

## Editorial

### **Welcome to the Conference Proceedings of the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability & Diversity 2023**

Holly Manaseri<sup>1</sup>, Kiriko Takahashi<sup>2</sup>, and Hye-Jin Park<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Conference Chair 2023, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

<sup>2</sup> Conference Co-Chair 2023, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

<sup>3</sup> Conference Co-Chair 2023, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

**Abstract**

This is a welcome message for the Conference Proceedings of the 38th Annual Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability & Diversity 2023 organized by the Center on Disability Studies, College of Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

*Keywords:* Pacific Rim, disability, conference

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Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability & Diversity 2023**

We are pleased to share the Conference Proceedings for the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity 2023. This collection documents some of the diversity of papers presented at the conference in Spring 2023. The conference was held in person for the first time in three years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 1988, the Pacific Rim Conference has served as an important international forum celebrating efforts by those with disabilities and their allies to create more inclusive spaces. In the decades since the conference's inception, it has emerged as the premier global gathering on disability. The conference draws educators, researchers, practitioners, entrepreneurs, policymakers, advocates, and others from across the globe to come together and consider ways we may help make our communities more inclusive and equitable places.

As such, this collection represents some of the many diverse voices present at the Pacific Rim Conference 2023. Drawn together by the conference's theme, *Coming Together and Moving Forward*, participants were invited to consider the ways in which their work might help invite attendees to take collective action and amplify our power for change.

Presentations and events at the conference were organized within six broad, general strands:

- (1) Built Environment: Digital, Physical, and Social – Building and Housing, Climate Resilience and Disasters, Digital Accessibility, and Transportation;

- (2) Deaf Innovations: Policy and Legislation; Qualified Service Professions/Providers; Workplace Barriers and Overcoming Them; Advancement in the Work; Resources (e.g., interpreters, technological services, therapies, etc.); Social Concerns (e.g., life experiences, self-esteem, confidence, self-acceptance, self-advocacy, peer interaction, mentors, and role models); Collaboration Between All Stakeholders (e.g., medical vs. cultural perspective); Family Support and Involvement; Lack of Understanding/Knowledge (from outside and inside deaf communities); Access to Communication and Language Modalities; Access to Technology; Literacy;
- (3) Education: Equitable and Accessible Systems; Pedagogies; Practices; Policies and Services; Inclusive Pre-K-12; Higher Education; Indigenous Culturally Responsive Pedagogy; Transition Planning, Instruction, Programs, and Support Services;
- (4) Employment First, Employment for All: Employment First Policy as Systemic Approach in Creating a Reality of Meaningful Work for All People with Disabilities; Equity through Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce; Work Incentives and Strategies on Managing Benefits While Returning to Work; Transitioning from High School to Further Education and the Workforce; Assistive Technology as Tools for Bridging the Gaps in Employment; Professional Development, Trainings and Services;

- (5) Family, School, and Community Engagement: Students' Sense of Belonging in Schools; Attendance in School; Mental Health; Learning; Special Education;
- (6) Healthy Bodies and Minds – Access for All: Physical Activity Across the Lifespan; Mental Health; Well-Being.

Within these strands, the contributions herein reflect a broad, cross-section of work in the field. In “Creation of a New Professional Position of ‘Assessor’ in Japanese Institutions of Higher Education -- Introduction to the University of Tsukuba's Initiatives,” Nakano, Takahashi, Okazaki, Shinoda, Waki, Takeda, and Sasaki discuss the rise in recent years of the number of students with disabilities in Japan’s higher education and describe initiatives to professionally assess relevant conditions. Jensen, Lee, Hughes, Vollmer, and Maroushek’s “Effective Inclusion Practices for Neurodiverse Children and Adolescents in Informal STEM Learning: A Systematic Review” examines preliminary findings from a review of programmatic elements in STEM learning for neurodiverse youth in informal learning settings. “Raising Children's Voices: Lessons Learned from EC Place” by Follari, Lawless, and Wallace describes the design and practices contributing to gains in skills and outcomes in a program supporting language, communication, and social development of children with significant disabilities within a public preschool setting. Schaffer’s “The Resolute Resisters: How Vulnerable Populations Are Not As Vulnerable As Presumed” considers how disabilities or being from vulnerable populations do not restrict one’s societal contributions. Leong examines “Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Outcomes: 2023 Pacific Rim Conference Accessible and Affordable Housing Discussion” to understand the challenges and advocacy approaches for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities seeking housing.

For all contributions to this volume, plain language versions of abstracts may be accessed at: <https://rdsjournal.org/index.php/journal/plain-language-38th-pac-rim-proceedings>

We wish to thank all the attendees and presenters attending the event. The Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is honored to host this important yearly event for our global community. At the time of writing, we are eagerly anticipating the 39th Pacific Rim Conference taking place at the Hawai'i Convention Center to be held in person in Honolulu, Hawai'i, February 27 to February 28, 2024. We invite readers to watch for announcements of forthcoming conference proceedings. The conference theme is *Beyond Access: Building a Culture of Belonging*, and it invites us to think about how we may collectively foster inclusivity and belonging. We are hopeful we will see many of you there and thank you for all your continued efforts toward these shared goals.

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