

SLR Bios – Spring 2025

Dr. Alexis Marcotte-Chenard

Alexis is a Postdoctoral Fellow | Exercise Metabolism and Inflammation Laboratory
School of Health and Exercise Sciences | University of British Columbia | Okanagan Campus.

Throughout his career, Alexis has employed a diverse array of methods, ranging from clinical research to epidemiology, to improve the management of type 2 diabetes. By focusing on exercise and nutritional approaches, Alexis aims to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and improve patients' quality of life.

Alexis's postdoctoral research centers on optimizing the non-pharmaceutical management of type 2 diabetes.

Specifically, he uses various exercise modalities, a low-carbohydrate diet, and ketone supplements to reduce traditional cardiovascular risk factors. Additionally, he is dedicated to bridging the gap between research and the public through knowledge transfer initiatives.

Anthony Neville

An intro to badminton drew Anthony to SLR, and then for 11 years he hosted the popular Watercolour, Pastel and Acrylic painting courses. An art student from John Abbott College, he exhibited in many Quebec venues. But starting this fall, Tony is pivoting to his first love, examining the many human attributes that underpin the current ecological, social, political, and economic crises that we are struggling with. This course will start off by focusing on CBC's *IDEAS* and other great podcasts that challenge our accepted views of the world. As an interactive course it will involve open-ended discussions, debates, and humour.

Barry Lane

Barry Lane, born in Regina, Saskatchewan, studied history at the Royal Military College of Canada. He served as a Captain in the UN Emergency Force in Egypt. Since 1976, he has lived in Quebec City, speaking English, French, Russian, and Italian. Co-founder of Mendel Tours in 1984, he specializes in academic travel. An award-winning author, Barry lectures on historical topics and recently published "Canadian Pacific and the Golden Age of Travel."

Brenda Josephs

Brenda has a BA in Gerontology, is a Certified Professional Consultant on Aging and a Grief & Loss Counsellor, and has a special interest in promoting mental health, lifelong learning, connection and resilience for optimal aging.

After starting her working life in hospitality, she changed directions and spent much of her career in the senior living industry in Calgary before moving to Kelowna in 2018. She continues to work with older adults through her company, Third Age Wellbeing.

Brenda is the Board Chair of Kelowna Seniors Outreach Resource Society and is also on the committee for the *Breakfast to Remember* supporting Alzheimer's BC.

Brenda and her husband Ron have five grown children, two grandchildren and two senior Yorkshire Terriers.

Byron Johnstad

Byron Johnstad is an accomplished educator and lecturer with extensive experience teaching Interior Design, History of World Architecture, Design Development, and Business Procedures.

His expertise spans residential and commercial interior design, space planning, and technical design for modular and custom homes. As a founding partner of *Boulevard Interiors Ltd.* in Vancouver, BC, he specialized in retail and residential design, overseeing installations, budgeting, and project management.

Byron also founded and operated *Byron & Company Imports Ltd.*, a retail and wholesale import business. He managed all the operations, designed interiors and fixtures, and curated unique merchandise selections from Asia. His career reflects a dedication to design excellence, education, and innovation, making significant contributions to the arts and interior design industries.

Christine Wood

Christine believes in living life to the full, taking every opportunity and greeting everyone with a smile and was very excited to find the sheer variety of courses and interests available at SLR, the problem is there are just not enough days in the week.

Christine moved to Canada nearly three years ago after a 30-year career teaching Geography and History in England, followed by her dream retirement job as a tour guide at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire.

Alongside this she trained as a Celebrant in the UK and continues to act as a Funeral Celebrant here, working with bereaved individuals, and funeral homes throughout the Okanagan, writing and taking services at a wide variety of locations, including cemeteries and funeral homes, but also wineries and community halls.

Christine is a firm believer that marking the end of our lives with some sort of ceremony is an important rite of passage for those left behind and I hope that her talk gives some idea of how to go about this for yourself.

Colleen O'Hare

Colleen became a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) Okanagan Centre club in 2004, and over the years she has been organizing the club's outreach activities, which include setting up telescopes in parking lots and other public spaces for people to watch the beauty of planets and bright stars.

Dan Bruce

Dan Bruce has dedicated more than 50 years to heritage work. A London University graduate in Anthropology, he trained as a curator at the British Museum, London. He has curated and consulted with museums throughout BC's interior. Dan began work with the Friends of Fintry in 2002, as the curator of the heritage buildings and has helped recreate the Manor House, now a heritage showpiece, with countless exhibits of historical significance. He also enjoys passing his knowledge along to others and has presented at SLR for several years.

Daryl Cooper

Daryl, with roots in the Peace River Country, a love of hockey and rodeo, stumbled into SFU in the sixties. Armed with Geography, Commerce and Education, he wound up teaching at Kelowna Secondary School. "It was an awesome ride", he told SLR. Thirty-two years later he was not yet ready for retirement.

Growing up, Daryl was fascinated with globes, maps and different cultures. This led to around-the-world travel, with a seven-year stop-over teaching in China. He lived in five different provinces, big and small cities, and rural communities. He toured much of China and got but a small taste of a vast country with a long story. Daryl left China for Öskeman, Kazakhstan, on the freezing Siberian border, for his 39th and final year of teaching. The school for 'gifted students' was a dream way to end his career. Daryl has a passion for learning and sharing and is grateful to the presenters, who share their knowledge, and he appreciates the participants who come to enrich his classes. "I have met so many unique people with awesome stories," he commented.

Don Plant

Don hosted a morning program at CBC Radio in Northern Manitoba and worked as a Daily Courier journalist in Kelowna for 25 years, reporting mainly on courts, health and education. He now takes courses on history and archaeology at UBC. He helped excavate an Early Bronze Age site in Israel and Maya ruins in Belize that date to 600 BCE. Don has degrees in a Arts (English) and Journalism. He covered the 2003 fire that destroyed more than 200 houses in Kelowna and co-wrote two books about it. Don is a freelance writer, occasional actor and sits on three volunteer boards.

Doris Karvonen

Doris was the director of her own school of dance for 16 years. She was also the choreographer and part-time teacher for the Notre Dame University theatre department for nine years. She has produced and staged two B.C. Games opening ceremony shows, taught musical theatre workshops and has directed and choreographed several musical theatre productions. Doris, along with her husband Lee has also co-written, directed and choreographed two musicals for a national historical site.

Edward (Ed) Kilgour

In a previous life, Ed was a mainframe (enterprise systems) computer engineer. With that technical background he launched into adult vocational education via the U of A, and then onto advanced business studies in both Canada and the U.S. As an adjunct faculty member, Ed has taught business and related disciplines at universities in the Middle East as well as directing, consulting and coaching for private and Government organizations at home and abroad.

Upon retiring, Ed has been able to pursue his scientific passions by leading study groups in fascinating topics such as astronomy and space, scientific developments, travel, celebrity biographies, Rubik's Cube and many other topics that evoke thought and interest.

Evan Burgess

Evan is a public services librarian at the downtown Kelowna branch of the ORL. While he has been a librarian for about 5 years, he has been with the ORL much longer, having started as a page, shelving books at age 15. Besides loving reading (as all librarians do) Evan also loves to create and craft and blab about tech.

Have a research topic and don't know where to start? Phone acting up and not sure what to do about it? Stop on by and have a chat and Evan will help jumpstart your information journey!"

Greg Dean

Greg is a retired high school teacher. He previously taught photography at SLR for a number of years. He has offered photographic workshops for a variety of organizations and co-taught entry level photography at the Centre for Arts and Technology Okanagan for three terms.

Greg has had his photos published in Sky News Magazine, BC Business Magazine, the Kelowna Capital News, the Kelowna Daily Courier, a Province of British Columbia Science 9 textbook and in a variety of web sites.

Gene Bodzin

Gene has spent a lifetime testing his father's contention that there is no useless knowledge. His main aim as an editor was clarity. As a teacher, researcher, and writer, he has tried to distinguish truth from ignorance, facts from opinions, and certainty from speculation. His focus at SLR is on how, why, and whether people think.

Gordon McGhie

Gordon is co-founder of CG Bros Entertainment and is a driving force behind all CG Bros projects. As executive Producer Gordon has achieved the perfect blend of creativity and business savvy necessary to produce quality projects. He has had the pleasure of working on major products with clients including – Warner Bros, Marvel, Rainmaker, Paprikaas/Dreamworks, Sony Pictures and Technicolor. Some of the outstanding projects include DreamWorks' Monsters vs. Aliens and Marvel Studio's Iron Man.

Heather Burton

Heather was born and raised in Montreal. After earning a Bachelor of Education degree from McGill University, she taught French Immersion in both Quebec and Ontario. A mid-life change of vocation led her to study at the Toronto School of Theology, where she earned a Master of Religious Education degree and a Master of Divinity degree and was ordained in 1997 into The United Church of Canada. Since taking early retirement in 2008, she has remained active in ministry and also in two of her passions – painting and the culinary arts. At SLR and in other groups, she has led courses focused on women through history and more general social commentary, past and present.

Professor Howard Hisdal

Professor Howard Hisdal has taught history at Okanagan College since 2005. He specializes in Canadian WW II military history, but has also taught Ancient, Medieval, Canadian, American, World, and Indigenous history, as well as courses on Warfare and Terrorism, and The Rise of Modern Capitalism.

He is a Royal Military College graduate with 25 years of service in the Canadian Military, as infantry platoon commander in the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and leader of the BC Dragoons' Reserve Regiment in the Okanagan. Howard retired in 2014 with a Canadian Forces Decoration (CD) for honourable service.

Jane Metzger

Jane is a local artist and drawing instructor who obtained her undergraduate degree in visual arts from Douglas College in 1982. She specializes in portrait drawing and enjoys teaching beginners the fundamentals of drawing, painting and clay modeling.

Jeanette Bosch

Jeanette has been leading classes at SLR since 2014. She first offered the "Silk Road" inspired by the fact that she planned to go there, she decided to study and research all aspects of the Silk Road, which added so much value to the experience. Jeanette has also presented a class on the "Many Faces of Africa", this continent being one of her favorite travel destinations. In this course, she explores ten countries that she has visited. Recently, Jeanette developed a second course called "The Ancient Age and Trade Routes", which covers 3500 BCE to 500 CE. It is a study of the rise and fall of the world's ancient civilizations. Jeanette has also presented one-session classes titled "Where in the World are We" and "David Thomson".

Dr. Jeff Werner

Jeff is a professor of Anthropology at Okanagan College. He specializes in Stone Age archaeology, human evolution and experimental archaeology. His current research focuses on southern Tanzania, where our early human ancestors lived for millions of years. He also hand carves replicas of prehistoric tools to further his investigation of Stone Age life and culture. Dr. Werner is affiliated with the Iringa Region Archaeology Project (IRAP).

Jim Howard

Jim has been leading SLR courses for over ten years. His obsession with Bob Dylan resulted in a series of courses on Dylan (3), Leonard Cohen, Woody Guthrie, and other singer-songwriters from the 60s and 70s. Jim is also student of English Literature (degrees from the University Toronto and California) focusing on women novelists of 18th and 19th century England, which inspired his very first SLR course, and has recently offered courses on the novels of Jane Austen and the Brontes as depicted in movies and on television.

John Burton

John brings to his courses for SLR his experiences as a trial lawyer, professor, conflict mediator and minister of the United Church of Canada. He served First Nations communities in Northern British Columbia as well as congregations across Canada. He taught theology and ethics in several of Canada's leading universities and for eight years prior to retirement taught business ethics and leadership in the Faculty of Management of the University of British Columbia in the Okanagan. John holds a Ph.D. in theological ethics as well as a J.D., M.B.A., and M.Div.

John Schlapbach

John is a Certified Body Code/Emotion Code Practitioner. His background also includes 30 years as a Registered Massage Therapist practitioner and over 40 years in Holistic Health in Nutrition, Herbology, Reflexology, Medical intuitive and Energy medicine specialist.

Keith Germaine

Keith very much enjoyed teaching Chemistry in high school most of his career and 17 years at Okanagan College to adults returning to upgrade. For him it was the subject that was the most practical as it explained so much of the world we live in. It is really important in understanding some of the big issues facing us as a species, as we attempt to control our impact on the environment, whether it be acid rain, ozone depletion, radon gas, air pollution, the problems of mining and oil exploration, and of course, nuclear power. Keith is a real advocate of education on all these issues so we can make informed decisions, taking into account the long-term consequences that will be visited upon us and the next generations for eons to come.

Keith Richardson

Keith is a retired educator, now a happy octogenarian, whose career saw him serve in various parts of Manitoba and BC for 20 years before heading off to Japan for 13 years where he taught and held administrative positions in Hokkaido's only International School in Sapporo. Since first seeing a Varied Thrush while camping with his then young family in 1976, he has been an active bird watcher wherever he travels. A decade after returning to Canada and developing a computer consultant business in the Lower Mainland, he retired to Kelowna in 2014, where he has dedicated his days to documenting the wildlife, particularly birds, that inform his life and community in the Central Okanagan. A self-styled 'student of Nature,' and a recent member of Kelowna's SLR, Keith is happy to share his experiences, insights, and photos with anyone who enjoys such things, especially folks increasingly fascinated with and concerned about their place in the ever-changing ecologies of Planet Earth.

Kelly Taylor

Kelly is a mixed media figurative artist. She is driven to paint by a need to tell stories. Her stories pay homage to all the experiences and emotions that have served to shape the woman, friend, mother, daughter, partner she is. Kelly believes that there are common themes in all of our stories, and we can support each other to find our way home to our deepest authentic self when we honour and share our stories. We can come to understand and experience that we are in this beautiful and complex web of life together.

Ken Tapping

Ken Tapping was born in the UK and has had a lifelong passion for science. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics and Physics from the University of London (UK), followed by a Master's from University College London (UK).

He further pursued his academic journey and obtained a Doctorate in Astrophysics from the University of Utrecht (The Netherlands). After completing his education, Ken joined the UK Science Research Council, where he had the opportunity to contribute to the commissioning and utilization of a new radio telescope located in Chilbolton (UK). Subsequently, he became part of a collaborative project between the British team and the National Research Council of Canada. This project involved utilizing the Chilbolton radio telescope in conjunction with the radio telescope at the Algonquin Radio Observatory in Ontario, enabling them to conduct Very Long Baseline Interferometry Experiments.

In 1975, Ken made the decision to move to Canada and joined the National Research Council's Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics in Ottawa. There, he immersed himself in the field of solar physics and took on the role of leading the Solar Radio Monitoring Program. In 1990, Ken relocated with the program to the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory in the Okanagan region. Outside of Ken's scientific pursuits, he has a keen interest in playing jazz guitar and has been fortunate enough to be part of a couple of bands where he can express his musical passion.

Keri Brekved

Keri is an RN with 35 years' experience in a variety of settings, including Hospice. She is an End-of-Life Sacred Passage Guide, Coach, and Educator, having trained at Conscious Dying Institute. She is a Healing Circle Facilitator, Yoga teacher, Reiki practitioner.

Kim Letson

With a Canadian military father, Kim spent her childhood living in various parts of Canada and Europe. She and her husband, Mike Simpson, served twenty-year careers in the Canadian Forces. Retiring in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, they focussed on raising their two sons, Brian and Kyle, pursued second careers as professional ski patrollers on nearby Mount Washington and for a time owned a sea kayaking company based on the west coast of Vancouver Island. In recent years *following her nomadic spirit*, Kim has indulged her passion for off-the-beaten-path international travel.

Kristine Stewart

Kristine is a certified clinical hypnotherapist and Access Bars Practitioner in Kelowna and has been offering her services since 2017. She is an active member of the *International Medical and Dental Hypnotherapy Association*, dedicated to healing: Body, Mind and Spirit.

Kristine enjoys facilitating change within clients who are interested in healing aspects of their lives, processing fears and trauma, managing anxious feelings and thoughts, learning and applying positive coping mechanisms, reducing stress, managing chronic pain, promoting sleep, letting go of unwanted habits, and growing spiritually.

Lauralee Kilgour

Lauralee was born in Saskatoon and later educated in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the United States. She spent her professional life working in various levels of post-secondary education both in Canada and in several countries abroad.

Before retiring to Lake Country, she lived and worked in the Middle East where she took the opportunity to travel extensively, become immersed in other traditions, and learn a respect and admiration for cultural diversity. Lauralee has been a member of SLR since 2019 where she has presented on topics related to people and places.

Linda Keurvorst

Following a 30-year career as an educator in Canada, Linda embarked on a second career as an international educator. Her first position was in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2002. She loved the people, the country, the history, the culture, and working in an international environment. After four years, she decided to continue her travels and accepted a position in Nanjing, China. Although very different from the predictability of Denmark, China was fascinating with its chaotic, random nature, its history, its **traditions, and the beauty of** the land.

Three years later, Linda moved once again, this time to Khartoum, Sudan. Here Linda experienced the wonders of the ancient world, travelled the Nile, explored the desert environment, and visited the many pyramids in the country.

Finally in 2011, she moved to work in an international school in Beirut, Lebanon where she enjoyed the weather, the Mediterranean Sea, the Greek and Roman ruins, the changing landscapes, the friendly people and the food!

Lindsay Atkinson-Smith

Lindsay has been playing with and reading tarot cards since a 1974 trip to Europe where she met a fellow traveler with a Tarot deck. Since then, Lindsay has collected many decks and books about Tarot and pulling a tarot card has become part of her daily and yearly practice. She finds that it gives her guidance for the day and year and will give her something to think about. Lindsay began teaching a Tarot class at SLR in 2019 and since then has taught one or two courses each year. She loves teaching the class and seeing people go from knowing nothing to being able to do a reading at the end of the five weeks.

Lynda Norman

Lynda Norman was born in Kelowna British Columbia and is a self-taught artist. Her body of work primarily includes watercolour and ranges from subtle to vibrant, often incorporating elements of Abstract, which, above all, values individual expression - the artist's direct experience of her subjects, her emotional response to nature, and her intuition are all more important than academic theory or elevated subject matter.

Most of Linda's paintings are created from an instinctive response, rather than a detailed study of her subjects, and she prefers to use colour to enhance or understate certain elements of her work. Exploring the possibilities of colour, form and perspective in this way often results in an abstract look and feel.

Understanding that by combining elements of colour and shape, the viewer's eye is encouraged to blend the colours so that each individual experiences the painting differently, her work leaves her subjects, and their relationships open to interpretation – an invitation to viewers to experience their own feelings and thoughts.

Lynda has always known that creativity is a natural part of being - that we are meant to fully participate in life on earth, and that we are meant to express and share our creativity as much as we can.

Margaret Gobie

Margaret Gobie graduated from the Editing Program at Simon Fraser University and continues to upgrade her skills. She is a member of [Editors Canada](#), [Editors BC](#), [Club Ed](#) and [The Creative Academy for Writers](#). She volunteers extensively in the arts, on selection committees for theatre festivals, helping to choose and pair new playwrights with directors, and on the board of directors for art galleries, live theatres and film festivals.

Margaret's editing work encompasses academic papers, fiction and non-fiction with various topics. She works with students, artists and professionals to help them get the best writing out into the world.

Margo Nielsen

Margo's journey into the health and wellness field began with Reflexology in 1996 and over the years she has continued to learn many different modalities, including Reiki, Chair Massage, Indian Head Massage, Metamorphosis, The Way of the Heart and more. She feels that each modality is such a gift and has tremendous value.

Margo is a member of both the Reflexology Association of Canada and the Reflexology Association of BC and have served on the board of RABC for seven years, three as the president and four as a director. Continuing to learn, ask questions, laugh, create fun, and enjoy new experiences is what she loves.

Marina White

Having personally suffered major injuries through sports, Marina knew she wanted to help other people who had also suffered injuries – acute or chronic. As the owner of Okanagan Athletic Therapy, Marina has been helping people who want to keep active and love to be healthy so they can get the most enjoyment out of life for many years!

Mary Lou Johnson

Mary Lou is the founder and past president of the Canadian Holistic Nurses Assn. and has worked as a nurse psychotherapist, meditation and life skills teacher. She is a new paradigm thinker, and her life has often placed her on the leading edge of change in the world. She has been teaching at SLR for the past seven years. Her courses in Practical Mysticism, the Enneagram, the Hero's Journey, Aging, Exopolitics and the Afterlife are popular offerings.

Merv Scott

Merv is a retired CPA and has lived in the Valley most of his life. He joined SLR in 2001 and has taken many enjoyable classes. Merv has served on the board of SLR several times over the years. Merv loves poetry and has facilitated 'Poetry Appreciation' many times. He even wrote a short 'Ode to SLR'.

Michael Force

Michael Force is a marine mammal and seabird observer with more than 4500 days at-sea on more than 90 research cruises aboard a wide variety of oceanographic/fisheries research vessels participating in marine mammal and seabird population assessments, oceanographic, fisheries and bio-acoustic surveys in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans and Antarctica.

Michael is highly skilled in seabird identification, having seen over 90% of the world's seabird species.

Mike Dedels

Mike was inspired to go into the Range Program at UBC as grazing is one of the few ways we produce food from intact ecosystems. After six years in wholesale and retail sales he started with the Ministry of Forests in the Range Program in 1990 and worked for the Provincial government in a number of roles until 2018. He enjoyed the opportunity to work with many leaders in Range Management in government and on the land, and developed a love for the grasslands. Mike then had four years working on invasive plants with the TNRD, including leading a major prevention and control program in the Elephant Hill wildfire area.

Mike is a long-time GCC member, including eight years on the Board, with terms as Secretary and Treasurer. He has been under contract as GCC General Manager since July 2022.

Mike has a passion for increasing knowledge of grasslands through outreach to the general public, and collaboration with First Nations, landowners and other NGOs.

Pam Laing

Pam has lived in the Kelowna area since 1998 and has a lifelong interest in the natural world. Wildflowers, wildlife and especially birds have always been important to her. Now birding has become a passion!

In 2004 Pam began to photograph birds using a small digital camera. While birding remains her main interest, photography has enhanced Pam's enjoyment and has enriched the knowledge of what she is seeing. Sometimes a photograph shows something about a bird of which we are not aware, often a feature not visible with the naked eye, or through binoculars. Pam enjoys the challenge of bird photography and sharing her photographs through presentations to community groups. It has been said that the best way to learn is to explain it to someone else. The camera may have changed over the years, but the challenges and the rewards are ongoing.

Pat Zander

Pat has been a participant in the Current Events class for 20 years, much of that time as facilitator. She joined SLR soon after retiring as a teacher. Originally from Ontario, the Central Okanagan has been home for much of her working, and all of her retired years.

Paul Hergott, BAdmin, LLB, Lawyer

Paul developed a strong work ethic while growing up on a farm near Melville, Saskatchewan. This fueled his pursuit of a law career. He went on to obtain a business degree at the University of Regina and a law degree from the University of Victoria. Paul has practiced law in the Okanagan since 1996, opening Hergott Law in 2007, specializing in litigation. He later built an exclusive practice pursuing fair compensation for injury victims. Currently he is in the more sedate practice of wills and estates.

Paul was a founder and has been a member of the Okanagan Business Excellence community leaders' group since 1999. He enjoys hiking, biking, skiing with his wife and children in the Okanagan outdoors.

Paulette Breau

Paulette served as an officer in the RCMP from 1987 to 2017, retiring as a sergeant. She's the proud mother of two Labradors, Oakley and Tilley. Tilley was a rescue she tried to foster but failed—which she considers the best failure of her life! Paulette is the author of 'Never at Ease' Memoir of a Mountie.

Reg Olson

Reg was born in Vancouver, but raised in the small community of Ahbau Creek, BC (about 30 km north of Quesnel). As a child in the 1950s, life was pretty rustic, living in a log house with an outdoor privy, no electricity and water from a hand pump in the house.

Although Reg's mother envisioned him becoming a teacher, Reg aspired to be some sort of 'scientist'. He attended UBC, where he initially pursued Physics in his second year. However, he quit at Christmas due to sub-par math skills and then completed three years of Zoology. In his third year, after a summer of mineral exploration fieldwork in central Yukon in 1965, he decided to switch to Geology. This career shift led to Reg earning three degrees in Geology and embarking on a 45+ year career in mineral exploration. Most of his work was in northern Canada, based out of Edmonton, with some assignments in West Australia and Argentina.

Reg retired in 2012, and with the encouragement of his wife Pat, who was born and raised in Alberta, moved to Kelowna in mid-2014. Initially hesitant about the move from Alberta, Reg now realizes Pat was right, as they both love Kelowna and have made many friends, most of whom are fellow members of SLR.

Ron Krystynak

Ron grew up on a grain-beef farm in Saskatchewan. With a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Regina he moved to Ottawa to work for the Federal Government. He earned a master's degree in economics from Carleton University and began working as an economist for Agriculture Canada in 1981. Nive years later Ron participated as part of the negotiating team for NAFTA, and the conclusion of the WTO agreement. He was posted to the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC in 2002. Ron subsequently retired and moved to Kelowna in 2009 and became a member of SLR a year later. He has a passion for gardening.

Dr. Rosalind Warner

Dr. Warner is a Political Science professor at Okanagan College. She has researched and published on topics such as ecological modernization, global environmental governance issues, and environment and trade in Canadian foreign policy. Rosalind has taught subjects ranging from International Development to Canadian government for nearly 20 years. She is a Research Fellow with the Earth System Governance Project, Board member of the BC Council for International Cooperation, Chair of the local Steering Committee of the Global Empowerment Coalition of the Central Okanagan, and Board Member of the Canadian Environmental Network.

Rosemary Botner

Rosemary is a "people-person" and has always worked with the public. It interests her to research a variety of topics and then prepare a presentation to share with others; the first was probably in 2004. She has been coming back ever since. Rosemary loves the camaraderie at SLR and always looks forward to the new line-up of courses. There is something for everyone! Her hobbies include working in her garden, reading (she is in two book clubs) and watching TV history shows, mystery, detective stories and travel.

Rosie Lawrence

Rosie worked for many years in Medical Diagnostic Imaging, using radioactive materials to assist diagnosis, as well as doing Treatment planning for Radiotherapy patients. She was initially in London, England and then in Winnipeg. After retiring and moving to Kelowna, Rosie soon discovered SLR and a Science class, which she have been attending or leading ever since.

Rosie is a keen golfer and a certified golf Rules Official, as well as a regular Mahjong player.

Sally Caisley

As a retired educator, Sally has been delivering the many topics prepared by the Seniors' Health & Wellness Institute in Power Point presentations to senior audiences for over 15 years. Wherever seniors meet for learning opportunities, first in the Boundary area and now in the Central Okanagan, Sally presents these packages of general information. Very much a senior herself, she relates well to the issues of chronic health, legal, social, and declining skills that people aged 55+ encounter.

Shannon Parker

Shannon is the Laufer Curator of Collections at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. When Shannon Parker was a girl growing up in Digby County, N.S., she and her mother often drove past Maud Lewis's home. Today, as the curator of collections at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, she sees the house almost every day.

Sharron J. Simpson

Born and raised in Kelowna, Sharron left to attend UBC and then set off to explore the rest of world. She has lived in Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto, attended various universities and gathered a variety of degrees and has enjoyed an eclectic career as a social worker, stockbroker, politician. For several years, Sharron taught memoir writing in conjunction with the Kelowna Heritage Museum. She has authored four books about various aspects of Kelowna's history along with innumerable articles and is the local editor for the Okanagan Historical Society Annual Report. Sharron is a passionate advocate for both writing our family stories and preserving our community heritage and is currently writing a travel memoir.

Shirley Piedt

Shirley has been a member of SLR for over 10 years and a facilitator of the Book Club for much of that time. She loves to read, but she also spent most of her life in a profession where she was privileged to hear many stories that highlighted the struggles and the strengths that are part of living. Stories help us to learn about others and to build pathways to understanding lives that are different from our own. Her farm and family roots of hospitality and looking out for one another, along with the Northern Alberta landscape are at the heart of who Shirley is. She thanks SLR "for the chance to continue building relationships within the programs."

Sigrie Kendrick

Sigrie is a master gardener and executive-director of the non-profit Okanagan Xeriscape Association. She inherited her passion for gardening from her Australian grandfather, a renowned rose breeder in New South Wales. Her interest in water conservation started early after a childhood spent growing up in the desert of Saudi Arabia, when a day of rain was cause for a national holiday.

Sigrie completed her Master Gardener course in 2014 during which time she met Gwen Steele, co-founder of the Okanagan Xeriscape Association. Her enthusiasm was infectious; Sigrie became passionate about promoting xeriscape and joined the OXA board as a director in 2015, becoming Executive Director in 2019.

She also writes a bi-monthly column for Castanet called 'Gardening with Nature' which is also published by Black Press in a variety of their newspapers.

Susan Thesen

Susan learned the art of origami in 1980 from one of the founding members of the Kelowna-Kasugai Sister City Association. She was inspired to fold miniature origami after receiving a gift of miniature cranes from a house guest from Kasugai. Since then, she has tried using origami in a number of different ways, including cards and Christmas ornaments.

Teresa Smith

Teresa was born in England but taught in a secretarial school in Kenya where she met her husband, Tony. She studied Anthropology at the University of Western Ontario and earned a Master's Degree in Liberal Arts, which included art history, from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Teresa taught Humanities for two years before moving to Canada in 2004. She joined SLR soon after and has been a Study Group Leader/presenter for many years for art history and anthropology courses. Teresa says, "I love doing research because I am continuing to learn and meeting all the wonderful people that attend SLR."

Terese Bowors

Terese an unyielding Chronic Illness Thriver, has journeyed on a 15-year wellness odyssey alongside her husband and two adult children. Navigating through hardships, she harnesses the power of plant medicine, gardening, and meditation to sculpt her holistic self-care rituals. As a Certified Medical Cannabis Coach, Educator, and captivating Public Speaker, Terese embodies resilience in her relentless pursuit of wellness.

Terese's role as Cannabis Coach has established her as a go to guide for seniors navigating a safe and healthy relationship with medicinal Cannabis. Terese's accolades include multiple "Cannabis Educator of the Year" honors, a testament to her expertise that has earned her the affectionate title of "Cannabis Yoda" among her peers.

Tina Siddiqui

Tina is an artist and long-serving instructor who's been teaching painting, drawing and mixed media courses in the Okanagan for nearly 20 years. Trained as a graphic artist, Tina has exhibited in group and solo shows in the United Kingdom, USA, Canada, Pakistan and Dubai since 1976. She received an award for portraiture and abstract paintings, in the 2003 Open International Portrait Competition in Toronto.

Vera Ito

Vera has been a member of SLR since the early years of OILR (Okanagan Institute for Learning in Retirement), our original organization, which was established in 1995. She sat on the OILR board and eventually became president of SLR, a position she held for about twelve years. During her tenure Vera has offered numerous courses, many on health-related subjects. As a retired medical laboratory technologist, she has always been interested in health and enjoys reading and learning about this topic. She also enjoys sharing her interest with our members, in an effort to help them to maintain and improve their own health by natural methods.

Walter Coates

Walter worked as a junior high school teacher for 29 years before retiring early to pursue the study and practices of Tibetan Buddhist meditation. From 2000 to 2015 he took many courses and completed many meditation retreats at different of meditation centers and Buddhist monasteries in Canada and the U.S. He also taught meditation at the Vancouver Shambhala Centre for a number of years before moving to Kelowna in 2015. Walter currently practices Vajrayana Buddhist meditation for approximately an hour every day.
