

CRDSSA

**Annual
Disability
Research
Conference**

Event Package

What is Special About CRDS Students

The Community Rehabilitation and Disability Students (CRDS) program was established in 1979 and offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees through the Cummings School of Medicine. Community involvement, interdisciplinary learning, social inclusion, rigorous research, and evidence-based practice are embedded in the program's curriculum and delivered to students by esteemed faculty who integrate their innovative research and practical experience into lessons. This approach to teaching about disability and mental health not only instills a sense of responsibility to innovate but also supplies the practical skills necessary to see their ideas to fruition.

Additionally, CRDS is one of the only programs in Canada to offer fully integrated practicum opportunities throughout students' degrees. Students complete approximately 460 hours of practicum work throughout the course of their degree in community programs or academic research. Integrating academia with front-line work provides students with a unique opportunity to develop practical skills, expand their network, and produce meaningful change during their degree. Thus, CRDS alumni are driven, pragmatic, and effective, which not only allows them to pursue a diverse range of meaningful careers in research, therapy, public policy, law, medicine, and education, but also be leaders in those careers.

No other program in Canada offers a comparable education in disability and mental health, and CRDS is a premier university program which produces premier alumni. Students in this program are of the highest competence and moral caliber, making them future innovators, scholars, and advocates ready to challenge the system.

Purpose of the Event

Rooted in the principles of disability justice, the conference fosters a space for interdisciplinary dialogue and amplifies voices that are often underrepresented in mainstream academic forums. It serves as a hub for knowledge mobilization where students, researchers, and community members come together to exchange ideas, challenge assumptions, and imagine new possibilities. By connecting knowledge with action, it supports emerging scholars, allows community partners to shape the dialogue, and for all participants to contribute to a collective vision of equity and inclusion.

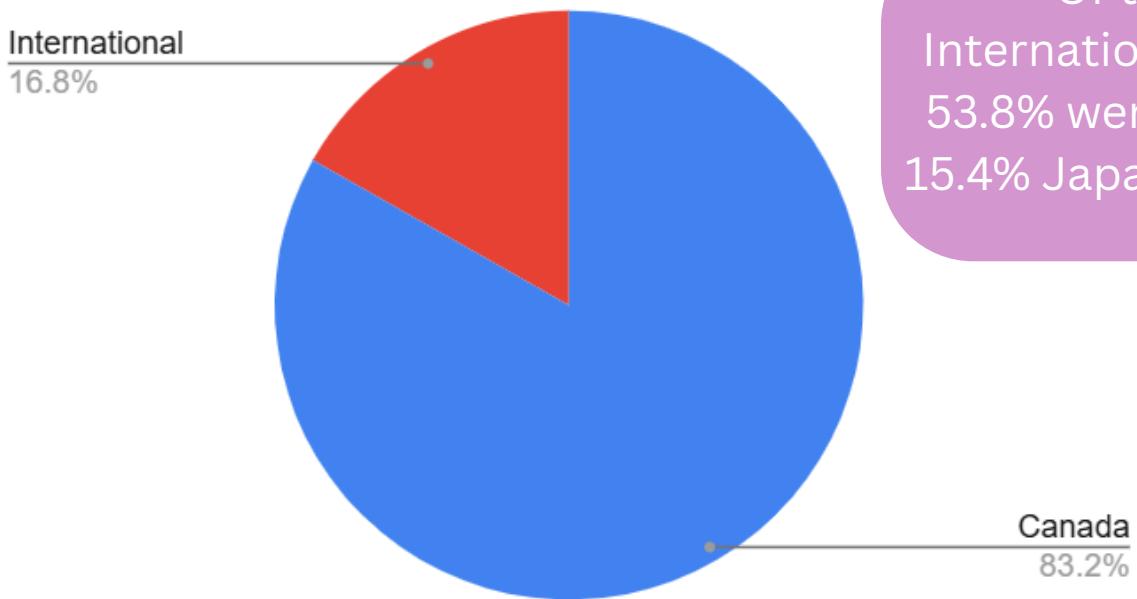
The CRDSSA Disability Research Conference is the only conference in Calgary that highlights contributions to the field of disability studies. In addition, this is one of very few free and hybrid events that offers live-captioning services.



Over the past 3 years...

This conference has almost doubled in attendance from the first year. What started as a local event has reached researchers, scholars, and stakeholders from across the globe.

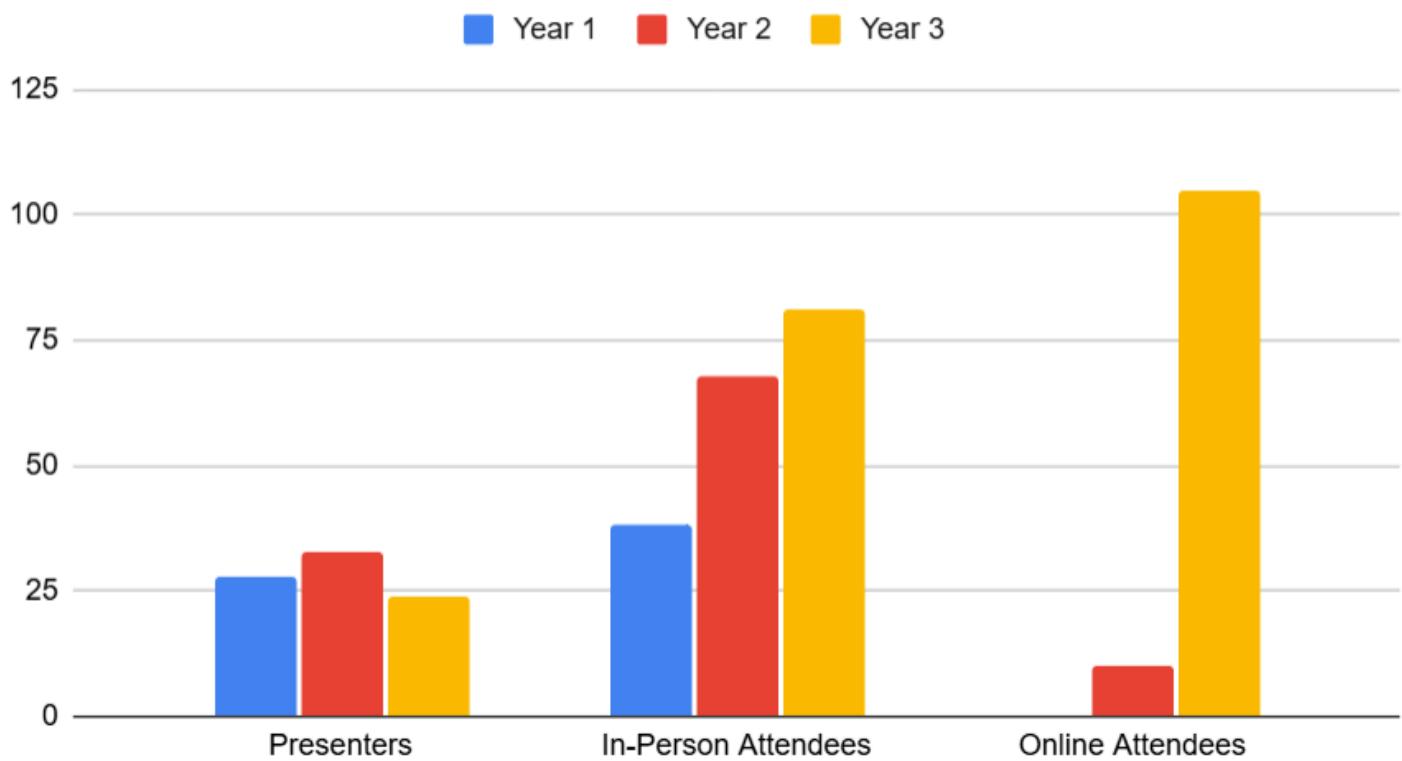
Global vs Local Affiliations



Of the 16.8%

International affiliations:
53.8% were from the UK,
15.4% Japan, Iceland, India

Conference Overview



2023

Disability: A Discursive, Institutional, and Cultural Experience



2024

Beyond Conventions: Navigating Disability Across Social and Cultural Dimensions



2025

From Research to Policy to Practice: Bridging Gaps in Disability Advocacy



2026

Knowledge as Resistance: Reimagining Disability, Systems, and Possibilities

The 2026 Conference will Feature:

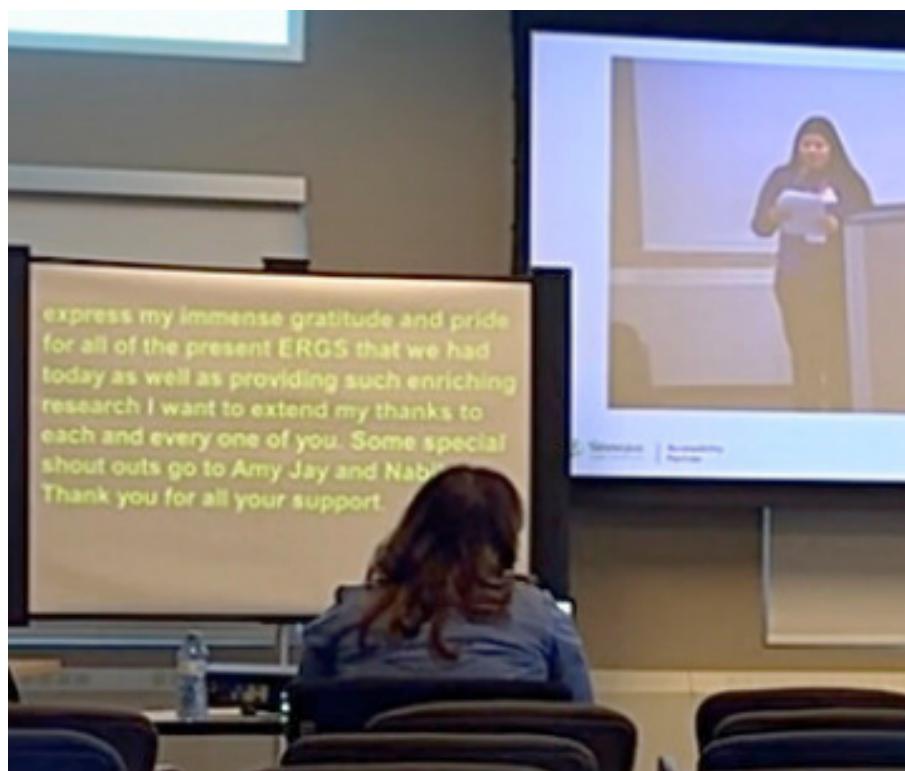
- 2 Keynote Speakers
- Oral Presentations (3-minute thesis, 5 minute & 15 minute options)
- Poster Presentations
- Panel Session (Total of 4 people consisting of community partners and alumni)
- Networking session
- Small Case Competition (15 minutes collaborative problem solving and 15 minutes presentation of solution)
 - Solutions will be presented to a panel consisting of 2 faculty members and 1 community partner

With our partners, we have been able to have:

an accessible event space thanks to the
Sinneave Family Foundation



CART Services for d/Deaf attendees through KLM Captioning with **Canadian Calgary Hard of Hearing Association**



a hybrid event, livestreamed on youtube managed by **SmartLinks**

What Critical Disability Studies Brings to Cute Studies

- Power and Social Construction:
 - Reveals how cuteness can reinforce power imbalances
- Intersectionality Lens:
 - Multiple identities (race, gender, disability) shape experiences of cuteness
- Challenging Norms:
 - Pushes back on ableist standards of "normalcy" and attractiveness
- Embodied Experience:
 - Centers lived realities of disabled people as complex, agentic, sexual beings

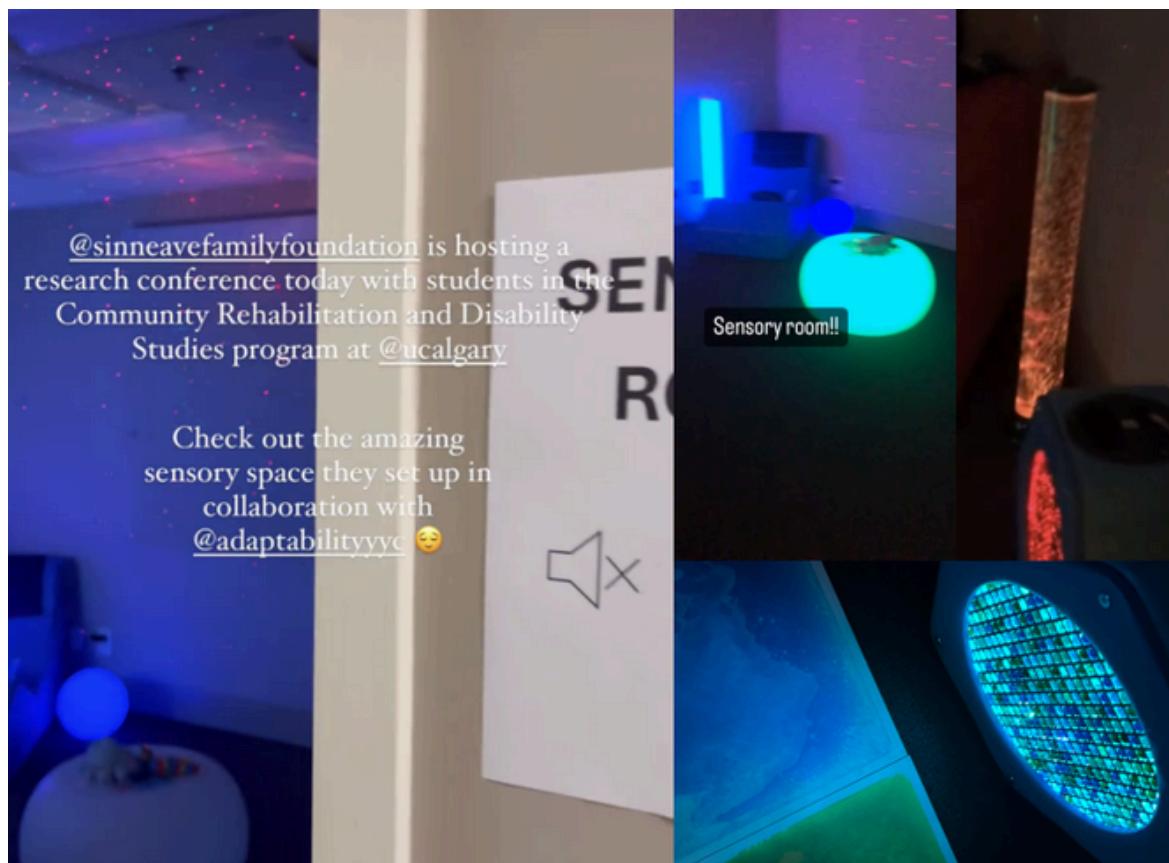
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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Sinneave FAMILY FOUNDATION Accessibility Partner

CRDSSA

a sensory room from **AdaptAbility**



Our conference has made space for our upcoming scholars and advocates to shape the conversation...

Double-Masking: Gender Variant Autistic Adolescent Suicide Risk

Susie Forsyth¹ (pronouns: They/Them) & A. McLuckie² (He/Him)

¹ *Adult Initiatives, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary*; ² *Forensic Initiatives, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary*

BACKGROUND

- Compared to cisgender (non-Autistic) peers, Autistic adolescents are more likely to identify as gender variant, and are more likely to be at higher risk for death by suicide.
- Gender variance is linked to increased risk of mental health problems, including depression and anxiety.
- Gender variance is linked to increased risk of suicidality.
- Autistic adolescents are more likely to experience gender variance than non-Autistic adolescents.
- Autistic adolescents are more likely to engage in self-harm.
- Autistic adolescents are more likely to experience gender variance than non-Autistic adolescents.
- Autistic adolescents are more likely to experience gender variance than non-Autistic adolescents.

METHODS

- The researchers for this preliminary qualitative research conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with Autistic adolescents aged 12-17 years.
- Autistic adolescents participating in the focus of research were cisgender, non-binary, and Autistic and gender variant (i.e., non-binary, gender variant, and gender non-conforming).

RESULTS

- Autistic adolescents are at high risk for suicide.
- Gender variance increases the risk for suicide.
- Gender variance is the highest predictor of suicidality.
- Autistic adolescents are more likely to experience gender variance than non-Autistic adolescents.
- Autistic adolescents with gender variance are more likely to experience suicidality.

CONCLUSIONS: Policy & Practice Implications

- An urgent call for research on Autistic adolescents is needed to determine the best ways to support Autistic adolescents to prevent and reduce suicidality.
- Gender variance increases the risk for suicide.
- Gender variance is the highest predictor of suicidality.
- Autistic adolescents are more likely to experience gender variance than non-Autistic adolescents.
- Autistic adolescents with gender variance are more likely to experience suicidality.

Double-Masking: Gender Variant Autistic Adolescent Suicide Risk

Autism

Gender Variance

Double Masking

Autism Thematic Analysis: Types of Masking

Figure 1: CMID: Risk of Suicide

Group	Estimated Risk (%)
Autism	~45%
Gender Variance	~30%
Autism & Gender Variance	~25%

REFERENCES

Common Information

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*The authors have no conflicts or disclosures to report



ADHD is my Superpower!

Fostering a strength-based approach to disability in education

How can we foster a strength-based approach to disability for teachers and students in the education system?

Strengths First

Find the gifts in disability, what are the strengths, or gifts of students with disabilities in the classroom? How can we identify strengths, and more importantly, how should we see their strengths when they look in the mirror?





Could Mary be Gifted?

Showing us strengths, based upon gifts in disability, can have a profound impact on how we see children with disabilities. Once we find those strengths, we can then move ahead the child and support it if they could be gifted. Publishing a PB version of the ICHC at this site, experimental teachers showed they could predict by a measured showing the shared traits of ADHD, ADD, and Giftedness.

Strengths First!

Starting the language can open the mindset of individuals with disabilities, it can move away from the disability first and be more person centered. Recently, the ADKIDZ has shown that this is a key strategy to success, however, it is important that students with disabilities are supported and have to live their ADKIDZ mission!





Every Child Deserves a Champion

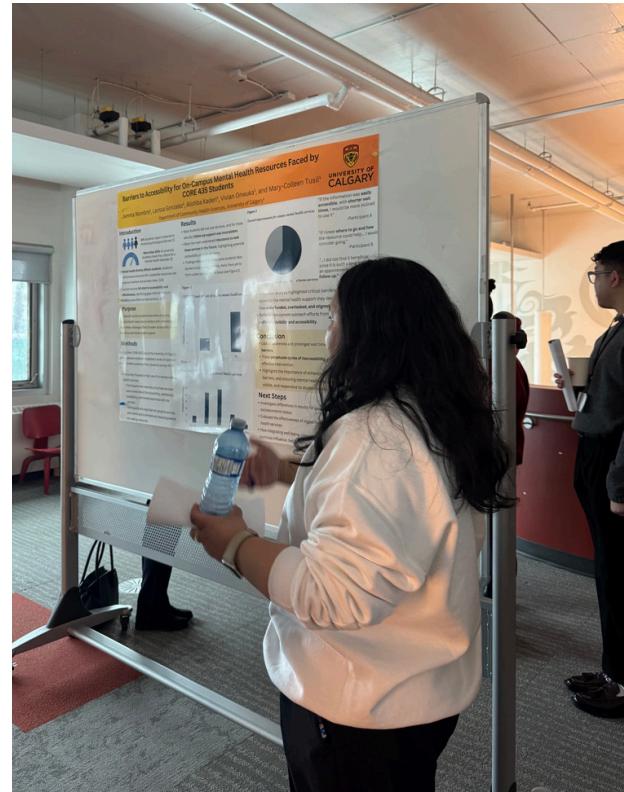
This growth mindset begins with the champion, which must be in the child's life. Champions need their child in the classroom, sometimes with others there can be a negative in the classroom instead of an individual with a disability.

Note: This is not formal research, this is based on my experience in the classroom as an educational assistant and a pre-service teacher.

Phoebe D'Amato, BEd
Pre-Service Teacher, St. Mary's University



- **Subreddits:**
 - R/Disability and R/LGBT
- **Search terms:**
 - ""Gay" OR "lesbian" OR "queer" OR "trans" OR "LGBT*" OR "bisexual" OR "disabled" OR "disability" OR "disabilities"
- Scrapped posts from May 16, 2023 - May 16, 2024
 - Generating 231 posts and 3707 comments
- **Inclusion Criteria:**
 - Posts and comments where users identified as LGBTQ+ and Disabled
 - Posts and comments where queerness and disability were both mentioned
 - Final result of 198 posts and 2641 comments
- **Data Analysis**
 - Thematic Analysis



...and **you** can
be part of the
impact!