**11D Brenda Rossow-Kimball, University of Regina & Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous, Executive Director of Astonished!**

"Yes We Can! Young Adults with Complex Physical DisAbilities Focus on Their Strengths"

Complex physical disabilities (CPD) are experienced when individuals require environmental and human supports to express their full capacities. This may include fully accessible buildings and transportation, assistance with mobility, communication, and eating, and personal, medical and health care. Astonished! is a grass-roots, user-led organization that enlists the expertise and knowledge of young adults experiencing CPD to build inclusive community. Traditional day programs and services for this population are often rooted in a deficits-perspective and focus on the diagnosis; they fail to consider the existence of, and capacity for, individual strengths. The result is isolation and segregation of these young adults while their non-disabled peers embark on adventures of young adulthood. When speech cannot be one’s preferred mode of communication, it can be particularly difficult to identify where and how young adults with CPD want to be included in community. This presentation will discuss how young adults living with CPD communicate their strengths, dreams, and needs in non-traditional, non-verbal ways. The author will share how her experience learning from young adults with CPD has awakened her to her own learned narratives of disability and the tensions she has experienced as a researcher, educator, and advocate in shifting these stories.

**11D Faye Wachs, Cal Poly Pomona**

"The Face of a Movement: Coming to Terms with Studying Stigma and Bodily Failure"

This paper focuses on the experience of studying a drastic change to the self that accompanies a significant physical change to the face - facial paralysis. I did not want to do this research. While I enjoy reading other’s work that has a deeply personal component, I have always avoided doing autoethnography and self-revelation in print. And here we are, me interviewing people with synkinesis as a result of permanent facial paralysis. But I couldn’t ignore, a sociologist with a specialty in theory and embodiment, having an experience that is revealing to her a deeper complication to self and embodiment. My experience alone seemed incomplete for analysis, so I completed over a hundred qualitative interviews with people with facial paralysis. The similarity of the experience to those with synkinesis is forming the basis for a new analysis. I have always believed in balance. Your greatest strength is also your greatest weakness, your greatest asset, is also your greatest liability. I had this thing happen - facial paralysis. A weird thing that floats in the nether space between disability, and normality. Something that changed every aspect of interpersonal communication. In that process, how the self changes with the physical ability to express ones-self, is central to the analysis. In the end, the insights into embodiment, self and social theory, have been something I could not have developed or understood without this ongoing experience. Through the project, I explore social and professional impacts of facial paralysis. A key coping strategy is incorporating the experience into one’s career or social network. So here I am coping, and hopefully making a meaningful contribution to the theoretical and advocacy landscape.

**11D James Anderson, Independent Scholar**

"Hope and Strengths within Canada’s Freestyle Ski Community"

In my presentation I discuss the ways in which my knowledge and skills have been transformed through a strengths and hope perspective in working with the Canadian Freestyle Ski Association. A strengths and hope perspective assumes that each individual has inherent strengths, and through access to resources and community support, individuals can enhance their strengths and use them to contribute to
community-oriented goals (Paraschak, 2013). Freestyle skiing is a counter-culture sport, enabling athletes the freedom to express themselves through their movements on-snow and outside of traditional alpine ski racing. Freestyle skiing is at risk of being removed from the 2024 Canada Winter Games (CWG) due to perceived low participation compared to other winter sports. This risk has rallied the provincial/territorial sport associations (P/TSAs) to work together with a “hope in” a preferred future wherein freestyle skiing meets eligibility requirements for the 2024 CWG. As such, large provinces have partnered with smaller provinces/territories to identify their respective strengths and specific pathways to achieve their participation goals, which ultimately will contribute to the greater freestyle ski community. The P/TSAs partnerships illustrate strengths and hope-based practices through listening to each other’s needs and sharing available resources (Paraschak, 2013).

11D Victoria Paraschak, University of Windsor
“Knowledge Production, Wikipedia and Elite Indigenous Athletes in Canada: A Strengths and Hope Perspective Intervention”

Adopting a strengths and hope perspective prompts me to ask different research questions and to consider different types of research. In this presentation, I discuss my current research project, which views Wikipedia as a potential key site for public information on Indigenous athletes in Canada. Assuming knowledge about elite indigenous athletes is a resource young people can draw upon for inspiration, goal clarification and pathways to reach such goals (elements of “hope theory”, e.g., Snyder, 2002), I am mapping out, then intentionally streamlining and creating an effective structure and entries about Indigenous elite athletes in Canada who have excelled in both the mainstream and Aboriginal sport systems. I am also recruiting volunteers who will work with me to achieve this shared goal, my “hope in” (Jacobs, 2005) a preferred future wherein indigenous and non-indigenous individuals have ready access to knowledge about the strengths demonstrated by Indigenous elite athletes along with their range of sporting possibilities. I justify my research processes within a strengths and hope perspective, and comment on ways this research approach transforms my skills as a researcher even as I work to transform existing information on Wikipedia, a process shaped and controlled by editors outside of academia.