

Philip D.: Hello, inclusion believers, and welcome to the Access Champions podcast. I'm your host, Phil Dallmann for this week's journey into the galaxies of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. We got another great episode for you guys this week on this giving Tuesday. We are joined by Pádraig Naughton who's the executive director over at Arts and Disability Ireland, and this is one of the last interviews we have from our pop up studio at this past summer's Kennedy Center LEAD conference in Denver. One that I'm very, very, very excited to share with you guys. Just had a blast chatting with Pádraig. Obviously we've both been long time attendees of the conference, and you know, I'd seen him speak a few times, and we had, you know, minimal interactions over the years. But it was so good to just sit down and hear his journey, hear where Ireland was, and where it is now, and where it's going as it relates to accessibility and inclusion, and how he's been, you know, such a major part of facilitating that growth, him and his team.

Philip D.: Just really, really exciting stuff including the big symposium event conference that they are having this coming spring, which is from access to inclusion. It's called. You know, that is a good segue because it is something that the podcast would love to attend. We would love to be there to cover it, again to get, you know, those international perspectives on accessibility, inclusion in person is invaluable. To be able to share those conversations with all of you, our listeners, is, you know, what we really, really strive for. So that being said those kinds of things are only possible with your support, and future listeners' support. That can happen on Patreon. patreon.com/accesschampions is where you guys can support us for as little as \$1 a month. Again, that's \$12 across the year for 52 episodes of content plus a sticker as a baseline. Plus additional content that we release exclusively on Patreon. There are obviously higher levels that have t-shirts and mugs and on air shout outs and ad space, and all of the above.

Philip D.: But as an entryway, a \$1 a month on Patreon. If all of our listeners based off the numbers that we get of those of you who listen to us, even just on the East Coast, if we just did the East coast, we absolutely could afford to go to Access to Inclusion this spring and cover it and be able to share some of the amazing work that's happening around the world, and to do other events like that and cover that. So this is on giving Tuesday. This is my ask to all of you. If you can consider putting aside \$1 a month, it's 100 pennies and committing it to supporting education of the masses about accessibility and in cultural inclusion.

Philip D.: We at the podcast and I will speak for some of our listeners, we would be incredibly grateful for your consideration and support. So again, patreon.com/accesschampions. I think, oh nope, I almost didn't plug our social media. Our producers would have been so mad. You guys, if you don't already follow us, @accesschampion, Instagram, Twitter, you guys know the deal. Access Champion podcast on Facebook. Don't miss out on the great episode line drawings done by our associate producer, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown, and all the

other content that she and Savannah Cooper, our champion intern, bring your way. So that's that. So without further ado, Access Champion Pádraig Naughton.

Philip D.: All right. We are here at our popup studio at the Kennedy Center LEAD conference in Denver, and I am now joined by Pádraig Naughton, the executive director of Arts and Disability Ireland. Thanks for taking the time to chat.

Padraig N.: Thank you. Delighted to be here.

Philip D.: I have to admit, I've been coming to the conference for years and years and years, and I've actually seen you speak a few times. So it's actually exciting to, like, finally chat because these conferences can be so large, and you don't get to meet everybody. But I've always been very, very impressed with everything. Well, one, your perspectives on things, and what you've, what you've accomplished. But I'd love to learn a little bit more and hear a little bit more about your journey into this work.

Padraig N.: Well, I have a visual impairment myself. So I grew up with that visual impairment, and I suppose I came out of education at a point where blind and visually impaired people were finally having choices. So rather than getting shunted off to physiotherapy, piano tuning, telephony, and stuff like that, you could choose what you wanted to do. I was interested in art, kind of thought, oh, I can leave all that blind visually impaired stuff behind me. I'll go to art college. Then ended up doing a ceramics degree in craft design, ceramics, and found that I still couldn't see very well, and I was on a visual design course, and needed to find ways of adopting that course, that visual design course in ceramics to work for me because while the ceramic material clay is a tactile material, the way it was taught as a degree was a visual design perspective, and I had to figure ways around that. Of course, then I came out of art college being the visually impaired visual artist, having tried to walk away from all of that.

Philip D.: Isn't it funny how that happens?

Padraig N.: Happens all the time. I suppose, you know, I did then practice as an artist, and really enjoyed that. But I think being the visually... I was kind of unusual back in '93 was when I finished college, in that there weren't that many of us with visual impairments who were doing 2 and 3D work, and that opened up opportunities. But it drew me into a lot of conversations, and also over my time as a studio artist, I became frustrated with the opportunities that were open to artists with disabilities.

Padraig N.: Like, for example, only getting exhibitions in August when everyone was on holidays because it kind of ticked the box. But actually it didn't affect the audience. I kind of thought I want to do something about this. In Ireland there were no opportunities in terms of working in the area. I ended up going to work for Equator in the UK and did that for a number of years. But in the early 2000s.

But there was a part of me that always wanted to do it in my own country. I hugely value what I learned when I was in the UK. But for me, it was really important to figure a way of bringing what I wanted to do back to Ireland. Because in fact what had caused me to move into the advocacy role was because I wasn't happy with the opportunities that were there for artists with disabilities coming up.

Padraig N.: Also there were a lot of struggles, and it's one thing to struggle through something. But I think it's another thing to expect the next generation to struggle in the same way. You want to figure ways to help them do it easier. Because the truth is if they don't start at the same point, and they're further on the journey, they may get further in their lifetime. I think that's really important. So that led me back to Ireland to take up the role as executive director of Arts and Disability Ireland in 2005, and one of the things I'd seen in the UK was audio description, and it was on the old Todd Browning film, and it was a live audio description of Freaks.

Philip D.: Okay.

Padraig N.: Of course it's black and white, and black and white for a visually impaired person is tricky at best at times because you don't have the color recognition and other stuff to rely on that helps you see. So I really valued the audio description, but I thought I'd love to see this in Ireland. So one of the first projects I started was audio description at the Abbey Theater, which is our national theater, in the Dublin Theater festival in 2006, and that led on to captioning in 2007 and eventually, so we worked with people like Tabitha [Loon 00:00:09:48], who at the time was at Stage Text, and kind of without her we wouldn't have got started when we did. They trained our captioners and everything, and then that led me to lead in terms of kind of the access that we were doing and how do we connect in with people.

Philip D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, Tabitha is amazing. We chatted with her this morning, and she demoed the new glasses.

Padraig N.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Philip D.: My understanding is is you gave it a try as well.

Padraig N.: Yeah. I could almost see the text, and for somebody's registered blind, I thought that was quite good.

Philip D.: Yeah, I was impressed. But, so that's fascinating. I want to take a step back because I think it's incredibly impressive that you had the perspective as young as you did, especially to think about making changes for future generations because I think that kind of perspective tends to come later in life for a lot of people. Our 20s and 30s can be very us centric, and what we're navigating right

now for our services or our rights or things of that nature. But I think that's really wonderful. When you came to LEAD for the first time, what was that experience like?

Padraig N.: The first LEAD I did was Boston in 2012, I think it was, and it was a great experience, but the thing that struck me was that I met all these people who are involved in access, and they were doing it differently to what we were doing, and in many other contexts. So for example, I met a woman who was working on a fern trail for a national park in Wisconsin. Now we don't have national parks the scale of the ones you have in the United States. But she was using a device called a discovery pen, which is an MP3 player with a kind of sensor on the tip of it. It does look like a stubby pen, and at that the wide end, there's a kind of a little speaker or you can plug in a headphone. I realized that she was using this on a fern trail, but I could adapt it to use it in a gallery situation.

Padraig N.: For the first time as a visually impaired person who uses audio description, I could choose which exhibits I wanted to get the audio description and background material on, and not have to start at track one, which was always the introduction. Exhibit one was always track two, exhibit two was always track three, and quite soon you get very confused.

Philip D.: Yeah.

Padraig N.: I just loved that, and that's what I love about LEAD is each year I come, I hear something that kind of makes me think or makes me think about things differently. It's not always in my context, but most of what we learn at LEAD has multiple applications. Like listening to Rebecca and the keynote, I've been thinking about it for a while because I live in a household of six people. I'm the only one with the visual impairment. My wife doesn't, my kids don't, neither do her kids or most of the visitors to our house. Rebecca spoke about the notion that 80% of children growing up with disabilities grow up in a house with no other person with a disability. That fact alone really makes you think about access. Because I think that's the thing about LEAD over the time I've been coming is that we're less and less now thinking in binary context.

Philip D.: Yes.

Padraig N.: For me that's... So like I went to token audio description that Evan Hatfield did this morning, and we ended up veering into conversations about who else are touch tours useful for? Not just people who are visually impaired and blind. That's what's so exciting about LEAD. Of course, the other thing is for the last three years I've been trying to convince Betty to come in behind Arts and Disability Ireland and partner with us on hosting a big summit in Ireland. You know, so it's those conversations that can happen. You can have really big dreams, and you can follow them for a few years. Sometimes you land them, which is great.

Philip D.: Yeah, and that's a great transition because it sounds like one of those dreams did in fact land. So I'd love to hear a little bit about this project that you're currently working on.

Padraig N.: Yeah. So we're delighted to officially announce in Denver alongside LEAD 2020, which will be happening in Raleigh, in North Carolina, that Arts and Disability Ireland with the Kennedy Center will host from Access to Inclusion 2020, an arts and culture summit, at Dublin Castle in Ireland from the 11th to the 14th of May next year. Really in some ways it will be a little bit like LEAD in that it is primarily for professional access. Our people who are professionally engaged in access and advocates, and while the focus will be Ireland and Europe, we want to draw in our colleagues from the US and from LEAD because there's a great deal to be shared and to be learned, and I think in Ireland and the UK primarily over my time in this arena, there's been an awful lot of talk about the artists with a disability and the creativity and the making, and making that work accessible. But a lot less talk and championing of the people who are making arts and culture accessible across a much broader range of environments and settings.

Padraig N.: You know, the truth is a great deal of the disability work, that output that's being created at the moment in the UK and Ireland is adult focused. It basically has an audience that is probably 18 to about 35, maybe 40, and I would say it's slightly more male than female as well. Whereas I know when we work on shows or when we work on exhibitions that the audience who come to the work that's made accessible, when the range of that work is as wide as it possibly can be, will be from zero up to 80s or 90s because actually a great deal of going to see exhibitions, going to galleries, engaging in arts and culture is a shared experience. So you know, the Broadway show *Come From Away* premiered in Dublin before moved to London, where it won loads of awards, and eight people including myself and my household went to see that show, age from seven to 49, and I was the only one with the visual impairment.

Padraig N.: But having the audio description and being able to go up on stage and do the touch tour with the the kids, and handle and touch the ugly stick, which is a significant piece of kit in that show was great. Of course, the kids then got the added bonus of seeing what old mobile phones, like old Nokias that predate iPhones, which they didn't know existed, and they were blown away. What are these? Are these phones?

Philip D.: Did you kiss the fish?

Padraig N.: Oh, we did kiss the fish, of course.

Philip D.: Okay.

Padraig N.: In fact, you know, that that was the thing that was amazing, that they were explaining to us about the fish, and how it was designed, and that actually it

flops and moves like a real fish. I said, "Oh, we got to touch the green baby from Wicked." They said, "Oh yeah, the same company made that made the fish," because they're meant to be as lifelike as possible.

Philip D.: I love hearing that they did a touch tour in Ireland. One of our podcast board members, Megan Dixon, shout out Megan Dixon, handles all the press and marketing for Come From Away, and she has obviously as a board member of our podcast, an inclusion based mind. So I'm very happy to hear that.

Padraig N.: Yeah. So just getting back to to the summit. As I say, we launched it here in Denver. The dates next year are the 11th to the 14th of May in Dublin. People can register their interest if they go on the Arts and Disability Ireland website. So that's adiarts.ie/summit2020.

Philip D.: We'll link to that in the copy of this podcast, absolutely.

Padraig N.: Then the other thing is there they'll also find a link to submit proposals, if they are interested in making proposals., and there's a set of guidelines. The deadline for that isn't until midnight on the 12th of November. So there's a fair bit of time for people to pull their ideas together.

Philip D.: That's fantastic. We were, as soon as you announced it I turned to our associate producer, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown, and said "Go find a corporate sponsor in time to make it over for the summit," which also would end up being a convenient trip to go see my mother-in-law who lives in Manchester, England. But, this is such a wonderful thing, and I love that it came out of several conversations here with the Kennedy Center folks, and you know, I obviously think the world of Betty. I'd love to, because we don't often get to do this in the world of nonprofit and advocacy and all of that. I'd love to hear a little bit about what you hope for the future beyond the summit, both for Arts and Disability Ireland, but for Ireland as a whole as it relates to inclusion.

Padraig N.: I suppose just taking the summit, first of all, the key things I want from the summit, from an Irish perspective, it is that the arts, culture, and tourism sector takes much more ownership over the access agenda, and runs with it, and that they stop saying it's ADI's audience. It's their audience.

Philip D.: Yep, it's human.

Padraig N.: They really need to move with that. Many of them are, but we need more because the more that do it, the more normal and expected that becomes. I think from a European international perspective, I think this will be the first summit of its type outside the United States that is multidisciplinary and multi-access and inclusion. I really want to see a network of organizations and individuals who care about access and inclusion kind of form around that. Because you know, a bit like that there are relatively cheap travel options in the

the the the United States. In Europe we do have low cost airlines, so it is relatively easy to move around. It's a bit harder to move between the US and Europe. That's a bit more expensive. But I would really like to see that network emerge.

Padraig N.: Then I think for Arts and Disability Ireland, you know, one of the things I have found over... I'm 14 years now with Arts and Disability Ireland as executive director is that I always thought that if we built it, they would come when I started. To my great frustration, I think sometimes if you build it, they will keep on letting you do it. So I kind of feel that while we have a lot of people doing it now, we still need to push for changes in legislation. We need organizations to take it on at a strategic level. We also need policy to move with us so that it becomes the norm.

Padraig N.: So, you know, for example, we have a great piece of human rights legislation as part of the Human Rights Act that came in in 2014, and it is a wonderful piece of public service duties within it. But there is no legal remedy. So in fact, nobody can sue anyone to make anything happen as a result. So what can we do from a policy perspective and maybe even a legal perspective if that law was to change, to move things forward so that everyone would start to move together rather than it still being the responsibility of the individuals who care within organizations.

Philip D.: Yeah. I a 100% believe in that and support that. I think that lives in that world of disability living in the design rather than the human.

Padraig N.: Yes.

Philip D.: You know? So, one, I think just given what you've accomplished so far, I can see that happening in the future, and two, thank you for all of the work that you've done. Thank you for taking the time to chat.

Padraig N.: It's been a pleasure.

Philip D.: I'm looking forward to hanging out in a castle in Ireland this May, and thank you for being an Access Champion.

Marc Molinaro: Hi, I'm Duchess County executive Marc Molinaro, and you may have heard me on episodes 22 and 36 talking about my county's think differently movement, which has swept throughout New York state and beyond. We all love Phil's podcast about accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. But did you know there's even more amazing Access Champion content out there for you? For only a dollar a month, you get access to even more exclusive interviews, games, and there's a brand new book coming soon. You'll not only get all that content, you'll also receive other perks like amazing swag, on air shout outs, stickers, and more. Join our team of inclusion warriors for only a dollar a month a

www.patreon.com/accesschampions. Don't miss out on this great opportunity to think differently and help Phil continuous mission.

Philip D.: Thanks again to Pádraig for taking the time to come by the studio out in Denver. It was so good to chat. I'm so excited about everything that is happening over there with Arts and Disability Ireland, and I do hope that the podcast will be able to make our way over there via a great, you know, my mother-in-law lives in Manchester, England, and it's just a little puddle hopper away, so I can turn this into, you know, checking that off the list. Saw the mother-in-law, and then you know, got some work done here, and continue to help spread the word of accessibility and inclusion. Again, for all of our listeners out there, the only way we're going to be able to do that is with your support through things like Patreon. Again, that's patreon.com/accesschampion. \$1 a month. and I do hope you will consider it on this giving Tuesday.

Philip D.: As always, and especially grateful in this season of giving and gratefulness and all of that. Just a special, special thanks to our executive producer Matt Kerstetter for making us sound great each and every single week, even when I don't make it particularly easy on him with my not so soundproof studio, and swishy clothing, and all of the above. Thank you to our associate producer, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown for everything that she does. Thank you to our champion intern Savannah Cooper, who you guys heard is on the Kaiser's room commercial ad last week, but I'm sure we'll have her speaking more and more on the show soon. Thank you to Tommy Karr for all of our logos, and thank you to both Eric Walden and Austin Bailey for all the music you hear on the podcast. We'll be back again next week and remember, inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.