

## Ontario's newest chief nurse arrives at Queen's Park

KAIYAN FU BRINGS A DIVERSE BLEND OF EXPERIENCE AND A DEDICATION TO PATIENT CARE TO THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

ONTARIO'S NEW PROVINCIAL CHIEF nursing officer didn't set out to become a health-care leader. Instead, Kaiyan Fu was led down that path by deeply ingrained values of respect for the elderly and the vulnerable in society.

Fu grew up in Zhengzhou in central China, where reverence for one's elders is woven into the cultural fabric. Part of a tight-knit family, Fu was also very close with her grandparents. When she was a teenager, her parents moved to Canada as visiting scholars at the University of Toronto (U of T). Soon afterward, she moved to Guangzhou to study medicine, following in the footsteps of her mother, a pediatrician.

Her path would take a dramatic turn following the June 1989 pro-democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. During the period of political uncertainty that followed the protests, the Canadian government granted many Chinese scholars permanent residency, and Fu was given a special permit to join her parents in Toronto. In November 1989, she landed at Toronto's Pearson International Airport in unfamiliar surroundings.

"Everything was so foreign," she recalls. "That was a very long winter for me in a new country, a new culture, a new language, a new everything."

Becoming a doctor in China requires five to six years of school, compared to upwards of eight years in Canada, and Fu's Chinese medical school

credits were not transferrable toward a Canadian degree. This, coupled with the challenge of a new language, led Fu's mother to suggest her daughter consider nursing. To overcome the language barrier, Fu recorded every lecture in nursing school at U of T



and painstakingly transcribed each recording word-for-word after class.

After graduating with honours in 1995 and being inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, Fu got her start practising part time at Toronto's Mt. Sinai Hospital and Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, where she gained a solid foundation as a point-of-care nurse. Two years later, she became a case manager (or care co-ordinator) at the Scarborough Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) – a role she says reinforced her desire to care for the elderly and vulnerable, and helped shape the

rest of her career. In 1999, Fu became the CCAC's youngest client services manager at just 28-years-old. This was her first taste of administrative leadership, and she never turned back, returning to U of T the next year for her master's degree in health administration.

Organization (BPSO) status in 2012, implementing 17 best practice guidelines. She was also heavily involved with RNAO in other capacities. She served on the association's board of directors from 2009-2011, and was integral to several RNAO initiatives – including travelling to

### Three things you don't know about Kaiyan Fu:

1. The name Kaiyan is composed of two characters in Mandarin, meaning "happy" and "smile."
2. She insists her two children speak Mandarin at home, to keep them connected to their heritage.
3. Kaiyan earned a 100 per cent grade in her math class at medical school in China.

"I knew that caring for people is what I really wanted to do... whether it was at the front line or in leadership," Fu recalls.

After earning her master's, Fu was recruited by Deloitte Canada, where she worked with health organizations from across the country and gained an understanding of health care at a system level. She spent six years at Deloitte before spending another six as director of nursing innovation and change management at Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital.

One of her most significant achievements at St. Michael's was helping the organization achieve Best Practice Spotlight

Beijing to help deliver educational workshops, and hosting four visiting Chinese nurses at St. Michael's as part of a joint knowledge-sharing project between RNAO and the Beijing Consultation of Culture.

This May, Fu took over as provincial chief nursing officer at Queen's Park – an opportunity she says is the perfect fit at this point in her career, with her diverse background in different sectors.

"It's almost like I worked for 20 years to prepare me for this job," she says. **RN**

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