Executive Director, Sherry Baker started the call with updates and news as follows:

- June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – CRNs will be supplied with Buttons to distribute to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of “WEAAD”.
- A new project grant was announced bringing the total grant amount for eligible projects between now and December 31, 2015 to $1,500 per CRN.
- March is Fraud Prevention month and our news release of “Don’t be pressured: it’s OK to say NO!” on this topic was featured in the Chilliwack Times.
- BC Association of Community Response Networks Annual General Meeting is June 18, 2015 at 5:00 pm. Each CRN is required to be represented by one voting member.

INTRODUCTION OF GUEST SPEAKER

In February 2013, the B.C. government introduced legislation that outlined the duties and authorities of the Seniors Advocate. The Seniors Advocate Act passed on March 14, 2013, marking an important milestone in establishing the Office.

Legislation mandates that the advocate is responsible for monitoring the provision of seniors’ services in the areas of: health, personal services, housing, transportation, and income supports. In addition to monitoring, the office will analyze issues pertaining to seniors, advocate in the interest of seniors and will identify, analyze and promote awareness of systemic challenges and resources. The office will refer individual complaints to the appropriate person or body for resolution and will track the issues raised by individuals and stakeholders, which may become topics for review. The office will collaborate with service providers to improve effectiveness and efficiency, working with government employees, health authority staff and private/non-profit service providers.

Isobel Mackenzie has over 20 years’ experience working with seniors in home care, licensed care, community services and volunteer services. Isobel led B.C.’s largest not-for-profit agency, serving over 6,000 seniors annually. In this work, Isobel led the implementation of a new model of dementia care that has become a national best practice, and led the first safety accreditation for homecare workers, among many other accomplishments. Isobel has been widely recognized for her work and was named B.C. CEO of the Year for the not-for-profit sector and nominated as a Provincial Health Care Hero.
Prior to her appointment as the Seniors Advocate, Isobel served on a number of national and provincial boards and commissions, including the BC Medical Services Commission, the Canadian Homecare Association, BC Care Providers, BC Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry, and the Capital Regional District Housing Corporation. Isobel currently serves on the University of Victoria’s Board of Governors.

Isobel received both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Victoria and has a Certificate in Health Care Leadership from the University of Toronto. Isobel lives in Victoria with her husband and they have two children attending university. Isobel Mackenzie was appointed as BC Senior’s Advocate in March, 2014.

Her presentation disclosed a gradual growth in the senior population in BC and not a grey tsunami. 50% of senior’s are aged 65 – 74. She brought forward some interesting points from the research conducted since taking office. Please see the presentation materials which are archived on www.bccrns.ca.

Isobel took the callers through 9 slides discussing statistics of our senior population and their incomes. She discussed the role of the Seniors Advocate, being to monitor, analyze, recommend, inform and report. Various issues were discussed facing seniors, including housing, transportation, lack of awareness of services, low incomes, caregiver burnout, multicultural/LGBTQ and ageism. She discussed the fact that if services were made available and then not used due to lack of awareness then many in need would not be assisted. Challenges in defining, identifying, reporting and abuse and neglect of seniors were discussed. Issues that were most challenging included a decision by a capable senior to live at risk vs self-neglect, the right to make risky financial decisions vs financial abuse, privacy rights vs protection obligations, cultural differences vs. historical “European” norms, competency, lack of awareness and lack of meaningful data.

She touched on the challenges being faced in dealing with abuse and neglect and the difficulty in working with inconsistencies in reporting between the health authorities and police.

Question: Tim from Prince George commented that seniors are the fastest growing sector in the northern BC population.
Answer: Isobel stated however that seniors are the lowest in numbers.

Question: Raymond from Kelowna asked who is responsible for the education of staff and safety around senior LGBTQ issues in supported living and long term care facilities. He suggested his research showed this could be 10% of the population.
Answer: The response identified this group, but made it clear there are several other groups within the population that have unique needs making the issue one of the challenges being faced.

Question: Jennifer from Courtenay stated CRNs are networks of people who work with vulnerable seniors, the coming on side with the bystander engagement message of the It’s Not Right program – can gradually disseminate through the whole community.
Answer: The response confirmed that ageism cuts across all incomes.

Question: Melinda from Prince George expressed her appreciation that Isobel highlighted the challenges in working with cases of abuse, neglect and self-neglect, and issues of capacity. Melinda is someone
who has been “on the ground” doing this work for 20 years and she says it remains as challenging as it always has been. She goes on to say that one of the frustrations she consistently faces as a service provider (from the designated agency), is the judgement from the public, based on their limited understanding of the complexities of this work, is that we’re seen as “doing nothing”.

Question: Jessie from Vancouver asked a question regarding data and whether stories or statistical numbers gained the most attention.
Answer: Isobel commented that it is always the numbers that gain the attention. While stories are moving, resource allocation is always about the measurements and statistical numbers in support. The numbers win every time.

The call ended at 12:00 noon.

The next learning event will be held on April 21 and will feature “Handydart” with Linda McGowan.