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MEDIA RELEASE

Media Advisory: Immigrant seniors' challenges and celebrations documented in new exhibit

May 10, 2017

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A new exhibit in Vancouver examines challenges faced by immigrant seniors in British Columbia and Quebec. Led in B.C. by Simon Fraser University **Gerontology** professor Sharon Koehn, the exhibit "The lived experiences of aging immigrants" opens from Thursday, May 11 to Friday, May 12 at the Sunset Community Centre.

WHAT:

Part of a research collaboration between SFU and McGill University, Koehn and her colleagues interviewed 19 immigrant seniors. The seniors were also provided with cameras to document and reclaim triumphs and tribulations in their daily lives. The exhibit combines the interviews with portraits of the seniors as well as three photos that they took.

"These diverse older immigrants have met so many barriers with such courage and resilience," says Koehn. "Their stories and photographs have much to teach us."

Koehn says that issues effecting immigrant seniors range from housing and transportation, precarious employment, the impact of past trauma, family and care, community engagement, and resilience.

The project aims to study the impact of immigration on aging within the context of the life stories of immigrant older adults; to explore the ways in which structural discrimination across the life course shapes interactions with family, community and formal services; and, to encourage knowledge exchange between seniors, service providers and policymakers.

The project was funded by an Insight Development Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

WHEN:

- Thursday, May 11 and Friday, May 12
- 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with Words of Welcome both days at 11:00 a.m.

WHERE:

- Sunset Community Centre lobby
- 6810 Main Street, Vancouver

WHY:

- Nearly two-thirds of immigrants 50 and over reported having no knowledge of either official language at their time of entry.
- Immigrants 65 and older, and female immigrants, are even less likely to speak English or French.
- Immigrant seniors are less likely than their Canadian counterparts to receive government-funded home care and must count on family, friends and neighbours for help

ADDITIONAL DETAILS:

On Thursday, May 11, Sharon Koehn and some participants in the project will be available for interviews with media from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded more than 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada's leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 145,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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