



## **A Global Perspective on Regional Accessibility**

**16 April 2020**

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also

been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role is, Accessibility Program Manager. So myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with these panelists today. So thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established

assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a

high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we

might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your

questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. however, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy.

I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and

things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the,

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And

it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector

companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are

seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is. what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home.

Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer

for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is

every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel

of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for

about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. my name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. my role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So

there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese

captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. Can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. It's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which

involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it

is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. Now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. We still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital

Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe

money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky

to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very

passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we

need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could

have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is what the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find

most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely

use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a

Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role is, Accessibility Program Manager. So myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people

with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers

because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. That's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm

advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlilii?

**Charlilii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional

critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once

those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is, there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of

transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of

it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds

similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the

first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is, what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies

and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also

been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. So thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established

assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a

high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we

might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your

questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. however, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy.

I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and

things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the,

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And

it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector

companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are

seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is. what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home.

Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer

for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is

every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel

of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for

about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. my name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. my role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So

there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese

captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. Can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. It's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which

involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it

is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. Now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. We still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital

Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe

money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky

to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very

passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we

need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could

have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is what the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find

most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely

use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a

Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role is, Accessibility Program Manager. So myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people

with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers

because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. That's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm

advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional

critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once

those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is, there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of

transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of

it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds

similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the

first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is, what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies

and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also

been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. So thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established

assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a

high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we

might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your

questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. however, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy.

I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and

things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the,

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And

it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector

companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are

seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is. what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home.

Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer

for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is

every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel

of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for

about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. my name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. my role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So

there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese

captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. Can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. It's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which

involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it

is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. Now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. We still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital

Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe

money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky

to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very

passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we

need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could

have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is what the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find

most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use these platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely

use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a

Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role is, Accessibility Program Manager. So myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people

with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers

because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. That's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm

advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlilii?

**Charlilii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional

critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once

those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is, there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of

transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of

it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds

similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the

first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is, what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies

and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also

been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. So thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established

assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a

high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we

might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your

questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. however, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy.

I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and

things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the,

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And

it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector

companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are

seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is. what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home.

Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer

for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is

every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel

of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for

about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. my name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. my role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So

there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese

captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. Can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. It's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which

involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it

is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. Now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. We still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital

Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe

money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky

to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very

passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we

need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could

have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is what the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find

most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely

use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a

Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role is, Accessibility Program Manager. So myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people

with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers

because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. That's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm

advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional

critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once

those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is, there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of

transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of

it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds

similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the

first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is, what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies

and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also

been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role is, Accessibility Program Manager. So myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with these panelists today. So thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established

assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a

high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we

might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your

questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. however, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy.

I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and

things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the,

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And

it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector

companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are

seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is. what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home.

Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer

for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is

every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel

of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for

about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. my name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. my role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So

there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese

captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. however, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. Can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. It's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which

involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it

is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. Now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. We still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital

Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe

money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky

to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very

passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we

need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could

have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is what the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find

most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use these platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are some differences between each other, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely

use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a

Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role is, Accessibility Program Manager. So myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people

with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers

because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. That's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm

advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional

critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once

those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is, there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of

transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of

it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds

similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the

first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is, what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies

and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also

been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. My name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. So thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established

assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a

high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we

might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your

questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. however, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy.

I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. it's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and

things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. we still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the,

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And

it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector

companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are

seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is. what, the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home.

Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer

for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is

every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much.

**Jonathan de Armas:** Welcome to Diamond Webinars.

This is the second in our webinar series format. We're going to keep these up, but we look forward to when we can gather in real life again today, we have a panel

of experts from around the world in an engaging discussion about how various countries address accessibility.

I'm Jonathan de Armas, a Partner here at Diamond.

Diamond is a digital agency built by developers with a commitment to well-crafted, inclusive software built on best practices. We support media companies and large brand names who rely on us every single day for Product Strategy, Experience Design, and Full-Stack Development services.

Diamond proudly sponsors Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Founded in 2012 and occurring on the 3rd Thursday each May, the purpose of GAAD is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities. GAAD has turned into a global event with a Twitter reach of over 195 million people on the GAAD hashtag celebrated by companies big and small inside and outside of the tech space.

Diamond has launched our own accessibility practice to marry our love of building great software. With our commitment to the accessibility community. We offer assessments, audits, and general consulting, but also development services for remediation efforts. Of course, it's in our DNA to build well-crafted software from the ground up with accessibility from the start.

With all that in mind, it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today's panel. He was my personal introduction to the accessibility community. He's also been a tech leader and community builder in the LA area for over 15 years. In 2012 he co-founded both GAAD and Diamond. Welcome, Mr Joe Devon.

Hey Joe. Welcome.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Jonathan. I really appreciate that introduction. I also would like to welcome our esteemed panelists and audience. It is really a pleasure to have such a great group of people from around the world, some of whom woke up at 2:00 am their time in order to join our panel. So thank you so much.

And with that, let me discuss our agenda. So we're going to begin with the introductions and welcoming the panelists. From there, we're going to speak for

about 20 minutes and go to an audience Q and A. And at that point we're going to wrap up. So with that. Let me start with introductions. I'd like to ask each of the panelists, tell us your name, what you do, where you do it, and for whom.

So let's start with Patrick Dunphy.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Hey everybody. my name is Patrick Dunphy. I'm based out of Toronto. I live in Toronto, and I worked for a Canada's National Public Broadcaster, , Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. my role, is, Accessibility Program Manager. So. Myself and my team, we are responsible for enabling our digital products and built experiences to be accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of how they decide to use built products and experiences.

I appreciate the invite to speak with, these panelists today. so thank you for having me. And, looking forward to this.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Patrick, and I love that background being Canadian, myself, this, when I hear the name CBC, it warms my heart. So thank you for joining us. Now, Irene, I'd like to invite you to answer the same question.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Thanks for having me. My name is Irene Mbari-Kirika. I'm the founder and executive director of inABLE. It's a nonprofit that I started around 2009 with a whole mission to empower the blind and visually impaired through technology. So I've spent my last 10 years with their users and we've established assistive technology labs and worked with over 8,000 blind and low vision youth in Africa.

At the same time, I'm very passionate about ensuring all some of the content and services that we are providing are accessible. So I'm running a separate initiative to show that some of the products coming out of Africa, especially all the, all the innovations that we are seeing are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Wonderful. Thank you, Irene.

Charlii I will pass it on to you.

**Charlii Parker:** Good morning. My name's Charlii Parker. I'm a Digital Accessibility consultant. with vision Australia. Vision Australia is the leading provider services for people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. However, my team, the digital access team have a pan-disability focus.

So we focus on equal access for all and help organizations to make sure that their digital content documents, etcetera are accessible. and we also do, a lot of trainings as well in the area.

And I'm based in Adelaide, Australia. So for me it is currently 3:06 AM

**Joe Devon:** Good morning. Thank you Charlii.

And Makoto I'll pass it along to you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I'm Makoto Ueki Tokyo, Japan. It's 2:30 am. Good morning. I'm a, independent consultant on Web Accessibility. Most of my clients, Japanese and global companies. And, I've been participating in the working group of like WC3s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and, Japanese national standards.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you, Makoto and I see that, from the logo over there that, we're celebrating GAAD at Mount Fuji as well. So.

**Makoto Ueki:** Exactly!

**Joe Devon:** Thank you for joining.

So now I want to ask each of you first, how are you all managing personally with COVID and locally in your region with COVID? How are things going, both personally and for the accessibility community there?

Why don't we start with you? Makoto we'll go back around.

**Makoto Ueki:** Oh, well, I stay home and work at home and I wash my hands frequently and do some exercise at home.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, great. Charlie?

**Charlii Parker:** For me, I was working from home before all of all of this happened. So it's, it's all very much. I feel kind of guilty cause so very much business as usual for me. I can stay home and away from, the crowds and the, the weird situations in the shops where certain products are off shelf and things like that.

So for me, it's, it's, it's pretty much life as usual flow. I'm very, very fortunate.

**Joe Devon:** I feel you. Same, same here, pretty much as tech techies. We're, we're indoors anyways, so, can be normal life.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** And so for me, it's life as usual. But, at the same time, I'm learning how to love my children because I'm with them 24-7.

So it's definitely a struggle, but, it's definitely a good time to go on. So I'm sort of trying to change my mindset in, in terms of how I think and, and, and how things should get done to try and get the best of it. So

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I'll have to go with Irene said, the struggle with a Google classroom is new. I shouldn't say struggle.

It's been a, it's been an interesting experience. My, I have to work before I start work with the children, but, unfortunate, family, direct family, extended family, and haven't had anybody affected. So we're, we're good here in Ontario and Canada, we've been managing well with COVID.

My entire department has been working from home since March 13th, so we're just passed a month. What's interesting is that we have programs for radio and television being produced from people's homes. Which is very unusual for the national public broadcaster. But extreme situations cause or call for extreme measures.

So, I'm doing well with it, other than grocery shopping for my inlaws and myself. I, I stay at home, so it's, it's, we're lucky and that's, that's the only way I can look at it.

**Joe Devon:** Yeah, yeah. Unfortunately are definitely learned that a lot of people struggling right now, and we, we've definitely lost a couple of folks in the accessibility community, so it is, it is pretty sad.

I keep hearing new stories and, and it's, yeah, it's really a shame. Something interesting that's happening over here is that sign language, American sign language is gaining a moment. And it, it depends on the region. So in California, the mayor, the local mayor, the governor, every time that they are doing some kind of alert to the community, there's always an interpreter.

And. A lot of people have noticed that because they're really up front and center. The FCC does require closed captions on all broadcast networks, so there's always a closed captioning. But the sign language definitely is seeing a moment federally, we're not seeing that, but at least there are closed captions.

What is it like in your local region? You know, we'll go back around again. Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** The social distancing has a, for ASL interpreters has, has definitely been interesting to watch from a, the press conference. We have, an inset for our broadcast of the ASL. and that's the, the prime minister gets a daily address to the nation.

He is the only person at a podium. So, for the broadcast, they have the ASL interpretation in a box. As we go through the provinces, you can see the different situations of, the interpreters are in the background from behind that, the health health lead or, or the premier, whoever is speaking at the time.

But yeah, definitely echo what you say, Joe, that the visibility and the prominence of, ASL and interpretation, that surface interpretation is definitely being recognized and a little celebrity culture, is happening a little bit with that as well.

**Joe Devon:** That's great. My friend Richard Ray is a big advocate for the importance of emergency services that it does go and reach out to people with disabilities as well.

So it's super important.

How about, how about you, Irene? Is Kenya seeing accessibility in terms of the emergency broadcasting?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. And I think what's interesting is that I know sign language has been there for quite some time on, on television. But what's interesting is that, the wider community is beginning to understand that actually the content that they're massively sharing is actually not accessible to people with disabilities.

At the same time of the interesting articles where you find people are trying to ask the government to sort of account for, for, we have a maybe over 200 people with COVID cases so far. So the government should be able to tell us how many of those people actually have disabilities so that we know how to help them.

An interesting situation that has been there is where everyone has to wear face mask everywhere they go. But the challenge comes in, what happens to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because some of them rely on lip reading. Then what are we doing? So there are a few challenges coming up, but, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come together and sort of address some of the accessibility or disability challenges that we have.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And that was, it was a great point that you brought up. I don't know if you saw, but there was a story going around that I believe it was a high school student saw this situation and said the masks are covering the lip reading and, and this high school student, 3D printed a mask that had plastic over the mouth so that, you know, it's possible to lip read and see what people are saying, which I thought was super cool. I don't know if you've seen that.

All right, Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia we actually had, from the end of last year, we had a lot of bush fires around the country, so there was a lot of emergency response. So

there was a lot of, highlight, put on, making. press conferences, et cetera, accessible. We did initially see a lot where we would have a, an Auslan Australian sign language interpreter to the side and the camera, the television camera would pan in on the speaker.

And so occasionally you'd see an, wave off the side of the interrupter, but now they are starting to place the interpreter in the middle of the screen. or to the side of the screen which has been a really good, a good thing to see. But there is a lot of fear in the disability community.

They are feeling, you know, quite vulnerable at the moment. There's been a lot of assistance put out financial assistance and things like that for job seekers, but, people with disability have really been fighting for extra assistance because goods and services have gone up. A lot of people have lost the ability to access carers because, of social distancing and things like that, and people feeling that, you know, they're not safe to continue doing those jobs.

So there is a lot of fear in the community. But the community itself is coming together really well. So, there's a lot of self-advocacy happening. and they getting the stories out though, which is a really, you know, it's a shame that has to be done, but it's a good thing that it is being done.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. And how about you Makoto.

**Makoto Ueki:** In Japan, the prime minister's press conference has a sign language interpreter, but, on live TV, we cannot see the interpreter in some cases. So, we might need to set the rules or guidelines for TV stations about that. And, we should split towards, about, sign language at force.

The sign language is pretty my primary language and essential for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. And I, I'm seeing, many. business persons started working at home, and we have business meetings online. A friend of mine, who is blind told me to. It's the Zoom is relatively accessible to screen reader users.

So he can attend meeting online, which is a great. My concern is accessibility for people who are deaf and a hard of hearing. Zoom has not supported the Japanese

captions yet. I hope they will, but, we have, talk, which is, voice recognition and translation application.

We can use it in combination with Zoom, which works very well for captioning.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Interesting to know. we were seeing over here, I don't know if it, I'm sure it probably reached Japan, but a lot of people are attacking Zoom for, for security issues. And, and what really happened is that Zoom, when they were building this product, they had, they had to weigh and balance.

Are we going to focus on security or ease of use? And they optimize for ease of use by far. Definitely made some mistakes, but they're, they're getting better. but, but the fact that you can loop in the live captioning is, is really a big deal. And hopefully they'll get Japan a part of this as well.

I'd also like to mention that, we've got, some notes in the chat room from Melissa who said, I'm hard of hearing some and, and have encountered that challenge with the face mask. And being able to read people's lips, facial expressions. So, this is, this is definitely not something that is a theory.

It's, it's definitely affecting people. and then Ted Drake, who was our panelist last month said that the web for all conference would be using UT talk for multilingual captioning next week. So yeah, shout out to them. And as I'm reading all of this, I think I'm pointing in the right spot, right about here.

You can see below you too. This is for the audience. The Q and a. At the end, we're going to have a Q and. A. And if you just click on that and start to ask your questions, by the time we're done with the panel, we'll be able to go in and, and, and, get to your questions.

So with that, I'm going to ask you Makoto any plans for Global Accessibility Awareness Day?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, I'm gonna co-host the, online webinar event, which is called GAAD Japan 2020. This is a first time for us to hold a one day online seminar. You can see the logo of the GAAD Japan on my background, everywhere. We will have eight Japanese speakers who are passionate with web accessibility.

Just, it's going to be awesome. I can't wait for the webinar.

**Joe Devon:** Awesome. Please do let us know that link. I think we'll be able to share that with the audience. I would love to see it myself.

**Makoto Ueki:** Yes, I will.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you.

Charlii.

**Charlii Parker:** Well, this, year actually, aligns with my team, the Digital Access team's, 20th anniversary, in doing what we do.

So we did have a big, GAAD birthday party planned, which was going to be a live event. However, now, things have obviously changed a bit. So we do have, some really fun things in the pipeline, which I don't want to mention just yet, but, we'll be, we'll be pushing those out when everything's being, better down.

We've got some really fun things that, that will be coming out.

**Joe Devon:** Cool. Well, congrats on the 20th anniversary and when you're ready, do let me or Jennison know about the event and we'll make added to the GAAD website.

Irene.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So we were actually planning to have a face to face event just like everybody else, because Digital Accessibility is a very new concept and it was important for us to bring people together. But now, because of COVID, we've moved online. So we will be hosting a webinar and we will have some local participation.

And most importantly, we are going to have Joe and Jennison as part of the panel to help us at least discuss the importance of Digital Accessibility. So we are very excited.

**Joe Devon:** I'm excited as well because, I haven't done enough events with Jennison on GAAD day, only a couple of times here and there.

So it's gonna definitely be a pleasure. Thank you for that invite.

And Patrick.

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, COVID definitely threw a wrench into things. Our building, the Toronto Broadcast Center is the main facility, for CBC. that's where the national broadcast come from. And we have generally have a space where we have a table and we set up computers.

It's a public space, so anybody from the public can come in and, and explore the building. So we set up a series of laptops, gov.uk last year, had their setups and basically personas. I can never simulate a disability. And that's not at all what I'm advocating for. It's the concept of barriers. And we use the different profiles on different laptops and we encourage anybody who's walking by just to come and play with them and use it.

But this year it's not possible. We will be doing it in an internal empathy workshop that'll, that is similar to that. So there is a bunch of, exercises that I will be guiding participants through. Basically the goal is to frustrate them by using content that they know, the content they built and make it so they can't access it.

And basically the goal is after an hour, I go to the slide and I said, are you being like this and that? And it's a picture of a, of a, of a duck smashing the monitor. And this is like, my goal is I want you to feel like this. I want you to have empathy. I want, I want, I want you to have that feeling. And that's, that's what we'll be doing for for GAAD this year.

**Joe Devon:** That's really awesome. I mean, the whole point of GAAD is to bring awareness to developers and folks that build digital content. And until you really see this upfront, you just can't understand it. So the empathy is, is so vital. I, I love this approach. all of you also are invited to let me or Jennison know about your events.

If you would like us to mention it publicly, we'll be happy to provide a link, at the end of this, but as well on the GAAD, website.

So up next I'm going to ask about the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the United States has not signed. Can someone define what it is or explain what it is and then let us know in your region if it has been signed and the impact of it, if, if you're up for that, Patrick, great.

If not, I'll see if another panelists wants to describe it.

**Patrick Dunphy:** It's, it's the intention is to, It's a, it's a human rights treaty to protect the rights and the dignity of, of, of persons with disabilities. It's, it's promoting the respect and the dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they have the fundamental freedoms available to them.

I should know this Canada is a member. I will say, and, yeah, I'm, I'm full disclosure, I'm not well versed on the, convention of rights per sensibilities.

**Joe Devon:** Okay. No worries. As long. I just curious like how, how that's impacted some of the regions because here we have the ADA and the ninth circuit court of appeals has been ruling that it is, the law that you need to make websites and digital products accessible, but it's still a matter of the courts. Because, in the 90s, in the early nineties, when it was passed, it was not yet ubiquitous to have, the web. So, we're, we're lacking this a little bit and, it would be nice to, to have the UN treaty signed, which hopefully will happen sooner or later.

Irene, how about you? In Kenya is a, is it a signatory and how has it impacted.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** Yes. So Kenya, is, a signatory, to the UN CRPD and actually Kenya was part of a team that developed, the CRPD. So they're very, we're very, very engaged in the whole process. The government is very committed and, actually the ministry of labor.

Nairobi leads the effort, and we do have people with disabilities, participating, as part of the effort. And the Kenya national human rights commission is the one that does the monitoring to make sure at least we are able to accomplish what we've committed to doing. So at the same time, there's a work group, which

involves the government and civil society groups, and they handle different issues, including, there's an effort to ensure that we have inclusive education, which is very, very critical. So I have to say for Kenya as a country, we've seen great progress, in the UN CRPD as well as, and I think the best part is just the movement of, of different groups of people where they, the civil society with AIDS, people with disabilities, but it's government.

So, yeah. So I think, Kenya is doing a great job. We still have some way to go, but, with this fall, for the long haul.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** Yes, Australia is, it's an, it's a signatory. We were, one of the original signatories, In 2008, I believe it was ratified. And, and then the optional critical in 2009, how that translates and transfers. it's difficult to say again. we have, our own disability discrimination acts and, and, things in place, but they're not necessarily widely known. so not a lot. it really takes somebody to, To push a complaint and, and, and have to, make a complaint on the basis of, of any of these, particular policies to get action happen. We do have a national disability insurance scheme now. So it does, aim to help people gain more independence and more, more independence over the services that they access and things like that.

So, that has really pushed disability into the spotlight, which has been a good thing. It's a very new scheme. So of course there are a few teething issues and things, but, and we also have a Senator, at the moment who is a wheelchair user, and he's a really good advocate for people with disability as well.

And he's, he's very personable and gets in and speaks to the people and really takes their messages into parliament, which is really good to see as well.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you. Makoto how about Japan?

**Makoto Ueki:** Yeah, Japan signed the convention in 2014, six years ago. And, the act for eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was in enacted in 2016. ADA in the United States in a AA in Ontario, Canada. I have to say that it

is fairly loose. We still don't have any real pressure to make things more accessible, under the law, we haven't seen any big changes through, last four years, especially in terms of a Digital Information Accessibility.

It's a very unfortunate.

**Joe Devon:** Thanks. I'm going to add from, from a Q. And. A.

We have, Jeremy Sada said that the U S actually did sign it on July 30 2009, but we failed to ratify it. So we're halfway there. So just thought I'd add that now. Oh, another question. Yeah, I'll come back to that. how about the cultural situation with respect to disabilities or accessibility, in the region?

Makoto what, what is it like if you have a disability?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, Japan is, way behind other countries in terms of, understanding on how and why accessibility is important and essential. It might be due to, lack of regular obligations and a social pressures. I think a, we need a more, strict role in Japan.

On the other hand, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. I believe accessible design also benefits, older people. So, we, we should have a different strategy to promote accessibility in my country.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** Ah, Charlii?

**Charlii Parker:** So in Australia, we have had the, national disability insurance scheme. so it has pushed disability into the spotlight. I think a lot of people's experience has been different. There are a lot of people out there who are wanting to do the right thing, but not sure how, and, especially at the moment, in, in the work that we do with, Auditing websites and, and helping people get the digital, Platform's accessible. We are extremely busy at the moment, which tells me that, that it is important. it, it was, when I first started in this industry, it was a bit of a checkbox exercise. It's, you know, we, there's something called WCAG and we want to be AA.

Tell me what we need to do to be AA, without any real understanding of what that was. Now, people are becoming more aware, People with disability are advocating for themselves a lot more. We have had a couple of, large, actions against, gets different companies over their accessibility.

So that has brought it into the spotlight as well. We still have a ways to go, but people are getting more of a voice. And, and that's a lot of what I do is I speak to organizations, about the needs of, of people with accessibility issues and how you know, people with a disability, they have the same wants and needs as everybody else.

Just because somebody has a disability doesn't mean that they don't want to do all the same things that everybody else wants to do online. So, and then once those things are accessible, it actually makes it easier for everyone and, and that message is coming through. So yes, we're still a long way to go, but I think we're on the right track.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. How about Kenya?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So I've been in the Accessibility space for about maybe 13 years now. And one thing I can say is that it's been an extremely lonely journey, and that's because Accessibility is a very, very foreign concept. And what you find is most people, when you talk about, when you say the word Accessibility, they tell you, are you talking about access to food or education or what is it?

So that's why sometimes you see, I tried to put an emphasis when I'm dealing with Digital Accessibility, I'm very clear as to what I'm talking about. Part of it, this being a very foreign concept, disability was not very popular in Africa in general until about one and a half years ago, we saw a huge momentum, and part of it is because there was a global disability summit in London that was hosted by the UK government.

So that created a huge momentum because of also the investments they were making in disability in Africa. So that opened doors. But what we've seen over time is. there's a bit of, of, of some confusion when it comes to Digital

Accessibility, what people think it's ease versus the reality of what it is are two different things.

So there's definitely a need for a lot of training and education in that piece. The other pieces that, the government has moved a lot of services is online. We don't have any laws on Digital Accessibility. Our, new ICT policy does mention, Accessibility and we are willing to do a review to see is this sufficient?

Because then we have to think about the legal framework, setting up standards and monitoring. But in the meantime, we don't have a very strong, legal framework in that area. But the best part about COVID 19 is that it's created an opportunity and an entry point for us to have these conversations.

Because like in Kenya, currently, the government is asking people don't use cash. Use mobile money applications if you need any governments services go online, but most of these mobile money applications are not accessible. So that's a huge problem. Government services online, they may be online. That's true, but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

So I find this to be a really, really great opportunity for us to push this agenda and parts of it. inABLE was actually going to host the first inclusive Africa conference last month. And of course, and the focus was on Digital Accessibility because we understood the need of people just getting to understand what's just basic, what does Digital Accessibility mean?

And unfortunately, we after that, constantly advent, but it still turns out good because everyone now has gone online. And our goal is to take advantage of this opportunity to promote a digital inclusion.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. I'm, I may actually ask, speak to you offline, to get a little more information on this because I always love to have examples when I do talks about, why Accessibility is really a civil right.

And so there's an example of when someone gets sued by, when the IRS set gives a fine, but they don't provide an accessible form when they say that you owe

money. You should, you should definitely pay taxes if you have a disability. But if you're not given the notice in an accessible way, then why should you pay?

If you can't use money. that's, that's, that's a pretty prime example of that. So thank you.

And how about Canada?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Canada is a, we are in the process of introducing the Accessible Canada Act. this was passed in a federal legislation last, before the summer, before this, before the session closed.

So it was in the consultation phase. It is not yet actionable, but what, what's happening is you're going to have different ministries to take responsibility for different areas. So, so the transportation, will take, look over the accessibility of transport communications, will be looked after by the CRTC who, who, governs, broadcasting, which is the, my industry, what I, where I work.

It's essentially, it's a, what it will be in the, it's. The outcomes. I, as I, I can see them. It's, it's will require consultation with persons with disabilities. It's the ability to, to respond as solicit feedback from, from, audiences or from people and transparency about your Accessibility plans and your progress and what's been done.

I mean, those are the three, three things that I think are, are, are necessary to be successful. I live in Toronto. Makoto mentioned a AODA, previously, the, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Now that is the first accessibility legislation that extends to the private sector as well.

So that was rolled out based on company size. Companies were, had to meet, accessibility requirements and AODA required. the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines that Charlii, mentioned referenced earlier. What's nice about AODA is the core principles that are references, it takes it out of their very rigid, WCAG speak of, perceivable, operable, understandable, robust.

And it talks about the independence, talks about dignity, integration, and equality. It really per personalizes, accessibility and what it is. Yeah, well, I'm lucky

to be in Toronto. We have a very vibrant accessibility community here, and I think that is a symptom of, we have a lot of, educational, higher ed in the city.

AODA, a lot of the large companies are here, so accessibly. Toronto has a very large following. I know Makoto has been here, the past two years for that, and he was actually hosted last year, which was a lot of fun. yeah, it's, it's, it's changing. more people are noticing it. more people are familiar with the term.

Accessibility is not about availability.

If people are under getting understanding, the Accessibility is about the ability to, to use and interact. So thank you.

**Joe Devon:** Okay, thanks. So with a final question, I'm just going to prompt our audience. It once again, hit the QA button. If you have a question. This is our last question and we only have two others, so that's why I went a little bit long.

The final question is a, it's kind of prompted from a trip I took to Spain, which was pretty fascinating. There's an organization there called, I call it ONCE, but a, apparently in Spain, it's pronounced On-THEY, and what it is that during the war and the Spanish King, a lot of, a lot of people were maimed and the Spanish King really didn't want to deal with it, and he just decided to. provide an exclusive lottery commission to this group, which was, for people who are blind. And the result of it is that, employment, among people who are blind in Spain is 80%. And it's a very powerful organization. And. The problem and most of the rest of the world is that there is very low employment numbers for people with disabilities.

So I thought it was an interesting model that may be we could learn from in other regions. So I'm wondering, is there something that we in the United States can take away from your region, or is there something that you can take away from one of the other panelists or other regions? How can we share our knowledge and what has worked and not worked?

So, Patrick, I'll start with you.

**Patrick Dunphy:** I think, things like what we're doing today, Joe, are important. The, the willingness of, of the people involved with Accessibility. we're very

passionate about what we do and just continue to spread the message and educate and teach where necessary. I, I can't think of a situation I similar to the, the, the Spain, scenario that you outlined, but I think it's, it's.

I think the onus is on us to, to really, to teach and educate and spread the word about accessibility, the importance of the impact, the benefit that people obtain from, from the measures that we take, and what we do. So, really it's, it's more of this, so it's kind of a simple answer, but really it's.

I, I, I used to be involved with Accessibility Toronto, as a lead. And it was really gratifying just to, to, to get feedback from people, as, as, as a former organizer of it, is just like, it really impacts you personally, and, and what you're doing and it, it does make a difference. So thanks.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Irene?

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So for me, one thing that I completely admire about the United States and of course Europe is, is that private sector companies have taken on, this message of accessibility. They are leading the effort, whether it comes to innovations to engaging their staff. They're making sure it's part and parcel of the companies that they lead.

Now the difference is in Africa, we don't have much going on about Digital Accessibility. And I think that African companies can learn from private sector companies here to realize that if any, if we have the government that should also be pushing Digital Accessibility, private sector companies have a huge role to play and these great opportunities for innovation.

At the same time, I think one challenge I would have for all this private sector, international companies doing business in Africa, is to make sure that their global strategies on accessibility actually trickle down to Africa. And in this case, what happens is you find all these companies here talking about Digital Accessibility, pushing great innovations, but when you go to their local offices in Africa no one even understands what the Digital Accessibility, so half the time you're told, Oh, that's a corporate initiative you need, you need to go back to corporate office. But then reality is we have more than 18 million Africans living with disabilities, so we

need products that are inclusive. And young Africans are very innovative so we have amazing innovations that are coming out of Africa, but they're not inclusive. So I'm really, this is a challenge to private sector companies to really join hands and make sure that their accessibility message is trickling down to their staff on the ground, because I'm sure the stuff on the ground in embrace message and push it on.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

Before I move on to you, Charlii, I'm just going to read a comment from from Ted Drake who was talking about the, ONCE that I mentioned earlier, and it sounds similar to the Randolph Sheppard Vendor's Act in the United States, which gives a priority to blind and low vision entrepreneurs to run cafes, concession stands, and vending machines on state and federal property, rest areas, courts, et cetera. Which is interesting. I need to learn more about that. Thank you, Ted.

So Charlie .

**Charlii Parker:** In Australia, we're seeing a slight movement. and, and I have to admit, I'm one of the big advocates for it away from, pure WCAG Accessibility. It's very important, but we are seeing a shift, a little bit more towards inclusive design and things like that. and really looking at the end user and how, you know, you can, if you design for. The extreme, it makes it easier for everybody. so we are seeing a slight movement away from that. And, and the other really important thing is, is the old slogan, nothing about us without us. you know, engaging with the disability communities.

I see a lot of, a lot of things being done to make things accessible for the people who are blind or have low vision or make things accessible for the people who are deaf. But not a lot of, of talking with those particular groups to find out what they want. And, and I think getting an understanding of each disability is really important because if you're building something for a particular group, you have to have an understanding of what you're building for, and, understanding that, you know, quite, quite a lot of people's experience lived experience is different. So I used to work directly with people who are blind and had low vision, and I could

have two clients who had exactly the same condition, but their actual lived experience when they're online. Well, it's completely different. So diagnostically exactly the same condition, how they had to set up the computer, completely different. So it's, it's getting understanding and really speaking to the communities, I think is really important. And that's something that I advocate and that we advocate a lot for as well.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you.

**Makoto Ueki:** I would say, let's see, not only people with disabilities, but also all users, different abilities. Accessibility is all about, people with disabilities in the first place, but I believe Accessibility is more than that. We are different. Regardless of the disabilities and accessible design benefits, everyone. For instance, Accessibility, benefits older people to have more difficulties and face more challenges when they are using the web.

As I mentioned an today, Japan is most rapidly aging on this planet. For instance, sufficient color contrast benefits, older people, including me. And a conscious...

**Joe Devon:** Me too.

**Makoto Ueki:** And a consistent navigation, descriptive instruction in the EULA message and a resizable text. help older people so. Following Accessibility guidelines will make your web content more user friendly.

And a, you can create a better quality of user experience for everyone who is using, your websites, web services, web applications. Whatever, and, we will be able to get more people involved in the accessible design.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you Makoto.

So that was the last question. Now I'm going to go to the Q & A. And in the interest of time, wow, we really gone quite long, but we have a lot of folks, almost nobody has left, so I'm going to. just direct the question to one or maybe two in, people, before we wrap up.

Maybe I'll go to Irene for that one. What are your thoughts on the technical divide? I've been following NGOs in India that are moving their occupational and independence training online, but many of their students lack adequate mobile phones to join, and it's also difficult to purchase phones during the shutdown.

**Irene Mbari-Kirika:** So, this is a really, really critical question and simply because, one thing we are seeing about COVID-19 is that it's actually, people with disabilities are experiencing a secondary source of isolation, which is digital isolation. And this is simply because if you go to Africa or anywhere, you'll find most people are going about their business the same way, using online application, doing their own thing.

But people with disabilities are not able to have access to like mobile money application. They're having connectivity challenges. And one, one area can give an example is online learning, which is what the participant has asked about in Kenya currently, that there are different issues that come with online money.

All, all schools are closed. Students are home and learning from home. I'll give an example of, of a professor that I work with. One, she has students with disabilities and when everyone else is logging online, the students are not logging in. One of the challenges is, students with disabilities in a tie education actually given laptops when they're in school.

And guess what happens when the semester is over? They have to give back the laptops. So this time when the students left for home, no one took a laptop home. Some of them have what we call the feature phones, which are very different from smart phones. So how can you access the educational content on feature phones?

Yet most of that content is not even accessible. At the same time, you also find that, like the professor I'm talking to, she, she doesn't know how to use he used the new online platforms that they've been told by the government. This is what you need to use for higher education. So there's also, an issue of connectivity.

Most people in Africa pay for every minute, every 10 minutes you spend on the internet. It's not like, yeah, half the time you have a unlimited. So you also find

most homes are not pre-wired for that, but also long term connectivity becomes very, very expensive. So there are a lot of issues going on.

Connectivity, access to hardware. Most people don't have laptops. They have phones and those are feature phones. Educational content is not accessible. The professors and the students themselves don't even know how to use this platforms. So when you look at that whole combination and then you see what the participant is saying about everything moving online, then you find there's a different set of challenges that's happening, especially in poverty, in developing countries.

**Joe Devon:** Wow. Great answer. Thank you.

All right. Melissa asks, how are countries addressing universal design to increase accessibility?

Would you like to take that one, Makoto?

**Makoto Ueki:** Well, in Japan, especially public sectors like to use the term universal design rather than accessible design or accessibility. And we also use a term "barrier free"

So, in the strictly meaning there are. Some differences between each others, universal design, accessibility, and barrier free, maybe, you know, inclusivity design, but I think the aim is the same. The goal is the same, to get more, comparable environment or two services. So, I am not sure if this is the answer for the question, but, if you, take the approach of a universal design, then you will get more accessible results.

**Joe Devon:** Thank you. Makoto.

And then the last question from Mitchell Avin is for Patrick.

When we demand Accessibility, I often hear this concern. Can you show me an example where it's been done well before? It's not necessarily pessimistic, it's wanting to follow other's best practices.

What's a success story you would point to in your region?

**Patrick Dunphy:** Yeah, I get that question a lot when we're building things. Okay. we're going to do it. How do we do it right? Who's done it right? Sometimes that requires me to go looking, consulting, looking, researching, looking at other sites.

It's, it's an evolution really. It's, I think Canada, Ontario has been doing very well, with regards to improving accessibility in like, in terms of visibility, knowledge, people working in Digital Accessibility. I often, when I'm looking for something, I generally start with financial institutions because they, have real needs to, When it comes to personal finances, there's nothing more personal than that. And so that's generally a starting point for me. Beyond that, this is the other good samples that we'll look at. I would actually look at various, accessibility agencies and the work that they've been consulting on if I don't have, an an answer that I'm comfortable with, with giving a direction.

**Joe Devon:** Great. Thank you so much, Patrick,

And thank you to all of the panelists. I cannot thank you enough. I know, it was a burdening specially for a couple of you at this hour. So it is, it is really much appreciated. I enjoyed this tremendously. And, I hope that I will see you all in person very soon.

The next global Accessibility awareness day is going to be on May 21st, 2020, which is one month from now on Thursday the third Thursday of May as it is every year, we are also going to be releasing our second annual state of Accessibility report.

Note how that comes to SOAR. So that we'll also be talking about the GAAD Pledge Partner Program. And this is something that we could actually use some help on. So from the audience, if anybody would like to be a sponsor, please let me know. We don't have, we only have 11 more spots open, and essentially we're going to be sponsoring and working with one open source project a month to try and help them to become more accessible.

We'll provide you more details as the event comes along, but something that we could really use is anybody that knows core developers and some of the big. Open source projects that are impacting accessibility downstream. We could definitely

use some, some personal intros there and get more open source projects to take the GAAD pledge.

So thank you for that.

Our next webinar will also be on the same day on GAAD Day, May 21st we're going to provide the findings of the State of Accessibility Report, and I'm very pleased that Jennison, my co-founder of GAAD, has agreed to be part of it. That webinar. And we also have a special guest from the WebAim report, Jared Smith, and we may add another one or two.

So I look forward to seeing you there. Thank you all. And if you would like to contact anyone that was on the panel today, here you have all of their contact information, we will be providing a transcript. And the reporting of above this. Just bear with us a little bit to make sure that all of the captions are correct and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Thank you very much