



GRC NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GERONTOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE

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JOHN K. FRIESEN

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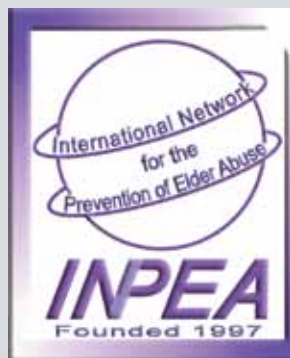
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SENIORS'
HOUSING UPDATE
VOLUME 19, NO. 2

ISSUE THEME
Mobility and
Aging



The GRC is the Secretariat of the International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) with President Gloria M. Gutman, Ph.D.



John K. Friesen

1912 – 2010

THE GERONTOLOGY COMMUNITY HONOURS THE LIFE OF JOHN K. FRIESEN

by **Andrew Wister**, Chair, Gerontology Department, SFU

On behalf of the Gerontology Department, Gerontology Research Centre, and the wider gerontology community, this GRC News issue is devoted, in part, to recognizing the life of John K. Friesen, who died at the age of 98 in June 2010. John K. Friesen has been a benefactor and tremendous supporter of gerontology education and research at Simon Fraser University. The John K. Friesen Lecture Series in his name has been held for 19 consecutive years, spanning almost two decades.



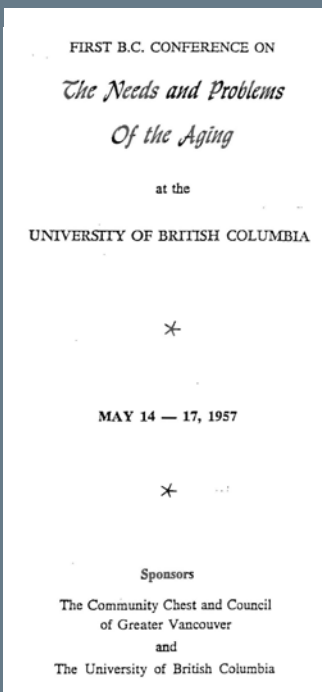
Congratulations to:
Dr. Gloria Gutman with **Dr. Amit Chakma**, UWO President and Vice-Chancellor (LEFT) and **John Thompson**, UWO Chancellor (RIGHT)]
 Dr. Gutman has been awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa (LL.D.)) by the University of Western Ontario for her work as an “international authority in the field of gerontology.” [Reported in SFU Media Matters]



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

by Andrew Sixsmith, Director, SFU Gerontology Research Centre

It is with great sadness that this issue of GRC News reports the passing of John Friesen, a friend and great supporter and benefactor of the GRC over many years. Andrew Wister’s article highlights John’s great achievements and visionary leadership within education and gerontology. Fittingly, GRC News and the Seniors’ Housing Update covers some of the leading edge gerontological research being carried out at SFU. Andrew Wister outlines SFU’s involvement in the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging that will provide us with an unprecedented level of information on aging within the Canadian population. Ashley Waldoch and I describe some initial work being carried out on access to broadband internet in rural areas of British Columbia. Glenyth Nasvadi examines the impact of driving restrictions on older people, while Ben Mortenson looks at mobility and social participation amongst wheelchair users in residential care.



IT HAS BEEN A GREAT PLEASURE and privilege to know and celebrate the annual Friesen lecture series with John and his wife Marta over the years. I have been able to put together a brief biography of his life, in particular, where it has intersected with gerontology. Dr. Friesen, a pioneer in cutting edge continuing education, was the organizer of the first BC conference on aging entitled *The Needs and Problems of the Aging*, which was held at UBC in 1957 (a photo of John along with other participants as well as the cover of the event program are reproduced here).

John Friesen was born June 11, 1912 in Altona, Manitoba. There is little doubt that John’s upbringing in rural Manitoba and experiencing the depression shaped his life’s pursuits, in particular his involvement in credit unions, rural issues, and continuing education. Indeed, John can be described as a community developer and educator. When I once asked John what he found most remarkable in his life, he said “the discovery that you can change people’s lives by working with others.” This epitomizes John’s life philosophy and virtually all of his education and work pursuits.

After graduating from high school, John became a Principal of Haskett School in 1930 at the remarkable age of 18. He was involved in a number of teaching positions for the next several years, but this was not enough for someone who wanted to make

a difference in the world. John started a credit union in Virden in 1939 in reaction to the depression years, and even traveled to St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia to study about the credit union movement from Father



Cody, another pioneer of his field. He returned to Manitoba to be involved in the Federation of Agriculture and Cooperatives, and the CBC Farm Radio Forum. John’s community development interests were put on hold in WWII during which he joined the RCAF as a navigator, flying 35 combat missions for which he received the Distinguished Flying Cross. Upon returning to his home province, John was appointed advisor to Premier Garson’s Manitoba Commission on Adult Education in 1945, which started him on an inevitable path towards the emerging field of Gerontology. Yet his thirst for knowledge was not complete. John applied and was accepted to Columbia University in New York, completing a Masters and PhD degree in Rural Sociology and Continuing Education between 1946 and 1948. But Dr. Friesen’s most remarkable achievement at Columbia has little to do with education. He met a woman at International House (a famous graduate student residence) who was taking an MA degree in Education



John Friesen (LEFT) pictured at first UBC Conference on Aging



Donations to the JOHN K. FRIESEN LECTURE SERIES

can be made to:

THE JOHN K. FRIESEN LECTURE SERIES ENDOWMENT

Gerontology Department

Harbour Centre

515 West Hastings St.

Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3

for the Physically Handicapped. It is ironic that international is exactly the word that would later describe John and the woman he married in 1948 from Columbia – Marta Korah.

A few things about Marta. She was born in Czechoslovakia in 1923, but she was always a step ahead of history. She was a Hungarian in Czechoslovakia, then a Czech in Chile, a Chilean in Canada, and a Canadian around the world. Marta was instrumental in their escape because of her knowledge of five languages. This later provided her with an opportunity to teach Spanish at UBC's continuing education department, and to develop a successful career as a travel agent. She started this in 1955 (the year I was born), guiding travelers on tours around the world and is still working as of today. Marta has also been an active community developer; she was a founding member of the BC Planned Parenthood Association in 1960 and President of the BC Voice of Women, to name a few.

John and Marta returned to his home province of Manitoba and had two children, in the early 50s – Robert and Melanie. John's work in developing credit unions, organizing campaigns for provincial education initiatives and hospitals did not go unnoticed in BC. Indeed, the President of UBC recruited John to become the Director of University Extension (Continuing Studies). He then became known at an international level through his involvement with UNESCO, traveling to India to promote continuing education. John was subsequently appointed to the Rockefeller Population Council and traveled with Marta to several countries, including Turkey and Iran, to work on health and family planning projects. He then was recruited by the Canadian counterpart IDRC International Development Research Centre and later CIDA to pursue this work in other countries around the world (including Kenya and Egypt), along with a multitude of other organizational duties.

In 1985, John received an honorary doctorate from SFU at the age of 73. As a result, John was asked by Jack Blaney (past President of SFU) to assist SFU in its Continuing Education Program. John gravitated to Gerontology, where he met Dr. Gloria Gutman. This led to some successful fund-raising and the development of the Friesen Lecture Series, which will reach its landmark 20th Lecture Series next spring.

John has received too many awards to mention here, but his appointed membership to the Order of Canada is one that deserves special attention. One can learn more about John Friesen by reading a UBC MA thesis published in 1992 entitled, John K. Friesen: Adult Educator, Mentor and Humanitarian, by Kathryn Anne Kennedy.

We are fortunate in that one of John's and Marta's dreams was to have an educational and advocacy forum in their name that focused on the concerns of older people at SFU. On behalf of the Gerontology Department, the Gerontology Research Centre, the university, and the audience, I want to extend our sincere condolences for the loss of a truly remarkable supporter of gerontological education. You have left a proud legacy.

SAVE-THE-DATE

8th Annual Ellen M. Gee Memorial Lecture:

*Personal Retirement Risk Management:
Who is Doing Well and Who Needs Help*

Presented by: **Dr. Leroy Stone**, Adjunct Professor, Department of Demography, University of Montreal; and leader of the department's Research Group on Population Behaviours Retirement Risk Management
Friday November 12, 2010

All are welcome.

To register call **778-782-5062** or e-mail gero@sfu.ca



Please see GRC website for details:
www.sfu.ca/grc/

2010 SFU GERONTOLOGY SENIOR LEADERSHIP AWARD (SLA2010)

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

In 2001 the Gerontology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University established a Senior Leadership Award to recognize the contributions that British Columbia seniors make as volunteers.

NOMINATION PROCEDURE

You are invited to submit a letter nominating a person aged 65+ in your family, community or organization who has contributed time and experience providing exemplary voluntary service. Seniors eligible for nomination must presently reside in the Province of British Columbia. This award is also open to seniors' organizations as-a-whole that perform community voluntary service.

LETTER OF NOMINATION should include:

- Name & contact information for the nominee.
- A summary of their contributions.
- Any supporting letters and/or additional documents you wish to include.

Please address your nomination to the:

SFU Leadership Award,
attention Lillian Zimmerman,
Gerontology Research Centre,
SFU Vancouver Campus,
Harbour Centre
#2800- 515 W. Hastings St.,
Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Friday 01 October 2010.

SLA2010 will be awarded at the upcoming 8th Annual Ellen M. Gee Memorial Lecture being held 12 November 2010. Please watch the GRC website for more information on this lecture.



CENTRE & DEPARTMENT RESEARCH GRANTS

SFU Gerontology collaborating on cutting-edge human aging study

by Andrew Wister, Chair, Department of Gerontology

Researchers at SFU, led by Dr. Andrew Wister, are set to embark on one of the most comprehensive studies of aging ever conducted - the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA). Dr. Wister is professor and chair of the Department of Gerontology, and is a co-leader in the development of the CLSA and the lead of the SFU data collection site.

The CLSA was officially launched last year with an announcement by the federal government of \$30 million in funding through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and \$26 million in infrastructure funding through the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. The CLSA will involve a multi-disciplinary research team comprised of more than 160 researchers from 26 universities across Canada. Approximately 50,000 Canadian men and women between the ages of 45 and 85 will be enrolled as participants in the CLSA and followed for at least 20 years.

The CLSA is a national project with its hub at McMaster, connecting researchers from universities across the country. It has strong BC representation through Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, and the University of BC. Dr. Wister will lead the SFU data collection team, which also includes Drs. Andrew Sixsmith and Heather Stewart (Gerontology). Other SFU researchers connected to the project include Dr. Mitchell (Sociology/Anthropology & Gerontology) and Drs. Lear and Joffres (Health Sciences).

Why is the CLSA important? The proportion of individuals aged 65 years or more is projected to increase over the next 20 years to approximately 22% of the Canadian population. As the baby-boom generation approaches and enters into retirement, this demographic shift will intensify the challenges that Canada faces in supporting an aging population.

The shifting lifestyle choices of baby-boomers make them one of the most compelling demographic segments to study. At present, the challenge for health policy makers is the lack of access to strong evidence to inform clinical, public health, and social policy decision making that is directed toward preventing morbidity and improving the health of Canada's aging population. The CLSA is being launched at a time when there is a need for data that will provide highly relevant information to help improve health and social care policy in Canada.

The ultimate aim of the CLSA is to provide a research platform that will allow examination into ways to improve the health of Canadians by better understanding the processes and dimensions of aging over the life course of individuals. The data collected will generate new knowledge on the many complex and interrelated biological, clinical, psycho-social, and societal factors that affect aging by facilitating interdisciplinary research. The CLSA will create a platform upon which researchers may connect and collaborate with other researchers, clinicians, academics, and other public and private partners. In addition, new investigators, trainees, and students will have opportunities to work and learn within inter-disciplinary research environments where the biological, clinical and social sciences coalesce to produce innovative approaches to the study of adult development, disease evolution, and healthy aging.

The SFU CLSA data collection site will reside in the Podium- "the intellectual heart"- of the Surrey campus, which is being constructed over the next 9 months. The comprehensive data collection will begin May 2011. Potential study participants living within 25 to 50 kilometers of the SFU Surrey

campus will be contacted at random with information about the CLSA. If they are eligible and provide consent, participants will visit the data collection site once every 3 years, and undergo a series of interviews about their physical, psycho-cognitive, and social functioning. In addition, participants will undergo tests of their heart, lung and vascular functions; bone density and joint function; vision and hearing; strength, mobility, and balance. Participants will also provide blood and urine specimens which may be used to study, for example, how environmental and social factors interact with the functions of genes and proteins to affect aging and disease processes.

SFU Gerontology and its Gerontology Research Centre are world renowned for multi-disciplinary research on aging, population health and health promotion, and is the home to the BC Network for Aging Research.

For further information on the CLSA in BC, please contact Andrew Wister: wister@sfu.ca

For more information on the CLSA, go to www.clsa-elcv.ca/

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE COURSES IN GERONTOLOGY

For information about enrolling in the PhD, Masters, Diploma, or Minor in Gerontology contact:

Anne Marie Barrett
778.782.5065

For a list of upcoming courses see our webpage at:
www.sfu.ca/gerontology

CENTRE & DEPARTMENT RESEARCH GRANTS

The impact of broadband internet on rural, remote, and first nation seniors in British Columbia

by **Ashley Waldoch** (MA student, Gerontology)
and **Andrew Sixsmith**, Director, Gerontology Research Centre

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is funding a study by researchers at SFU to examine how broadband Internet affects the health and security of rural seniors in BC. The project involves the collaboration between the Centre for Policy Research on Science and Technology (CPOST), the Institute for Canadian Urban Research Studies (ICURS), the Interdisciplinary Research in the Mathematical and Computational Science Centre (IRMACS), and the GRC.

While the potential of broadband Internet and broadband-enabled technologies are increasingly acknowledged as providing seniors with an interactive lifeline to the world, empowering them to live more robust, healthful, and independent lives, a significant number of seniors across Canada do not share equal access to this service. This 'Digital divide' is due to the fact that even though Canada has one of the most advanced information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructures, its rural, remote, and First Nation communities do not have reliable and sustainable access to broadband Internet. Digital divide is an umbrella term that refers to this gap between people with effective access to information and communication technologies, and those with very limited or no access at all. There are many variables at play when discussing the digital divide. Specifically, having a lower income, being less educated, being older, and living in rural and remote communities are found to decrease accessibility to broadband Internet, thus marginalizing people from the benefits of technology based services. Ramirez & Richardson (2005, p.300) clarify that, "the digital divide is not only about physical access to phone lines and computers, it is also about becoming aware of the values of telecommunication services, having access to training on a range of computer and information-related skills, and to having an occupation where the relevant uses for the

technology yield added value or savings."

To address this issue, BC's Connecting Communities Agreement (CCA) program has partnered Telus with the Canadian government in providing broadband to communities where the market is unable or unwilling to serve. Additionally, British Columbians in up to 50 rural and remote locales will soon have broadband connectivity through the Connecting Citizens Grant Program, a \$5.2 million, multi-year grant program that provides up to \$50,000 per project. The current study takes advantage of this government incentive by observing how broadband impacts on previously unconnected communities and increases penetration in others. Seniors will be able to seek health information more efficiently and have better links to health services, while social networking may decrease social isolation. Universal access to the Internet is in line with an "active aging" agenda to create supportive environments to enable healthy aging in the settings where older Canadians live.

Ramirez, R., & Richardson, D. (2005). Measuring the impact of telecommunication services on rural and remote communities. *Telecommunications Policy*, 29, 297-319. Retrieved June 2, 2010, from Academic Search Premier database.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Dr. Loren Lovegreen, who has been a limited term Assistant Professor in the Gerontology Department for the last 4 years, will be leaving us this September to assume a post as a Research Associate at Case Western University, where she received her doctorate. After 4 years at the GRC, **Dr. Eunju Hwang** (BC Real Estate Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow) will be leaving to take up an Assistant Professorship at the University of Tennessee.

Dr. Heather Stewart, who is a research manager on the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging has been appointed Research Associate in the GRC.

ISG2010 - A RESOUNDING SUCCESS!

The 7TH WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR GERONTECHNOLOGY (ISG2010), hosted and organized by the GRC May 27-30, was an unqualified success. There was a record attendance, both in terms of number in attendance (407) and number of countries represented (29). There was a record rate of participation in the program (352 presentations) which included 28 symposia, 80 free papers, and, something new at ISG conferences, three round-table discussions – two co-sponsored by other international organizations focused on gerontology (the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) and the International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA)). Additionally, 114 posters were presented, including 36 that were part of a very successful Master Class for students from Canada and worldwide, held in conjunction with the conference.



THE GERONTOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE

(GRC) is committed to high quality research and knowledge transfer in the field of aging.

**Gerontology Research Centre
Simon Fraser University
2800-515 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6B 5K3
P: (778) 782-5062 E: gero@sfu.ca**

GRC website: www.sfu.ca/grc/
Department of Gerontology
website: www.sfu.ca/gerontology
Director: Dr. Andrew Sixsmith
Editor: Raymond G. Adams, BA, MLIS.
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