

Dr. Frances Westley

JW McConnell Chair in Social Innovation, University of Waterloo at Social Innovation Generation
Kitchener, ON, CA

Putting the SOCIAL in change is the JW McConnell Chair in Social Innovation at SiG@Waterloo, which builds capacity for social innovation

Description

Dr. Frances Westley joined the University of Waterloo as the JW McConnell Chair in Social Innovation in July 2007. In this capacity she is one of the principle leads in a Canada wide initiative in social innovation.

SiG (Social Innovation Generation), a cross sectoral partnership to build capacity for social innovation in Canada funded by the J.W McConnell Family Foundation, University of Waterloo and the Ontario government. At University of Waterloo, Dr. Westley leads a research team dedicated to understanding social innovation, and has designed both graduate and undergraduate curricula in social innovation.

Dr. Westley is a renowned scholar and consultant in the areas of social innovation, sustainable development, strategic change, visionary leadership and inter-organizational collaboration. Her most recent book, *Getting to Maybe* focuses on the dynamics of social innovation and institutional entrepreneurship in complex adaptive systems. Her first book, *Experiments in Consilience* focuses on the dynamics of inter-organizational and interdisciplinary collaboration in the management of ecological and conservation problems.

Before joining the University of Waterloo, Dr. Westley held the position of Director, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies (2005-2007) at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. Other positions she has previously held include the James McGill Professor of Strategy at McGill University's Faculty of Management, director of the McGill-Dupont Initiative on Social Innovation and director of the McGill-McConnell Masters program for National Voluntary Sector leaders – an innovative executive masters customized for the leaders of voluntary organizations across Canada.

Dr. Westley serves on numerous advisory boards including Resilience Alliance Board of Science, Emery University School of Ecology, World Conservation Union-Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, the Canadian Biodiversity Institute, the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, the Stockholm Resilience Center, the SARAS Institute and Evergreen Canada. She is on the editorial board of several journals, including *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science and Ecology and Society*.

Honours and awards Dr. Westley has received include the Corporate Knights Award and the Ulysses S. Seal Award for innovation in conservation.

Availability

Keynote, Moderator, Panelist, Workshop, Host/MC, Author Appearance, Corporate Training

Industry Expertise

Non-Profit/Charitable, Public Policy, Think Tanks, Research, Education/Learning, Renewables and Environmental

Topics

Sustainable Development, Social Innovation, Social Finance, Engagement and Social Change, Social Innovation and Resilience, Funding Social Innovation, Building Partnerships for Social Innovation

Affiliations

Sample Talks

Tipping towards sustainability: The great transformation towards sustainable development

This presentation will explore the links between crisis, opportunity, and innovation for navigating shifts and large-scale transformations towards global sustainability. A key question is the role of social innovations in transforming multi-level governance and management regimes and reducing negative environmental impacts. Social innovations that hold the promise of changing unsustainable trajectories need to be nurtured and connected to broad institutional resources and responses.

Strategies of Engagement

Private citizens, charities, interest groups and businesses are increasingly becoming involved in causes in which government has traditionally played a role. The issues range from climate change to global humanitarianism and consist of local, national and international spheres of action. This presentation will examine the complexities and sensitivities of engagement. Key issues to be explored include the constraints and success factors in different approaches.

Speaking Innovation to Power: The Uses and Abuses of Power in Social Innovation

Speaking innovation to power is a key element of successful, system changing, social innovations. This session will ground the dynamics of challenging and channeling existing power resources to support real change in cases as diverse as helping displaced persons camps in Eritrea, facilitating multi stakeholder collaborations in British Columbia and changing the power dynamics of environmental organisations through the use of global search engines.

Investing for People AND the Planet

Environmentalists and social investors are coordinating efforts to restore ecosystems and lift people out of poverty. There has been an unnatural divide between impact investors focused on alleviating poverty and planet-focused funders. Now scientists and investors jointly realize that these problems and solutions are linked and require a new, holistic approach to meet the challenges faced by our world and our species.

Social Innovation and Resilience: A Complexity Approach to Change and Transformation

Social innovation is an initiative, product or process or program that profoundly changes the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of any social system. Frances Westley will discuss how disruptive social innovations can address seemingly intractable social problems such as environmental degradation, poverty, and mental health and how the capacity of a society to create a steady flow of social innovations, can contribute to its overall social and ecological resilience.

Past Talks

Tipping towards sustainability: The great transformation towards sustainable development
3rd Nobel Laureate Symposium on Global Sustainability

Social Innovation and Resilience
Inspiring Action for Social Impact Series

Case Studies: Strategies of Engagement
From the Ground Up: Civic Engagement in Our Time

KEYNOTE SPEECH: Harnessing the Power of Social Innovation
State of the Fraser Basin Conference

KEYNOTE SPEECH: Social innovation and the Resilience of Social-Ecological Systems
The Association of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research Annual Conference

KEYNOTE SPEECH “Experiments in Consilience: Integrating social and scientific responses to biodiversity conservation challenges
EcoHealth ONE: Forging Collaboration Between Ecology and Health

Speaking Innovation to Power: The Uses and Abuses of Power in Social Innovation
Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship

Investing for People AND the Planet
SOCAP: Designing the Future!

KEYNOTE SPEECH “Institutional Entrepreneurs: Building Resilience in Socioecological Systems
Global Institute of Sustainability Speaker Series

KEYNOTE SPEECH “Getting to Maybe: Social Innovation an Agency Based Approach to Transformation
Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation in Turbulent Times

Panel Moderator: Leadership, Innovation and Sustainability
2009 Brick Works Forum on Leadership, Innovation and Sustainability

A Conversation on Climate Change and Social Innovation
SiG@Waterloo Speaker Series

KEYNOTE SPEECH
Renewal Partners Speaker Series

Education

Middlebury College
B.A. Fine Arts, English

McGill University
M.A.

McGill University
Ph.D. Sociology

Accomplishments

JW McConnell Chair in Social Innovation – **Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience**
At Social Innovation Generation, University of Waterloo (SiG@Waterloo), our goal is to generate new knowledge about social innovations and the social innovation process in Canada. In particular, the dynamics of learning, adaptation and innovation in the arena of sustainable development and in the mental health domain (identified as one of the most pressing challenges of engaging vulnerable populations).

Co-Author – **Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed**

Many of us have a deep desire to make the world around us a better place. But often our good intentions are undermined by the fear that we are so insignificant in the big scheme of things that nothing we can do will actually help. Getting to Maybe applies the insights of complexity theory and harvests the experiences of a wide range of people and organizations to lay out a brand new way of thinking about making change in communities, in business, and in the world.

Author / Editor – **Experiments in Consilience: Integrating Social And Scientific Responses To Save Endangered Species**

In his book Consilience, E.O. Wilson set forth the idea that integrating knowledge and insights from across the spectrum of human study – the humanities, social science, and natural sciences – is the key to solving complex environmental and social problems. Experiments in Consilience tells the unique story of a path-breaking effort to apply this theoretical construct in a real-world setting, and offers fresh ideas on how to improve on-the-ground conservation decision-making.

Core Member – **Waterloo Institute for Complexity and Innovation**

The Waterloo Institute for Complexity and Innovation (WICI) facilitates rigorous transdisciplinary and collaborative research promoting innovation and resilience within – and beneficial transformation of – the complex adaptive systems at the core of human well being in the 21st century. Core Members are regular, research, or adjunct university faculty who lead a long-horizon research program under the Institute’s auspices.

Board Member – **South American Institute for Resilience and Sustainability Studies**

SARA(S) is an interdisciplinary research institute designed to catalyze high impact science that serves to enhance the region's long term resilience and sustainable development. SARA(S) is a place where paradigm shifts in thinking about resilience and sustainable futures are triggered. While it is respected for its cutting edge science, SARA(S) is also be known for its remarkable capacity to link the powers of science and arts to policy.

Strategic Committee Member â€“ Conservation Breeding Specialist Group

The Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) is a global network of conservation professionals dedicated to saving threatened species by increasing the effectiveness of conservation efforts worldwide. CBSG is recognized and respected for its use of innovative, scientifically sound, collaborative processes that bring together people with diverse perspectives and knowledge to catalyze positive conservation change.

Advisory Board â€“ Centre for Marine Biodiversity

The Centre for Marine Biodiversity (CMB) is a largely virtual institute established in 2000 to provide a focus for the broad array of marine biodiversity research being conducted in Atlantic Canada. The mandate of the Centre is to provide a focus for structuring independent research efforts toward an overall synthesis of information on marine biodiversity, with a focus on the Northwest Atlantic.

Board Member â€“ Stockholm Resilience Center

Stockholm Resilience Centre advances research on the governance of social-ecological systems with a special emphasis on resilience â€“ the ability to deal with change and continue to develop. The aim is to create a world-leading transdisciplinary research centre that advances the understanding of complex social-ecological systems and generates new and elaborated insights and means for the development of management and governance practices.

Recipient â€“ Corporate Knights Schools Pioneer Award

In 2003, Dr. Westley received a Corporate Knights Schools Pioneer Award in the Category of Institutional Impact. The award recognizes Canada's academics who have had the most impact in furthering the evolution of the triple-bottom-line (people, planet, and profits). The winners were voted by the Knight School advisory panel consisting of leading individuals from business, media and the NGO sector.

International Advisory Council â€“ Musagetes Foundation

Musagetes is an international organization which seeks to transform contemporary life by working with artists, cultural mediators, public intellectuals and partners to develop new approaches to building community and culture. Musagetes promotes the arts & artistic creativity as tools for social transformation, and works with artists, cultural mediators and partners to develop new approaches to enhance the impact of artistic creativity on culture and communities, policy makers and the public.

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