RECREATION SUMMIT 2026

Building Healthy Communities
THROUGH RECREATION, ARTS & HUMANITIES

SUMMIT SCHEDULE

TIME	NOVEMBER 12	NOVEMBER 13
8:30 - 8:45 AM	**Summit Welcome** Uncle Randy & FOM Leadership	**Summit Welcome** Coffee & Connections
8:45 - 10:00 AM	**DISRUPTIVE DIALOGUE:** **Building Healthy Communities with Recreation, Health and Medicine** Katie Fenn, Charlotte Davis, Dr. Adam Hoverman, Prof. Joanne Schroeder	**STORY: Serious Leisure: My Serious Life Film Review** Dr. Saulo Neves
10:15 - 11:15 AM	**NUTRITION & MOVEMENT BREAK** **Building Healthy Communities Walk** **Stadium District Community Infrastructure** Charlotte Davis, City of Nanaimo	**Nutrition & Movement Break** **Food & Plants as Medicine** Dr. Nicholette Richer
11:15 - 12:30 PM	**DESIGN: SESSION #1** **Prescribing Possibility** **Building Pathways, Equity & Access to Recreation** Dr. Amanda Johnson **CONNECTION: SESSION #2** **Intersection of Recreation, Community Engagement and Health in End of Life Care** Dr. Caroline Variath	**DESIGN: SESSION #5** **Narrative Medicine & Healthy Communication** *Sharing health and Recreation Experience and Knowledge to Build Connections* Dr. Daena Goldsmith **CONNECTION: SESSION #6** **The Loneliness Epidemic: Facilitating Connections for Older Adults** Bobbi Symes, United Way
12:30 - 1:15 PM	**Lunch & Networking**	**Lunch & Recreation Lab** The Community Living Room
1:15 - 1:45 PM	**DESIGN: Sound Healing** Linda Nardelli	**STORY: More Than Campaign** VIU Students
1:45 - 3:00 PM	**CONNECTION: SESSION #3** **From Inclusion to Belonging:** ***Moving Beyond Accessibility Checklists Toward Genuinely Inclusive Spaces and Programs*** Jocelyn Maffin, Spinal Cord Injury BC	**DESIGN: SESSION #7** **Prescription to Culture Connection** Danielle Dickson, Bee True Studio Expressive Arts Therapy **CONNECTION: SESSION #8** **Inclusion, Diversity, Equality & Accessibility in Public Recreation** Emma Courtney & Langara College Students
3:00 - 4:00 PM	**CONNECTION: SESSION #4** **Recreation as Reconciliation, Building Lasting Partnerships through Recreation** Emma Courtney, Langara College & Courtenay Gibson, Musqueam Indian Band	**DISRUPTIVE DIALOGUE:** **Same Community, Different Systems** *What could we accomplish together that none of us can accomplish alone?* Susie Saunders, Dr. Daena Goldsmith, Dr. Adam Hoverman, Joanne Schroder
4:00 - 4:30 PM	**Debrief & Wrap-Up**	**Summit Wrap-Up**

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 12, 2026

DISRUPTIVE DIALOGUE

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES WITH RECREATION, HEALTH & MEDICINE

Dr. Adam Hoverman, Charlotte Davis, Katie Fenn, & Prof. Joanne Schroeder

What if strengthening social connection was not the responsibility of one sector, or one siloed discipline, but a shared commitment? This dialogue brings together an interdisciplinary discussion around connection as more then a phrase, but as the architecture of collective action.

Disruptive Dialogue creates space for an intentionally disruptive conversation: What becomes possible when we move beyond professional boundaries and design for connection together? Who is currently missing from our conversations, and whose responsibility is it to ensure everyone has access to meaningful relationships?

By challenging assumptions, sharing perspectives, and identifying opportunities for collaboration, this session invites a new approach to community building—one where social connection is intentional, accessible, and sustained through a shared foundation.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



DR. ADAM HOVERMAN

Family Physician, Wellington Medical Clinic

Dr. Adam Hoverman is a family physician at Wellington Medical Clinic in Nanaimo and a Clinical Instructor with the University of British Columbia and the University of Washington. With training in family medicine, preventive medicine and public health, his work explores how quality improvement methods help strengthen health & social care.

His interests include social prescribing, population health and narrative medicine. Locally, he has helped advance initiatives connecting people with community-based opportunities and supports, emphasizing collaboration across health care and community systems to create healthier, more connected communities.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



CHARLOTTE DAVIS

Director, Parks, Recreation and Culture, City of Nanaimo

Charlotte Davis is the Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture for the City of Nanaimo, where she leads the planning and delivery of parks, recreation services, cultural programs, and public amenities serving a growing and diverse community. With extensive experience in municipal government, Charlotte has held progressive leadership roles in parks operations, public works, and community services. She holds a Master of Science in Environmental Management and a Bachelor of Science in Ecology. Charlotte is passionate about creating healthy, inclusive, and resilient communities through quality public spaces, recreation opportunities, environmental stewardship, collaborative partnerships, and initiatives that enhance quality of life for residents and visitors.



KATIE FENN

CEO, BC Recreation and Parks Association

Katie Fenn is the Chief Executive Officer of the BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA). She joined BCRPA in 2022 following a long tenure in public health at the BC Centre for Disease Control, where her work focused on quality systems and improvement.

With a lifelong connection to recreation and parks, Katie is passionate about system-level collaboration and the role recreation plays in health promotion, disease prevention and building healthier, more connected communities. She holds an MBA from UBC and degrees in Physical and Health Education and Film from Queen's University.



PROF. JOANNE SCHROEDER

Vancouver Island University

Joanne Schroeder is a Professor and Chair in the Department of Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality at Vancouver Island University. Her career spans more than 40 years in recreation and leisure, including municipal recreation, teaching, research, consulting and community engagement.

A strong advoate for recreation as an essential service, Joanne's work focuses on the role of leisure and recreation in supporting health, well-being and connected communities. She has held leadership roles with the World Leisure Organization, including serving as its first female Chair, and is a former Director of VIU's World Leisure Centre of Excellence.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

NUTRITION & MOVEMENT BREAK

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES WALK + STADIUM DISTRICT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Charlotte Davis & Grace Bell

Join us for a guided walking tour of Nanaimo's Stadium District to explore how investments in sport and recreation infrastructure are creating a more inclusive, accessible, and vibrant community. Discover how recent improvements align with the City's Nanaimo ReImagined Official Community Plan and learn about partnerships between the City, School District, and community user groups. The tour will highlight how these investments expand recreational opportunities, reduce barriers to participation, and strengthen Nanaimo's capacity to host sport tourism and major events.



Image courtesy of the City of Nanaimo

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



GRACE BELL

Manager, Sports and Arenas, Parks, Recreation and Culture, City of Nanaimo

Grace Bell is the Manager of Sports and Arenas with the City of Nanaimo, where she supports the delivery and development of sport, recreation, and arena services within the community. With many years of experience in municipal recreation, Grace has held progressive roles with the City and has been involved in community programming, sport initiatives, events, and partnerships. Her work focuses on creating opportunities for participation, supporting local sport organizations, and strengthening Nanaimo's recreation infrastructure and services. Grace brings a collaborative, community-focused approach to her work and a strong commitment to creating accessible opportunities for people to connect through sport and recreation.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

DESIGN: SESSION #1

PRESCRIBING POSSIBILITY: BUILDING PATHWAYS, EQUITY AND ACCESS TO RECREATION

Dr. Amanda Johnson

Recreation Prescription Project (RecRx) is a community-based initiative designed to connect youth with recreation opportunities. This presentation explores how RecRx brings together education, health, and recreation partners to strengthen social connections, support youth wellbeing, and reduce barriers to participation. In this session we will consider how collaborative practice, community-led approaches, and cross-sector partnerships can build pathways to equitable access to recreation, while also considering the potential for scalable models designed to support health, wellbeing, and stronger communities.





Images courtesy of Emma Davidson

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



DR. AMANDA JOHNSON

PhD, Vancouver Island University

Dr. Amanda Johnson is a Professor in Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality Management at Vancouver Island University. Her research explores the importance of public leisure spaces and how recreation can support sustainability, community wellbeing, and equitable access to meaningful leisure experiences. Amanda's work takes a community-focused approach to recreation, with interests in public spaces, community development, and social inclusion. Amanda is involved in initiatives that connect recreation with health and wellbeing, including United Way BC's School's Out program and the Recreation Prescription Project. Her work advances social prescribing by exploring how accessible recreation can foster physical activity, social connection, and youth wellbeing.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

CONNECTIONS: SESSION #2

INTERSECTION OF RECREATION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND HEALTH IN END OF LIFE CARE

Dr. Caroline Variath

What if the best support at life's end isn't found in a hospital, but in a community? End of life was once a communal experience, and quality of life still depends on relationships, meaningful activity, and belonging. This session explores how recreation and compassionate communities can support connection and well-being for people nearing end of life, their caregivers, and those grieving, including those considering medical assistance in dying (MAiD). Drawing on our research, we'll explore opportunities for cross-sector collaboration.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



DR. CAROLINE VARIATH

Michael Smith Health-Professional Investigator,
Vancouver Island University

Dr. Caroline Variath is a Nursing Professor at Vancouver Island University and a Health Professional-Investigator with Michael Smith Health Research BC. She is also a nurse coordinator with Island Health's Medical Assistance in Dying Program within Palliative and End-of-Life Care.

Drawing on more than 15 years of clinical experiences and a specialization in Bioethics, Dr. Variath's research focuses on end-of-life care, health equity, and ethics. Her work uses patient- and community-oriented approaches to improve experiences and supports for patients, families and healthcare providers navigating death and dying.

DESIGN

SOUND HEALING

Linda Nardelli

Participants will be invited into an immersive sound healing experience with crystal singing bowls, voice, and resonant sound. As the tones move through the room, participants can receive and experience the vibrations as they settle into the body. The session offers a spacious pause from the day's activity, inviting deep relaxation, inner listening, and a felt sense of connection.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



LINDA NARDELLI

Registered Therapeutic Counsellor, Healing Practitioner

Linda Nardelli is a registered therapeutic counsellor, healing practitioner, author and artist with more than 25 years of experience supporting people in connecting with body, mind and inner well-being. Her work draws on counselling, somatic awareness, meditation and sound- and vibration-based practices to create opportunities for reflection, relaxation and connection.

Deeply inspired by nature and the arts, Linda brings creativity and embodied experience into her practice, inviting people to slow down, listen inwardly and reconnect with themselves and the world around them.

CONNECTIONS: SESSION #3

FROM INCLUSION TO BELONGING: MOVING BEYOND ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLISTS TOWARD GENUINELY INCLUSIVE SPACES AND PROGRAMS

Jocelyn Maffin

Inclusive recreation is more than accessible infrastructure. This session invites participants to look critically at systemic and often unseen barriers that keep people with disabilities from engaging. Through practical examples and candid discussion, attendees will explore the importance of recreation in this population, challenge assumptions about accessibility and inclusion, and look for opportunities for partnerships and community support. Participants will learn tangible ideas for reducing barriers, improving access, and fostering meaningful participation and belonging.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



JOCELYN MAFFIN

Associate Director, Service Delivery, Spinal Cord Injury BC

Jocelyn Maffin leads public facing programs at Spinal Cord Injury BC, including Peer Support, Peer Health Coaching, Navigation, and Information Services. Living with paralysis since childhood, she brings both lived and professional expertise to her work. Jocelyn holds a B.Sc. in Cell Biology from Simon Fraser University, with post graduate studies and experience in public health, population health research, knowledge translation, and community engagement. She previously worked at UBC and ICORD (UBC's Spinal Cord Injury Research Centre) and developed the Consumer Engagement Program at Praxis Spinal Cord Institute.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

CONNECTIONS: SESSION #4

RECREATION AS RECONCILIATION, BUILDING LASTING PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH RECREATION

Emma Courtney & Courtenay Gibson

What does meaningful reconciliation look like in the everyday work of recreation? Drawing on an ongoing partnership between Musqueam Recreation and Langara College's Recreation Studies Department, this interactive session explores moving beyond transactional engagement toward relationships grounded in trust, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. Through reflections, practical examples, and group activities, participants will explore relationship-building, community-identified priorities, and organizational accountability, leaving with concrete ideas for strengthening relationships and taking meaningful steps toward reconciliation within their own communities

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



EMMA COURTNEY, MA

Instructor, Recreation Studies, Langara College

Emma Courtney is an educator, curriculum developer and applied researcher in Langara College's Recreation Studies Department. Her work explores recreation as a site for belonging, leadership, community well-being and social change, with a focus on relational leadership, Indigenous education, decolonization and community-led program development.

Emma holds a Master of Arts in Global Leadership from Royal Roads University. Her current work includes collaborating with Musqueam Recreation and other First Nations partners to strengthen relationships, honour community knowledge and explore how recreation education can contribute to reconciliation and more just, connected communities.



COURTENAY GIBSON, MBA

Recreation Manager, Musqueam Indian Band

Courtenay Gibson is a proud member of the Musqueam Indian Band and has served as Recreation Manager for 18 years. Her work supports recreation, community programming and relationship-building within Musqueam, informed by extensive experience in social programs including health, education, social development, employment and childcare.

Courtenay holds an MBA in Indigenous Business and Leadership from Simon Fraser University and a diploma in Indigenous Community Development and Governance from the University of Victoria. She also contributes to teaching and research that advances Indigenous leadership, community knowledge and culturally grounded approaches to recreation.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 13, 2026

STORY:

SERIOUS LEISURE: MY SERIOUS LIFE FILM REVIEW

Dr. Saulo Neves

My Serious Life brings academic research on the Serious Leisure Perspective into conversation with the experiences of people and communities. Through documentary storytelling, the project explores how meaningful leisure pursuits can shape identity, learning, belonging and connection.

Originally developed as a six-episode docuseries and later produced as a 30-minute documentary film, My Serious Life invites audiences to consider the activities that give meaning to our lives while demonstrating how filmmaking can make research more accessible, engaging and relevant beyond traditional academic settings.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



DR. SAULO NEVES

PhD, Ambrose University

Dr. Saulo Neves de Oliveira is an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Ambrose University in Calgary. His research explores leisure, education and ageing, with particular interest in the Serious Leisure Perspective and the ways people learn and develop through meaningful participation in everyday life.

Saulo is also a researcher-filmmaker whose work explores documentary filmmaking as a tool for research, education and public scholarship. His work seeks to make academic knowledge more accessible and relevant beyond traditional scholarly audiences.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

NUTRITION & MOVEMENT BREAK

FOOD & PLANTS AS MEDICINE

Dr. Nicolette Richer, DsocSci

What if food and plants could do more than prevent disease, but help reverse it? Drawing on nearly two decades of experience in chronic disease reversal, Dr. Nicolette Richer explores the transformative power of whole-food, plant-based nutrition, lifestyle medicine, and our connection to nature. Discover how food can become a powerful catalyst for healing, vitality, and healthier communities.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



DR. NICOLETTE RICHER

DSocSci, Chronic Disease Reversal Specialist, TEDx Speaker, Author, Serial Entrepreneur

Nicolette Richer is a chronic disease reversal specialist, TEDx speaker, serial entrepreneur, podcast host, and author of Eat Real to Heal. With a Doctorate in Social Sciences from Royal Roads University and nearly two decades of experience, she has helped thousands address the root causes of chronic disease and mental health disorders through nutrition, lifestyle medicine, and integrative healing.

She is the founder of Richer Health Consulting, Kulandira Healing, and The Root Organic Cafe & Chronic Disease Reversal Centre, and Executive Director of Sea to Sky Thrivers Society. She is currently pioneering Canada's first chronic disease and mental health reversal hotel, redefining hospitality as a pathway to healing.

DESIGN: SESSION #5

NARRATIVE MEDICINE & HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

SHARING HEALTH & RECREATION EXPERIENCE & KNOWLEDGE TO BUILD CONNECTIONS

Dr. Daena Goldsmith

How can making space for stories create new cultures of care and strengthen community wellness? This session will describe “narrative medicine” and how it can develop our capacities to attend closely to a story, learn something previously unknown about self and other, and build trust. Participants will experience narrative medicine practices of close reading and free writing. We’ll conclude by discussing how these practices can be used to promote wellness and connection in participants’ own professional roles and communities.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



DR. DAENA GOLDSMITH

PhD, Director, Center for Community and Global Health,
Lewis & Clark College

Daena J. Goldsmith is Professor of Health Studies and Director of the Center for Community and Global Health at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Her teaching and research focus on health communication in families, clinical settings and public discourse, with an emphasis on supporting coping, wellness and resilience.

She also directs the Northwest Narrative Medicine Collaborative, a non-profit organization that centres stories in health and healing. Her work brings together patients, caregivers, healthcare providers, artists, writers and educators to strengthen listening, foster empathy and humanize conversations about health, illness and disability.

CONNECTION: SESSION #6

THE LONELINESS EPIDEMIC: FACILITATING CONNECTIONS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Bobbie Symes

Social isolation and loneliness are growing challenges for older adults, with significant implications for individual health, wellbeing, and community connection. Join the United Way to explore how community-based programs and partnerships are creating meaningful opportunities for older adults to connect, engage, and thrive. Participants will gain insights into the important role of recreation, social engagement, and community collaboration in building inclusive, age-friendly communities where older adults feel valued, supported, and connected.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



BOBBI SYMES, MA, CPG

Director, Healthy Aging, United Way British Columbia

Bobbi Symes is Director of Healthy Aging at United Way British Columbia and a professional gerontologist with more than 20 years of experience working with and supporting older adults. She holds an interdisciplinary master's degree with a focus on gerontology.

Bobbi's work focuses on improving quality of life for older adults through community-based supports, healthy aging initiatives and stronger social connections. Her passion for the sector is informed by both her professional experience and her personal role as a caregiver, bringing real-life perspective to her work with communities across British Columbia.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

DESIGN: SESSION #7

PRESCRIPTION TO CULTURE CONNECTION

Danielle Dickson

Discover how creativity, expressive arts therapy and nature-based practices can foster connection, curiosity and collective well-being. Through a brief introduction and an accessible, hands-on creative experience, participants will explore the power of individual expression within a collaborative process. Using colour, mark-making, reflection and shared poetry, we will discover how creativity can invite new perspectives, deepen awareness and strengthen our sense of belonging. No artistic experience is necessary only a willingness to explore, contribute and connect.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



DANIELLE DICKSON, MTC, EXAT, RYT, BFA

Expressive Arts Therapist, Master Therapeutic Counsellor
Founder, Bee True Studio

Danielle Dickson is an Expressive Arts Therapist, Master Therapeutic Counsellor, multidisciplinary artist and founder of Bee True Studio in Nanaimo. Her practice takes a relational, dignity-driven and arts-based approach, integrating creative expression, somatic awareness, movement and the natural world.

Drawing on her experience in therapeutic practice, community workshops and the arts, Danielle explores creativity as an accessible and transformative human experience. Her work creates opportunities for curiosity, authentic expression and connection, grounded in the belief that creative exploration can foster empathy, belonging and individual and collective well-being.

CONNECTION: SESSION #8

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUALITY & ACCESSIBILITY IN PUBLIC RECREATION

Emma Courtney & Langara College Students

How well do public recreation services reflect the needs of immigrant and newcomer communities? Drawing on the IDEAs in Public Recreation project and findings from community surveys, interviews, and staff engagement, this session explores gaps in access and participation. Participants will examine how Belonging, Dignity, Justice, and Joy (BDJJ) can inform recreation practices and explore a prototype evaluation tool applying BDJJ and the 5As (Availability, Accessibility, Adequacy, Acceptability, and Agency) to identify opportunities for more inclusive and responsive recreation services and experiences.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

DISRUPTIVE DIALOGUE

SAME COMMUNITY, DIFFERENT SYSTEMS
WHAT COULD WE ACCOMPLISH TOGETHER THAT NONE OF US CAN ACCOMPLISH ALONE?

Dr. Daena Goldsmith, Dr. Adam Hoverman, Susie Saunders & Prof. Joanne Schroeder

Let's wrap up and sum up but not leave it there. How do we respectfully question the different systems and silos that we function within? How can we ensure our work reinforces, rather then fragments our efforts for healthy community and social connections through recreation, health, arts and culture and medicine?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



SUSIE SAUNDERS

Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services, City of Courtenay, Director, BCRPA Board

Susie Saunders is the Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services with the City of Courtenay. With extensive senior-level experience in local government and community recreation, Susie brings a collaborative, values-driven approach to leadership and a strong commitment to building inclusive, healthy and resilient communities. She is a passionate advocate for sustained investment in parks and recreation as essential community infrastructure and a foundation for connected, thriving communities across British Columbia. Susie also serves as a Director on the BC Recreation and Parks Association Board.

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