Speaker Bios

27th John K. Friesen Conference “From Social Isolation to Inclusion”

Simon Fraser University Vancouver campus, 515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC

May 16-17, 2018

Keynote Speaker

Angela Kitching, MA is Age UK’s Head of External Affairs. She has worked for Age UK for over 11 years and her current role is to influence the UK Government on issues of concern to older people. Angela leads Age UK’s work in the Parliament of Westminster and in the charity’s public campaigns. She has shaped the national Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness and using media, campaigns and political influencing has helped to achieve the UK’s first government minister for loneliness. Angela’s principal objective is to achieve change in UK social policy. She is particularly interested in connecting elected representatives with people’s life experiences. She is an alumnus of the Government of Japan’s Core Young Leaders of Civil Society programme (2006), is an AMEX Charity Leaders graduate (2007) and has recently completed the National Council of Voluntary Organisation’s Charity Leaders 2020 programme (2017). Angela graduated with an MA in Ethics from the University of London and BA in English from the University of York.
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Andrew Wister PhD is currently Director of the Gerontology Research Centre at SFU. Previously he was Chair of the Gerontology Department, where he spearheaded the development of the Masters and PhD programs. He has been active in the Canadian Association on Gerontology, receiving the Distinguished Member Award in 2014 and is the immediate past chair of the National Seniors Council of Canada. As the lead of the SFU Data Collection Site and Computer Assisted Telephone Interview Site, Dr. Wister is part of the Canadian Longitudinal Study of Aging (CLSA). He is author of over 75 peer-reviewed articles, 12 books and monographs, and numerous chapters, reports and other publications on: baby boomer health dynamics; population aging and population health; environmental adaptation among older adults; patterns of family and social support; health promotion; statistical methods; and life-course trends and transitions.

Gloria Gutman PhD developed the Gerontology Research Centre and Department of Gerontology at SFU and was director of both from 1982-2005. She is currently a Research Associate and Professor Emerita at SFU. Dr Gutman is author/editor of 23 books, the most recent (with Andrew Sixsmith), Technologies for Active Aging (Springer, 2013). Her research interests are wide-ranging; including seniors’ housing, long term care, health promotion, seniors and emergency preparedness, gerontechnology, prevention of elder abuse and neglect and most recently, increasing advance care planning among marginalized groups. During her career Dr Gutman has held a number of high profile roles including two terms as President of the Canadian Association on Gerontology, President of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, and President of the International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse. Currently, she is President of the North American chapter of the International Society for Gerontechnology, a member of the CIHR Institute of Aging Advisory Board and a member of the Research Management Committee of the Canadian Frailty Network. In 2007 she was awarded the Order of British Columbia, in 2010 an LLD (honoris causa) by the University of Western Ontario for her work “as an international authority in the field of gerontology” and was named one of Canada’s “best 45 over 45” by Zoomer magazine, in 2012 she was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal and in 2016, the Order of Canada, the country’s highest civilian honour.
Kimberly Barwich, B.A. has been Program Director at Burnaby Neighbourhood House for the past 19 years. The Neighbourhood House, the first in Burnaby, is a multi-service agency with a focus on building welcoming and inclusive communities. Utilizing an asset based community development approach, Kimberly develops and supports a range of programs throughout the lifespan from Family Support programs to Youth Leadership and Adult Literacy. Through this work Kimberly has been involved in the development of seniors services at the Neighbourhood House, including Seniors Together and the Senior Ambassador Outreach program.

Sylvia Ceacero, MBA, MA Chief Executive Officer BC Seniors Living Association has over 20 years of executive management experience in the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors with a focus on transformational change. Sylvia has an MBA from HEC Montreal, an MA in Political Science from McGill University, and several executive certificates from Queen’s University and a Master Certificate in Risk Management from York University. Sylvia’s achievements include bringing organizations the desired vision and results that drive organizational mission.

Laura Cherrille BA (Psych) was recently hired as the first staff member for the New West Hospice Society as Program Director. Laura brings to New West Hospice a wealth of experience in the non-profit sector that includes over 14 years in Executive Director positions in hospice palliative care, a hospital foundation, and addictions services. She believes in giving back to her community and has sat on several boards in areas of addiction, mental health, restorative youth justice, chamber of commerce, and was an active Rotarian for over 5 years.

Heather Cowie, MA is the Provincial Coordinator for Dementia-Friendly Communities at the Alzheimer Society B.C. Heather has a Masters degree in Gerontology from SFU where she studied aging and the built environment. She has been involved in numerous programs and projects related to the well-being of older adults and is thrilled to be bringing attention to making communities better for people living with dementia by leading B.C.’s Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative.

Cass Elliott, BA, BFA is an ally and advocate for marginalized communities and an ambassador for queer, trans and Two-Spirit communities in his role as Seniors’ Coordinator at QMUNITY and from his seat on EGALE’s National Seniors Advisory Council. He is passionate about policy and program design based on principle understandings of collaborative practice, practice readiness, anti-oppressive frameworks, and values based inclusive development.
Eddy Elmer, MA is completing his PhD in social gerontology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He is interested in mental health and aging, with a focus on social isolation and loneliness. His dissertation examines the psychological processes linking sexual minority stress and loneliness in older LGBTQ adults. Prior to his PhD, Eddy earned bachelor’s degrees in psychology and general studies, and a master’s degree in gerontology, all from Simon Fraser University. In addition to conducting research, Eddy serves as a member of the City of Vancouver Seniors’ Advisory Committee.

Joanne Franko, MA is Manager, Seniors & Volunteers, North Shore Neighbourhood House (NSNH). Joanne holds a Master’s Degree in Gerontology from SFU and has worked as a city planner, healthcare researcher and advocate for community-based seniors’ services. Studies in gerontology aligned with her experience in urban planning and have informed research and policy work in the areas of the built environment and community service delivery for older people living in the community. As a researcher she advocates for improved community services including integrated home support, caregiver support and adult day programming. In her current position with the NSNH Joanne is actively engaged with two working groups in the Allies in Aging Project.

Wynona Giannasi, MPA is an evaluator and strategist specializing in the health and social service sectors. Wynona has over 15 years of public sector experience focusing on evaluation, project management, stakeholder engagement and change management. She works with project teams to develop appropriate evaluation methodology that documents the journey and the impact, uncovers success factors and future improvements, demonstrates accountability, and tells the story of what happened and what changed. Wynona utilizes a unique style to engage diverse stakeholders and brings together differing perspectives to drive organizations forward. She is passionate about initiatives designed to enhance system functioning. Wynona holds a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Victoria.

Mario Gregorio, BA, BSc is a retired Data Analyst who arrived in Canada from the Philippines in the mid-1970s. He holds a BA with a major in English and a Bachelor of Science in Journalism (Mass Communication). Diagnosed with vascular dementia and Alzheimer’s disease in 2008, he accessed support and education through Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s First Link® dementia support. Living alone and independently, Mario is a long-time dementia advocate and volunteer with the Society and other organizations, like Tourism Vancouver. An avid photographer, he contributes photos to publications where he volunteers. He lives in Burnaby.

Charles & Marjorie Grierson were born, raised and educated in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Charles has a B.Comm. degree from the University of Manitoba, and a Masters in Hospital Administration from the University of Minnesota. Retired in 1990 after 32 years in Health Care, his last position was President of the G.F.Strong Rehabilitation Centre. Marjorie, trained as a Secretary, was a stay-at-home mom for 23 years, then resumed her career as Secretary at Maple Lane Elementary School, a position she held for 11 years. She also was secretary/marketing at Courtyard Gardens Residence. The Griersons have been married for 64 years. They are parents to three children, David, deceased at age 49 in 2004 (Sheri); Maureen 61 (Richard, retired), Peter 55, retired (Julie); they have seven grandchildren (five married), and a one-year-old great granddaughter. They have lived in the Emerald Assisted Living at Elim Village for two years.
**Eman Hassan, MD, MPH** is the Director of Public Health Initiatives at the BC Centre for Palliative Care, where she is leading its Compassionate Communities Initiative, Seed Grant Program and Advance Care Initiative. She is author of the Centre’s White Paper “The Public Health Approach to Palliative Care” in which she describes the different public health palliative care models including the Compassionate Communities’ model and presents the international experiences with these models. Eman has more than 15 years of experience leading population health initiatives in BC and abroad.

**Marian Heemskerk, LPN, MA, CHE** is Director of Community Life at Elim Village, a multi-site seniors living community located in Surrey and recently expanded to Chilliwack. The Surrey location is a 25-acre campus of care featuring various housing and care options. Marian Heemskerk began working at Elim in 2004 and was directly involved in the development of the Emerald Assisted Living. Marian’s role today oversees the operations of Community Life, which includes Assisted Living as well as the extensive community of Independent Living residents, and ensuring the provision of community health and wellness for all.

**Maria Howard, MBA, M.Ed** is the Chief Executive Officer of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. Her educational background includes a BA with a focus on mental health from UBC, an M.Ed with a focus on rehabilitation from the University of Washington, and an MBA in Leadership from Athabasca University. She is a dynamic and strategic thinker with both provincial and national board governance experience. Her decades of leadership in the health-care sector and commitment to operational excellence fit with the Society’s ambitious goals — goals that have grown out of the increasing number of people who face a dementia diagnosis in B.C..

**Laura Kadowaki, MA** is a PhD Student in the Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University. Her research interests include: home and community care services, community-based seniors’ services, integrated care systems, social policy, and gerontology education. Laura has worked on a number of research and advocacy projects including the Raising the Profile Project, the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging, and the Fact Book on Aging in British Columbia. Laura currently serves as the President of the Canadian Association on Gerontology Student Connection.

**Marc Kinna, B Comm, MBA**, Executive Vice President Operations & Chief Operating Officer - Baptist Housing, leads Baptist Housing operational teams, where over 1100 Team Members serve over 2,100 seniors each day in 17 residences in Victoria, the Lower Mainland, and the Interior of BC. Their services include community programs, volunteer opportunities, affordable housing, home support, independent supportive living, assisted living, and residential care. Based on their belief that seniors experience life well in supportive communities, Baptist Housing tailors its inclusion and socialization programs to the needs of seniors across the spectrum of services and housing.

**Sharon Koehn, PhD**, is a Clinical Research Professor in the Department of Gerontology at SFU. Trained as a medical anthropologist, she conducts interdisciplinary community-based research with immigrant older adults on dementia, health care access, chronic disease self-management support, quality of life, and mental health promotion. Dr. Koehn’s current research focuses on the lived experiences of immigrant older adults as captured by photovoice and life story methods and exhibited in community centres across the Lower Mainland. She currently teaches courses on culture migration and aging, health care issues for minority older adults, death and dying, and health and illness in later life.
Anthony Kupferschmidt, MA, CPG, CDP, is the Executive Director of the West End Seniors’ Network in Vancouver. He currently serves on the City of Vancouver Seniors’ Advisory Committee and is a member of the Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Seniors (SILAS) subcommittee. Anthony is Co-President of the BC Psychogeriatric Association, Co-Chair of the Community Action Initiative, and a member of the BC Community-Based Seniors’ Service Sector Leadership Council. He is also past Psychology Division Chair of the Canadian Association on Gerontology. Anthony has been working with older adults since the age of 17.

Delphine Labbé, PhD is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of British Columbia. She obtained her PhD from the University of Quebec at Montreal where she studied housing and families living with people with spinal cord injury. Dr. Labbé uses participatory action research and involves the participants in all aspects of her studies to ensure their voices are heard. She has been working in partnership with various organizations, focusing on universal access, adapted leisure, and promoting social opportunities.

Kahir Lalji, MA is the Provincial Director of Healthy Aging with the United Way of the Lower Mainland which supports the Provincial Better at Home and Active Aging Programs as well as sector collaboration and capacity building initiatives. United Way’s Healthy Aging strategy is predicated on physical activity, social connectedness and civic vitality. Kahir is a Social Gerontologist by designation and was inspired to work in the field of Aging by his Mentor, his grandma, for whom he was primary caregiver.

Mariam Larson, BA, PBD (Gero) is a Consulting Gerontologist, providing comprehensive consulting and project management services for cities and agencies. As Backbone Lead for Allies in Aging, Mariam supports coordination, communication and collaboration among partners. Inspired by aging family and senior leaders in the community, Mariam returned to school after 20 years in corporate communications. She completed her Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Gerontology at SFU in 2007. On a personal note, Mariam belongs to the “sandwich generation.” She is married, the mother of two adult children, active grandmother to toddler-twins, and the go-to support for her 87 year-old mother. She considers “life balance” a fallacy and instead aims for role integration.

Annwen Loverin, MA is the Executive Director of Silver Harbour Seniors’ Activity Centre, a community gathering place with more than 70 different programs and services for seniors in North Vancouver. She is a skilled non-profit manager with over twenty years’ experience in supporting seniors’ well-being, independence, and resilience. With a Master of Arts in Community Planning from the University of British Columbia, she balances strategic thinking with a strong commitment to equity, compassion, and positivity.

Claudine Matlo, MA is Director of Community Programs at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House and has been working in a variety of roles with seniors for over 15 years. She completed her MA in Gerontology in 2012. Her Capstone was on Aging in Place in the Built Environment. She holds a certificate as an Ayurvedic & Hatha Yoga Teacher and is currently enrolled in the Leadership Fellows Program with the United Way.
Barbara McMillan, MN is the provincial Community and Sector Development Coordinator with United Way of the Lower Mainland’s Healthy Aging Team, where she is leading development of the Community Based Seniors’ Services Sector network and knowledge hub. Barbara has over 30 years experience in community, organization, and network development. She has worked and volunteered with a wide range of community and civil sector organizations locally and globally, including Vancouver Foundation, Community Foundations of Canada, Vancity Community Foundation, and Health Canada’s Health Promotion Directorate. She earned a BA in Communications from SFU and a Master of Management (National Voluntary Sector Leaders) from McGill University.

Paul Mick, MPH, MD is a practicing Otolaryngologist (ENT surgeon) in Kelowna and a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, UBC. He obtained a Master’s degree in public health from Harvard. He treats a wide range of head and neck disorders including hearing loss. His research goals are to understand and quantify the effects of sensory loss on health and wellness at the population level, and develop strategies to improve quality of life for people with sensory loss. He is using data from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging to investigate the links between sensory and cognitive health and the role of social factors.

Andrew Middleton, BA, BEDA is an Affordable Housing Consultant with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. He is active in promoting the federal government’s role in housing to a wide range of housing stake holders and is currently focused on building partnerships with municipal governments, the non-profit housing sector and private industry to develop affordable housing opportunities across the province. Andrew has over 20 years of experience in the housing and finance sector and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Environmental Design degree in Architecture, both from the University of Manitoba. He has also completed certificates in Project Management and Management Excellence from UBC Sauder School of Business.

Heather Mohan, PhD, RCC, MTA is the Founder and Executive Director of Camp Kerry Society; a registered charity that specializes in providing support and counselling for young families coping with life-threatening illness, grief and bereavement. Heather worked as a Counsellor and Music Therapist with Delta Hospice Society and as the Coordinator of the Lions Gate Hospital Family Bereavement/Expressive Arts Therapy Program. In 1997, she developed the first music therapy program at Canuck Place Children’s Hospice. Heather holds a Master’s degree in Music Therapy and a PhD in Arts Education. She has been a Faculty member at City University of Seattle and Capilano University and is currently an instructor in the UBC Department of Medicine (Division of Palliative Care).

Brock Nicholson BA, Dip(Gero), CPG is a Founding Member and Director of New West Hospice Society. Founded in 2016, NWHS is dedicated to building a grassroots hospice initiative from the community level up, based on the Compassionate City model. An alumnus of SFU’s Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Gerontology program, Brock has worked in hospice palliative care for over 10 years and has been an avid proponent of the Compassionate Communities movement since 2014. Most recently, he has been working on the iCAN-Advance Care Planning study funded by the Canadian Frailty Network, the Translating Research into Elder Care Program for the University of Alberta, and as a Regional Coordinator for the BC Office of the Seniors Advocate’s Residential Care Survey Project.
Jan Robson has been with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. since 2006, as the coordinator of the Dementia Helpline, a Provincial Program Coordinator, and now in the Advocacy and Education department as a Provincial Education Coordinator. She has experience facilitating a support group for people with early-onset dementia and one for caregivers, as well as delivering workshops to various community groups. Her current role is multifaceted. She does workshops for health care providers; coordinates and delivers the tele-workshops; supports staff around advocacy issues; and works on program development.

John Stark, MCIP, RPP, is the Acting Manager of Planning and the Senior Social Planner for the City of New Westminster. In the latter role, John is responsible for such diverse areas as age and ability friendly communities, housing and shelter, multiculturalism and inter-cultural relations, and poverty reduction and food security. As part of his work, John has taken an active interest in the creation of more caring and compassionate communities which foster a sense of belonging, inclusion and respect.

Elizabeth Tang, MBA is Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) Knowledge Transfer Consultant in BC. In her role as Knowledge Transfer Consultant, Elizabeth is focused on engaging with professionals in the housing industry, academics and provincial and municipal governments to ensure access to the latest and most relevant housing information from CMHC. She is currently focused in the areas of integrated accessible and adaptable design, solutions for aging in place and designing for housing affordability. Elizabeth has been with CMHC since 2006. Prior to working at CMHC, Elizabeth was Trade Commissioner, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. She is a LEED Green Associate, and holds a MBA from University of British Columbia with a specialization in sustainability and business strategic management.

Stephanie Williams, BA is General Manager of Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST), a non-profit charity promoting sustainable transportation. She has been with the organization for eight and a half years and working on BEST’s seniors’ transportation programs for three years. She is currently completing her Master’s in Community Development at the University of Victoria. Her thesis is on the topic of adapting Metro Vancouver’s transportation system to be age-friendly.

Carol Ann Young, ECE (honours), BA, WSET Level 3, has been engaged in policy, research and program development in local and provincial governments in both Ontario and BC. Over the past 18 years, as a senior social planner and team lead with the City of Vancouver she has worked on Early Care and Learning, Healthy City Strategy, Social Granting, Age Friendly Action Plan, Social Infrastructure Review and most recently on Senior’s initiatives. In partnership with the Seniors’ Advisory Committee, she supported the Isolation and Loneliness Among Seniors project and Dementia Friendly Cities Train the Trainer (in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Society of BC).