

Type 2 Diabetes Dialogue 2022 Speaker Bios



Annie Comtois

Annie Comtois is the Acting Executive Director of the Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Equity at the Public Health Agency of Canada since October 24, 2022. As lead for healthy living and chronic disease prevention programming, she works with a number of domestic and international partners in the public, business and non-governmental sectors to advance the government's policy objectives through a variety of platforms. She joined the Centre in July 2021 as Director of the Programs and Performance Division, managing the Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund. Prior to joining the Agency, Annie held the position of Director, Family Violence Prevention and Urban Programs at Indigenous Services Canada between 2019 and 2021. She has also held various manager positions at Indigenous Services Canada, the Privy Council Office and the Canada Revenue Agency between 2005 and 2019. Annie holds a master degree in wildlife habitat management from the Université du Québec à Rimouski and an undergraduate degree in environmental sciences from the University of Ottawa.

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Bushra Mahmood

Bushra Mahmood is a Canadian Institute of Health Research Health System Impact Fellow at BC Centre of Disease Control (BCCDC). She completed her PhD from the University of British Columbia with a focus in Public Health and chronic disease burden among visible minorities. Her research interests include application of theoretical frameworks and health models to understand complex lifestyle behaviors and social environments. As a Health System Impact Fellow at BCCDC, Dr. Mahmood is investigating the impact of COVID-19 pandemic control measures on diabetes care cascade among British Columbians with specific focus on South Asians.

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Catherine Joseph

Catherine Joseph is the Manager of the Diabetes, Obesity and Nutrition Strategic Clinical Network. Catherine has a research background and holds a Masters degree in Rehabilitation Medicine from the University of Alberta (2013). She has worked in health services for the last nine years, during which time she has led and managed a variety of provincial initiatives aimed at implementing evidence-based best practices and innovation in care. Catherine previously worked with the Emergency Strategic Clinical Network managing a PRIHS-funded initiative to improve the management of upper gastrointestinal bleed patients presenting to the Emergency Department. She has also worked in research and evaluation with the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Fund, with the Alberta Research Centre for Health Evidence, and in several research labs at the University of Alberta and University of Toronto.

Catherine is the Project Lead for the Alberta Virtual Diabetes Prevention Program.

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Dawn Christie

Dawn is the Manager of the Mount Paul Community Food Centre. Dawn has worked in the social services sector for 20 years and has dedicated the last five years to starting and growing the first Community Food Centre in BC. As a long-term resident of Kamloops, Dawn recognizes the importance of an equitable and sustainable food system for all. Through these five years, the centre has grown to support six staff and over 200 volunteers. The Mount Paul Community Food Centre was recognized as the Not For Profit of Year in 2021 by the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce. The centre is owned by Interior Community Services and is part of a national network under Community Food Centres (CFC) Canada. CFCs across Canada band together with vibrant centres using food as a tool to build health, belonging and social justice.

Headshot coming soon

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Diane Finegood

Diane Finegood is a Professor and Fellow in the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University where she teaches the Semester in Dialogue and through her Fellowship applies systems thinking to many wicked problems related to health. Her career has spanned a broad range of disciplines and leadership roles. She is currently the Executive Director of the Canadian Health Services and Policy Research Alliance. She served as President and CEO of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and inaugural Scientific Director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes. Diane is internationally recognized with scholarly work in a range of disciplines including pathogenesis of type 1 and type 2 diabetes, application of mathematical modeling to physiological systems, cross sector partnership, systems thinking and complex adaptive systems.

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Geoff McKee

Geoffrey McKee is a public health physician and Medical Director for Population and Public Health (PPH) at the BCCDC. He is also a clinical instructor at the UBC School of Population and Public Health. Dr. McKee completed his Medical Degree (2013), Master of Public Health (2017), and specialty training in Public Health and Preventive Medicine (2018) at the University of British Columbia. He previously worked as a Medical Health Officer at Vancouver Coastal Health providing support for the Coastal Rural region, Population Health, Indigenous Health, and the Public Health Surveillance Unit. His current role at the BCCDC is focused on prevention of chronic disease and injury through supporting health promotion and healthy public policy. The PPH team also supports the centre with knowledge generation, synthesis, and translation activities related to population health.

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Harpreet Singh Bajaj

Harpreet Singh Bajaj is an Endocrinologist and Medical Director of Endocrine & Metabolic Research at LMC Healthcare/Centricity Research. Dr Bajaj completed his endocrinology fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic (Ohio, USA). Dr Bajaj's medical education was at University of Delhi, India, followed by a Masters of Public Health (Epidemiology) at State University of New York in Albany (New York, USA).

Dr. Bajaj is a Research Associate at Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto and an adjunct lecturer at McMaster University. He has co-authored publications in key medical journals in the fields of diabetes prevention and management, obesity and cardiovascular risk reduction.

He is the Principal Investigator of the Canadian Diabetes Prevention Program, a nationwide collaborative effort between LMC, Diabetes Canada with the Public health agency of Canada. Dr. Bajaj currently serves Diabetes Canada as the Chair of the Clinical Practice Guidelines Steering Committee.

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Lisa Maks

Lisa is a nurse in background with 34 years of experience in too many areas to list, with the past 18 years being in diabetes both in and out of hospital settings. She received her Masters in Nursing through University of Victoria in Advanced Practice Leadership in December 2007.

For over a decade, Lisa worked as a Diabetes Clinical Nurse Specialist for Hamilton Health Sciences in Ontario with a focus on diabetes management in the in-patient setting. Prior to this position, she was a Diabetes Educator for six years. Her role as a Diabetes Clinical Nurse Specialist included acting as an expert advisor to the prescriber group; providing education to front line staff, prescribers and patients/families; leading quality improvement and research initiatives; and looking at strengths and gaps in service pertaining to diabetes management to find avenues that improve the patient experience and safety.

Lisa recently started in a newly created position as the Diabetes Clinical Nurse Specialist for the St. Paul's Hospital and Mount St. Joseph Hospital sites earlier this year. She has also been an Assistant Professor with the McMaster University Nursing Program since 2008 and is looking forward to joining the UBC Faculty next year.

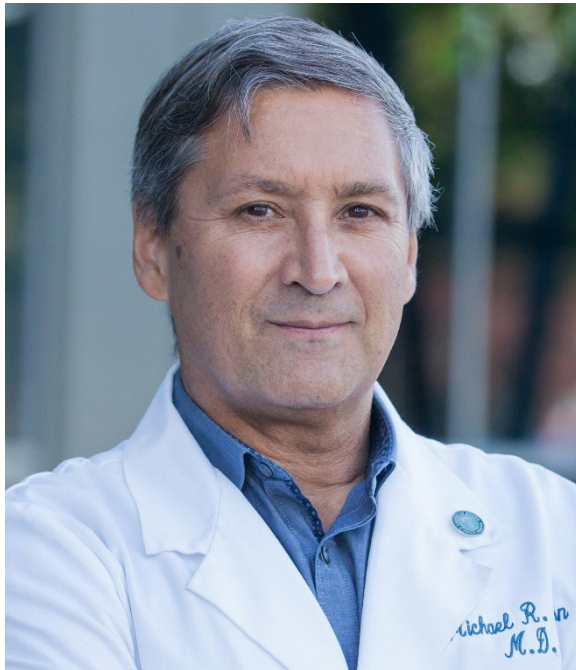
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Marc Pelletier

Marc is the CEO of the Institute of Health System Transformation & Sustainability and holds a Master of Criminology and a Master of Health Administration from the University of Toronto. Marc brings extensive leadership experience in Canadian health care, spanning strategic consulting, government and large, complex health care delivery organizations including a 20-year career with Fraser Health leading a variety of clinical, support and corporate functions.

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Michael R. Lyon

Michael is a Clinical Lecturer in the UBC Faculty of Medicine, Department of Family Practice. He served for several years as an Adjunct Professor with the UBC Food, Nutrition and Health Program and four years as the Chair of the Nutrition Committee for Doctors of BC. He is board certified in the field of Obesity Medicine through the American Board of Obesity Medicine.

Michael is the Medical Director for the Medical Weight Management Program at the Obesity Medicine and Diabetes Institute in Coquitlam. He is also a Canadian Mental Health Association CBT program facilitator and he makes extensive use of CBT, ACT and mindfulness-based stress reduction in his obesity medicine practice. He has an interest in Culinary Medicine and he is trained as a Clinician Chef Coach through Harvard School of Public Health.

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Pamela Turpin

Pamela Turpin has been the Acting Director of the Policy and Engagement Division within the Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Equity at the Public Health Agency of Canada for 1.5 years. As lead on healthy living and chronic disease prevention policy, she works with multi-sectoral stakeholders at the domestic and international levels to help people live healthier lives. Pamela has been in the health promotion and chronic disease prevention field in the federal government for over 20 years. Previously, Pamela held positions as a Site Researcher for the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research Demonstration Project led by Queen's University, and as a Teacher at the high school level. Pamela holds an Executive Mini-MBA from McGill University, a Master's degree in Education (Psychopedagogy), a Bachelor in Education, as well as an Honours degree in Science (Human Kinetics) from the University of Ottawa.

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Peter Sargious

Dr. Peter Sargious is a General Internal Medicine specialist and the Senior Medical Director of the Diabetes, Obesity and Nutrition Strategic Clinical Network, where he leads a variety of provincial initiatives across the continuum of acute care, primary care and public health. He is also an Alberta Health Services Associate Professor with the Cumming School of Medicine (University of Calgary).

Dr. Sargious received his MD from the University of Calgary in 1991, his Royal College Fellowship in Internal Medicine in 1995 and an MPH from Boston University in 1997.

Dr. Sargious joined the University of Calgary in 1997 and became the Manager for Alberta Research Council's newly created Health Informatics Unit. During his five years with this not-for-profit research and development organization, he led the development of internationally recognized interoperability standards for telehealth applications and the commercialization of two web-based electronic medical record products.

In 2001, Dr. Sargious became the Founding Medical Director of Calgary's Chronic Disease Management (CDM) Portfolio and worked with other regional leaders to establish the Living Well program, which offers thousands of Calgarians support in managing a variety of chronic health conditions.

Dr. Sargious is the Principal Investigator for the Alberta Virtual Diabetes Prevention Program.

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Philip Powell

Philip Powell is a registered nurse and certified diabetes educator working at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. He has had type 1 diabetes for 19 years and is an avid athlete, spending his free time playing squash, cycling and hiking. After spending many years struggling with low blood sugar during exercise, he has now found success in reducing its frequency through the use of Dexcom and his Omnipod insulin pump. He enjoys bringing his lived experience to his work in the diabetes center at St. Paul's Hospital and helping other people with diabetes live healthier, happier lives.

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Rachel Dickens



Rachel was born and raised in Prince Rupert, a small coastal town in Northern BC. She is of mixed ancestry; her mother is first-generation Chinese to these homelands; from her fathers' side she is a member of Lax Kw'alaams Band, a Ts'msyen Nation located 30km by boat from Prince Rupert. She now currently has the privilege of living and working on the unceded and ancestral homelands of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, colonially known as Tofino.

Rachel works alongside the Nuu-chah-nulth Peoples as a Registered Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Educator and is currently employed by the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. She is grateful for the opportunity to work with other Indigenous-led organizations, including ISPARC (Indigenous Sports, Physical Activity and Recreation Council), BCCAFC (BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres) and NIDA (National Indigenous Diabetes Association), who are actively promoting wellness through a decolonized lens.

She recognizes that diabetes was rare in Indigenous communities prior to the 1940s and that the loss of land, legacy of residential schools, displacement, trauma, and racist policies have contributed to the disproportionate representation of diabetes in Indigenous communities. As an advocate for food sovereignty and social justice, she hopes to raise awareness around and dismantle some of the colonial and anti-Indigenous racist policies that impact Indigenous peoples' access to traditional foods, thus reducing the burden of chronic diseases including diabetes.

Her formal education was completed at Griffith University in Australia, graduating with a Masters in Nutrition and Dietetics in 2011. She is currently undertaking a Ph.D. program at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in the school of Land and Food Systems, with a focus on food sovereignty, traditional foods and diabetes care for the Nuu-chah-nulth Peoples. Rachel acknowledges her greatest and most precious education has been provided by community and the community members who have generously gifted their knowledge.