Beyond Limits

Canada's Conference for Diversity & Accessibility

October 26

2026

Designing the Future of Accessibility

8:30 am - 10:15 am in the Main Room

Welcome and Opening Keynote: Dr. Carly Christensen

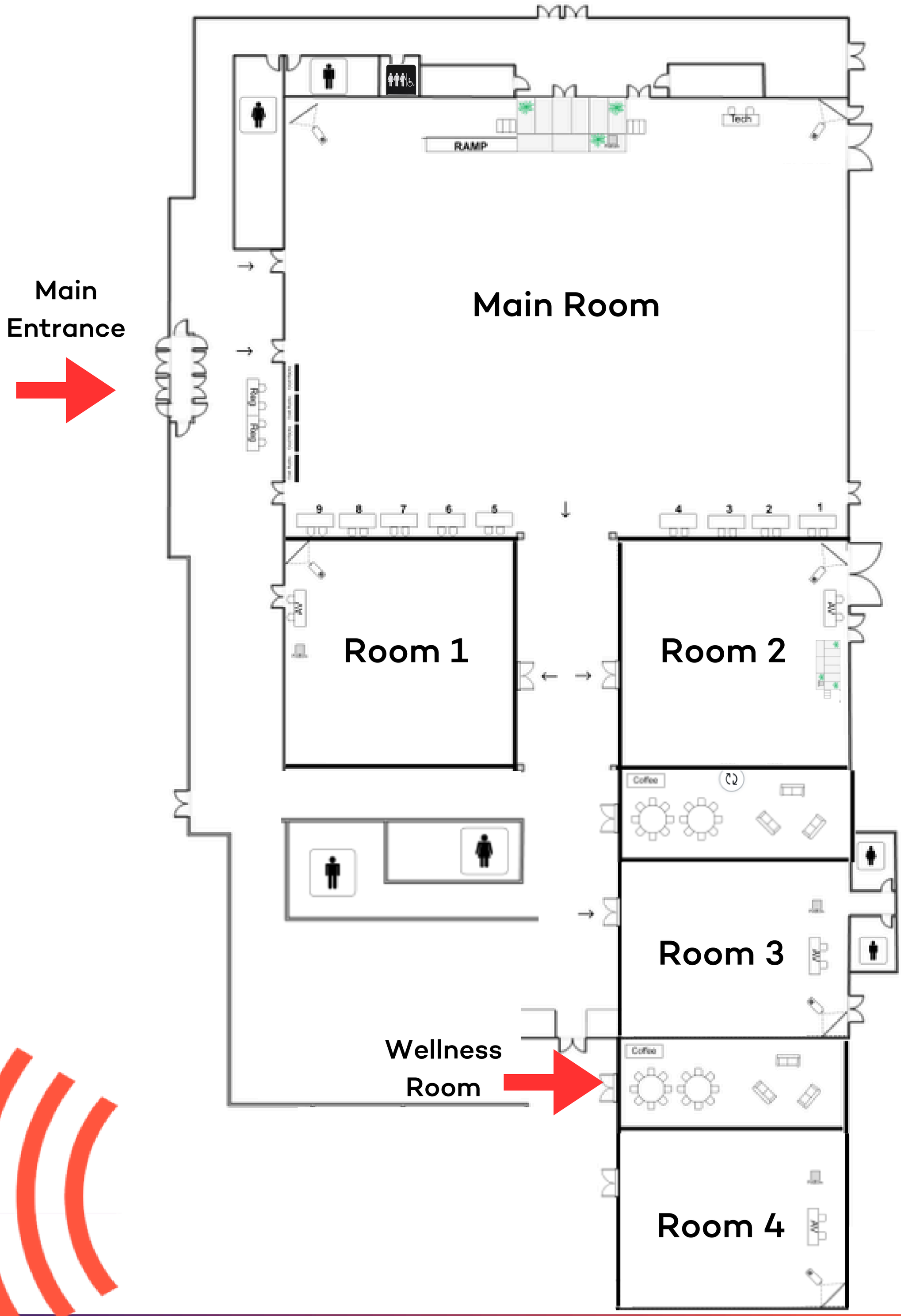
Breakout Sessions	Learning and Support **Room 1**	Rights and Voice **Room 2**	Care and Creativity **Room 3**	Innovation and Access **Room 4**
Breakout 1 10:40-11:40am	**Dr. Carly Christensen – Turning the Page on Ableism: Rethinking Disability Through Children's Books**	(Panel) From Classrooms to Workplaces: Inclusion Dilemmas Across the Life Span	**Andrew Terhoch and Sam – When Art is Medicine: An Exploration of Personhood, Autonomy and Dignity to Creative Expression**	Ashleigh Lodge - AI and Digital Accessibility: Removing Barriers, or Reinforcing Them?
Breakout 2 1:00-2:00pm	**Laura Walsh Martino and Sarah McCarthy – Accessible by Design: Reimagining Behaviour Support Through Relationships and Lived Experience**	Bethany Stevens – The Right to Learn, the Right to Choose: Sexual Health, Safety, and Self-Determination for People with IDD	**Lindsey Childe – Canary in the Coal Mine: The Power of Professionals with "Invisible Disabilities" in the Workplace**	Muriel Mac-Seing and Jean Nikiema – Improving Access to AI for Persons with Disabilities
Breakout 3 2:20-3:20pm	**Frances Sinclair-Kaspick – Opening the Door and Paving the Way: Supporting Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Through Inclusion**	(Panel) My Rights Matter: From Empowerment to Action -Self-Advocates Leading Change	**Traci Foster and Shaylee Rosnes – Creation as Care: Creative Ways of Maintaining and Cultivating Health and Wellbeing While Building Accessibility**	Dr. Jacquie Ripat and Dr. Monire Nobahar Ahari – Smart Homes, Assistive Technology, and Independence: From Possibility to Practice

3:35 pm - 4:20 pm in the Main Room

Closing Keynote: Dr. Bethany Stevens

Participants do not need to pre-register for breakout sessions. Visit BeyondLimitsCanada.ca or scan the QR code to view a full description of our presenters and their presentation topics.

Victoria Inn Hotel and Convention Centre Map



Beyond Limits

Canada's Conference for Diversity & Accessibility

Morning Keynote
8:30am - 10:15am

Dr. Carly Christensen

Rethinking Inclusion Through Disability Justice

Inclusion is a widely shared goal across education, health, and social services. But inclusion cannot be meaningfully realized without disability justice. A central challenge is that ableism is often misunderstood — or not recognized at all — as a form of discrimination. As a result, practices that exclude, limit, or harm disabled people can be normalized within systems that see themselves as inclusive.

This keynote explores how ableism operates, both broadly and within school systems, shaping expectations, policies, and everyday interactions with children and adults with disabilities. Grounded in disability history, this session emphasizes that these are not just issues of the past — they continue to reverberate into the present through ongoing inequities and disability rights concerns.

Disability justice offers a framework that makes ableism visible and gives us tools to actively challenge it. Schools and service systems are not neutral — they are sites of world-building.

The language we use, the representations we circulate, and the structures we design all shape what is possible for disabled children and adults. When grounded in disability justice and anti-ableism, inclusion becomes more than placement — it becomes a commitment to dignity, belonging, and changing the conditions that shape disabled people's lives.

Participants will leave with practical ways to:

- identify how ableism shows up in schools and service systems
- reflect on disability language and representation
- reframe everyday practices in ways that expand what is possible for disabled people

Dr. Carly Christensen is a Disabled educator and scholar committed to inclusive education frameworks that recognize Disability as a valued identity. Carly is the co-lead of the Inclusive Education Research Stream at the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship (CIIC), where she emphasizes that creating inclusive schools involves acknowledging disability history, dismantling its lingering effects, and ensuring schools become spaces of belonging and healing for Disabled learners.

Read her full bio on the beyondlimitscanada.ca website.

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Canada's Conference for Diversity & Accessibility

Learning and Support
Breakout 1
10:40am - 11:40am

Dr. Carly Christensen

Turning the Page on Ableism: Rethinking Disability Through Children's Books

In this highly interactive, hands-on workshop, participants will dig into children's picture books to explore how disability is represented. Together, we will examine how books can reinforce ableism, but also how they can be used more thoughtfully to open up new ways of understanding disability as part of human diversity.

Disability is a social identity that is often left out of conversations about representation and social justice. This session centers disability as a valued and important part of identity, and explores how including disability in meaningful ways can strengthen broader efforts toward equity and belonging.

This workshop introduces practical tools for spotting ableism in language, images, and storylines. Participants will work directly with texts to analyze representation, grapple with complexity, and consider how books can be used in more critical and affirming ways.
This workshop draws on a curated and researched collection of 90+ children's books that engage with disability in a range of ways, not all perfect, but all useful for learning.

Participants will leave with:

- concrete strategies for selecting and using books in more disability-affirming ways
- tools to identify deficit-based, simplistic, or harmful narratives
- practical ideas for supporting conversations with children about disability, difference, and belonging

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Rights and Voice
Breakout 1
10:40am - 11:40am

Panel

From Classrooms to Workplaces: Inclusion Dilemmas Across the Lifespan

This session will explore complex inclusion dilemmas across the lifespan of individuals with disabilities. Through a panel format, speakers will respond to real-world ethical tensions that arise at the intersection of service delivery, systems, and societal expectations. The discussion will centre around inclusion, segregation, safety, and quality of life across three life stages:

1. early childhood and school years,
2. transition to adulthood, and
3. adulthood and aging.

For example, is segregation ever warranted to ensure safety at the cost of inclusion and people's quality of life? The panelists will draw both on lived and professional experiences as well as ethical principles to examine how these tensions are navigated in present-day realities. The presentation will challenge participants to consider the complexity of inclusion and explore how decisions are shaped by resource limitations and systemic design.

The intended outcome is to foster thoughtful, honest, and at times uncomfortable discussion about what meaningful inclusion truly requires. The intended outcome is also to reflect on both the progress that has been made and the gaps that remain. Moreover, the session will highlight opportunities for innovation in designing more responsive and inclusive systems across the lifespan.

Moderator:
Dr. Carly Thiessen
Senior Clinical Manager, St.Amant Autism Programs

Heidi Hutchison
People First Manitoba

Caroline Cramer
MBA Candidate, Director of Operations, St.Amant

Susanne Marius
Principal, St.Amant School

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Canada's Conference for Diversity & Accessibility

Care and Creativity
Breakout 1
10:40am - 11:40am

Andrew Terhoch and Sam

When Art is Medicine: An Exploration of Personhood, Autonomy and Dignity through Creative Expression

St.Amant Art-Based Spiritual Care Group - The Capital 'C' Circle

We are a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with diverse abilities. Some of us come to Circle to hold the tools for artistic expression in our hands for the very first time. Some of us explore and express ourselves through presence, attuned with the hands and heart of a co-creator alongside us. In our Circle, we can all find, feel, and if we choose, share the Medicine in the stories we carry. Circle sees us. Circle hears us. We become known for who we are in Circle. And we come to know that when we touch into our life's story through art, there is a healing that happens; healing for the artist, and if the artists choose to share, healing for the viewer and listener too. The Circle and everyone close to it is guided by relationship, and by the Truth that Art is Medicine.

The shared image is a communal creation by the five artists in the Winter 2025 Art-Based Spiritual Care Circle at St.Amant. It is titled "in Circle in Circle in Circle in Circle" representing the Medicine found within and around us. A story of our group's beginning can be found on YouTube: https://youtu.be/UxyLJnbXF1E

Andrew Terhoch is part of the Réseau Compassion Network as the Spiritual Health Practitioner for the St.Amant community. In his daily work, Andrew supports people of all ages and abilities to explore and strengthen spiritual health in all areas of life and their healthcare experiences. He is a Ceremony helper to Knowledge Carriers and Elders in his work community.

Samaria, or Sam as she is referred to by friends, has been an advisor in the St.Amant Art-Based Spiritual Care Circle for this past year. She is a member of Garden Hill First Nation and resides in Winnipeg. Sam is a social and deeply spiritual woman. She lives by the Seven Sacred Teaching and also by her Christian faith.

As a loving and deeply empathic person, Sam has thrived in her role of advisor. She guides the Circle co-creators in attuning to Artists' ways of communicating. And she explores Art as Medicine, how for her, the Sacred Teachings shine a light on the connections between life, expression, values and belonging.

With her incredible sense of humour, Sam values how laughter strengthens her deep connections with friends, family and her support Circle. She strives to be involved in new adventures and is excited to be a conference presenter for the very first time!

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Innovation and Access
Breakout 1
10:40am - 11:40am

Ashleigh Lodge

AI and Digital Accessibility: Removing Barriers, or Reinforcing Them?

Using the POUR principles of digital accessibility (perceivable, operable, understandable and robust), we will look at real-world use cases for AI and digital accessibility, from generating alt text for images, to checking and updating the reading level for a document, to testing if a website or application is accessible to all users.

Through demonstrations and hands-on exercises, attendees will learn when AI can be used (with human validation!) to implement or enhance digital accessibility, when it absolutely cannot be used, and how to tell the difference, even when you're not an accessibility expert.

Ashleigh is the leader of the Enterprise Apps Team at Neovation Learning Solutions. She manages a team of over 20 developers, UX designers and QA analysts as they create and maintain eLearning products of all kinds. A graduate of Red River College, she has held various development and management roles in the tech industry for over 14 years.

Additionally, Ashleigh is on the board of Level It Up, an organization that supports autistic job seekers in finding STEAM roles and careers. Her support for Level It Up has become more personal recently, after being diagnosed with autism and ADHD (AuDHD) herself.

Ashleigh is a vocal advocate for accessibility and inclusive design, working to make digital websites, apps and products more accessible to users of all types and abilities. She has spoken about accessibility to a variety of audiences, including at Prairie Dev Con, Confoo Montreal, CreativeMornings Winnipeg, and at TedxWinnipeg 2019, where she brought the idea and foundations of digital accessibility to an audience of nearly 700 Winnipeggers.

Ashleigh has also published articles on digital accessibility in Code Magazine, and an article on including accessibility in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives for the Learning Guild.

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Learning and Support
Breakout 2
1:00pm - 2:00pm

Laura Walsh Martino and Sarah McCarthy

Accessible by Design: Reimagining Behaviour Support Through Relationships and Lived Experience

This presentation examines how challenging behaviour can be understood and addressed through a relational, compassionate, and behaviour-informed framework in school and support settings. Rather than positioning behaviour as something to be controlled, this approach recognizes behaviour as meaningful communication shaped by environmental, relational, and systemic factors.

Framed within the broader context of accessibility and inclusion, this session highlights how adult responses, environmental design, and relational safety contribute to creating spaces where individuals can meaningfully participate, engage, and thrive. Participants will be introduced to foundational behaviour analytic concepts translated into practical strategies, including co-regulation, proactive environmental supports, and the use of clear, compassionate boundaries. To enhance applied understanding, the session incorporates video examples from real-world practice, illustrating how these approaches can be implemented in authentic contexts. These examples support participants in translating theory into accessible, responsive practice across settings. Grounded in trauma-informed and neurodiversity-affirming principles, this work is informed by lived experience through Amal Behavioural Health Supports, where individuals, families and front-line staff play a central role in shaping assessment, intervention, and decision-making. This collaborative, person-centered and relational approach reflects a commitment to designing services that are responsive to the diverse needs, voices, and experiences of those we support. By centering relationships, lived experience, and thoughtful design this work contributes to a future where accessibility is embedded in everyday practice, not added as an afterthought.

Laura Walsh Martino, MEd, BCBA, and Sarah McCarthy, MA, BCBA, are clinical leaders with Amal Behavioural Health Supports at Amal Youth & Family Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Together, they have played a central role in developing and expanding a compassionate, behaviour-informed service model supporting children, youth, adults, and families with complex needs across community, residential, and clinical settings.
Both Laura and Sarah specialize in working with individuals who present with significant challenging behaviour, including those with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and experiences of trauma. Their work is grounded in a shared commitment to dignity, safety, and meaningful quality of life, with an emphasis on relational, trauma-informed, and neurodiversity-affirming care.

They hold advanced credentials in Practical Functional Assessment and Skills-Based Treatment (PFA-SBT) and are deeply committed to translating behaviour analytic principles into accessible, real-world practice. Laura is currently completing her PhD in Community Health at Memorial University, focusing on social justice and equity in health, while Sarah brings over 15 years of experience in frontline and leadership roles, with a foundation in Child and Youth Care and Relational Practice.

Together, they are passionate about bridging theory and practice, centering lived experience, and supporting teams to create more compassionate, accessible systems of care.

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Rights and Voice
Breakout 2
1:00pm - 2:00pm

Dr. Bethany Stevens

The Right to Learn, the Right to Choose: Sexual Health, Safety, and Self-Determination for People with IDD

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are too often framed as either desexual or hypersexual. Both deny agency and self-determination, our collective goal. This talk pushes back, drawing on disability studies scholarship that names the right to be an adult, to have relationships, to be safe from abuse, and to learn about sexuality as inseparable. That right to learn about sexual health matters because the same population fighting for sexual autonomy faces starkly elevated rates of sexual violence prevalence at roughly one in three (Tomsa et al., 2021).

This significant problem is driven by systems supporting people with IDD, especially through restricted communication, caregiver dependency, isolation, and a persistent knowledge gap around consent. By choosing to deny their sexuality, people with IDD could be criminalized for their behavior and/or end up with unintended sexual consequences. Comprehensive sexuality education is consistently linked to protective outcomes, including decreased susceptibility to abuse (Andreassen et al., 2024), yet people with IDD remain among the least likely to receive it. Treating sexual health education as purely protective, severed from agency, is itself a failure: safety and self-determination reinforce each other, and real protection means taking seriously what people with IDD say they want to learn, not just what we fear they'll do.

Dr. Bethany Stevens is a wheelchair-using doctoral graduate at Georgia State University's Sociology Department and a sexual health educator. Trained as an attorney and holding a Master of Arts in Sexuality Studies, she has a diverse range of interests that ground her work in human rights and social justice. Her publications and invited talks address a range of disability topics, including media analysis, sexual violence prevention, and policy analysis.

Stevens lectures and offers workshops internationally and has taught courses in public health, disability studies, and social work across the United States. Please follow and engage with her on all platforms @disabethany.

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Care and Creativity
Breakout 2
1:00pm - 2:00pm

Lindsey Childe

Canary in the Coal Mine: The Power of Professionals with "Invisible Disabilities" in the Workplace

This presentation will revolve around the importance of including the perspective of neurodivergent people or those with "invisible disabilities" within their organizations. It will explain what neurodivergency and "invisible disabilities" may look like in the workplace, and shine light on how when the needs of this community are accommodated, it often leads to positive workplace cultural changes that benefit entire organizations.

This presentation will express compassionately and effectively supporting oneself, those someone may work with, and those someone may supervise that live with "invisible disabilities". It will describe how management can spot signs of an employee in need of support and how to help them long-term in order to sustain their employment and personal health. The presentation will also include how folks working and living with "invisible disabilities" can seek support from their workplace, and how to advocate for their needs.

Lindsey Childe (they/she) is a 2Spirit person of Anishinaabe and settler descent from Treaty No. 1. Lindsey has worked with St.Amant for over a decade, currently as a Psychology Technician for Jordan's Principle where they support children with acute behavioural needs around the province of Manitoba. Lindsey is also an Education Facilitator for Dragonfly Teachings with the Women's Health Clinic where they provide training workshops to healthcare professionals on methods of providing Indigenous-based and trauma-informed supports to parents experiencing miscarriage and babies born to spirit.

Lindsey is neurodivergent and lives with chronic illnesses that have evolved over their life, providing them with a unique perspective on supporting others, while accommodating their own needs in the workplace.

Their goal is to support the community, encourage the use of Indigenous perspectives of healing and trauma in the world of Psychology, and to advocate for ethical accommodations and inclusion for everyone. In their down time, they love to read, watch Sc-fi, listen to music, and swim whenever they can. They also have a wonderful seven-year-old child and three pets that overstimulate them just the right amount.

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Innovation and Access
Breakout 2
1:00pm - 2:00pm

Muriel Mac-Seing and Jean Noel Nikiema

Equitable and Inclusive AI: Removing Barriers for People with Disabilities – Lessons from the Health Sector

AI dominates headlines, promising technological advancements, improved efficiency in health, education, communication, and employment. Yet, its benefits remain elusive for the 16% of people with disabilities worldwide, 27% in Canada, who are often excluded by design. In this presentation, we will share the latest evidence on disability inclusion in the healthcare sector, drawing from a scoping review and intersectoral perspectives from AI experts and the lived experience of people with disabilities. We will also explore actionable ways forward to ensure no one is left behind.

Muriel Mac-Seing, Assistant Professor at the Université de Montréal's School of Public Health and Researcher at the Centre de recherche en santé publique (CReSP), studies inequities in access to health services, particularly in sexual and reproductive health, climate justice, and AI.

Her research, focused on people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, combines mixed, qualitative, and intersectional methods to advance health equity and social justice, both in Canada and globally.

Jean Noel Nikiema is an Associate Professor of Digital Health whose research focuses on advancing trustworthy artificial intelligence grounded in the realities of healthcare practice. His work adopts a distinctly sociotechnical perspective, with particular emphasis on aligning data standards and data quality with clinical workflows, while integrating methodological rigor with organizational feasibility.

His research highlights interoperability, auditability, and explainability as fundamental prerequisites for the safe and responsible development and deployment of learning-based systems in healthcare. Governance and equity are likewise treated as integral design requirements rather than downstream considerations.

Working collaboratively with clinicians, health system partners, and decision-makers, his overarching objective is to translate the potential of artificial intelligence into demonstrable value for health systems, including more informed decision-making, improved experiences for patients and healthcare professionals, and the responsible stewardship of public resources.

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Learning and Support
Breakout 3
2:20pm - 3:20pm

Frances Sinclair-Kaspick

Opening the Door and Paving the Way: Supporting Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Through Education, Employment, Inclusion, and Community

Join Frances Sinclair-Kaspick as she shares her personal journey as an Indigenous person with a disability, reflecting on the people, opportunities, and determination that helped shape her path. Through stories of education, employment, advocacy, and community, Frances will explore the barriers many Indigenous people with disabilities continue to face and the importance of creating inclusive pathways to success.

This session will highlight the transformative power of education, meaningful employment, cultural connection, and early supports for children and youth. Participants will gain insight into the unique challenges experienced by Indigenous families in northern and remote communities, while also hearing a message of resilience, hope, and leadership rooted in lived experience. Frances challenges us all to open doors, remove barriers, and create opportunities where every person can thrive

Frances Sinclair-Kaspick is a First Nations woman, community advocate, and leader whose lived experience with disability, poverty, and intergenerational trauma has inspired a lifelong commitment to empowering others. Rather than allowing barriers to define her, she has transformed adversity into a driving force for personal achievement and community action.

A member of the Pequis First Nation in Manitoba, Frances has built a diverse career as a public servant, motivational speaker, writer, performer, artist, and advocate for Indigenous people living with disabilities. Through her work, she has consistently promoted inclusion, accessibility, education, and employment opportunities for marginalized communities.

In 1992, Frances partnered with the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development Inc. (CAHRD) to establish the Aboriginal Disabled Self-Help Group Inc. (ADSHG). The organization's mission is to support Indigenous people with disabilities in accessing education, training, and meaningful employment opportunities. Under her leadership, ADSHG has also developed resources and initiatives designed to foster self-sufficiency and community engagement.

Frances has been a strong advocate for accessible recreation and wellness programs. In 2010, working in partnership with the City of Winnipeg, ADSHG played a key role in the creation of the Simply Unique Accessible Pool Program. The initiative improved access to health and wellness opportunities for people with disabilities and contributed to accessibility upgrades at the North Centennial Recreation Centre, including wheelchair accommodations and dedicated programming.

As a motivational speaker, Frances has shared her message of resilience, healing, and inclusion with audiences across Manitoba. In October 2015, she served as the keynote speaker at a three-day employment conference focused on disability inclusion, addressing human resource professionals, administrators, and managers on the importance of creating accessible and equitable workplaces.

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Canada's Conference for Diversity & Accessibility

Rights and Voice
Breakout 3
2:20pm - 3:20pm

Panel: My Rights Matter

From Empowerment to Action - Self-Advocates Leading Change

This presentation is led by self-advocates from three committees: Inclusive Minds, We Matter, and Talk It Up! The collaborative creators of MyRightsMatter.ca, a website made by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities, to learn about their rights.
In this session, panelists will share why learning about rights is important and how learning from each other builds confidence, leadership, and community. They will talk about their own experiences with self-advocacy and what it means to speak up, be heard, and make choices about their own lives.

The panel will also explore how working together helps create a stronger, unified voice to promote and protect human rights. Panelists will speak honestly about barriers people still face and what needs to change.

Through stories, examples, and interactive discussion, attendees will learn how self-advocates collaborate to share knowledge, break down barriers, and foster inclusion. Attendees will learn how to better support people to understand and exercise their rights, and how to create more inclusive, respectful environments.

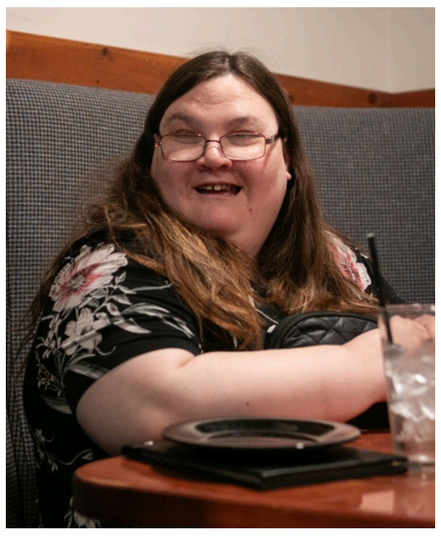
Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of the importance of self-advocacy, peer learning, and human rights—and clear actions they can take to support real change.

Moderator: Steven Walcer
Member of Inclusive Minds Self-Advocate Committee

Philip Bialk
Chair, Inclusive Minds Self-Advocate Committee

Donovan Thiessen
Talk it Up! Self-Advocate Committee Member

Paul Rittinger
We Matter Self-Advocate Committee Member



Kelsey Sobiak
Talk it Up! Self-Advocate Committee Member

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Care and Creativity
Breakout 3
2:20pm - 3:20pm

Traci Foster and Shaylee Rosnes

Creation as Care: Creative Ways of Maintaining and Cultivating Health and Wellbeing While Building Accessibility

IDisability artists and cultural workers Traci Foster and Shaylee Rosnes will host a 1-hour interactive workshop focusing on integrating care into accessibility for disabled people and everyone in service to cultivating or providing accessibility. Using research from lived experience, d/Disability Culture movement, and trauma-informed exercises, the presentation will build an understanding of how disabled professionals not only survive the impossible pace of an ableist world but thrive within it.

This workshop will break down how creation as care is held and why it is important that everyone understand and integrate it when building accessibility. All participants will leave with an understanding of how care is central to accessibility, how to integrate care-centered access for people with disabilities, and how to interrupt the inherent overwhelm and sometimes burnout for everyone in service to or allyship with d/Disabled folks. 'Creation as Care' emerged as a theory and practice within the disability cultural movement. It grew out of concern for the health and wellbeing of disabled people and the environments around them. Creation as Care is based on biological, physical, physiological, and psychological needs.The presenters will use facilitated dialogue, presentation, and trauma-informed exercises to help integrate the information from the experiential learning model.

Traci Foster is a d/Disabled artist, cultural leader, and consultant who explores and develops her work with a focus on where awareness, intuition, and action intersect in the body. She works with creation as care, and unapologetically seeks pleasure in all aspects of life, including art-making. Her trauma-informed approach to facilitation was cultivated through her long journey to find her voice, and her right to be in her body as a disabled individual with pleasure and ease. The heart of her work lies within the space where compassion meets creativity.

Traci is the Founder and Artistic Director of Listen to Dis' Community and Arts Organization – Saskatchewan's first and only disability led arts organization – and is an unrelenting advocate of disability culture and justice.

Shaylee Rosnes is an Artist, Administrative Associate, and Arts Programmer with Listen to Dis' Community & Arts Organization [LTD']. She graduated from the University of Regina with a Bachelor of Social Work in 2022 and incorporates that education in her programming and project work. Shaylee is an actor in both The Dripping Honeys [LTD's music ensemble] and The Other Ordinary [LTD's theatre company]. Most recently, she has appeared in the Dripping Honeys' productions Bits & Pieces of Dis' & Dat, which toured across the province in 2023 – 2026.

She is also the monologist in the annual "Not Just Christmas" concert which is performed at care and seniors' homes in Regina and surrounding areas, in addition to the annual public concert. She has also co-presented at conferences including the 2024 Re-Imagining Nonprofits conference and Inclusion Saskatchewan's 2025 Inclusion conference.

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Leadership Breakout 3

2:20pm - 3:20pm

Dr. Jacquie Ripat and Monire Nobahar Ahari

Smart Homes, Assistive Technology, and Independence: From Possibility to Practice

Home-based electronic assistive technology (H-EAT) is rapidly changing what is possible for people with disabilities living in the community. This session will explore how smart home technologies can support independence, safety, autonomy, social connection, and everyday participation, drawing on examples from the Canada Life Smart Suite and current research. We will also consider the challenges of technology adoption—including cost, reliability, personalization, support, and sustainability—and share emerging work with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Jacquie Ripat, PhD, is the Endowed Chair in Technology for Assisted Living and Dean of the College of Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Manitoba. An occupational therapist and researcher, her work focuses on using technology to support independence, participation, and community living for people with disabilities.

She leads research that brings together people with disabilities, clinicians, researchers, and technology developers to design and evaluate meaningful technology solutions.

Monire Nobahar Ahari, PhD, is a Research Associate and Sessional Instructor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Manitoba. An occupational therapy researcher, she previously completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Manitoba.

Her research focuses on the role of technology in supporting everyday activities and participation among people with disabilities, with particular interests in functional technology literacy, sustained technology use, and the development of assessment tools to support the integration of technology into everyday life.

Beyond Limits

Canada's Conference for Diversity & Accessibility

Closing Keynote
3:35pm - 4:20pm

Dr. Bethany Stevens

Promoting Disability Joy: How to Build on Disability Rights Work

People working for disability rights have made tremendous strides, helping people with disabilities move away from institutionalization, embracing person-centered planning, and working to shift society's understanding of disability. Yet even as we celebrate this progress, ableism persists and, in many ways, is intensifying alongside broader social regression. This moment calls us to be more passionate than ever in our commitment to the autonomy, joy, and power of people with disabilities.

This talk invites disability professionals to expand their vision of person-centered work, to move beyond practical support to engage more fully with the emotional lives of the people they serve, including grief, rage, and desire. By attending to more of the whole person, we open doors to deeper authenticity, stronger community connections, greater accessibility for BIPOC disabled folks, and a richer expression of disability community joy. Rooted in the principles of disability justice, this expanded approach doesn't ask us to abandon what we do well. Instead, disability justice asks us to believe even more fully in what we practice, and to embrace disability in its fullest, most expansive sense.

Dr. Bethany Stevens is a wheelchair-using doctoral graduate at Georgia State University's Sociology Department and a sexual health educator. Trained as an attorney and holding a Master of Arts in Sexuality Studies, she has a diverse range of interests that ground her work in human rights and social justice. Her publications and invited talks address a range of disability topics, including media analysis, sexual violence prevention, and policy analysis.

Stevens lectures and offers workshops internationally and has taught courses in public health, disability studies, and social work across the United States. Please follow and engage with her on all platforms @disabethany.