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So accessibility is at the core of ISANS mission in supporting newcomers to build a future in Nova Scotia and it's not just accessing services but also focusing on empowering folks through skill building confidence and tailored

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programming. Um we think we believe that employment information is a right and not a privilege especially in a system that's um complex and has a lot of um norms and codes.

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And in my role, I use um strength-based approach to meet clients where they are regarding their language skills, digital skills, um life constraints and the value of care, empathy, diversity and inclusion guide um our delivery um our service delivery. Accessibility is

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essential in ensuring that newcomers participate fully in community and economic life. Uh and that's a foundation um to help people belong and grow. So we've addressed um language barriers through interpretation services for example and also providing multilingual um orientation sessions to our clients on important topics such as

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taxes for example. Um I've like in my role I've uh redesigned feedback templates and written communication in plain language to make sure more um more more clients were able to access it whenever possible. I also um provide different formats uh for like documents or like step-by-step instructions, screenshots, one-on-one meeting uh again

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in the idea of meeting the clients where they are to better help them. Um and these changes reduced um friction points um that often prevents newcomers from engaging confidently with services um strengthening their ability to

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participate fully in employment and settlement pathways. Um so I've taken several trainings with Sea Change CoLab and that really helped um uh shift my mindset from accommodation to design. Um so now I use like a proactive accessibility lens. Uh and I think uh like I um like how is this information going to be received? Who might they

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this exclude? Um what assumptions am I making regarding time, technology, knowledge? So the long-term goal is to embed accessibility into templates um facilitation plans, evaluation uh and also across team systems so that it becomes uh a routine in our day-to-day work and it doesn't stay on individual efforts. ACE programming

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um really broadened my understanding on how um diverse clients uh engage with learning. It really helped me like slow down and design with intention um especially through um online in online spaces where exclusion can be um easy to miss. Um it also reinforced that accessibility benefits everyone and not just um folks who disclose their needs.

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Um and also like um awareness like I became aware that accessibility can be invisible but if we design our programs with accessibility in mind uh more clients will be able to be successful and one example that I really

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love is plain language um like everyone will understand a message in plain language whereas um um and it doesn't it won't exclude people who don't understand jargon or technical language but the opposite because it is not true.

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So the ACE programming really reinforced the importance of designing for um real world constraints like time, bandwidth, confidence and competing responsibilities um which directly improves newcomer engagement and outcomes. If um if people

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cannot access fully our services um the impact reaches only those who already have advantages and it reinforces the systemic barriers that we are committed to reduce. So in employment services for example lack of accessibility can waste talent um increase inequities for newcomers because finding a job is more than uh just employment. It's

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empowerment. It's like financial independence, a perspective of stability, growth, um and offering a better future for clients and their families and also the community at large. So the true impact um depends on whether people can actually use um our services to change their lives. So one thing I didn't um

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really know before taking um those trainings is that uh and I wish more people knew about it. It was like accessibility removes uh unnecessary barriers but it doesn't lower standards. So it benefits everyone um not only people who request uh accommodations and because most barriers are systemic they can be redesigned.

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Um when organizations design with accessibility in mind, they unlock talent, they strengthen equity, and they expand who gets to participate in the economic and um community life.