Department of Community Health Sciences

Community Rehabilitation & Disability Studies

CONNECTOR 2024

Connecting students, graduates, and service providers in our community

April 3, 2024
A Virtual Event via Zoom | Calgary, Alberta

cumming.ucalgary.ca/bcr
Welcome / Thank you / About

Welcome to our annual Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies (CRDS) Connector Event!

This event has been organized by a dedicated team of students, faculty, and administrative staff. It’s an exciting time for our program and the field as we continue to grow and adapt, and work to cultivate leadership development, innovation, community capacity building, and to encourage students to become allies who work towards improving the well-being of people with diverse abilities, promoting social change and building corresponding knowledge and theory.

Our faculty, students, and partners are dedicated to building and developing partnerships between the university and our community. The participation of each individual at this event demonstrates the ongoing commitment to develop reciprocal relationships. Today, students in the CRDS program who have completed practicums and research in community have the opportunity to share the work that they have completed throughout the year and engage with community partners, program graduates and faculty.

Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies and the field of disability is an exciting area in which to work and study. We hope that opportunities such as this allow all of us in this field to continue to meet and bring people together and to encourage growth, and innovation more widely.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), as well as the Tsuut’ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta (District 5 and 6). The University of Calgary is situated on land Northwest of where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, a site traditionally knows as Moh’kins’tsis to the Blackfoot, Wichîspa to the Stoney Nakoda, and Guts’ists’i to the Tsuut’ina. On this land and in the place we strive to learn together, walk together, and grow together “in a good way.”

On behalf of the CRDS Connector Committee, we would like to thank each of your for attending our event and bringing your experience to our gathering. Together we have the vision, the knowledge, the wherewithal, and the experience to help pave the future. We could not accomplish what we do without your support and leadership.

Sincerely,

The CRDS Connector Committee
## Schedule

**Wednesday, April 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Welcome and Land Acknowledgement</td>
<td>Zoom Main Room</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Valerie Martin</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:05 a.m.</td>
<td>Department Welcome</td>
<td>Zoom Main Room</td>
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<td>Dr. Fiona Clement</td>
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<td>11:10 a.m.</td>
<td>Undergraduate Health &amp; Science Education Welcome</td>
<td>Zoom Main Room</td>
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<td>Dr. Fabiola Aparcio-Ting</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Keynote Presentation</td>
<td>Zoom Main Room</td>
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<td>Frances Sterzer, BA Hons in Psych ’20, minor CRDS, MSc ‘24</td>
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<td>11:50 a.m.</td>
<td>Student “Three Minute Thesis” Breakout Sessions</td>
<td>Zoom Break Out Rooms</td>
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<td>12:40 p.m.</td>
<td>The E. Anne Hughson Change Makers Award</td>
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<td>Dr. Fiona Clement</td>
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<td>Dr. Patti DesJardine</td>
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<td>Dr. Zack Marshall</td>
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<td>12:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Closing Remarks</td>
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<td>Dr. Patti DesJardine</td>
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Faculty Speakers & Guests

Dr. Fiona Clement
Associate Professor and Department Head, Community Health Sciences

Dr. Clement is the Department Head of Community Health Sciences and the Director of the Health Technology Assessment Unit at the University of Calgary. She is an accomplished academic leader, health services researcher and expert in health policy. She has received numerous awards for her work with the most recent being named one of 2020’s Most Powerful Women in Canada and selected for induction into the Royal Society of Canada’s College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists.

Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting
Associate Dean, Undergraduate Health and Science Education
Director, Bachelor of Health Sciences Program

Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting, MPH, PhD, is an Associate Professor (Teaching) in the Department of Community Health Sciences. As a social epidemiologist, her research interests focus on health inequities. Dr. Aparicio-Ting also has a program of scholarship of teaching and learning with a focus on applied educational research in health science education, curriculum development and evaluation, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary course development. Her work spans from local to global public health program development. She is currently the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Health & Science Education, Director for the Bachelor of Health Sciences Honours program, and co-Director for the Bachelor in Community Rehabilitation program.

Dr. Aparicio-Ting holds a Master of Public Health from the University of Texas Health Science Center (2001) and a PhD in Epidemiology from the University of Calgary (2010). She teaches a number of undergraduate courses in the areas of public health, epidemiology, global health and the social determinants of health.
Frances Sterzer, BA Hons in Psych ’20, minor CRDS, MSc ’24
University of Calgary Research Associate
Human Factors Psychologist
University of Calgary Ability Network (UCAN)

Frances is a researcher, entrepreneur, and advocate for accessibility based in Calgary, Alberta. With a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Minor in Community Rehabilitation & Disability Studies, she recently completed a Master of Science in Applied Psychology focusing on Human Factors Research and Design from the University of Calgary. Additionally, she holds the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certificate from Athabasca University.

Frances has conducted impactful research in transportation, particularly on predictors of driving under the influence of cannabis and the effects of substances on driving safety. She is also actively involved in emergency medical technology development, having written her master's thesis on this topic.

As an entrepreneur for over 30 years, Frances is committed to innovation and leadership. She has been one of the initial advocates behind the University of Calgary Accessibility Network, driving collective efforts towards a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

Outside of her professional pursuits, Frances enjoys a fulfilling family life, celebrating almost 32 years of marriage and raising three accomplished children, all alums of the University of Calgary.
# Student Speaker Order & Breakout Room Assignments

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Amer Karamanos</td>
<td>Zaida Crane</td>
<td>Mimi Huynh</td>
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<td>Riana Saliba</td>
<td>Dina Elkady</td>
<td>Anita Bell-Gam</td>
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<td>Madalyn Hart</td>
<td>Haley McConaghy</td>
<td>Yerin Kim</td>
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<td>Simerta Gill</td>
<td>Mhelemar Antonio</td>
<td>Amanpreet Malhi</td>
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<td>Maria Escobedo</td>
<td>Alyssa Siemens</td>
<td>Fritzilia Ghafira</td>
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<td>Vianna Aiello</td>
<td>Tanvir Parmar</td>
<td>Hannah Cruickshank</td>
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<td>Jordan Dortman</td>
<td>Shreya Jahagirdar</td>
<td>Kaury Thoreson</td>
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<td>Melissa Miller</td>
<td>Ridham Madaan</td>
<td>Meghan Loken</td>
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<td>Leticia Pritchard</td>
<td>Monica Ryan</td>
<td>Selina Sarlak</td>
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<td>Clarise Leiva</td>
<td>Taryn Karsten</td>
<td>Rheanna Ramos</td>
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<td>Skylar Richardson</td>
<td>Ayeisha Galvez</td>
<td>Sehar Sami</td>
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<td>Ellie Dang</td>
<td>Angelica Uy</td>
<td>Alexa Dever</td>
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<td>Annaliesse Stephan</td>
<td>Hailey Oh</td>
<td>Salsabeel Mohammed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanson Martens</td>
<td>Darlene McShane</td>
<td>Brooklyn Lutz</td>
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<td>Kendal Jober</td>
<td>Justine Espiritu</td>
<td>Alyssa Fitzgerald</td>
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<td>Gurleen Dulku</td>
<td>Amy Gromek</td>
<td>Meghan Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leah Godard</td>
<td>Edith Chan</td>
<td>Cailin Muhlberger</td>
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<td>Kim Lugay</td>
<td>Aaron Pineda</td>
<td>Tayleigh Dawson</td>
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<td>Jordan Bonertz</td>
<td>Chloe Livingstone</td>
<td>Arwa Smaili</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Ripley</td>
<td>Celina Faulkner</td>
<td>Shauna Giesbrecht</td>
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<td>Shivreet Sharma</td>
<td>Oranab Murtaza</td>
<td>Alison Kernick</td>
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<td>Samar Honardar</td>
<td>Kerenpreet Sandher</td>
<td>Copelan Manzer</td>
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<td>Sara Theriault</td>
<td>Madison Olson</td>
<td>Chrys Angela Salazar</td>
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<td>Harry Wijaya</td>
<td>Jillian Wallace</td>
<td>Anna Nguyen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellie Noble</td>
<td>Karissa Simpson</td>
<td>Naomi Millsop-Melancon</td>
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AIELLO, Vianna

Making Workplaces Inclusive and Safe for All Walks of Life

Milk Jar’s philosophy of creating inviting spaces includes more than just hiring minority workers, that’s only the start. Being labelled as an inclusive business means the company is actively seeking out diverse workers and workers with disabilities not for a token benefit, but because their unique experiences, viewpoints, and abilities can benefit the workplace and the company structure.

Accommodations must be made so any employee can go to work feeling safe, comfortable, valued, appreciated, and capable. Most businesses are reluctant to hire individuals with disabilities into the workplace because they believe the duty to accommodate is too much of a financial burden.

Although this is just a misconception and most accommodations can be funded by government grants, Milk Jar has alleviated the burden for over 10 businesses across North America and Europe by donating $74,374. This donation fund was created to go towards businesses that are devoted to creating inviting spaces for workers with disabilities. The occupational health and safety (OHS) of a business also must be adaptable to encompass special needs. I’ve learned that being simply “compliant” with Alberta Health and Safety requirements isn’t enough to account for the diverse needs of employees with intellectual and physical disabilities and adequately keep them safe and comfortable. Alberta’s OHS standards don’t include protocol adjustments for employees with disabilities so there’s a current gap of knowledge as to how businesses can adequately prepare for emergency situations, while still maintaining the safety of every worker.

ANTONIO, Mhelemar

Empowerment through Interaction

Empowerment begins with understanding, and understanding begins with conversation. In my practicum, I spearheaded an initiative aimed at shedding light on the diverse experiences of disability through an innovative, in-person event. Centered around the theme “Disability is Diverse”, our interactive puzzle wall invited participants to engage in meaningful dialogue, turning personal stories into powerful tools for advocacy and community education. A crucial element of my role involved leveraging social media to promote the event’s activities, facilitating direct engagement with participants and establishing connections with key organizations. Additionally, a thorough community scan unveiled significant gaps in the after-stroke support network and the availability of March of Dimes Canada (MODC) programs in Alberta. Presenting these findings to MODC leadership, I contributed to the enhancement of the National Database and the promotion of MODC’s inclusive vision. Disseminating information and facilitating the GRASP program, my work aligned with MODC’s mission to empower individuals with disabilities, showcasing the organization’s dedication to creating a society where all
person's diverse abilities are acknowledged and valued. This practicum experience reaffirmed the transformative power of conversation in building understanding and fostering an inclusive community.

BELL-GAM, Anita

Social Engagement and well-being: Exploring the impact of Adult Day Programs for seniors

This practicum has provided an in-depth exploration of the significant impact of Adult Day Programs at Kerby Center on seniors' social engagement and overall well-being, incorporating rich personal anecdotes and detailed accounts. By delving into the daily experiences of program participants, it elucidates how these programs not only offer structured activities but also serve as vital social hubs, fostering lasting friendships and a sense of community among older adults. Furthermore, the role of Adult Day Programs in addressing loneliness and isolation highlights specific examples of how these programs have positively transformed the lives of seniors by providing meaningful connections and purposeful engagement. Through a comprehensive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, this experience has made me better understand the crucial role of Adult Day Programs in promoting seniors' social integration, emotional resilience, and overall quality of life.

BONERTZ, Jordan

Bringing high school students attainable success

When I started this practicum, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had a basic idea about Calgary Quest and the kids in the Oak Room, but it took me a few weeks to really understand what was important building connections and getting to know each student.

Over the next few months, I focused on building trust and relationships with the students. I spent time with each of them, learning about their dreams, strengths, and what they needed help with. This helped me see how their time at Calgary Quest influenced their goals.

Wanting to do more, I did research and made calls to find volunteer and job opportunities for them. I got a lot of info but felt I could do better in supporting the students beyond the classroom.

Now, I'm helping each student create a resume that shows off their skills and dreams. This way, they can feel more confident about what comes next after Calgary Quest.
CHAN, Edith

Community and Connection: Friends Through Pens

As humans, we desire community and social connection to others. Especially for kids with cancer, they are at increased risk for isolation and other poor mental health outcomes. My practicum at Kids Cancer Care (KCC) has focused on addressing these barriers by creating the Friends through Pens program. Our program specifically focuses on the shared experiences that our kids may have and facilitates opportunities for them to build relationships. Our program will supplement KCC’s tutoring program, which provides one-on-one tutoring to the kids. Through their weekly tutoring, our kids will continue to develop their literacy skills while connecting to a pen pal. I have had the privilege of researching and planning the start of this new program and learning the intricate details of program development. This presentation will further discuss my practicum experience at Kids Cancer Care and all I have learned during and throughout my CRDS degree.

CRANE, Zaida

Intentional Mentorship Program: Opportunity for Success

Obtaining and maintaining employment can be challenging for many people with disabilities, including those with autism spectrum disorder—a developmental disorder. Therefore, it is important that opportunity for growth, skill development, and working experience are provided through programs to benefit and aid in employment opportunities and success. The Intentional Mentorship (IM) Program, at Autism Aspergers Friendship Society (AAFS), does just that. It provides a gateway and opportunity for members of AAFS to learn and demonstrate learnt skills in a working/volunteer experience. However, the program is only as good as it is organized, and can only last as long as financial resources allow. Therefore, the ultimate focus I had during my practicum was revising, and organizing the IM program formally. Additionally, developing documents necessary to request and obtain financial aid through funders, was also a key focus so that the IM program may continue providing such opportunities. Through the CRDS we learnt a great deal about advocacy, inclusion, and supporting people with disabilities, therefore, I will discuss further on how the IM Program incorporated all aspects; and highlight the positivity it has had on individuals with ASD, and how it will continue to have an effect with means to funding.

CRUICKSHANK, Hannah

Navigating Parental Experiences of Child Diagnosis: Insights from Pacekids

My classmate Fritz and I have been planning the 2024 Annual Aide Conference at Pacekids for our practicum project this year. In planning this event, we were also invited to conduct a research project and facilitate a presentation at the conference. Between our personal interests and applying a CRDS lens, we agreed to present on the topic of Parental Experiences of Child Diagnosis. Through our time at the Pacekids organization, we have learned about what goes into a child with a developmental diagnosis
receiving education. Early diagnosis shapes not only a child's future but also the future of a family. The intersections of how the diagnosis of a child can affect parental well-being are broad in the forms of cultural, social, and financial intersections. We wanted to explore the further impacts of early diagnosis of developmental disabilities on parental personal growth for the parents at Pacekids. Throughout this project, we aim to help parents discover shared everyday experiences and a sense of community at Pacekids while assisting the organization in better supporting families undergoing familial transformations linked to a child's diagnosis.

DANG, Ellie

Enhancing Employment Awareness and Inclusive Activities: A Program Planning Approach through the F-words lens

My practicum placement is the OSNS Child and Youth Development Center where providing early intervention and autism intervention in community. My main goal is developing OSNS programs to enhancing employment awareness and fostering inclusive activities for youth with autism and developmental delays, utilizing the F-Words lens. I worked on two programs involve Link-To-Success program and LINK@OSNS program. Both programs are intertwining to promote understanding and raise awareness of employments while providing opportunities for autistic youth and children to have meaningful social engagement and skill development. In order to modify and develop program, I have done community-based surveys and employed the F-words framework to have a holistic approach to ensure the program is accommodate, educate, empower and inclusive to children and youth with autism. I my 3-minute thesis, I will further discuss my experience in developing Link-To-Success program and LINK@OSNS program planning for Children with autism or developmental delays at OSNS Center.

DAWSON, Tayleigh

Transitioning Leadership and Supporting Student Well-Being

Throughout my practicum at a CBE school, the focus of my project was to work closely with the resource/student support teacher in preparation for her maternity leave to facilitate a seamless transition between her and the individual taking over the position. This was crucial to ensure that students continued to receive the support they required. In doing this, I created many resources for the incoming teacher, encompassing diverse student needs, streamlined IPP signature organization, and gained invaluable insight into the day-to-day operations of the role. The second half of the practicum focused on the implementation of this project. After this transition, my focus shifted to utilizing the knowledge and understanding of the role that I gained from my original supervisor to pick up any aspects of the job that the new resource teacher might not be able to do due to her part-time schedule. As I continue to implement these learnings, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the seamless support of students, making this practicum an invaluable and enriching experience.
DEVER, Alexa

Enhancing Program Navigation Services for Families of Children with Disabilities: A Person-Centered Approach

This project focuses on analyzing the practices employed by the Calgary Adapted Hub (CAH) to facilitate families' access to suitable programs for children with disabilities. Primarily targeting parents of children with disabilities, with a broader aim to benefit individuals with disabilities, the project emphasizes the importance of person-centred services. Drawing inspiration from the "Patient Navigation" model utilized in healthcare, particularly in cancer and HIV care, the project aims to ensure that families receive quality interactions and have their needs heard and addressed effectively.

Extensive research into the principles of Patient Navigation has informed the critical analysis of CAH's current guidelines and practices concerning program navigation services. By comparing and contrasting these practices, the project has developed a visual infographic highlighting differences, suggesting modifications for CAH’s approach, and demonstrating how adopting person-centred practices can enhance care provision.

The infographic serves as a tool for disseminating findings to CAH's community partners, promoting awareness and adoption of person-centred approaches in service delivery. Moving forward, the project aims to conduct interviews with service users, in collaboration with my supervisor, to gather insights into the effectiveness of CAH's Program Navigation Service and further refine its person-centred approach.

This project contributes to improving the accessibility and quality of support services for families of children with disabilities, advocating for person-centred care principles in program navigation, and fostering collaboration between service providers and community partners to better meet the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities.

DORTMAN, Jordan

Accessible Education & Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Transitional Vocational Program (TVP) at Mount Royal University (MRU) provides various post-secondary programs to adults with developmental disabilities. Students are supported through various teaching modalities to further their education and gain independence. TVP offers part-time classes and the Employment Preparation Certificate Program (EPCP), where students can obtain a certificate from an accredited university. The EPCP provides work-integrated learning, and once students have transitioned to the employment field, job support is provided to ensure successful and stable employment with numerous community partners throughout Calgary. TVP highlights the importance of accessible and inclusive education as ALL students deserve equal opportunities and meaningful participation in their community. As part of my practicum, TVP has recently focused on research, which includes the overarching themes of increased reach and communication, which involved internal interviews. Further, TVP has completed hands-on, actionable EDI change at an organizational level while establishing networks throughout the university, focusing on collaboration with the Office of Equity,
Diversity and Inclusion at MRU by participating in Inclusion Week. Our presentation, ‘Enhancing Disability Inclusivity: A TVP Perspective,’ highlights the roles TVP plays in inclusive education and supporting students with developmental disabilities to achieve academic and employment outcomes in higher education and beyond graduation.

DULKU, Gurleen

Empowerment Through Movement: AAFS Physical Literacy

Stepping Out at Autism Asperger’s Friendship Society (AAFS) provides a transformative recreational experience uniquely designed for individuals on the Autism Spectrum, emphasizing fitness as a means of empowerment, social connection, and personal growth. The progress I made in spearheading the development of the AAFS physical literacy program entails detailed planning and structure to ensure alignment with the organization’s objectives and member needs. The journey involves crafting a comprehensive program structure and schedule while utilizing the Move Improve app for data collection and analysis among members participating in the Stepping Out programs. This process has enabled the identification of key concerns related to physical literacy, facilitating the creation of tailored workout regimens to meet the diverse needs of AAFS members. Looking ahead, the focus shifts towards the successful completion and integration of the physical literacy program within AAFS’s initiatives. Key goals include finalizing program components, identifying member goals, evaluating member progress, and fostering a supportive environment for program implementation. As part of my practicum, I was able to shift from the evolution from technology-centric solutions to prioritizing physical engagement aligned with literature emphasizing improved physical literacy for individuals with autism. Guided by experiential learning theory and reflective practice models, my project integrates data findings with existing literature to inform program development effectively. Insights from the data collection were able to provide value and knowledge as I developed the program itself. Scholarly reviews and practical resources contribute to a holistic exploration of physical literacy and inclusion, underscoring the commitment to promoting well-being through adapted strategies.

ELKADY, Dina

The Community Resource Booklet; Comprehensive Resources to Empower Families Towards Independence

Heartland Agency is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing care and education for young children with behavioral needs, offering support through preschool and kindergarten programs. Upon commencing practicum in September, an assignment was initiated to revamp an existing resource binder utilized by staff when working with families. Throughout this assignment, a significant need for ongoing family support post-graduation and for relieving staff stress became apparent. Staff members were interviewed, offering valuable feedback that shed light on the stresses families were facing. Collaborating with another CRDS student, the Community Resource Booklet was created. The feedback given by staff guided the initial research and provided direction in the early stages of project development. A holistic approach was adopted in creating the booklet, recognizing that families require...
support beyond just the child. The following presentation will elaborate on the execution and completion of the Community Resource Booklet.

ESCOBEDO, Maria

Mental Heath in the Media - Let’s break it down!

Have you ever thought about what is being said in the media in regard to mental health? A content analysis can give some understanding into this question and discuss how mental health is portrayed in the media. As a practicum student on the Radical Mental Health Doula (RMHD) Research project, a content analysis has been one of the many projects we’ve been given to complete throughout the semester. Overall, this content analysis has helped identify some of the gaps in how current understandings of mental health perpetuate stigma. The RMHD research team may help overcome some of the issues presented in the media regarding the mental health of individuals in the future.

ESPIRITU, Justine

Peer-mentoring as reciprocal learning

My practicum placement explored the impact of peer mentorships through having myself and two other 4th year students peer mentor the first year CORE 209 and 207 classes. While the intention was for us peer mentors to act as a bridge of communication between students and instructors, I’ve noticed a pattern of reciprocal learning in my interactions with students. Answering questions about class content encouraged me to review on how much knowledge I’ve retained while concerns about grades and feedback encouraged me to utilize the communication skills I’ve learned back in CORE 321. Through my position as a mentor I’m not just helping with understanding class content, I’m also learning leadership skills, planning skills, conflict management skills, and group facilitation skills with the class I’m overseeing for my practicum. Peer mentorships differ from formal instruction not only because I’m closer in age and experience with the students I’m mentoring, but also because I’m learning just as much from them as they are from me. It’s a co-operative learning experience rather than the typical one sided learning seen in instructor-student dynamics.

FAULKNER, Celina

The Hidden Profession of Vocational Rehabilitation

I learnt about and advocated for vocational rehabilitation (VR) professionals and students through my practicum with the Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada (VRAC). VRAC supports vocational rehabilitation professionals and students across the country. VR professionals aid individuals with functional, psychological, developmental, cognitive, and emotional disabilities or impairments find or return to meaningful jobs. This career is interesting to me as I work as Rehabilitation Assistant in an
acute care hospital and so I never get to see how people carry on with their lives after their recovery stay, which VR professionals have a leading hand in doing. However, VR is a hidden profession that is not very well known to the general public. The absence of people knowing this profession exists is hindering the support given to individuals using these services. Students engaging with VRAC can help with this. VRAC offers free student memberships with a multitude of incentives to try to onboard early professionals. A fellow student and my project co-pilot, Oranab Murtaza, explains our initiative to promote the vocational rehabilitation profession in her abstract.

FITZGERALD, Alyssa

A Parent’s Lens: Shifting From Tragedy to Capability

The beginning of a child’s life is a stressful time for any parent. This stress is exacerbated when things do not go as planned, such as when their child receives a disability diagnosis. While navigating through the system to find information, resources, and future expectations, ideals of grief and catastrophe are often pushed upon parents as they hear nothing but the things their child will supposedly be unable to do or need support to accomplish. As a result, many parents develop a mindset of tragedy. Centre Street Church is working to rewrite this experience for families, equipping them with the much more-fitting lens of capability to view their child through. Using this as a project focus, this practicum at Centre Street Church produced inclusive volunteer opportunities, a parent-led resource sharing forum, and a strength-based family conference to provide tangible evidence of the bright and exciting future that parents should expect their children to have. Through these programs, lenses are shifting from tragedy to capability as families begin to fully understand that their children can, and will, create their own lives, hobbies, friends, and accomplishments, just like every other child.

GALVEZ, Ayeisha

Peer Mentoring: Building Connections, Bridging Gaps, and Fostering Future Independence Among First-Year Students

During my practicum with the CORE 209 and 207 classes, I overcame my initial doubts and skepticism about peer mentorship. Through firsthand experience, I witnessed the genuine effectiveness and immense potential of peer mentoring in bridging the gap between students and instructors, while simultaneously fostering meaningful connections and encouraging students to develop the independence necessary for the personal and academic growth. Alongside two other senior students, I assumed the role of a peer mentor. Often, a noticeable disconnect exists between instructors and students due to differing experiences, with instructors’ first-year experiences diverging significantly from those of current students. Students may feel apprehensive about posing questions to instructors, fearing how their inquiries might reflect upon them. However, as a peer mentor, I occupy an intermediary position; we recall the challenges of being first-year students while possessing the ability to offer the support we wished we had upon entering the CRDS program. My aim as peer mentor was to cultivate an atmosphere wherein students felt at ease reaching out to us for clarification or guidance without apprehension. Through mentoring, I observed an increase in students’ comfort and confidence levels.
when seeking clarification, advice, or simply initiating contact. Moreover, my mentorship experiences illuminated the depth of knowledge I had acquired throughout my disability studies. Notably, assuming a mentorship role honed my capacity to communicate complex concepts in a more accessible manner. While the primary objective of peer mentoring is to provide support to CRDS students, the dynamic of learning proved to be reciprocal, differing from the typical instructor-student interactions.

GHAFIRA, Fritzilia

Inclusive Early Childhood Education: Aides’ Training and Contribution

Aides make up the largest group in inclusive early childhood education, yet often underrepresented in the work field. Many aide positions require no qualification or post-secondary education, making them entry-level positions. Despite their crucial role, aides face significant stress and demands, especially when they lack proper training and support system. During my practicum at Pacekids, I understood the importance of training in supporting children with disabilities. I observed the efforts aides put into providing meaningful learning experiences for preschoolers with disabilities. Not only do they directly assist students, but they also support teachers, making them essential in the classroom. To address the need for training and support, my classmate Hannah Cruickshank and I are planning an aides’ conference at Pacekids. This conference provides an opportunity for aides to receive necessary training, share best practices, and develop a supportive system. We conducted a short survey to collect topics of aides’ interests tailoring their learning needs. We collaborated with therapy and administrative teams to assign sessions led by experts in their respective fields. We developed a communications strategy to build up hype and send out necessary invitation links to the attendees. We anticipate the conference on April 19th.

GIESBRECHT, Shauna

Creating a Framework for Organizational Development: Manuals, Handbooks and Funding

Operational manuals are a fundamental component of a healthy and efficient organization. During my practicum at the Red Deer Dream Centre, I focused on creating standardized manuals for new employees, case support workers, and clients. I also contributed to grant proposals and composed letters to secure foundation funding for the Centre, which operates as a non-profit organization. By establishing standardized processes and expectations, the Centre aims to improve the quality of service provided to men engaging in recovery. This, in turn, will enhance the support the men receive, promote their well-being, and foster a sense of shared identity that facilitates community engagement.
GILL, Simerta

Comparing Alternative Mental Health Supports: Birth Doula, Peer Support, and Companions

The current ecosystem of complementary mental health support is nuanced and complicated. To better understand these alternative supports, my peers and I assisted the Radical Mental Health Doula Research Team by creating an annotated bibliography to compare mental health services offered by birth doulas, peer supports, and companions. We identified what each of them does, who they assist, and the model and context in which they provide care. A significant finding of this research is that peer support workers provide recovery-focused care as part of clinical teams, while birth doulas and companions focus on advocacy and comfort. Our annotated bibliography allows a deeper understanding of the diversity across non-specialist mental health supports. By gathering and analyzing existing literature, our annotated bibliography propelled the research project forward and aided Dr. Fang in writing a literature review further outlining the need for Radical Mental Health Doulas.

GODARD, Leah

The Growth of Canada’s Largest Canadian Adaptive Snowsports (CADS) Location

Canadian Adaptive Snowsports (CADS) is a volunteer based nonprofit organization aiming to make snowsports, like skiing and snowboarding accessible and available to everyone. CADS Calgary is the largest CADS location in Canada with 150-200 participants and 300 volunteers each season. Therefore, CADS Calgary aims to support the growth of the organization post Covid-19 pandemic to ensure all potential participants have an opportunity to take part in snowsports. Continuing to grow and support CADS growth was the primary objective of my work at CADS Calgary.

Through my time with CADS, I’ve taken up the position of a program coordinator, alongside other practicum student Kim Lugay and an engagement coordinator position. This was my first year working with CADS, so I needed to become comfortable and knowledgeable with the values, goals, and areas of growth of CADS Calgary. Through my work as the program coordinator, I worked to analyze and implement different strategies and activities, ensuring each activity is accessible and engaging to everyone. This position took place Thursday and Sunday evenings ensuring the volunteers and participants have the support they need in training and lessons. My engagement coordinator position was mainly online as I worked to grow CADS Calgary through social media, promote CADS to other organizations and recruit new volunteers/participants to support the fast growth of CADS Calgary for seasons to come. Having both positions was useful as I was able to fully grasp the guidelines and goals of CADS Calgary as I was working with both the administration and the ski school side of CADS.
**GROMEK, Amy**

**Roots to Results: Paving the way to a Network of Sustainable Adapted Sports**

My time with Lacrossing Barriers allowed me to immerse myself in various environments such as physical activity, community service, and program planning. Throughout my practicum, I observed how Lacrossing Barriers has encouraged and enabled marginalized communities to successfully build strong relationships as well as learn essential life skills. I believe that the success of the athletes was made possible through the constant support and nurturing optimism that the coaches and organizers had in their athletes. The central goal of my project was to promote inclusivity while continuing to teach others what I loved most: gymnastics. When I met Scott, we instantly bonded over adaptive sport-based programs and providing exciting opportunities for inclusion, available to everyone, regardless of abilities or support needs. We set a new goal of creating Calgary’s first artistic gymnastics competitive program for differently-abled people. After months of hard work, I am proud to announce that our new program will launch this September. This final project is a celebration of how hands-on learning can change us and how we can make a positive impact in our fields. I hope this inspires others to dive into their career goals, no matter how daunting it may be, knowing it’s where we truly grow and succeed.

**HART, Madalyn**

**Moving a Community-Based Research Project Forward**

The Radical Mental Health Doula (RMHD) project takes an innovative approach to mental health care by translating the doula model of care into a mental health context. This community-based research project has engaged co-researchers with lived experiences of mental health at every step. My peers and I have been lucky enough to see this firsthand as practicum students on the research team. Since September, we have been involved in tasks to help aid the growth of the RMHD project. Through interview transcription, my peers and I familiarized ourselves with the Radical Mental Health Doula pillars of comfort, support, educate, and advocate, and have been able to see the immense real-life value in this project. Additionally, we have contributed time to researching faith-based mental health supports and have helped update the RMHD workbook which will be used during the doula training in May. Overall, all our tasks have been completed with the goal of moving this groundbreaking project forward in preparation of the second pilot project.

**HONARDAR, Samar**

**The experiences of nurses in providing sexual health care to patients with disabilities**

This project aimed to address the need to improve the sexual health care and education that is provided to patients with disabilities, with a particular focus on the role that nurses play in delivering these services. The study delves into the experiences of nurses in providing sexual health care to patients with disabilities, and also aims to identify areas in which we can improve at both the institutional and educational levels. The research incorporated qualitative interviews to gain further insight into the
experiences, challenges, and perception of medical personnel, related to providing sexual health care for individuals with disabilities. Ultimately, the research contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding sexual health care for individuals with disabilities, offering practical insights and recommendations for enhancing nursing practice, education, and institutional policies to better the care provided to this population.

HUYNH, Mimi

Empowering Artistic Expression and Communication

“Empowerment, expression, and meaningful communication” is how I would describe my practicum experience at The National accessArts Centre (NaAC). During my placement at the NaAC, my focus evolved from addressing communication barriers to crafting resources for streamlined goal planning. Delving into the intricacies of artist goal planning, I discovered the profound impact these documents have on funding models and support structures, emphasizing the importance of best practices within the studio environment. Moreover, my journey at the NaAC has catalyzed personal growth, fostered leadership skills, and nurtured a deeper understanding of allyship and empowerment within the disability community. Through peer-to-peer relationships, I have embraced a strength-based lens approach, transcending labels to connect with artists as whole individuals, each with unique experiences and stories. As I reflect on my experiences at NaAC, I am reminded of the power of authentic connections and the value of fostering an inclusive environment where every individual is celebrated for their creative endeavors.

JAHAGIRDAR, Shreya

Critical Evaluation of Training in Recreation and in a Supportive Role

During my year at Vecova, I was in the Aquatics, Health, Fitness (Recreation) and Wayfinder (support staff) departments. Initially my objective was to update and make changes to the training received for future volunteers and practicum students via a manual in Recreation. This was conducted by creating feedback surveys and collecting responses from consumers and support staff. However, due to shift in project direction, the manual was not completed. In my second half at Wayfinder, I reviewed, critiqued and offered suggestions for improvement to the existing manual. One of the important aspects was providing multi-media options for communications to aid in consumer interactions and expressions. I also used my survey skills from previous term to create an additional feedback survey and dive deep into staff supporting their consumers while using a current manual. Using multi-media, I learned more about a consumer enjoying specific activities, location preferences, reason for likes and dislikes and finally introducing them to a new activity they have not participated in. The first term helped me in asking important questions while creating surveys. These skills made the transition for the remainder of my time at Vecova smooth and allowed me to ask questions by interacting with the consumer. Critically evaluating and filling the gaps in the manual, helped in improving the training for future practicum/volunteers to make change intentionally through an intersectional framework. My work also
JOBER, Kendal

Enhancing Inclusivity in Student Transportation: Integrating Indigenous Perspectives for Bus Drivers

During my practicum project at 4Seasons Transportation, I was tasked with enhancing diversity, fostering inclusion, and ensuring safety within the school bus environment. To achieve this, I grounded my work in the foundational principles outlined in the 94 Calls to Action, intending to catalyze tangible organizational transformations. Central to the initiative was a dedicated effort to create an inclusive environment tailored to the needs of children with disabilities and behaviours. By equipping school bus drivers with actionable strategies rooted in principles of inclusivity and diversity, I aimed to cultivate a nurturing and supportive atmosphere on school buses, benefiting all passengers. In addition to my primary project focus, I participated in diverse methodologies, such as immersive experiences such as monthly celebrations and ride-alongs. These engagements provided firsthand insights into the unique experiences of 4Seasons Transportation employees and the challenges faced by children with disabilities in transit settings. Observations of supervisor interventions during challenging situations underscored the pivotal role of empathy and compassion in fostering a supportive environment for drivers and passengers. Leveraging my background in disability studies, I approached challenges from alternative perspectives, including careful consideration of language use when discussing and addressing disability-related issues. Furthermore, integrating principles from the 94 Calls to Action provided a robust framework for guiding my efforts toward meaningful organizational change, emphasizing reconciliation and equity within the transportation sector. This project initiative was both dynamic and impactful, inviting attendees to delve into the intersectionality of diversity, inclusion, and safety within the realm of school transportation.

KARAMANOS, Amer

Canvas Chronicles: Art for Wellness Program

I started my practicum at Bow View Manor Adult Day Program (ADP) where I was tasked to introduce an adapted art program to reignite engagement and reintroduce art as a vital therapeutic outlet. During the first semester I had the opportunity to participate in the OMA (opening minds through art) program where I was able to see how empowering art was with a variety of different dementia clients with varying abilities. This is where it was decided that the wellness group at ADP needed an art program that was specific to their cognitive abilities and interests. I then spent the next semester researching and trialing many different art projects which were of all artistic calibers. I have since facilitated nine art projects all which were challenging and inspiring in their own way. I have learnt throughout each of these projects that the wellness art program needed structure, like an example of the art project to follow along with in order to get the best success. Throughout this project I was able to have relatively the same clients each session to ensure I was getting appropriate feedback. Each session ended with a survey in regard to their thoughts on the project along with how it made them feel emotionally. Almost
all the clients in each session had an improved mood from how they felt before the art project to afterwards. I will be leaving behind an art portfolio for Bow View ADP, which will serve as a foundation for ongoing art projects.

KARSTEN, Taryn

**Developing Accessible Assessments of Learning for Students with Autism**

Stamina, self-discipline, patience, and a passion for people with disabilities are all traits that I have strengthened and embraced in implementing this project. In my practicum I have had the opportunity to compose assessments from the Alberta Education Program of Studies. These measurable targets help guide the Certified Teachers in their teaching to students and reporting to parents on student growth. My second main project work involved changing out old curriculum materials to align and reflect the new curriculum objectives. Janus Academy strives to limit barriers in learning, participating and accessing opportunities in society. I have witnessed the passion and love each staff member has for the students as they work collectively to reach each student's individual goals, abilities, and learning targets. Each child has an equal opportunity to feel included and empowered to do their best in an adapted learning environment. The CRDS program aligns with Janus Academy through the following principles that we have learned: social model of disability, person-centred approach and rights-based approach.

KERNICK, Alison

**Advocacy Work in the Community**

In my year-long 2023-2024 practicum experience, I was placed into two placements: the Cerebral Palsy Alberta Association and the Health Equity Hub at the University of Calgary. Reflecting on these experiences, three key takeaways emerged.

Firstly, I learned that progress in advocacy work demands patience and perseverance. Through involvement in policy development and research projects, I encountered the slow-moving nature of policy change and the intricate challenges it entails. Despite setbacks, this experience provided a nuanced understanding of advocacy's realities and the importance of community partnerships. Secondly, effective communication emerged as a cornerstone of successful collaboration. Transitioning from university to professional settings showed me the significance of clear communication in navigating organizational expectations and facilitating impactful work. This realization extended to policy advocacy, emphasizing the need for alignment across diverse stakeholders. Lastly, I have realized the importance of advocating for others and advocating for oneself within professional settings. Balancing the considerations of various stakeholders and workplace peers while maintaining personal integrity was a central challenge this year. Navigating this balance will be crucial in my future career pursuits within policy and law.
My practicum experience has equipped me with invaluable insights into advocacy work, emphasizing the importance of patience, communication, and self-advocacy. These learnings will undoubtedly shape my future endeavors and enhance my ability to effect positive change in marginalized communities.

KIM, Yerin

Meaningful Guidance to Provide Opportunities and Support for Stepping into a New Occupation

Finishing my last practicum at Vocational Rehabilitation Services at Lifemark was the most meaningful experience I had throughout my school year. Seeing the potential of individuals who got injured or disabled at work to discover new abilities and watching the roles of Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists to assist them with providing opportunities to start a new chapter of their lives after the incident by being able to explore new careers to match their potentials were the most meaningful experiences that I was able to perceive at this practicum site. Not only by matching the occupations but by being able to make clients learn skills such as interview, resume writing, computer skills, and how to dress in proper attire for different situations, teaching independent skills that clients can utilize when specialists are no longer able to support were meaningful to watch. From this practicum, I was able to see my career in Vocational Rehabilitation because experiences that I have perceived have motivated me to become the one who can assist and guide individuals with discovering new characteristics and potentials and bring them new opportunities together to bring them back to the community.

LEIVA, Clarise

Fostering Education Accessibility Through Adaptability

Janus Academy is a school in Calgary that offers specialized education services for students with autism grades 1 through 12. My senior practicum involved creating teaching material for their “Independent Life Skills” curriculum. I was tasked with creating material for a variety of units that aimed to teach students functional life skills in adapted ways as needed. This experience has taught me to be intentional with how educational material needs to be adaptive and accessible for students with diverse learning needs. The different ways of presenting stimuli is important to help the learners be successful based on their needs (ie. visual, auditory, hands-on, or verbal prompts). I was pushed to be creative when designing activities that could be modified to be either more challenging or easier. My experience at Janus inspired me to pursue my Education degree in the fall, and become an inclusive/special education teacher! I will be taking what I have learned from this practicum to inform my future practice with the students that I will work with.
LIVINGSTONE, Chloe

Multifaceted Exercise Programing for Older Adults with Alzheimer’s

I completed my senior practicum at the Alzheimer’s Society Club 36 in Seton. My project idea stemmed from my background in sports and my job as a physiotherapy assistant. I am passionate about inclusive practices of exercise and movement, and through my practicum I have emphasized critical thinking as a tool to ensure that exercises can be accomplished with using adaptive methods. This creates an inclusive space regarding exercise, and it allows individuals to continue being physically and cognitively challenged in fitness regardless of mobility or cognitive decline. I created a program titled “Bands and Balance”, focusing on resistance exercises using Therabands and balance work. The use of resistance bands adds a physical challenge to the fitness program and a cognitive aspect. Having to set up each exercise with the bands takes mental stimulation and is followed by resistance training which is sufficient at targeting certain muscle groups while being low impact on joints. The use of resistance bands ensures that during exercise, the members will need to engage their core, which in turn, improves their balance. When creating my program, I made sure to consider adaptability as I ensured each exercise was adaptable to individuals in wheelchairs, with single side paralysis, and anything other adaptation that was needed. The lessons I have learned throughout this project and the connections I have made with each one of the members I have had the pleasure of working with will leave a lasting mark on me as an individual and how I approach my professional practice.

LOKEN, Meghan

Lives Worth Living Part 1: Damaging Narratives

For my practicum, I was given the opportunity to partake in research, and throughout this a significant focus was placed on understanding and addressing the harmful impact of damaging narratives on the perception and treatment of Canadians with disabilities. “Lives Worth Living” is a research project that aims to move away from deficit-based narratives to embracing the positive experiences of individuals with disabilities. These narratives, deeply embedded in societal attitudes and media representation, often paint individuals with disabilities in a light of deficiency and struggle, overshadowing their capabilities and contributions. By critically examining these damaging narratives, inspired by Eve Tuck’s work, we aimed to challenge and reshape these misunderstandings and advocate for a narrative that recognizes the inherent value and rich experiences of people with disabilities. Through this practicum and the research that has been conducted I have learned how to systematically investigate and study materials and sources to establish facts and reach new conclusions. Through my initial involvement in this study, I discovered the significant role of arts-based research in challenging and transforming damaging narratives, and I am eager to see how these methodologies that we have created can deepen our insights in this aspect of society.
LUGAY, Kim

Inclusive On The Slopes: Optimizing Accessibility Through Universal Design

CADS Calgary plays a crucial role in providing adaptive ski and snowboard lessons to individuals with disabilities, allowing them to experience the thrill of skiing down the slopes in a safe and supportive environment. However, during COVID restrictions, CADS Calgary has had to adapt its programs to ensure the safety of both participants and volunteers. With this came the realization that previous guidelines, procedures, and instructions needed to be updated and adjusted to meet the new challenges presented by the pandemic to the post-COVID world. As CADS Calgary is in its rebuilding phase, there are increased opportunities to implement new strategies and initiatives to enhance the organization's overall accessibility and inclusivity. My project as a program coordinator is to utilize principles of universal design and create new guidelines for current and future ski programs; this will help ensure that CADS Calgary's content material and resources are accessible to a broader audience, leading to a more enriching and innovative environment for everyone. This project will help improve current and future ski programs, guidelines, and procedures at CADS Calgary and ensure that they are designed to meet the needs of a diverse population.

LUTZ, Brooklyn

Connect, Learn, & Thrive: Elevating Senior Joy

As the population of seniors grows, so does the importance of addressing their holistic well-being. Seniors and older adults often face isolation and vulnerability especially since the pandemic, which can exacerbate various health issues and reduce their overall quality of life. Recognizing these challenges, virtual programs such as Rec@Home offer a promising solution to bridge the gap and enhance seniors' well-being. By leveraging technology, these programs provide accessible platforms for seniors to engage in cognitive exercises, physical activities, social interactions, and emotional support. Through a combination of interactive sessions, educational resources, and community engagement, virtual programs cater to the diverse needs of seniors, promoting active aging and fostering a sense of connectedness.

MADAAN, Ridham

Redefining Progress: Tailored Assessment Methods for Inclusive Growth in Community Programs

Traditional assessment tools often overlook the unique needs of people with intellectual disabilities (PWID) and mental health challenges. Being ignored in assessments disservice PWID as it limits proper feedback, reducing their chances of obtaining the same standard of evidence-based care that non-disabled people do. This project focuses on developing an inclusive assessment practice that better captures the personal growth of PWID enrolled in the Friends and Dating Program (FDP) at Calgary Alternative Support Services (CASS).
The FDP program serves to educate PWD about aspects of interpersonal relationships to empower them as autonomous sexual beings and prevent abuse. Demonstrating progress due to this program measurably will help secure future funding.

The phases for this project included the following: experiential-based learning, research, collaborative review, creation and implementation. This project adopted a bottom-up strategy grounded in community development principles to ensure relevance and inclusivity. Experiential steps included learning the groundwork of observing and participating in facilitating workshops. The research phase includes conducting a literature review, consulting experts in the field, and critically analyzing the patterns of the original testing method. Initial tests used quantitative questions and indicated promising trends, including heightened emotional self-awareness and improved sexual health knowledge among participants. Still, most questions revealed little information about the participant's growth. In the collaborative review phase, aspects of the evaluation methods are discussed with CASS co-facilitators and staff. This review process informed the new assessment of narrative inquiry and thematic analysis alongside quantitative assessments for the Winter FDP assessment.

MALHI, Amanpreet

Creating Inclusive Sexual Health Resources for Neurodiverse 2SLGBTQIA+ Individuals

At Autism Aspergers Friendship Society (AAFS), their PRISM program provides a space for 2SLGBTQIA+ members to connect every week to venture out into the community and enjoy activities, socialize, and build genuine friendships. My project aims to create accessible and inclusive sexual health materials for neurodiverse 2SLGBTQIA+ members and to make space for discussing desired topics. The current barriers and gaps to educating individuals, especially the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, about sexual health are evident, and the overlapping intersections of neurodiversity can make it more difficult for materials and discussions around sexual health to be equitable, inclusive, and accessible. This presentation intends to discuss my experience and points of learning while developing sexual health discussions.

MANZER, Copelan

Change makers and advocates: Working with Cerebral Palsy Alberta

To be changemakers and advocates, we must ask ourselves, “is what we’re doing the best practice?” As leaders in the disability sector, it is imperative that we continuously question our practices and uphold our end of social responsibility. Throughout our degree, we are equipped various theories and taught to critically analyze our approaches. From the start, we are placed in practicums where we get to put theory into practice.

For my final practicum, I was fortunate to get the opportunity to work with Cerebral Palsy Alberta. Throughout my time with the organization, I had the privilege of working with the Alberta Ability Network, collaborating with various stakeholders on poverty reduction, human rights, and accessible
transportation. I was also able to work on internal policies, highlighting various accessibility policies to incorporate into the organization.

What resonates with me the most after leaving this practicum is the importance of social responsibility. Being leaders in the social sector highlights the importance and necessity of constant self-reflection and commitment to improving our practices. Cerebral Palsy Alberta exemplified this ethos through continuously implementing inclusive practices. Nevertheless, upholding positive practices does not end our social responsibility, but rather should continue the questioning of policies and practices.

MARTENS, Hanson

Accessibility in Mountain Sport and Recreation

The Rocky Mountains are home to some of the most incredible outdoor experiences that Canada has to offer, which also happen to be some of the most exclusive; contingent on specialized equipment, high costs, and seemingly compulsory able-bodiedness. Rocky Mountain Adaptive challenges this traditional understanding of access to mountain sport and recreation, and breaks down the barriers that people with disabilities face through providing adaptive equipment, instruction, funding and opportunities to participate.

Throughout the past academic year, I have had the privilege of working closely with Rocky Mountain Adaptive in bringing these goals to fruition, through participation in design, support and delivery of programs. To truly understand how Rocky Mountain Adaptive functions to address the needs of people with disabilities, I was able to take on two distinct, yet highly correlated practicum projects; one focussing on volunteer module assessment and reconstruction, and a project management role in planning ShredAbility, an annual alpine scavenger hunt and fundraising event. Volunteers are the lifeblood of non-profit organizations, and Rocky Mountain Adaptive is no exception. My project aimed to restructure existing volunteer training modules in a way that would streamline the onboarding process, and access the untapped resource of volunteers living with disabilities through universal and participatory design. My role in planning ShredAbility involved a team-based approach to non-profit event planning and coordination. Through direct collaboration with various team members, I created a workplan and critical path to facilitate weekly meetings, and eventually the upcoming event itself.

MCCONAGHY, Haley

The Community Resource Booklet; Comprehensive Resources to Empower Families Towards Independence

The Community Resource Booklet was developed to address the needs of staff and families at Heartland Agency. It serves two primary objectives: easing stress for staff and teachers, and fostering the increasing independence of families during and after their participation in the program. Families, accustomed to the support provided by Heartland, began to feel the mounting pressures of daily life when their child’s graduation was approaching. Following initial research, we reached out to various
organizations to ensure the accuracy of the information presented to families. Continuous collaboration between students and staff helped alleviate project-related pressures. The booklet is available in PDF format, with a physical copy provided to the agency and the potential for printed copies to be distributed to families in the future. Recognizing the importance of embracing a holistic approach to child development, this booklet aims to offer support and guidance in promoting family independence.

MCSHANE, Darlene

Universal Design for Early Intervention: Transforming Classroom Regulation in Neurodiverse Settings

This presentation briefly overviews my practicum experience, focusing on integrating Universal Design principles to shape classroom regulation in early intervention programs for neurodiverse populations. Universal Design, known for its inclusive approach, offers transformative opportunities to create supportive learning environments conducive to regulatory success.

Through hands-on learning and practical insights gained during my practicum placement, I illustrate the application of Universal Design principles in early intervention settings. Emphasizing the importance of regulation, I demonstrate how environmental modifications, such as lighting, space, and noise reduction, can increase engagement and foster a positive climate for neurodiverse learners.

In an environment where the current trend focuses on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), I urge early intervention specialists to step back and examine the larger environment. By leveraging Universal Design principles, my practicum experience underscores the potential for creating equitable and empowering learning spaces where all students, regardless of neurodiversity, can thrive.

In just three minutes, this presentation encapsulates the essence of my practicum journey, emphasizing the transformative impact of Universal Design on classroom regulation within early intervention programs for neurodiverse populations.

MILLER, Melissa

Disability, Sexuality and Pleasure

Individuals with disabilities will tell you they have had sex, seek sex, or would be interested in having sex, and yet discourse and education exclude one of the most important reasons people have sex: pleasure and desire. For decades, researchers and academics have proven that disabled people are sexually active and desire the opportunity to develop a sexual voice, but service and program providers have yet to integrate that research into sex positive curriculum or policy. Through my practicum with the Disability & Sexuality Lab, my fellow research assistants and I have been able to promote social change by conducting research and developing resources to help address the lack of realistic, sex positive material available. Through this practicum I have been involved in writing two research papers, developing a visual sexual pleasure resource, and I am currently co-authoring a book chapter on the intersection of queerness and disability. To deny persons with disabilities sexual agency and the ability
to seek out and enjoy sexual pleasure is exclusionary and undermines the equal rights of individuals with
disabilities. We cannot purport to support autonomy and rights based approaches if we fail to recognize
and respect the sexual agency and sexual rights of the disabled population.

MILLSOP-MELANCON, Naomi

Transitioning into Employment

Calgary is a large city with several opportunities for employment, but what opportunities are available
for community members with disabilities? As well as, what accommodations are required, and what
barriers need to be addressed when people with disabilities seek out employment or volunteer
opportunities. During my placement with Embrace. A community project, my focus has been on
understanding what Embrace members aspirations for their futures were and what barriers they are
nervous of encountering. It has also included engaging in meaningful conversations with organizations in
Calgary regarding their willingness to employ community members with disabilities. These conversations
aided in gathering information surrounding current policies that are implemented, accommodations
needed, potential certificates required, and barriers that Embrace members may need to prepare for
when seeking employment or volunteer work. In further understanding what organizations are looking
for, I am able to have open conversations with them to discuss what they may expect when employing
members with disabilities and the benefits. Furthermore, we can develop and implement programs
within Embrace that may support members to prepare for the obstacles they may encounter when
seeking out opportunities in Calgary.

MOHAMMED, Salsabeel

The impact of language on the quality of feedback

The Calgary Seniors Resource Society conducts an annual client survey via phone with clients enrolled in
its programs. These surveys play a crucial role within the organization, not only gauging client
satisfaction but also serving pivotal functions. Information gleaned from these surveys aids in generating
reports essential for grant applications, funding, and fundraising efforts. Moreover, they enable the
identification of emerging trends in seniors' needs, potentially necessitating the expansion of resources
and services. Through these surveys, areas requiring program improvements are pinpointed, and
potential new programs are identified for piloting.

The language utilized in survey questions significantly influences the type and quality of feedback
received from clients. However, despite efforts to optimize language use, several limitations impact
feedback quality. These include language barriers, technological constraints, and sensory impairments
such as visual or hearing impairments, dementia, and capacity limitations. Throughout my placement at
Calgary Seniors Resource society, I critically observed the impact that language used in survey questions
could have on the quality of feedback received.
MUHLBERGER, Cailin

Platform Development and Resource Expansion to Northern Alberta

My project at Children’s Link Society has had a main focus on helping with the development of the new resource database/platform that the organization is planning to launch this spring! This new platform is going to be a one-stop shop for families where they can easily access all of the information they need regarding the various supports they are seeking. Along with the development of this site, Children’s Link also wanted to expand its resource base to other populations and geographical locations in Alberta, especially Northern Alberta (Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie). The goal of this project is to increase access to resources and information about services and organizations for families living in the Northern Alberta region. This resource will aid as a beneficial tool for these families seeking support for their child or family members with diverse needs. I have created an Excel sheet where I collect applicable information about organizations such as age ranges, organization descriptions, funding options, and the different diagnoses they serve. From there, if any critical information is missing I have connected with the organization either via email or phone to ask specific questions about their services. This benefits Children’s Link as it has gotten the word out about Children’s Link and the services that it offers for families seeking support options.

MURTAZA, Oranab

Curating a Student Ambassador Program with the Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada

My practicum experience with the Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada VRAC has given me much insight into the world of work, especially the world of work that pertains to those individuals with disabilities. My practicum project, that I have co-piloted with Celina, has granted me the opportunity to learn more about Vocational Rehabilitation, and in turn given me the platform to encourage others to learn about it as well. Our Student Ambassador Project strived to educate various students of various educational backgrounds on some of the social aspects of rehabilitation, and what services Vocational Rehabilitation professionals essentially provide. Inspiring other students to join this curated program, and become Student Ambassadors of knowledge, on behalf of VRAC, was a central goal of this project. In this presentation, I will discuss my project’s target outcomes, establishment process and challenges, as well as the impact my overall practicum experience has had on my qualms for the future.

NGUYEN, Anna

Creating Your Own Space: Autistic Adults Living Independently

Autistic individuals with low to medium support needs are typically placed into “normal” streams of independent living, like their non-Autistic peers. But, due to some of the characteristics of Autism, this makes it difficult for Autistic adults to live independently. Autistic adults with low to medium supports don’t qualify for provincial funding and don’t have a co-occurring intellectual or cognitive disability. Therefore, eliminating them from group homes, or residential program settings. With that being said,
Autistics that want to live independently have difficulty finding a suitable living space that will accommodate their sensory challenges. Many homes are not built with the intent of it being universally designed; therefore, many homes contain upsetting sensory challenges for Autistic people. In a home, many of the barriers that Autistic people face is sound, visual, smell, and texture sensory challenges. Sensory challenges present as hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity. For example, for with hearing sensitivities, there could be a distant noise in the background (construction noise), and for non-Autistics they would view the noise relatively quiet. Through these issues, prompted the need for the guide on how Autistics can alter their environment to that it will not overload or under stimulate their sensory stimuli.

NOBLE, Ellie

Client Annual Survey: The Impact and Importance of Social and Practical Supports for the Senior Population

Through my education and life experiences, I have noticed that seniors are typically an underrecognized and unvalued group of people. Luckily, I’ve had the opportunity to learn with an organization that values and appreciates seniors. The Calgary Seniors Resource Society has built its non-profit around the need to create meaningful change and support seniors while they face age-related challenges. During my time at Calgary Seniors’, I’ve had the pleasure to work within the Seniors Social Supports Department. This department is comprised of Social Connections, Practical Supports, and Volunteer Engagement. The bulk of my projects have been done within the Social Connections and Practical Supports team. The Social Connections programs use a one-on-one match model with a volunteer to provide the senior with social connections. These programs consist of Friendly Check-In, Friendly Visiting, and Shopping Companion. The Practical Support team runs programs that use an on-demand model that helps seniors with more practical, miscellaneous needs. These programs include Essential Transportation, Pet Assist, and Practical Kindness.

Through completing the client annual survey, I was able to talk with seniors to get their feedback and overall satisfaction with these programs. My presentation will cover the trends from this survey as they directly relate to the impact and importance of the social and practical support programs that the Calgary Seniors Resource Society offers.

OH, Hailey

The Impact of Music on Individuals Living with Dementia

The Adult Day Program, designed by the Brenda Strafford Foundation, provides seniors with opportunities to engage in physically and cognitively stimulating programs that allow for meaningful and empowering experiences in a welcoming environment. The foundation aims to provide a wide range of programs and activities enjoyed by both seniors with and without dementia. I had the opportunity to build relationships with many clients and learn about the organization from the Adult Day program staff throughout my practicum. The intention of my practicum project was to kickstart a new music program
that would not only stimulate long-term memory but also encourage clients to reminisce about emotional memories through mainstream music and artists of their past. Additionally, music is universally enjoyed by many and has the power to enhance one’s emotions, spirituality, memory, creativity, and various other factors. With this knowledge about music, music-related programs hold great potential to generate meaningful moments of self-empowerment for seniors and seniors with dementia.

OLSON, Madison

Advocating for Individual Rights and Responsibilities (AIRR) Group

During my time at Accredited Supports to the Community in the town of Olds, my main focus was the client advocacy group called AIRR. Consisting of adult clients with developmental disabilities, AIRR meets once a month to discuss important topics in disability advocacy. Prior to my placement, AIRR Group did not receive the attention it deserved from employees or members. My project was to work alongside group members to revamp the advocacy group into something that was empowering, engaging, and unique to them. The process in which I have implemented “nothing about us without us” in each decision has been extremely rewarding for myself, and fellow AIRR members.

PARMAR, Tanvir

The World of Non-Profit in Media

I will discuss the mutually beneficial relationship between non-profit organizations and social media in this brief presentation, emphasizing both advantages and disadvantages. I’ll discuss how non-profits handle audience engagement and emphasize the value of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in improving inclusivity and accessibility. Through the adoption of UDL, non-profits can enhance their outreach tactics and capitalize on the favourable effects of social media while reducing associated risks. We will explore the dynamic intersection of digital connectivity through this lens, imagining a future in which non-profits use social media as an effective tool for social change.

PINEDA, Aaron

The Next Step: Labour Force Involvement for Individuals with Acquired Disabilities Through Vocational Rehabilitation

The next steps taken upon acquiring a disability can not only be difficult to navigate, but poses the question: “What’s next?”. The vocational rehabilitation service offered by Lifemark plays a catalytic role in the rehabilitative process through taking leadership in labor force participation. This is done by working collaboratively with case managers to find the most suitable occupational pathway that considers the individual’s unique circumstance. Lifemark empowers persons with acquired disabilities to
achieve the most suitable occupation that reflects their interests and ability, while also providing support through various services and skills workshops. Myself, along with four other practicum students, had the opportunity to update and revise these workshops where we learned to not only incorporate our knowledge from CRDS, but to also implement a holistic mindset when developing them. My presentation will go over what I have learned throughout this practicum, and the skills that I plan to take with me moving forward.

PRTICHARD, Leticia

Mindfulness and its Effects on Brain Injury

Research has shown that rates of depression and anxiety are higher for those with a traumatic brain injury (TBI). A more recent modality to support TBI survivors is through using mindfulness, through therapies such as Compassion Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). The primary goal of these therapies is to improve “psychological flexibility and general well-being”, this has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. By understanding the benefits of mindfulness, how it can impact TBI survivors, and implementing it as part of their rehabilitation, we can help provide practical tools to improve mental and emotional well-being.

RAMOS, Rheanna

Building Inclusive Classrooms

Inclusive education is a fundamental human right, yet students with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing equitable educational opportunities. Establishing inclusive and supportive frameworks for students with disabilities demands a nuanced approach, incorporating intersectional perspectives. This presentation will address the various gaps within educational systems that limit the support and service for students with disabilities. Furthermore, this presentation will discuss the resources, strategies, and attitudes that can be utilized for building inclusive and supportive systems that will address the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Reflecting on engagements in varied practical settings, including daycares and schools, there has been an evident need for a more informed approach to care. As many educators have not had much education or experience with disability, they are not fully informed or equipped with the skills to fully support individuals with different abilities. Educational systems must foster a culture of acceptance and understanding by promoting awareness and sensitivity towards disabilities. Additionally, it is necessary for educational systems to provide adequate support services and accommodations to students with disabilities. After extensive work within varied settings, it is evident that applying a disability studies lens within educational systems will help foster and improve inclusive practices.
RICHARDSON, Skylar

Promoting an Inclusive and Accessible Community

My practicum experience at Cerebral Palsy Kids & Families has been focused on community inclusion through their CPKF-organized events. This presentation will focus on the community events I have helped with, including their annual Holiday Party and Music & Movement, and how I connected my project to the organization. Working closely with their program coordinator, I have been able to experience what goes into developing community events and what is needed to facilitate/lead inclusive and accessible community events. Since September 2023, I have been developing a Community Guide of Accessibility, targeted for CPKF, their employees and for their members. The guide addresses important aspects of planning an inclusive and accessible community event, such as social inclusion, inclusive disability language and accessibility. My experience at CPKF as a practicum student will be beneficial to my future professional practice as I wish to expand my education and pursue a master’s degree.

RIPLEY, Laura

What about Mental Health? Gaps and Possibilities within Acute Care Settings

Disability and mad studies scholars have long discussed the importance of mental health; however, little attention has been paid to mental health within acute healthcare environments. The mental health of patients with complex medical needs is often a secondary consideration, typically caused by a lack of knowledge and resources provided to healthcare professionals. Without appropriate resources and training, professionals have reported using physical and chemical restraints to ‘control’ behaviour, resulting in damaging impacts on patients. It is clear that the unnecessary use of restraints and the lack of knowledge related to mental health is preventing us from meeting the needs of our patients.

This research involves an analysis of data collected from online surveys, providing an understanding of allied health professionals’ education, training, experience, and comfort level in supporting the mental health of patients. Recruited participants do not primarily work in a mental health environment, therefore, represent the general healthcare provider experience. The goal of this study is to identify the challenges faced by allied health professionals and possible solutions for policy makers to make mental health a top priority. Ensuring professionals feel knowledgeable and supported when working with individuals with mental health concerns will ultimately improve patient health outcomes.

RYAN, Monica

Engaging Parents with Cognitive Disabilities in Operational Workplans: A Framework Development Project

Disability advocates have long argued for the need to regularly include disabled voices in disability focused services. Understanding the process to authentically include parents with cognitive disabilities in operational work plans is not only essential to their autonomy but also in providing client focused
services for the future. Through a 9-month collaboration with parents who participate in current Connections for Families Society services, parents evaluated services provided by Connections and then utilized the outcomes to inform operational workplans for the future. Through a mixed method inquiry parents shared what they valued and what they wanted “more of” in existing Connections services. Reflection on results with parents aided in deciphering what steps parents wanted to take next, who was going to be responsible, what resources were needed, and how they were going to measure their success.

Through these experiences, a “living” framework was created to promote the values and voices of parents in evaluation and future operational workplans within Connections. This experience not only created an obtainable process to include parents as participating stakeholders in operational workplan operations but also proved that parents with cognitive disabilities make meaningful contributions to their own lives and the organizations that support them.

SALAZAR, Chrys Angela

Navigating Empowerment: A Journey in Vocational Rehabilitation

During my time at Lifemark, my practicum journey was more than just professional development—it became a deeply personal experience. I found myself fully engaged in refining the Essential Job Demands (EJD) system and updating workshop materials, tasks that gave me a sense of purpose in supporting individuals through vocational rehabilitation challenges. Alongside my colleagues, I poured myself into making the EJD system more efficient and enhancing outcomes for our clients. Moreover, updating workshop content became a heartfelt mission to empower individuals as they embarked on fresh starts post-injury or illness.

Throughout this journey, I not only grew more confident but also underwent a profound shift in perspective. Interacting closely with people with disabilities, I was moved by their resilience, strength and unwavering determination. These encounters have not only enriched my professional skills but have also instilled in me a newfound sense of empathy and admiration for the diverse journeys of individuals with disabilities. As I move forward, I carry with me a deep commitment to advocating for inclusivity and equality, driven by the personal connections I’ve forged along the way.
SALIBA, Riana

Benefits of inclusive dance education for individuals with diverse abilities

Inclusive dance education refers to implementing dance programs in schools and organizations that provide services to people with and/or without disabilities. My role at Bloom Wellness Collective was to observe/evaluate the dance program Bloom provides to their clients, research the benefits of dance education for individuals with disabilities and create tools for my organization to use to promote their program. Throughout my time at Bloom and after speaking with staff and participants, I found several benefits of dance education for individuals with diverse abilities. Dance education promotes student engagement, problem solving skills and creativity through movement exploration. Dance education provided through a specific curriculum connects to provincial programs of studies, reinforcing and enhancing school curriculums. Additionally, through a thoughtful conversation with a staff member, I uncovered the fact that dance inadvertently reinforces tasks individuals work on in their individual placement plans (IPPs). This is important as dance can help achieve individual goals and dance is a natural way to encourage physical activity rather than through physical therapy or other physically demanding exercises that may not be as enjoyable (i.e., running). Overall, there are numerous benefits of dance education for diverse populations and implementing more dance-based programs in schools is a useful way to facilitate movement, expression, and enjoyment among students.

SAMI, Sehar

Empowering Futures: Elevating Lifemark’s Vocational Vision

Lifemark is a dedicated organization that strives to give individuals the necessary skills and knowledge so that everyone has an equitable opportunity to gain and retain employment, ultimately improving their overall quality of life. During my practicum, I spent the first few months immersing myself in the various programs that Lifemark offers its clients, which are funded by the Government of Alberta and the Workers Compensation Board (WCB). Then, I took the time to understand the objectives and explore the benefits, which led me to design marketing presentations for each of the programs which will be used to showcase to our stakeholders the success we’ve had in helping the clients on their employment journey. I spent the second half of my practicum working on revitalizing the eight current workshop PowerPoints that Lifemark uses to teach the clients the necessary skills and knowledge that will benefit them in gaining employment opportunities. To strengthen the workshops, I implemented peer-reviewed research and cited academic literature that supported the existing information provided in the presentations. Also, I focused on creating participant material, such as worksheets for clients to work on, by providing them various opportunities to reflect on the information they learned as they went through the workshop to increase engagement and improve information retention so that in the end, the clients feel equipped with helpful knowledge and skills.
SANDHER, Kerenpreet

Embracing Diversity: Tailoring Educational Experiences for Children with Disabilities

Embark on a comprehensive exploration of my enriching practicum journey at Janus Academy, where my primary focus has been on creating inclusive and impactful educational experiences tailored specifically for children with disabilities. This journey commenced with the careful planning and execution of a diverse range of field trips, meticulously designed to cater to the unique needs and interests of each child. These field trips not only provided valuable learning opportunities but also emphasized accessibility and engagement, fostering an environment where every child could thrive and actively participate. Transitioning from field trips, I delved into the creation of dynamic and interactive summer camp activities, aligning them with diverse themes to cater to the varied learning styles and abilities of the children. This endeavor involved the utilization of various media formats and innovative tools, all aimed at ensuring that the educational experiences provided were both meaningful and enriching. Throughout my practicum, I actively engaged in classroom observations and collaborated closely with educators, gaining invaluable insights into the diverse learning styles and abilities present among the students. This hands-on approach not only deepened my understanding but also enabled me to tailor my educational strategies effectively. As I reflect on the accomplishments achieved during my practicum, I am aware of the importance of continuous growth and improvement in the field of inclusive education. This presentation serves as an opportunity to delve into the strategies, challenges, and triumphs that have shaped my practicum experience, with a strong emphasis on fostering inclusivity and empowerment in educational settings.

SARLAK, Selina

Lives Worth Living Part 2: An Arts Based Methodology

"Lives Worth Living" is a research project that aims to move away from deficit-based narratives to celebrating the positive experiences of individuals with disabilities. By adopting an arts-based inquiry methodology, this project explores ways that integrate art and creativity to capture and share the stories of individuals with disabilities that value their experiences, aiming to promote positive societal change. This approach aims to challenge existing stereotypes, encourage greater inclusivity, and foster a deeper appreciation for disability identity. This project highlights the importance of collaboration with participants, ensuring our research respects and amplifies the voices of the disability community. The outcomes of "Lives Worth Living" are anticipated to impact policy, alter public attitudes, and enhance the societal inclusion of people with disabilities. Engaging in the first stages of this research project, I learned about the transformative power of arts-based inquiry as a methodology, and I look forward to the ways arts-based methods can strengthen our understanding in this field.
SHARMA, Shivreet

Empowering Individuals Through Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Vocational Rehabilitation Services at Lifemark offer support to individuals who are unemployed or seeking re-employment after their work-related injuries and restrictions. This covers a wide range of services, resources, and knowledge necessary for successful re-employment and workforce integration. During my senior practicum at Lifemark, my project focused on updating the Ready Set Work (RSW) workshop PowerPoints to incorporate recent research findings and enhance the reliability of these resources. Additionally, I created Essential Job Demand (EJD) spreadsheet that required gathering critical job-related information from various sources into a single, user-friendly, and accessible resource, assisting staff in matching clients to suitable employment opportunities. Through these projects, I have developed a comprehensive understanding of contemporary labor market demands, while also refining my data analysis and organizational skills, and fostering critical thinking and creativity. Moreover, I gained deeper understanding of different demographics and perspectives, enabling me to appreciate how populations with diverse educational, financial, and cultural backgrounds can be empowered to return to the workforce. Overall, my practicum experience has not only provided me with valuable insights into the role of vocational services in supporting individuals transitioning into or re-entering the workforce, but it has also encouraged me to commit to my passion for assisting individuals in overcoming social or personal barriers that may limit them from attaining or sustaining employment and experiencing fulfillment and life satisfaction. This experience has inspired me to continue making a meaningful impact in individuals’ lives, especially those with acquired disabilities and restrictions due to their work injuries.

SIEMENS, Alyssa

Universal Design Guidelines in Practice at G.R.I.T.

During my practicum at G.R.I.T. Calgary Society, I took on many roles within the administrative side of the agency. In September, I began my first project of creating an annual mandated report. This report highlighted G.R.I.T.’s many achievements of the previous school year, including their fundraisers, programs, specialized equipment, finances and overall vision. While researching and assembling this report, myself and G.R.I.T.’s team members began to realize the importance of ensuring that all documents, including the aforementioned, hold Information that is easily accessible to consume and understand for everyone. This led to the emergence of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) research and ideas on how to implement the guidelines into this report and G.R.I.T.’s agency as a whole. Through my research, I identified the guidelines and principles of UDL and examples of how they can be integrated into G.R.I.T.’s many environments; classroom, office and media platforms. Examples listed included things such as options for perception/customizing of display information, optimizing choice in the classroom as well as providing tools and technologies to support learner needs and reduce barriers. All of these fall under UDL’s three principles of engagement, representation and action & expression. This research guided the idea behind my next project for the second semester; an easily understandable checklist with the UDL guidelines and principles available with G.R.I.T.-focused examples for how to integrate them into their different settings.
SIMPSON, Karissa

Innovative Empowerment

Barriers manifest in various forms and fostering inclusivity for individuals with disabilities constitutes an ongoing journey. Medicine Hat Adaptive Sports and Recreation exemplifies the remarkable opportunities that arise when accessibility, collaboration, and inclusivity intersect. The organization provides a diverse array of adaptive sports and recreational activities, consistently seeking ways to enhance accessibility and empower its athletes. Notably, this practicum shed light on persisting barriers faced by the disabled community within the broader population. My work this semester primarily addresses the challenges related to the lack of opportunities for independent responsibility and community acknowledgment of adaptive sports. The focal point of this endeavour is the creation of educational videos aimed at fostering independence. The practicum goal is to provide resources supporting coaches, volunteers, athletes, and anyone interested in learning or engaging in adaptive sports. Through thorough research, brainstorming and existing resources, gaps in the realm of adaptive sports were identified. The initiative begins with videos outlining foundational rules and expectations for individuals entering the world of adaptive sports. Secondly, emphasis is placed on maintaining equipment, with step-by-step videos enabling athletes to independently manage this aspect. Specifically in Medicine Hat, we developed toolkits containing all necessary equipment-maintenance tools, ensuring accessibility for all athletes striving for independence.

SMAILI, Arwa

Celebrating Diversity Among Inclusive Communities and Organizations

Being involved in a complex and meaningful organization’s work has given me the opportunity to dip my toes into many aspects of different projects. ‘Celebrating diversity’ is regarding not only the diversity of individuals, members, staff, and volunteers included in this work, that is, diverse ages, races, sexes or diverse abilities, but also about the vast variety of responsibilities and roles taken upon these individuals to ensure maximal support for their members. The importance of diversity is explicit in providing representation for various backgrounds and abilities, empowerment and social justice, as well as enhanced collaboration among all advocates with differing approaches. Drawing on the beneficial opportunity to cooperate with these unique tasks and interact with diverse people, in my presentation, I look forward to sharing my personal experience as a woman of colour with disabilities, a family member of someone with CP, and a practicum student at CP Kids & Families, through my navigation of new waters and priceless, multifaceted experience contributing to this organization’s purposeful goal.

STEPHAN, Annaliesse

Making Dreams a Reality

My experience at FACE had many successes and failures, heartbreaks and happy dances. During my time at Families of Alberta for Conductive Education (FACE), I spearheaded efforts to diversify funding
sources. This was vital for the organizations to achieve sustainability and growth. Money is not everything, but it plays a significant role in realizing our visions. This experience in the “real world” help me to understand that despite our passion and dedication, our vision and dreams are often limited to our financial capacity. Limitations in funding should not deter us from pursuing our goals; instead it is an opportunity to think creatively and find innovative solutions.

THERIAULT, Sara

Emotional Regulation in the Classroom

My connector is going to touch base on emotional regulation in the classroom highlighting its importance for a student’s social and emotional development. Emotional regulation plays a huge part in how we communicate our feelings with those around us. However, when a student has trouble with self-regulating and communicating those feelings effectively, this is when behavioural issues within the classroom may arise. It is important to be mindful that when these unwanted behaviours occur within the classroom it is common to want to correct the behaviour immediately, however, when a student is unable to process new information in their current state of high stress and dysregulation the expected replacement behaviour is not going to be processed or understood by the student, and secondly trying to teach replacement behaviour before a student has self-regulated tends to lead to unwanted behaviours. More effective self-regulation can be taught and practiced once the student is in a state of learning where they can receive and process new information. Before teaching replacement behaviours, it is important to have the students understand the type of emotion they are feeling beforehand i.e.. “I am mad”, and a calming technique to pair with that emotion i.e.. “deep finger breathing” Once a student is aware of what emotion they are feeling, and a strategy they can use in the moment to regulate themselves then they can be transitioned to a state of information receiveal where you can teach the replacement behaviour.

THORESON, Kaury

Embracing and Applying Play-Based Learning

Learning through play contributes to language acquisition, creativity, motor skills, social skills, and problem-solving, and most importantly, it allows kids to explore. During my placement with Providence, I recognized the diverse student population with varying interests and abilities, learning and processing the world and material in unique ways. My project focused on developing and implementing adaptive play-based learning plans for kindergarten Fridays. Kindergarten Fridays encompassed students aged four years and eight months to six years, entitled to 75 additional kindergarten-funded hours. By implementing interactive activities and engaging resources on Fridays, I intended to foster a positive and supportive learning environment for each student to thrive. Recognizing the importance of play-based learning and addressing students’ diverse needs and capabilities allowed me to cater to individual strengths, challenges, and interests, thus supporting curriculum learning and students’ individualized learning plans through play. Through a play-based approach, I've learned the significance of being a flexible and creative observer and guide in students' learning through play. Embracing play has allowed
me to witness students’ continuous development of social skills, problem-solving abilities, motor skills, and emotional regulation. The indicated underscores the importance of play-based programs and learning materials in accommodating individual differences, learning styles, and interests while fostering exploration, creativity, and imagination.

UY, Angelica

**Cross-sectional Associations between Physical Activity and Chronic Pain Reporting for Children with a Neurodivergent Diagnosis using the All of Our Families Dataset**

**Background**

Chronic pain is a deliberating condition that affects many children worldwide. Previous studies have found that neurodiverse children are more susceptible to chronic pain conditions in comparison to their neurotypical peers. Different predictors have been assessed to help inform best practices to prevent the development of chronic pain, however there is limited research for the neurodiverse cohort. This cross-sectional study aimed to analyze physical activity as a predictor to chronic pain while considering other environmental and sociodemographic considerations. The results will help inform future projects to investigate the predictive variables that have shown significance to chronic pain reporting for the neurodiverse population specifically.

**Methods**

This was a cross-sectional study using the All Our Families Q8 Dataset. A binary logistic regression performed through SPSS was used for data analysis.

**Results**

Physical activity ($p = .187$, $\text{Exp}(B) = .552$) was not considered to be a significant factor in this study. Sleep habits ($p = .062$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.056$) was found to be the most significant factor, with bullying having an upward trend, and being male having a downward trend.

**Conclusion**

This analysis suggests that sleep habits are a significant factor in predicting chronic and gut pain in children. Other variables such as bullying, sex, age, household income, and daily physical activity were not found to be statistically significant yet contribute to the model's overall predictive capability.

WALLACE, Jillian

**Empowering Equity, Ability & Inclusivity: Strengthening Disability Support Services at March of Dimes Canada**

I had the privilege of immersing myself in the transformative work of March of Dimes Canada (MODC), a national charity dedicated to championing equity and fostering inclusivity for individuals with disabilities across the country. Guided by MODC’s commitment to empowerment and accessibility, my journey encompassed a wide range of diverse projects aimed at enhancing support networks and advocating for
meaningful change. From co-planning and organizing the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) event, to taking part in GRASP (Graded Repetitive Arm Supplementary Program) for stroke survivors, to conducting a comprehensive community scan and carrying out my Alberta After Stroke Network Project, I gained invaluable experience and insights both personally and professionally. Join me as I reflect upon the transformative journey I took part in with March of Dimes Canada,1 where I delve into my practicum project deliverables and achievements.

WIJAYA, Harry

A Snapshot of Academic Peer Mentoring

The journey of a university peer mentor is a profound blend of empathy, guidance, and personal evolution. Being adverse in the role allowed me to establish a supportive atmosphere that fosters the holistic growth of my mentees. Through attentive listening and empathic resonance, I create an open environment where mentees feel comfortable expressing their concerns, fears, and dreams. Central to the peer mentor’s role is navigating the complexities of academic life, providing indispensable counsel on study techniques, time management, and campus resources. Beyond academics, mentors offer emotional solace, aiding mentees in acclimating to university life’s challenges and nurturing a sense of belonging within the campus community. In my experience, peer mentoring transcends mere instruction; it embodies a dedication to nurturing personal and academic advancement. Guiding mentees through goal-setting exercises and encouraging exploration of their passions, I foster critical thinking and self-assurance. Despite its rewards, the journey of a university peer mentor presents challenges, demanding resilience and adept time management to balance academic obligations with mentoring duties. Furthermore, navigating diverse mentee personalities and backgrounds underscores the need for adaptable approaches tailored to individual needs. In essence, the role of peer mentorship is enriching, offering both challenges and opportunities for mutual growth. Those considering this role should prepare to evolve alongside their mentees, embracing the chance to learn about themselves and others throughout the process.

WONG, Meghan

Helping develop the Linked! site

Cailin and I assisted Children’s Link (CL) in developing information for their online resource hub. After the launch of such, families will be empowered with the knowledge that they need to find various resources in Alberta. I know when I was diagnosed, having such a centralized hub of correct, timely, and accurate information would have made a world of difference. Because, I know for my family, our initial feelings around my diagnosis were confusion and uncertainty. The database will be pan-disability and apply to all age groups, and families will be able to select resources based on their child’s diagnosis. As my diagnosis came when I was 18, I chose to tackle transition to adulthood, and include my own experience within healthcare system. Aiming to research, compile information, and develop articles in an easy-to-read format with complementing visual infographics. Having this information widely available in one place, supports families in accessing critical information to support their family whenever they
need it. Families have the information they need without having to make an appointment, phone call, or share their diagnosis story again—which from experience, can be filled with emotions. Further, the database is a proactive endeavour, as it will help disabled families—a family with one or more children with a disability, to prepare and contribute to comprehensive, family-centred-care.