



# E-Connector

*Newsletter for the BC Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRN).*

## **From Stranger to Friend: Helping Individuals have Healthy Conversations to Resolve Conflict, Reduce Isolation, and Create Community**



*(Photo: Suzanne Klassen)*

### *Definition of Community:*

- All the people living in a specific locality.<sup>1</sup>
- Friendship between different people or groups, and a sense of having something in common.<sup>2</sup>

In 2013, community agencies from the Lower Mainland's North Shore<sup>3</sup> and local volunteer groups observed a disturbing trend. Seniors were being evicted from their homes<sup>4</sup> due to unresolved conflicts among residents and neighbours.

The conflicts seemed minor, but were nonetheless difficult to resolve. There was no true evidence to prove any one side of the story. The longer-term worry was the increased number of seniors who were

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Oxford Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> CollinsDictionary.com

<sup>3</sup> Here, the North Shore includes the areas of North Vancouver and West Vancouver.

<sup>4</sup> In this article, home refers to a congregate living environment, like a seniors' home.

in danger of becoming homeless because housing was (and still is) very hard to find. Community agencies also did not have immediate ways to address the problem, compounding the possibility of this concern turning into reality.

Enter the North Shore community response network (CRN), which supported training for groups working with seniors to help them self-manage and resolve conflict.

### **Community Facilitation Training for Seniors**

“After surveying the community and talking to a number of agencies, we learned that conflict in seniors’ housing was a big problem. Seniors were often left on their own to resolve minor conflict, but without any skills or guidance on how to do it,” says **Suzanne Klassen**, Director of Information and Advocacy<sup>5</sup> for the [North Shore Disability Resource Centre](#).

“There wasn’t a lot of communication between tenants, and property managers were often feeling overwhelmed. We looked at a number of different ideas, and decided to approach conflict prevention through open dialogue, empathy building, and communication.”

The team developed and piloted a program in senior homes where participants learned how to listen, communicate, empathize, and resolve minor conflicts.

“We partnered with restorative justice practitioner Christianne Paras, and ran several pilot programs. In general, we used circle facilitation techniques, and an experiential approach,” continues Suzanne. “Participants practiced communicating in different ways, and did exercises to build different listening and empathy skills. After receiving the training, participants told us they recognized the benefits right away, and were able to move past their own intolerances they had built up.”

### **The Pilot Program Becomes an Ongoing Program Offering to the Community**

The success of the pilot program was overwhelming, and created the platform for an ongoing program.

Thanks to the financial and in-kind support from the [BC CRN](#), North Shore municipalities, [North Shore Soroptimists](#), the Province of BC, the North Shore Disability Resource Centre, [Community Justice Initiatives](#), and [Vancouver Coastal Health](#), the North Shore CRN was able to create a sustainable program to continually provide this training to the community, and expand its reach to include all vulnerable adults, as well as those with disabilities.

The program is now a workshop consisting of three progressive sessions. It is regularly offered to the community, and is open to all.



*Photo: Suzanne Klassen*

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<sup>5</sup> Kari Chambers has now taken over as the North Shore CRN’s coordinator. Suzanne, in her capacity with the North Shore Disability Resource Centre, continues being an active member of the North Shore CRN.

The objective of the workshop is to:

- Bring together vulnerable populations and those who work with them.
- Prevent conflict by promoting empathy, conflict comfort, and self-reflection.

“We are grateful to all of the funders, partner agencies, and volunteers who helped this program develop over the year,” says Suzanne. “They have allowed us to hold training in different locations, access services such as language translators and sign language interpreters, and train additional facilitators for the community.”

The program has become so successful that there is waitlist for the next workshop.

### **Steps to Mitigating Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Self-Neglect**

Learning to talk to one another and listening with empathy are foundational to forming relationships, lessening isolation, and building bridges between individuals, and community. Isolated seniors are more at risk of self-neglect, and being abused or neglected by another.

“Respectful and open communication builds trust and empathy between people. Friendships form from these interactions, and prevents conflict from happening to begin with,” adds Suzanne.

“However, if conflict were to arise, effective dialogue enables the individual to refrain from snap judgements and complaining about the other behind their back. Strangers become friends. Friendship then enables groups of individuals to create community where they can talk, take care of one another, and watch out for each other.”

For more information on the Facilitating Vibrant Conversations Program, or if you’re interested in the workshop schedule, please contact CRN Coordinator **Kari Chambers** at [northshorecrn@gmail.com](mailto:northshorecrn@gmail.com)

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## **Volunteer of the Month: Youla Thomas, White Rock/South Surrey CRN**

*BC CRN relies on volunteers to spread the word on adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect in their respective communities.*

*These individuals are critical: without them, there would be no network. Volunteers include everyday individuals who live in the communities they serve. Others work in a seniors’ service industry who volunteer for a CRN as an extension of their work. Both want to make a difference.*

*Youla Thomas of the South Surrey/White Rock CRN is an exceptional example of the latter, and we are pleased to profile her in this month’s edition.*

### **Tell our readers a little something about yourself.**

Professionally, I’m the business development manager at [Comfort Keepers](#), which provides home care support services for seniors. The



*Youla Thomas  
(Photo: Y. Thomas)*

goal is to help seniors stay safe and independent in their homes for as long as possible wherever home may be for them. I've been with this company for six years.

Personally, I live in Ladner with my family, including my 87-year-old mother-in-law, 93-year-old father-in-law, and my 11 and 16-year-old daughters. I'm a constant caregiver at home! I also have a degree in psychology and sociology.

### **How did you hear about BC CRN and what made you decide to volunteer with us?**

I started volunteering with the [Semiahmoo Seniors' Planning Table](#) back in 2014. The Semiahmoo Seniors' Planning Table consists of volunteers coming from different non-profits, city representatives, and community agencies who are committed to ensuring seniors are aware of the resources where they live. This is where I first met Louise (Tremblay, Regional Mentor). I was instantly curious about BC CRN, and she encouraged me to become the coordinator of the local CRN.

I've also always had an interest in helping seniors and making a difference in community. My husband says I have a knack for it!

### **What kind of projects have you been able to do with the South Surrey/White Rock CRN?**

Louise and I have engaged with the community in a number of ways. As part of the Semiahmoo Seniors Table, we hosted events for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) and Grandparents Day, strawberry teas for seniors, and a health resource fair we call *For the Health of It*.

We also conducted the Gatekeeper program at financial institutions. Participants saw the value right away, and this triggered an idea of the "pop-up event" as a means to more broadly reach out to isolated seniors.

### **What is a "pop-up event"?**

Pop-up events are outreach events where we go out into the community in an effort to meet isolated seniors part way. The goal is to spread the word of elder abuse prevention, the value of BC CRN, and seniors' health resources available in the community. Each event has a very full program that includes speakers, exhibits, and workshops from community agencies, the RCMP, local fire halls, and health care providers. The success of these community resource pop-ups has been our most successful venture to date.

And the success of the pop-ups has grown. Our first pop-up in 2016 yielded about 45 participants. Now, we average around 100 people per event. More people are becoming familiar with the BC CRN and the work we do, and who we partner with to educate others on the signs of adult abuse and neglect and what they can do about it.

### **Best part of the work?**

When I see people having "light bulb moments". We try to educate people on adult abuse and neglect *before* they need it. As a network, our job is to connect people to education, resources, and to each other. Being a bridge to information is one of many ways we can build a safer community.

If you know of an exceptional volunteer we should profile, contact us at [administration@bccrns.ca](mailto:administration@bccrns.ca).

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## ***It's Not Right! Helps Communities Make It Right***

Participant evaluations from 2017 indicate the program is making an impact.

Ninety-five percent of people who participated in an *It's Not Right!* presentation or workshop in 2017 feel they can identify the warning signs and risk factors of abuse of older adults.<sup>6</sup> Over 93% of participants know where to go for help should they suspect abuse or neglect.<sup>7</sup>

*It's Not Right!* is one of BC CRN's hallmark educational programs that focus on engaging with and equipping bystanders to identify and address possible abuse and neglect of someone they know.

In 2017, community presenters have conducted a total of 135 public presentations and workshops across the province to approximately 2,000 British Columbians. BC CRN has trained 180 community presenters in BC who are certified to present the *It's Not Right!* and Gatekeeper programs.

Other highlights from the 2017 evaluations include:

- Over 83% of respondents believe our attitudes about aging put older adults at risk.<sup>8</sup>
- Over 75% of respondents are willing to respond to signs of abuse, now that they know what to do.<sup>9</sup>

### **Book Your Presentation or Workshop**

Contact your local Community Response Network (CRN) to book *It's Not Right!* or Gatekeeper for your group or organization.

CRN contact information can be found at: [www.bccrns.ca](http://www.bccrns.ca) → Find a CRN → Choose a Community.

Both programs are free of charge. (We strive to work with communities to address adult and abuse together, and do not want cost to be a barrier.)

We will work with you to organize your session and provide all materials, also at no cost to you.

[View our program brochure for more information](#), or email us at [itsnotright@bccrns.ca](mailto:itsnotright@bccrns.ca), [gatekeeper@bccrns.ca](mailto:gatekeeper@bccrns.ca), or [info@bccrns.ca](mailto:info@bccrns.ca).



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<sup>6</sup> Based on 411 responses received on participant evaluations processed to date from 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Based on 399 responses received on participant evaluations processed to date from 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Based on 406 responses received on participant evaluations processed to date from 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



## New to BC CRN

BC CRN welcomes **Connie Kaweesi** of Fort St. John. Connie is the Regional Mentor for North Easter BC replacing **Lindsay Jardine**. Thank you, Lindsay, for your contributions to the organization!

For more information on Connie, or to contact her or any of our Regional Mentors, [please visit our website](#).

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### **REMINDER: Start Planning for #WEAAD2018 Now!**

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is the one day in the year when the whole world voices its opposition to the abuse and suffering inflicted to some of our older generations.

It's the perfect time to put #WEAAD2018 into your calendar and start planning your activities today!

View BC CRN's [Spread the Word Guide](#) for activity ideas, or contact your [local community response network](#) (CRN) to get involved.



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## Provincial Learning Events

**March 20, 2018:** *How to be an Ally in Your Community* presented by BC CRN board members Silvia Straka and Ajit Mehat.

Canada prides itself as being diverse and inclusive. However, divisions and exclusions persist. We have yet to solve the problems of racism, colonialism, sexism, ableism, and homophobia. Participants will understand what they can do to make a difference in the community, and how to become part of the solution. We look at why good intentions are not enough, and the skills needed to become an ally. Becoming an ally is a long process. This event will help you get started. *Please email advanced questions to [info@bccrns.ca](mailto:info@bccrns.ca). All questions will be passed onto the presenters anonymously.*



**Silvia Straka** is (PhD) is an Assistant Professor, School of Social Work and Human Services, Thompson Rivers University. Her research focuses on anti-oppressive perspectives on aging, with projects including older women living with intimate partner violence, indigenous aging, and the abuse of older adults.



**Ajit Mehat** is a retired senior Federal/Provincial executive who develops policy initiatives, and builds stakeholder consensus for innovation. Some of his projects included Federal and provincial human rights case investigation, conflict resolution and process change

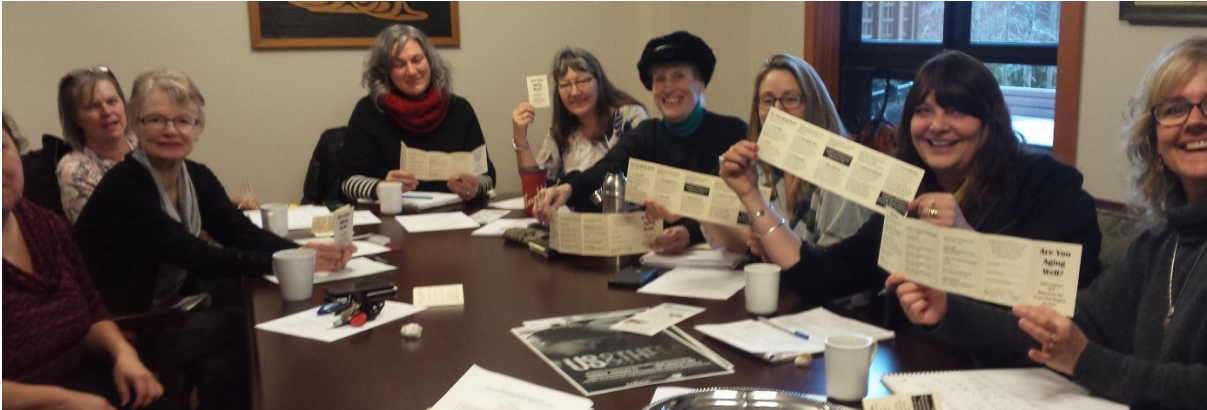
Provincial Learning Events are toll-free teleconferences that take place the third Tuesday of the month from 10:30 am to 12 pm. Everyone is welcome.

Email [info@bccrns.ca](mailto:info@bccrns.ca) to receive notifications of upcoming teleconferences and to receive dial-in info.

[Access recordings and materials for previous events](#)

## Our Top 4: Resources of the Month

1. [Are You Aging Well Resource Card](#): A simplified version of Nova Scotia's Dr. Kenneth Rockwood's "Frailty Scale". Dr. Rockwood is a geriatrician and researcher, and with his permission, Elder Care Project Cowichan (EPIC) amended the scale so any senior, caregiver, family, or community member, can assess their own wellness, or better understand the wellness of their loved one. Copies available at doctors' offices, clinics, and community organizations in the Cowichan region.<sup>10</sup> For more, email [EPICCommunityGroup@gmail.com](mailto:EPICCommunityGroup@gmail.com).



*The EPIC Community Working Group. (Photo: Jane Osborne)*

2. [Canadian Seniors Directory](#): An extensive guide and listing of services and products tailored to seniors, baby boomers, older adults and caregivers in Canada.
3. [Empathy \(Video\)](#): Created by Canadian company the [Responsive Group](#), this video offers a view of senior care through another's eyes.
4. [No Voice: Older Immigrant Women Surviving Violence, Calling for Change \(Video\)](#): Created by the Canadian Centre for Elder Law, survivors share stories of how the family law system failed them. WARNING: content may be triggering to some.

"Like" [Facebook](#) or "follow" us on [Twitter](#) to receive the latest resources on adult abuse and neglect.

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## Our Top 5: Headlines of the Month

1. [Don't call back: 'one ring scam' targets phones across Canada](#), CTV News, Feb. 13, 2018.
2. [Nurses with a mission: send older ER patients home with help](#), The National Post, Feb. 2, 2018.
3. [Former B.C. nurse fined more than \\$17k for exploiting elderly couple in 'very unusual' relationship](#), CBC News, Jan. 27, 2018.
4. ['Pet Safe Keeping' finds shelter for pets of domestic abuse victims](#), NTV.ca, Jan. 22, 2018.
5. [Broken teeth and bruises: dentists in a unique position to spot domestic abuse](#), CBC News, Jan. 22, 2018.

"Like" [Facebook](#) or "follow" us on [Twitter](#) to receive the latest news on adult abuse and neglect.

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<sup>10</sup> Feedback is coming in from many sources and the team expects to be printing an improved version by mid-March.

## Campaigns & Professional Development Events

- **National Fraud Prevention Month**

*March, Canada-wide*

Help Canadians recognize, reject and report fraud. For ideas on how to do this, see BC CRN's [Spread the Word Guide](#).

- **Reach Isolated Seniors Everywhere, RISE Canada**

*March 11, 2018, Canada*

Reach Isolated Seniors Everywhere (RISE) invites all Canadians to connect with seniors at risk of social isolation or loneliness. Materials available, including poster, brochure, and video, at [www.rise-cisa.ca](http://www.rise-cisa.ca).

- **Community Wellness Forum, Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House**

*March 12, 2018, Aboriginal Friendship Centre, 1607 East Hastings St., Vancouver*

Free event hosted by the Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, and the Mount Pleasant CRN. Call 604-251-1225 for more.

- **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (#WEAAD2018)**

*June 15, 2018, Worldwide*

View BC CRN's [Spread the Word Guide](#) for ideas on how to raise awareness of adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect on this very important day!

- **14<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Aging, International Federation on Aging (IFA)**

*August 8-10, 2018, Toronto, ON.*

[View more on exhibition opportunities.](#) [View more on the conference.](#)

- **Canadian Association of Gerontology (CAG) 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific and Educational Meeting: Making it Matter – Mobilizing Aging Research, Practice, and Policy**

*October 18-20, 2018, Vancouver, BC*

Share research and work in the field of aging with national and international colleagues. **Call for abstracts open until April 16, 2018.** [View more on how to submit an abstract.](#) [View more on the conference.](#)

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