

Sheila Early, A nurse to know

By the Forensic Nurses' Society of Canada

Sheila Early is currently a Forensic Nursing Consultant in British Columbia and a Program Coordinator/Instructor at the BCIT Forensic Science and Technology department.

In 2004, Sheila developed the first Advanced Certificate in Forensic Health Care at BCIT; the first classroom-delivered certificate in Canada. She has been teaching sexual assault nurse examiner courses throughout Canada since 1996.

Sheila has been a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner for 17 years and has testified in both Supreme and Provincial Courts in B.C., as an expert witness. Her background is in emergency nursing and she has been active in this role for 30 years. She travels internationally promoting forensic nursing in Europe and doing presentations on forensic nursing.

Sheila is currently President of the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN). She has received numerous awards recognizing her work in forensic and emergency nursing, including:

- 2010: Achievement Award from the IAFN
- 2008: "One of 150 outstanding nurses in BC" from the government of British Columbia
- 2002: Award of Excellence in Nursing Practice by the College of Registered Nurses of BC
- 1997: Award of Excellence in Emergency Nursing Education by the National Emergency Nurses Affiliation.

Thrilled beyond words, Sheila Early was chosen by the members of IAFN to represent the organization for a three-year term as president elect for 2013, president for 2014 and past president in 2015.

Sheila isn't the only one who is thrilled. Susan Short, President of FNSC stated: "How clever are the IAFN members to vote in such a marvelous person? Sheila will do a great job. She brings a wealth of experience along with a real desire to

share and work with others to see much accomplished. And I am so excited to see a Canadian as the first international president."

Sheila is a registered nurse, with four decades of experience under her belt. She has practised as a nursing administrator, nurse clinician, and nurse educator in both emergency and forensic nursing. Currently, Sheila is the Program Coordinator/Instructor for the BCIT Forensic Science and Technology Program—Forensic Health Sciences option.


Sheila has known many firsts in her career such as:

- She founded the first sexual assault nurse examiner program in British Columbia starting the process in 1992 (currently known as the Forensic Nursing Services at Surrey Memorial Hospital)
- She performed the first medical forensic examination by a B.C. nurse examiner in February 1994, and remained a practising nurse examiner until 2007
- She developed the curriculum for the first Advanced Certificate in Forensic Health Sciences (classroom delivery) in Canada (2005) at BCIT
- She provided the initial education for sexual assault nurse examiners in five provinces and one territory.

Sheila's immense experiences as a nurse clinician in emergency, a legal nurse consultant for both criminal and civil legal matters, and as a forensic nurse



have provided her with the expertise to assist health care in the investigation of inquiries/complaints, as well as consulting on issues relating to violence and trauma.

Sheila has lived in Surrey, B.C., for the past 25 years with her husband Peter. They have two daughters and sons-in-law, and four grandchildren. 

IENJ reminder

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