

## MEETING REPORT

### SFU's Women's Health Research Symposium

*Examining Diversity across Disciplines, Decades, and Distances*

Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Diamond Alumni Centre, SFU Burnaby campus

An SFU-wide, interdisciplinary learning, discussion, and networking event for anyone engaged or interested in research focused on improving women's health.

Health Research Day 2017 [#SFUWomen17](#)



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3-4
Agenda and Speaker Biographies	5-9
Symposium Summary	10-15
Next steps	16
Live Scribe	17
Symposium Attendees	18
Symposium Evaluation	19-20
Acknowledgments	21
Appendix 1: Article from The Peak	22-23
Appendix 2: Storify of tweets using #SFUWomen17	24
Back page	25



## Executive Summary

Simon Fraser University's 1st Women's Health Research Symposium - "Examining Diversity across Disciplines, Decades, and Distances" was held on Wednesday, October 25th, 2017 at the Diamond Alumni Centre, SFU Burnaby campus. The event was hosted in collaboration with the Office of the Vice President of Research at SFU, the Women's Health Research Institute, and the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). The symposium brought together over 140 faculty members, staff, and trainees from across SFU's 8 faculties and our community partners to engage in interdisciplinary learning and discussion on research focused on improving women's health. The aim of the symposium was to build, support, and nurture SFU's diverse community of scholars engaged in research that impacts women's health; to learn and discuss emerging research on priority topics in women's health; and to position SFU as being ready to engage in and lead national and international activities focused on women's health (e.g., the upcoming Women Deliver conference to be held in Vancouver in June 2019). The symposium was structured around 3 insightful panel discussions with presentations by distinguished speakers from across SFU's faculties to discuss intersections between technological, scientific, social, and legal solutions to improve women's health.

The purpose of this meeting report is to share an overview of the program and the discussions at SFU's 1<sup>st</sup> Women's Health Research Symposium and to highlight the key ideas for advancing SFU's role in transforming women's health research.

### *Overview of the symposium program*

The symposium began in the early morning with a trainee breakfast and talk on 'Charting a Course for Successful Research Career' with Dr. Joy Johnson, Vice President of Research and International. Allison Carter, a PhD candidate, FHS facilitated the Trainee breakfast session, with over 25 trainees from across SFU faculties in attendance. Dr. Johnson provided 10 tips for charting a career in research and shared her personal experiences and advice from her successful and impactful career.

Elder Valerie Nicholson opened the formal program of the symposium and reminded all participants "to keep in mind and remember the individual women behind our research." Dr. Lori Brotto, Director of the Women's Health Research Institute, gave opening remarks, in which she emphasized the importance of this symposium and what it means for SFU's leadership in women's health research. The morning also included some opening remarks from Dr. Angela Kaida, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Dr. Kaida offered words of welcome and highlighted what SFU does differently regarding women's health research. She talked about how in designing the symposium program, the organizers wanted to highlight disciplinary diversity. She challenged attendees to commit to intersectional thinking, such that we are focused on a goal of health for all women, not just a privileged few. She extended these comments to encourage attendees to consider how we bring in the concept of diversity to not only being about who or what is being researched, but who is doing the research? Do we see diversity among our researchers and trainees? Dr. Kaida posed a guiding question for the symposium related to identifying SFU's role in the women's health research landscape, provincially, nationally, and globally.

Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows were invited to present posters on their work related to women's health research. Trainees presented their posters during the morning session and breaks. Three judges

evaluated all the posters and awarded cash prizes to the top MSc poster, entitled “Sexual self-efficacy and consistent condom use among adolescent men and women living in the HIV hyper-endemic setting of Soweto, South Africa” by Kalysha Closson, Faculty of Health Sciences as well as the top PhD/postdoc poster on ‘In Vitro Monitoring: The Next Revolution in IVF Technology’ by Reza Moradi Rad, School of Engineering Science. It is clear that our trainees are engaged in innovative and important research with the potential to improve women’s health.

Dr. Kaida offered closing remarks for the symposium, and highlighted the need to continue to expand our efforts to integrate sex and gender across the full spectrum of health research. She also emphasized the role SFU can play in this effort through our commitment to interdisciplinarity and diversity, innovation, student and community engagement.

Barb Berry, an educational consultant in the Faculty of Health Sciences, created an incredible visual graphic of the symposium in real time. The 7x4’ graphic captured information from the presentations and discussions highlighting how women’s health is researched at SFU. A photo of the visual graphic is included in this report, and the original will be on display in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

As the symposium came to an end, Elder Valerie Nicholson provided closing prayers. She asked all attendees to join hands in a circle around the entire room and shared the lessons of the Seven Gifts of the Grandfathers; Humility, Bravery, Honesty, Wisdom, Truth, Respect, and Love.

*Key ideas for advancing SFU’s role in transforming women’s health research.*

Dr. Johnson reminded attendees that “Every person is gendered. Every cell is sexed.” Symposium discussions highlighted that if we are to understand and incorporate this truism into our research, then there is a clear need to engage in critical discussions about gender and sex to be better accountable for our research, for improving our scholarship, for transforming our mentorship, and for advancing our teaching.

The symposium revealed an appetite at SFU for leadership on women’s health research. Discussions revealed that SFU has a unique and important role to play in this area, and part of our work going forward will entail identifying our position in this space. Evaluations from the symposium made clear that attendees enjoyed the symposium as it provided an opportunity to meet and network with a broader community of people across SFU who are engaged in women’s health research across a range of disciplines. Attendees indicated that they are looking forward to more opportunities to participate and discuss women’s health research, particularly through the lens of diversity and equity.

**SFU Women's Health Research Symposium Program**

7:15AMPM – 8:00 AM	<b>Trainee Breakfast</b> Q&A with Dr. Joy Johnson: <i>Charting a course for successful research career</i> <b>Introduction:</b> Allison Carter, PhD candidate in the Faculty of Health Sciences <b>Presenter:</b> Dr. Joy Johnson, Vice-President Research at SFU; former Scientific Director of the CIHR Institute of Gender and Health	
8:00AM – 8:30 AM	<b>Registration and Coffee/Tea and Mingling</b>	
8:30AM – 9:15 AM	<b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b>	
	8:30-8:40	Welcome & Opening by Elder Valerie Nicholson
	8:40-8:50	Welcome by Dr. Angela Kaida, Faculty of Health Science, SFU Welcome by Dr. Lori Brotto, Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI)
	8:50-9:15	<b>Keynote Presentation by Dr. Joy Johnson:</b> <i>History and Future of Gender, Sex, &amp; Health research in Canada</i>
<b>Research Symposium (3 panels)</b>		
9:30AM-10:15AM	<b>Panel 1: Mapping the Future for Women's Health Research: Equity, Diversity, and Success</b>  <b>Moderator:</b> Dr. Lesley Shannon, Associate Professor, Department of Engineering Science, NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering for BC and Yukon  <b>Panelists:</b> Dr. Shannon McDonald, Deputy Chief Medical Health Officer, First Nations Health Authority Dr. Diane T. Finegood, Professor, Centre for Dialogue, Dept. of Biomedical Physiology & Kinesiology; Former President & CEO at MSFHR Jill Earthy, SFU's Board of Governors; Chief Growth Officer of FrontFundr	
10:15AM-10:40AM	<b>Coffee/Tea Break and Mingling</b>	

10:40AM-11:25AM	<p><b>Panel 2: Harnessing New Science &amp; Technology for Women's Health</b></p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Ellen Balka, Professor, School of Communication; Senior Research Scientist Centre for Clinical Epidemiology &amp; Evaluation, Vancouver Coastal Health</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><b>Dr. Dawn Mackey</b>, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology; Director, Aging and Population Health Lab</p> <p><b>Dr. Ryan D'Arcy</b>, Professor, School of Computing Science &amp; School of Engineering Science; Surrey Memorial Hospital Foundation BC Leadership Chair in Multimodal Technology for Healthcare Innovations</p> <p><b>Dr. Carolyn Sparrey</b>, Associate Professor, School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering</p> <p><b>Dr. Kate Tairyan</b>, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Health Sciences; Director of Public Health for NextGenU</p>
11:25AM-12:10PM	<p><b>Panel 3: Supportive Environments, Policies, and Laws for Women's Health</b></p> <p>Moderator: <b>Dr. Valorie Crooks</b>, Professor, Dept. of Geography; Canada Research Chair in Health Service Geographies</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><b>Dr. Shira Goldenberg</b>, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences</p> <p><b>Dr. Genevieve Johnson</b>, Professor, Department of Political Science</p> <p><b>Dr. Sharalyn Jordan</b>, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education</p> <p><b>Dr. Olena Hankivsky</b>, Professor, School of Public Policy, Director of the Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy</p> <p><b>Brittany Bingham</b>, PhD candidate in the Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU, Research consultant with the Vancouver Coastal Health, Aboriginal Health</p>
12:10PM-12:30 PM	<p><b>Summary, Closing, and Next Steps</b></p>
12:30PM – 1:30 PM	<p><b>Networking Lunch, Poster viewing and prizes</b></p>



## Speaker Biographies

**Dr. Joy Johnson** is the Vice-President of Research at SFU, where she works across eight faculties. At SFU, Dr. Johnson is committed to developing initiatives that support students and faculty members to harness new ideas and innovations for the benefit of society. She previously served as the Scientific Director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Gender and Health from 2008 to 2014. She has been a strong advocate for the gender, sex and health research community and stakeholders, both in Canada and internationally, and an unwavering champion of the need to better integrate gender and sex considerations in all areas of health research. Dr. Johnson has published over 170 papers in peer-reviewed journals and has supervised over 75 graduate students at the Master's and PhD level.

**Valerie Nicholson** is a Spirited Indigenous Warrior Woman: Valerie became active in HIV/AIDS in 2008, 2 years after her HIV diagnosis, and was the first Indigenous woman to Chair the Board of Positive Living B.C. She is currently the Indigenous Peer Navigator for Positive Living, Co-Chair of Red Road HIV/AIDS Network, Board Member of AIDS Vancouver, a member of Canadian Aboriginal Aids Network, CTN'S Prevention and Vulnerable Populations Working Group.

**Dr. Angela Kaida** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU and holds a Canada Research Chair in Global Perspectives in HIV and Sexual and Reproductive Health. Her global research program centers on a rights-based, evidence-informed, and community-driven approach to sexual and reproductive health among women and youth affected by HIV. She is the faculty lead for SFU's Women's Health Research Symposium.

**Dr. Lori Brotto** is a Professor in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, UBC. She is also the Executive Director of Women's Health Research Institute, where she provides leadership and guides strategic priorities for the institute, which has over 150 members in BC. Dr. Brotto also holds a Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Women's Sexual Health (2016-2021). Her research focused primarily on the quality of life, biopsychosocial correlates of health, intimacy, and sexuality, primarily in women.

**Allison Carter** is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU with a focus on HIV, women's sexual health, gendered issues, and social justice. Allison is also a Research Associate at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, where she is conducting critical feminist quantitative research on the positive aspects of sexuality and relationships among 1,424 women living with HIV in Canada.

**Dr. Lesley Shannon** is an Associate Professor at SFU in the Department of Engineering Science. Her primary area of research is non-traditional computing system design and her focus is improving computer performance, both speed and power, for a variety of applications. Dr. Shannon is also the NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (BC/Yukon Region) which operates as Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology (WWEST.ca) based at SFU. She has long been an advocate of increasing the diversity of students and workers in science and engineering-related fields. Through WWEST, she works to engage students, industry, and the community to increase awareness and participation of women and other under-represented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

**Dr. Diane T. Finegood** is a Professor in the Department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology at SFU. She served as President & CEO of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research from 2012 to 2016 and inaugural Scientific Director of the CIHR Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes. She is an internationally recognized researcher with scholarly work in all four of CIHR's pillars. Dr. Finegood is currently seconded to SFU's Centre for Dialogue where she is developing an innovative new Semester in Dialogue on health and wellness.

**Dr. Ryan C.N. D'Arcy** is a neuroscientist and world-renowned expert in using technology to help make brains better. Dr. D'Arcy is BC Leadership Chair in Medical Technologies and Professor of Applied Sciences at Simon Fraser University. He serves as Head of Surrey Memorial Hospital's Health Sciences and Innovation at Fraser Health and is the founding Chair of BC's Innovation Boulevard. Dr. D'Arcy received his B.Sc. (with distinction) from the University of Victoria, M.Sc. & Ph.D. degrees in Neuroscience from Dalhousie University, and completed post-doctoral training in MRI Physics at the National Research Council. Over the last 20 years, Dr. D'Arcy has led Canada's translational neuroscience to bring direct healthcare impact to devastating brain conditions. He has created brain vital signs, led VR brain surgery breakthroughs, and discovered activity in elusive brain white matter. Click here to read about the recent innovative story of Captain Trevor Greene, who is reaching new heights following a devastating axe attack in Afghanistan (<http://www.macleans.ca/society/life/the-iron-soldier-how-trevor-greene-learned-to-walk-again/>).

**Dr. Shannon McDonald** is the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA). Dr. McDonald is a trained physician, with post-graduate medical training in Community Medicine and Psychiatry, and has worked for over 20 years in the area of First Nations and Aboriginal Health. She is a proud member of one of the founding families of Manitoba's Métis Nation and served as the Executive Director of the Aboriginal Health Directorate, with BC Ministry of Health for five years. Dr. McDonald also leads the FNHA's participation in local, provincial or national committees on public health, mental wellness and substance misuse, as well as population and public health surveillance.

**Ms. Jill Earthy** is the Chief Growth Officer for FrontFundr, an online investment platform connecting entrepreneurs and investors. She is an accomplished entrepreneur who has successfully built and sold two companies, followed by 8 years in nonprofit leadership roles supporting entrepreneurs. Ms. Jill also serves on the Board of Governors for SFU and is the Board Chair of the Women's Enterprise Centre. She is Co-Chair of We for She: Championing the Next Generation Conference and is passionate about the economic advancement of women. She is an active mentor and was recently named one of 35 Most Influential Women in BC by BC Business Magazine.

**Dr. Ellen Balka** is a University Professor in SFU's School of Communication. She held a Senior Scholar's award from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (2008-2013), and has served as PI of projects funded by CIHR, SSHRC, Health Canada, Genome BC and the MSFHR. An interdisciplinary scholar, Dr. Balka's work is concerned with human aspects of technological change and gender, particularly in the health sector. Past work has addressed topics such as technology assessment, socio-technical approaches to design, implementation and use of information technology in the health sector, governance and policy issues related to use of technology in healthcare, and the relationship between computing infrastructures, data production and use and knowledge generation. Gender and equity issues have been central themes of Balka's work since graduate school.

**Dr. Dawn Mackey** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology at SFU. She is also a Core Member of the UBC Centre for Hip Health and Mobility, and she holds a Scholar Award from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research. She directs the Aging and Population Health Lab at SFU, which conducts research to help older adults maintain independence and mobility. She has strong interests in developing strategies to help people adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle behaviours in order to age successfully, and in evaluating technologies to prevent injuries from falls.

**Dr. Kate Tairyan** is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Health Sciences at SFU. She is also the Director of Public Health for Next Generation University (NextGenU.org), the world's first free university. Dr. Tairyan's research interests are focused on online distribution of health sciences information and education; global dissemination of high quality public health education using computer-assisted technologies and local mentorship, health workforce development and online learning; and knowledge translation. She has also worked on research projects focusing on ethics issues and neuroscience/neuroethics.



**Dr. Carolyn Sparrey** is an Associate Professor in the School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering, SFU. She is the Principal Investigator at ICORD. ICORD (International Collaboration on Repair Discoveries) is an interdisciplinary research centre focused on spinal cord injury. Dr. Sparrey's research focuses on biomechanics and biomaterials. She studies the mechanical characterization of neurological tissues. She also works on modeling and simulating injuries and diseases, including accident reconstruction. Dr. Sparrey also designs and evaluates injury prevention devices.

**Dr. Valorie Crooks** is a professor in the Department of Geography at SFU. She currently holds the Canada Research Chair in Health Service Geographies and also a scholar award from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research. Dr. Crooks is a health geographer by training with strong interest in the spatial and place-based dimensions of health services. Much of her current research examines the equity and ethical dimensions of global health care mobilities that are untracked, untraced, and unregulated.

**Dr. Shira Goldenberg** is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at SFU and a Research Scientist with the Gender & Sexual Health Initiative of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. Dr. Goldenberg's research aims to improve sexual health and access to healthcare for marginalized populations, including migrants, sex workers, and women living with HIV in Canada, Latin America, and other international settings. Currently, her research largely focuses on the unique health, safety and human rights issues faced by migrant and refugee/internally displaced sex workers and women living with HIV, who often experience intense barriers to health access due to criminalization, stigma, social isolation, and language barriers.

**Dr. Sharalyn Jordan** is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at SFU. She is a practitioner and educator in Counselling Psychology and over the past 13 years, has been helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) refugees navigate the Canadian refugee system and settlement. In 2015, she received the YMCA Power of the Peace Award for social change for her work as a Counselling Psychologist, researcher, teacher, and supporter of LGBTQ+ refugee mental health. Dr. Jordan's recent and current projects explore the implications of homophobic and transphobic stigma, trauma, and intersectional oppressions for refugee protection, settlement, and mental health. She has published in Forced Migration Review, Refuge, and Qualitative Health Research.

**Dr. Genevieve Johnson** is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at SFU. She is also the Chair of the Graduate Program in Political Science. Dr. Johnson studies and teaches democratic theory, feminist political thought, theories related to sexuality and gender, interpretive approaches to policy analysis, and a range of current public policy issues. She is also an author and her book *Democratic Illusion: Deliberative Democracy in Canadian Public Policy* (University of Toronto Press, 2015) won the 2016 BCPSA Weller Prize for Best Book by a BC Political Scientist. Dr. Johnson's current research focuses on the implementation of prostitution laws and the governance of sex work in Canadian cities.

**Dr. Olena Hankivsky** is a Professor in the School of Public Policy at SFU. Dr. Hankivsky is also the Director of the Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy at SFU and is formally the CIHR Gender and Health Research Chair and Michael Smith Senior Scholar in Population Health. Her research interests include gender, intersectionality, and social and health policy and regularly consults with government, including internationally, on gender and diversity analyses in public policy and health reform. She is also currently a Visiting Professor at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva Switzerland and Founding Director of a new School of Public Health in Lviv Ukraine.

**Brittany Bingham** is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU with a focus on health, social and justice service use among Aboriginal people who are homeless and mentally ill. Brittany is currently a research consultant with the Vancouver Coastal Health, Aboriginal Health where she is working on cultural safety training and developing research partnerships for Indigenous health research.

## Summary of the Event

The symposium Steering Committee identified the purpose of the symposium to include:

- I. To build, support, and nurture SFU's diverse community of scholars engaged in research that impacts women's health;
- II. To profile and celebrate the excellent women's health researchers and research underway at SFU;
- III. To learn and discuss emerging research on priority topics in women's health;
- IV. To locate SFU in a larger provincial network of women's health research and researchers;
- V. To position SFU as being ready to engage in and lead national and international activities focused on women's health (e.g., the up-coming Women Deliver conference to be held in Vancouver in June 2019).

## Trainee Breakfast

Dr. Joy Johnson gave the morning's address and shared her experiences on "Charting a course for successful research career". She highlighted that "there's an urgency to be thinking about women's health and we have that opportunity to do that today". She urged the over 25 trainees present to continue to think and talk about who is being researched, who is doing the research, and identify those leading the important questions being discussed about women's research. Dr. Johnson's presentation included her top 10 tips for trainees; urging trainees to follow their passion to build their careers, be persistence and be ready to apply and reapply for positions and scholarships. Dr. Johnson stated truthfully that this is important since "you don't get a position if you don't apply." She also advised trainees to work with people who have similar interest and stated, "You are colleagues of tomorrow—It is important to network now and think about your future because it will be you writing the grants together" if we want to build a successful research career.

After the presentation, Allison Carter facilitated an interactive Q&A with attendees, through anonymous live polls. Some questions asked by the trainees included:

- "In your PhD what was your biggest challenge and how did you overcome it?"
- "How do you strike a balance between being an engaged & collaborative trainee while not having your time and energy taking advantage of?"
- "Looking back, what is one thing you wish someone told you earlier in your career about the world of research?"

## Welcome and Opening Remark

Welcoming symposium attendees, Dr. Kaida highlighted in her greetings that for many, the dominant construction of women's health research is mostly biomedical and clinical, important areas of focus that, provincially, largely remain the purview of UBC. But this construct of women's health research is too narrow to transform women's health outcomes at a population health or systems level. We need to understand and act on women's health from a broader conceptualization. And it is from here where we began examining the value-add of SFU's engagement vision as a means to improving women's health. Dr. Kaida stated that this

thinking led us to develop an objective of this symposium, which is to highlight, celebrate, and nurture how SFU does women's health research. As part of this objective, Dr. Kaida asked attendees to reflect on what it is that our SFU community uniquely contributes and what space do we occupy regarding women's health research? How are we located in a larger provincial, national, international networks of women's health research and researchers? Also, to reflect on what role SFU wants to play in women's health research and what do we need to get there? She noted that we have a clear vision as Canada's most engaged university and asked if we can start a process today of developing a vision of what women's health research at SFU can be in 5 years? 10 years? 15 years?

She noted that to help lead us in this discussion, we are fortunate to have the help of one of Canada's leading voices of Gender and Sex considerations and thinking in health research, our very own VP of Research, Dr. Joy Johnson who will deliver a keynote on History and Future of Women's Health Research in Canada.

### Keynote Presentation

**Dr. Johnson's** opening keynote speech addressed the historical considerations of gender as a health determinant and how we arrived at where we are today. Her remarks on gender mainstreaming and opportunities for women and how it crosscuts many issues helped set the tone for the symposium discussions around women's health research that followed. Dr. Johnson spoke on the topic on the "*History and Future of Gender, Sex, & Health research in Canada*" including:

- "Gender gets under our skin at a very young age"
- Status of women in Canada: academic women's movement was up and running, well into the 1970's. In the 1980's new discussions about the Social Determinants of Health emerged. It was indicated that health is not simply an outcome, and that 'it's not our health that makes us healthy'
- It laid out some ground work for health and health opportunities and included 167 recommendations, including the acknowledgment of gender as a health determinant. Aboriginal and gender and health is the last two to be added.
- Dr. Johnson emphasized the need for gender considerations in all we do and the desire for institute for women's health.
- Gender is a placeholder for women's health but men's health is a movement that is a part of gender and health so we need to create legit spaces for us to do women's health research
- One obvious problem we face today: Thinking about Sex and Gender is important but scientists today are not thinking about these factors. Gender is viewed as neutral vs. women's health. We need more movement that has to be done for sex-based differences but how could we incorporate Sex and Gender in meaningful way.

## Panel Presentations:

### Panel 1: Mapping the Future for Women's Health Research: Equity, Diversity, and Success

The first panel was introduced and moderated by Dr. Lesley Shannon. The panelists were Dr. Diane Finegood, Ms. Jill Earchy, and Dr. Shannon MacDonald.

In her panel synopsis, **Dr. Shannon** framed the discussion around the necessary structures and systems that need to be in place to achieve equity, diversity and success in woman's health research. She noted that there is an inadequate model of growth due to gender bias exists (not set up for equity) and differences in financing and growth opportunities. She indicated that understanding equality vs. equity is critical in all STEM fields. Given the political and social climate, now is the time for a change or to fix these issues. Dr. Shannon urged attendees to engage in 'Grey Thinking' by learning how to leverage and think outside the box.

**Dr. Finegood** responded by urging attendees to think about complex problems from a feminist perspective. According to Dr. Finegood, delving into the deeply held beliefs that drive the system and underlie current inequities are very important. As a first step, Dr. Finegood pointed out that using this approach is not easy, but it is important to think about changing the system at different levels and how to drive incremental change.

**Ms. Jill Earchy** stated that diversity drives innovation, but there is still unequal distribution of women in entrepreneurship. She emphasized that inclusive technologies will increase in the near future as the lens of technology changes; as more women enter the field. She highlighted that more women are creating small business and health technologies and stressed the importance of employing an "Entrepreneurial mindset."

**Dr. Shannon MacDonald** discussed the challenges and considerations for mobilizing women's health research for indigenous women and other remote populations. She pointed out that we need to understand and appreciate the traditional role of women. Indigenous communities have historically faced disruption and devaluation as a result of colonization. Dr. MacDonald noted that, although data collected with Indigenous Communities are important in describing health inequities and issues with available services, we need to be more critical. Particularly, regarding what we are collecting and how. For instance, we should question whether the data we are collecting have positive or negative indicators or negative and if they are traditionally reflective. She recommended conducting culturally safe research - "Nothing about Us without Us", provide childcare, honorariums, food, transportation, and support. Dr. MacDonald also emphasized the need for knowledge translation back to the community.

### Empowering Next generation of Researchers

- What should we do?
  - We should always be diverse and "diverse doesn't mean all women, but rather encompasses diverse cultures, backgrounds, and gender)
  - Men need to be engaged in these discussions and we need to call-out men to reframe some of these views



## Panel 2: Harnessing New Science & Technology for Women's Health

Dr. Ellen Balka moderated this panel, and the panelists were Dr. Dawn Mackey, Dr. Carolyn Sparrey, Dr. Kate Tairyan and Dr. Ryan D'Arcy.

**Dr. Balka** highlighted that there are many different ways that technologies are viewed in our society and can be taken for granted in health care studies. While technology can be viewed as inevitable, a source of progress, and neutral. It can also reflect social biases or social constructs in its design. Dr. Balka, started the discussion by inviting panelists to share how they incorporate sex and gender in their research and how technology characterize your work.

**Dr. Dawn Mackey** presented on "Harnessing technology to prevent injuries from falls in long-term care (LTC)" This is important for the health of ageing women, as we identify areas of research for women ageing in Canada: "Where do we grow old?" and "Where do women in older age live?" Dr. Mackay emphasized that there is a high percentage of women living in long-term care homes and safety is an issue in LTC environment, for examples of injuries from falls. She indicated that injury prevention technologies such as Compliant flooring (CF) are designed to reduce impact forces on the body during falls.

**Dr. Carolyn Sparrey** described Mechanical Loading about the human body (research on injury) and the Sex and Gender gap in Spine Biomechanics research. In Spinal Loading Research, 80% of the research participants are male, but women suffer a significant amount of spinal loading injuries, and there is an argument to support this assumes that males engage in riskier activities. Dr. Sparrey indicated the need for better definitions of gendered and sexed behaviors and risks. Consider effects of pregnancy, sex differences in Lumbar Lordosis, there are no sex differences when people are lying down, but difference emerges when individuals are standing (impacts of pregnancy). We need to establish clinical collaboration (midwives and

pelvic floor physiologists) to look at postpartum changes in spinal musculature and develop Physical Therapy interventions focused on females.

**Dr. Kate Tairyan** also highlighted that billions of people do not have access or have never had access to health care workers in their lifetime. It is estimated that we need 7.5 million more health care workers to meet current needs and account for discrepancies. Dr. Tairyan pointed out that access to health care workers improves health across the board for mothers, children increase immunization rates and save lives. So how can we use technology to bridge the gap? In 2013, nextGen, a free, online accredited and higher education provided computer-based knowledge translation, coupled with peer-to-peer, local mentored experiences and training in women's health for student's researchers.

**Dr. Ryan D'Arcy** made the attendees aware of the impact of sex-related differences in the brain structure, which can have an impact on medical treatments (epilepsy, degenerative brain disorders). He emphasized the need to promote the work that takes differences into account when prescribing medical care and also highlighted the value of diversity in science

### Panel 3: Supportive Environments, Policies, and Laws for Women's Health

The moderator of this panel was Dr. Valorie Crooks, and the panelists were Dr. Shira Goldenberg, Dr. Genevieve Johnson, Dr. Sharalyn Jordan, Dr. Olena Hankivsky and Ms. Brittany Bingham.

**Dr. Shira Goldenberg** discussed *Health Inequities among Marginalized Women Who Use Drugs: Intersecting Contexts of Substance Use, Sex Work, and Structural Inequities*. She pointed out that Substance use research often focuses on men and that women are underrepresented in research on substance use, HIV, and co-morbidities. She noted, there needs to be more research with women to bridge the gaps so that women-specific interventions can be implemented. For example, drug and sexual vulnerabilities, require more gender-specific interventions. She also highlighted that intersectionality relates to substance use research since it can be applied to many contexts. For example, research conducted in the Downtown Eastside, as well as disadvantaged areas around the world. Criminalization, violence, barriers to health for marginalized women exacerbates the harm faced by women who use drugs. Dr. Goldenberg stated, "Police harm, not help" She pointed out that treatments for substance use are difficult to access when the cause of a person's harm is illegal. She suggested that we must create safer integrated spaces for women all aspect of the women's needs including reproductive health, and safer work environment. For instance, a women's only injection site was recently opened in the Downtown Eastside, which she emphasized is a good sign towards more women-centered interventions.

**Dr. Genevieve Johnson** spoke about *Supportive Environments for Women's Health: Perspectives from Prostitution Policy Formulation, Implementation, and Research*. She noted that during policy development, involving individuals immediately affected by the policy, including the most marginalized, is essential as it offers insight into which laws and policies ought to be reformed.

Dr. Johnson's work using a text analysis of preliminary hearings on bill C-36, found disrespectful questions were geared towards sex worker rights advocates. She emphasized that this is unacceptable as it only takes a



few harsh questions to alienate and intimidate sex worker rights advocates. She recommends that we treat all witnesses in respectful, neutral, and fair and supportive ways. She also suggested that inclusion in decision making, regular meetings, collaboration with law-enforcement. These are ways policy making and policing could improve. When working with marginalized populations, the entirety of the research must be empowering. Research must not contribute to the further marginalization of populations.

**Dr. Sharalyn Jordan** also about Enhancing Safety of Inland Refugee Claimants Fleeing Persecution of their Sexual Orientation Gender Identity or Expression: through Policy, Education & Inquiry. She highlighted the increased risk faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) refugees, including intersectionality of stigma, mental health impacts and challenges to accessing health services. Dr. Jordan noted that research complicates the categories of women and gender, on the periphery of health. Homophobic, transphobic persecution often starts at home, and currently exists state-sanctioned in many countries. LGBT+ refugees often are not able to reach a place of safety. In May, refugee authority introduced guidelines to be inclusive of LGBT refugees. Most progressive policies in the world. She indicated that, for the first time, people's recognition as LGBT is not so much of a disadvantage and the Canadian Council for Refugees, and grassroots organizations, are involved in supporting LGBTI refugees. For example, Rainbow Refugee as a grassroots organization. Dr. Jordan urged attendees to Co-constructing knowledge with marginalized communities, and develop an empathic understanding of what refugee claimants are experiencing and have conversations about identity, gender, expression, as distinct yet interrelated.

**Dr. Olena Hankivsky** highlighted the importance of mainstreaming gender and equity and provided some provocative thoughts on intersectionality in women's health research and policy. Dr. Hankivsky pointed out that, through an intersectionality lens, "women's health and experiences are shaped not only by sex and gender but factors such as race, socioeconomic status, age, ability, sexual orientation, immigration status, Indigeneity, geography." However, she also stresses that, this approach raises some key questions: Does categorizing health groups help if those categories are problematic? Are these efforts addressing the differences between women and men, in the context of intersectionality? Intersectionality in the context of women's health divulges the more significant differences among women, compared to the differences between men and women. Dr. Hankivsky's recent projects involve examining how other countries and organizations are taking in the lessons learned and are integrating gender, equality and intersectionality.

**Ms. Brittany Bingham:** Community-based approaches to empowering women, focus on building strong Indigenous women, policies and programs that support Community-based practices. Ms. Bingham emphasized that Indigenous societies were traditionally matriarchal but was disrupted by acts of colonization. She indicated that ongoing empowerment of women to re-take their roles as matriarchs, especially in the downtown eastside is very important. However, data on Indigenous women are characterized by deficit, including women's trauma, poor indicators, and negativity in general. Conversely, Indigenous women were incredibly resilient in historical contexts. Ms. Bingham recommended that Indigenous-only research teams are excellent. And therefore, Indigenizing research teams, will help teach non-indigenous researchers about traditional ways of researching. Creating a Culturally safe, women-only spaces are important. For example, an Indigenous women's research group, involving both researchers and Indigenous women on the Downtown Eastside.

## Closing and Next Steps

### Remaining questions about SFU's role in women's health research:

- We have a community doing cutting edge women's health research
- We have a community of women health researchers here and we need a rallying call
- What role are we going to play here at SFU?
- What is it going to look like?

### Suggested Solutions

- It's very important to support one another "We are always stronger together"
- One of thing we can do is calling – out on daily –This is how paradigms are shifted and these practices need to be part of our everyday work.
- We need to embrace diversity, humility and inclusivity
- In health research, the dominant paradigm is that one needs to be an "Expert in their field", which goes against the idea of "humility" and co-learning/re-learning
- More collaboration and scope is needed to address global health issues. Within global health there are similar trends in diverse global settings.
- How do we address barriers for marginalization on a global scale?
- How can SFU support women's health research
  - Supporting indigenous women in research
  - Women with unique community perspectives leading
  - Canadian Coalition in Global Health Research
  - Humility, authentic partnerships, inclusive, shared benefits, commitment to the future
  - causes of inequities and using the resources that you have available here.
  -

### Summary of Barb Berry's Live Scribe:

Barb's amazing sketches captured the discussion in the room and highlighted the history, opportunities and challenges; and mapped us into what women's health research would look like 5, 10 and 15 years from now.

- Historic moments such as the release of the Status of Women's Report, where we saw changes Gender and Sex, as well as gender mainstreaming in the 2000s were impactful. However, these same historic moments demonstrate the need for sex differences in science and to unpack gender
- We need inclusive technologies and to reduce barriers of access to education and democratize our work
- Think of creating diverse teams and consider the roles of Indigenous women in Governance.
- Be inclusive, walk in partnership and co-construct with others doing the work we are doing and strive for excellence in our research
- It was noted that, 'it is time to start thinking about power, understanding women's health through intersectionality's and changing the models/frameworks in which we view women's health.

# Live capture of discussions at SFU's Women's Health Research Symposium

October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at the Diamond Alumni Centre, SFU Burnaby campus  
Live capture by Barb Berry, Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU





### Symposium Attendees

Overall, 143 people attended the symposium, with every faculty across SFU represented. Over 60 SFU trainees attended the symposium, which was exciting and a sign of the deep interest in women's health research across campus. We also had attendees from other SFU units (Major Projects Office, Continuing Education, Health and Counselling Services), the BC Support Unit, CARMA, the BCCfE, WHRI, and UBC. There were also attendees from Provincial and community organizations including the FHNA, Vancouver Women's Health Collective, Intra Pacific, Red Tent Project, BC Nurses' Union, CAREX Canada and the BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.

There is an appetite at SFU for leadership on women's health research.



## Evaluations

A total number of 34 participants completed an evaluation form.

Key themes addressed in the evaluations included:

### Quality of discussions

- Regarding the quality of discussions, almost 90% of attendees reported that they "totally agreed" that the Trainee Breakfast and Q&A with Dr. Joy Johnson was very valuable.

*"The symposium gave one the opportunity to look beyond one's own area of research for once. I also really liked the possibility to submit an anonymous question during the trainee breakfast and think this should be used more as it helps people participate while might be too shy or struggle with mental disabilities"*

*"Really wonderful balance of scholarly/academic focus and accessible, engaged conversation in everyday language"*

### Diversity of presentations/Presenters:

Attendees thought that the symposium represented inter-disciplinarity but challenged organizers to reflect more diversity in the speakers, including more ethnic, gender, and sex diversity.

Others also brought up the challenges of researchers and/or trainees of either identifying as women's health researchers or doing work that impacts women's health. A few responders commented:

*"Interesting how many presenters do women's health research but don't call it that"*

*"Presenters felt like they were not women's health researchers"*

### Balance between presentations and discussions:

Overall, the balance in the panel presentations was rated as adequate, with attendees expressing that they had hoped for more time to engage in discussions with peers and speakers:

*"The panels were great but more opportunity for audience questions/interactions would be good"*

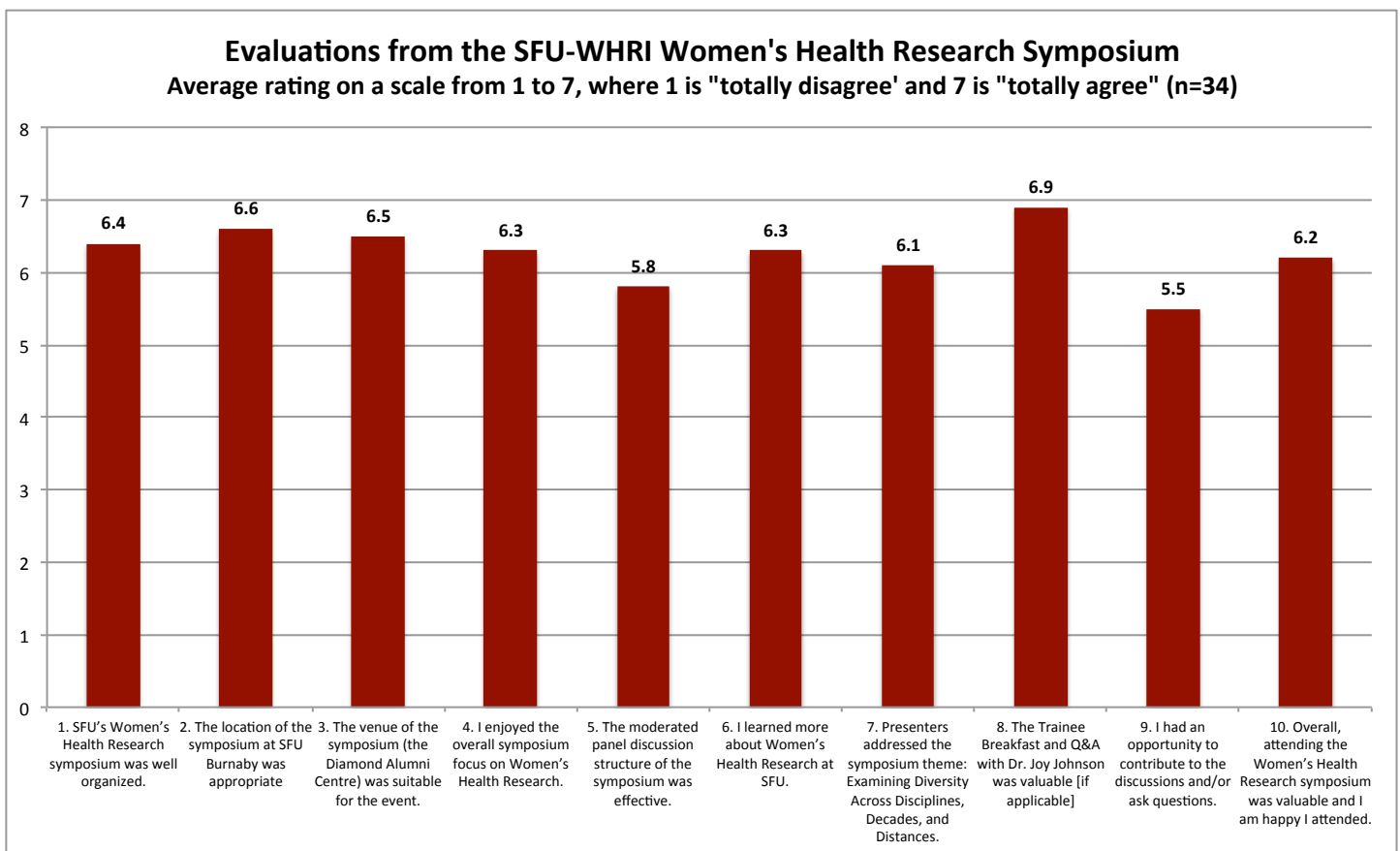
### Suggestions from Symposium Attendees:

Participants also provided additional suggestions to improve the symposium. These included the following: -

- *"I think there needs to be more of a focus on intersectionality. Diversity and gender, it's about intersectionality"*

- "The panels were great but more opportunity for audience questions/interactions would be good"
- "Another idea for future would be small group breakout discussions/workshop format"
- "Continue to connect people across disciplines"
- "keep it up! Another one in 2018"?
- "Need a strong collaboration between feminist theories and women health research, include the social Sciences"
- "Keep bringing together these voices from different academic and theoretical/disciplines perspectives"

Based on the responses from the questionnaires, the symposium was well received and participants felt the symposium delivered a well-planned, interdisciplinary session which provided a space for SFU to begin insightful and critical discussions around women's health research. The event was rated as excellent with regards to the relevance of the topic, multidisciplinary presenters and discussion for the diverse attendees. However, participants rated lower scores for some aspects of the symposium, including the insufficient time allocated for Q&A with panelists and peer discussions.





## Acknowledgments:

On behalf of the Steering Committee, we want to thank the symposium speakers, moderators, panelists, organizers, and attendees. We greatly appreciate your comments and suggestions. Your feedback will certainly help to better future events. We want to think about the vision for the road ahead, and this vision would not be possible without our keynote speaker Dr. Joy Johnson, our diverse group of panel speakers and enthusiastic symposium attendees. The insightful discussions provided us opportunities to become aware and more engaged in initiatives that support women's health research at SFU.

### This symposium was supported by funding from:

- Office of the Vice-President of Research
- The Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI)
- The Faculty of Health Sciences

### The Steering Committee would also like to thank:

- **Ama Kyeremeh, Cecilia Kalaw, Katrina Salvante, Allison Carter, Eliza Mallari, Kathryn Dewar, Barb Berry** for all their work in making the event a success.
- **Elder Valerie Nicholson** for providing prayers and blessings for the symposium and sharing with us the Seven Gifts of the Grandfathers. We gratefully cherish the knowledge you passed on to us.
- A huge thanks to our **steering committee**, led by **Dr. Angela Kaida, Dr. Joy Johnson and Dr. Lori Brotto** for their vision and support for women's health research at SFU, for without their leadership, the symposium would not have been possible.
- **Dr. Lori Brotto, Dr. Nicole Berry, and Dr. Julian Christians** for judging the poster presentations for the symposium. The steering committee greatly appreciates your efforts to help us award a prize for best student presentation, which was a 2 cash prizes (\$200 each) to the top Master's level poster and the top PhD/Post-doc poster.
- A final thanks to our **volunteers and note takers**, Nigel Morgan, Karthika Yogaratnam, Justine Uy, Sara Bhatti, Tarras Adams, Arpreet Singh, Nathan Milley, Emily Rees, Hadia Samim, Kalysha Closson, Tatiana Pakhomova, Agnetha De Sa and Sreelalitha Sarojini

**Swag Sponsors:** Westcoast Women in Engineering Science and Technology (WWEST), WHRI

If you are interested in becoming a WHRI member, you can download a copy of the membership application form here: <http://whri.org/become-a-member/>. Completed forms can be emailed to [whri\\_cwbc@cw.bc.ca](mailto:whri_cwbc@cw.bc.ca) or [kdewar@cw.bc.ca](mailto:kdewar@cw.bc.ca) (Kathryn Dewar, Senior Research Manager).

### Suggested citation for this report:

Kaida A, Kyeremeh A. (2017). Meeting Report for SFU's Women's Health Research Symposium: *Examining Diversity across Disciplines, Decades, and Distances*. Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada. October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

For additional questions, please contact the symposium coordinator at: [akyereme@sfu.ca](mailto:akyereme@sfu.ca)

## Appendix 1: In the Media

The Peak's Agnetha de Sa writes about the symposium:

**SFU examines diverse approaches to women's health at campus conference**

*The symposium incorporated non-traditional fields and eight faculties*

Agnetha de Sa

October 30, 2017

SFU hosted its inaugural Women's Health Research Symposium to explore research spanning eight faculties at the Burnaby campus on October 25. It is the first time that the symposium, which looks at interdisciplinary solutions to issues surrounding women's health, has been held at the university.

"We don't have a medical school or a nursing school or those types of programs but a lot of the work that is underway here promises to be really transformational for women's health," said Angela Kaida, faculty lead for the SFU Women's Health Research Symposium.

"This symposium is an opportunity to showcase and really celebrate the huge diversity of women's health research that's underway, and to really nurture a community of women's health researchers who might not really think of themselves as women's health researchers, but are really doing important work to improve women's health."

The conference was hosted in collaboration with the Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI), an organization based in the BC Women's Hospital. The institute has partnered with other post-secondary institutions in the past to facilitate discussion around women's health in the province.

According to Kaida, the university wanted this symposium to set itself apart from other similar events held by choosing researchers from non-traditional fields and research initiatives.

"Let's look at who else is doing work that . . . we might not think about as women's health research but stands to make a huge difference," said Kaida. "We were able to go . . . across our campus identifying researchers whose work does fit into the bucket of women's health research but [is not] typically discussed as such."

The event provided attendees the opportunity to see the "ways in which women's health research is being enacted at SFU," Kaida stated.

Through three different panels, ranging from innovation in technology and science to laws and policies that promote women's health, the attendees were introduced to the various facets of research at the university.

There was also a poster display for master's and PhD students which were judged for monetary prizes and allowed students to get some exposure of their work.

At the breakfast held specifically for the student attendees, those interested in women's health research had the opportunity to hear from the vice-president of research at SFU and keynote speaker Joy Johnson. A key objective of the symposium was to include students in the exchange, Kaida explained.

"I have a lot of respect of the trainees that we have here at SFU," she said. "The ways in which women's health and intersectionality and diversity and gender equity are being discussed by many students and many student groups is really helping to transform the conversation."

Johnson spoke about the history and speculation as to the future of gender, sex, and health research in the country, highlighting some of her own experiences through her various positions.

"Gender gets under our skin at a very early age," said Johnson. "The toys that we give children and the way that they interact indeed is highly gendered" which has implications for health.

"No matter what, we should be thinking about gender," she said on the topic of academic research.

"This is hopefully the beginning of a discussion and I think there are a few events on the horizon that make it quite timely for us to be having this event," Kaida stated in reference to the Women Deliver international conference that will take place in Vancouver in 2019.

## Appendix 2: In the Media

More stories available at: <https://storify.com/Amk/sfu-s-women-s-health-research-symposium-2017>





SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
ENGAGING THE WORLD

WOMEN'S HEALTH  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
AT BC WOMEN'S

