An Unforgettable Experience  
NUI Galway International Disability Law Summer School, 2018

On June 18th, 2018 we traveled to Ireland to participate in the 10th International Disability Law Summer School, “Moving Forward: Intersectionality as a tool of Social Change”. Speakers included Rosemary Kayes, Gerard Quinn, Theresia Degener, and current and former committee members of the UNCRPD. This experience complemented the CDS curriculum as ideas surrounding critical theory, human rights and social policy were applied and presented by experienced disability rights activists and experts. We gained a comprehensive understanding of intersectionality and disability rights while discussing how these areas of inquiry relate to different categories that include the additional systemic barriers that are faced by those who experience the many forms of discrimination that disproportionately affect children, women, older persons, and those displaced by international and local political conflict.

We unpacked themes related to reproductive health and disability rights in the context of the global refugee crisis while exploring how shared socio-cultural understandings of ableism and ageism work to sustain the normative ideological lens that views disability as an impairment. While minimal consideration has historically been afforded to the increasing need for a paradigm shift that views disability rights as human rights, it was refreshing to engage with some of the foundational members of the movement.

The level of optimism, determination, and hope that was felt over the week is immeasurable, yet riveting. The value of our experience has now shaped and positioned our understanding of how Canada is situated in the international disability rights movement, and it was noted that despite the many victories gained, there continues to be a lot of work to do!

Sukaina Dada, Alexandra Jean, Fallon Burns, Bephyer Parey, Anne Jackson, Michelle Shelley and Laura Girardo