

## Blind/Low-Vision Theatre Accessibility Toolkit

This is a resource to assist theatre companies creating accessible experiences for Blind and Low-Vision (BLV) audiences.

This living document is intended to remain open and accessible to all and should change over time based on additions from various theatre creators and real experience and feedback from BLV consumers.

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## About This Toolkit

*\*Throughout the toolkit we will use BLV in place of Blind and Low-Vision for the sake of brevity and consistency.*

## Welcome to Our Toolkit

This is an Open Sourced living document; a compilation of suggestions and experiences; a toolkit for any Theatre Company creating experiences which aim to be more accessible to the Blind and Low-Vision community in Canada and Beyond. This began as a Ryerson University student project for their Design Solutions Super-course, and was produced in collaboration with Jess Watkin, and Nightwood Theatre Company in Toronto, Ontario.

As a group of four sighted students, we were challenged to aid in increasing accessibility in the Toronto Theatre Community for those who are blind or have low vision. Alone, it was difficult to navigate what solutions were best to implement. However, through conversations with Canadians interested in theatre accessibility, as well as theatre professionals within the Blind and Low-Vision community, we concluded that there is no "one size fits all" solution to accessibility. The experience of each individual is unique; as sighted people we must work to implement a variety of options for those who have low vision or are blind to experience theatre with the autonomy they are entitled to.

For the purpose of our toolkit, we will implement the acronym: BLV, which stands for Blind and Low-Vision. After conversing with Jess Watkin, our accessibility consultant for the formation of this project, we came to the conclusion that there is not one universally accepted term for Blind and Low-Vision folks. Currently, "Blind and Low-Vision" is the most widely used vocabulary in 2020. Throughout the toolkit we will use BLV in place of Blind and Low-Vision for the sake of brevity and consistency.

## Bridging the Gap: Creators and Consumers

This toolkit is for those who plan to deliver content accessible to BLV Audiences. It is for sharing methods and tools that work to improve accessibility, and for explaining what doesn't work for different individual needs on personal and organizational levels. Part of the "gap" we have identified is that many accessible solutions - designed by sighted folks - are too rigid and/or too vague, and the resources for BLV consumers and creators are often buried deep in google search results, making them difficult to find for sighted creators and consumers.

We hope that in providing an open source platform to discuss and exchange information about theatre accessibility, we can share the knowledge we have compiled in the last 12 weeks, and continue to build upon it.

## What Inspired this Toolkit?

This toolkit exists to start conversations and better autonomize accessibility within theatre performance. An open sourced format allows everyone's voice to be heard, and creates a community network specifically supporting BLV experiences of both live and online theatre. We chose Press Books because of its history and commitment of sharing knowledge. We believe that a resource like this toolkit should not belong to any one individual or organization, and could

not possibly be a finite or conclusive document. While COVID-19 continues to affect the shape of the performance industry on a global scale, it also presents an opportunity to adapt and revolutionize many aspects of theatre, performance, digital media, and audience relations in order to make more artistic experiences into inclusive experiences.

## How to Contribute to the Conversation

After reading this toolkit, perhaps you have suggestions of your own. Maybe you are a theatre creator, or a theatre lover who has worked in accessibility, or faces challenges in accessible theatre yourself. If you have anything to add, we would love to hear from you.

Take this toolkit, make it your own: sign up for a [Hypothesis account](#) to propose additions, edits, critiques, or criticism of your own, and join in the conversation. This is a living document - your contributions help bring it to life.

## Reflections

### Sydney Almond

When we started this process, it was incredibly overwhelming. I had no idea where to even begin. It seemed like such a daunting and impossible task. If major theatre companies could not figure out how to make theatre accessible, how could a group of students with little to no budget do it? And what I came to realize is there are ways in which theatre can be made accessible but a lack of effort from the able-bodied theatres. During an interview, someone from The Good Host Program said something that stuck with me, “theatre companies have just decided that Blind and Low Vision people won’t like theatre because we can’t see, not because we don’t actually like theatre.”

When we met with Jess for the first meeting it started with us describing our physical appearance and describing where we were during the call and our interests. This really made me think about, especially in post-COVID world where everything is online, how visual our world really is. This is honestly not really something that I had ever considered in my life and this project has really opened my eyes to a lot of things that we as sighted people take for granted. Working on this project has been a roller-coaster, I felt uncomfortable writing what was not my lived experience. This was something that struggled with this whole project. In the end after having it looked over by Jess Watkin, I do feel proud of what we’ve created and my hope is that it will help give others a starting point to start a conversation about what accessibility looks like in their theatre.

## Caitlin Cahill

This project started in September during an unprecedented semester of online learning. The first meeting with our team: four sighted students, none of whom had any experience working coding or digital technology design, each of us wondering how we could possibly contribute to a digital solution for Nightwood Theatre's online season which would increase accessibility for Blind and Low Vision audiences. In twelve weeks, this seemed like an impossibly huge task, and we were right.

Through conversations with Blind theatre advocates like Toronto Based Musician and founder of the Glenvale Players, Murray Powell, and under the guidance of Scholar, Artist, and Accessibility consultant, Jess Watkin, we learned that there is no Band-Aid for "inclusion" – there is a much larger systemic injustice which needs to be addresses. At this point, I felt overwhelmed and out of place. How can I, an individual with no lived experience of blindness, tackle any portion of this? When our group reevaluated our project we took a step back – Instead of providing a product for Blind and Low Vision folks, we wanted to make something for people like ourselves. Young, independent theatre makers who don't know where to start! To have had the opportunity we have had, making connections within the Blind and Low Vision community in Canada, I feel empowered to continue this conversation and share my experiences through this resource.

## Patrick Lynn

The crux of my work and experience with the BATT can be summed up in one word: effort. This project took time and energy, and we have spent the Fall 2020 semester navigating how to be a sighted person tasked with bridging a gap for blind audiences. As our term comes to a close and we finish this assignment, I now realize that *honest* effort is what is necessary, both to complete a school assignment and for sighted theatre creators to access blind audiences. There is not a single solution that is going to magically fill a house with audiences, blind or otherwise. It takes honest effort to get to know communities and invite them into your theatre spaces. It takes effort to learn and engage with the stories that audiences want to consume. Access is not about filling a quota or checking a box on a grant application. I believe that if someone truly wants to make their artistic practice accessible, then they must take the time and use the resources at their disposal to heartfully connect with their potential audiences to learn what real strategies they can implement in their work.

## Tom Masterson

As a sighted person, theatre maker, and activist, I was very enthusiastic to start this project - but I had no idea what I was doing. Through Ryerson University's "Design Solutions Supercourse", I was attracted to Nightwood Theatre's challenge "to explore and employ digital solutions to address theatre's systemic exclusion." Artistic Director Andrea Donaldson and her associate Teiya Kasahara guided us in the creation of this toolkit, and have been supportive all the way through.

Of course, not having experienced blindness myself, I had a lot to learn, and even more to consider. Thankfully we've been aided by Jess Watkin, a Toronto-based Blind & Disabled Artist-Scholar and Accessibility Consultant. Her insight into current limitations to accessibility in theatre and feedback have been instrumental in the creation of this toolkit, and we are beyond thankful for her contributions. Reviewing and refining our work with her guidance felt like a necessity; four sighted people simply cannot assess the effectiveness of accessibility strategies intended for blind and low vision theatregoers.

This experience has been humbling and enlightening. I am filled with gratitude by the compassion and enthusiasm shared between my team members, Nightwood Theatre, and Jess. I have never purported to know all the answers, but I am passionate about finding them. My hope is that this toolkit will help bring about increased awareness about blindness and disability in theatre, but also catalyze change in a historically discriminatory industry, in ways big and small.

## Creating Accessible Work

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### Existing Work

This section of the guide is intended to aid creators in adapting their work in ways that more easily allow people who are Blind and Low Vision (BLV) to engage with it.

A wonderful resource called "[Demystifying Access](#)" has already been compiled by [Unlimited Impact](#), a UK-based nonprofit organization that enables "new work by disabled artists to reach UK and international audiences." Their guide offers a semi-comprehensive look into how creators can broaden access to their work for audience members who are watching the show, make the venue more accessible, and market their work to communities with reduced access.

Clickable Link: [Demystifying Access: A guide for producers and performance makers: how to create better access for audiences to the performing arts.](#)

### New Work & Work in Development

This section is intended to aid in the creative process of developing original content with BLV accessibility in mind.

## Blind Artists and Theatre in Toronto & Canada

Toronto and Canada are host to an array of practicing groups, actors, playwrights, and other theatre creators that are blind or otherwise living and creating with disabilities. Here are a few of them:

## Theatre + Performing Arts Companies:

- [Dramaway](#)
  - "DramaWay programs span the realm of the fine arts including theatre, dance, vocal, multi-arts as well as social and life skills training. All programs are created, geared and modified to suit individuals of all abilities."
- [The Glenvale Players Theatre Group](#)
  - "A not for profit, non-union theatrical group comprising blind, vision impaired, sighted members as well as persons with other disabilities, who share an interest in theater arts."
- [Tangled Art + Disability](#)
  - "Tangled Art + Disability is a registered charitable organization dedicated to enhancing opportunities for artists with disabilities to contribute to the cultural fabric of our society."
- [Red Dress Productions](#)
  - "A Toronto non-profit that creates interdisciplinary, community-engaged, public art projects."
- [CCB Mysteries Chapter](#)
  - Inclusive Dinner Theatre group encouraging audience participation. Proceeds from shows go toward children with disabilities.
- [Real Wheels - Vancouver](#)
  - "Realwheels is a professional theatre company based in Vancouver with a mission to create and produce performances that deepen understanding of the disability experience."
- [Propeller Dance - Ottawa](#)
  - "Propeller Dance has been an innovator in the field of contemporary integrated dance and diverse performance practices in Canada since 2007. At the core of our work is the belief that dance is for all people, and as wide a breadth of expression as possible is of value."
- [CRIPSiE \(The Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society in Edmonton\)](#)
  - "An Edmonton-based collective of artists that include people who experience disability and their allies. We challenge dominant stories of disability and other forms of oppression, through high-quality crip and mad performance art, video art, and public education and outreach programs."
- [Inside Out Theatre - Calgary](#)
  - "A Deaf and disability theatre company in sunny Calgary, Alberta equally invested in artistic excellence, community development, and deepening our cultures' accessibility."
- [Stage Left Productions - Calgary](#)

- "Stage Left Productions is a grassroots, Popular Theatre company of diverse artists and non-artists/ catalysts of change who create pathways to systemic equity – in and through the arts. The common thread in our disparate whole is a lived experience of disablement. Our teams promote equity & diversity in the arts, provide support services for equity-seeking artists and produce radical forms of Political Art."

## Disabled Creators:

- [Alex Bulmer](#)
  - "With 30 professional years across theatre, television, film, radio, and education, Alex Bulmer is dedicated to inclusive collaborative art practice, fueled by a curiosity of the improbable and deeply informed by her experience of becoming blind."
- [Bruce Horak](#)
  - "Having lost over 90% of his eyesight to a childhood Cancer, Horak has navigated the world of the fully-sighted his entire life. For the past 25 years, Horak has pursued a career in the performing arts and has won numerous awards for his performance, writing, direction, and creation."
- [Rachel Ganz](#)
  - Rachel Ganz is a Toronto-based playwright, essayist, and story teller. She is the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Newborn Theatre, The Odds and Ends Festival, and Down Mordechai Productions.
- [Graham Isador](#)
  - "Graham Isador is a writer and theatre creator based out of Toronto. He trained as a part of the playwright unit at Soulpepper Theatre. Isador's work has appeared at VICE, The Risk Podcast, and the punk rock satire site The Hard Times, among other places."
- [Carmen Papalia](#)
  - "Born in Vancouver, unceded Coast Salish territory in 1981, Carmen Papalia is an artist who uses organizing strategies and improvisation to address his access to public space, the art institution, and visual culture. His socially engaged practice is an effort to unlearn visual primacy and resist support options that promote ablest concepts of normalcy."
- [Rod Michalko](#)
  - "Rod Michalko is Associate Professor of Sociology at St. Francis Xavier University. He is the author of *The Mystery of the Eye and the Shadow of Blindness* (1998) and *The Two- in-One: Walking with Smokie, Walking with Blindness* (Temple, 1999)."
- [Melisse/Coyote Watson](#)
  - "Melisse is a disruption-ist, earth-worker, counselor and multidisciplinary artist utilizing direct action, performance, visual, aural, and installation art that work to provoke an experience and an opportunity for the viewer to engage with critical

analysis and self reflection - all while being intentional around access and audience."

- [Jess Watkin](#)
  - "A PhD Candidate at the University of Toronto's Centre for drama, Theatre and Performance Studies. She has been consulting on a project-basis in Toronto and Canada (in person and online) since 2016 with companies such as Next Stage Theatre Festival, lemontree productions, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Live Describe, New College Library, Canadian Association of Theatre Research, Bodies in Translation, and more!"

## Organizations

- [Bodies in Translation](#)
  - "Bodies in Translation: Activist Art, Technology, and Access to Life (BIT), is a multidisciplinary, university-community research project that at its core, aims to cultivate and research activist art. In this project, 'activist art' refers to: disability art, Deaf art, Mad art, aging and e/Elder art, fat art, and Indigenous art."
- [Creative Users Projects](#)
  - "As a disability-led, national arts service organization, our community programs, and online platform connect people to cultural knowledge, resources, and accessible opportunities with the goal of helping artists and arts leaders build stronger and more inclusive communities."

This list is by no means exhaustive; If you think we've missed anyone, please let us know.

## The Venue

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## Patron Services

Adjustments and additions to a patron services team can drastically increase accessible options in a theatre space for BLV patrons. Here are some examples of possible patron services additions and adjustments for your consideration.

### Designated Point of Contact

Assigning a staff member as the 'Designated Point of Contact' for accessibility concerns offers a streamlined approach to decreasing individual access barriers. This individual should be clearly

identified on digital communications (including emails and your organization's website) with contact info available for any inquiries related to access. This individual should respond to concerns about how patrons will be able to access performances and have the ability to offer a variety of customizable solutions that suit relevant access needs and the performance's specific barriers.

You can find Ontario-based consulting companies who specialize in accessibility in the live events sector on the [Accessibility Consultants Association of Ontario website](#).

## Ushering

Upon arriving at the venue, navigating the space to find the box office, finding the correct aisle & seat, washrooms, concessions, etc. can be a challenge for blind and low-vision patrons. When standard signage does not present a viable solution, offering an usher to meet patrons during a designated window of time to escort them around the venue can assist in navigating a presentation space with dignity and confidence.

Accessing a concession stand can also be challenging during a brief intermission in a busy and unfamiliar lobby. Offering a menu online that is screen reader-friendly, as well as a physical menu written in braille can be helpful. Offering ushering services that escort patrons to a canteen is another suggestion that can ease access challenges for BLV patrons.

## Program

Programs can be a valuable tool for communicating relevant information to patrons prior to a performance. Digital programs available for download can be helpful, but only when they are screen reader-friendly. You can find relevant guidelines for screen-reader friendly PDFs here: <https://kb.iu.edu/d/bfua>.

Offering large-print programs can also help low vision patrons who struggle to read the small print.

## Navigation

A significant challenge for new BLV patrons can be navigating to a venue. Obstacles can include navigating a direct transit route and locating the correct entrance. These challenges are exacerbated when a piece is presented in a site-specific location, found space, or other unconventional performance space. Offering detailed guides for all types of transport is essential. Maintaining and updating this resource is imperative; changes to transit routes or road closures can be highly disruptive.

## Suggestions for Presenting with Optimal Access

## Audio Description

In the theatre, audio description can be used to transmit essential information about a play that may be unclear to BLV patrons. If you wish to provide these services, you would employ the services of an Audio Describer.

An Audio Describer should be on-site and providing description into a microphone that transmits to a patron's receiver. An Audio Describer should be properly trained to identify the key elements necessary to the description of the performance in addition to providing commentary integrated with the dialogue presented onstage, so as not to interrupt the flow of the performance.

For more information about working Audio Describers, you can visit [VocalEye](http://www.vocaleye.ca), a Vancouver-based Audio Description company with domestic and international resources: <http://www.vocaleye.ca/resources/>.

## Touch Tours

Touch tours can complement the performance and story-telling by engaging multiple senses. By providing props, scenery, costumes, and other tactile objects and materials for the audience to become familiar with, they may gain a better understanding of nuances presented onstage.

[Euan's Guide](#) offers some tips for designing and presenting an engaging touch tour that will enhance the theatrical experience: [Top Tips for Designing a Touch Tour](#).

## Companions

Many BLV patrons may prefer not to listen to an Audio Description service throughout an entire performance, for a variety of reasons. Patrons may prefer to sit with a companion throughout the performance and quietly clarify any questions they may have about the action onstage. If this is the case, having in-house ushers who are available when needed to provide friendly companionship throughout a performance can be helpful. Patrons may also prefer to be accompanied by their own friends and loved ones who can provide this type of description. Offering a designated seating section or Relaxed Performances where this type of description is offered and encouraged can be a simple way to provide a more enjoyable theatre experience to patrons with varying accessibility needs.

For information from a pioneer of the Relaxed Performance movement, Jess Thom, you can visit [Relaxed Performances - The FAQs](#).

## Online Performance & Theatre at Home

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a major transition to online offerings of theatre and performance as a result of social distancing laws in many countries. We would be remiss to not include information about how BLV patrons are affected by this digital transition.

Many platforms and websites for streaming audio and video offer similar challenges for Screen Reader users. Ensuring that the chat function and other text options will not distract the viewer via admin controls (when available) can be helpful. Opting out of unnecessary notifications and pop-ups will also support a more refined listening experience for BLV patrons.

More information on this topic can be found on the National Endowment for the Arts website: [Resources to Help Ensure Accessibility of Your Virtual Events for People with Disabilities](#).

## Marketing & Publicity

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### Current Marketing and Publicity (M&P)

Throughout our research we've encountered a gap in accessible Marketing and Publicity (M&P). Some strategies that we have identified include:

- Participation in forums, clubs, and newsletters related to accessibility needs and interests (one example: the [Torshout announcement list for blind Torontonians](#)) (Powell, October, 2020).
- Asking local Accessibility Consultants to share performance information with their network (Watkin, September 2020).
- Providing information on your Theatre Company's website detailing the specific accessibility options available at each performance (Watkin, September, 2020).
- Using social media to provide accessibility information about your performance (Watkin, September, 2020).

### Current Challenges With M&P

Some current approaches to M&P pose challenges for the marketing of shows with BLV accessibility. Many of the ways current shows are marketed are not accessible for BLV people (Watkin, September 2020). Ad campaigns are often reliant on transmitting information visually and don't offer adequate alternatives for those who can't see the visual aspects of the campaign (Watkin, September 2020). This is especially prevalent in online advertising.

Creating visual marketing materials that include image description and/or alternative text should be a priority, as they increase access and likelihood that your ads can reach and be understood by consumers with varying levels of access (Watkin, September 2020). Social Media is an integral part of modern advertising, and is a great way to reach your audiences - make sure you create accessible posts, and that your accounts provide information in accessible ways (Tips for Making Social Media, N. D.) .

During interviews with BLV community members, we were told that many accessibility features implemented by theatre companies feel like afterthoughts; The show wasn't created with them in mind, it was created and then incorporated accessibility features afterward (Watkin, September 2020). This can feel even more apparent when there has been little-to-no accessible advertising (Watkin, September 2020).

There is also a general lack of advertising for accessible options in live performance. Some theatre companies use BLV forums and advertise their accessibility information on posters and ads, but many tend to only provide accessibility information about their shows on a specific, sometimes hard to find section of their website (Powell, October 2020). Implementing accessibility measures can be hard work - it would be a shame if you didn't make it apparent that your show is accessible.

Another key problem is website accessibility. Having information on accessibility doesn't mean much if your website hasn't been set up for a screen reader or if your images don't have alternative text. These are things to keep in mind when creating public-facing materials for your work.

## Website Accessibility

Creating an accessible website for your work should be a paramount concern. There are many helpful guides about how to create an accessible website, and they all agree that readability shouldn't be something that is an afterthought (CNIB, p. 2). By creating an accessible website, you allow a wider range of access to your work (CNIB. p. 3)

Here is a resource from the Ontario government: [How to Make Websites Accessible.](#)

Readability is key for BLV consumers. Readability can be achieved and improved upon in a variety of ways:

- Contrast. By creating contrast between the text and background (for example: black text on a white background) you improve readability (CNIB, p. 4).
- Text colors should be reduced to just titles (CNIB, p. 6).
- Text size (i.e. font size) is also important: stick to around 12pt-18pt font, but keep in mind that bigger is better (CNIB, p. 8).
- Spacing between words (i.e. leading) should be wide - don't crowd letters or words together (CNIB p. 10). Uneven spacing can negatively affect the readability (CNIB, p. 10).

- Stick to simple fonts. Decorative fonts can be hard to read (CNIB, p. 12).
- Boldness of text should sit around medium thickness (CNIB, p. 14). Only bold text when you want to emphasize something (CNIB, p. 14).
- Use margins and columns (CNIB, p. 18). Longer paragraphs are hard to read, so try to break up long passages of text where possible.

You can find more readability resources from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) [Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines](#).

## Screen Readers and Other Tools

It is worth noting that many BLV consumers use a screen reader or screen-reading program (that is, a device or application that turns onscreen text into audio (Watkin, September 2020) .

To create an accessible website for someone who is using a screen reader, you need make sure that all non text objects (eg. images, links) have texts equivalents; all graphics need text labels (How to Make Websites Accessible, October 19th 2020) . Don't use decorative fonts, as screen readers can have difficulty reading them (Anderson, 2020). Make sure titles are descriptive yet concise (Anderson, October 19th 2020). Layout is also important for screen readers to follow: headings and subheadings are helpful in differentiating titles from main body text (Access Technology Team, p. 3). It is worth exploring and implementing the many layout options and hierarchical headings available in most website creators (Access Technology team, p. 3).

Nightwood Theatre, in conjunction with an accessibility consultant, created an audio-based e-program for their "Groundswell Festival" event (Accessibility Audio E-Program, 2020). The e-program explains how to navigate the website and its features for first-time visitors (Accessibility Audio E-Program, 2020). This optional resource is implemented as a video that serves as an audio guide on how best to engage with the content being presented (Accessibility Audio E-Program, 2020). It offers an overview of the festival, a tour of the website, and a detailed list of their upcoming event information, including times and accessibility options (Accessibility Audio E-Program).

You can view Nightwood Theatre's e-program here: [Accessibility Audio e-Program](#).

## Solutions

To create the most accessible M&P materials you can, we recommend meeting with an Accessibility Consultant who can review any already-existing marketing materials and also advise you on the creation of future materials (Watkin, September 2020). Financial compensation should be offered at a fair wage (Watkin, November 2020). It can also be helpful to create a profile of what is lacking in your M&P accessibility that you can address in order to create and maintain relationships within the BLV community (Watkin, September 2020).

## Creating Relationships in the BLV Community

Creating an accessible campaign from the outset is the easiest solution. This requires creating materials that can be understood from non-visual perspectives, and could also mean reviewing and revising previously published advertising material.

Using forums that have been created by and for the BLV community is a great way to advertise to the theatre community, but can be hard to find and research if you don't already participate within them (Powell, October 2020) . Reaching out to organizations like the [CNIB](#) and Creative Users Projects. can help you make these connections and "go to where your audience is (Jodham, October 2020)."

Social media is a great way to reach a wide variety of potential consumers, and creating accessible social media content helps further that reach (Tips for Making Social Media More Accessible, N.D.). Instagram and Facebook, for example, have built-in accessible features such as alternate text for images (Tips For Making Social Media More Accessible, N.D.). Instagram now has a feature that will auto generate alt text, but manually creating it allows you to be more intentional and precise (Tips For Making your Social Media More Accessibility, N.D.) . If your preferred social media platform doesn't have the ability to add alt text to your images, you can include it in your written post captions.

If you're posting Story content on social media, use the Summary Text feature to give an overview of what your talking about (Tips for Making Social Media More Accessible, N.D.) . As a reminder, avoid the use of decorative fonts in captions, as screen readers can't read it (Tips for Making Social Media More Accessible, N.D.). When creating hashtags, consider implementing CamelCase - the practice of writing phrases without spaces or punctuation, indicating the separation of words with a single capitalized letter, and the first word starting with either case (Tips for Making Social Media More Accessible, N.D.). For example, a hashtag for the production company "New Harlem Productions" would be written as "#NewHarlemProductions" using CamelCase.

If you use an abundance of hashtags (upwards of 5), put them in the comments and not in the caption, as screen readers will read all text in a post caption (Tips for Making Social Media More Accessible, N.D). By putting hashtags in a separate comment, a screen reader user has the autonomy to choose whether or not to interact with them (Tips for Making Social Media More Accessible, N.D).

More Social Media Accessibility resources:

- [Queen's University - Social Media Accessibility](#)
- [Ryerson University - Tips for Making Social Media More Accessible](#)

## The Theatre Community

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## Building & Maintaining Audience Relationships

The work of engaging and retaining BLV audiences may not be appropriate for all shows and situations. However, working with BLV artists and community members to find meaningful ways to create artwork that appeals to BLV people can create new community relationships that center and support the BLV experience. It is important to remember that exploring and integrating lived experience into artistic practice takes resources. Integrating fees and reasonable livable wages into consultations and any other work that BLV community members are doing for your show or company is necessary for ethical accessible performance. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind posits that 75% of blind individuals in Canada are unemployed. As a result, current ticketing structures may pose barriers for BLV audiences as they may not have the capital to attend the theatre. Consider how Pay What You Can or Pay It Forward models can help in reaching your target audiences while maintaining individual dignity and respect.

Consider that theatre and performance culture in Canada is not limited to performance onstage. Ensuring that a performance can be understood by BLV patrons is necessary, but only a partial step toward realizing an accessible theatre experience. Consider some of the other ways that patrons love to engage with their favourite companies, including post-show talkbacks, Q&As, lobby art installations, and workshops. These activities help foster a community atmosphere to retain audiences. It is imperative that many of these activities be planned from the outset to intentionally engage with BLV patrons. Events that can interest multiple senses simultaneously will ensure that vision access does not become an afterthought. Advertising campaigns must not rely solely on visual indicators. Accessibility considerations should be as varied as the companies presenting them and implemented every step of the way. Lasting relationships are formed only when we make continuous efforts to engage with and incorporate BLV accessibility.

