

📅 October 3 - 5, 2025
📍 Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel
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Human Rights and Ageing: *Advocating for an Equitable Future*

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

For more info, visit Coscobc.org/conference/

Funded in part by the
Government of Canada's
New Horizons for Seniors Program



United Way
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CIHR IRSC
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Health Research
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Community Savings
the unions' credit union



UNITED STEELWORKERS
SOAR
STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES
3-14 CHAPTER

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Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC

Representing seniors in British Columbia since 1950

www.coscobc.org

Welcome to our 75th Anniversary Celebration

Dear Conference Participant

On behalf of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia, welcome to our conference ***Human Rights and Ageing: Advocating for an Equitable Future***. We are truly at a nexus of change in our global society. Your active participation in our deliberations over the next two days will be essential to finding new ways to ensure the rights and contributions of older adults are valued in an uncertain world.

The Conference Planning Committee has prepared a veritable feast of speakers, panelists, moderators, workshop hosts and entertainers to stimulate and guide our discussions. Our Gala dinner will truly celebrate our first 75 years and provide glimpses of our future. We hope you will learn more about the issues facing older adults today and forge new connections with diverse participants to develop strategies to resolve them. Every voice is important to ensure that COSCO is truly 'the voice of BC Seniors'.

We at COSCO extend sincere thanks to the many co-sponsors and supporters who believe in the work we do and without whom we would have been hard pressed to make this event a reality. I thank the Planning Committee, our admin support team and the COSCO Executive for their many contributions to make this conference a success. Please look for our sponsors on the COSCO website and in this program, some of whom have tables in the lobby area.

I look forward to your participation in this conference and hope you will find it both interesting and inspiring. My sincere wish is that our work together over the next two days will lead to further involvement and action on the part of all participants – individually and through our organizations. And don't forget to have fun!

Sincerely

Leslie Gaudette

President • Leslie Gaudette • 604-630-4201 • pres@coscobc.org
Box 228, Mountain View Plaza, Unit 505-8840 210 St, Langley, BC, V1M 2Y2

Our 75th Anniversary Conference is dedicated to: Sheila Pither and Garnet Grosjean



Sheila Pither died on September 19th, 2022.

Sheila generously served on COSCO's executive over many years in various roles that included being the President. A teacher by training, she advocated for high quality education, labour rights and equality for seniors. Her efforts were recognized by many organizations:

- Fergusson Award and Honorary Life membership from the BC Teachers Federation;
- Honorary Life Membership to the Retired Teachers Association and Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC;
- Life Member and Woman of Wisdom and Passion; special recognition from the Jewish Seniors Alliance and more.

Her interest in health promotion and accident prevention led her to establish training workshops - over time, the initial offering of 5 increased to 40! The COSCO Seniors Health and Wellness Institute Society's workshops are now delivered for free by dedicated senior volunteers all over British Columbia. This is in keeping with COSCO's motto: Seniors helping seniors!

Sheila's guidance and leadership were marked by integrity and firm kindness that greatly benefited our organization. There appeared to be no end to her energetic attention to work. When it looked like we were overwhelmed by the myriad of pressing issues that affect seniors, she reminded us that while we couldn't do everything, we could certainly do some things. Her gentle, cheeky humour punctuated thoughtful discussion on many topics.

Her absence is felt profoundly by all of us who were privileged to work with her. Here is a link to a BC Labour Heritage Centre 2019 interview with Sheila Pither: <https://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/oral-history/sheila-pither/>



Shocking news to all of us: on January 31, 2025 Garnet Grosjean,

a key member of our program committee died suddenly. He was a stalwart supporter of COSCO, a particularly effective mentor to our education programs including Passing the Torch and Conferences. As a trusted and reliable advisor, he guided every conference planning committee. His academic background was in Adult Education; he practiced what he preached not only internationally but, for our benefit, also locally with his involvement in our seniors' communities.

Garnet's professional life was wide-ranging as a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training. At the University of British Columbia, part of his work was the position of Academic Coordinator for the Doctor of Leadership and Policy Program as well as Coordinator of an Intercontinental Master of Education partnership (universities in South Africa, Sweden & Australia). Adult Learning and Global Change was the focus.

For us at COSCO, his non-judgemental, personal approach even exposed us to his passion for wild, big cats. To say that he left a big void on our conference planning committee is understating reality.



Happy 75th Anniversary
**Council of Senior Citizens'
Organization (COSCO)**

As Premier of British Columbia, I am pleased to congratulate the Council of Senior Citizens' Organization (COSCO) as it celebrates its 75th anniversary.

Established in 1950, COSCO is comprised of 70 seniors' associations and currently represents approximately 80,000 members across British Columbia.

COSCO promotes healthy aging, advancing the physical and social wellbeing of our seniors through policy proposals and political engagement. Run by volunteers, this organization helps to amplify the voices of senior citizens in our province to ensure they live with dignity, independence and purpose.

Congratulations on reaching this milestone!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "David Eby".

Honourable David Eby, KC
Premier of British Columbia

Office of the
Secretary of State (Seniors)



Cabinet de la
Secrétaire d'État (Aînés)

Ottawa Canada K1A 0J9

Leslie Gaudette
President, Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC
Mountain View Plaza, Unit 505 - 8840 210 Street
Langley, BC, V1M 2Y2

Dear Leslie Gaudette

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO) on your 75th anniversary.

For three-quarters of a century, COSCO has been a steadfast advocate for the rights, well-being, and dignity of older adults in British Columbia. Your unwavering commitment to improve seniors' health care, housing, transportation, and income security through policy engagement, and community empowerment has made a lasting impact on generations of seniors and continues to inspire organizations across Canada.

We commend your dedication and thank you for your invaluable contributions to building a more inclusive and age-friendly society. I hope this milestone is a moment of pride and a springboard for continued success in the years ahead.

Please accept my best wishes for the continuation of your work.

Warmest regards,

The Honourable Stephanie McLean
P.C., M.P.
Secretary of State (Seniors)

Canada



City of
Richmond

Malcolm D. Brodie
Mayor

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Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1
Telephone: 604-276-4123
Fax No: 604-276-4332
www.richmond.ca

GREETINGS FROM THE MAYOR:

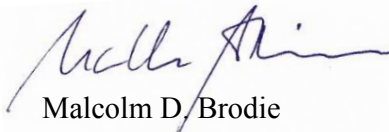


On behalf of City Council and the residents of Richmond, I would like to extend sincere greetings, and welcome everyone to the *2025 COSCO BC Conference*, being held from October 3rd – 5th, at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel in Richmond.

This year's highly anticipated conference will not only be educational and worthwhile for everyone in attendance, but will also celebrate 75 years of shared accomplishments as well as the many invaluable contributions *COSCO* has offered throughout the province of British Columbia. As Mayor of the City of Richmond, I take pride in the remarkable multicultural community within our City, and believe that it creates mutual respect and generates understanding of the different values and traditions that make up a diverse cultural heritage.

We are pleased that you have chosen Richmond as the host city for your Conference. Our vibrant community has the quality services and attractions to ensure that your event will be a huge success, and will be remembered by all attendees for years to come. I hope those of you visiting will find the opportunity to enjoy the gourmet restaurants that are abundant in our city, as well as our many shopping destinations and recreational facilities. Richmond is also home to an extensive variety of natural parks, gardens, and miles of dykes to walk and explore.

Best wishes for a successful conference!



Malcolm D. Brodie
Mayor

Conference Information

REGISTRATION

Friday, October 3rd from 6:00pm to 8:00pm

Saturday, October 4th at 7:30am to 8:30am

WELCOME RECEPTION - Friday October 3rd from 6:00pm

Lobby Minoru Ballroom

Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel - 7511 Westminster Highway, Richmond BC

ABOUT COSCO BC

Established in 1950, the Council of Senior Citizens' Organization (COSCO BC) is an umbrella organization made up of over 60 seniors' organizations and individual associate members. Registered under the Societies Act since 1981, COSCO BC has grown and now represents more than 80,000 seniors across British Columbia.

COSCO BC is run by volunteers, with activities coordinated through an elected Board of Directors. As the voice of BC seniors, our mandate is to promote the well-being of seniors and their families, advocating for policies that allow seniors to remain active, independent, and fully engaged in the life of our province. The organization is non-partisan, but politically active, advocating for seniors' needs no matter who is in power.

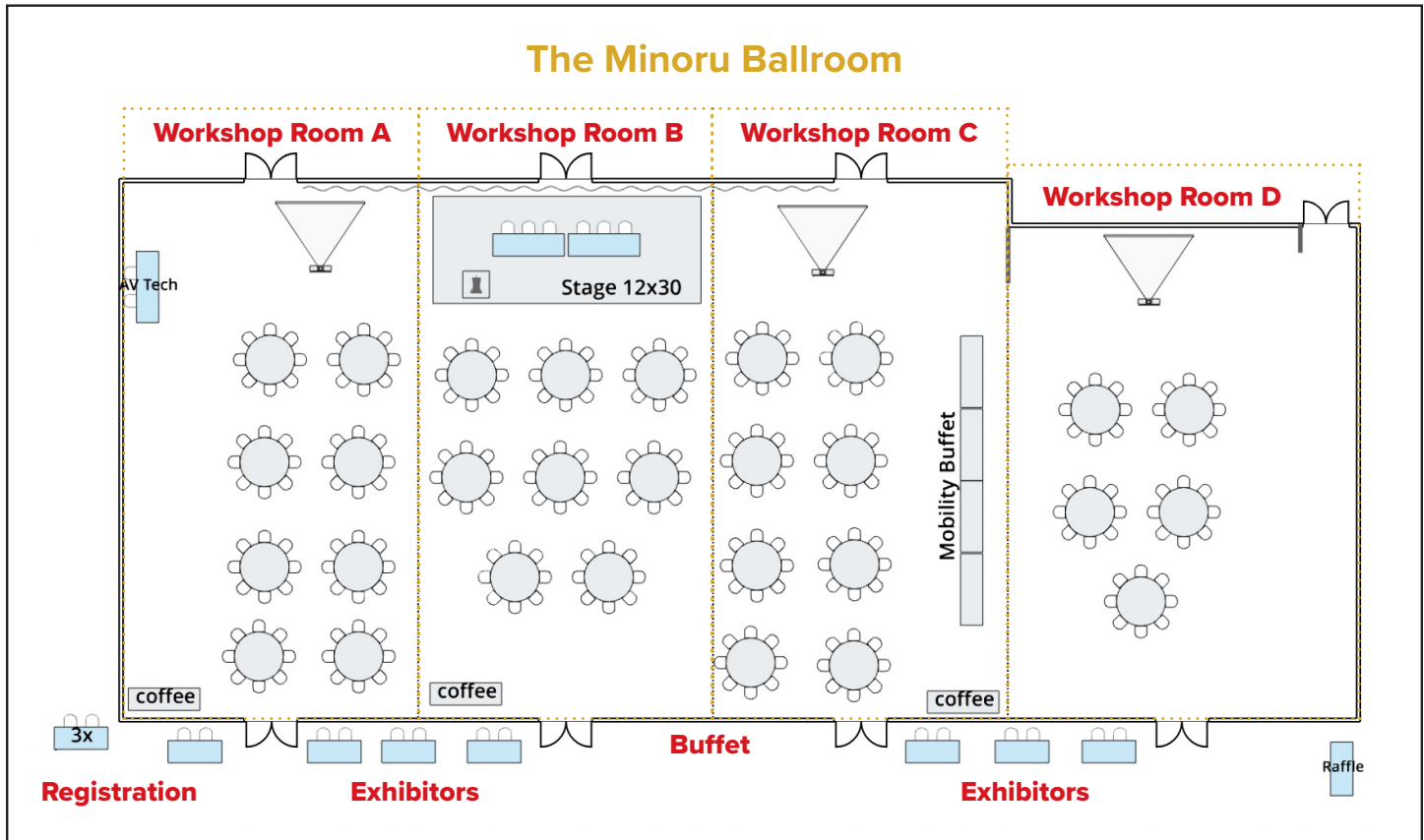
COSCO BC also proudly supports the COSCO Seniors Health and Wellness Institute, a registered charity since 2010 with Board members elected by the COSCO Board of Directors. The Institute presents 47 diverse health, financial and safety topics in powerpoint presentations either in-person or by zoom. For more information visit www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca

OUR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

COSCO BC is proud to be a member of national and international organizations including:



Floor Plan and Workshops



DAY 1 WORKSHOPS:

Room A 1. UN Convention and Rights of Older Persons - Margaret Gillis and Margaret Young

Room C 2. Understanding Ageism: An Age-Friendly Lens - Olive Bryanton and Zena Simces

Room B 3. Cultural Perspectives on Ageism and Human Rights - Jacky Leung

Room D 4. Indigenous Perspectives on Ageism and Human Rights - Margo Greenwood

Room A 5. Team-based Primary Care and Community Health Centres - Paul Adams

Room B 6. Home Support Advocacy Campaign - Jeff Moss

Room D 7. Grass-roots advocacy in support of resident and family councils in long-term care - Lisa Dawson

Room C 8. Quality of Life in Long Term Care - Penny MacCourt

DAY 2 WORKSHOPS:

Room A 9. Research projects and Seniors Centres - Andrew Wister and Mei Lin Fang

Room D 10. COSCO Health And Wellness Institute: Workshop Overview - Barb Mikulec

Room B 11. Successes and Challenges for Northern and Rural Seniors Centres - Janet Marren and Lori Dennill

Room C 12. Connecting seniors through Social Prescribing - Connie Newman

DAY 1: Saturday, October 4, 2025

7:30am REGISTRATION AND CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

WELCOME AND GREETINGS:

- 8:30am** **Leslie Gaudette** - President, Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO BC)
Alec Dan - Musqueam First Nation - *Welcome*
Malcolm Brodie - Mayor, City of Richmond - *Letter of greetings*
Trish McAuliffe - President, National Pensioners Federation
- 8:50am** **Terri Van Steinburg** - Conference Facilitator: *Overview of conference, and what we hope to achieve*

MORNING THEME: Ageism and Human Rights

- 9:00am** **KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Susie Chant**, Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors Services and Long-Term Care
- 9:30am** **KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Margaret Gillis**, President, International Longevity Centre (ILC) Canada and co-founder of the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism
- 10:00am** **PANEL DISCUSSION: Ageism and Human Rights**
Moderator: Margo Greenwood - Senator for British Columbia
Olive Bryanton - Advocate for rights of older people and Social Researcher, U of PEI.
Jacky Leung - Program Director, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
Margaret Young - Immediate Past Chair, Global Alliance on the Rights of Older Persons (GAROP) & Founder, Age Knowble
Zena Simces - Board member, International Longevity Centre, Canada.
- 11:00am** COFFEE BREAK
- 11:30am** **Workshops:**
1. *UN Convention and Rights of Older Persons* - **Margaret Gillis and Margaret Young**
 2. *Understanding Ageism: An Age-Friendly Lens* - **Olive Bryanton and Zena Simces**
 3. *Cultural Perspectives on Ageism and Human Rights* - **Jacky Leung**
 4. *Indigenous Perspectives on Ageism and Human Rights* - **Margo Greenwood**
- 12:30pm** LUNCH

AFTERNOON THEME: Health Care for Older Adults

- 1:30pm** **Entertainment: Re: Sisters**
- 1:45pm** **KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Stephanie McLean**, Secretary of State for Seniors
- 2:15pm** **KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Kasari Govender**, BC Human Rights Commissioner
- 2:45pm** **PANEL DISCUSSION: Continuum of Seniors Health Care in Community**
Moderator: Louise Holland
Paul Adams, BC Rural Health Network - Team-based primary care and Community Health Centres
Jeff Moss, Jewish Seniors Alliance of BC - Home Support Advocacy Campaign
Lisa Dawson, Independent Long Term Care Councils Association of BC - Independent Long-Term Care Councils Association of BC, Grass-roots advocacy in support of resident and family councils
Penny MacCourt, Action for Reform of Residential Care - Quality of Life for Seniors in LTC
- 3:45pm** COFFEE BREAK
- 4:00pm** **Workshops:**
5. *Team-based Primary Care and Community Health Centres* - **Paul Adams**
 6. *Home Support Advocacy Campaign* - **Jeff Moss**
 7. *Grass-roots advocacy in support of resident and family councils in long-term care* - **Lisa Dawson**
 8. *Quality of life for seniors in LTC* - **Penny MacCourt**
- 5:00pm** RECESS

EVENING EVENTS:

- 5:30pm** NO HOST BAR
- 6:30pm** **75th Anniversary Gala Dinner with MC: Andy Ross**
- Rose Gellert String Quartet
- Special 75th Anniversary Video
- Charles Demers

DAY 2: Sunday, October 5, 2025

7:30am CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

8:30am Opening remarks and Introductions: Terri Van Steinburg - *Overview of Day 2*

MORNING THEME: Inequality, Social Connections and Age-Friendly Communities

8:45am KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate

9:15am PANEL DISCUSSION: Understanding Inequality for Seniors in BC

Moderator: Alison Silgado - Seniors Services Society of BC

Iglika Ivanova - BC Society for Policy Solutions

Laura Kadowaki - United Way of BC

Carole Christopher - Society Promoting Environmental Conservation

Kai Okazaki - Social Planner, City of Burnaby

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip - Union of BC Indian Chiefs

10:15am PANEL DISCUSSION: Seniors' Centres: At the Nexus of Aging and Community

Moderator: Anthony Kupferschmidt - Strategic Lead, Aging and Older Persons; City of Vancouver

Mei Fang - SFU Department of Gerontology, Seniors Centres in Age-Friendly Cities

Andrew Wister - SFU Department of Gerontology, Senior Centres and Social Isolation

Janet Marren - Prince George Council of Seniors, Northern and Rural Seniors Centres/Programs

Connie Newman - Manitoba Association of Seniors Centres, Social Prescribing and Deprescribing

11:15am COFFEE BREAK

11:30am Workshops:

9. Research projects and Seniors Centres - Andrew Wister and Mei Lin Fang

10. COSCO Health And Wellness Institute: Workshop Overview - Barb Mikulec

11. Successes and Challenges for Northern and Rural Seniors Centres - Janet Marren and Lori Dennill

12. Connecting seniors to community programs - Connie Newman

12:30pm LUNCH

AFTERNOON THEME: Transportation

1:30pm Entertainment: MOSAIC Seniors Choir and Musical Theatre Troupe

1:45pm KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Eric Doherty, Human Rights, Ageing and Transportation

2:15pm PANEL DISCUSSION: Transportation

Moderator: Tim Larsen

Chris Fudge - BC Transit

Sarah Ross - TransLink

Paul Adams - Executive Director, BC Rural Health Network

Farinaz Rikhtehgaran - B.E.S.T. Better Environmentally Sound Transportation

3:15pm Reflections on the role of COSCO BC the Voice of BC Seniors since 1950 - Trish McAuliffe, President, National Pensioners' Federation

Note: coffee available in lobby from 3:00 pm (no break)

3:30pm DISCUSSION: Advocating for an Equitable Future; Strategies for Healthy Ageing

Moderator: Terri Van Steinburg

Time for participants to contribute to the discussion, and offer suggestions for equitable and healthy ageing, based on the last two days presentations and discussions.

4:00pm Leslie Gaudette and Terri Van Steinburg

Thanks to our supporters and sponsors of the conference

4:10pm Mei Fang - Rapporteur

Summary report of what we have achieved at this conference

4:25pm Wrap up with next steps for conference follow up

4:30pm ADJOURNMENT

Acknowledgments

COSCO BC acknowledges that this conference is being held on the unceded, traditional and ancestral territory of the Musqueam people.

Thanks to our Conference Planning Committee, Support Team and Volunteers

Conference Chair and Facilitator: Terri Van Steinburg

Committee Members:

Wilf Brodrick, Mei Lin Fang, Leslie Gaudette, Garnet Grosjean (deceased),
Kathleen Jamieson, Gudrun Langolf, and Jean Sickman

Conference Design and Administration:

Webmaster: Vince Dimanno

Graphic Design and Social Media: Kayla Meadows

Registration Administration: Nicole Glass and Erin Seatter

Conference Tech Management: Trevor Marples of WE FILM EVENTS

COSCO Executive Member Volunteers:

Leslie Gaudette	Gord Ditchburn	Jean Sickman
Barb Mikulec	Jerry Gosling	Barry Jones
Terri Van Steinburg	Linda Forsythe	Rod McIvor
Renee Poley	Patrick Harkness	Louise Holland
Wilf Brodrick	Marion Hartley	Anthony Kupferschmidt
Diane Wood	Agnes Jackman	Janis Kaleta
	Tim Larsen	

SFU Gerontology Department Graduate Student Volunteers:

Becky White, Eldrick Chand, Mohammad Rahnamay Shalmani, Farnoush Mansourian,
and Letitia Zhu

A Video to Celebrate 75 Years of Advocacy and Impact of COSCO BC

Thanks to funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and project management by Dr Mei Fang of the Urban Studies Program and the Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University, a short documentary will premiere, featuring testimonials from members and celebrating COSCO's legacy. The film amplifies the voices of seniors, honours 75 years of leadership in advocacy, and sheds light on ongoing efforts to secure sustainable funding for seniors' centres, eliminate ageism, foster social inclusion, and expand awareness of elder abuse. Serving as both a celebration and a call to action, the documentary highlights COSCO BC's commitment to advancing the rights and well-being of older adults. Thanks to our videographer **Eric Sanderson** for making this happen.

Our Sponsors

Government of Canada New Horizons for Seniors Program

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

United Way of British Columbia

BC Government and Service Employee's Union

BC Government Retired Employees Association

International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada

Community Savings Credit Union

Canadian Union of Public Employees of BC

United Steelworkers District 3 and Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) 3-14 Chapter

MoveUP

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WE Consulting and Benefits

BC Retired Teachers Association

Federation of Post-Secondary Educators

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Municipal Pension Retirees' Association

College Pension Plan Retirees

Canadian Medication Appropriateness and Deprescribing Network (CaDeN)

Funded in part by the
Government of Canada's
New Horizons for Seniors Program

Canada



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Canadian Medication
Appropriateness and
Deprescribing Network

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the unions' credit union



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3-14 CHAPTER



BCRTA
BC Retired Teachers' Association

CPPR

CIHR IRSC
Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

MUNICIPAL PENSION RETIREES' ASSOCIATION
MPRA
BRITISH COLUMBIA
EST. 2003

FPSE
FEDERATION OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATORS OF BC

KPU

KWANTLEN
POLYTECHNIC
UNIVERSITY

bcgeu
BC GOVERNMENT AND SERVICE EMPLOYEES' UNION

Conference Facilitator/Moderator



TERRI VAN STEINBURG

Terri Van Steinburg has been a labour leader, community and political activist for over forty years.

As well as being a post-secondary educator who taught in the Career and Life Success Program for Women at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Terri has served on many boards and executives at the local, provincial and national levels.

Terri held various leadership positions in Kwantlen Faculty Association, finally serving as President from 2004 to 2015.

She has also served as a full-time officer of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE), first as Secretary-Treasurer then as President.

Nationally, Terri was the President of the National Union of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (NUCAUT) and was a member of the Canadian Labour Congress Canadian Council.

She served as an Executive member of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and Chair of the CAUT Collective Bargaining and Economic Benefits Committee.

Terri was the President of the New Westminster and District Labour Council and served as an officer of the BC Federation of Labour.

She served on a number of local boards such as the United Way of the Fraser Valley and the Union Protein Project.

In 2020, Terri was appointed to the BC Chiropractors Association Board by then Minister of Health, Adrian Dix and subsequently served as Board Chair.

Terri currently serves as a public member on the College of Complimentary Health Professionals of BC Board and is the Vice Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

She serves as Vice-Chair of the Kwantlen Polytechnic Retirees Association (KPURA) and is the KPURA delegate to the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO BC).

Terri is the Second-Vice President of COSCO BC and serves as Chair of the Conference Planning Committee and Income Security Committee.

Terri continues to be a fierce advocate for equity, diversity, inclusion in all she does.

COSCO BC President



LESLIE GAUDETTE

Leslie Gaudette is President of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia (COSCO BC) which serves as the "Voice of BC Seniors". A 'retired' epidemiologist whose career with federal agencies focused on chronic disease control, she serves on the Public Awareness Committee of the Canadian Medication Appropriateness and Deprescribing Network.

She represents COSCO BC on the Steering Committee of the BC Health Coalition and as a founding member of the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism to support the UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

She is active in local community groups including Langley Seniors in Action and her local Branch of the National Association of Federal Retirees, among others, and is a member of the Steering Committee for Langley's Primary Care Network. She has been recognized for her contributions through the King Charles III Coronation Medal in 2025, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Award in 2022, the SFU Gerontology Research Centre's 2022 Seniors Leadership Award for Outstanding Service and Community Education, the 2021 Eric Flowerdew Langley Volunteer of the Year Award of Merit and in 2015 the National Collaboration Award with the National Association of Federal Retirees.

Day 1 Speakers



TRISH MCAULIFFE

Trish has served as President of the National Pensioners Federation (NPF) since being elected at the 2018 Convention, continuing to provide strong, principled leadership to the present day.

Retiring from General Motors in 2013 after a distinguished 30-year career, Trish brought with her 14 years of experience in Union Leadership and a deep commitment to education as a classroom facilitator of Worker Education Programs, specializing in Human Rights Training.

Since retirement, she has continued her advocacy work, including running twice for Federal office as a passionate champion of social justice. As a committed advocate for senior's social housing, Trish was invited to serve on the executive board — and later as President — of Parkview Place, a not-for-profit seniors housing in Oshawa.

An active and dedicated member of the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC), Trish spearheaded the formation of the South-Central Ontario Area Chapter. She also contributed significantly to the development and facilitation of CURC's Pre-Retirement Courses and How to Lobby workshops.

A proud supporter of public healthcare, Trish is a long-time member of the Canadian Health Coalition and was recently appointed to the Board of Directors of the Ontario Health Coalition, where she continues to advocate for equitable, accessible health care for all Canadians.

Before her election to NPF, Trish served three terms as an executive member of her workplace retired worker's chapter, Unifor Local 222.

Trish remains a steadfast voice for pensioners, workers, and communities across Canada — always grounded in justice, equity, and grassroots empowerment.



SUSIE CHANT

Susie Chant was first elected as the MLA for North Vancouver-Seymour in 2020.

Susie was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors' Services and Long Term Care in November 2024. She is also responsible for B.C.'s Consular Corps. Susie previously served as Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility.

Susie has dedicated her life to caring for and protecting people — as a Registered Nurse team leader in community care with Vancouver Coastal Health, and as a member of the Royal Canadian Navy Reserves for over 40 years.

Susie and her husband are the parents of two adult daughters and were foster parents for 12 years. They provided a safe home for teenagers in crisis and supported them to get back to their families.

Susie's nursing career has also taken her overseas, teaching nursing students in Saipan and working in children's psychiatry in Hawaii.

Susie is an active member of Girl Guides of Canada and a former leader. She has also been a Sun Run clinic leader for 25 years, helping people in her community to be more active.

With deep roots in the North Shore community, Susie has called Lynn Valley home since 1988, where her kids grew up attending local schools and participating in community sports.

Day 1 Speakers



MARGARET GILLIS

Margaret Gillis is the founding President of the International Longevity Centre Canada, a human rights based organization, and Co-President of the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance, which is an alliance of 16 Centres around the world dedicated to the needs of older people. She is also an “Community Ambassador” for Elder Abuse Awareness Ontario an organization providing education, training and information on elder abuse. An award winning executive and innovative leader, Margaret played a key role in establishing the Age-friendly Community program in Canada and internationally. Other career highlights include the establishment of the “Canadian Coalition Against Ageism” a nation-wide social change movement to combat ageism.

Margaret has strong credentials in regard to human rights, working with and speaking at the UN General Assembly on behalf of older people. Margaret has been actively working for a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons in Canada and internationally. With a background in health promotion, protection and programming, Margaret is committed to improving the rights of older people.

MARGO GREENWOOD



Dr. Margo Greenwood is an internationally recognized and highly respected Indigenous scholar of Cree ancestry. She is a mother, grandmother, researcher, and author. Dr. Greenwood is a full professor in UNBC’s Education Program, working part-time. Alongside this role, she was appointed to the Senate of Canada as a Senator for British Columbia in November 2022, where she advocates for the continued well-being of all children and families in Canada.

Up until her appointment to the Senate of Canada, Dr. Greenwood served as Academic Leader of the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health and as interim Scientific Director of CIHR’s Institute of Indigenous Peoples’ Health.

Dr. Greenwood has worked with UNICEF, the United Nations, and the Canadian Reference Group to the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health. She has served on the Assembly of First Nations’ Public Health Expert Advisory Committee, the Indigenous Health Advisory Committee for the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Public Health Network of Canada. Dr. Greenwood participated in the development of three federal early childhood programs—the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative, the Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Program, and the First Nations Head Start On Reserve Program—and recently co-authored the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. Dr. Greenwood was a founding member of the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society and now serves on the Board of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia and as a Council Member of the BC Patient Safety & Quality Council.

In recognition of her transformational leadership and contributions to society, especially in Indigenous health and early childhood, Dr. Greenwood has received numerous awards and recognitions. Most recently she was appointed to the Order of Canada as an Officer and as a Fellow in the Royal Society of Canada.

Day 1 Speakers



OLIVE BRYANTON

Dr. Olive Bryanton, is an educator, specializing in aging issues related to aging in place, lifelong learning, technology and ageism. As a renowned advocate for the rights and dignity of older people, she has dedicating over three decades to promoting healthy aging, challenging ageism, and preventing elder abuse. She continues to inspire and inform policy and practice, promoting a culture of respect and empowerment for older people.

A respected expert in her field, Dr. Bryanton holds key roles in various national and international organizations, including the Age-Well, International Longevity Centre Canada, National Seniors Council, The Lancet Commission and the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism and she chairs the coalition's Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG).

Her work has been instrumental in raising awareness about ageism and promoting evidence-based solutions. A recipient of numerous honors, including an honorary degree from the University of Prince Edward Island, the Order of Prince Edward Island and Queen's Diamond and Jubilee Medals.

Dr. Bryanton obtained her PhD at the age of 82, focusing on the voices of women aged 85+ living in rural PEI. During her PhD journey, CBC produced a documentary entitled "Never Too Old" and includes some of her study participants.



JACKY LEUNG

As a 1.5 generation immigrant from Hong Kong, Jacky Leung is proud to have the language and cultural knowledge to work with the diverse seniors community in Vancouver for more than 10 years. He is currently program director of wellness and active communities at S.U.C.C.E.S.S., a immigrant serving social service organization, where he leads a number of community based and culturally-appropriate programs for older adults in metro Vancouver. He works with a team of passionate individuals who support seniors of diverse backgrounds who live independently at home in areas including in-home supports, digital literacy, health education, and seniors-led social programs. Since the beginning of his career working as a settlement worker, he sees first-hand the challenges immigrant seniors face in accessing supports brought by systems that are not designed to support the diverse needs of a diverse people who live in our communities. He also sees the resilience in many who try very hard to navigate the digital world that is changing ever quicker. Jacky is keen to learn more about innovative practices that can improve the quality of life for the seniors he serves.



MARGARET YOUNG

Margaret Young is the Founder of Age Knowble, amplifying older persons' voices, championing their human rights, and strengthening systems for healthy, active ageing. With award-winning corporate experience and advanced studies in business and gerontology, she blends passion, compassion, and strategy to build inclusive societies where older persons are leaders and changemakers. She is also Immediate Past Chair of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People, Human Rights Advocacy Lead at the Pass It On Network, and a Global Advisory Board member of the ASEM Global Ageing Center.

Day 1 Speakers



ZENA SIMCES

Zena Simces is a senior consultant with over 30 years of experience in the health (population and public health, primary care and mental health), social services, education, justice and employment sectors.

Zena has a unique combination of expertise in research (needs assessments), program evaluation (evaluation frameworks and performance measures), strategic planning, policy and program development and project management along with a solid background in community consultation/facilitation, marketing, communications, and public/media relations.

She has managed many complex projects and has extensive government and voluntary sector experience as a manager, consultant and change agent working at a national level, and at a provincial and community level in the provinces of New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia.

She has supported organizations in understanding and implementing reforms and undergoing transformation both within their groups and across systems and has worked to build effective teams, partnerships and multi-sector coalitions to enhance collective impact.

Zena has facilitated numerous consultation sessions with a wide range of community organizations, professional groups, academics, diverse cultural groups, First Nations, women, older persons, families, youth, people with mental and physical challenges and the general public.

She has conducted training sessions in program evaluation, strategic planning, communications, deliberative dialogue, and partnership development. Zena has provided strategic advice and recommendations to senior management at all levels of government and in the voluntary sector.

Her volunteer work has been devoted to promoting human rights for vulnerable groups and she has organized human rights dialogues in partnership with the Atlantic Human Rights Centre, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and Equitas (International Centre for Human Rights Education).

Zena Simces is an author of a book: *You Can Make a Difference: A Guide to Being a Great Consultant*.

Zena was a member of the National Seniors Council (2021-2025) providing advice on issues impacting older persons to the Federal Minister of Seniors and Minister of Health. She also sits as a board member of the International Longevity Centre- Canada and a member of the Older Persons Advisory Group of the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism. She recently received the King Charles 111 Coronation Medal in recognition for her “extraordinary dedication, contribution and service to community and country”.



STEPHANIE MCLEAN

The Honourable Stephanie McLean was first elected as Member of Parliament for Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke in the spring of 2025 and, shortly after, joined Mark Carney's government as Secretary of State (Seniors).

In 2015, she was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in Alberta and served as Minister of Status of Women and Minister of Service Alberta. She made history when she became the first member of the Legislative Assembly in Alberta to give birth while in office.

Secretary McLean earned her law degree from the University of Calgary. As a practising lawyer, she represented both unions and employers, including acting as general counsel for a building trades union. She has called Vancouver Island home since 2019 and lives in the city of Colwood with her husband Shane, son Patrick, and their three dogs.

Day 1 Speakers



KASARI GOVENDER

Kasari Govender took office as B.C.'s first independent Human Rights Commissioner on September 3, 2019. Her role is to lead the promotion and protection of human rights in British Columbia through the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner.

Govender has devoted her life to promoting human rights, with a focus on the rights of those most marginalized. She is passionate about using her skills as a lawyer and community builder to create a more equal and just province. She has worked closely with organizations and communities promoting gender equality, Indigenous rights, children's rights, the rights of people with disabilities and the rights of immigrant communities.

From 2008 until 2019, Govender held leadership positions at West Coast LEAF and was appointed Executive Director in 2011. She has co-authored key reports and articles and speaks widely on crucial social issues such as hate speech, access to justice, gender based violence and systemic racism. Her earlier work includes a pivotal role in establishing the Rise Women's Legal Centre, a non-profit legal clinic in British Columbia.

Govender earned her law degree from the University of Victoria and her Master's degree in International Human Rights Law from the University of Oxford, UK. She has served on the board of directors for the University of Victoria, Pivot Legal Society, the Coalition for Public Legal Services, and the Society for Children and Youth. Govender has taught as an Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of British Columbia and as an instructor at Simon Fraser University. Her work was recognized by the Women Lawyer's Forum which honoured her with their Award of Excellence.

In addition to her role as Human Rights Commissioner, Govender is a mother, an aunt, a daughter and a sister.



LOUISE HOLLAND

With a background in geriatric social work, Louise Holland worked in a variety of roles from front-line to management in programs that delivered services to seniors for over 25 years in Prince George. Her experience included the areas of senior's mental health and substance use, geriatric assessment, adult guardianship legislation, and long-term care. Retired from Northern Health, she continues to be involved in the field of aging as a sessional instructor in the School of Social Work at the University of Northern BC, a member of the Council of Advisors for the Seniors Advocate, and the chair for the COSCO Health Committee.



PAUL ADAMS

Paul Adams is the Executive Director of the BC Rural Health Network (BCRHN), an organization dedicated to advocating for equitable healthcare access across rural and remote communities in British Columbia. With a background in health policy, community engagement, and advocacy, Paul has worked extensively to bridge the gap between government, healthcare providers, and rural communities. Under his leadership, BCRHN has strengthened its role as a voice for rural healthcare, fostering collaboration with stakeholders, facilitating research, and advocating for policy solutions that address systemic barriers. Passionate about the social determinants of health, Paul works to ensure that rural and remote populations receive the care and support they need, with a focus on housing, transportation, and equitable access to healthcare services.

Day 1 Speakers



JEFF MOSS

Jeff has served as the Executive Director of the Jewish Seniors Alliance of British Columbia (JSABC) since July 2024. Jeff has deep roots in both the local Vancouver Jewish community and in the Greater Vancouver business community, having lived locally his entire life.

Prior to entering the non-profit workspace, Jeff spent over 25 years owning and operating his own business. During that time, he was a strong leader working on and leading several Boards. Eventually Jeff's career path led to his working at United Way British Columbia. With a strong commitment to seniors' well-being, Jeff is dedicated to advancing JSABC's mission to support and empower seniors.

Jeff is delighted to have the opportunity to speak about JSABC's efforts in promoting increasing access to home support for improved physical and mental health outcomes among seniors throughout BC.

JSABC is focused on advocacy; lobbying government for improved access to free home support for all seniors throughout BC; increased access to outreach programs; expansion of its Community Support Services programs through one-to-one in-home support programs; and growing distribution of JSA's renowned Senior Line Magazine.



LISA DAWSON

Inspired by her personal experience with her father in long-term care, Lisa is a dedicated volunteer to the continuous quality improvement of resident experience in long-term care (LTC). Providing all residents with a voice, elevated through resident and/or family councils, Lisa strives to ensure growth and sustainability of councils in every LTC home throughout BC.

Lisa is: Co-Chair of her Fathers Care Home Family Council, Co-Founder and Chair of the Vancouver Coastal Association of Family Councils (VCAFC). There are 5 regional associations, one in each health authority. They work with care home leaders to support education, mentoring and growth of councils in LTC homes.

President of the Independent Long-Term Care Councils Association of BC (ILTCCABC), the provincial umbrella of the 5 regional associations. ILTCCABC supports its member regional associations and elevates regional discussions to our Ministry of Health.



PENNY MACCOURT

Dr. Penny MacCourt has a social work background and has worked with older adults in the community, long term care and acute care settings for many years as a clinical social worker. She holds a Bachelor and Masters of Social Work from University of Manitoba and a PhD (Interdisciplinary Studies) from University of Victoria. Her doctoral and post-doctoral studies have focused on aging, mental health and service delivery. She is a founding member of the BC Psychogeriatric Association and was appointed to the Seniors Advisory Committee to the Mental Health Commission of Canada. She received a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of her contribution to Canada for her work with caregivers. She is past Chair of Action for Reform of Residential Care, formed to advocate for improved quality of life in long-term care through system reform.

Gala Special Guests



ANDY ROSS

Andy is the retired former president of MoveUP. Move UP represents workers from over 90 workplaces in both the public and private sectors including ICBC, BC Hydro, TransLink, Coast Mountain Bus Company, Fortis, Capilano University, car rentals such as Hertz, Avis, etc., numerous credit unions and more.

Andy served for 20 years on his Executive Board as a director, Vice President and President. In addition, he also served on the Executive Board of his national union.

As head of his union for British Columbia Andy was an Officer of the BC Federation of Labour. As such he chaired numerous committees as well as chairing at the BC Fed Convention.

Andy is a delegate at the New Westminster and District Labour Council for over 30 years. He was President of the Labour Council, with its 60,000 delegated membership, until 2006.

Andy was an Executive Board member of the BC Federation of Retired Union Members.

He also served on various committees for the Canadian Labour Congress.

As well he served on committees for two Global Union Federations, UNI and ICEM (now IndustriALL).

During his career Andy served on numerous boards including; Employment Standards Tribunal, Working Enterprises, Columbia Foundation, Camp Jubilee, First Aid Ski Patrol.

Since retiring in 2011 Andy has remained active both within and outside of the union movement. He taught Parliamentary Procedures at the Harrison Winter School for the Canadian Labour Congress. In addition, he teaches and works with many unions and the executives and membership in parliamentary procedures and leadership development.

He has also worked with not-for-profit groups as a parliamentarian and advisor.

He was a Vice President for the 2012 BC Senior Games, and also the 2016 Junior World Taekwondo Championships.

He recently retired as as Vice Chair on the Board for TransLink and serves as a director for the BC Ferries Authority Board.

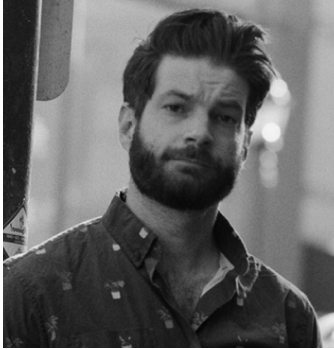


ROSE GELLERT STRING QUARTET

Rose Gellert String Quartet perform for various events and concert series in Vancouver and throughout the Fraser Valley. Will Chen and Llowyn Ball (violin), Peter Ing (viola), and Ben Goheen (cello) are all active musicians, teachers, and music coaches who, through their LCMS residency, enjoy fulfilling their mandate to create and foster community and a deeper appreciation of music, providing outreach concerts at local schools and bringing live music to seniors' homes where residents might otherwise go without the joy of live music.

The Rose Gellert String Quartet enjoy performing all genres of music and love to mix and match different styles in order to create fun and engaging programs for all types of audiences.

Gala Special Guests



ERIC SANDERSON

Eric Sanderson is a maker of documentary films and videos based in Vancouver, BC. He produces, directs, and shoots short and medium-length documentaries and advocacy videos for a variety of clients.

Projects he's directed have screened at film festivals both locally and internationally, including Hot Docs in Toronto and DOXA in Vancouver. His work as a cinematographer has been shown at Oscar-qualifying international festivals and reviewed in *Wired* and the *New York Times*.

Eric is interested in projects that explore worlds outside of the mainstream, and the intersection of radical advocacy and mainstream accessibility. His style of shooting and directing emphasizes verité storytelling, with a preference for open spaces, long takes, and working with people who respect the storytelling power of a carefully-crafted image.

Eric prides himself in taking time to listen and reflect on how he can best support his clients' and subjects' stories. Documentary film as a medium is uniquely positioned to interject a dose of empathy into our understanding of the world around us, and he is grateful for the opportunity to be a part of projects that foster and uplift this process.



CHARLES DEMERS

Juno Nominated Stand-Up Comedian

BC Book Prize Nominated Author

Co-Star of 2 Emmy-Winning Netflix Animated Series

Charlie Demers is an author, comedian, actor, playwright, screenwriter and political activist.

His collection of essays, *Vancouver Special* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2009), was shortlisted for the Hubert Evans Non-Fiction Prize. He is also the author of *Property Values* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018). He is one of the most frequently returning stars of CBC Radio's smash-hit comedy *The Debaters*, with a weekly listening audience of 750,000.

He has performed for national television and radio audiences and at the Just for Laughs Festival. He is one of the most frequently returning stars of CBC Radio's smash-hit comedy show *The Debaters*.

Charlie's latest book is *Noonday Dark* (June 2022). *Noonday Dark* is an exciting second installment followup to *Primary Obsessions* (Sept 2020). *Noonday Dark* continues the series of mysteries starring Dr. Annick Boudreau and involving themes of mental health. In the Doctor Annick Boudreau Mystery Series, the endearing and unflappable Dr. Boudreau returns in this complex and nuanced portrait of psychology and a city.

Charlie's second album *I Hope I Don't Remember This My Whole Life* was released in March 2022, on 604 Records comedy arm, *Comedy Here Often*. Demers, who CBC Radio calls "one of the smartest comics out there" has many achievements in the entertainment world under his belt including a Juno nomination for his previous, debut album, *Fatherland*. (Nov 2017)

Over the time of the pandemic, Charlie had a lot of the same soul-searching and identity crisis that so many people have experienced, and he reflects that in his new album. "I lost almost three quarters of my income from 2019 to 2020" says Demers.

"I wasn't sure when comedy would come back, or always sure if I was still going to be a comedian when it did. I'm incredibly proud of how this album turned out, and I think people are really going to enjoy it. My hope is that it builds on the last album, shows some growth & evolution, but also the fact that I will always be a comedian, and nothing will change that."

Culled from multiple performances in Vancouver in April 2017, Charlie's first album 'Fatherland' shows Demers at his sophisticated best. Clearly influenced by the current state of world politics, the album brings a fresh and hilarious perspective to many of the commonly debated topics of the day such as racism.

Day 2 Speakers



DAN LEVITT

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 was an adjunct professor of gerontology at both Simon Fraser University and a former sessional instructor at the British Columbia Institute of Technology. He has also been a surveyor with Accreditation Canada, reviewing quality improvement and person-centred care at long-term care homes and community-based service providers across Canada.

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.

Dan earned an undergraduate degree from the UBC and master's degree from the University of North Texas, Center for Studies in Aging. He has served on the board of directors for the Denominational Health Association and the Alzheimer Society of British Columbia. He is inspired by the aging journeys of his grandparents and great-grandparents, and is now supporting his parents, who are living life to the fullest in their mid-80s.



ALISON SILGARDO

Alison Silgado brings over two decades of leadership and advocacy experience in the social services sector, with a deep commitment to improving the lives of older adults across British Columbia. As the CEO of the Seniors Services Society of B.C., Alison leads a province-wide organization that provides critical housing navigation, outreach, and support services for vulnerable seniors, including those facing homelessness or housing insecurity. In addition to her work in the sector Alison has lived and worked on three continents and in multiple sectors including real estate, banking and government in India, Switzerland and Canada.

Alison is a passionate advocate for systems-level change to ensure that aging populations are treated with dignity, equity, and respect. Her work centers on collaboration across sectors—government, non-profits, Indigenous communities, and municipal partners—to build age-friendly and inclusive communities.

At COSCO's 75th Anniversary Conference, Alison brings her facilitation expertise to guide an important and timely conversation on Human Rights and Ageing: Advocating for an Equitable Future. She will be moderating a distinguished panel featuring:

- Iglia Ivanova, BC Society for Policy Solutions
- Laura Kadowaki, United Way.
- Carole Christopher, Society Promoting Environmental Conservation
- A representative from a First Nations perspective
- A representative from the Union of BC Municipalities

Alison's inclusive and thoughtful approach to dialogue ensures that all voices are heard and that the session generates meaningful insights and calls to action to advance human rights for seniors across the province.

Day 2 Speakers



IGLIKA IVANOVA

Igluka Ivanova is a Senior Economist and Public Interest Researcher at the BC Society for Policy Solutions, a new BC-based public policy research institute that looks at issues facing BC and proposes bold and achievable policy solutions that centre social, economic, racial & environmental justice. Igluka also co-directs the Understanding Precarity in BC project, a research and public engagement initiative investigating precarious work and multi-dimensional precarity in BC.

Igluka brings 17 years of experience analyzing economic and social policy in BC and Canada, having previously served as Senior Economist and Public Interest Researcher with the BC Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) until its closure. Her work focuses on labour market trends, poverty reduction, living wages, precarious work, inequality and public finance, with a commitment to turning economic analysis into actionable policy solutions that promote economic security and justice. Igluka has provided expert analysis to provincial and federal policymakers through public consultations, task forces and policy roundtables, helping to shape conversations on key issues affecting people in BC.



LAURA KADOWAKI

Dr. Laura Kadowaki is a Specialist, Research and Knowledge Mobilization for the Healthy Aging Department at United Way BC. Through her work with the Raising the Profile Project and United Way BC, she has been collaborating with the community-based seniors' services sector in BC since 2016 to raise the profile of and build the capacity of this sector. Laura has a PhD in Gerontology from Simon Fraser University. Her areas of research interest include community-based seniors' services, ageism, seniors' housing, and home and community care. Laura is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University. She is also an Executive Committee Member for the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism.



CAROLE CHRISTOPHER

SPEC Guiding Elder, Director, and Executive Team member

Carole has a doctorate in nutrition and has developed and taught university and adult education courses for fifty years, promoting local, sustainable, and just food. She has been a Director of The Society Promoting Environmental Conservation, (SPEC) since 1997 and Board President from 2015-2019, during which she started two initiatives; a Reconciliation/Decolonization project and the SPEC Elders Circle which encourages Western Elders to reclaim an active and engaged elder role in society. She is designated as the SPEC Guiding Elder and is the current lead of the SPEC Elders Circle.

Carole has served on many community boards and advisory councils, including being past chair of the Vancouver Food Policy Council, advising City Council on food security. She is a master gardener, an enthusiastic camper and creative cook with her partner Rick. She speaks and offers workshops on topics related to food security and Becoming an Elder. She is an avid jazz vocalist, a dedicated meditation practitioner, and, in 2018 was acknowledged by the City of Vancouver for her thirty-five years of volunteer work as the recipient of the Vancouver Award of Excellence in the category of Healthy City for All.



KAI OKAZAKI

To learn more about Kai, please visit our website at: www.coscobc.org/conference-speakers/

Day 2 Speakers



GRAND CHIEF STEWART PHILLIP

On September 14, 2022, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Sylix Nation, was re-elected by acclamation to his ninth consecutive three-year term as President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), a position he has served for the past 26 years.

Prior to his tenure as President of UBCIC, he served his community as Chief of the Penticton Indian Band (PIB) for 16 years, in addition to previously serving as an elected Band Councillor for a 10-year period. He has also worked within PIB Administration in various capacities such as Band Administrator, Education Counselor, Director of Land Management and more. Aside from his 26-year tenure as an elected leader of PIB, he also served as Chair of the Okanagan Nation Alliance for 16 years.

In October 2006, the Okanagan Nation, led by the Elders of the Penticton Indian Band, bestowed on him and his family the rare title of Grand Chief in acknowledgement of his lifetime commitment to advancing Okanagan Title and Rights and the Title and Rights of all First Nations.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip's activism to First Nations Title and Rights across Turtle Island has been acknowledged through various awards and honors, including the BC Reconciliation Award in 2021 and the Eugene Rogers Environmental Award in 2017 (awarded jointly with Joan Phillip) for his decades-long commitment to protecting the lands, waters, and environment. Additionally, in November 2018, he received an honorary Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, from the University of British Columbia for his lifelong advocacy. His work has extended to shaping and advancing landmark legislation and policies, such as advancing the Tsawwassen Accord to unite BC First Nations leadership, the passing of the Bill 41 into the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and his involvement in founding the Indigenous Youth Internship Program (IYIP) in partnership with the BC government.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip has been married for 46 years to his wife Joan Phillip, who is currently serving as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of BC for the riding of Vancouver-Mount Pleasant. They have three sons (one deceased), two daughters, six granddaughters and nine grandsons. He has been enjoying sobriety for 37 years while splitting his time between Penticton and East Vancouver.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip has long since committed to strengthening and protecting the interests, title and rights of First Nations people and communities in need and addressing the climate emergency. He has taken a lifelong role in working tirelessly to ensure that the actions of all levels of government are directed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 2S+ Calls for Justice, including advocating for crucial movements and campaigns that advance First Nations title and rights. His immense wisdom, patience, empathy, and leadership continues to be a source of inspiration and hope for those fighting for their voices to be heard.

"I hereby commit to work collectively with the Chiefs of the UBCIC, the First Nations Summit and the BC Assembly of First Nations. We must work together to ensure the governments of Canada and British Columbia endorse and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for our Nations and communities. We must work together to compel government to update the Comprehensive Claims Policy to reflect the many hard-fought court victories such as the Delgamuuk'w, Haida and William cases"

-- Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.

Day 2 Speakers



ANTHONY KUPFERSCHMIDT

Anthony Kupferschmidt is a Credentialed Professional Gerontologist and the Strategic Lead, Aging and Older Persons with the City of Vancouver. In this role he leads policy, planning and strategy for the aging population and works collaboratively across departments and with community partners and other levels of government to help make Vancouver a more age-inclusive city. He completed the MA in Gerontology at Simon Fraser University and has been working in the field of aging for his entire career, including in seniors' centres, care homes, adult day programs, hospitals and research settings.



MEI FANG

Dr. Mei Fang is an Assistant Professor in Urban Aging at Simon Fraser University (SFU), jointly appointed in the Urban Studies Program and the Department of Gerontology. She serves as the Undergraduate Chair for the BA in Urban Worlds and is a Visiting Scholar at the University of Dundee, Scotland. Mei has over a decade of experience in aging and wellbeing research, with expertise in transdisciplinary and participatory research methods, including narrative and visual approaches such as photovoice, story mapping, walk-along interviews, and deliberative dialogues. She is currently leading COALESCE (Championing Older Adults for Leadership in Environmental Sustainability and Climate Empowerment), a CIHR-funded climate action project that engages older adults as co-researchers and climate leaders. Mei is also an Associate Member of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO) and serves on the COSCO conference planning committee.



ANDREW WISTER

Andrew Wister, PhD is the Director of the Gerontology Research Centre, and a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Gerontology, in which he has been a faculty member for 34 years. His research covers healthy aging, resilience and aging, social isolation and aging; life-course trends and transitions; and applications of the above areas to the Covid-19 pandemic. Dr. Wister is the past Chair of the National Seniors Council of Canada. He was awarded the Distinguished Member Award, Canadian Association on Gerontology in 2014; the prestigious SFU University Professorship award (2015-2020); and is a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. Dr. Wister was the primary architect of the MA and PhD Programs in Gerontology at SFU, and has served on the committees of over 85 graduate students. His extensive research career has produced over 160 peer-reviewed articles, in addition to numerous books, textbooks, and other publications. Dr. Wister is the SFU PI on the Canadian Longitudinal Study of Aging (CLSA) SFU Data Collection Site and the CLSA SFU Computer Assisted Telephone Interview Site. He is also the PI of the five year (SSHRC funded) Connect!Age Project and PI or Co-Inv on numerous other grants and contracts that coincide with the strategic initiatives of the GRC.



JANET MARREN

Janet Marren was elected to the Board of the Prince George Council of Seniors in 2021 and served as Board Chair from 2023-2025. Prior to her retirement in 2019, Janet's professional career included work in special, academic and public libraries. While Director of the Prince George Public Library, Janet became involved in the important work of the Council of Seniors by participating in its strategic planning sessions and the restructuring of its governance model. Through its membership of Senior Centres and other senior serving agencies, the Council strives to bring together seniors' voices throughout the community and to provide much needed advocacy, information, services and resources for seniors in the North.

Janet enjoys working with her colleagues to help make Prince George a place where seniors can age well and enjoy a safe, healthy and connected life.

Day 2 Speakers



CONNIE NEWMAN

Connie Newman is the executive director and lead consultant for the Manitoba Association of Senior Communities which currently leads Age-Friendly Manitoba and Social Prescribing Initiatives. MASC is a member association currently with 86 member groups throughout Manitoba. MASC-AFI connects with 96 municipalities in Manitoba on the Age-Friendly pathway.

Since 2022, Connie has also been a member of the Appropriate Use Advisory Committee of the Canadian Drug Agency (National).

Among her many volunteer engagements, Connie continues to be very involved with the St. James-Assiniboia 55+ Active Living Centre and Friends of Living Prairie Museum. She is a primary caregiver for a friend residing in community and another living in a personal care home.

Connie is 76 years young and holds a master's degree in education administration from the University of Manitoba. She was a junior high teacher and principal for 34 years in the St. James Assiniboia School Division and retired from education in 2004. Newman has many connections in Manitoba, Canada and beyond.

Newman believes in active aging and all that it means. Keeping the mind and body active helps to assist those around her who may need information and support as we all age together. She believes giving back and giving to others is important and we can all give in some form as it makes our Canada a much better place.



BARB MIKULEC

Barb Mikulec is a retired Vancouver teacher who serves on the provincial. Board of the BC Retired Teachers Association. Barb is chair of the R. R. Smith Memorial Foundation which funds literacy projects in BC and in developing countries.

She is first VP of COSCO the Council of Seniors Citizens Organizations of BC and serves on committees including Finance, Communications and Strategic Policy.

Barb is chair of the Seniors Health and Wellness Institute which facilitates over 300 free workshops yearly, throughout BC on healthy living, safety and financial literacy for seniors.

Barb serves as 1st VP of the National Pensioners Federation and is Housing chairperson. She also serves on the Council of Advisors for the Seniors Advocate of BC.

Day 2 Speakers



DAISY AU

Daisy Au brings extensive experience in the immigrant settlement sector and serves as Coordinator of the MOSAIC Seniors Club, leading initiatives that connect immigrant seniors through social activities, community events, and volunteer opportunities. She also founded the MOSAIC Seniors Choir, which empower seniors by reframing aging and amplifying their voices through arts and creative expression. Daisy is committed to addressing elder abuse in collaboration with community partners and fostering environments where seniors are valued and able to thrive. She also serves on the Canadian CBSS Interim Community Leadership Council and is a board member of the Metro Vancouver Cross-Cultural Seniors Network Society.

ABOUT THE MOSAIC SENIORS CHOIR & MUSICAL THEATRE TROUPE

The MOSAIC Multicultural Seniors Choir was established in 2019 after seniors expressed a desire to learn English songs. Daisy Au, Coordinator of the MOSAIC Seniors Club, recognized the potential of this request and invited Andrea Montgomery Di Marco, PhD — a teacher and choir-drama director — to lead the group. Andrea combines her passion for working with immigrant seniors with her love of music and movement.

In 2022, the choir began exploring improvisation and musical theatre. Their original production, *Seniors Take on Things We Never Talk About*, sensitively addresses difficult themes while maintaining a spirit of play and purpose. Major themes include elder abuse, ageism, myths about aging, reframing limiting narratives, accepting challenging realities, and celebrating the gifts of connection and friendship. Over the course of six months, this remarkable group of seniors learned an original English script written for them, along with new songs, staging, and choreography. Their work demonstrates risk-taking, determination, adventurous spirit, and the power of dreaming big.



ERIC DOHERTY

Eric Doherty is a semi-retired transportation planning consultant who specializes in improving community accessibility, as well as reducing climate pollution. His work includes the 2023 report *Access for Everyone? Publicly Operated HandyDART in Metro Vancouver*. His education includes a MA from the School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC, and he is a Registered Professional Planner (RPP) and a Member of the Canadian Institute of Planners (MCIP). Eric lives on Lekwungen Territory (Victoria BC). More information, including links to Eric's videos and writing, is available at www.ecoplaning.ca.



TIM LARSEN

Tim is a lifelong advocate for public passenger transportation.

He was the BC President of Transport 2000, now known as Transport Action. Transport 2000 actively and successfully advocated for improvements to Canada's national passenger railway network VIA Rail. He was also part of the ad hoc Citizens for Rapid Transit group that was an advocate for the building of rapid transit in Vancouver. Tim was a member of the advisory group for the development of the Merritt Age Friendly Action Plan. He was also on the BC Ferries qathet Sunshine Coast Ferry Advisory Committee until it was discontinued last spring. Tim is the Chair of the COSCO Transportation Committee. He is also an active member of the qathet Council of Canadians.

Tim practised architecture as an employee and as principal of his own firm. He later moved on to be an executive in the non-profit sector. He is now semi-retired, enjoying his grandchildren and driving a bus in the qathet rural transit system.

Day 2 Speakers



CHRIS FUDGE

Chris Fudge serves as BC Transit's Director of Government Relations, leading the organization's efforts to build and maintain productive relationships with local government staff and elected officials and to support the growth and development of public transit service throughout British Columbia. His team members serve as the key liaison between BC Transit and external stakeholders, and ensure effective communication with municipal, regional and provincial partners in over 130 communities across the province. He has been instrumental in helping communities to benefit from the diverse range of services that BC Transit provides, while ensuring that the unique needs of each community are reflected in the transportation solutions that are delivered.

Prior to joining BC Transit, he held various management positions with the Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Whistler, VANOC and Intrawest Corporation. Chris holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Carleton University.



SARAH ROSS

Sarah Ross is Vice-President of Transportation Planning and Policy and provides leadership on multimodal service, investment, and policy decisions through the development of statutory, strategic and tactical plans; major studies and business cases; multi-modal service, infrastructure and network plans; regional policies and guidelines; and, transportation analytics, forecasting and research.

Sarah is passionate about advancing sustainable transportation so that all people of Metro Vancouver have access to the services and activities that are integral to their daily lives. She has applied this passion throughout her career: removing barriers for people with disabilities, improving the experience of taking the bus by reducing delay, advancing protected cycling infrastructure so people of all ages and abilities can cycle safely, advancing funding strategies for expansion of the multi model transportation system.

Sarah is a seasoned professional with 25 years of experience in planning and research. She joined TransLink in 2004 and has been in this VP position since 2022. She is the Executive Sponsor for the Women and Allies Employee Resource Group.

Sarah is a Registered Professional Planner and a member of the Canadian Institute of Planners and holds degrees from McGill University (BA Sociology), University of Toronto (MA Sociology) and University of British Columbia (MA Planning). Sarah loves the outdoors, riding her bike, trail running and coaching cross-country skiing.



FARINAZ RIKHTEHGARAN

Farinaz Rikhtehgaran is a Project Manager at Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST), with a multidisciplinary background in Gerontology and Urban Planning and Design. Her work focuses on creating age-friendly, inclusive communities through system-level change, accessible transportation, and equitable urban design. With over five years of experience in seniors' mobility, built environment accessibility, and aging in place, she brings both practical and strategic insight to her work. She has supported province-wide collaboration efforts aimed at improving transportation options for older adults, helping lead community engagement, research translation, and public education initiatives. Farinaz also brings international experience as an urban planner with private consulting firms, where she led projects rooted in equity, inclusion, and participatory design.

Conference Notes

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