

**Interview with Dr. Yves Lachapelle, Chair of the International Summit for the Alliance on Social Inclusion to be held May 3-5, 2006 in Montreal, Canada**

“Social inclusion elicits different views among persons with intellectual disabilities, their families and professionals who support them. One potential reason for this difference is that there is relatively little communication among these groups of people...” says Dr. Lachapelle.

The International Summit for the Alliance on Social Inclusion is being co-organized by the American Association on Mental Retardation’s (AAMR)/Quebec after many years of work with several international organizations from America, Europe, and Australia, including Inclusion International, the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disabilities, and Collaborative Centre WHO/OPS of Montreal. More from Dr. Lachapelle...

**AAMR:** Why did you pick social inclusion as the theme for the Summit?

**Dr. Lachapelle:** As a former professional and now professor and researcher, it continues to strike me as ironic that wonderful work is accomplished daily worldwide in the inclusion arena *without really working together!* Often, we tend to forget that the presence of persons with intellectual disabilities is necessary, whenever possible in this process. By not doing this, we are only increasing the confusion in our understanding of the concept of social inclusion. So although we are doing great at developing concrete and innovative practices in inclusion, we are not being as efficient as we could and should be. I believe that by meeting together at the Summit, we will share our knowledge of socially inclusive practices as well as the conceptual frameworks that support them. These points of view deserve to be shared.

**AAMR:** What would you say to someone who asks, “Why should I attend the Summit?”

**Dr. Lachapelle:** There are several reasons why you wouldn't want to miss the International Summit for the Alliance on Social Inclusion. Notably, it is the first time parents and relatives, researchers and professionals will gather as partners to plan collaborative efforts toward the next steps in social inclusion...I mean, *really work together!* To date, we have received over 400 presentations and proposals from experts in 27 countries! That’s the level of interest in the Summit. We have involved experts from English and French-speaking countries from the beginning and plenary sessions and major symposiums will be simultaneously translated into French and English. For AAMR members, this will be the first time the association is initiating an international summit and it’s the first time AAMR is hosting its meeting in Quebec. The Summit, as you can see, is a first in many ways and will create a niche in the history of intellectual disabilities. For each one of these reasons, I wouldn’t want you to miss this unique event!

**AAMR:** Who should attend the Summit?

**Dr. Lachapelle:** Achieving social inclusion requires that international, national, regional, and local associations of practitioners, policy-makers, administrators researchers, persons with intellectual disabilities and their parents and relatives, self-advocates, stakeholders,

and other specialists meet and set a clear agenda to reach our common goal. So all of these groups must plan on attending.

**AAMR:** What would you hope as outcomes of the Summit?

**Dr. Lachapelle:** Meeting of world leaders I hope will foster a spirit of international partnership and collaboration. We hope that implementing best practices discussed will increase success stories in developmental and intellectual disabilities. This process will enhance our understanding of socially inclusive practices and shall contribute, I hope, to the creation of an International Alliance on social inclusion that would diligently work on creating more opportunities for social inclusion and participation! For example, with our actual knowledge, I can't see why existing technologies aren't put to establish a structure that would serve as our gateway to sharing what we know and don't know, best practices, etc. Did you know that in Chili there is a daily half-hour radio program to educate the general population about intellectual disabilities? That we are almost done with deinstitutionalization so there are no institutions left in the province of Québec? That the term mental retardation (object of great debate in the United States of America) hasn't been used for 30 years in Canada? That American, Canadian and Belgian researchers worked on very similar projects but didn't know that they were reinventing the wheel until they joined within an international research group? Imagine how more efficient we would be by increasing and creating linkages... I am not saying it is an easy task but we believe it is good for the field and that it is worth getting to work to make it happen!

**AAMR:** Can you talk a little bit about the speakers chosen for the Summit?

**Dr. Lachapelle:** Sure! Each morning will start with a plenary session where three experts will share perspectives on an issue with attendees. In keeping with the multidisciplinary approach toward the Summit, we have speakers to address a variety of themes that come under the umbrella of social inclusion, including self-determination and quality of life; rights and ethics; health, inclusive schools; barriers to community living; sports and leisure; technology; sustainable urban development; and more. Some of the featured speakers are Dr. Benedetto Saraceno, Director of the World Health Organization's Health department; Dr. David Felce, Director of IASSID; Mrs. Diane Richler, President of Inclusion International and Order of Canada awardee; Dr. Jay Lundell, Intel Oregon; Mrs. Valerie Bradley, President of AAMR; Dr. Hubert Gascon; Past president of AIRHM; and Mrs. Cathy Ficker-Terrill, past president of AAMR. Some more presenters are to be confirmed.

**AAMR:** Why did you choose Montreal as the venue for this Summit?

**Dr. Lachapelle:** What Montreal has to offer attendees—from architecture to hundreds of shops, old-world charm to exquisite cuisine—makes us, the organizers, a little worried (Ha! Ha!). Seriously, Montreal is the best place to host a truly international meeting since the city embodies the SPIRIT of the Summit. In French we say that we love Montreal's French "joie de vivre"! But I don't need to tell you that, the best way to experience it is to BE THERE!

**AAMR:** For AAMR members, how would this meeting differ from ones conducted in the past?

**Dr. Lachapelle:** I have attended AAMR's Annual meeting since 1998 and I am well aware of the importance of that gathering of national leaders of the field. We need it and it is resourceful. As a former Canadian representative to the AAMR board of directors, I've noticed over the years, an increasing interest of AAMR in becoming more internationally focused and to share expertise for the benefit of the persons we serve. Three years ago, the Quebec chapter's board decided that it was time to MAKE IT HAPPEN and we contacted international leading organizations such as, the International Association for the Scientific Study on Intellectual Disabilities (IASSID), Inclusion International, and the Association Internationale de Recherche Scientifique en faveur des personnes Handicapées Mentales (AIRHM) to name a few. Their responses were overwhelming so our crew took it from there. From the very beginning we involved international experts and perspectives from French and English speaking countries. So this will make the Summit quite different.

To learn more about the Summit, visit [www.aamrqc.org](http://www.aamrqc.org)

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