Our lead feature for this month is an adaptation of a story provided by Anna Hudson, coordinator for the community response network (CRN) for Victoria area and the Saanich Peninsula on Vancouver Island, a community presenter for BC CRN’s ‘It’s Not Right!’ program, and a former social worker. Here, she recounts her experiences as a caregiver to elderly parents. Anna tells this story to educate others on how adult abuse related behaviour can arise gradually in times of stress.

Note: Names and other specific personal details have been omitted due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter. The content may also be triggering to some of our readers.

Both of my parents lived to be over 100 years old. My mom died two months after her 100th birthday, and my dad, six months after his 100th. They passed away just shy of their 70th wedding anniversary.

Being the daughter of parents who aged together, I learned many lessons about myself, what it means to be a caregiver, and the long progression of aging. My parents were able to live together in an
independent living apartment in Ontario. In their final two years of life, they entered long-term care – my mom first, then my dad followed a year later.

With siblings living on Vancouver Island and Ontario, we each had taken on specific caregiver responsibilities: one sibling and I who lived on the Island, we did most of the caregiving for my parents in a long-distance capacity; the sibling in Ontario lent financial and moral support whenever needed as their in-laws were also aging and had health issues that required support.

As mom and dad entered their nineties, our concern deepened year by year. They were fiercely independent and were determined to remain so, even to the detriment of what the family thought was in the best interest of their well being. Fortunately, my parents lived in a building that allowed support services to be brought in, and eventually, the building underwent some changes to offer assisted living support services that included providing meals in the dining room.

While these measures eased the burden of worry temporarily, my father started to show the early signs of dementia by age 80. My mother was still able to keep him home with her. This decision impacted everyone in the family, and we had to figure out how to support our mother, who shouldered the majority of caregiving responsibility.

Here’s where my story really begins.

I was visiting my parents one cold winter day in January in Ontario. At the time, Mom was really struggling with her mobility because of arthritis in her hips and legs. She was in her early nineties at this time. My dad was also the same age. While Dad was in great shape, his dementia had progressed. He had periods of confusion, which were compounded by his severe hearing loss. (He refused to wear a hearing aid.)

During lunch, my mother asked if I could take her to the drug store. It was a very cold day. The thermometer read several degrees below zero, and we would need lots of bundling up to stay warm. Although I was feeling somewhat apprehensive about the affects of freezing cold on my mom’s increasingly fragile health, she wanted to go out.

I quickly said: “I could take the car out myself and pick up what you want.”

My attempts to dissuade her were futile. I realized she probably wanted some respite from Dad and a reason to leave the apartment. Dad, on the other hand, did not like being left alone. But, he also did
not want to go out into the cold with us. Despite his dementia, Dad being alone at this point didn’t pose any danger to himself, and I assumed the trip to the drug store would be quick.

Getting Mom dressed for the cold took some time – the big coat, hat, gloves. “No boots,” she said. She felt safer wearing her running shoes, which were a struggle to get on. Her feet were slightly swollen.

We shuffled to the elevator, and then to the lobby, where I left her to go warm up the car. I drove to the front of the building, and got out to help her into the car. I didn’t want her to slip. The whole process took much longer than I anticipated. But, off we went, and she was grateful to get out into the fresh air.

At the drug store, we went through almost the reverse procedure – I stopped the car out front, helped her out of the car and into the store, watched she did not slip, and then parked the car. When I got back to the store, mom was slowly walking toward the aisle with the vitamins. We decided to take her coat off since it was warm inside.

By now, a good half hour had passed for what would have taken me five minutes. But, it was important to help Mom with this small outing. Once she was in front of the selection of vitamins, she began taking a lot of time reading the labels on all the containers. She seemed unsure of what vitamins she needed.

I decided to take charge. I persuaded Mom to finally choose a supplement. We needed to be on our way. I felt my worry, impatience, and stress growing: it was going to be slow getting back home, Dad was alone and would be worrying, and I was tired and afraid for my parents’ situation.

Mom shuffled to the counter to pay for her purchase. I tried to be respectful of her pace. When we were finally able to head out, I was grabbing her arm and tugging on her sleeve. “Come on, Mom! We have to get going! Dad is waiting for us!”

When we reached the door, we began the arduous process of putting on her heavy winter coat. When she tried to connect the zipper, my exasperation took over: “Oh Mom! Just let me DO IT!”

I grabbed the zipper, unaware of how rough I was. Forcefully, I zipped up the jacket, and then yanked up her collar. I looked into her eyes, and for the first time in my life, I saw fear.

I, the good and loving daughter, caregiver, and social worker, was bullying my mother...and she was afraid of me. I said to myself: “I am not a bully, and certainly not an abuser.”

But, my mother was looking at me with terror in her eyes.

There is a fine line between being decisive and being controlling. People don’t wake up one day and decide to abuse someone. It’s a gradual slide based on circumstances, stress, responsibility, and time. Had I been less aware of my actions, I might have continued with that kind of behaviour.
Every time I tell this story, I feel the tears bunch up behind my eyes. It’s a difficult memory to recount. I learned how easy it is to slip into bullying behaviour, be it family, friends, or caregivers. We are the people they trust, and it is our responsibility to give them respect and help them feel as safe as possible.

Anna tells this story as part of her ‘It’s Not Right!’ presentation to the public. To learn more about the Saanich Peninsula CRN, or to get involved, contact Anna at (email) or Regional Mentor Cari Taylor at (email.)

To book an ‘It’s Not Right!’ or Gatekeeper workshop for your team, contact BC CRN at either itsnotright@bccrns.ca or gatekeeper@bccrns.ca.

To learn more about adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect, consult our resources on our website. Even better, get involved with your local CRN by contacting the Regional Mentor responsible for your area.

If you have a story you would like for us to consider for a future edition of E-Connector, contact us by email at info@bccrns.ca or direct message us on Facebook or Twitter. We’re always looking for stories on how CRNs have made an impact in your life and community.

New BC CRN Mentor Liaison Role Assists with Outreach

BC CRN’s Regional Mentors are key to supporting community response network (CRN) coordinators and establishing new CRNs in communities. It’s a big job: building local networks, mentoring coordinators, and working with the community to raise awareness and educate the public on how to spot the signs of adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect. Sometimes, the Regional Mentors also act as coordinators while they search for someone to fill the role.

Enter the Mentor Liaison, a new role currently being tested and developed in the Central and North Vancouver Island region.

Regional Mentor Jane Osborne says: “This role is in place to help with outreach efforts. I needed someone whose connections could be leveraged. I also wanted to be intentional about establishing intergenerational relationships. With my region stretching from the Malahat to the North Island, several communities are both rural and remote, and many others are Indigenous. Alyssa is the perfect person to fill the immediate need from Courtenay to Port Hardy, and then help further develop a more long-term role.”
We are pleased to introduce you to Alyssa Christensen, BC CRN’s first Mentor Liaison.

A Role in Progress and in Development

“It started as a casual coffee meeting with Jane about a year ago, and we clicked immediately,” says Alyssa. “We both had similar values and goals in mind. There wasn’t an official position at the time. All we had was Jane’s request for help, and my desire to help her out. I recently celebrated my first anniversary in this role. Time flies!”

“Currently, I work about once a week, and things change from week to week,” she adds. “I’ve attended several planning meetings and events with people who work in and individuals who live in care facilities, LGBTQ2S+ communities, and CRN coordinators from all over the central and northern parts of the Island. It’s a brand-new role, so finding out what we can do is exciting.”

Working together with Jane and the community, recent activities of the team include transitioning the Mt. Waddington CRN, onboarding its new coordinator, and helping co-create the CRN’s vision and legacy. “Mt. Waddington consists of a cluster of remote communities, so this CRN has some interesting challenges to navigate in order to engage the community,” adds Alyssa.

She is also working with Volunteer Campbell River and the Homalco First Nations Band to establish a CRN to serve the Strathcona Regional District.

Leveraging Her Métis Roots

Alyssa is Campbell River born and raised. She is also Métis, and has family living all over the North Island. “One of the reasons why I’m so interested in CRN work is that my grandmother was enrolled in a covenant school and part of the residential school system,” she states. “She was taught to hide her ancestry. I need to help stop the cycle of shame and intergenerational trauma.”

“Because Alyssa has Indigenous roots, she has experiences and connections I would never have,” says Jane. “She grew up in a family that was both colonial and Indigenous, which lends her instant credibility with other Indigenous groups. Because she also lives on Vancouver Island, she naturally connects with these communities and understands the cultural norms when it comes to communication.”
Mentor Liaison Role Supplements Her Studies

Alyssa is also studying social work after switching from accounting. “I studied business for a couple of years, and then worked a summer internship for a large company in an accounting position. I decided it wasn’t for me,” she says. “Halfway through my undergraduate degree, I switched specialities.”

Previous stints working with immigrant populations, girls’ groups, and seniors help solidify Alyssa’s decision to complete her studies in social work. In addition to her studies and her work as Mentor Liaison, Alyssa also sits on the Board of the Laichwiltach Family Life Society, a non-profit multi-service organization that provides direct service to Aboriginal people throughout the region in the areas of outreach, culture, healing, and wellness.

“My end game is to work in the criminal justice system as a counsellor for Indigenous people, or in the area of restorative justice,” she says.

It’s About the People

“The most rewarding part of the role is meeting people I wouldn’t encounter in other parts of my life,” she says. “People are passionate and have so much to offer. It’s exciting to be around them. My social circle is becoming a happier place.”

“Alyssa has both the interest and passion for the work. She has several assets we just don’t have right now in the organization. She’s a natural leader who relates easily to people, and who can engage with any one. She’s charismatic and a lot of fun to work with,” says Jane.

If you would like to learn more about the Mentor Liaison role and the projects happening in central and northern Vancouver Island, please contact Jane Osborne at jane.osborne@bccrns.ca.

#WEAAD2020: It’s Time to Start Planning!

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) 2020 takes place June 15! Let’s work together to make it bigger and better for this new decade!

WEAAD was officially recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 66/127, December 2011, following a request by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA), who first established the commemoration in June 2006.
It represents the one day in the year when the whole world voices its opposition to the abuse and suffering inflicted to some of our older adults.

It’s the perfect time to put #WEAAD2020 into your calendar and start planning your activities today!

View BC CRN’s WEAAD resources, join our Facebook page to see photos of past WEAAD events, or contact your local community response network (CRN) to get involved.

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**CRNs at Work (Photo Summary)**

Here are some highlights on where you may have seen our community response networks this month!

Celebrating the Year of the Rat!

The [Chinese CRN](https://example.com) out of the Vancouver Lower Mainland celebrated Chinese New Year on January 21, 2020 with activities, like music, dancing, and calligraphy – all for seniors - and delivering care packages to seniors in the community. *(Photos: MOSAIC)*

*To submit your pics for consideration on our social media and future editions, tag or direct message us through Facebook or Twitter.*
(Top row): The Logan Lake Seniors’ Centre held its first open house on Feb. 25 (Logan Lake CRN)

(Right): A Mardi Gras themed seniors’ luncheon (Mission CRN)

(Below): BC CRN Board members at the Federation of Community Social Services Conference in Victoria on Feb. 20.

(Below right): A lunch serving 76 seniors took place earlier in the month as part of the Kootenay IRIS program (Castlegar CRN).

Photos on this page courtesy of Logan Lake Better at Home, Mission Community Services Society, Kootenay IRIS, and S. Baker.
Volunteer of the Month: Linda Krantz, Castlegar CRN

This month, we profile veteran volunteer Linda Krantz of Castlegar, BC. Best guess by those who have worked with her, Linda has been involved with BC CRN for 20+ years. She was a witness to the development of today’s provincial Adult Guardianship Act, the legislation that explicitly defines adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect, the agencies that must respond, and the rights and provisions of all adults in making decisions related to their health and wellbeing.

We are thrilled to introduce you to Linda, our exceptional volunteer of the month.

Hairdresser Turned Social Worker

Linda was a hairdresser for several years before she decided to go back to school as an adult student to become a social worker. “I needed to make changes personally,” she says.

As part of her studies, Linda completed practicums in Prince George, working in community and seniors’ mental health. “This was when I first heard of the BC CRN and the work of community response networks (CRNs),” she says. “This was also the time we were beginning to understand the importance of legislation to support abused and neglected seniors in the community.”

After receiving her bachelor’s degree in social work from the University of Northern BC (UNBC) in 2003, Linda moved to Castlegar to start her practice. She still calls Castlegar home today.

BC CRN Involvement from the Start

The answer to the question of when Linda started with the BC CRN was challenging to nail down, mainly because she has been involved in CRN work since the organization’s inception, when there were only five communities in BC piloting the CRN model.

“I’ve always been involved with CRN work in some way...I can’t tell you an exact date when it happened,” she explains. “Working with BC CRN and the local CRN just kind of flowed like a river throughout my adult life. That’s kind of wonderful!”

She was aware of early Regional Mentor discussions when the five original CRNs were figuring out how to engage the community to discuss adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect.

“I still remember hearing the conversations with designated agencies, and from the people who were impacted by abuse and neglect. I also remember thinking to myself how valuable these CRNs could be to the community. It really formed the groundwork to some of my social work practice, and ignited my interest in CRNs,” says Linda.

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1 View more on BC CRN’s 25 year history.
As part of her studies, Linda also had the opportunity to interview community members on their awareness of the Adult Guardianship Act and the local CRNs of the time as part of an academic project. “Communities and organizations were either completely unaware, or they were aware but did not yet put the legislation into practice. We were still in the early stages of helping communities make that connection with the legislation,” she says.

While still in school, she learned from many of the seniors who participated on the committee that advised on the law that would become the Adult Guardianship Act, partly through her work, and coincidentally through friends. (“One of my childhood friend’s dad was a member of the committee.”) This enabled Linda to understand the legislation from a different perspective, and how it protects both the people and their rights.

“It was all very grassroots at the time, and was meaningful to me,” she says.

**Continued Involvement after University and Into Retirement**

Once she earned her degree, Linda stayed updated on CRN news and developments. “BC CRN became part of my practice as a social worker. (The role is a designated responder.) I was able to assist with the reports on abuse, neglect, and self-neglect cases that were given to designated agencies.”

Linda would continue working with BC CRN in her capacity as a social worker and designated responder for the duration of her career, which lasted 17 years.

When she retired from social work two years ago, she became a volunteer with the [Castlegar CRN](#), supporting the Kootenay [Increasing Recreation Involving Seniors (IRIS)](#) program led by CRN coordinator Sandi McCreight.

“I still use my social work skills to guide my conversations with seniors,” adds Linda. “Most of all, it’s about holding space for building respectful and meaningful relationships.”

In her volunteer capacity, she collaborates regularly with the Castlegar CRN on programs, education sessions, and seniors’ engagement opportunities.

**Where Her Desire to Help Seniors Comes From**

“My passion for supporting seniors comes from my life history with my mom, and grandma. They were huge influences,” says Linda. “They led a very humanitarian life. They were poor farmers, but they were also very kind. They opened their hearts to everyone. These are the roots of my admiration and respect for seniors.”

Linda also emphasizes that seniors are excellent sources of knowledge. “We can’t quit learning from them. We have so many intelligent and wise seniors who fall into isolation. We need to work together to prevent this from happening. Personally, I love learning from them so, so much.”

**Still Holding High Regard for BC CRN after 20+ Years**

Last Fall, Linda, along with volunteers and CRN coordinators province-wide, were invited to participate in a three-day conference hosted by BC CRN. There, participants were able to share stories, compare notes, and network with each other.
“After the conference, I saw how integral CRNs still are to the community and the (health) system,” she says. “So much came out of stories. It was refreshing and encouraging to see so many people still doing CRN work with so much passion.”

Why Linda is Our Exceptional Volunteer of the Month

Sandi McCreight Castlegar CRN Coordinator: “Linda's history with the Castlegar CRN put her in a position as one of my go-to people when I started as coordinator in 2006. Her compassion and empathy displayed in her role as DA was limitless, and she has carried that amazing support forward into her volunteer role with the CRN's IRIS program. Linda is one of those rare people who can address any situation, confront misinformation or misguided opinions, and provide education in a gentle and truly caring way that makes everyone feel loved and supported. Linda's passion for supporting local seniors makes her a key and very valuable member of the IRIS Crew.”

If you have an exceptional CRN volunteer in your community you think we should profile, contact us at info@bccrns.ca.

Provincial Learning Events

March 17, 2020: *Active Aging in Recreation* presented by Noelle Virtue, Project Manager, BC Recreation and Parks Association.

The presentation focuses on three initiatives supporting older adults in the recreation sector in BC. *Choose to Move* and *ActivAge* are complementary programs aimed at inactive and isolated older adults.

Hear about the benefits and breadth of these programs, as well as unique examples of how they are being implemented in BC communities to reach the needs of the older adult population.

The third initiative is a training module developed to provide insights into the unique needs of older adults when participating in recreation or leisure activities. It also helps ensure that our programming creates environments and spaces that foster healthy active aging.

Noelle Virtue is the Project Manager at the BC Recreation and Parks Association working on initiatives at both ends of the age spectrum – infants to 13 years and older adults. She is currently overseeing the *Choose to Move* and *ActivAge* programs across the province. Her previous work has included advocacy and policy development in BC and the UK, with a particular focus on healthy living. She enjoys being active in beautiful British Columbia and exploring nature with her family.

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 to receive notifications of upcoming teleconferences and to receive dial-in info.
Our Top 3: Resources of the Month

1. **World Alzheimer Report 2019**: The report analyses findings of the world’s largest survey on attitudes to dementia, as well as expert essays and case studies from across the world. The report reveals the results of the largest attitudes to dementia survey ever undertaken, with almost 70,000 people across 155 countries and territories completing the survey.

2. **Sexual Assault/Abuse of Older Women (2019)**: This paper out of Australia was authored by the executive director of the OPAL Institute, a non-profit organization that promotes the sexual rights of older adults. The paper specifically highlights ways to prevent and respond to the sexual abuse of older women at home and in residential aged care.

3. **Fact Book on Aging in British Columbia and Canada (2019)**: The SFU Gerontology Research Centre has released the latest edition of this book, which utilizes data collected over 30 years to showcase major demographic, health and social patterns of older adults. SFU is also distributing electronic and paper copies at no charge to the public.

“Like” [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) or “follow” us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com) to receive the latest resources on adult abuse and neglect.

Our Top 7: Headlines of the Month


3. **Project looks at transportation needs**, Prince George Citizen, February 19, 2020.*


“Like” [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) or “follow” us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com) to receive the latest news on adult abuse and neglect.

* Denotes local CRN story.
Campaigns & Professional Development Events

- **Dialogue on Aging Geriatric Services Conference: Creating Synergy, Inspiring Change – Providence Health Care**  
  *March 27, 2020, Vancouver Convention Centre, Vancouver, BC*

  Save the date! Join colleagues from across the province for another day of inspiration, latest research and best practices. Faculty includes Dr. Brendan McCormack internationally recognized in leading person-centred practice development.

  [View more information.](#)

- **John K. Friesen Conference: Supportive Communities for Healthy Aging – Simon Fraser University**  
  *May 13-14, 2020, Joseph & Rosalie Segal Centre, SFU's Vancouver Campus, 515 W. Hastings St., Vancouver, BC*

  This year's Friesen Conference is focused on the key role that Supportive Communities can play in promoting healthy aging at the global, national, regional and local level and for both individuals and populations aging in today's society. [View more details.](#)

  Call for abstracts is also now open. Deadline for submissions: before April 10, 2020.

  Register now to book your spot.

- **20/20: A Vision for Seniors – 43rd Annual Conference**  
  *May 24-26, 2020, Fairmont Chateau Whistler, Whistler, BC*

  BC Care Providers Association’s annual conference will take a retrospective view of the past twenty years, and focus on what seniors’ care and living should look like twenty years from now.

  Along with looking at best practices and innovative models and solutions being employed internationally; the conference will also cover how we can work collaboratively to meet the needs of a rapidly aging population with increasing expectations.

  Call for presenters for the 2020 conference is now open. [View more details.](#)

- **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD)**  
  *June 15, 2020, Worldwide*

  WEAAD is an official United Nations International Day acknowledging the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue.

  Save the date now and check E-Connector, the BC CRN web, and our social media channels for events in your community.
- **44th Annual Elders Gathering**
  *July 7-8, 2020, Vancouver Convention Centre, Vancouver, BC*

  The BC Elders Communication Centre Society (BCECCS) hosts this annual event in Vancouver for 2020.

  Registration cut-off for the 2020 event is June 5, 2020. [View more information about the event and how to register.](#)

- **Canadian Association on Gerontology 2020 Conference: Closing the Research Practice Gap – Knowledge Mobilization and Implementation Science**
  *November 21-22, 2020, Regina, Saskatchewan*  *NEW DATE*

  Also known as the 49th Annual Scientific and Education Meeting, this multi-day conference is now [accepting abstracts](#), [open for registration](#), and sharing program highlights. [View more.](#)

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*E Connector* is published 11 times a year (monthly except for a combined July/Aug. issue).

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