics can be posted for the music in the meeting chat.*
***Anonymous 1:** [I don't] use Spotify so would be hard.*
This is how they took the idea and then incorporated it in their own way that was accessible to them.
***Anonymous 2:** [Someone] suggested we send the clips with the invitation, and she thought that might be a good idea to consider.*

***Anonymous 4**: The idea she liked from others was voting. She said she would pick a few recipes that she would like to demonstrate for her next event and will get everyone to vote what they would like to see/make together.*

***Anonymous 5:** From our group discussions about organizing events for disabled communities, I learned that disabled communities contain a lot of organizing-related strengths. These include being able to create collective accessibility, balancing conflicting access needs, as well being flexible and innovative when it comes to organizing events.*

***Sam and Julie:** I think we would send the questions before the second meeting (the one that we discuss the book). Ask everyone to pick one passage or part of the book they liked the most. Giving people the option to stay off camera if they want to. We never thought about this or thought it would be important to someone.*

Appendix B – Co-Researcher Consent Form

Preamble

Project Title: Partnering with Disability Communities for Inclusive Corporate Research Practices

Project Purpose: The purpose of my project is to use the experiences produced by disability to improve corporate research practices. The sample research topic will be based on your own experiences with digital tools that you use to communicate with friends and loved ones (Examples - Virtual meeting tools, Direct Messages, or Emails etc). First, we identify the barriers or problems you face with using these tools. Next, we explore what your ideal or dream experience would look like. Finally, we gather your reflections on the research process itself.

REB Number: 2025-66
[Additional REB Contact information removed for the Appendix]
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Section 1 - Consent Form - *to fill out and click on "Next"*
Section 2 - Consent Details - *to read and then click on "Submit"*

Section 1

CONSENT DETAILS

What's part of the co-research sessions: The co-research sessions will involve group or individual discussions and activities around your experiences of research or your expectations of research within the disability community. The sessions will be to first understand existing barriers, discuss reimagining research from the disability communities perspectives, and analyse the results to come up with a disability community research framework that can be used by organizations and corporations that do consumer research. These sessions will take about 1-1.5 hours to complete. You can take a break at any time.

Potential Risks and Benefits: The psychological risks for participating in these co-research sessions are slightly greater than those you might face in everyday life. The goal of our project includes understanding barriers and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities when they have participated in research or their own expectations. Recalling these barriers may cause emotional distress. You can invite a supporter (like a friend, family member, or personal support worker) to join this activity to offer support. The social risks for participating in these co-research sessions are slightly greater than those you might face in everyday life. By sharing personal experiences, you may experience a loss of privacy. We ask you to not disclose any information you heard in this workshop with anyone who wasn't there. We recommend that you do not share any of your personal private details. The benefits of these co-research sessions include being able to share with people who may have similar experiences as you. You may learn about resources or build your network during the workshop. You will also get to be a part of a project that is working towards equitable research practices when engaging members of the disability community and defining a framework that can be used by organizations and corporations.

Confidentiality: I will keep your responses confidential. You will not be identified individually in reports of this research unless you consent to your quotes and/or ideas being attributed to you using the boxes below. During the project, access to data files will be restricted to those involved in the project team. All files will be stored in the One Drive for OCADU Students secure database until November 2026 after which all data related to this activity will be permanently erased. In exceptional and compelling circumstances, we may be subject to obligations to break confidentiality to report information to authorities to protect the health, life or safety of a participant or a third party, a community, or the general population.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this activity is voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions. The research results will be published in May 2026. If you wish to withdraw from this activity, or request withdrawal of your data, please email Angelique Saunders before April 9, 2026. This will not affect your compensation.

Publication of Results: Results from this activity will be published on the project public website at https://openresearch.ocadu.ca/. Data will be presented in summarized forms. A link to the summary report will be sent to you via email after it has been published on the project website.

If you have any questions about this or want more info please contact Angelique Saunders using the info above. This activity has been reviewed and received ethics clearances through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University No 2025-66. If you have any comments, please email the Research Ethics Office.

Section 2
CONSENT FORM

1. Consent Statement: I agree to participate in this co-research session. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in this Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the activity and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time. I am checking the relevant boxes below to show my consent for those activities.

   I have read and understood the above information. I certify that I am 18 years or older. I consent to participate in this activity.

   Please select: ________YES ________NO
2. Please select one of the following options for featuring your responses:
   - I do not want my responses quoted directly.
   - My responses may be featured as anonymous in the final report.

- My responses may be included in the final report and should be attributed to me by my name.

3. Do you want to be named as a co-researcher in the final report?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Not sure – I require more information before I make a decision

4. Do you wish that we retain your contact information to send you updates about this project's further developments. Please check an option below:
    - Yes
    - No

5. Full Name:

6. Email address:

7. Please feel free to provide any comments or feedback here. (Optional)

8. Message on form submission: Thank you for your assistance in this project.