

CREA Conference 2026: CONNECT

Our Presenters



Barb MacLean, Executive Director, Family Caregivers of BC (FCBC)

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Barb has over 30 years' experience in non-profit, government and private sectors. She spent many years in the developmental disabilities field, specializing in supporting some of the most complex and challenging individuals living at home, in residential care and in school settings. Barb holds a Bachelor of Arts from UBC and a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training from RRU.



Heather Treleaven, Executive Director, BC Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN)

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Heather Treleaven is the Executive Director of the British Columbia Association of Community Response Networks, where she leads province-wide efforts to prevent adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect through coordinated community responses. Throughout her career, she has been a strong champion for grassroots, community-driven social change and a passionate advocate for older adults. Previously, as Executive Director of the Seniors Network Society of Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows, she helped build the local Community Response Network and advanced initiatives to improve safety, inclusion, and well-being, including achieving the Age-Friendly Community designation for both cities.



Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate

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Dan Levitt has tirelessly championed the rights of seniors for 30 years at the local, provincial, national and international levels. Prior to his appointment as BC's Seniors Advocate, Dan held leadership positions in senior-living and long-term care homes in the Lower Mainland for more than 10 years where he helped shape a dementia-friendly future for seniors and their loved ones.

He is a certified health executive with the Canadian College of Health Leaders and achieved Fellowship status in the college in July 2024. He also received the Young Executive Award presented by the BC Lower Mainland Chapter Executive of the Canadian College of Health Leaders. On the global stage, Levitt recently served as a member of the board of directors of the Global Ageing Network and the International Federation on Ageing.



Angelina Gordon, Director of Adult Guardianship and Community Engagement, Public Guardian and Trustee

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Angelina Gordon has worked at the Public Guardian and Trustee's office for the last 20 years. In the role of the Director of Adult Guardianship and Community Engagement in Services to Adults, she has focused on building strong connections with partners, government organizations and community groups, with a particular interest in learning from and engaging with indigenous partners in the work of the PGT. Her previous work centered on working with and on behalf of children and youth in and from care. She is grateful to live on the unceded and ancestral territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.



Jaime Lord, Senior Manager, Fraud & Security, First West Credit Union

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Jaime Lord is the Senior Manager, Fraud & Security at First West Credit Union, where she has dedicated 27 years to safeguarding members, employees, and communities across British Columbia. She leads enterprise fraud prevention, detection, and investigations, combining operational rigor with a deep commitment to public awareness and education.

Jaime holds a Bachelor of Technology in Forensic Investigations (Economic Crime) and is a Certified Financial Crime Investigator. Jaime is passionate about education and awareness initiatives that empower individuals and communities to recognize and prevent fraud, scams, and financial abuse.



Vinh Ngo, Corporal - Federal Policing Financial Crimes - Subject Matter Resource, RCMP Federal Policing Prevention and Engagement (FPPE) - Pacific Region

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Cpl. Ngo is a police officer with the RCMP and is currently working at Federal Policing Prevention and Engagement (FPPE) at Pacific Region. He has been working to bring financial crime awareness to vulnerable demographics including seniors. Unfortunately, older adults are increasingly being victimized by sophisticated tactics used by organized crime groups. This issue requires a holistic approach that includes utilizing outreach and capitalizing on partnerships with public and private entities.



Denise Cheung, UBC Social Work Practicum Student, Public Guardian and Trustee of BC (PGTBC)

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Denise is a Project and Program Supervisor at the Chinese Community Policing Centre, where she leads culturally and linguistically responsive outreach and educational workshops for Chinese communities across the Lower Mainland. She collaborates with partners, including the Vancouver Police Department, to promote fraud prevention, community safety, and senior well-being. She is also completing her Social Work practicum with the University of British Columbia at the Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia, contributing to community engagement within Services to Adults and Child and Youth Services.



Leslie Gaudette, President, Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia (COSCO BC)

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As the president of COSCO BC, she is a thoughtful and passionate advocate for healthy ageing and values, and the incredible contributions older adults make to their families and communities through active participation in society. She represents COSCO on CREA, the Steering Committee of the BC Health Coalition, and is a founding member of the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism to advocate for the UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. A 'retired' epidemiologist whose career focused on chronic disease control, she serves on the Public Awareness Committee of the Canadian Medication Appropriateness and Deprescribing Network.



Marie-Noël Campbell, Executive Director & Staff Lawyer, Seniors First BC

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Marie-Noël was called to the Bar in New York State and British Columbia. She joined Seniors First BC as their Executive Director and as one of their staff lawyers in December 2020. She has focused on expanding services throughout the province, including in First Nations' communities, in rural BC and for and older adults with complex needs. Prior to joining SFBC, she worked in mental health law, housing law, and citizenship, immigration and refugee law, and served as an adjudicator for a local tribunal.



Sergeant Joseph Chidlow, CD, Mental Health Act and Elder Abuse Coordinator, Community Policing Services / "E" Division (BC RCMP)

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Sgt. Joseph Chidlow joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 2012 and has served in a range of investigative and supervisory roles throughout British Columbia. He currently serves as the Provincial Coordinator for the Mental Health Act and Elder Abuse, where he works closely with partner agencies and detachments to support program delivery across the division.

Alongside his policing career, Sgt. Chidlow is a commissioned Reserve Officer in the Canadian Armed Forces, contributing 24 years of dedicated service. He is also an active volunteer with several non-profit organizations, most notably Honour House.



Dr. Gloria Gutman, Professor/Director Emerita, Simon Fraser University Gerontology Department & Gerontology Research Centre

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Gloria Gutman, PhD developed the Gerontology Research Centre and Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and was director of both from 1982-2005. Currently, she's a Research Associate and Professor Emerita at SFU. Her awards and honours include Order of British Columbia, LLD (honoris causa- Western University), Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal and Order of Canada for her work "as an international authority in the field of gerontology". She is author/editor of 23 books. Her research interests include LGBT+ aging, seniors' housing, long-term care, health promotion, gerontechnology, prevention of elder abuse, advance care planning, and disaster mitigation.



Kelly Acker (Retired)

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Kelly Acker is a lawyer, with a background in human rights and environmental issues. She recently retired after 20 years with the BC Government (primarily Ministry of Health), where she managed the Prevention of Elder Abuse portfolio. In 2013, Kelly played a pivotal role supporting the launch of CREA, part of the province's *Together to Reduce Elder Abuse Strategy*. In retirement, Kelly is availing herself of opportunities to support the excellent work of community-level and province-wide organizations addressing elder abuse.



Darren Usher, Chair, Dignity Seniors Society

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Darren (he/they) brings a background in Gestalt psychotherapy and social work, with over 25 years of experience delivering and managing frontline social services for gender and sexually diverse individuals and communities. He has extensive knowledge of the BC mental health community, and coordinated the BC Alliance on Mental Health and Addictions from 2010 to 2012. From 2009 to 2015, he served as Program Manager at Health Initiative for Men, and initiated many programs focusing on gay men's (MSM) mental and social health.

Darren spent two years working as Director of Professional Practice at the BC College of Social Workers with a focus on professional regulation. He currently works with the BC Association of Social Workers, advocating for social workers and social justice issues in BC.



April Struthers, Director of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Learning,
BC Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN)

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April owns Wit Works Ltd. and works across Canada and in the UK and US as an organizational consultant, to increase capacity, develop collaboration and conduct prevention research. She specializes in non-intrusive practice in First Nations communities and has written extensively on Networks. She led, co-led and/or co-authored several national events/publications in relation to the Federal Elder Abuse Initiative.

April works on the national **It's Not Right** community of practice and co-hosts episodes of the EAPO podcast '**Ageing Vibrantly**'. April holds teaching certification, an MED in social psychology and is a Registered Clinical Counsellor.



Lindsay Risk, Manager, Community Health Services Island Health, Campbell River

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Lindsay is a registered social worker with over 24 years of experience in health care, working across community, acute, long-term care, and mental health outreach settings. Her frontline practice has focused on supporting individuals and families navigating chronic illness, dementia, adult guardianship, and palliative and end-of-life care.

Lindsay is deeply committed to relational care. She approaches her work with curiosity and humility, believing that feeling safe, seen, and valued is foundational to healing and connection.

Lindsay has served as a sessional instructor in the Schools of Social Work at the University of Victoria and Vancouver Island University. She currently works with Island Health as a Manager of Community Health Services in Campbell River, BC.



Shae Viswanathan, Director, Settlement Services, Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC)

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Shae Viswanathan is a Director at the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC), where she oversees multiple teams delivering integrated settlement programs across Metro Vancouver. She leads innovative curriculum design and community-based initiatives that advance newcomer inclusion, digital literacy, climate resilience, and culturally informed service delivery. Her work supports vulnerable newcomer groups including seniors, women, youth, and families through trauma-informed, participatory approaches. Her extensive experience in multilingual resource development, staff training, and cross-sector partnerships strengthens access and safety for immigrant and refugee communities, while her leadership is anchored in equitable, culturally respectful systems that foster belonging, well-being, and enduring community resilience.



Joanna Drake, Director, Community-based Seniors' Services, BC Ministry of Health

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Joanna assumed responsibility for the Adult Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Response portfolio last August, prompting an immense amount of respect and appreciation for the complexity of this important work. Promoting health and well-being to seniors has consistently motivated her, and she welcomed this transition as a meaningful challenge. Prior to her current role, she worked as a dietitian for over 20 years in a variety of clinical and health promotion settings.



Sandy Zeznik, Chair, Seniors in Partnership (SIP) – Cranbrook

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Sandy was born in Vancouver BC and moved to Cranbrook BC to take on a teaching position. She retired as a Teacher/Principal and continued her work as a community volunteer. Turning 85 this year, she is involved as a chair, board member or volunteer in the following organizations: Cranbrook Seniors Centre, Cranbrook Rotary, Cranbrook Health Care Auxiliary, Community Foundation of the Rockies, Curiosity, Frailty and Palliative Care, Key City Theatre, Friends of the Library, COSCO, BC CRN, Abreast in the Rockies Dragon Boat Team, and Cranbrook Tourism.



Anjali Marshall, Regional Mentor - Northwest and Northern Interior BC, BC Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN); Representative of Smithers Seniors Association

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After living in Vancouver for 20 years, I moved to Bulkley Valley four years ago. I initially lived in a very rural subdivision of Smithers called Quick, where I spent two years supporting seniors in their eighties who were living independently on their own acreage.

While Quick was too slow-paced for me, my husband and I later moved closer to Smithers, settling on a rural farm property. Through these experiences, I have continued to learn about realities faced by seniors living both in town and in rural settings—each with its own challenges. I've also come to learn that many people experience social isolation for unique and varied reasons.



Nancy Devries, President, Smithers Seniors Citizens Association

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I came from Michigan in 1963 to teach grades 1 and 2 in a Christian school under the teacher exchange program. While living in Smithers, I met Paul, and we were married in 1965. I later left teaching to focus on raising our four children.

As our children grew, I became increasingly involved in community service, volunteering in various roles, including serving on the board of the government-funded Resources Board. This work eventually led to my role as CEO of Smithers Community Services, a position I held until 1998. Then, as now, I have continued to volunteer in the community, including with the Senior Citizens Association and the Hospice Society.



Dr. Balbir Gurm, Executive Director, Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships (NEVR)

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Dr. Balbir Gurm is an award-winning nursing leader, professor at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Nursing. She founded the Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships (NEVR), where she collaborates across sectors to develop resources, deliver workshops, and advocate for systems change to build a violence-free society.

Dr. Gurm led the development of the free e-book, *Making Sense of a Global Pandemic: Relationship Violence & Working Together Towards a Violence Free Society*, which brings critical academic knowledge into communities. Her numerous honours include two Teaching Excellence Awards, BC Achievement Community Award, two YWCA Women of Distinction Awards and Darpan Magazine's Community Crusader Award.



Sally Watson, Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre

Sally was elected in local government for 20 years and has dedicated her time since retirement to helping seniors navigate their way through the mess of paperwork to find available services and has helped to fill in as a chauffeur/advocate and good listener when needed. Affiliated with BCCRN and Seniors Health and Wellness Institute, she has attempted to make aging in place more comfortable and safer for Seniors in her communities. Her concern is the lack of services and the lack of knowledge of current services, and the funding cycles that dry up closing down the service.