



International Day of Persons with Disabilities Conference

Breaking Barriers - Making the Invisible Visible

Date: December 4, 2021

Time: 1 - 4 PM E.S.T.

Location: Virtual Meeting / Zoom



The goal for this year's conference is to spread awareness of invisible disabilities as well as the impact that COVID-19 pandemic has had on mental health.

This virtual conference will be accessible to all and will feature ASL interpreters, real time live captioning, and AMI's [Joeita Gupta](#) to co-host. AMI will broadcast live. Joeita Gupta is the host and producer of *The Pulse* on AMI-audio. She is also a CBC Radio columnist on disability issues and an editor/reporter on CBC Toronto's Metro Morning. She lives in downtown Toronto with many houseplants, and her husband.

You will hear from diverse speakers with lived experience with disability share their stories and experiences. The speakers will have a fireside chat about why it is so awkward to talk about invisible disabilities and mental health. This conference will be very interactive, and we want to hear your voices and your stories.

Register Online!

Registration is **free** and is **online** on Eventbrite. To register click on the hyperlink below:
[Eventbrite https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/international-day-of-persons-with-disabilities-event-breaking-barriers-tickets-205268622977](https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/international-day-of-persons-with-disabilities-event-breaking-barriers-tickets-205268622977)

Please register at <mailto:aebctoronto@gmail.com> if you have challenges registering online.

UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities Theme 2021

Not all Disabilities are Visible



International
Day of
**Persons with
Disabilities**

The UN day aims to raise awareness of disabilities which may not be immediately apparent but can have an impact on people's lives.

People with disabilities have been impacted by the pandemic and it has impacted our mental health.

Meet Our Speakers

Keynote Speaker-Melanie Taddeo-Presentation-The Power of You



Melanie is a passionate advocate for inclusion who at the age of 21 suffered a massive stroke that left her completely paralyzed on her left side and legally blind. After years of therapy, she was able to regain her independence and go on to become the first legally blind teacher to graduate in Ontario.

She is a certified special education teacher with over 20 years of experience in program development, fundraising, community outreach, volunteer management, and public speaking. Melanie founded Connect 4 Life and Voices 4 Ability; V4A Radio based on her personal experience of the lack of programs that promote independence for people with disabilities. She has made it her goal to help empower others to achieve their dreams despite the challenges they face. Melanie published her first book in 2019. "My Unforeseen Journey Losing Sight Gaining vision."

Guest Speaker-Maddy Dever- Presentation -The Language of Acceptance - Changing the Language of Autism and Disability



Maddy **Dever** (they/them) is a non-binary, wheelchair using Autistic adult and parent of five children with three also on the autism spectrum, living in Carleton Place in rural Eastern Ontario. Maddy advocates with both provincial and federal governments for inclusion and acceptance of Autistic individuals and for Autistic people to have their own voice in policy decisions. Maddy has been an advocate for change in education, affordable and accessible housing, as well as moving disability supports rates out of poverty levels.

Maddy is a former member of the [Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel](#), and current member of the [Ontario Autism Program Implementation Working Group](#).

Maddy is on the Board of Directors of [Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance \(CASDA\)](#), where they are helping with aspects of developing a National Autism Strategy. They have [spoken](#) at the annual [CASDA Summit in 2020](#) and were both [moderator](#) and [panel member](#) of two panels at the [CASDA Summit 2021](#). In 2021, they spoke twice to the [UN Human Rights Committee regarding the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).

Maddy is on the Board of Directors of [ConnectWell Community Health](#), a rural organization supporting thousands of citizens, including supports and services for Autistic children, youth, adults and their families.

Maddy has also led workshops and panels on topics surrounding autism and education. They have spoken about autism with many groups including [ECHO Autism Ontario](#), which works to educate and inform health professionals on issues related to autism. They have recently joined the [ECHO Autism Ontario Expert Hub Team](#).

Maddy is also an [inaugural member of the Editorial Board of the Canadian Journal of Autism Equity](#)

Fireside Chat



Moderator Christine Zannier



Christine is a Disability Inclusion consultant with both corporate and community work experience. She has developed and implemented diversity and inclusion projects in employment and talent management for a Tier 1 bank. As an active member on the executive team for the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, she has led consultations, focus groups and events to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Christine has a bachelor's degree in Psychology from York University and a Certificate in Human Resource Management from Ryerson University.

Panelists

Aime Hutton



Aime is a true miracle survivor. Being born 3 months early was just the start of the challenges Aime has overcome in her lifetime. Hailing from Calgary, Alberta Canada, as a Youth Diversity Advisor, Aime facilitates trainings, programs, live experiences, and workshops that educate and promote/create safe spaces at school and in the community. Aime also mentors young teen girls privately 1:1 to build their own courage, their true voice, and trust in themselves. As a 5-time international best-selling author/compiler Aime shares hope, healing, and inspiration through her writing. Aime sits on the Gender and Sexual Diversity Advisory Board with the Calgary Police Service, and she represents Alberta on the National Network for Mental Health Alliance Board.

Kevin McShan



Kevin is a graduate of St. Clair College's Journalism, Print and New Media Program. Kevin has an extensive history of promoting employment equality for individuals with disabilities. Most recently, as the Job Developer and Enhanced Employer Support Facilitator with the YMCA of Windsor-Essex County. He also continues the effort of promoting inclusion for people with disabilities through his motivational speaking efforts. Kevin was instrumental with the implementation of the WEareAble Project. He also has experience in the sports journalism industry, through the 2Man Advantage Podcasting website, an endeavor he was involved with for many years. Currently Kevin is the producer of his own podcast Lets have this conversation and interviews people from all backgrounds and industries.

Kevin is a proud recipient of the 2012 Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for his commitment to promoting equality for individuals with disabilities. He was also the recipient of a Community Excellence Award from Community Living Essex. Additionally, in 2015 he was awarded with the Influential Advocate Award from Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario, for his work in

promoting employment and societal equality on behalf of individuals with disabilities in Windsor-Essex. Kevin's greatest thrill doesn't come through personal achievement or accolades it comes from the success and enthusiasm of people he touches along the way.

Chantal Oakes



Born with congenital cataracts, Chantal has always managed with partial vision. At the age of six, she attended the Nazareth Institute in Montreal, the first residential school in Canada with the capacity to educate blind children.

She received a good education, with strict discipline and well-rounded life experience. She is certified as a social service worker, she found employment with the federal government where she nurtured a career of over 20 years as a public servant. She married, raised two daughters, and now has two grandchildren.

Growing up in a blended large family, she realized her strength and independence would be crucial, for a meaningful life. The scope of her limited vision was something her parents did not understand. With proper guidance and resources, she believes living with blindness should not be thought of as a horrible circumstance.

Dorothy Riddle



Dorothy is a certified management consultant who has consulted on economic development and trade in 85 countries. When the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) was formed, I was the first businessperson appointed to represent Canadian small businesses by then Prime Minister Chrétien. Having developed the Employment Readiness Scale™, I then consulted with employment agencies in Canada, Australia, the U.K., and the U.S. on how best to assist their clients (including those with disabilities) in finding and retaining appropriate employment.

Dorothy also has osteoarthritis and has gradually recognized that she is not alone in having limits on how far she can walk or how long she can stand unsupported without severe pain. After realizing that there was no research on hidden mobility disabilities, she launched the first ever study of the lived experience of those with hidden mobility disabilities in 2017, formed a non-profit support organization (Hidden Mobility Disabilities Alliance), and launched an educational website, www.HiddenMobilityDisabilities.com. Dorothy now focuses on raising awareness about and addressing barriers for hidden mobility disabilities.

Musician

Susanna McCleary



Susanna was born in London UK and began studying classical violin in Oxford. She was voted Musician of the Year for Herefordshire in 2006 and upon moving to Canada began learning traditional fiddle styles. She has also studied fiddling in Scotland and Ireland. She holds a music diploma from Mohawk College, where she gave violin lessons for academic credit, and a B.Mus. from McMaster University. During COVID she has been studying virtually to be a Certified Music Practitioner at the Longy School of Music (MHTP program), which will qualify her to play for individual patients in hospital and hospice settings. Here is the link to the concert we did for the CCB Toronto

Visionaries: <http://www.ccbtorontovisionaries.ca/concert.php>

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Partners

[Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians](#) (AEBC), [AMI](#), [Baker McKenzie](#) , [Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Association \(CASDA\)](#), [Canadian Council of the Blind Toronto Visionaries](#) ,

[Centre for Independent Living in Toronto](#), [Community Living Toronto](#), [Ethno Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario \(ERDCO\)](#), [Ontario Chamber of Commerce](#), [Ontario Disability Coalition](#) and [Trailblazers Tandem Cycling Club](#).

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