

Foreign Policy.

The Democracy, Diversity and Disability Studies conference took place from June 21st to 23rd in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Conference brought together leaders in the disability movement, academics and researchers. A number of major international organizations such as Disabled Peoples' International, Inclusion International and World Federation of the Deaf were able to present their issues in plenary sessions. In addition, many of the Canadian disability organizations such as the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Association for Community Living, Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres and the Canadian Association of the Deaf participated in presentations. The interaction and discussion of issues proved to be very significant and will lead to further dialogue on the development of an international research network. This network will enable the fostering of collaborative partnership on research projects as well as scholarly discussion and exchange on disability research.

Of the three hundred and fifty registered participants, one quarter were from developing countries or former Soviet Union locales. The importance of their continued involvement in future discussions about disability studies was emphasized. The perspectives of individuals from developing countries were promoted in papers, panel presentations and plenaries, and these views added a new dimension of learning to the conference. Those from developing countries also emphasized the benefits to their countries and disability movements of a partnership approach between the disability grassroots movement and the academic sector.

Previous SDS conferences did not attract the level of participation from international participants that was evident at the 2001 event. Over 50 youth and students participated in the conference, some of whom received credit for their involvement through a course in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. A number of students also presented papers at the event.

In addition, there were significant contributions to the developing field of disability studies in Canada and abroad. On the last day, one of the panels examined the critical issues around emerging disability studies programs. At many universities, it appears disability studies is still linked to rehabilitation or professional training. The challenge is to make it truly interdisciplinary and move it away from a professional orientation.

The workshop on Canadian Foreign Policy took place on June 22nd. Two background papers (one entitled "Future Directions in Pursuing of International Disability Issues" and the other called "Canadian Foreign Policy and Disability Issues") were prepared and circulated ahead of time to enable attendees to more meaningfully participate in the discussions which followed the presentations. (see attached papers). In addition, the workshop offered the first opportunity for the researchers and selected participants from disability organizations, (including youth with disabilities), the academic and community sectors and government departments to critically examine the role of disability issues in foreign policy by taking stock of past developments in this area and formulating future directions for action, with a view to developing a policy paper based on current research and the shared knowledge of participants. This paper will be disseminated and be