

COURSE PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

FALL 2026 SESSION

Chrystal Arnet – Habitat for Humanity 101

Chrystal is the community engagement and events manager for Habitat for Humanity Vancouver Island North, a role she has loved for three years. A longtime Campbell River resident, she connects with the community, shares Habitat's impact, helps young families access safe, affordable housing, and creates engaging fundraising events like escape rooms.

Linda Bartholme - Build Mental Fitness Daily

Linda is a certified coach, workshop facilitator, speaker, and educator dedicated to helping others build resilience and mental fitness. As the founder of Linda Bartholme Coaching & Consulting and a mother of three, she brings warmth, real-life insight, and practical, science-backed tools to help seniors thrive with clarity, confidence, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Jamie Bowman - Community Radio, World Changer

No information available.

Bonnie (Patricia) Brett - Swing It, Brother, Swing! and Music Talk: Steve Wallace

Bonnie is a Canadian jazz singer and recording artist who was a mainstay of the Toronto jazz scene for three decades before she returned to Vancouver Island where she grew up. From 2005 to 2022, in addition to performing, she taught voice lessons and jazz history at York University, Centennial College and the University of Waterloo. She holds a master's degree in music from York University.

Ann Brown – Growing Your Family Tree and Connecting the Generations

Ann has been researching families for more than 20 years. She started with a box of family documents and has learned, sometimes the hard way, to build and validate family history.

It has led her to some exciting stories, some sad discoveries, and some travel to meet family she didn't know she had.

Kate Brown - Innovation and Design

Kate studied 3D Design in London, England and operated her own interior, product and apparel design businesses. She hosted "Arts Beat" on Shaw TV and founded Artsphere Art Group. In 2019 Kate was awarded the Local Hero's Award as the ambassador for Arts Comox Valley.

Chuck Burdick - Basics of Photography

Through photography Chuck seeks to capture beauty in this world while emphasizing shape, colour, and texture. Recently he has been using infrared photography as another tool for expression.

Lyle Carlstrom - Financial & Estate Planning

Lyle has been a member of the Canadian Bar Association since 1983 and is a strong supporter of public legal education. He has taught with Athabasca University, Fairview College, Grande Prairie Regional College, the Alberta Real Estate Association, the Council for Lifelong Learning and the Rural Learning Network and helped create The Estate & Financial Planning Institute and FEP Institute Inc. He has given several courses for ElderCollege.

Wei-Ching Chang - Wisdom for a Better World

Wei-Ching has a master's degree in philosophy (University of Minnesota), and a PhD in mathematics/statistics (University of Toronto). He taught biostatistics and conducted research at the University of Alberta. His publications include research papers on heart disease, essays on health equity, human dignity, global peace and cooperation, and two books: *Finding Meaning and Beauty in an Idiotic World*, and a biography of his father, *A Fantastic Life of Tung-Lan (Symonds) Chang*.

Brian Charlton – The Two Faces of Film

Brian has been a lifelong film lover and part of the ElderCollege film class since 2013. A retired postal worker, he became active in the Comox Valley community soon after moving here in 2002. Those activities have ranged from being on the boards of the Cumberland Museum and the Art Gallery to helping organize Mayworks and Miners Memorial.

Lesley Comassar - Art Talk: Realism to Abstract

Lesley is a fibre artist sharing ideas and stories in fabric, paint and thread. Subjects have included environment, displacement, migration, family history, and human emotions.

Gordon Dann – Bletchley Park Code Breakers

Gordon is a retired telecom worker. He worked for 36 years in a plant as a splicer and later in engineering. He was interested in electronics at a young age and worked on airplane electronics and radios for small planes. He has built and flown two airplanes. He has always been interested in math and physics and returned to college after retirement.

Nancy Dawes - Beginner Zentangle Drawing 1, Zentangle – Black Magic Tangling and Zentangle – Renaissance Tangling

Nancy is a Certified Zentangle Teacher™ (CZT) who focuses on helping students draw mindfully. She became certified to teach Zentangle in 2013. Nancy enjoys designing classes to help students along their own art journey. Her classes in Courtenay, British Columbia, on Zoom, and around North America include Zentangle drawing, eco-printing, book making, Celtic Knot drawing, and mixed media techniques.

James Derry - Cook Better, Taste Better

Cooking was James' last career before retirement. He is a Red Seal chef, a member of Canadian Culinary Federation and a board member for seven years of local branch (NVICA). James was a chef for seven years at Berwick Comox and a teaching chef for Canadian Mental Health Association Peppermill program for eight years. He also ran a B&B for 10 years.

Christine Dickinson - History in the Comox Valley

Born and educated in New Zealand, Christine has had close contacts in the Comox Valley for 50 years. She is an educator who lived and worked in Northern British Columbia for 34 years. Her passion is for the regional history of the province, and she has co-authored *Watershed Moments: A Pictorial History of Courtenay and District* (2015) and *Step Into Wilderness: A Pictorial History of Outdoor Exploration in the Comox Valley* (2020). Christine has lived in Courtenay since 2007 and is a member of the Comox Valley Writers Society. She has had close family connections to the Comox Valley since 1973.

JoAnn Dunderdale - Advance Health-care Planning

JoAnn is a retired RN with more than 37 years experience in clinical nursing, teaching and health-care management. She has experience working with current patient consent legislation. She volunteered with Oceanside Hospice and facilitated many workshops to support individuals and groups to plan for their future health care.

Felix Gilliland - Intro to Gender Diversity

Felix is a trans educator and activist with a decade of experience in systems change. These days, they are a grad student and an organizer with Comox Valley Pride. They are a lifelong learner and passionate about creating opportunities for allyship, as well as providing brave and integral spaces for learning.

Lori Goddard - Creative Drawing: Manifesting and Intro To Neurographica

Lori has a background in visual arts, counselling, and therapeutic practices; she guides participants in exploring creativity as a pathway to reflection and personal insight.

Cindy Greenhill - Discovering Lawn Bowling Fun

Cindy is a certified lawn-bowling coach.

Marvin Haave - Writers' Workshop

Marvin had a career in adult education as a minister, university lecturer, international development officer, and counsellor. He writes memoir, poetry, essays, and dreams and is committed to lifelong learning.

Derrick Harvey - Community Radio, World Changer

Derrick has been involved in community radio and TV for the past 65 years around the world, starting in Toronto at CKFH and now to Campbell River TV Association. He moved to Calgary and worked for Rogers for 18 years, before moving on to UNESCO and UNICEF building low-power FM stations around the world including Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Jordan and Melbourne. He is now retired and living in Comox.

Janice Harvey - Diabetes: Without the Hype

Janice is a licensed pharmacist who has specialized in diabetes since 2013. As a certified diabetes educator, she helps patients gain the knowledge and skills needed to manage diabetes by providing education on medications, as well as healthy eating habits, nutrition, exercise, blood sugar monitoring, and more. She enjoys working with patients to develop personalized goals for living with diabetes and preventing long-term complications.

Mike Joss – My Dad and Hitler's Downfall

Mike trained as an RN and a member of the British forces. He served in England, Wales, Scotland, Germany, the Maldives, and Canada before emigrating to Alberta in 1990. He moved to Comox in 1995. Mike is a keen photographer and traveller; he has visited 130+ countries including some that no longer exist.

Kay Kennedy - Silver Screen Gems

Kay is a retired teacher in Vancouver Island North. She holds a BA in English, a M Ed in Communications and Media, and is a lifelong movie buff. During university Kay took several film as art courses in the SF Bay area and was lucky enough to have access to lots of classic and foreign films. She loves to share movies with others.

Joel Kositsky – Numbers

Joel received his MIT degree in physics, though his expertise and interests span many sciences: particularly biology and astronomy. After a successful science career, mostly researching radar applications, he now enjoys organizing and presenting courses in many scientific fields, designing them for the interested layperson, usually with only little mathematics. His courses focus on imparting a general understanding of the subject, rather than on esoteric details that would require prerequisites.

Joline Martin – A Fresh Look - The Vietnam War

Disillusioned with the Vietnam War, Joline moved to Haida Gwaii in 1972. There, she discovered the beauty of the natural world and the importance of community while living close to Haida culture. Forty years later, she retired to the Comox Valley. With her, she brought an understanding of human dynamics and deep compassion for people and poverty. *War Resisters, Standing Against the Vietnam War* is her first book.

Norman Mathew – Basic Photo Editing

Norman taught visual communications and photography with Edmonton Public Schools and holds a doctoral degree in education. His retirement interest has been photography, and he has taught many photography courses at ElderCollege over the past 15 years.

Deidre Macdonald - Seven Habits of Healthy Living

Deidre is a naturopathic physician who has practiced in Courtenay for 29 years. She has a busy naturopathic family practice, runs a multi-disciplinary clinic, and has given hundreds of lectures at corporate, academic, and public events.

Ian McIntyre - Writers' Workshop

Ian moved to the Comox Valley in 2016 after a full career in the military and in the field of aviation training and simulation. After joining the Writers' Workshop in fall 2016, he was asked to run a new class in winter 2017 to meet increased demand and has been doing so since then.

Joyce McMenamon – Backyard Composting

Joyce is a master composter from the Comox Valley, an organic master gardener, and an avid food gardener. She has been making rich wormy compost for decades and enjoys helping others make compost successfully and safely.

Warren Michelow - Making Sense of Medical News

Warren has worked professionally as an epidemiologist and health researcher focussing on blood-borne pathogens, STIs, sexual behaviour, and substance use. During this time, he volunteered as a board member with the Public Health Association of BC and was involved in a variety of professional and community initiatives to improve health literacy.

Rod Montague - Don't Buy the Snake Oil!

After completing a degree in chemistry in the UK, Rod spent many years as a high school teacher in the UK and in Zimbabwe. He moved to Canada in 2001 and found his niche as an instructor at Mount Royal University in Calgary. On retiring, he moved to Courtenay in 2022.

Julie Nygaard - Art Talk: Realism to Abstract

Julie is a visual Artist working with photography; her subjects range from portraiture to mythology.

Susan Osso - A Bit of Laughter!

Susan has been facilitating improv at ElderCollege, as well as school venues, for five years. She appreciates the necessity for laughter in our lives and works with any level of participant to gain skills and knowledge of improv as well as developing new strategies to navigate through life.

T. Michael Owen – Android Smart Phone Basics

Mike acquired his first Apple Computer in 1986, first Personal Digital Assistant in 1998, and Blackberry's since 2008. He was an instructor and trainer in the Canadian Forces from 1992 to 2013.

Nathanial Lenard Paisley - Estate & Probate Planning

Nathan is co-owner of Nathina Financial Services and a financial planner. He holds a bachelor's and master's degree in international business and has lived and studied abroad in Chile, Spain, Norway, and Austria. Born and raised in the Comox Valley, Nathan combines local understanding with global experience to help students master probate bypass strategies and effective wealth preservation techniques.

David Paris - Neck and Upper Limb Injuries and Back and Lower Limb Injuries

Dave received his master's degree in athletic therapy from Indiana State University (1975) and his PhD in human anatomy from the University of Oregon in 1980 (Go Ducks!) He became a USA-certified athletic trainer (1975) and a certified athletic therapist in Canada in 1986. In 2012, he was the Canadian Distinguished Athletic Therapy Educator and was inducted into the Canadian Athletic Therapists Association Hall of Fame (2015).

Kamal Parmar – Falls Prevention and Managing Arthritis & Joint Pain

Kamal Parmar is a certified functional medicine practitioner with degrees and professional certificates in nutrition, chronic disease management and lifestyle self-management.

Sandra Petrie - Who Knew Writing Could Be Fun

Sandra came to Canada in 1962 having trained as a teacher in Scotland. She has worked in both public and private schools in Canada and Scotland. Since retirement she has taught this course at ElderCollege.

Gary Priestman - Bridge: Intermediate Bidding; Bridge: Modern Bidding Intro; and Bridge: Play the Hand

Gary is a Silver Life Master in the American Contract Bridge League who has taught these courses for many years.

Bob Rennie - Revisioning Retirement

Bob is a retired elementary school teacher who was a health and wellness associate with the BC Teacher's Federation,

which involved offering workshops for BC teachers. He has a certificate in counselling and a master's degree in educational leadership. He stays engaged locally, singing with Island Voices Chamber Choir, playing trombone with the Georgia Strait Big Band, and playing ice hockey and pickleball, and mountain biking.

Keith Ritter - The Canadian Constitution

Keith practiced law in Alberta from 1973 to 1993. He was appointed to the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench 1993 and to the Alberta Court of Appeal in 2002. He retired in 2013 and moved to Comox Valley in 2014. Keith was legal counsel for Joe Clark during the Constitutional Referendum held on October 26, 1992. He gave talks and papers on constitutional issues to the Alberta Bar and to judges across Canada.

Henri Saucier - Discovering Lawn Bowling Fun

Henri is a certified lawn-bowling coach.

Donald Skogstad - The Dunsmuirs & The E&N Rail, and Issues in Criminal Law

Don received his BA in Economics and his LLB from UBC. He was lawyer for 42 years and has been a course presenter for the Law Society of BC, Trial Lawyers Association, Continuing Legal Education Society of BC, and with Greenline Canada across Canada.

Jane Sterk - Climate: Calamity or Action, and UBI: Rethinking Income

Jane's varied career included time as a public-school teacher, a psychologist, an entrepreneur and executive director of organizations in hospice care and the prevention of domestic and intimate partner violence. She led the BC Greens from 2007 to 2013. Her political involvement was driven by a belief that public policy should be grounded in social, climate, and intergenerational justice. She has a PhD in counselling psychology.

John Sterk - How Geography Shapes Politics, and Amsterdam: A Historical Tour

John practiced corporate and commercial law in Edmonton. He also taught real estate law in the Faculty of Law, UofA and is the author of a legal text. With a BA, an LLB, and an MA in Dutch History, he is also a Kings Counsel and a former president of the Canadian Bar Association in Alberta. Recently, he taught Canadian Business Law at University Canada West.

Gregg Strong - Visiting More Uncommon Corners

Gregg spent long years outside Canada working in less commonly visited corners of our world, first as a Canadian volunteer teacher, then with various international development agencies. He returned to Canada to build another career and started taking extended cycling tours to far-flung areas. Gregg retired to the Comox Valley and continues to be active with cycling advocacy and bikepacking.

Ted Trueman - Geology & Vancouver Island

Ted is a geologist with degrees from UBC and Queen's. He's had a rewarding career in mineral exploration and production, having worked throughout Canada and in numerous other countries.

Allan Vonkeman - The Path of the Elder

Allan is a retired police officer whose journey of healing and transformation engaged many modalities and spiritual traditions. He has collected teachings and technologies in the quest for purpose, compassion, and healing. These experiences provided sharable tools to gift in service to others. He is an accredited coach, a healer, a student of the ancient wisdom traditions, an astrologer, and an Elder and pipe carrier in the Cree tradition.

Steve Wallace - Music Talk

Steve is a noted Canadian bassist with a career performing in his native Toronto and internationally, playing clubs, touring and recording with such American greats as Zoot Sims, Ray Bryant, Scott Hamilton, Rosemary Clooney, Woody Herman,

and Canadian giants Fraser MacPherson, Rob McConnell, Oscar Peterson, Phil Nimmons, Ed Bickert, and Mike Murley. He moved to Courtenay in July 2021 where he now lives with his long-suffering wife, Anna.

Jennifer White - Seniors Chair Yoga/Fitness

Jennifer's leadership roles in HR and organizational well-being provided insights that became post-retirement interests. A therapeutic yoga certification, seniors fitness certification and being a Minds in Motion instructor have all contributed to rich retirement experiences.

Pat Wickware - Lighting for Home and Office

Pat has been in the field of design for over 40 years. She completed her Interior Design at Ryerson in Toronto and taught night courses at Camosun and Malaspina colleges. She continues to give consultations at homes and offices.

Mike Yip – All About Bald Eagles and Vancouver Island Birds

Mike is a retired teacher and has been photographing birds for the past 22 years. He uses his photos to educate the public about birds by sharing photos and information to the media, delivering PowerPoint presentations to clubs and organizations, and self-publishing books about birds.

Ann Zambilowicz - Tai Chi for Life

Ann was born and raised in Montreal and educated at McGill and Vanderbilt University in Nashville. She has studied Tai Chi for over 30 years and currently teaches a year-round class to more than 30 students.