**The Phil, Towards Inclusive Clubs and Societies, November 2021**

Harry 0:00

Hello, and welcome to the Trinity ability Co Op podcast. I'm your host Harry O'Brien. Today I'm here with Aiden de Jardine. Am pronouncing that right Aiden?

Aiden 0:08

Ye it's close enough.

Harry 0:11

All right, we'll take it. So Aiden is the accessibility and inclusion officer of the Phil.

Aiden 0:17

Yep, That works.

Harry 0:20

Okay, perfect. So yeah, he's an Accessibility Officer. And he's a third year microbiology student. So a bit of background about us. The Trinity Ability Co Op is a cooperative movement, led by students with disabilities towards radical inclusion on campus. This podcast is part of the "towards inclusive clubs and societies project", which began over the summer, trying to make all societies and clubs and Trinity campus just more inclusive so that everyone can go to all the events and be part of every society. In this podcast series, we'll be speaking to leaders in those clubs and societies, is to ask them what changes are being made to become more inclusive to disabled students, you can find out more about the project on our website, theabilitycoop.com and that's all one word, no dashes or hyphens or anything, abilitycoop.com. So without further ado, we'll get into it. So Aiden, how did you end up becoming the Accessibility Officer of the film.

Aiden 1:17

So a bit of my background is that I've kind of worked a little bit in this realm before, I used to do some accessibility in communications work with other groups outside of Trinity back in secondary school. And then my background within the field was that I was formerly one of the PRL officers. So I was involved in the film. And with that sort of background, I decided to run for the position this past year and was elected.

Harry 1:50

Okay, cool. Why did you run for Accessibility Officer?

Aiden 1:55

Um, I think, well, it's part of a dual role I carry, and then I'm also in charge of, you know, equity and welfare within the fill. So it's sort of, it's a field that I value, and it's a field that I'm kind of hoping to work for in future, as my actual background, academically is in global health. So that's what I work in a lot of it. And so integrating that sort of, soft skills, and that sort of background of work kind of led me to run.

Harry 2:29

Okay, cool, cool. And your role is, so part of this project, this society's inclusive project that the the Ability Co Op is doing is one of the three things we want to say is to do is to create an accessibility and inclusion officer, or diversity and inclusion officer, whatever you want to call it. If you were to summarize your role, very, very succinctly, to someone who has no idea what the role is, how would you do that?

Aiden 2:55

Making sure all members of the Trinity community are welcome in our society and in our events.

Harry 3:01

Okay. Okay, and how does that play out in reality?

Aiden 3:06

um, a lot of the work is behind the scenes logistics work. So a lot of what we've been doing is small changes to optimize a lot of our activities to make them more accessible. Rather, I'm making a lot of our communications and advertisements more accessible. We're really lucky in that the GMB where we operate is an accessible space. And all our events are therefore, like in accessible spaces, I think part of the once we have a lot of that behind the scenes work done, which we've been working on a lot recently. Our big next push will be to advertise, you know, that we are an inclusive space.

Harry 3:49

Okay, cool. And how, how has the society become more accessible and inclusive in your time as being just a member? Not even an officer but being a member?

Aiden 4:03

Um, well, I think in all honesty, we didn't really make accessibility a high priority in a lot of ways, which, obviously, is not a great thing. I think it's just for a lot of roles. It's for when you're juggling so much on your plate. It's kind of things like that. How would I put this, it might not come to the forefront of your mind at all times. So what we're trying to do now is kind of integrate that into our normal procedures in making sure that accessibility and inclusion is always considered, no matter what we're organizing, no matter what our role is.

Harry 4:42

Okay. Has it changed a lot during your tenure?

Aiden 4:47

I'd say so, I think, you know, little small steps, trying to build up and make it more of an inclusive space.

Harry 4:56

Could you include some specifics there like what specifically you're doing to make the society more Have?

Aiden 5:00

Oh, yeah, of course. So in a lot of our social media advertisement, we've been trying to optimize it to people with visual difficulties, making sure that our images are easy to read and understand. And on top of that, including captions for those who use software to help them access electronics. On top of that, um, I think something we just didn't, didn't advertise is that, that we do have, an accessibility and inclusion officer, my role, and in truth, the title of senior member of council, which is like, my actual title doesn't really scream, accessibility and inclusion officer. And I think so putting it out there that we do have someone in charge of this, someone that you can contact and work with to facilitate you joining and accessing the Society events is helped there as well.

Harry 6:06

Okay, cool. And do you have any plans and stuff you're going to change in the future?

Aiden 6:13

I think the big thing is making sure the progress we've made so far and are continuing to make the set in stone for future years. I think that'll look like integrating a lot of the changes we've made recently into our normal standard policy and making sure like when we move to new years and new years come in, they have the resources and just the body of knowledge to continue that work.

Harry 6:44

Okay. A lot of people will wonder this, especially the officers of some smaller societies, is it even really worth doing all this? Like, is it like a lot of extra effort for like, maybe one out of every 100 people or something? All this extra inclusive work?

Aiden 7:06

It's definitely worth it. We've been in chats before that, no, not everyone's disability is visible. And so just creating that inclusive space for all is really for, again, for the betterment of all, because we can have a more diverse and rich discourse in our events, and we can welcome all members of the community to take part in all media.

Harry 7:34

And have you noticed any real tangible benefits to the society from becoming more inclusive?

Aiden 7:44

I think the best benefit is, you know, that change of mind. And well, there might not always be the most tangible, I think, changing the culture of the society to be more accessible, and keeping the idea of welcoming all and maintaining that accessibility for all will definitely help improve the atmosphere.

Harry 8:11

That's a good point, actually. Because the fill is a debating society. And like, I imagine diversity of thought is quite important there.

Aiden 8:20

Oh for sure.

Harry 8:20

That's actually a good point. That would be important, hearing other points of view as a kind of, how would you say? Hearing a diverse point of view, it benefits everyone. I don't know what you'd call it.

Aiden 8:31

Yeah, exactly. You get to hear thoughts and ideas you wouldn't necessarily otherwise hear and necessarily otherwise consider.

Harry 8:39

So I will finish off with this. Now. Why do you feel it's important for us to be inclusive for students with disabilities?

Aiden 8:50

I think being inclusive to students with disabilities is, you know, just part of being inclusive and excluding students with disabilities from consideration is just narrowing the body of thought and body people you can work with. And really, that's just to the detriment of everyone.

Harry 9:14

Do you have any advice for officers or chair people or whatever from other societies who are considering, you know, adopting the guidelines of the towards inclusive clubs and societies project?

Aiden 9:28

I think sometimes the smallest changes, which, you know, that we might not necessarily even consider, can do the most good.

Harry 9:38

Actually, on that point, what would you say are the smallest changes that do the most good?

Aiden 9:44

I think it's just keeping the idea of accessibility in mind and, you know, making sure that accessibility is a part of all of your plans, and just the work that you do.

Harry 9:56

Yeah, that's a good point. I'd agree with that just having it in mind. Like having it brought up in meetings like, okay, can people get to this event? And that's like, you know, by having an Accessibility Officer that can pretty much guarantee that for your society. But yeah, we'll leave it there. Thanks a million Aiden.

Aiden 10:16

Thanks so much. Thanks so much for having me.