



UNIVERSITY OF  
**WATERLOO**

# **CASES OF PERSONS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA WHO GET LOST AND GO MISSING IN CANADA**

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Public Safety  
Canada

Sécurité publique  
Canada



## 9. A retired pastor living with young onset Alzheimer's Disease becomes lost while on a walk and is never found

### Personal information

**Name:** Reverend Shin Ik Noh.

**Age:** 64 years old when he went missing in 2013.

**Gender:** Man, pronouns are he/him.

**Living situation:** Single family home in Coquitlam, British Columbia, with his spouse.

**Social support:** Spouse (Florence), two adult children (Sam and Rebecca) and their families.

**Health:** Young onset dementia (midstage at the time of missing incident), was taking medication to slow down and manage dementia symptoms.

**Interests:** Going for walks, attending church services, reading, going for coffee, socializing with family and friends.



## Background

### Shin's family

Shin and his wife Florence got married in 1980. Shin immigrated from Korea to Canada, leaving his career as a chemical engineer and settling in Coquitlam. Their adult children, Sam and Rebecca, and their families, live close by. Since Shin's diagnosis of young onset dementia at the age of 59 years, Sam and Rebecca help their parents by taking Shin to medical appointments and providing rides for Shin. Sam owns a small business, and Shin accompanies Sam on his errands to give Shin's wife a break from caregiving. Shin and his wife are proud grandparents of a granddaughter. Shin speaks fluent English and Korean.





### **Shin's career and community service**

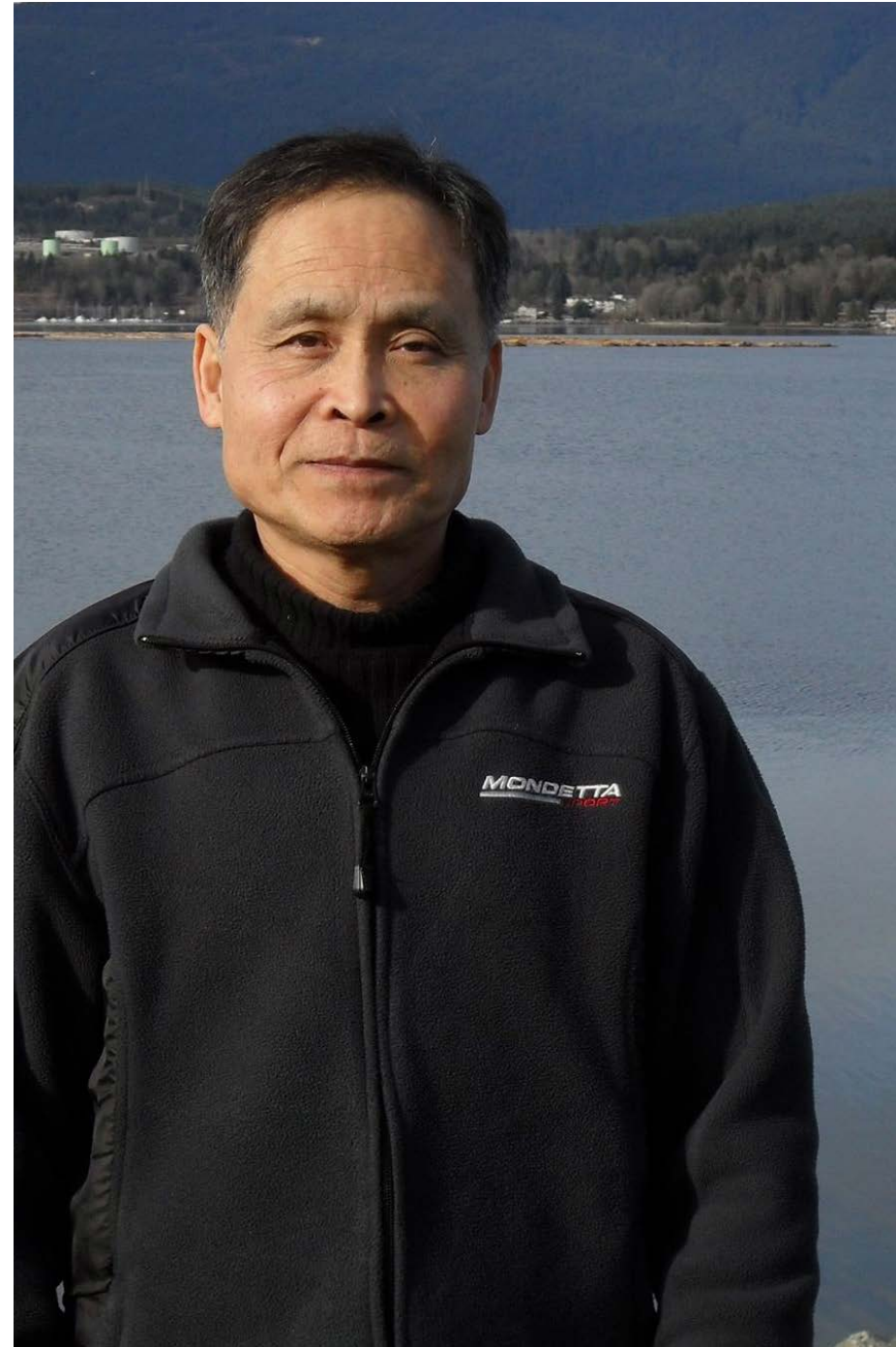
Shin and his wife Florence worked hard to create a good life for their family in Canada. Initially, Shin worked many odd jobs to support his family before obtaining a master's degree in theology. He became a church pastor in Calgary in 1989. He then founded a Korean immigrant church in Coquitlam in 1993. He retired from his position as pastor in 2005. Shin looks forward to going to church each Sunday, where he continues to see members of his congregation. Shin is highly respected in his community. He has dedicated his life to helping others through his work as a pastor and through his volunteer work at emergency shelters. He is known for his wisdom, sense of humor, perseverance, and kindness.



## Diagnosis and history of missing incidents

Shin has good days and bad days. He forgets dates and details like when he last ate, and he repeats questions. Communication is becoming more difficult. It can be challenging to reason with Shin at times, especially when he wants to do an activity that he may no longer be able to do, such as going for walks alone. Shin prefers to keep his diagnosis private. Only his family and his doctor know that he has dementia.

Shin is an avid walker. In the year before he went missing, he got lost twice while out for a walk alone. He was found by an RCMP officer once and, another time, by a neighbour who noticed Shin pacing back and forth not far from home. The neighbour recognized that Shin needed help and brought him home. The officer and the neighbour respected Shin's wish not to inform his family that he was lost. Until this most recent missing incident, Shin's family members were unaware that he had been lost twice in the past and received help to return home. Unfortunately, Shin's family was also unaware that he could potentially get lost even with the young onset dementia disease, as they were not informed.





## The day of the incident

### – Getting lost

#### Shin goes on a walk

He is at home with his wife Florence, and they are looking after their two-year-old granddaughter. Shin is very eager to go for his morning walk. He is in good physical shape and can walk long distances. Florence asks Shin to wait until his granddaughter wakes up from a nap so that they can go together. She tries to stop him, but Shin becomes upset. Shin agrees that he will only walk around the block and then return home to wait for Florence and granddaughter. On September 18, 2013 at 10:20 AM, Shin leaves his home wearing appropriate clothing and a medical identification bracelet.

#### Shin does not return from his walk

When Shin does not return from his walk a couple hours later, Florence calls their son Sam for help. Sam is concerned for his father's safety. He contacts police to report his father missing. However, he wonders if it is too soon to do so and if he should try to look for his dad himself.





## The search

### Local search

Officers are dispatched to interview Shin's wife and Sam. Friends and family help search local areas and places that Shin liked to visit such as the local parks, churches, and coffee shops. A search is initiated and the area surrounding Shin's home is searched by police. The local search and rescue team is asked by police to help with the search later in the evening on the day he left home, with no results.

### Sharing Shin's diagnosis

News about Shin being missing spreads slowly. It takes more than 24 hours to be released by the media. Shin's family struggles with deciding whether to share Shin's diagnosis since they want to respect Shin's wishes of keeping his dementia diagnosis private.

The family decides to disclose Shin's diagnosis and was overwhelmed by the support and understanding they received from friends and members of their community. Desperate to get the word out, Shin's family starts utilizing social media. They set up a Google map for members of the public to plot their own searches and



to use collective data gathering. Sam's fitness studio becomes search headquarters for the public to pick up flyers and maps.

### Expanded search

The search expands. Police search public transit stations, bus shelters, soup kitchens, food courts, shopping malls, fast-food restaurants, and convenience stores. Police seek the assistance of the search and rescue team to search challenging terrain, bushes, creeks, parks, construction sites, and shorelines. The search area is enlarged to Vancouver and other suburbs. Unfortunately, Shin is not found.

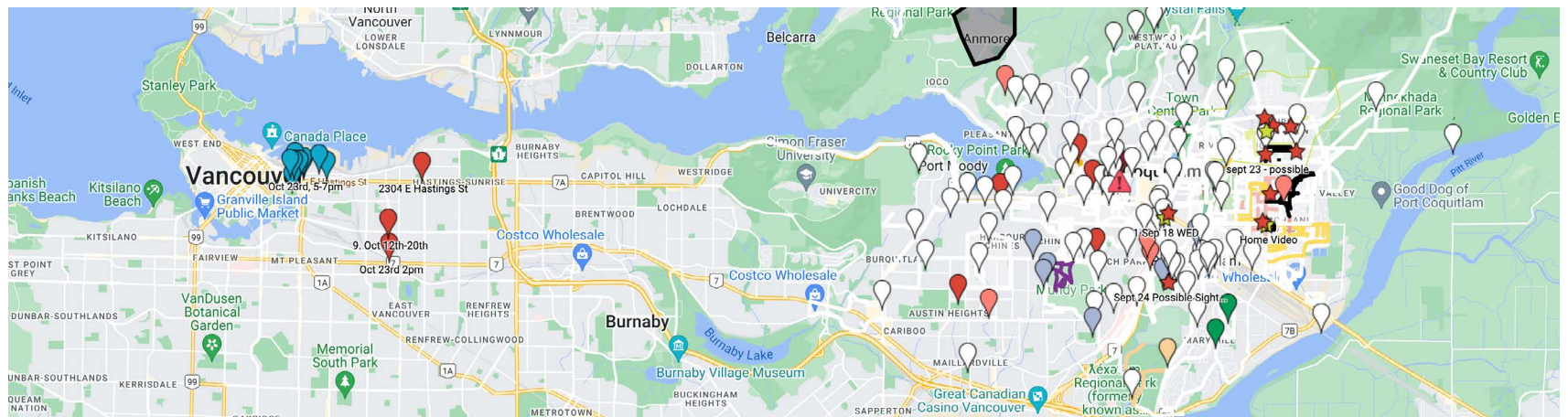
## Volunteers get involved

Shin's family knows that he may not ask for help and that the public can assist by keeping an eye out for him. Sam and his sister organize searches involving hundreds of volunteers. They distribute posters containing information about Shin including his photo, ride public transit and walk the streets in hopes of spotting Shin. They have coffee watches at Tim Hortons and McDonald's in case Shin goes to these to warm up. Shin's family set up a website, a Facebook group, and use social media to spread the word. Money, food, and supplies were donated by the public and businesses to support the search. The missing incident is widely covered in the media. Despite these efforts, Shin is not located.

## Potential sightings

On Sunday September 22, 2013, the family learns of confirmed sightings of Shin by a member of his church and a construction worker. The church member saw Shin on the day that he went missing, but they did not realize that Shin was lost so they did not intervene. The construction worker's sighting suggests that Shin may have taken a wrong turn and ended up kilometres from his home. Police, search and rescue, and Shin's family follow up on many other sightings. A group of unhoused people living on Burke Mountain, approximately 5 kilometres from his home, report giving Shin food, but his identity is not confirmed. This potential sighting and others do not lead to finding Shin.

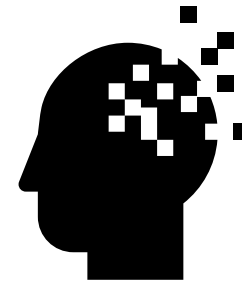
## Areas searched were tracked on Google Maps





## After the incident

Despite the efforts of police, search and rescue, Shin's family, and volunteers, he has not been found. For years, the family has maintained hope and continued to look for him. They want closure and have come to the painful realization that he may never be found. Sam and his family want to prevent others from going through the same circumstances and grief. Sam co-founded BC Silver Alert, a community-led program for notifying community subscribers about missing persons with dementia, cognitive impairment, and autism. The system uses various channels, including social media platforms like Facebook and X (previously Twitter), as well as via email or SMS messages.



**BC Silver Alert**

We would like to thank and acknowledge the Noh family for giving permission to share their story.



## Resources

### **It is an emergency when a person living with dementia is missing. Call 911 right away.**

It is a common myth that a person needs to wait 24 hours to report the person as missing. If a missing person is not found within 24 hours, up to half of missing people living with dementia will be found seriously injured or deceased.

Some people living with dementia and their care partners may not have access to the support they need due to a lack of culturally safe care and language barriers. A diagnosis of dementia can come with stigma and shame. This can result in delays in diagnosing dementia, getting support, reporting missing incidents, and giving permission to publicly disclose the missing incidents.

The Alzheimer Society of Canada has the following resources:

- Information on dementia in various languages including Chinese, Punjabi, Hindi, Spanish, and Portuguese: <https://alzheimer.ca/en/help-support/dementia-resources/more-languages>
- A report that describes barriers to culturally appropriate care faced by racially diverse communities: <https://alzheimer.ca/en/whats-happening/news/equity-diversity-inclusion-dementia-diagnosis-canadian-perspective>
- 10 ways to reduce stigma against dementia: <https://alzheimer.ca/en/about-dementia/stigma-against-dementia/10-easy-ways-fight-stigma-against-dementia>



Alert systems, such as Silver Alerts, exist in some places. These systems use media outlets (e.g., radio and TV stations), social media (e.g., X or Facebook), or traffic signs to share missing persons information to the public and reduce risks of harm. The University of Waterloo created a policy brief that can inform the development of community alert systems in Canada:

[https://uwaterloo.ca/aging-innovation-research-program/sites/default/files/uploads/files/policy\\_brief\\_community\\_alert\\_systems\\_finalcitation.pdf](https://uwaterloo.ca/aging-innovation-research-program/sites/default/files/uploads/files/policy_brief_community_alert_systems_finalcitation.pdf)

Information about the BC Silver Alert system, co-founded by Sam Noh and Michael Coyle (a search and rescue volunteer) can be found here: <https://bcsilveralert.ca/>







## Resources

**Toolkit** to manage the risk of getting lost and going missing for people living with dementia.

This toolkit contains strategies to help with the common concerns of people living with dementia and their care partners regarding the risks of becoming lost.



## Emergency card

People living with dementia can carry an “In Case of Emergency” card. It has important information to help them if they go missing. This card was made by the [Calgary Missing Older adult Resource Network](#), see page 16.

## The Herbert Protocol

Important details about the person at risk can be gathered in The Herbert Protocol. This information can help first responders when someone is missing. Keep this information at home on your fridge and give it to care partners. Click this link to access the [‘Resource Guide for Older Adults at Risk of Going Missing’](#); fill out the form on pages 15-20.

## Safety and leisure activities

Balancing leisure time with safety can be challenging. [The Canadian Guideline for Safe Wandering](#) provides strategies to promote safe wandering and manage the risk of getting lost when doing leisure activities.

## Driving with dementia

It can be challenging to drive a car when the driver has a hard time remembering, navigating, and attending to the environment. This [Driving and Dementia Roadmap](#) includes safety considerations related to driving with dementia.

In Case of Emergency	
Full Name	_____
Date of Birth	_____ Blood type _____
Address	_____
Cell	_____ Work _____ Home _____
Current Meds	_____
Conditions	_____
Physician	_____ Phone _____
Allergy/additional info	_____
In Case of Emergency	
Emergency Contact #1	_____
Relationship	_____ Work Phone _____
Cell Phone	_____ Work Phone _____
Emergency Contact #1	_____
Relationship	_____ Work Phone _____
Cell Phone	_____ Work Phone _____
Additional Info	_____
_____ Last updated _____	

## Locator devices

Locator devices help people living with dementia share their location with family in case they are lost. They may also help the police find people should they go missing. The [Alzheimer Society of Canada](#) shares more information about the purposes of locator devices. The [University of Waterloo Aging and Innovation Research Program](#) outlines features of locator devices, including cost and battery life.

## What to do if you find a missing person

A missing incident is an emergency. Call police and ask the operator or service how you can help. [A video from Dementia Network Calgary](#) outlines a missing incident involving a person living with dementia and how to help.

# Links

- **Toolkit** to manage the risk of getting lost and going missing for people living with dementia, made by the University of Waterloo. <https://uwaterloo.ca/managing-risks-of-disappearance-in-persons-living-with-dementia/toolkit-0>
- **“In Case of Emergency” card** made by Calgary Missing Older Adult Resource Network. See page 14. <https://missingseniors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Resource-guide-for-people-at-risk-of-going-missing.pdf>
- **The Herbert Protocol** described by Calgary Missing Older Adult Resource Network. See pages 15-20. <https://missingseniors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Resource-guide-for-people-at-risk-of-going-missing.pdf>
- **The Canadian Guideline for Safe Wandering.** [https://canadiansafewandering.ca/#more\\_information](https://canadiansafewandering.ca/#more_information)
- **The Driving and Dementia Roadmap.** <https://www.drivinganddementia.ca/>
- **Locator device overview**, as described by the Alzheimer Society of Canada. <https://alzheimer.ca/en/help-support/im-caring-person-living-dementia/ensuring-safety-security/tracking-devices>
- **Locator device features**, as described by the University of Waterloo Aging and Innovation Research Program. <https://uwaterloo.ca/aging-innovation-research-program/locator-devices>
- **What to do if you find a missing person.** Dementia Network Calgary’s video [dementianetworkcalgary.ca/](https://dementianetworkcalgary.ca/)





# For more information

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