

Canadian Autism Leadership Summit 2020 –Speakers

Below is a list of Speakers who will be presenting at the Canadian Autism Leadership Summit 2020. Speakers have been ordered alphabetically.

[Cindy Harrison - Parent Implemented Models of Autism Early Intervention: Implications for Public Policy and Practice in Canada](#)

Cindy is a Speech Language Pathologist and is co-founder of ACT Learning Centre and CommuniCare Therapy in Ottawa. Cindy's area of clinical focus is the provision of assessment and treatment of children, adolescents, and adults with autism spectrum disorder. Cindy is also Senior Faculty for Profectum, a not for profit, New Jersey based international training facility that specializes in offering post graduate training in the DIR/Floortime model. Cindy holds Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Western Ontario and a Master of Science in Speech Language Pathology from the University of Vermont.

[Dan Ten Veen - Spectrum Freelance Creative Network Project](#)

Dan Ten Veen is the co-founder and director of Spectrum Productions, a non-profit organization created in 2010, that provides a unique platform for autistic creatives to realize their potential and talent through creative, exploratory, and professional opportunities in video and media production. Dan holds a Classroom and Community Support Autism Specialty Diploma from Douglas College, and has worked in a variety of related settings before launching Spectrum Productions. They include: community, education integration and home care support settings, recreational program development and delivery for at-risk youth, developing visual recipe universal design approach within his teaching position at Vancouver Community College.

[Elsbeth Dodman - Autistic Adults on the National Autism Strategy](#)

Elsbeth is an Autistic advocate who has a BA in fine art history and anthropology as well as a post graduate certificate in Autism behavioral sciences. Elsbeth lives in London Ontario with her family.

[Dr. Emile Tompa and Maureen Haan - Moving Forward Together: Development of a Pan-Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work](#)

Emile Tompa is Director of the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy, and a Senior Scientist at the Institute for Work & Health. Tompa is a labour and health economist with an MBA from the University of British Columbia and a PhD in economics from McMaster University. His research is about work as a social determinant of health and well being. He spearheads a Disability and Work in Canada strategy and action plan with several community leaders.

Maureen has been the President & CEO of CCRW since 2012. CCRW is the only national organization with the sole vision of equitable and meaningful employment for people with disabilities, in operation for over 40 years. Maureen provides insight to employer engagement through CCRW best practices and proven results. Maureen has been involved with numerous committees and groups that increase awareness of and access for the disability sector and the Deaf community, including involvement with Civil Society on the UNCRPD as the lead for employment (Article 27); leadership with the Conference on Work and Disability in Canada; co-development and leadership of the pan-Canadian Strategy on

Disability and Work; and as a Board member on the Accessibility Standards Canada. Maureen was appointed to the Canadian Disability Advisory Group (CDAG) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Autism Women and Non-Binary Network of Edmonton, Dr. Heather Brown, Jennifer Fehr, Krys Mahr, Danielle Thompson, Ewa Bochinski - Exploring unique barriers that autistic women/non-binary individuals encounter when navigating employment](#)

Dr. Heather Brown is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Education Psychology in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. She is also an autistic professional who studies autism. Her research focuses on examining what it means to “**thrive**” for individuals on the spectrum. She aims to create reasonable expectations around what it means to “function adaptively” with autism and to highlight all the ways in which people with autism are already thriving. By doing so, her research is poised to empower individuals with autism to be more self-confident in their neurodiversity and to develop a better understanding of the factors that most support their well-being.

Jenn embraced self-advocacy and the neurodiversity movement after a late-in-life Autism diagnosis. She lives in Edmonton with her partner and their pets, and loves to get outside (when there isn't too much snow).

Krys is a proud Autistic person who was only identified as autistic a few years ago. They do their best to confront ableism everywhere they encounter it. They have the unique, and often isolating, experience of working within disability services as a multiply disabled person. They've been working within disability services in one form or another since they were a teenager and still manage to be baffled by the ways in which disability services often replicate the very problems they are meant to address. Krys dreams of accessible futures where neurodiversity is embraced.

Danielle was diagnosed with Mild Aspergers Syndrome with cognitive delay and language processing delay when she was 17 years old. She is currently 27, working at a not-for-profit organization called MCG Careers Inc. in their accounting department as a Program Accountant. She is currently taking courses to get certification in payroll through the Canadian Payroll Association. Her dream is to pursue a career in Accounting and eventually get her CPA (Certified Professional Accountant).

[Dr. Isabel Smith - The Preschool Autism Treatment Impact Study: A tale of two provinces](#)

Isabel Smith, a Clinical-Developmental Psychologist, is a Professor and the Joan & Jack Craig Chair in Autism Research at Dalhousie University in Halifax NS. Her research encompasses long-term studies following the development of autistic children / youth and their families, as well as evaluating novel interventions. In this presentation, she speaks on behalf of the research - policy partnership that carried out the Preschool Autism Treatment Impact (PATI) study. The PATI team combines research expertise in ASD and child development, children's mental health policy, and health economics, with the skills and perspectives of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia autism policy makers.

[Dr. Janet McLaughlin, Bonnie Brayton, Denise McKee, Neil Belanger, Dr. Shivajan Sivapalan & Robert Gagnon– \(Panel\) Addressing Disparities in a National Autism Strategy: An Equity Lens](#)

Janet McLaughlin is an Associate Professor of Community Health at Wilfrid Laurier University, where she serves as co-founder and co-director of the Laurier Autism Research Consortium. As a parent of a child on the autism spectrum, Dr. McLaughlin was inspired to explore barriers facing families to access services and the impacts of these challenges on their health and well-being. Her current research

continues to explore these themes from a social determinants of health perspective, examining inequities of access to diagnosis, therapy, education and other services, with a particular focus on Indigenous, immigrant and refugee populations.

A recognized leader in both the feminist and disability movements, Bonnie Brayton has been the National Executive Director of the DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) Canada since May 2007. In this role, she has proven herself as a formidable advocate for women with disabilities here in Canada and internationally. During her tenure with DAWN Canada, Ms. Brayton has worked diligently to highlight key issues that impact the lives of women and girls with disabilities.

Denise has spent her 30-year career striving to achieve full citizenship for all. In 2009, Denise's family relocated to the community of Aklavik, NT and in 2011 they permanently settled in Yellowknife where she became the Executive Director of the NWT Disabilities Council. Denise became an effector of change spearheading the development of the NT Disability Framework, Strategic and Action Plans. Denise's experiences, as the mother of an autistic son, fuel her lifelong personal and professional commitment to the autism and disability communities. Denise strives to ensure the voices of the North are represented in all decision making.

Neil Belanger – Biography to come.

A family doctor by profession, Dr. Sivapalan believes in the potential for change to the current diagnostic landscape for children with Autism. After six years of a busy and fruitful family practice, Dr. Sivapalan left his practice to help facilitate this change. With an interest in child development, Dr. Sivapalan has worked collaboratively with multiple stakeholders to design the M-DOC, a unique developmental screening initiative whose goal was to increase access to diagnosis and intervention support for newcomer communities. In addition, Dr. Sivapalan helped develop the CARES initiative, which employed a task-shifting model to provide mental health support for caregivers of children with autism.

Robert Gagnon – Biography to come.

Kathi Cosgrove – Family Services Community Grants: Achieving More Together

Kathi Cosgrove is the new Program Manager of Services and Supports for Autism Speaks Canada, a Canadian charity dedicated to promoting solutions across the spectrum and along a life span for needs of people with autism spectrum disorder and their families. She has over 15 years of experience supporting children and youth on the autism spectrum at ErinoakKids, Ontario's largest Children's Treatment Centre. Kathi has worked with numerous families, school boards, community partners, private and public service providers, and led various interdisciplinary teams. She is passionate about enhancing community supports with a lens on collaboration and evidence-based practices.

Dr. Mayada Elsabbagh, Anna Katalifos, Dr. Mira Puri, & Dr. Fabienne Samson - The Transforming Autism Care Consortium: Advancing Discovery, Training, and Community Integration

Mayada Elsabbagh is Associate Professor in Neurology and Neurosurgery at McGill University. She holds appointments as Research Scientist at MUHC and the Douglas Institute. Her research focuses on

understanding the root causes of autism and tracing its developmental pathways. Her contributions include discovery of early brain function markers for autism prior to the onset of behavioral signs. She supported successful launch of several research and translational networks aimed at accelerating the pace of discovery in autism, like TACC and ACAR. She is active in global efforts to improve evidence-based practice in community and capacity building in low- and middle-income countries.

Anna Katalifos is currently in her final year of undergraduate studies at McGill University. She is studying Psychology and Political Science and plans to begin her Master's degree in clinical psychology in September 2021. She has worked as a policy advisor for TACC since its inception. Her contributions focus on implementing research-based knowledge into public policy. Her work as a summer intern in the Senate for Senator Leo Housakos helps her foster meaningful relationships with both federal policymakers and researchers alike. Anna's brother, Manoli, 18, was diagnosed with ASD in 2005 and is a student at Giant Steps School.

Based in Toronto, Canada, Dr. Mira Puri is the Manager of Science Initiatives at the Azrieli Foundation, the largest private foundation in Canada with funding programs in eight impact areas. Her responsibility is to develop and steward the foundation's funding initiatives in basic and clinical research in neurosciences and neurodevelopmental disorders. By working outside of, but alongside academic research, her aspiration is to integrate stakeholders in the research ecosystem and assist an interdisciplinary research community with translation of their research in ways that address complex social and health issues.

Fabienne Samson holds a PhD from Université de Montréal in Biomedical Science (Psychiatry), completed postdoctoral fellowships in auditory cognitive neuroscience at Queen's University and University of Western Ontario, and worked as a research associate in the Cognitive Neuroscience of Autism Group (Hôpital Rivière-des-Prairies). She has used behavioural, neuroimaging, and meta-analysis quantitative methods to investigate the underpinnings of auditory and visual processing in autism. She is now the network manager for the Transforming Autism Care Consortium (TACC), a new initiative aiming to connect and mobilize Quebec's strengths in autism research and improve the integration and dissemination of research knowledge.

[Penny Wheelwright and Katie Lafferty - Employable Me – What We Learned](#)

Executive Vice President, Head of Development, Thomas Howe Associates Inc. Penny is an award winning documentary filmmaker whose credits include *A Rough Crossing*, *Captive: The Story of Esther* and *A Spy's Life: Kitty Harris*. Penny documentary series credits include *Undercover Boss Canada*, *Be The Boss Canada*, and most recently, Penny has been the Executive Producer and head of corporate casting of the Canadian series *Employable Me*, now in its fourth season.

Katie Lafferty is the series producer of the groundbreaking series "Employable Me" which tells the stories of job seekers who prove that having a physical disability or neurological condition shouldn't make them unemployable. The series won the Diversify Excellence Award at MIPCOM 2017, a 2018, 2019 & 2020 Rockie Award and was nominated for four Canadian Screen Awards.

[Tanya McLeod - Maintaining Momentum: Improving the Odds for Employment Success](#)

Tanya McLeod is currently President of The Sinneave Family Foundation located in Calgary, Alberta. Tanya values the opportunity to contribute to making a difference in the lives of others. She is committed to supporting the Government of Canada to deliver on its mandate to develop a national

autism strategy. Her hope is that a national strategy provides a paradigm shift. A comprehensive framework that provides government policy with clear and transparent ways and means to provide all autistic Canadians with access to the resources and opportunities they require to achieve their full potential.

[Terry Batley - Building Partners within Your Community](#)

Terry is an adult on the spectrum employed full time and raising three children on the autism spectrum ages 19, 21, & 22 with his wonderfully supportive wife Joanne. Terry volunteers in the community serving as Vice President on the board for Autism Home Base, running D&D on every Tuesday night at Dueling Grounds in Peterborough (Now online) and Co- Coordinating social activities for adults on the spectrum with Autism Home Base. Including fundraisers. Terry is serving as a member of the Workers with Disabilities Committee for CUPE Ontario and is the workers health and safety co-chair where he works.

Canadian Autism Leadership Summit 2020 – Discussants

Below is a list of Discussants who will be presenting at the Canadian Autism Leadership Summit 2020. Discussants have been ordered alphabetically.

[Corey Walker](#)

Corey Walker is an autistic self-advocate from Prince George, BC. He was diagnosed with Asperger's in 2001, while in his early 20's, and since then he has made it his life's mission to empower autistics to live the best life possible, and to educate others about what makes autistics such wonderful, unique people with proper supports. Corey is currently a Project Coordinator for Sinneave Family Foundation where he leads the development of an employer toolkit titled Success in the Workplace: Strategies from Autistic Employees.

[Jackie McMillan](#)

Direct, thorough, well-referenced, and spell-binding, autistic bio-hacker Jackie McMillan interweaves stories and metaphors with tips and stats about autism into a transformational carpet ride. Jackie not only establishes deep rapport with her audiences, she also empowers them with concrete strategies for thriving with autism. If you're ripe for the abundant harvests that a paradigm shift allows those touched by autism challenges, then you're ready for Jackie's home-grown insights into how to thrive with autism.

Starting in 1976, Jackie has been steadily and dramatically improving her own and hundreds of other autistics' lives with her unique blend of collated lived experiences of autistics, and syntheses of relevant health and social research. She has taken her own difficult journey and turned it into a beacon of hope in the sea of misinformation about autism.

Jackie has supported hospitals, boards of education, hospitals, child development centres, professionals, assisted living organizations, therapeutic organization, parents, and other spectrum adults with systematized practices which consistently optimize the gifts, and minimize the challenges of autism.

Check your assumptions at the door. If you are prepared for your audience to see their lives at home, work, and play from angles that demand -- and motivate -- positive change, then ask Jackie to speak. The evolution begins before she ever enters the room.

Dr. Mackenzie Salt

Dr. Mackenzie Salt is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University as well as a researcher in the McMaster Autism Research Team (MacART). His research is focused on research methods for studying autistic adults and he previously developed a new way of studying language skills in ASD to ASD social interaction between autistic adults. He is autistic himself, having been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome when he was 13 years old, and he has worked with several autism organizations across Canada including Autism Ontario and Autism Speaks Canada.

Matthew Dever

Matthew (Maddy) Dever (they/them) is an Autistic parent of five children with three also on the autism spectrum, living in Carleton Place in rural Eastern Ontario. They advocate at both provincial and federal governments for inclusion and acceptance of Autistic individuals and for Autistic people to have their own voice in policy decisions. Matthew is a former member of the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel, and current member of the Ontario Autism Program Implementation Working Group.

Matthew is a founder of Autistic Bridge, an Autistic self-advocacy group, and a leader in the National Disability Strategy movement to build a nation-wide coalition of disability organizations advocating for a Barrier Free Canada that meets all needs of all disabilities at all ages. They are also a member of Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance (CASDA), where they are providing an Autistic view on the development of policy and helping with aspects of developing a National Autism Strategy and participating in the annual CASDA Summit.

Matthew has also led workshops and panels on topics surrounding autism and education and has spoken about autism with many groups including ECHO Autism where they are now part of the Expert Hub, which works to educate and inform health professionals on issues related to autism. Matthew writes on the blogs Matthewdever.ca and autismwordsmatter.ca and has a podcast called "The Autistic Rambler".