



Children's Heart Network &  
BC Children's Hospital Heart Centre *Present*

# GROWING UP WITH HEART DISEASE

PARTNERING TOGETHER

A collaborative conference by professionals  
and families for professionals and families

**October 19, 2024**

BC Children's Hospital Research Institute  
Chan Education Centre | Vancouver



**SCAN TO  
REGISTER!**

# 2024 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Kerry Harding - Co-chair

Tracey Carpenter - Co-Chair

Karen LeComte

Megan Crane

June Albrecht

Farisha Khan

Leslie Raffin

Emily Deimling

Sam Aitken

## PARTNERS



SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Vancouver Kidsbooks

Savoury City Catering & Events

# AT-A-GLANCE | Saturday, October 19

Time	Session 1	Session 2	Heart of Gold Teens
7:45-8:50am	<b>Registration and Continental Breakfast</b> Chan Centre Atrium		
8:50-9am	<b>Welcome to Growing up with Heart Disease ‘Partnering together’</b> <i>Kerry Harding (Conference Chair)</i> Chan Centre Auditorium		
9-10am	<b>Decades of Heart: Partnering with Families for Lifelong Pediatric Cardiac Care</b> <i>Dr. Derek Human</i> Chan Centre Auditorium		<b>Art Project</b> <i>Emily Deimling</i> KO-155 (Ambulatory Care Building)
10-10:30am	<b>Break with Refreshments</b> Chan Centre Atrium		
10:30-11:30am	<b>Partnering for Success in Pediatric Heart Surgery</b> <i>Dr. Andrew Campbell and Emily Tai, NP</i> Chan Centre Auditorium		
11:30am-12:30pm	<b>Lunch</b> Chan Centre Atrium		
12:30-1:30pm	<b>Heart to Heart: Partnering for Healthy Heartbeats</b> <i>Dr. Saketh Saravu &amp; Monique Maclean</i> Chan Centre Auditorium	<b>Coping and Stress Management for Families of Children with Heart Disease: Partnering Together for Resilience</b> <i>Karen Chin &amp; Dr. Penny Sneddon</i> Chan Centre Room 2108	<b>Team building – felting project</b> <i>Emily Deimling</i> KO-155 (Ambulatory Care Building)

# AT-A-GLANCE | Saturday, October 19

Time	Session 1	Session 2	Heart of Gold Teens
1:30-1:45pm	<p align="center"><b>Break</b> Chan Centre Atrium</p>		
1:45-2:45pm	<p><b>Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve: Partnering with Your Kids to Build Their Coping Toolbox</b> <i>Emily Deimling &amp; Rebecca Steel</i> Chan Centre Auditorium</p>	<p><b>Youth Transitions to Adult Care: Partnering for Success</b> <i>Ben Szakun, Janet Bartnik, Jerry Szakun &amp; Heart Centre Nursing</i> Chan Centre Room 2108</p>	
2:45-3:00pm	<p align="center"><b>Break</b> Chan Centre Atrium</p>		
3:00-3:45pm	<p align="center"><b>What is the Future of a Child Born with a Heart Condition in the Year 2024?</b> <i>Dr. Brian Sinclair</i> Chan Centre Auditorium</p>		
3:45-4:30 pm	<p align="center"><b>Youth Presentation</b> <i>Hearts of Gold</i> Chan Centre Auditorium</p>		
4:30-5:40pm	<p align="center"><b>Reception</b> Chan Centre Auditorium</p>		

# PRESENTATION INFORMATION

## Decades of Heart: Partnering with Families for Lifelong Pediatric Cardiac Care

9-10am | Chan Centre Auditorium

This session celebrates the evolution of pediatric cardiac care and highlights the powerful partnerships between healthcare providers and families. Led by an esteemed pediatric cardiologist, this session offers a unique opportunity to reflect on the milestones achieved in the field and the invaluable lessons learned from working alongside families throughout a lifelong career.

Families and healthcare providers will:

- Appreciate the advancements in pediatric cardiology and how they have shaped care over the decades.
- Understand the crucial role families play in the treatment and long-term well-being of children with heart conditions.
- Receive practical advice on fostering strong, enduring partnerships that ensure the best outcomes for children with cardiac conditions.
- Whether you are a healthcare professional or a family member of a pediatric cardiac patient, this session provides insights on building collaborative, compassionate care that supports both the medical and emotional needs of the patient. Attendees will leave equipped with practical wisdom for the lifelong journey of pediatric cardiac care.



### Dr. Derek Human

Our keynote speaker for the Growing Up with Heart Disease conference is the well respected pediatric and congenital cardiologist, Dr Derek Human. A native South African, he did his education and medical training in England and South Africa before migrating to Canada in 1987. He

moved to Vancouver to join the Division of Cardiology at BC Children's Hospital in 1993 and became the Division

Head in 1994, continuing in that role for 20 years. He was the medical director of the Cardiac Sciences Program from 2001 – 2010. Dr Human's contributions to the province include development of pediatric partnership clinics, medical education and mentorship, and a long-standing involvement in research and quality improvement. Until his retirement from cardiology in 2023, he had an active cardiology practice at both BC Children's Hospital and at the adult congenital clinic at St Paul's Hospital. He is currently the Executive Medical Director, Quality & Safety, for BC Children's and BC Women's Hospitals. He has a love of family, fine wine and travel. With a long history of excellence in the care of individuals with heart conditions, we are most fortunate to have him as our keynote speaker.

## Partnering for Success in Pediatric Heart Surgery

10:30-11:30am | Chan Centre Auditorium

Navigating pediatric heart surgery can be overwhelming, but when families and healthcare teams work together, the journey becomes smoother and more successful. This session is designed to empower families by deepening their understanding of the surgical process and the vital roles everyone plays—from medical professionals to caregivers at home.

During this session, families and healthcare providers will:

- Identify the key roles of the healthcare team and how they collaborate throughout the surgical process.
- Gain insight into pre- and post-surgical care, including what families can expect and how to best prepare.
- Explore how active family involvement can positively influence surgical outcomes and support a child's recovery.

Whether you're preparing for surgery or seeking to better understand the surgical journey, this session offers practical guidance and support for creating a strong, effective partnership between families and medical teams. You'll leave feeling more informed and confident in your role, ready to contribute to your child's care and recovery.



**Dr. Andrew Campbell**

Dr. Andrew Campbell is a Cardiothoracic Surgeon at BC Children’s Hospital, specializing in pediatric cardiac and congenital surgery. In addition to his pediatric practice, Dr. Campbell also leads the adult congenital heart surgical program at St. Paul’s Hospital. He

earned both his Doctor of Medicine and Bachelor of Medical Sciences in General Medicine from the University of Ottawa. His extensive training includes residencies in General Surgery and Cardiac Surgery at the University of Toronto, followed by fellowships in Pediatric Cardiac Surgery at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and Cardiothoracic Surgery at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

His career has spanned roles at the Children’s Hospital of New Jersey, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, and as a Senior Consultant for the National Heart Centre at the Royal Hospital in Oman. He continues to participate in international medical conferences and educational initiatives. In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Campbell was the former Director of the UBC Residency and Fellowship Program and has been recognized with numerous teaching awards. Outside of work, Dr. Campbell recently welcomed a Dalmatian puppy named ‘Penny’ into his family -- adding much joy and adventure to his family life!



**Emily Tai, NP**

Emily Tai has been involved with the Pediatric Cardiology Program at BC Children’s Hospital through many different nursing roles since 2007. She started off her nursing career as a RN on medical/cardiac units, first at BC Children’s Hospital and then at Montefiore

Children’s Hospital in New York. She later went to pursue her Master of Nursing-Nurse Practitioner degree in Toronto. She trained at Toronto’s SickKids Hospital with the Cardiac NPs there who taught her the challenges that NPs face but also the great impact that they can have on patient care. Upon graduating from the NP Program, Emily returned to BC Children’s and started her role initially as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Cardiology and then joined the Cardiac Surgery Team as a NP in 2013. Her role is to manage diagnoses related to medical, pre and post surgical issues both in the inpatient and outpatient setting and to support patients and

families along their surgical journey. Over the years, she has been so touched by the many wonderful Heart families and patients that she has met along the way; they are the reason of where her passion lies. *“The only way to do great work is to love what you do.”* –Steve Jobs

**Heart to Heart: Partnering for Healthy Heartbeats**

12:30-1:30pm | Chan Centre Auditorium

In this session, families and healthcare professionals will come together to deepen their understanding of pediatric heart rhythm issues. With a focus on education, empowerment, and personal experience, this session will provide families the knowledge and tools they need to support children living with heart rhythm challenges.

Attendees will:

- Gain an understanding of pediatric heart rhythm conditions, including their causes, symptoms, and treatments.
- Be empowered with the knowledge to actively participate in managing and monitoring heart rhythm issues.
- Hear firsthand experience from an individual living with a heart rhythm condition, gaining insight into how to navigate the challenges and embrace a healthy lifestyle.

This session emphasizes the importance of a strong partnership between families and healthcare providers, fostering a supportive environment where families feel confident in managing their child’s heart health and gaining insight regarding life with a cardiac implantable electronic device -- this session provides practical tools and insights for ensuring ‘healthy heartbeats’.



**Dr. Saketh Saravu**

Dr. Saravu is a cardiologist and interventional electrophysiologist at BC Children’s Hospital and St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver, BC.

He did his medical schooling and pediatric residency in India following which he undertook PICU training in the UK. He then completed his Royal College fellowship in Pediatric Cardiology at the University of British Columbia (BC Children’s Hospital).

Having developed a keen interest in electrophysiology he then moved to London, Ontario to train with the London Health Sciences team in adult electrophysiology. Following this he completed his training in pediatric and adult congenital EP at Harvard University (Boston Children's Hospital). Dr. Saravu currently works both at BC Children's Hospital as well as St. Paul's Hospital as a cardiologist and interventional electrophysiologist. His areas of research interest includes accessory pathway ablations, ultrasound guided PM implantation and inherited arrhythmias.



**Monique MacLean**

Monique MacLean was born with a congenital heart defect, but from an early age, she learned that her condition wouldn't define her. Raised in an active, adventurous family, Monique embraced life fully—hiking, camping, traveling, and pursuing countless other activities.

Her condition was never a barrier, and her determination to live without limits became a defining part of who she is.

Today, Monique works as an Educational Assistant, specializing in supporting Deaf and hard-of-hearing students. She continues to live an active, vibrant lifestyle and is passionate about using her experiences to inspire others. Monique is dedicated to supporting children and families affected by heart conditions, offering hope and connection. By helping them meet adults who have overcome similar challenges, she shows that having a heart condition doesn't mean life is limited—children can grow up to lead full, meaningful lives and achieve their dreams

**Coping and Stress Management for Families of Children with Heart Disease: Partnering Together for Resilience**

12:30-1:30pm | Chan Centre Room 2108

This session, co-presented by a social worker and psychologist, is designed to support families of children with heart disease in understanding and managing the unique stressors they face. Participants will gain insight into the emotional and psychological impacts that heart disease can have on both the child and the family as a whole. The session will explore effective coping strategies to reduce stress, manage health-related challenges, and foster resilience. Additionally, families will be provided with valuable resources to build a strong support network, helping them navigate their journey with confidence and emotional strength.



**Karen Chin**

Karen Chin is a registered social worker, with over 20 years of experience in pediatric healthcare. Specializing in supporting children and their families through medical challenges, Karen is passionate about addressing the emotional, social, and practical needs of families navigating complex cardiac care.

Karen holds a Master of Social Work and is an integral member of the cardiology healthcare team at BC Children's Hospital. Her role involves providing emotional counseling, connecting families with community resources, and helping them navigate the healthcare system. Whether offering support for hospitalizations, chronic illness management, or preparing families for medical procedures, Karen ensures that every family feels heard, supported, and empowered.



**Dr. Penny Sneddon**

Dr. Penny Sneddon is a Registered Psychologist with a Ph.D. in clinical, counseling, and school psychology. She is passionate about providing evidence-based treatment and is committed to the highest standard of care. With a diverse background, Dr. Sneddon

uses a primarily cognitive-behavioral approach to help children and youth manage a range of childhood disorders, including anxiety, chronic pain, medical-related psychological distress, and behavioral issues.

In addition to her role at BC Children's Hospital, Dr. Sneddon is the director at Cornerstone Child and Family Psychology Clinic. She holds academic appointments as a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of British Columbia and at the Child and Family Research Institute.

## **Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve: Partnering with Your Kids to Build Their Coping Toolbox**

1:45-2:45pm | Chan Centre Auditorium

In this session, child life specialists will guide families through the process of supporting their children in building resilience and coping strategies while navigating heart conditions. We will explore the developmental impacts that hospitalization and medical treatments can have on children and teens, and how these experiences influence emotional and psychological well-being. Participants will learn practical coping techniques that can be applied both at home and in the hospital, helping children manage stress and foster emotional strength. The session emphasizes the power of collaboration between parents and children, creating a supportive environment where children feel empowered to face challenges with confidence.



### **Emily Deimling**

Emily is a certified Child Life Specialist, currently practicing at BC Children's Hospital. She was born and raised in Ontario, in the small town of Windsor. There, she graduated from her undergraduate degree in Developmental Psychology with a thesis in Mindfulness in Youth. Following this, she received her

master's degree in Child Life and Psychosocial Care at McMaster University. During her internship placements, Emily was given the amazing opportunity to work with many different populations and children with different levels of complexity at both Winnipeg, and London Children's Hospitals.

Emily was hired at BC Children's about 2 years ago and really loving Vancouver! In her spare time she enjoys hiking, paddling, and simply being in the trees! One of her other passions is singing. Emily enjoys performing in community theatre shows in her spare time on the hiking off-season.

Emily has been grateful to have had many opportunities working with kids and teens in both a teaching and psychosocial capacity. One of her favorite work experiences was teaching English as a second language in Italy for three summers. Alongside working at the Hospital, Emily recently took on the role of Hearts of Gold Youth Coordinator with the CHN. She has been thrilled to work with these teens in this capacity outside of the hospital setting, building social, and

independence skills along with the fun activities every month! She is so excited for upcoming projects, teen socials, and getting to know the teens!



### **Rebecca Steel**

Becki Steel has a bachelor's degree in child and youth care from the University of Victoria, and a MSc in Pediatric Psychosocial Health. Becki has been a certified child life specialist for five years at BC Children's Hospital and has clinical experience working in a variety of different settings including the emergency

department, medical imaging, PICU, and med-surg units. She was the child life specialist at Sunny Hill Health Centre, which provides specialized developmental assessments and rehabilitation services and treatment, where she operates as a one-person child life program. She has grown and developed the program from the ground up, establishing child life as a key part of the multidisciplinary team. Becki also works for Upopolis, an online community for children with chronic health conditions and is an instructor at Douglas College in their Child and Youth Care Program. Becki is passionate about working to proactively influence children's healthcare experiences and empower them to take ownership of their coping. In her free time Becki enjoys hiking, skiing, cooking good food and travelling.

## **Youth Transitions to Adult Care: Partnering for Success**

1:45-2:45pm | Chan Centre Room 2108

As children with heart conditions grow into adolescence and adulthood, transitioning from pediatric to adult care is a crucial step in ensuring long-term health and well-being. This session will focus on the importance of early and thoughtful transition planning to optimize health outcomes for youth with heart conditions. Recognition of the vital partnership between healthcare providers, patients, and families necessary to create a seamless transition process, addressing both medical and emotional needs. The session will also explore effective strategies for empowering youth to take an active role in their care and fostering strong partnerships with their new healthcare teams. Join us to discover how a well-coordinated transition can set the foundation for a healthy and successful future in adult care.





**Ben Szakun**

Ben Sakun is living with congenital heart disease. His journey exemplifies resilience, as he successfully transitioned from pediatric to adult care. Ben’s ability to navigate this transition highlights his commitment to his health and well-being. His experience serves as an inspiration to others with congenital heart

conditions, showing that with the right support and care, it is possible to thrive despite the complexities of living with congenital heart disease. Ben is currently going to school and is joining us today to share his experience with transition and offer some helpful advice to those beginning their transition journey.



**Heart Centre Nursing**

**Leslie Raffin**, a skilled nurse clinician, has worked across all areas of cardiac care at BC Children’s Hospital, including inpatient cardiology, critical care, and most recently, outpatient services. Leslie brings a deep understanding of the continuum of care for children with heart conditions. She recently returned from an incredible month in France and Italy, where she celebrated a special anniversary and visited family.

**Jessica Merkley** is a nurse clinician in the Children’s Heart Centre, with a strong background in cardiology nursing. Her experience spans internationally, having worked at Boston Children’s Hospital and serving as a nurse educator for inpatient programs at BC Children’s Hospital. Jessica balances her professional life with the love of live music and spending time with her energetic toddler.

**Karen LeComte** is the Clinical Nurse Specialist for Pediatric Cardiology, returning to pediatrics from 11 years working in the Adult Congenital Heart Program at St. Paul’s Hospital. She is

planning to utilize her expertise in complex congenital heart care to improve care for cardiac children and their families. Outside of work, she is the ‘puppy mom’ of a stubborn mini Bernedoodle and enjoys exploring ideas for an ‘epic’ vacation next year.

**What is the Future of a Child Born with a Heart Condition in the Year 2024?**

3-3:45pm | Chan Centre Auditorium

This session will explore the promising future for children born with heart conditions, focusing on the advancements in early detection, intervention, and treatment that have dramatically improved outcomes in pediatric cardiology. Attendees will gain insight into how medical and surgical techniques have enhanced the quality of life for children living with heart conditions, allowing them to thrive in ways once thought impossible. In addition to reflecting on the current achievements, the ongoing need for research, innovation, and technology to continue improving care and outcomes for future generations will be discussed. Join us to learn how current and future advancements are shaping a brighter, healthier future for children born with heart conditions in 2024 and beyond.



**Dr. Brian Sinclair**

Dr Brian Sinclair is a Pediatric Cardiologist, Medical Program Director for Pediatrics, Vancouver Island Health Authority and Clinical Associate Professor, University of British Columbia. He is a native of British Columbia and completed his pediatric and cardiology training at BC Children’s Hospital. After a brief

relocation to Ottawa, he returned to British Columbia in 2002 to become the first Pediatric Cardiologist in Victoria. He has completed adult congenital training in the UK and made enormous contributions to supporting transition care in this province. He is a frequent passenger on BC Ferries as he continues to do cardiology work at BC Children’s Hospital and at the Adult Congenital Heart Program at St Paul’s Hospital. He has many interests in cardiology including: echocardiography, fetal echocardiography, exercise physiology, and cardiogenetics. When not at work, you will likely find him enjoying the great outdoors!