Local Psychologist
Competed in the First
Ever Three-minute
Thesis National
Competition

Eleven finalists from across
the country recently competed
in Canada’s first ever
Three Minute Thesis (3MT)
national competition. A local
Psychology PhD student, Kirk
Luther, was among them.

The contest pits graduate students against
each other to present the complexities of
their research in an engaging and accessible
way, and the catch is that they must present
their research in three minutes or less. The
Canadian Association for Graduate Studies
spearheaded the idea as both a skill-building
opportunity for graduate students, and a way
to “publicly showcase the importance and
relevance of graduate studies.”

His Battle of the Brains began in October,
when Memorial University held a cross-
campus competition. “As the winner of
the 3MT competition at Memorial,” Kirk
explains, “I was fortunate to have the chance
to compete in the Eastern Regional 3MT
competition at Dalhousie University in April.”
He, again, won first place, and at the time of
this interview was set to compete against ten
more graduates from across the country, in
Canada’s first national 3MT competition.

In a nutshell, Luther’s research aims
to improve investigative interviewing
practices. “I just finished a study examining
the child interviewing practices of police
officers. My results showed that there is
a dire need to reform child interviewing
practices across the country. I am using
my published research findings to work
with police organizations and improve child
interviewing practices across Canada.” He
says he was drawn to the topic of child
interviewing practices, because interviewing
children is “an extremely complex but very
important skill, and there is generally a lack
of research examining what occurs during
police interviews with children.” His work will
ensure that police officers are being guided
by “scientific and evidence-based practices.”

He says the most tense moment of the
competition is hard to pinpoint. “It’s pretty
nerve-racking knowing that you only have
three minutes and any slip-up could cost you
the competition. There is no doubt that trying
to condense years of research into three
minutes is tricky. You have to make sure that
your talk includes all of the important points
of the research, you have to ensure that
you grab the attention of the audience and
keep it for those three minutes, and most
importantly, you have to demonstrate why
your research matters and how it can impact
the lives of Canadians.”

Yet he does feel, “without a doubt,” that
relaying information in such a compact
timeframe can actually strengthen one’s own
understanding of the work. “It gives you new
insights into your own research. In today’s
world of 140-character limits and viral
5-second videos, people want information
fast. The ability to present your research
clearly and concisely is on trend with today’s
society, and it’s a great skill to have.”

You can check out Kirk’s project, as well
as the research of his competitors here:
cags.ca/3mt/index.php.