Hello everybody. I’m David MacDonald, and I want to talk to you today about the WCAG 2.0 and how it can help you make the web more accessible to people with disabilities. And what you need to know as content providers.

I am an alumni of the University of Ottawa, and I am glad to participant of the University’s Community Accessibility Training initiative. And also I’m really glad to work with Accessibility By Design which is really a great organization and working alongside us with this project.

As a person with a disability, I went through the University of Ottawa relying a lot on the Access serviced department. And they helped me an awful lot, and I understand firsthand what it means to need extra help and to make sure the content is provided in a format that is accessible.

So I am also a member of the WCAG Working Group which is the organization that was put together by the W3C and the W3C is the organization that invented the Internet, and governs a lot of the standards that we find on the Internet today. It is an international standard that’s been accepted by the Canadian government and also by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and that’s why those of you today who are watching this video will need to follow the WCAG. It’s because part of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

What some of you may not know is that WCAG 2.0 does not only apply to HTML content, it also applies to many other types of formats that are found on the web, such as word processing, spreadsheet, presentations, PDF, videos as well as online applications.

Because WCAG 2.0 is so broad, it can be complex. Portions of WCAG are very technical. In the few minutes I have, I will review the four of the principles we find, that’s an overview basically of the WCAG.
Understanding these principles, they will really help you understand the guidelines, and the success criteria that sit underneath these principles. If you don’t understand the principles well, you really have a hard time understanding the rest of the WCAG.

So, the four principles are:

1. Perceivable
2. Operable
3. Understandable
4. Robust

So let’s start with Perceivable. And what is perception? Well as human being, each of has five senses usually. So on the web, we are using three of these senses. Perhaps our sight, our sound and also touch if you use braille or something like that. We don’t use smell, or taste on the web these days anyway. So here are a couple examples of that principle.

Some people can’t see, so they use special software and that brings the content of the web site to them. If the web site is coded properly, software will read it easily. For instance, alternative text associated with a photo will tell a user who is blind about the contents of the photo.

Now let’s look at the ‘Operable’ principle. This means that the user must be able to act upon the web site so they will have to be able to click links, fill out forms, hit the play button on a video. That type of thing.

Looking at one of the guidelines for the Operable principle will provide a bit of context.

One of the four guidelines for this principle is to “Make all functionality available via a keyboard." So some individuals may not be able to use a mouse for one reason or another. They may be blind or have a dexterity disability for instance. So a good way to test for this is to unplug your mouse from your computer and try and operate your web site without it. Try to get through the menus, form fields, the links and that type of thing.
The third principle is Understandability. Information and the operation of user interface must be understandable."

One of the three guidelines for this principle is to “help users avoid and correct mistakes”. One of the ways to achieve this is to provide clear instructions for entering information into forms and applications. This is especially important with individuals who have sight, hearing and learning disabilities.

The last principle is Robust: "Content must be robust enough to be interpreted in a reliable way in a variety of user agents, including assistive technologies. Whoo, that’s a mouthful, isn’t it.

Well, this is very technical, but basically what we’re trying to say in this is that the web site has to be able to work with technology that is made for people with disabilities, today, and in the future. And so if you work according to specifications and designed by international standards, then you will probably be able to meet these. But you want to make sure that you expose your name, your role and your value to what they call the accessibility API, and the accessibility API talks to the screen reading software, which in turn does talk to the individual user at the other end.

So this kind of give you an overview of principles of Perceivable, Operable Understandable and Robust. We call it POUR, not poor of course, but POUR. And we want to ensure that you understand that people with disabilities are using your web sites and following the WCAG is going to make it more accessible to them.

I’m David MacDonald and I do appreciate your time today. And if you want to know more about the WCAG, you can always go online to the W3C, or you can come and visit us at can-adapt.com. Thanks very much for your time.