

Enhancing the Well Being, Social and Civic Engagement of Immigrant Women Retirees Project Newsletter 1

Project Newsletter

10/5/2016

Volume 1

The Project – Why Immigrant Women Retirees?

A silent but significant shift in the Canadian demographic is underway. The population is growing rapidly due to immigration, and is also aging, thus creating a new group of immigrant seniors. Current

research about the impacts of immigration on aging is sparse, especially in Canada. Even less is known about the gendered experiences of immigrant women seniors.

There is growing agreement among policy makers, scholars and service providers of the need for an innovative, integrated approach to seniors, which acknowledges their strengths, diverse cultural backgrounds, socio-economic contexts, gender differences and immigration experiences. In response to this need Bow Valley College (BVC) and the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) have partnered in a SSHRC funded initiative to develop an evidence based

approach to understanding critical barriers and available supports for retired immigrant women.

Did you know?

- By 2030 close to one in four persons in Canada will be a senior and nearly 30% of seniors are immigrants
- At age 65, about 1 in 4 people belonging to the "baby boom" cohort could be born abroad. By comparison, this proportion could be close to 1 in 2 for those born between 1997 and 2001.
- Women are over represented in both immigrant and senior populations.

Project Team

Research Working Group and Co Creation Team:

Dr. Martha Fanjoy (BVC)
Hana Taleb Imai (BVC)
Bronwyn Bragg (BVC)
Laurent Wall (BVC)
Mariama Zaami (BVC)
Celestina Akinkunmi (CIWA)

Steering Committee:

Elza Bruk (BVC)
Beba Svirig (CIWA)
Elizabeth Schnitzler (City of Calgary)
Dr. Cherylyn Cameron (BVC)
Patricia Spadafora (Sheridan College)

For information on the project please contact Martha Fanjoy.
mfanjoy@bowvalleycollege.ca
403-410-3482

Project Update

Phase 1 (July 2016– February 2017): *Data collection with immigrant women retirees and stakeholders.*

Data collection will include in depth interviews with 20 immigrant women retirees, followed by targeted participant observation, and 15 stakeholder interviews.

Phase 2 (March 2017- September 2018): *Co-creation and knowledge dissemination.*

This phase involves working with a group of 10 participants to co-learn from the research findings and our experiences, and co-create a community driven initiative to address wellbeing and social participation for immigrant women retirees.

Knowledge dissemination and mobilization activities with stakeholders in community, government, and post-

secondary institutions, is also part of this phase.

Milestones to date include:

- Research team hired and trained.
- Literature review completed
- 10 Stakeholder interviews completed
- 10 Participant interviews completed

Methods Corner

Participant Observation (PO), is a method in which the researcher spends time observing, and often participating in, events and daily activities of their research participants. So what do we learn from spending time observing everyday activities and events? What are we looking for?

Observing National Seniors Day – RA field note excerpt:

National Seniors Day was hosted at City Hall on a rainy Saturday morning. Seniors of Sikh, East Indian, Polish, Mandarin and Cantonese communities almost filled the 200 available seats. This event was hosted by Immigration Services Calgary, the city's Age-Friendly Calgary initiative, and the Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizen's Association. Speeches from a federal cabinet minister, an Albertan MLA, and the deputy mayor of Calgary emphasized the importance of this event as a community building initiative, and the important role that seniors and immigrants of diverse backgrounds play in Canada. While the organizations provided the framework for putting the event in place, the day's performers were volunteers. As the morning progressed the audience cheered as numerous volunteers performed- a five piece zither song set, Chinese and East Indian elderly women dancing to Punjabi music, Polish elders dancing to a Polish waltz, and CCECA members dancing to American techno and country music. These performers included all ages, from ten years old to seniors in their eighties.

From these notes we can start to unpack data and triangulate it with what we are hearing in interviews. We can see how women are networking and socializing within, and outside, of their ethno-cultural group, or we can explore the relationship between the discourse found in programmatic materials and stakeholder interviews with on the ground practice and implementation. In short PO allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how immigrant women retirees' everyday practices construct and shape their experiences of well-being and participation.