

## 9th Annual Canadian Autism Leadership Summit Presenters

Please note that this list of presenters is subject to change, and will be updated continuously up to CALS2023. All times listed are in Eastern Time (ET).

For more information, visit: [www.autismalliance.ca/cals/](http://www.autismalliance.ca/cals/)

April 17, 18, 19,  
2023

Pop-Up Show | Ben Animalia



**Benjamin Lachapelle** | Autistic Artist, Author & Illustrator

Benjamin Lachapelle has been selected as the artist whose work will be presented to the recipient of the 2nd Annual Jim and Ginette Munson Autism Leadership Award. The Award Ceremony announcing the recipient of the 2nd Annual Jim and Ginette Munson Leadership Award will take place Wednesday April 19th, 2023 from 2:30 - 3:00 PM.

Benjamin Lachapelle (self described “Animal Knower”) is a 20-year-old Canadian Autistic artist and author-illustrator of children’s books from Quebec. Diagnosed with autism at age 3, he is a multidisciplinary artist with a singular focus on animals, his passion since he was a young child. Ben uses art to manage his feelings and express himself. He channels his joys and his anxieties for animals through his paintings, sculptures, stories, and illustrations. His work has been exhibited in numerous events and commissioned by organizations, businesses, and private collectors throughout North America. Extinction Protest Series (EPS) is a collection of paintings Ben began in 2019 upon hearing a United Nations report that 1 million species were threatened with extinction because of habitat destruction and climate change. Each painting is a manifestation of Ben’s intense love for animals and his frustrations over the inadequate global response to environmental crises. Going into Year 5, EPS is Ben’s call-to-action for the planet, biodiversity and the animals.

Benjamin has written and illustrated several children’s books including How Tall is a Yeti? and Pace-Ants (a book about patience). Each book provides a unique glimpse into Ben’s rich inner world as an autistic creative. Ben enjoys reading his stories at elementary schools to share his love for animals and promote autism acceptance and inclusion.

## Monday, April 17, 2023: Pre-Summit Afternoon

Bringing Leaders Together

12:30PM - 5:00PM (ET)

12:30 - 2:30 PM

Roundtable | **Building Collaboration in Autism Postsecondary Education Supports**



**Orly Fruchter** | Moderator

Manager, Neurodiverse Initiatives at Azrieli Foundation

Orly Fruchter is the Manager of Neurodiverse Initiatives at the Azrieli Foundation. She has over 12 years of experience working in international development and disaster response. With both a bachelor's degree in psychology and an MBA, Orly specializes in developing sustainable, replicable services and programs for people with disabilities in partnership with governments, academia, service providers and those with lived experience in Canada and abroad. With the guiding principle of "Nothing About Us, Without Us" and holistic person-directed approaches, she works with the Azrieli Foundation to improve the lives of neurodiverse individuals and enable an inclusive and accessible society.



**Andrew Eddy** | Presenter

Co-founder and CEO of Untapped Holdings

Andrew is the CEO of Untapped Talent, a for-purpose social enterprise focused on developing a sustainable neurodiverse employment ecosystem to increase opportunities for autistic individuals, thereby realising their untapped potential.

Andrew is also driving the Neurodiversity Hub community of practice initiative (<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org>) which is about working with universities and employers to facilitate neurodivergent university and college students become more work-ready and increase their chances of securing a job and commencing a career. A range of life skills training courses has also been developed for neurodivergents (<https://www.beyourbest.academy>).

He also promotes the Genius Armoury platform (<https://geniusarmoury.com>) to attract and identify an autistic cybersecurity talent pool through fundamental training in cybersecurity.



**Dr. Heather M. Brown** | Presenter

Associate Professor in Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta

Dr. Heather M. Brown was initially trained as an elementary school teacher but is now an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. She is also an autistic researcher passionate about supporting the academic achievement and overall well-being of autistic children, youth and adults. Her community-based participatory research aims to empower autistic individuals to be more self-confident in their neurodiversity and better understand the factors that most support their

well-being at home, work and school. She currently serves as the director of the Autism, Neurodiversity and Academic Achievement (AIDAN) Lab as well as the chair of both the Neurodiversity and Autism Research in Education Committee (NAREC) for the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the Autistic Researcher Committee (ARC) for the Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health (AIR-P) at UCLA.



**Jenna Gauthier** | Presenter  
Manager, Autism CanTech! at NorQuest College

Jenna Gauthier is the Autism CanTech! Centre Manager, at NorQuest College, in Edmonton, Alberta. She is a trained Occupational Therapist who has been working with Autistic individuals for more than 15 years. In her current role with Autism CanTech! she oversees the program delivery and works to create a sustainable program. Her goal is to be a catalyst for change, working alongside industry and community stakeholders to create inclusive and accessible spaces for Autistic individuals in their local communities, education, and employment. Jenna has a personal connection to Autism that helps motivate the work she does in this space, and in her spare time, sits on the board for On Site Placement, an organization that is dedicated to building an inclusive community through employment-related services.



**Jess Lopez** | Presenter  
Neurodiversity Support Advisor at the University of Calgary

Hello! Mari Mari! I'm Jess Lopez (they/them). I am proudly neurodivergent, nonbinary, and epupillan (Mapuche 2Spirit). In my role as a Neurodiversity Support Advisor at UCalgary, I am able to assist any self-identifying neurodivergent student (no diagnosis needed) in navigating university life on or off campus. Through the principles of Universal Design for Learning, I help students to better understand their personal learning preferences and sensory experiences. This awareness can then be utilized to empower students to build supports, strategies, and resources to help improve their academic, social, and personal wellbeing.



**Dr. Lee Burdette Williams** | Presenter  
Executive Director, College Autism Network

Lee Burdette Williams is the Executive Director of the College Autism Network, an organization committed to improving access, experiences and outcomes for college students on the autism spectrum. She worked in higher education and student affairs for almost three decades, including serving as Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students at Wheaton College (MA) and Dean of Students at the University of Connecticut. As a student affairs professional, Lee served in a variety of areas including student activities, residential life, orientation, student conduct, and admissions. She has taught in student affairs graduate programs at the University of Vermont, the University of Connecticut, Appalachian State University, Western Michigan University, and the University of Maryland.

Lee holds a Ph.D. in College Student Personnel Administration from the University of Maryland College Park and an M.Ed. in community counseling from Salem State University. Her undergraduate degree is from Gordon College (MA). Lee is a frequent contributor to Inside Higher Ed and the Chronicle of Higher Education, and is the author of two professional books, one on peer education and one on learning communities. She writes and presents on a variety of topics, most often on student mental health, autism in a college setting, student culture and conduct, and leadership in student affairs.



**Dr. Megan Ames** | Presenter

Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at University of Victoria

Dr. Megan Ames is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Victoria. Dr. Ames' research focuses on supporting autistic postsecondary students with a focus on peer mentorship models. In her graduate work, Dr. Ames was involved in developing and evaluating a peer mentorship model for autistic university students; Ames et al., (2015). Overview and evaluation of a mentorship program for university students with ASD. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 31(1), 27-36. doi: 10.1177/1088357615583465. Dr. Ames and her team recently published an environmental scan of autism-specific postsecondary supports across Canada; Ames et al. (2022). Canadian mapping of autism-specific supports for postsecondary students. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 90, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2021.101899>.



**Dr. Patty Douglas** | Presenter

Associate Professor of Disability Studies & Inclusive Education at Brandon University

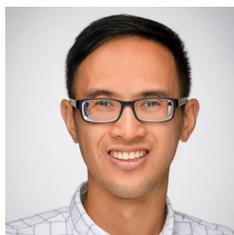
Patty Douglas is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Brandon University in Manitoba, Canada. Her work is located in disability studies, inclusive education, critical autism studies, mothering and care and feminist science studies as they are informed by decolonial and critical theories, and creative methodologies and research creation. Patty identifies as neurodivergent and is the mother of two sons, one of whom attracted the label of autism. Her book *Unmothering Autism: Ethical Disruptions and Affirming Care* has been accepted for publication with UBC Press. For more information: @ReStorying; [www.restoryingautism.com](http://www.restoryingautism.com).



**Simone Daniels** | Presenter

Research Assistant at Autism Alliance of Canada

Simone Daniels, M.Sc., is a research assistant at Autism Alliance of Canada. She recently obtained her Master's degree in Kinesiology from York University. She is thrilled to be working for Autism Alliance of Canada by conducting research to help persons on the autism spectrum reach their full potential. In her spare time, you could find Simone reading, listening to music, exercising, walking her dog or enjoying the biggest and fastest roller coasters at Canada's Wonderland.



**Dr. Jonathan Lai** | Presenter  
Executive Director at Autism Alliance of Canada

Jonathan is the Executive Director at Autism Alliance of Canada. He also holds an Adjunct Faculty position in Health Services Research at the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation (IHPME) in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. Previously, he completed a postdoctoral fellowship at York University, examining predictors of changes in service use for people with developmental disabilities. He led a series of TEDx talks and other integrated knowledge translation projects. This was followed by a CIHR Health System Impact Fellowship at McGill University and the Centre for Innovation in Autism and Intellectual Disabilities, where he led the development of a program evaluation of a specialized medical-dental primary care clinic for people with developmental disabilities, led federal government engagement of evidence-use in policy dialogues, and reported at the United Nations Convention on research evidence used in rights-based approaches for children with disabilities in Canada.



**Tanya McLeod** | Presenter  
President at Sinneave Family Foundation

Tanya McLeod is President of The Sinneave Family Foundation in Calgary, Alberta; a national organization committed to providing value to the community by coordinating and investing in a portfolio of purposeful initiatives and projects aimed at enhancing opportunities in education, employment and housing for Autistic youth and adults. Tanya values the opportunity to contribute to making a difference in the lives of others. She is pleased to lead the National EmploymentWorks Project that supports working age Autistic Canadians to prepare for, get and keep jobs. She is a member of Autism Alliance of Canada's Board of Directors and is committed to supporting the Government of Canada to deliver on its mandate to develop a national autism strategy. Her hope is that a national autism strategy provides a paradigm shift. A comprehensive framework that provides government policy with clear and transparent ways and means to provide all autistic Canadians with access to the resources and opportunities they require to realize their desired futures.



**Tara Connolly** | Presenter  
Assistant Director, Research & Development, READ Initiative

Tara is a transitions specialist who has some 20 years of experience working with and learning from adults and youth on the autism spectrum. Her work has focused on facilitating neurodiverse thinkers to thrive on their own terms through co-creating meaningful transitions into and throughout adulthood. Tara earned a Master's in Sociology and Equity Studies from University of Toronto and is a member of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association and the College of Registered Psychotherapists.

## Tuesday, April 18, 2023: Full Summit Day

Lessons from Abroad: What can Canada Learn, Adopt and Implement?

8:00AM - 4:30PM (ET)

9:30 - 10:00 AM

Opening Remarks



**Rebekah Kintzinger** | Presenter

Co-Chair of Autism Alliance of Canada's Board of Directors, Autistic Advocate

Rebekah Kintzinger, diagnosed Autistic in 2012, is a prominent Autistic advocate from Kelowna, British Columbia (BC), Canada. Since her diagnosis, her advocacy has included writing extensively about autism in the context of health, language, and policy, which has led her to be featured in a multitude of mediums including magazines, news articles, webinars, and the radio. Rebekah is the co-chair of the board at the Autism Alliance of Canada. Her speaking engagements include participation at a United Nations Conference Side Event on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Her work has also been quoted at the Senate of Canada. She is a founding editor of the Canadian Journal of Autism Equity where she continues to champion the voices of Autistic Canadians and publishing articles in the journal on the models of disability, and education strategies for autistic students. Rebekah also contributed to book chapter about the Hierarchies of Disability Human Rights. Rebekah is very creative. Aside from loving to draw and write, she also appreciates cooking for her two boys, acting out scenes from Monty Python with them and singing karaoke together.



**Anna Betty** | Presenter

Deputy Grand Chief Achneepineskum, Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Anna Betty Achneepineskum is Anishinaabe-Mushkego from Marten Falls First Nation (Ogoki Post). As Deputy Grand Chief for Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and as a social justice advocate for many years, she has strived and committed to raising awareness of issues and challenges experienced by First Nations people, families, women and children. Anna Betty is a person of action and a strong voice for transformative social change. Her life's work and contributions are driven by a passion to help the most marginalized people, especially the people from the Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory. In whatever she does, she advocates for equitable access to justice and services, and for improving the quality of life, community wellness and safety for all NAN citizens. She currently resides in Thunder Bay, and credits her children, grandchildren and her first great-granddaughter as the inspirations for her lifelong work, service, and advocacy



**The Hon. Mike Lake** | Presenter  
PC, MP, Edmonton-Wetaskiwin

Mike is the Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Wetaskiwin, and was first elected in 2006. After his re-election in October, 2008, Mike was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, a position to which he was re-appointed after the May 2011 election.

On September 13, 2012 Mike was sworn into the Queen's Privy Council, after being asked by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to serve on the Priorities and Planning Cabinet Sub-Committee on Government Administration. On October 21, 2019, he was re-elected to a fifth term, receiving the highest vote total out of all candidates, from all parties, across the country. Mike currently serves as the Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Addictions and Suicide Prevention.

Prior to entering federal politics, Mike worked for 10 years with the Edmonton Oilers Hockey Club where he served as National Accounts Manager, Director of Ticket Sales and Group Sales Manager. Mike holds a Bachelor of Commerce (with distinction) from the University of Alberta.

Mike has two children, a son Jaden, 24, and daughter Jenae, 20. The Lakes have been active supporters of autism organizations, families and individuals across the country, and around the world, while sharing their story of life with Jaden, who has autism.

**10:00 - 11:00 AM**

Panel Presentation | **The International Autism Landscape: What can Canada learn?**



**Dr. Deepa Singal** | Moderator  
Director of Scientific and Data Initiatives at Autism Alliance of Canada

Dr. Singal is a Research Scientist at the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, a world renowned Centre for population-based research and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba.

Dr. Singal is a quantitative child and maternal health researcher working at the intersection of academia and policy. As a two-time Health System Impact Fellow at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and a CIHR Institute of Health Services and Policy Research (CIHR-IHSPR) Rising Star, Dr. Singal has a breadth of experience working in multiple jurisdictions with senior level policy makers and key change makers in the health data science sector. She has a demonstrated history of leading multidisciplinary teams and her work has informed government policy and has been widely disseminated among media outlets throughout the country.



**Dr. Alistair de Gaetano** | Presenter

Administrator of the Maltese Government's Directorate for Disability Issues (DDI), and Chairperson of the Autism Advisory Council

Alistair de Gaetano is Administrator of the Maltese Government's Directorate for Disability Issues (DDI), and Chairperson of the Autism Advisory Council. He worked on setting up both the Directorate and the Council, and eventually on developing key legislation, strategies, policy and actions to reform and strengthen the Maltese disability and autism sectors. Alistair has represented Malta at a number of high-level meetings, and was Vice-Chair of the Social Questions Working Party on the European Accessibility Act, during the country's 2017 EU Presidency. He is a warranted lawyer, having studied in Malta, Maastricht and Dublin, where he was awarded a PhD by Trinity College, after defending a dissertation on denial of rights to autistic persons. Alistair was previously involved in disability and autism-related activism and outreach, including as a co-founder of EUCAP, the European Council of Autistic People, and co-chair with IDA (International Disability Alliance) of the working group that delivered the first-ever written submissions on behalf of disabled people to the UN's High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development.



**Harald Neerland** | Presenter

President of Autism Europe

Harald is the father of a young woman with infantile Autism and complex support needs. A professional engineer by education, he has been involved in autism advocacy for 25 years on local, national and international levels; and is the current president of Autism Europe. In addition he has served two periods as president of the Autism Society of Norway, and has been part of several working groups with Norway's Department of Health and Care services focusing on the services for children on the autism spectrum and their families. He has also served as Chairman of the Advisory group, the Autism unit, at Oslo University Hospital. He is focused on educating society, transferring research into practical application, and has organized international conferences, educational programs and most notably a "summer school" for parents of children on the autism spectrum.



**Dr. Susan Daniels** | Presenter

Acting HHS National Autism Coordinator at National Institute of Mental Health

Dr. Daniels is the Acting National Autism Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Director of the Office of Autism Research Coordination (OARC) at the National Institute of Mental Health. As Acting National Autism Coordinator, Dr. Daniels facilitates coordination and implementation of autism activities across federal departments and agencies. Dr. Daniels also serves as the Executive Secretary of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC), a federal advisory committee created by the U.S. Congress to coordinate federal activities and provide advice to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on issues related to autism. Before coming to NIH, Dr. Daniels was a Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the National Academy of Sciences. She received her Ph.D. in molecular and cell biology from Brandeis University, where she conducted research on the function of the sensory nervous system.

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

Keynote Discussion | **A Conversation with International Policy Experts: How do your autism policies help Autistic people?**



**The Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard** | Moderator  
Canadian Senator

Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard is the first African Nova Scotian woman to be appointed to the Senate of Canada, representing the province of Nova Scotia and her hometown of East Preston. Senator Bernard champions issues impacting African Canadians and people living with disabilities. She is particularly invested in human rights, employment equity, and mental health. Through her involvement in community projects, her social work career, her time with Dalhousie School of Social Work, and now her work in the Senate, Senator Bernard has maintained a deep dedication to social justice and racial justice. Senator Bernard advocates for reparations for the historical and continued anti-Black racism impacting the lives of African Canadians.



**Dr. Alistair de Gaetano** | Presenter

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**Dr. Susan Daniels** | Presenter  
Acting National Autism Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Daniels is the Acting National Autism Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Director of the Office of Autism Research Coordination (OARC) at the National Institute of Mental Health. As Acting National Autism Coordinator, Dr. Daniels facilitates coordination and implementation of autism activities across federal departments and agencies. Dr. Daniels also serves as the Executive Secretary of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC), a federal advisory committee created by the U.S. Congress to coordinate federal activities and provide advice to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on issues related to autism. Before coming to NIH, Dr. Daniels was a Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the National Academy of Sciences. She received her Ph.D. in molecular and cell biology from Brandeis University, where she conducted research on the function of the sensory nervous system.

**Dr. Jennifer Zwicker** | Moderator

Director of Health Policy at the School of Public Policy, University of Calgary, Canada Research Chair in Disability Policy for Children and Youth

Dr. Zwicker is Director of Health Policy at the School of Public Policy, associate professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, Canada Research Chair (II) in Disability Policy for Children and Youth and Deputy Scientific Officer for Kids Brain Health Network. Her research program assesses interventions and informs policy around allocation of funding, services, and supports for youth with disabilities and their families. Strong stakeholder and government collaboration has been critical in the translation of peer-reviewed publications to policy papers, op-eds and briefing notes for provincial and federal ministries and senate committees. Her work recently informed the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences National Autism Strategy Working Group and Royal Society of Canada Expert Working Group to develop disability inclusive policy during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has been recognized for her policy leadership as an Action Canada Alumni, Governor General Leadership Forum, and Canada's Top 40 Under 40.

**Sarah Ewart** | Moderator

Labour and Employment Lawyer, Forte Workplace Law

Sarah is a labour, employment and human rights lawyer in BC who works with employees, employers and unions and a volunteer with the Autism Alliance of Canada. As a lawyer, she is most passionate about representing workers who have been discriminated against in their workplace due to their disabilities.

**Alexandra Minuk** | Presenter

Doctoral Student, Faculty of Education, Queen's University

Alexandra Minuk is a doctoral student and course instructor at Queen's University in the Faculty of Education. Alexandra's research sits at the intersection of autism spectrum disorder and teacher professional development to promote inclusive education. Prior to pursuing graduate studies, Alexandra worked as a special education teacher for students on the autism spectrum, as well as a consultant for special education teacher training.



**Christiane Roth** | Presenter

Research Associate at the University of Calgary – School of Public Policy

Christiane Roth is a Research Associate at the University of Calgary – School of Public Policy. She is currently involved in research on disability policy and child wellbeing measurement to align policy and service delivery with child health and wellbeing. With an MSc in Human Rights from the London School of Economics and Political Science she has particular interest in the domestic application of international disability focused human rights frameworks in Canada.

Christiane has work experience in policy development and advice that aims at improving participation in society and access to services for marginalized population groups. In this framework, she has lead programs on behalf of the German Development Cooperation and European Union Commission, which included efforts to improve access to legal services for people with disabilities.

Christiane is starting her PhD under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Zwicker to examine how neuro-diversity/disability is considered in policies and service delivery in the justice sector. As an Autism Alliance/KBHN Policy Fellow, Christiane has gained a better understanding of the Canadian policy environment, global approaches to autism specific policy-making and how policies align with international human rights frameworks.



**Dr. Preeti Kar** | Presenter

Postdoctoral Fellow, University of British Columbia

Preeti completed her PhD ('21) at the University of Calgary with the supervision of Dr. Catherine Lebel, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of British Columbia. Her research has focused on understanding how prenatal/postnatal experiences shape brain and behavioral development in children. Alongside her research, Preeti has worked as a behavior interventionist with children with developmental disabilities and their caregivers both locally and internationally with the Global Autism Project. She is passionate about family/community engagement in research and knowledge translation with active roles with the Calgary Fetal Alcohol Network, Kids Brain Health Network, and the Calgary Perinatal Collective. Currently, Preeti is a medical student at UCalgary with the long-term career goal to be a clinician-scientist in the field of neurodevelopment.



**Yvonne Spicer** | Presenter  
Ambassador, Autism Canada

Hello, my name is Yvonne Spicer, and I am on the New Vision Advocates committee with Community Living London. I am extremely motivated, ambitious, who is always thinking ahead to take the initiative by supporting people, to make everyone feel special. I have an excellent awareness of the disability and advocacy issues besides being a proven leader in the Community Living movement, as I have spoken up for the inclusion of all people in communities from speaking engagements I have attended in Ontario.

I have attended and spoken at various political events as well as respected by continuing to hear the concerns from people I meet. I am a strong supporter and also industrious at encouraging people to rely on their strengths they have, by championing their successes through their path of advancement by working together to make sure that rights for all people are heard. I am an excellent advocate on social issues, and particularly on disability issues that are supporting human rights, anti-poverty, housing, and employment for people.

My career history is overshadowed by my ongoing role as a teacher where I have volunteered and remained focused to support a fostering an energetic, friendly approach to showcasing what I can do as a fantastic teammate in the advocacy movement using my insightful, intelligent knowledge. I have a transition from social services to social change: supporting people and communities to become stronger, rather than expecting people and communities to serve systems. I've expanded my public profile to share this passion with others through keynotes, presentations, and collaborative projects. I am a great partner and energetic, with a friendly approach that makes me a great colleague with knowledge about the unfairness in life for people who have intersectionality.

I am highly skilled and with a background in Non-profit Organizations, Program Development, Strategic Planning, Leadership Development, and Community Outreach. I have experience in communications professionally with over 20 years' experience leading public relations and government relations initiatives in the non-profit sector. I am a well-organized person who has an important voice on provincial and federal committees. I have the ability to foster relationships and connections that broaden partnerships, and develop innovative, unique opportunities that help further an organization's brand, mission, and vision. I have partnered with professionals through networking to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to discuss their work, challenges, vision, and trends

I am creative and highly cooperative with strong strategic thinking with a keen ambitious spirit, facilitates, supports, and empowers advocates to excel and fulfill their potential. I am a person you can always depend

on to take pride in initiatives with a driving force of moving forward to building a community in Ontario where we can build a choice and independence in a home of our own. I am a tireless advocate who's not afraid to speak up respectfully, and I'm sure I will make a fantastic addition to your community and committee. I represent people with passion and commitment advocating for better housing, income and support for people who are impacted by limited resources. I have enjoyed a career of interesting and successful partnerships with rewarding teaching experiences that I have discovered a deeply satisfying effort in the field of social services.

4:00 - 4:30 PM

## Summary of the Day



**Tanya McLeod** | Presenter  
President at Sinneave Family Foundation

Tanya McLeod is President of The Sinneave Family Foundation in Calgary, Alberta; a national organization committed to providing value to the community by coordinating and investing in a portfolio of purposeful initiatives and projects aimed at enhancing opportunities in education, employment and housing for Autistic youth and adults. Tanya values the opportunity to contribute to making a difference in the lives of others. She is pleased to lead the National EmploymentWorks Project that supports working age Autistic Canadians to prepare for, get and keep jobs. She is a member of Autism Alliance of Canada's Board of Directors and is committed to supporting the Government of Canada to deliver on its mandate to develop a national autism strategy. Her hope is that a national autism strategy provides a paradigm shift. A comprehensive framework that provides government policy with clear and transparent ways and means to provide all autistic Canadians with access to the resources and opportunities they require to realize their desired futures.

## Wednesday, April 19, 2023: Full Summit Day

Looking within Canada: Building on our Momentum

8:00AM - 4:30PM (ET)

9:30 - 10:00 AM

Opening Remarks



**Dr. Karen Bopp** | Presenter

Co-Chair of Autism Alliance of Canada's Board of Directors, Director of Autism Information Services BC, Director of Provincial Outreach at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Collaboration in Autism (CIRCA) at The University of British Columbia

Dr. Karen Bopp has worked extensively with autistic and neurodivergent individuals and their families for over 28 years. She received her Master's in Speech-Language Pathology in 1995, a PhD in Special Education in 2006, and completed a National Alliance for Autism Research Post-Doctoral Fellowship in 2009. Karen is currently the Co-Chair of the Autism Alliance of Canada and works for the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development as the Director of Autism Information Services BC. Recently, Karen completed a 4 and half year secondment with UBC's Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Collaboration in Autism (CIRCA) as the Director of Provincial Outreach. At CIRCA she led the creation of free, on-line, self-paced professional development programs on how to better support neurodivergent individuals in dentistry, family medicine, employment & childcare.



**The Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos** | Presenter  
Minister of Health

The Honorable Jean-Yves Duclos is a Canadian economist, Member of Parliament and is currently Canada's Minister of Health.

Jean-Yves Duclos studied at the University of Alberta, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in economics, followed by graduate and doctoral studies in economics at the London School of Economics. He was a tenured professor at Université Laval, where he also was the Director of the Department of Economics. Jean-Yves Duclos was the president-elect of the Canadian Economics Association and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2014.

In 2015, Jean-Yves Duclos was elected to represent the riding of Quebec in the House of Commons. He has previously served as President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

## Presentation | **An Update on the National Autism Strategy**



### **Mark Nafekh** | Presenter

Director General, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada

Mark Nafekh joined the Public Health Agency in 2020 as the Director General for the Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Equity and is currently the Director General of the Centre for Health Promotion. He has led his teams in implementing programs and policies that promote healthy living and prevent chronic disease through the lens of health equity. He also holds a Champion role for equity, diversity and inclusion and ensures intersectional analyses are used to assess how diverse groups of people in Canada experience different policies, programs and initiatives.

Prior to joining the Agency, Mark worked in a number of areas at Correctional Services Canada, including research, evaluation, offender redress and investigations into non-natural deaths in custody. He holds a Masters degree in Economics and continuously seeks learning opportunities in both his professional and personal endeavours.

**10:00 - 11:15 AM**

## Panel Presentation | **What do our provinces and territories need from a National Autism Strategy?**



### **Dr. Karen Bopp** | Moderator

Co-Chair of Autism Alliance of Canada's Board of Directors, Director of Autism Information Services BC, Director of Provincial Outreach at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Collaboration in Autism (CIRCA) at The University of British Columbia

Dr. Karen Bopp has worked extensively with autistic and neurodivergent individuals and their families for over 28 years. She received her Master's in Speech-Language Pathology in 1995, a PhD in Special Education in 2006, and completed a National Alliance for Autism Research Post-Doctoral Fellowship in 2009. Karen is currently the Co-Chair of the Autism Alliance of Canada and works for the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development as the Director of Autism Information Services BC. Recently, Karen completed a 4 and half year secondment with UBC's Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Collaboration in Autism (CIRCA) as the Director of Provincial Outreach. At CIRCA she led the creation of free, on-line, self-paced professional development programs on how to better support neurodivergent individuals in dentistry, family medicine, employment & childcare.



**Carolyn Kamper** | Presenter

Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Integration, Policy and Legislation Division at Government of British Columbia

Carolyn Kamper was appointed Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of the Strategic Integration, Policy and Legislation division in the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) in October 2020. Before this role, Carolyn was the ADM of the Strategic Priorities division in MCFD from March 2017 to September 2020. During her 20-plus year career with the BC Public Service, Carolyn provided leadership on several large stakeholder engagement projects and business transformation initiatives across the social, health and resource sectors. Prior to Carolyn's appointment as ADM, she held Executive Director positions in MCFD and the former Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation with responsibility for strategic planning, social innovation, project and change management, communications, and stakeholder engagement. Her experience in the BC Public Service includes leadership roles in climate action, energy, health, advanced education, child welfare, employment programming, as well as the Office of the Premier.



**Cynthia Carroll** | Presenter

Executive Director at Autism Nova Scotia

Cynthia Carroll is the Executive Director of Autism Nova Scotia. Since 2008, Cynthia has led Autism Nova Scotia to become the largest community-based autism organization in Atlantic Canada and a recognized leader in advocacy, training, and programming across the lifespan. Cynthia has participated on numerous advisory and working groups that have influenced provincial and federal government policy, including her current role in the Employment Standards Development Committee to assist in standard development for the Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act. She has co-authored numerous needs assessment reports and contributed to the Autism Alliance's National Autism Strategy Blueprint, which has since been prioritized by the federal government.

Cynthia has been recognized as one of Atlantic Business Magazine's Top 50 CEO's and was the recipient of the Mel Hebb Hourglass Action Award for Exceptional Service for persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia. In 2022, she also received the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal for her work in autism. In addition, while under Cynthia's leadership Autism Nova Scotia received the Bhayana Foundation's Invisible Champions Award, the Canada Volunteer Award for the Social Innovator Category, and a Halifax Volunteer Award under the Community Group Category. Cynthia's current passion and priorities include increasing community capacity for autism knowledgeable supports across Atlantic Canada and advocating with the autism community for improved quality of life and supported living options for Autistic individuals, their families, and the greater disability community.



**Jennifer Covey** | Presenter

Coordinator with the Department of Health and Wellness Government of Nova Scotia

Jennifer Covey is a Coordinator with the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness and has been a provincial government employee since 2009. Prior to joining government, she completed her Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience at Dalhousie University in Halifax and went on to study Health Informatics. She recently was the project lead of a collaborative team that developed a new provincial model of care pre-school autism services in Nova Scotia, which resulted in an annual investment of \$12 million. Jennifer currently lives in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia with her husband and their two dogs and a cat.



**Lyndon Parakin** | Presenter

Vice President at Autism Society Alberta



**Margaret Spoelstra** | Presenter

Executive Director, Autism Ontario

Marg Spoelstra's career has focused on supporting people with a variety of learning differences, with a primary focus on autism. As an educator she has worked with children, teens and adults, their families and the professionals and community leaders who support them in the U.S. and Canada in various community, educational and research/knowledge translation settings. She currently serves as the CEO of Autism Ontario. She is a team member of the Patient Advisory Committee for the Province of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Disorders Network, and as a partner in the work of the Laurier Autism Research Consortium. She was appointed as a Member to the Order of Canada in December 2011.

1:15 - 2:30 PM

Panel Presentation | **Centering Indigenous Perspectives: How can a federal strategy help?**



**Sarah Sark** | Moderator

**CEO ConnectWell Community Health**

Sarah Sark is a Mi'kmaq woman from Lennox Island First Nation located in Prince Edward Island, now living in Ottawa. Ms. Sark is the CEO of ConnectWell Community Health, a not for profit organization, providing a range of client centred health, developmental and Autism services to the rural areas of Lanark, Leeds, Grenville and Renfrew counties. Sarah is a registered speech-language pathologist and was she was introduced to the world of Autism, 30 years ago, when she attended a Geneva Centre event as part of her student placement. Her work in the field began as a front line provider and has progressed into leadership roles and most

recently to CEO. She also sits as a subject matter expert on the Medical Supplies and Equipment Advisory Committee (MSEAC) with Indigenous Services Canada. She is an ally, an advocate and is dedicated to client centred, needs based work with neurodiverse peoples of all ages. The scope of my work has evolved over the years, but my dedication to the Autism community remains and I am honored to be asked to moderate this session and look forward to the conversations and learnings that will result.



**Grant Bruno** | Presenter

Autism Alliance of Canada's Data2Policy Fellow, Doctoral student in Medical Sciences at the Women and Children's Health Research Institute, University of Alberta

Grant Bruno is nehiyawak (Plains Cree) and a registered member of nipsihkopahk (Samson Cree Nation), one of the reserves that makes up maskwacis (Bear Hills), Alberta. He is a PhD in Medical Sciences - Pediatrics student at the University of Alberta. Grant Bruno is a father, two of his children are on the autism spectrum. His PhD research will explore redefining autism from a nehiyaw lens, gathering stories with families and individuals who have experiences with autism using a strength-based approach, as well as gathering data on the perspectives of autism in Maskwacis.



**Jennifer Quaile** | Presenter

Senior Director, Policy and Programs, Native Women's Association of Canada

Jennifer Quaile is the Senior Director of Policy and Programs at the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). She is currently leading a number of projects related to Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, transgender and gender-diverse people who live with disabilities, including autism. Prior to joining NWAC, she worked for 17 years at Employment and Social Development Canada where she managed teams responsible for policy analysis and program development. The programs included the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities and the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities. She has an M.A. in Political Economy (Carleton University).



**Charles Brown** | Presenter

Education Director, Nishnawbe Aski Nation



**Bertha Sutherland** | Presenter

Women's Council Member, Nishnawbe Aski Nation

A member of the Moose Cree First Nation located on moose factory island, Ontario. Currently on a third term as a northeastern Ontario representative on the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Women's Council. The Women's Council ensures that women's and family issues, and their priorities and needs, are identified and addressed. Her portfolio includes Child Development Strategy, in particular sits in the Autism Action Team under the Child Development Strategy, formerly the Special Needs Strategy at NAN. She is also a proud parent of a son on the spectrum, whom she continues to support and advocate for.

**Ken Robertson** | Presenter

Chair, Four Directions Autism and Member, Autism Ontario



Ken Robertson, M.S.M., is a dedicated husband and father of four. He is Secwepemcúl'ecw from Neskonlith Indian Band, located in the south-central part of British Columbia.

Ken has dedicated his career in public service to advocating for all children on the autism spectrum. He is a former Board Member of Autism Ontario, the Implementation Working Group with the Province of Ontario, and the Social Inclusion Working Group with the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS). In addition, he has experience speaking in conferences and committees on the needs-based approach to Autism services. Also, he volunteers with the Giiwedín Anang Council, which provides a traditional approach to guiding families toward the best possible outcome for the children.

In 2020, Ken received the Meritorious Service Decoration (Civil Division) from the Governor-General for his advocacy work with the ASD community.

Ken is passionate about investing in a fairer, greener economy that empowers future generations and makes life better for families right here in our community.

Ken's hobbies include fishing, playing basketball and cooking.

**2:30 - 3:00 PM**

**Award Ceremony | 2nd Annual Jim and Ginette Munson Autism Leadership Award**



**Margaret Whelan** | Presenter

Co-Chair of Autism Alliance of Canada's External Affairs Committee, Founding member of Autism Alliance of Canada (formerly Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance)

Margaret Whelan has been an advocate and leader in the autism field for over 35 years.



**Ginette Munson and The Hon. Jim Munson** | Presenters

The Honourable Jim Munson is a former Senator. The Hon. Jim Munson was appointed to the Red Chamber in 2003. He spent three decades as a journalist reporting across Canada and around the world. The power of story has shaped Senator Munson’s career from war zones to committee rooms. During his nearly 18 years serving in the Upper Chamber, Senator Munson has championed the rights of children and people with disabilities through legislation, committee work and by setting an example of inclusion.



<https://sencanada.ca/en/sencaplus/people/time-and-space-for-everybody-senator-munson-says-goodbye-to-the-senate/>



**Recipient of 2nd Annual Jim and Ginette Munson Autism Leadership Award** | To be announced during the Award Ceremony.

**3:15 - 3:45 PM** | Presentation | **Looking Forward at the Alliance**



**Dr. Jonathan Lai** | Presenter  
Executive Director at Autism Alliance of Canada

Jonathan Lai (PhD) is the Executive Director at Autism Alliance of Canada. He also holds an Adjunct Faculty position in Health Services Research at the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation (IHPE) in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. Previously, he completed a postdoctoral fellowship at York University, examining predictors of changes in service use for people with developmental disabilities. He led a series of TEDx talks and other integrated knowledge translation projects. This was followed by a CIHR Health System Impact Fellowship at McGill University and the Centre for Innovation in Autism and Intellectual Disabilities, where he led the development of a program evaluation of a specialized medical-dental primary care clinic for people with developmental disabilities, led federal government engagement of evidence-use in policy dialogues, and reports at the United Nations Convention on research evidence used in rights-based approaches for children with disabilities in Canada.

**Shino Nakane** | Presenter

Co-Vice Chair of Autism Alliance of Canada's Board of Directors, and Provincial Director at Autism Society Alberta

Shino Nakane is currently the Provincial Director for Autism Society Alberta. She has volunteered on a variety of boards and committees over the past decade and is currently the co-vice-chair for the Autism Alliance of Canada. She is the Vice-Chair for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, an advisory body for the Government of Alberta.

Shino is the mother of a young adult who is on the autism spectrum who communicates uniquely without words to the people he loves and the world around him. She enjoys walking and listening to music with her son. Shino continually strives to spearhead efforts so that all people are able to live in accessible and inclusive communities.

**Maddy Dever** | Presenter

Co-Vice Chair of Autism Alliance of Canada's Board of Directors, and President of Autistic Bridge Inc.

Maddy Dever (they/them) is a non-binary, wheelchair user with a spinal cord injury and an Autistic adult and parent of five children with four who are also Autistic living in Carleton Place. They advocate at both provincial and federal governments for inclusion and acceptance of Autistic individuals and other people with disabilities and for people with disabilities to have their own voice in policy decisions. Maddy is a former member of the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel and Ontario Autism Program Implementation Working Group, and a current member of the Children's Mental Health Ontario ASD Working Group.

Maddy is the founder of Autistic Bridge Inc., and a leader in the National Disability Strategy movement to build a nationwide coalition of disability organizations advocating for a barrier-free Canada that meets all needs of all disabilities at all ages. They are on the Board of Directors of ConnectWell Community Health. They are a member of ECHO Ontario Autism where they are part of the Expert Hub, which works to educate and inform health professionals on issues related to autism.

Maddy has also led workshops, panels and is a featured speaker on topics surrounding Autism, education, gender identity intersections and disability rights. They have spoken at many businesses, organizations and institutions as well as at national and international conferences and the UN Human Rights Commission.

Maddy writes and shares their speaking engagements at [autisticrambler.com](https://autisticrambler.com).

**The 9th Annual Canadian Autism Leadership Summit would not be possible without the generous contributions of the following organizations:**

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