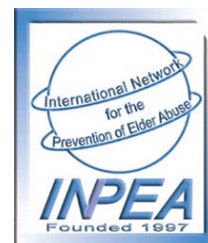




INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION ON AGEING  
Global Connections



**PROCEEDINGS REPORT**  
**WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY (WEAAD)**

**“World Day...Five Years Later”**

**June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010 – Toronto - Canada**



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Human Resources and  
Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et  
Développement des compétences Canada

*Your World... My World... Our World, Free of Elder Abuse*

**Introduction** – *By Dr Elizabeth Podnieks*

The fifth anniversary of the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) took place on June 15th 2010 at the historic Faculty Club. One the oldest buildings of the University of Toronto, it was the perfect venue in which to welcome nearly one hundred conference participants.

The program was focused on the launch of two important educational resources. The Community Elder Abuse Awareness Tool Kit, funded by the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and the Teen Elder Abuse Awareness Kit funded by the Public Health Agency Canada (PHAC). Papers were clustered around the theme of intergenerational relationships and augmented by appropriate video clips. The presentations are included in these Proceedings and will also be posted on websites, e.g. INPEA, IFA, CNPEA, ONPEA etc.

This document is further testimony to the commitment of the government of Canada and HRSDC, for funding the production of this report, to share information internationally and allow others to see the work being done in Canada and perhaps replicate some of the projects and ideas. The conference was honoured to have keynote presentations by The Honourable Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State (Seniors') and the Honourable Gerry Phillips, Minister Responsible for Seniors. Their support in making WEAAD 2010 possible is most gratefully recognized and acknowledged.

If through the publication and dissemination of this document, the elder abuse literature has been expanded, even just a little bit, and then the goals and hopes of world day will have been met. Special thanks are extended to Teri Kay, Executive Director, ONPEA for compiling this document.

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## Greetings from the President of the International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse —Dr. Gloria Gutman

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls.

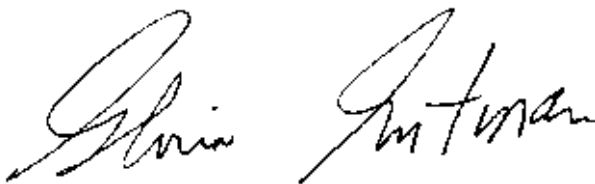
As the President of the International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA), I am pleased to welcome you to today's event marking the fifth annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. I am sorry I cannot be with you in person but I am being awarded an honorary degree this morning by the University of Western Ontario (UWO). This is a very important day for me personally, and for Canadian gerontology, because it is the first time that a gerontologist has been honoured in this way – and by such a prestigious university.

The President of UWO asked that in my remarks to the graduands, I speak about the implications of the demographic changes that are taking place in Canada and around the world. I want to talk about the contributions that older persons make to their families, their communities, and their country. I also want to draw attention to issues of elder abuse and neglect, and how important it is to combat the ageism that so often underlies it, as well as to address other factors that contribute to the occurrence of abuse and neglect.

Today you are going to hear about two exciting projects. I want to congratulate and thank the Public Health Agency of Canada for its contribution to the tool kit that is designed to raise awareness of elder abuse and neglect among children. I also want to thank Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for enabling us to adapt the existing INPEA tool kit so that it will be appropriate for the Canadian context.

I urge other countries to follow the lead of Canada in developing such materials. It is only by working together and using tools such as these that we will be able to achieve a Society for all Ages, the goal articulated by the United Nations during the International Year of Older Persons.

Sincerely,



Gloria M. Gutman, PhD, FCAHS, OBC  
President, INPEA

## Welcome

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### SPEAKER

Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks  
Chair & Founder  
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

The eyes of the world are on elder abuse today, said **Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks**, noting that World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is not just about awareness of the indignities suffered by the elderly, but also a celebration of older people.

Dr. Podnieks asked the audience to consider the day's slogan: "My World...Your World...Our World...Free of Elder Abuse." The slogan has been translated into many languages, events are happening globally, and the topic has been the subject of thousands of Google searches.

The concept of WEAAD originated in New York in 2003 and since then much work and time has been spent to support the cause, said Dr. Podnieks. Many challenges remain, including the need to measure success. Furthermore, while the day is unofficially on the United Nations (UN) calendar, it still lacks official recognition. For this to happen, a sponsor country must take the idea to the UN Security Council, and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse is working toward this goal.

## Greetings

### SPEAKERS

The Honourable Gerry Phillips  
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Jane Barrett  
Secretary General  
International Federation on Ageing

The Honourable Diane Ablonczy  
Minister of State (Seniors)

Dr. Podnieks introduced the Honourable **Gerry Phillips**, Minister Responsible for Seniors, as INPEA's "new best friend."

Minister Phillips said it is an exciting time to be considering issues affecting seniors, given the growing number of Canadian seniors; Canada will soon have more citizens over 65 years of age than under 15. Noting that Ontario's most dynamic mayor is nearly 90, Minister Phillips said the province is a good place to be discussing seniors' diversity and vitality.

Minister Phillips said discussion at a federal minister's meeting on pension reform the previous day focused on ensuring age friendly communities that guarantee safe and secure environments for seniors. Ontario is taking a step toward this by introducing legislation aimed at regulating its 700 retirement homes; the legislation is near completion.

**Jane Barratt** said while citing abuse statistics is easy, it is important to move past the numbers and put a face on the problem. Abuse takes many forms and can be as dramatic as decapitation in South Africa, or as slow and insidious as denying or withdrawing food to seniors. Whatever its manifestation, such abuse is unacceptable and a face must be given to both the abused and the abusers. She said many people are silently committing abuse without being aware they are doing so.

Bartlett introduced the Honourable **Diane Ablonczy**, Minister of State (Seniors) who is quickly becoming known for engaging with the community and its issues.

Minister Ablonczy said more and more countries are joining together to fight against elder abuse. Change is never easy, but progress is being made. Sadly, 96% of elder abuse remains unreported, and much needs to be done to raise awareness and move toward eradication.

Minister Ablonczy announced funding of almost \$1 million for six Federal Elder Abuse Initiative projects. These projects will involve six professional organizations working with front-line service providers to identify, and take action on, the signs and symptoms of elder abuse. The government will also be opening up a call for proposals for projects focused on these issues.

Canada has launched a national awareness campaign focused on raising awareness of elder abuse, and in 2007 the federal government established the National Seniors Council.

Minister Ablonczy directed conference participants to the Government of Canada website for more information.

In a day and age where Betty White is the “it girl” in Hollywood, the definition of what it means to be old is being rewritten, said Minister Ablonczy.

Barratt said issues around elder abuse are not just about policy and legislation, but about partnerships with stakeholders—and every member of society is a stakeholder when it comes to elder abuse.

## Student Projects

### **SPEAKER**

Sharon MacKenzie  
Consultant

**Sharon MacKenzie** discussed the work being done in schools to raise awareness of elder abuse. While much money is invested in changing attitudes at the college and university level, greater changes would occur if the focus were placed on the 9–14 age group. She said it is necessary to “think younger” to connect with older people, and noted that neglect is a community issue, while intergenerational projects mean community involvement.

MacKenzie introduced high school students' projects, spanning the country from Newfoundland to British Columbia. She said the students had grasped these projects with their hearts and tapped into something very important.

The program process began with approaching five schools and securing approval for student participation. This approval was followed by one-and-a-half day workshops on elder abuse for the students. The project used the "IDE" template: the *intent* of the project, the project *design*, and the 10 steps required to *execute and evaluate* the project.

### **Ontario**

Students from Unionville High School in Markham, Ontario said they became involved in the program through a family studies course and are now on a mission to get the word out about the seriousness of elder abuse.

The students adopted various means to raise awareness, including:

- Writing a children's book about elder respect
- Visiting a seniors' home to forge intergenerational relationships
- Creating educational posters
- Printing facts about elder abuse onto coffee cup holders that were then placed in the school cafeteria

### **Quebec**

The Gatineau, Quebec students' leadership teacher **Ray Baker** presented an overview of their projects, from making t-shirts and buttons about elder abuse to staging a press conference. Students also designed pamphlets that were passed out at a school barbecue, an event at which students sold the informative t-shirts and buttons. The students harnessed the power of social networking by creating a Facebook page and sending out text messages on the topic to their networks.

Baker said the problem of elder abuse can be beaten. He likened the phenomenon to bullying. While bullying was an epidemic not long ago, aggressive campaigning has raised public awareness and helped reduce the problem in schools.

### **Manitoba**

Representatives from Stonewall Collegiate in Stonewall, Manitoba introduced their team briefly before delivering a presentation on their projects. One group opted to make t-shirts for WEAAD, a sample of which was shown to attendees. Another group held an activity day at the school that was intended to be intergenerational, and they invited seniors from a local

residence. Unfortunately, the date conflicted with another seniors' event and the event proceeded without the older adults.

The activity day involved several different stations. One featured information about elder abuse. Another station offered bingo, an activity intended to remind students what youth and older people might have in common. The third station was devoted to crafts, and encouraged students to make items for important elders in their lives.

Despite the seniors' absence, the students said they were pleased with the event, which attracted both the town's mayor and the local press. "It was a great experience that was both educational and rewarding," said one student. "We'd like to build on this work in the future, and try to involve more older adults."

MacKenzie noted that the date of WEAAD is a challenge for those in the school system as it comes during exam time. As such, these student groups have proclaimed June 1 as Intergenerational (IG) Day in Canada. Part of the intent of this day is to look ahead to June 15 and WEAAD.

### **Newfoundland**

A teacher librarian and two students from Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's, Newfoundland shared their experiences of working on elder abuse awareness projects.

The trio said students were enthusiastic when initially approached about the program because St. John's is a community in which many students live with their grandparents. The presenters said they felt the program offered a good opportunity to effect real change, rather than offering abstract learning without action.

The team opted to focus on the topic of neglect and its prevention. One student said they wanted to be proactive rather than reactive: "We wanted people to know about such situations before they happened, rather than pick up the pieces after they did."

One of their initiatives was a student recess aimed at raising awareness and funds for IG Day. During the recess, students sold donated snacks such as chips and pop, and used the recess as a forum to discuss issues of neglect among elders.

Another initiative involved presentations delivered during class sessions. These presentations reached 100–150 students and focused on intergenerational connections. The group also arranged for an intergenerational screening of the animated film *Up* at a local retirement residence.



## British Columbia

Students and their advisor from École Phoenix Middle School in Campbell River, British Columbia spoke of their contributions. A major component of their projects was connecting teens with elders through intergenerational teaching, including weekly visits to a care home.

One student created a book based on the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series that featured the stories of six seniors. A group conducted a survey of teens in Grades 7–9 that asked students questions ranging from what they thought constituted elder abuse to how it might be prevented. The team said the most surprising finding was that none of the respondents had considered neglect to be a form of abuse. The survey also revealed that the majority of students felt that being more loving and kind would help prevent elder neglect and abuse.

The group presented a student-generated video with an explorer theme that showcased the challenges and rewards of their intergenerational work.

Dr. Podnieks said new doors are clearly being opened and this innovative work is creating whole new pathways. She applauded Sharon MacKenzie for her work in getting the program into the school system, something that is often very challenging

## Findings from Three School Projects in India

### SPEAKER

Mala Kapur Shankardass  
Delhi University

International perspectives are critical given the global nature of elder abuse, said Dr. Podnieks. She welcomed Mala Kapur Shankardass to speak on the elder abuse awareness initiatives taking place in India.

Shankardass said creating elder abuse awareness programs to coordinate with WEAAD in India is challenging because May marks the end of the academic year and students are busy finishing course work before summer vacation. Even so, Shankardass said she found tremendous support, including from a school where she had once been a pupil and from schools where she currently works. The support has been so overwhelming that she has received requests to take the project into other states.

One marked difference in how the projects were realized in India is visible in the terminology. Rather than using the vocabulary of the WEAAD, the initiative was referred to as “Intergenerational Bonding.” Shankardass said this shift in wording was necessary due to cultural differences: “It was more appropriate to use the term bonding than to talk of abuse.”

The projects focused on students ranging in age from 14–22 years. Shankardass said there was initial hesitation about working with college-aged students but it seemed a wise option given that Delhi colleges offer national social service themes that engage students in social service

activities. "With this in mind, it was very appropriate they become involved in elder awareness issues," said Shankardass. "Student wanted not to just raise awareness but also wanted to have action plans to reduce and mitigate elder abuse."

The pilot program ran in three institutions in two states. Participating students were selected by organizers and teachers but involvement was voluntary. Teachers from the English and Social Science programs participated and led conversations about intergenerational bonding, and the issues raised in these sessions were included in regular classes. Many of the activities were designed to have students interact with their parents, the community, and even the media.

Another outcome of the project was the establishment of the Maitreyi Youth Club, aimed at sensitizing students on the issue of elder abuse and creating a workforce for spreading awareness throughout Delhi University colleges and the country. The club has already started working on slogans and posters to reduce ageist attitudes and to identify ageist language that may lead to disrespect.

At the end of the project, participants were given feedback forms asking about the project's goals, clarity of purposes, the various activities' successes, and other questions about the program's value. Shankardass said the feedback revealed that nearly all participants found the program interesting, satisfying, and successful, and many said they wanted to be involved in future activities. Some of these planned activities include a celebration of Grandparents' Day, an international day of older persons; intra- and inter-college competitions; a story-writing competition; and a program to connect students with senior citizen communities.

The feedback also revealed an immediate impact on the students involved; the initiatives generated "age-friendly awareness and later-life care concerns," Shankardass said.

Many students said they had become very conscious of intergenerational bonding as a result of the program and were thinking more about their interactions with their elders. They also said it made them consider how they might improve their attitudes and behaviours and how "little things they might not be aware of could hurt." This feedback shows the program's significant consciousness-raising role, said Shankardass.

This heightened awareness led to students expressing an interest in volunteering at the national level, something project coordinators are in the process of organizing. Students have also started creating pamphlets that will be published by the country's national publishing program.

Dr. Podnieks told attendees that she had hoped to include an Aboriginal voice in the discussion but it was not possible on this day. However, the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, under direction of scheduled speaker Lisa Mercure, had sent a video that featured a series of interviews discussing the role of Elders in Aboriginal environments.

## Greetings from Quebec

### **SPEAKER**

Jean-Guy St. Gelais  
Co-Chair  
Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

**Jean-Guy St. Gelais** said on June 15, 2010 the Province of Quebec made an announcement to commit \$20 million to initiatives related to elder abuse. The funding will roll out over the next five years, and will finance several initiatives including television commercials in both English and French to raise awareness of elder abuse, a provincial 1-800 line to report elder abuse, and a new research chair at the *Université de Sherbrooke* to study issues of elder abuse and related dynamics.

St. Gelais read emails received from people as far away as Spain and South Africa, expressing delight that participants were gathering for the fifth annual WEAAD, and regret that they could not be present at the Toronto event.

He noted that the U.S. federal government has officially recognized WEAAD for the first time, "and hopefully not the last time." St. Gelais said he had been involved in previous WEAAD events, and was pleased to see more than 100 people attending the 2010 event and showing an interest in the topic.

## Importance of Intergenerational Approaches

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### **SPEAKER**

Susan Crichton  
Senior Consultant Policy Analyst  
Federal Elder Abuse Initiative  
Public Health Agency of Canada

**Susan Crichton** said she has been a part of the WEAAD planning committee since its inception in 2006. She noted the importance of recognizing the vision and passion of WEAAD founder and chair, Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks. Without WEAAD, many of the elder abuse awareness and prevention initiatives created in Canada and elsewhere would not be possible.

Crichton said she has been part of many community-based elder abuse awareness activities over the past five years. While all have made a significant impact on the issue, the activities involving youth have had the greatest impact. As the best way to reduce elder abuse is to prevent instances from occurring in the first place, and because ageism is at the root of many issues affecting adults, getting youth to understand the issues is vital.

Crichton said she was involved in creating the Teen Elder Abuse Awareness Kit launched earlier in the day, and is part of a group updating a video for youth titled *Seniors Are Cool*, which uses the context of bullying to help young people understand the impact of elder abuse.

Crichton described an event that took place a few years ago at a school in a small rural Manitoba community. During the weeks leading up to WEAAD, the school children created posters that were exhibited in the community to help raise awareness of elder abuse. The children marked WEAAD by walking down the town's main street with local seniors to a community centre, where they ate ice cream and played floor curling together.

Intergenerational activities such as these allow youth and older adults to create friendships, said Crichton. Opportunities for youth to get to know older adults create an environment of respect, and help ensure young people will continue to build strong relationships with elders throughout their lives.

## **Personal Relationships: Pathway to Prevention**

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### **SPEAKER**

Sharon MacKenzie  
Consultant

Sharon MacKenzie said the critical message shared among the day's presenters is the importance of elder abuse prevention. Society must look at the root of the problem to improve it, and teaching young people about the implications of elder abuse is one way to ensure its prevention.

MacKenzie shared two videos demonstrating how young people can help prevent elder abuse. The first told the story of Diego, a First Nations youth with a strong bond with his grandparents. In the video, Diego explained that he spent more time at his grandparents' house than at home, allowing him to learn skills from his grandmother, including painting, carving and traditional First Nation dances. When his grandmother developed an autoimmune disease, Diego's parents decided he should move in with his grandparents full-time to help out and spend as much time as possible with them. His grandmother passed away shortly after her 58th birthday. Diego said his grandmother was there with him the day he was born and throughout his life, just like his mother, and he was happy to have been able to take care of her at the end of her life. "I was there for her last breath, as she was for my first," he said.

MacKenzie said this story was made into a book as a way for Diego to keep the lesson alive. A copy has been placed in his band's archives, one with his family, and another at his school.

The second video was a 10-minute excerpt from an hour-long documentary entitled *Whose Grandma Are You?* The video explores the Meadows School Project, developed by MacKenzie in 2000 while she was working as a teacher in British Columbia. The intergenerational immersion project relocates groups of elementary school students to a chapel next to the Coldstream

Meadows Retirement Community for five-week periods twice a year. The students take classes in addition to participating in activities involving seniors at the nearby residence.

Students interviewed in the documentary said while they initially thought the time spent with the seniors would be “boring,” they soon developed friendships with the residents and gained new respect for older adults.

## **The Community Elder Abuse Awareness Kit**

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### **SPEAKER**

Susan Susskind  
Consultant

**Susan Susskind** discussed her involvement in developing the Community Elder Abuse Awareness Kit that was launched during this event. The original toolkit was created by Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks and Charmaine Spencer as a resource to help individuals and organizations plan for WEAAD, and was launched to coincide with the first WEAAD in 2006. It was determined the kit should be updated for 2010 to contain new and expanded information, and Susskind was hired to lead the project in conjunction with the IFA. Susskind said the revision was made possible through funding from the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

The new toolkit was developed with the original goals in mind:

- To provide sample event and promotion ideas and tools
- To provide resources and information
- To be thought-provoking

The revision team also determined that the kit should have a more professional look, with WEAAD as a key focus; they incorporated branding, such as using purple as an official colour. New how-to tools were also developed for the kit on topics such as encouraging participation from local businesses, delivering presentations on elder abuse, addressing cultural diversity, and generating media attention for WEAAD events. Ideas and resources on encouraging and rewarding participation are also included.

The revised toolkit includes updated proclamation and declaration statements that can be personalized—for example, mayors could use it to proclaim Elder Abuse Awareness Day in their municipalities. It also features an updated participation certificate that can be personalized and distributed to individuals who take part in WEAAD events. Additional new resources include poster and brochure templates communities can use to promote their events; a reporting template for organizers to record information on their WEAAD events and initiatives, and outline successes and possible improvements; and a template public service announcement that organizers can distribute to local media.

The event suggestions in the toolkit include organizing community awareness walks. Susskind said walks are an ideal awareness activity “because they can be done anywhere and don’t cost anything.” A walk registration form is included in the kit.

Susskind said she believes the toolkit will never truly be finished; she hopes new information and resources will continue to be developed as participation in WEAAD increases and new issues related to elder abuse are explored. She also said that while she was pleased to see a few WEAAD participants wearing purple at this year’s gathering, she hopes to see even more wearing the official colour next year to brand WEAAD.

## *Panel Discussion*

### **Measuring Awareness Programs**

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#### **MODERATOR**

Greg Shaw  
Director, International & Corporate Relations  
International Federation on Ageing

#### **PANELISTS**

Cynthia Thomas  
International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse  
Senior Study Director  
Westat

Lynn McDonald  
Board Member  
International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

Raeann Rideout  
Regional Consultant  
Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

**Cynthia Thomas** said one way of determining how to measure success in the relatively new field of elder abuse awareness and prevention is to consider how success is measured in a related established field—that of child abuse awareness and prevention.

The first national study on child abuse in the United States was conducted in the 1970s. Since then, three more national studies have been completed. Thomas said a look at those studies can offer a glimpse at methods child abuse researchers use to look at success in their field.

The most recent study did not observe change when looking at the type of abuse or neglect investigated, nor the level of harm. Rather, improvements were indicated by looking at the types of reporting agency involved. Improvements were seen in the numbers from overall agencies, juvenile probation agencies, and public health agencies.

Thomas said “significant improvements” were also seen in social service agencies, indicating that these agencies might be particularly effective at managing the issue of abuse and neglect.

The initiatives taken by jurisdictions to promote and control the issue are another indicator of elder abuse awareness success. The U.S. National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) [website](#) features information on individual state activity.

Virtually all state websites on elder abuse provide definitions of abuse and neglect; a list of phone numbers for reporting instances of abuse; and information on relevant laws, legal assistance, and available general services. However, only 32 states have such websites. Four states publish guides for professionals on elder abuse, while 15 have brochures, videos, and other promotional materials available for the general public.

Thomas said some states, including her home state of Maryland, offer substantial information on ageing, but very little specific information on elder abuse.

In order for elder abuse organizations to effectively measure their success, an appropriate baseline of cases must be established, she said.

**Lynn McDonald** said a consensus on elder abuse-related definitions is vital before moving forward on measuring instances of abuse and the success of harm reduction efforts. To this end, she is currently conducting a study entitled “Defining and Measuring Elder Abuse and Neglect: Preparatory Work Required to Measure the Prevalence of Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults in Canada.”

McDonald said defining abuse and its various forms is essential, as this information determines who is at risk, who is eligible for related services, what government funding for those services will cover, and how those in the medical and social service communities should treat elder abuse and neglect.

The study is scheduled to run from 2010 through 2012. During the initial stages, researchers from other countries who have undertaken similar definition work were brought together to discuss how to define various forms of elder abuse and neglect. Similar international studies were also reviewed. McDonald said the researchers are still in the early stages of defining the forms of abuse and neglect for Canada. They are working to define every potential form of abuse and neglect and are taking suggestions and feedback on definitions throughout the process. She said a consensus is particularly difficult to reach in Canada due to multi-ethnic and multi-faith considerations.

McDonald said researchers are working to determine parameters for measuring cases of abuse and neglect. The group has decided to use the term “older adults” rather than “elders” in its work. It has also determined that for the purpose of categorizing abuse and neglect of older adults, an age range of 55 years and over should be used.

While the group also decided to adopt a prevalence period of the past year for the sake of measuring abuse and neglect, McDonald noted the importance of considering lifelong patterns

of abuse and neglect, since many who are victimized at an early age tend to be victims of elder abuse in their later years.

**Raeann Rideout** said ONPEA's mission is to oversee implementation of the Ontario government's Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse, key elements of which include coordination of community services, multi-sectoral training for front-line staff, and public education and awareness.

Rideout listed some methods ONPEA uses to measure the impact of the strategy and its initiatives, including the following:

- Data collection from community partners
- Tracking calls reporting instances of elder abuse
- Analyzing regional consultants' quarterly reports on their interactions with community partners
- Conducting sustainability surveys that allow community partners to share their opinion of ONPEA's initiatives and offer suggestions for improving interaction

Rideout said when she started with ONPEA in 2002, Ontario had 10 elder abuse networks; today there are 54. This growth is an indicator that the strategy's goal of coordinating community services has been successful. ONPEA is working to expand this coordination by working closely with francophone networks and reaching out to more ethnic groups.

Regarding training for front-line staff, ONPEA has facilitated 5,233 training sessions since 2002. It is also working to develop training for a growing list of new partners, including the Probation Officers Association of Ontario, Service Canada, and the Seniors Health Research Transfer Network (SHRTN).

ONPEA has handled 7,000 elder abuse and neglect case referrals since 2002. Rideout said annual referrals have steadily increased, demonstrating that its public education and awareness activities are working. Elder abuse networks across Ontario distribute promotional materials locally; seniors are invited to attend events focused on safety, fraud, and other issues; and public service announcements are frequently aired in both English and French. Other measures of ONPEA's success include an increase in media inquiries and invitations for ONPEA representatives to take part in broadcast panels on relevant issues, and the increasing popularity of ONPEA's [website](#), which is the fifth-ranked elder abuse-related site globally with 1,500 visits per week.

ONPEA launched its Senior Safety Line in April 2009. In its first month, the toll-free hotline received 225 calls reporting possible instances of elder abuse and neglect. The monthly call total has steadily increased as more people become aware of the service, and 725 calls were received in December 2009.



Rideout listed several future ONPEA initiatives including:

- A provincial survey for key stakeholders
- A blog for seniors
- Evaluations of elder abuse networks to determine best practices
- Increasing electronic outreach through listservs, e-blasts, and social media

### **Discussion**

A participant said while discussing and working towards initiatives on elder abuse prevention is important, it is also important to develop specific timeframes for these actions. He also said the government should establish budget allocations specific to issues of elder abuse in multicultural groups.

Rideout said all initiatives undertaken by the Ontario government through ONPEA are undertaken with the full intention that they be completed within a reasonable timeframe. ONPEA employs a consultant who is specifically responsible for outreach to multicultural communities, and their other consultants also do a good job of reaching out to multicultural partners in the communities they cover.

A participant said, unlike Calgary, Ontario does not have a shelter dedicated to abused elders. She said while the Ontario hotline for reporting elder abuse is commendable, it is unfortunate there is nowhere for workers to relocate abused elders.

The lack of indicators for gauging individuals' levels of wellness and happiness is an issue in many Asian countries, another participant said. Such indicators are not widely recognized in certain countries, and more work needs to be done to ensure such recognition.

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## Powers of Attorney and Substitute Decision Making: Friends or Foes for Preventing Elder Abuse

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### SPEAKERS

Kimberly Whaley  
Whaley Estate Litigation

Graham Webb  
Advocacy Centre for the Elderly

**Kimberly Whaley** and **Graham Webb** said they would focus specifically on power of attorney within the context of Ontario law.

Whaley said an ageing population, coupled with increasing life expectancy and related health and dependency issues, means assigning power of attorney is an increasingly important task for estate planners. Given that a person with power of attorney holds significant influence, individuals should undertake careful advance planning to ensure they make the right choice.

Webb said those who do not settle power of attorney arrangements prior to becoming temporarily or permanently unable to make their own financial, property, or health decisions risk being taken advantage of.

“Rogue attorneys” – those who attempt to negotiate on-the-spot power of attorney agreements with individuals in hospitals, nursing homes, or other places where people are vulnerable – pose a significant threat. Whaley said these legal arrangements are very complex and those who attempt to determine their own power of attorney relationships without the guidance of an attorney with specific knowledge also put themselves at risk.

Webb outlined the three types of power of attorney under Ontario law:

- **General power of attorney for property:** Gives consent to the designated person to manage an individual’s finances and property only when that individual is mentally capable. This designation is typically only used in business situations and for temporary reasons (e.g., if the individual is on an extended vacation).
- **Continuing power of attorney for property:** Takes effect immediately upon signing an agreement and continues after the individual becomes mentally incapable of managing their finances. It is possible to have the power take effect only after an individual becomes mentally incapable if clearly outlined in the legal document.
- **Personal care power of attorney:** Gives the designated person consent to make personal care decisions for an individual only after that individual has been determined to be mentally incapable of making their own decisions.

Individuals are free to grant general and continuing powers of attorney for property to anyone 18 years or older. Personal care power of attorney can be granted to anyone age 16 or older,

except those who are mentally incapable themselves or who are paid to provide health care, residential, social, training, or support services to the individual.

While these are the only legal requirements, Webb said potential power of attorney candidates should be judged on their honesty, integrity, and accountability. Individuals often arrange for continuing power of attorney for property agreements to commence only after the individual becomes mentally incapable. "If you can't trust people to make decisions for you when you're capable, how can you trust them to do so when you're incapable?" he asked.

Whaley said when it comes to power of attorney arrangements, "what can go wrong, will go wrong." While case law dictates that those who hold powers of attorney must account for all decisions they make on an individual's behalf to everyone who holds financial interest in that individual, such as other family members, this does not always happen. The resulting legal wrangling often causes disputes between family members.

Whaley presented case examples of power of attorney abuses leading to family turmoil. She said many of these cases arise from situations where an individual's children do not agree on who is most capable of making decisions for a parent. Resulting instances of elder abuse have included a child kidnapping a parent who is under power of attorney of another child, or a child who holds power of attorney keeping a parent isolated from other family and friends in an effort to exert influence over that parent.

Webb said power of attorney designations can be one of the most important decisions an older person can make. He reiterated that careful advance planning can help the individual avoid negative situations upon granting such powers.

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## **Innovative International Approaches to Elder Abuse Prevention**

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### **SPEAKER**

Betty Malks  
North American Regional Representative  
International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

**Betty Malks** said the *Elder Justice Act* recently passed in the United States legislates the establishment of a federal agency to oversee elder abuse issues and sets aside \$100 million in funding for state adult protection services.

Malks outlined an approach to elder abuse prevention in which she is personally involved as project director. The Enhancing the Capacity of a Diverse Faith Community in Addressing Elder Abuse initiative is aimed at mobilizing diverse faith groups to create awareness and action against elder abuse within Santa Clara County, California.

Malks said Santa Clara County, which includes the Silicon Valley high-tech business area and San Jose, California's second-largest city, is home to a hugely diverse population comprising

people of many faiths. The project began in 2006 with funding from the state's millionaire tax, which imposes an additional 1% tax on personal incomes over \$1 million, the proceeds of which are used solely for mental health-related programs.

A clergy board comprising more than a dozen clergy from different faiths was established to provide input on the best methods for spreading awareness of elder abuse among followers. On their advice, small documents were created, such as laminated cards listing phone numbers for reporting elder abuse and one-page information sheets on key elder abuse issues.

Malks said she hired a community organizer for the project who created important connections with community members that helped further the project's goals. The organizer also created a Lay Leaders Network with representatives who bring forward ideas on elder abuse prevention in use within different faith groups. These lay leaders also take courses on mental health and ageing as a "train the trainer" initiative.

Malks discussed the work of Barbara Mountjouris, director of the Office of Senior Victorians in Victoria, Australia. Mountjouris undertook research that found that elder abuse affected 5% of the population of Victoria, and was most common amongst those in the 75–85 year age group. Based on this research, the Victoria government created an elder abuse strategy that included the establishment of a social agency and a community strategy designed to act upon community thoughts on elder abuse prevention.

## Reflections on Trends in Ageing: The Next Five Years

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### SPEAKER

Pat Spadafora  
Director, Sheridan Elder Research Centre  
Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning

**Pat Spadafora** said she believes five potential risk factors for elder abuse could increase in the coming years:

- Social isolation
- Caregiver stress
- Dependency or impairment of older persons
- Ageism and lack of knowledge of the ageing process
- Insufficient staffing and training in nursing homes

Spadafora said she wanted to frame her look at the future in a positive light and presented a "wish list" of changes she believes could be achieved before WEAAD 2015, including:

- Developments that foster engagement, connectivity, and social inclusion

- Greater emphasis on the rights of older persons
- A reduction of ageist stereotypes in the media through more positive images of ageing
- A world where older adults are seen as resources, not burdens
- Innovative health promotion strategies that facilitate the ability of older adults to age in a place of their own choosing, such as their own home
- Enabling technologies that are practical and affordable
- The eradication of elder abuse

As the baby boomer generation moves into their senior years, there will be growing use of and demand for relevant technology and social media tools among older adults, said Spadafora. Adults of this generation are already accustomed to managing their lives with online tools and will look to technology to manage their health, banking, and connections to family and friends through social media and blogging.

Spadafora said the meaning of “home” will continue to evolve between now and 2015, with more options on the continuum between independent living and the shift to long-term care homes. There is a resurgence of multi-generational living arrangements and “intentional” communities of interest, such as people living together to explore a common love of art or environmental preservation.

More varied forms of exercise will need to be established to facilitate ageing in place, said Spadafora. Statistics Canada reports that those over age 65 have the lowest rate of exercise among Canadians. In addition to ensuring a greater variety and availability of physical activities, cognitive activities such as online games should be emphasized to maintain brain function in older persons.

“The more empowered they [older adults] are, the more they will be able to speak up for themselves,” said Spadafora.

## Appendix: Speaker Presentations