A recreation program that aims to engage seniors in the community has a new ally: the entire community itself committed to keeping it going long-term.

The Increasing Recreation Involving Seniors (IRIS) program spearheaded by Castlegar Community Response Network (CRN) Coordinator Sandi McCreight has become a beacon for the city, drawing seniors out of isolation and back into the folds of the community.

**Incredible Growth in a Short Period of Time**

IRIS started in July 2017, when the program consisted of a coffee social and lunch offering every month. The original intention of the program was to provide the community with quality programming free of charge. This goal still stands today. (Donations are accepted and go back into programming.)
With the help of ongoing funding from a variety of sources, fast-forward to today, and IRIS has grown to also include:

- Transportation service to and from IRIS events, grocery store, pharmacy, etc. for a $5 donation, if possible.
- Monthly lunch and learn sessions where seniors brainstorm topics for future education sessions and community presentations.
- A monthly meal program called Cook and Share where seniors and volunteers cook three different dishes. (The youngest volunteer is five years old!) The dishes are then taken home by the prep team, and additional portions delivered to seniors in the community by the seniors involved. A volunteer Kitchen Coordinator (shout out to Hope!) prepares lunch for the crew while the food cooks or cools.
- A monthly men’s group where men of all ages can network and socialize.
- A monthly ladies’ tea where women can network and socialize.
- Weekly chair yoga sessions for seniors. Once a month, sessions take place at two different seniors’ housing facilities.
- A monthly journaling group.

“Our operating space is in a community church that used to be a middle school,” says Sandi. “The former home economics room is still set up as a kitchen, and we use the space to do food prep for larger events and hold our monthly Cook and Share. Ongoing engagement with the community has helped keep our programming fresh, new, and relevant.”

The cumulative efforts from the community is seeing returns. Members of the community are now stepping up to help ensure IRIS is sustainable through sponsorship, funding and volunteer hours.

**Hockey Night in Castlegar**

One of those community members is City Councillor Bergen Price, who is a long-time resident of Castlegar, an avid ice hockey player, and supporter of IRIS.

Bergen is a member of the local men’s hockey club called the Castlegar Gentlemen’s Hockey League, and created an annual fundraiser game nine years ago to benefit the community’s programs. “The first Christmas Classic was a simple scrimmage,” he says.

Players volunteer to face off against one another in this friendly game to raise money for the cause selected for the year. Any one from the community is welcome to take in the game free of charge.
The 2019 Christmas Classic was attended by 400+ people and raised over $1,000 that went directly to the IRIS program.

BC CRN along with Columbia Basin Trust, the Castlegar Villa Society, the Community Foundation of Castlegar and District, Kootenay Saving Community Foundation, Nelson Wholesale Club, New Horizons for Seniors, Teck, and individuals from the communities sponsored the event.

It was the largest event over Christmas in Castlegar.

Ongoing Support from the Community, Council

Volunteers are critical to sustaining IRIS, and they show up multiple times throughout the year to assist however they can. Program participants also freely donate what they can when they can.

Bergen is the programs newest supporter.

“I first learned about Sandi and her work while running for council and she was conducting the age-friendly survey for Castlegar,” continues Bergen. “IRIS, to me, is hope for the future. We’re all seniors in training. She inspired me to join her in getting seniors out and involved in the community. For longevity, engagement in the community is everything. As long as I’m on council and running the Christmas Classic, I will be doing everything I can to support her. I’m looking forward to working with her for many more years.”

Community members working together for the benefit of the community: we can certainly get behind that!

For more information on the IRIS program, join their Facebook page or contact CRN Coordinator Sandi McCreight at castlegarcrn@hotmail.com.

Reminder to CRNs: Year End Paper Work Due

CRNs: please submit your year-end forms, project grants, and invoices as soon as possible to Arlene Johnston.

Arlene can be contacted at arlene.johnston@bccrns.ca.
BC CRN Team Changes

Join us in thanking Susan Moore, Regional Mentor – Vancouver, and Louise Tremblay, Regional Mentor – Surrey, White Rock, and Delta for their extensive contributions to the organizations and the communities they serve.

Susan has been with the organization since 2017 and has been integral in helping BC CRN more fully engage with urban First Nation communities and establishing the Living OUT and Visibly Engaged (LOVE) Lower Mainland community response network (CRN).

Louise started with BC CRN in 2012 and has worked extensively to connect the organization with seniors’ groups in Vancouver Lower Mainland neighbourhoods south of the Fraser River. She is also responsible for establishing a Francophone CRN that connects with seniors whose first language is French.

On behalf of the organization and the communities they have touched, we will miss them both and wish them well in their future endeavors!

#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 Spread the Word Guide for activity ideas, join our Facebook page to see photos of past WEAAD events, or contact your local community response network (CRN) to get involved.
CRNs at Work (Photo Summary)

Your local community response networks (CRNs) are at work year-round. Here are some highlights on where you may have seen us!

Focus on Seniors: Brain Health Forum on January 25, 2020 at the Fleetwood Community Centre in Surrey, BC (above).

Regional Mentor Ken Kuhn (left) presents It’s Not Right!

The first coffee social for seniors in Logan Lake took place on January 9, 2020 (below).

20 people braved the wintery conditions to “talk shop” and socialize.

The Logan Lake CRN coffee socials are Thursdays from 10:30-11:30 AM at the Logan Lake Fire Hall.

To submit your pics for consideration on our social media and future editions, tag or direct message us through Facebook or Twitter.
Volunteer of the Month: Neil Fernyhough, Living OUT and Visibly Engaged (LOVE) Lower Mainland CRN

The LOVE Lower Mainland CRN is one of BC CRN’s newest. (It was launched in November 2018.) With an approach that is kind, compassionate, and inclusive, CRN Coordinator Neil Fernyhough has already brought over 100 people together from across service sectors, geographical boundaries, age-groups, and backgrounds to address the challenge of service and support provision to aging LGBTQ2S+ populations in the Vancouver Lower Mainland.

BC CRN is very lucky to have Neil as part of our team, and we are very pleased to be profiling him as our first exceptional volunteer for 2020.

From Social Worker to Anglican Priest to Programs Manager

Originally from Saanich on southern Vancouver Island, Neil holds an undergraduate degree in psychology and philosophy, which led him to a career in social work with the Ministry of Child and Family Development.

“I started my professional career as a child protection social worker in Prince George in northern BC and then in Sooke on southern Vancouver Island,” he says.

After seven years with the government, he returned to school, earning masters’ degrees in divinity and theology from the Vancouver School of Theology in 1998 and 2000 respectively. He then pursued a doctoral program in biblical studies, ethics, and rhetoric at the University of California – Berkeley in the US from 2002 to 2004.

Between degrees and for several years after completing his PhD, Neil developed and delivered programs in rural, suburban, and inner-city Anglican parishes throughout Vancouver Lower Mainland and Sunshine Coast as a minister with the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster until 2011. Some of his responsibilities included consulting with communities in developing educational and social justice programs; counselling individuals in crisis, and managing the property and infrastructure needs of the physical plants of five churches, including St. James Anglican Church located in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

He also served as chair of the diocese’s Multifaith and Ecumenical Unit for six years where he developed partnerships with leaders from other faith communities to collaborate on common goals;

(Photo: N. Fernyhough)
managed a parish’s major food distribution program to low-income individuals; a thrift store program; and developed dozens of education programs for the public.

After 11 years of parish work, Neil joined Alexandra Neighbourhood House in 2013 as the manager of community programs. Alexandra House operates out of three separate locations in White Rock, and South Surrey, BC. “Alex House’s mandate is to develop programs for the community, like gardens and arts program, as well as programs for vulnerable adults, such as trips for seniors, and our latest offering, an intergenerational LGBTQ2S+ discussion group,” he says.

In addition to connecting LGBTQ2S+ seniors and youth, the intergenerational discussion group resulted in a book called Sharing Our Journeys: Queer Elders Tell Their Stories, which documents the coming out stories of seniors from across the Lower Mainland. “There are few visible LGBTQ activities outside of Vancouver proper, so the discussion group was about reducing social isolation of both local youth and seniors’ populations,” says Neil.

**Long Time Familiarity with BC CRN and Its Programs**

“I’ve known about the BC CRN since 2013, which was when I first started with Alexandra House,” he explains. “I’ve been receiving updates from the organization since. I was involved with several community tables, and at that time I wasn’t able to be directly involved until now.”

In 2018, he assumed the CRN coordinator for the LOVE Lower Mainland CRN, which celebrated its first anniversary last November.

“We were really inspired by the work of the LOVE CRN on Vancouver Island,” continues Neil. “Once we signed on, we collectively decided to do a scan to understand the resources and service available, how to engage with these organizations, and then figure out how collate our findings and make them available to at-risk adults. A sub-committee of the table organized a large-scale workshop to discuss these questions.”

The session was launched in March 2019, and attracted 110 people from civic government organizations, health, settlement and housing agencies, seniors’ groups, and LGBTQ agencies. LOVE Lower Mainland attracted a few more members soon after.

“We’ll be holding a strategic planning meeting in February to clarify our goals and workplan,” continues Neil. “We have 32 people
on our contact list. So far, 19 have committed to participate.”

Although the CRN itself is new to the BC CRN, Neil’s vision for LOVE Lower Mainland is clear: “There are varying degrees of support and service for LGBTQ seniors in the Lower Mainland, which is a very large catchment. I see us being a collective body working together in supporting each other’s service provision, projects, and communities.”

**A Personal Labour of Love**

Many CRN members are LGBTQ identified, meaning the work is personal. “As a 55-year old gay man, I have an interest and stake in this work,” says Neil. “I have aging friends without family, a partner, or children, and they struggle to maintain independence. Isolation is a risk for all seniors as well, but in particular, for those who identify as LGBTQ. The support systems we currently have in place just do not address the issues of queer trans adults, which need to be looked at with sensitivity and respect by all involved. The CRN model enables us to collaborate on solutions, and help make changes in the system for the benefit of everyone.”

**Why Neil is Our Exceptional Volunteer of the Month**

“Neil has accomplished so much with the CRN in a short period of time,” says Susan Moore, Regional Mentor – Vancouver. “He’s incredibly organized, asks very good questions, and always listens to understand. He’s intentional with inclusion, and speaks to people with great care. He’s been generous in sharing some of his personal struggles, and I think this empowers people to be themselves and do their best. Neil has set the bar high in terms of maintaining the big picture for the CRN, and creating a diverse team consisting of stakeholders from multiple sectors and municipalities, who all have competing priorities. He’s an expert in mobilizing people and having all involved co-create a story that is impactful. I’m learning so much.”

*For more information on Alexandra Neighbourhood House and the LOVE Lower Mainland CRN, or to get involved, please contact Neil directly at communityprograms@alexhouse.net.*

If you have an exceptional volunteer you think we should profile in an edition of E-Connector, contact us at admin@bccrns.ca or via private message on either Facebook or Twitter.
Provincial Learning Events

February 18, 2020: Contextualizing Abuse and Neglect among Transgender Older Adults presented by A.J. Lowik, PhD Candidate, Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice, the University of British Columbia.

This presentation will be in two parts. Part one will focus on terminology and language, how to talk to and about trans people, how to respectfully ask questions and understand the common mistakes when interacting with trans people. Part two will focus on the unique vulnerabilities older trans adults experience in healthcare settings, retirement, nursing and long-term care facilitates, in familial, romantic and caregiver relationships, and in cisnormative society more broadly. We will consider how and why trans older adults are more vulnerable to neglect, abuse and mistreatment than their cisgender counterparts, and will provide some preliminary background and context to the lives of trans older adults and elders.

A.J. Lowik is a PhD Candidate with the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice at the University of British Columbia. Their research focuses on trans people's reproductive lives, health, and decision-making processes. They are a Graduate Academic Assistant at the BC Centre on Substance Use, where they conduct queer and trans-inclusive substance use research. They also work as a trans-inclusion consultant and help all kinds of organizations and individuals develop trans and gender-inclusive policies and practices, from hospitals to yoga studios.

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 4: Resources of the Month

1. When a Hub Becomes Home: Putting Seniors at the Heart of BC’s Communities (December 2019): A paper based on a project of the same name, the BC Care Providers Association continues to study the concept of “Care Hubs”, its various models, and how the idea can facilitate care access by seniors.

2. Core Community Supports to Age in Community (June 2019): This report by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors contains the results of ongoing collaboration between all of Canada’s government bodies on the topic of aging in place. The intent is for this report to inform government policy on provincial, territorial, and national levels.
3.  **Asian and Alone: Asian American Living Alone in New York City (November 2017):** This mini-documentary, produced by the AARP, follows a day in the life of Mrs. Chu, a Chinese American senior that lives alone in New York City. Our challenge: "how might we end social isolation among seniors?"

4.  **Handbook of LGBT Elders: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Principles, Practices, and Policies (2016):** This is an academic textbook that contains comprehensive information on psychological, sociopolitical, and care delivery issues affecting LGBT elders reveals both the nuanced interplay between diverse sources of identity and multiple sources of stigma and discrimination. Includes a chapter on elder bullying.

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

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**Our Top 6: Headlines of the Month**


6. **Seniors' advocate studying how elder abuse is reported in BC**, The Vancouver Sun, December 12, 2019.

“Like” Facebook or “follow” us on Twitter to receive the latest news on adult abuse and neglect.

*Denotes local CRN story.

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**Campaigns & Professional Development Events**

- **Mistreatment of Older Adults: From Research to Practice Guides – Canadian Association on Gerontology (Webinar)**  
  *February 13, 2019 from 12 PM to 1 PM (EST)*

  Presented by Dr. Marie Beaulieu of the University of Sherbrooke, this webinar will present the main research results that led to the publication of four practice guides: one addressing ethical and psychosocial issues, another one on police intervention, a third one on self-neglect, and a fourth one on barriers and facilitators to help-seeking by mistreated older persons. [View more details](#).

  Participation is free of charge, but registration is required. [Register now](#).

- **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  
*October 22-24, 2020, Regina, Saskatchewan*

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.](#)