

Darby Lee Young, CVP

Certified Venue Professional | Accessibility Strategist
Founder, Level Playing Field Inc.

**Creating spaces
where everyone feels welcome,
not just accommodated.**



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level
PLAYING FIELD
an accessibility agency



Who is Darby?

With over 15 years of experience in accessibility strategy, Darby Young, CVP (2025), is one of North America's leading voices in inclusive design. As a Certified Venue Professional, ADA Coordinator, and founder of Level Playing Field Inc., Darby combines lived experience, technical expertise, and a deep understanding of how accessibility intersects with design, operations, and the guest experience. Her work helps organizations move beyond code compliance to create spaces that are inclusive, functional, and welcoming for everyone.

Darby founded Level Playing Field (LPF) in 2015 with a mission to eliminate barriers in the built environment and support truly inclusive design. Today, LPF consults across Canada and the United States on a wide range of projects, including education campuses, entertainment venues, civic infrastructure, corporate spaces, and masterplans. Darby is often brought in early to help design teams integrate accessibility from day one and avoid costly retrofits.

Darby brings deep technical training to her work. She is a Certified Venue Professional (CVP)(2025), a Certified ADA Coordinator (ADAC), and an IOC Safeguarding Officer in Sport. She also holds accessibility certification through the Rick Hansen Foundation. These credentials reflect her hands-on approach to accessibility, from design to operations to the guest experience.

Her career is deeply rooted in lived experience. Born with mild cerebral palsy, Darby grew up navigating barriers that weren't always visible to others. That perspective shaped her passion for change and fueled her success as a competitive para-alpine skier, where she pushed physical limits and defied expectations. She has also spent years working behind the scenes in high-pressure event environments. Darby's expertise in Team Services gives her a deep understanding of the logistical needs for athletes, staff, and organizers, as well as the unique challenges of being a disabled staffer in an able-bodied sports world. Her experience includes contributions to the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics and Paralympics, the World Hockey Championships, and the World Junior Hockey Championships.

As a speaker, Darby delivers high-impact keynotes that blend real-world stories with practical advice. Her sessions help audiences reframe accessibility as both a business opportunity and a human responsibility. She has spoken at VenueConnect, A4LE Southern, BuildEX, and CANU, and regularly presents to design firms, corporate teams, and public sector leaders across North America.

Darby's leadership and impact have been widely recognized. She was named one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40, one of the Top 25 Women of Influence, and received the Calgary Stampede Western Legacy Award for innovation.

Her personal philosophy is rooted in resilience and humor:

"We all fall at some point. What matters is how we get back up. Laughing along the way helps." Darby always says, "Watch your ankles, scoots likes to make friends."



Accessibility is about unlocking ability, not just meeting standards.

About Level Playing Field Inc.

Darby is the founder and Principal Accessibility Strategist at Level Playing Field Inc. (LPF), a national consulting firm that partners with design teams, developers, and public institutions to create inclusive, people-first environments. Since 2015, LPF has led accessibility reviews and strategies for venues, campuses, civic spaces, and corporate real estate portfolios across Canada and the U.S.

Known for blending lived experience with technical expertise, LPF helps clients go beyond compliance to deliver environments that work for everyone. LPF works with architects, property developers, municipalities, universities, cultural institutions, and large-scale venue operators.

From intimate renovations to billion dollar master plans, LPF brings practical guidance that is grounded in both human experience and policy knowledge. Whether advising in early design or assessing existing conditions, LPF focuses on real usability, not just checklists.

If you are ready to make accessibility a lasting part of your project, we'd love to talk.

Featured Keynotes

▼ **The Power of Lived Experience in Design**

Who better to guide inclusive design than those who live it every day? Darby shares how her lived experience with cerebral palsy shaped her career and inspires teams to center real user needs in every project.

▼ **Transforming the Guest Experience: Accessibility in High-Pressure Environments**

From international festivals to major sporting events, Darby offers a behind-the-scenes look at navigating large-scale venues as both a consultant and a person with a disability. This talk highlights what's often overlooked and how to get it right.

▼ **Accessibility as a Business Imperative**

Accessibility is not only the right thing to do; it is a smart business decision. Darby shows how inclusive design supports ESG goals, strengthens brand trust, and opens opportunities for better customer and employee experiences.

▼ **Beyond Compliance: Creating Truly Inclusive Spaces**

Building codes are just the beginning. This keynote dives into what it takes to go beyond minimum standards and create spaces that reflect the diverse needs of all users, with practical examples drawn from real projects.

Additional Sessions Available by Request

▼ **Universal Design:**

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

A candid look at what works, what doesn't, and why thoughtful implementation of Universal Design matters. Includes visual examples and real-life takeaways.

▼ **Breaking Barriers:**

Leadership in Accessibility and Inclusion

Darby shares her personal journey in leadership, advocacy, and self-advocacy. This talk is ideal for DEI and professional development audiences.

▼ **Designing Accessible Cities**

This session explores strategies for inclusive city planning, from transit systems to public spaces, and is best suited for municipal and urban design audiences.

▼ **Operationalizing Inclusion:**

Accessibility Behind the Scenes (Optional Add-On)

Focused on front-line staff, customer service, and venue logistics, this practical session helps teams embed accessibility across day-to-day operations.

Why Book Darby?

▼ Lived experience

as a person with a disability and former competitive para-alpine skier

▼ Delivers practical strategy, storytelling, and humor

in every session, with real takeaways, not just checklists

▼ Certified Venue Professional (CVP)

with firsthand insight into venue operations and guest experience

▼ Trusted speaker

at industry-leading conferences including VenueConnect, A4LE, and BuildEX

▼ Founder of Level Playing Field Inc.

an award-winning accessibility consulting firm





Whether its a keynote, workshop, or fireside chat, Darby brings energy, honesty, and lived experience to every stage. Her sessions challenge assumptions, spark new ideas, and help audiences reframe accessibility as an opportunity, not a checkbox.

▼ Audience Fit

- ✓ Darby's keynotes and workshops are designed for audiences who want to:
- ✓ Improve accessibility in real-world, high-pressure environments
- ✓ Build inclusive spaces that go beyond basic compliance
- ✓ Strengthen team awareness and confidence around accessibility
- ✓ Integrate Universal Design into everyday operations
- ✓ Connect accessibility goals with business performance and community impact

Speaking Formats and Credentials

Darby regularly speaks at:

-  Industry conferences and venue management conferences
-  Architecture, planning, and design forums
-  Corporate retreats and executive leadership sessions
-  Accessibility, DEI, and policy panels

Available Formats

- ✓ Keynotes (30–60 min)
- ✓ Panels & Fireside Chats
- ✓ Half or Full-Day Workshops
- ✓ Executive Briefings & Lunch & Learns

Darby's talks have reached thousands across North America, including venue operators, architects, designers, planners, and corporate leaders

In-person and virtual formats available.

"Audiences leave with practical tools, fresh ideas, and an understanding of accessibility that goes beyond compliance."

Certifications & Awards

- Certified Venue Professional (CVP) – **2025**
- Certified ADA Coordinator – **2024**
- IOC Safeguarding Officer in Sport – **2023**
- Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification - **2021**
- Canada's Top 40 Under 40 – **2018**
- Top 25 Women of Influence – **2021**
- Calgary Stampede Western Legacy Award – **2016**

Clients and Partners

As accessibility strategists and specialists, LPF specializes in maximizing efficiencies, leveraging our extensive knowledge to ensure accessibility is embedded in every aspect of design and execution. While LPF has engaged in diverse and impactful projects throughout North America, it is always exciting to tackle new challenges, pushing the boundaries of what accessibility can achieve for all people.

The clients and partners LPF works with help action many of the best practice recommendations provided through accessibility audits and drawing reviews, creating tangible change throughout the built environment.

Venues & Events



Education & Institutions



Corporate, Commercial & Transportation



Architecture



Media and Speaking Appearances

Darby is regularly invited to speak at conferences, institutions, and leadership forums across North America.



2025

- VenueConnect (IAVM) – **Speaker:**
**Transforming the Guest Experience:
Accessibility in High-Pressure Environments**
- IAVM Region 4 Conference – **Speaker:**
Transforming the Guest Experience

2024

- A4LE Southern U.S. – **Keynote:**
The Power of Lived Experience in Design
- CANU Conference – **Panelist**
- BuildEX Alberta – **Speaker**

2023

- BuildEX Alberta – **Speaker & Panelist (2)**

2022

- City of Calgary Operations Conference
– **Keynote**
- BuildEX Alberta – **Speaker**

2021

- University of Calgary – **Sessional Instructor**
- NCCEH Built Environment Forum
– **Virtual Keynote**
- Western Folk Festival (Collective)
– **Virtual Keynote**
- BuildEX Alberta – **Speaker**

2020

- APPI (Alberta Professional Planners Institute)
– **Virtual Keynote**

2019 & 2017

- BuildEX Alberta – **Speaker**

2016

- A4LE Pacific Northwest – **Keynote**

Testimonials

"This was one of my favorite sessions at VenueConnect. I always enjoy going to sessions about accessibility because I always learn something new and interesting and it's a good reminder to pay attention to these details in other venues. Thank you for sharing your stories and expertise. "

Jennifer Tuchband | **Keen Independent Research LLC**

"This was a great session. Real and full of examples that made you laugh and think all at the same time. But most of all full of solutions to a better environment for everyone."

Kerry Painter | **Executive Director of the Raleigh Convention and Performing Arts Complex**

"The exemplary expertise demonstrated by the Level Playing Field team has provided us with invaluable insights, enhancing our comprehension of the accessibility requirements of our clients and the broader public."

Linus Murphy | **Principal Architect at S2 Architecture**

"Through their thoughtful approach, we have strengthened our understanding of accessibility principles, which has led to the seamless integration of these concepts into our projects . . . We are fortunate to collaborate with such a great team."

Bill Mitchell | **Partner at Zeidler Architecture**



Do you want to learn how to level the playing field?

Contact **Darby**

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