



In Attendance

Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement, Bow Valley College

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Phase II / III Knowledge Exchange Meeting – Summary Notes

Bow Valley College, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association research participants, and the City of Calgary's Age Friendly Calgary team

Project Background

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 experience. In response to this need Bow Valley College (BVC) and the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) partnered in a SSHRC funded initiative to develop an evidence based approach to understanding critical barriers and available supports for retired immigrant women.

This multi-phase research project took place between September 2016 and December 2017. In the first phase of the research, the team interviewed 20 retired immigrant women and 15 stakeholders who work with immigrant women seniors. The interviews were followed by a period of focused ethnography' or participant observation with a group of seven

research participants. Together the interview data and the observations allowed the research team to identify key barriers and facilitators to civic engagement and social participation for immigrant women seniors in Calgary (these findings are available in our Phase 1 report on the website).

In the second phase of the project, the research team worked with staff at the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association to engage participants from the research in 'co-creation.' From May until November 2017, the research team met with a group of immigrant women retirees to develop and pilot initiatives to support the social participation and civic engagement of immigrant women seniors.

The co-creation group identified Calgary's Age Friendly Strategy as a key policy lever for meeting the needs of seniors from both immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds. In November 2017, the team set up a meeting with staff from the City of Calgary to learn more about the Age Friendly Strategy and civic engagement more broadly. This brief highlights some of the key discussion points from a three hour knowledge exchange meeting between retired immigrant women, staff from the City of Calgary, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association and Bow Valley College.



Key insights

Civic Engagement

Bruce Furlong, Coordinator, Age Friendly Calgary, presented on civic engagement and the variety of ways Calgarians can get involved in municipal issues. In an engaging and interactive presentation, Bruce shared key avenues for civic engagement. The key take-aways from this presentation were the following:

- Providing a comprehensive definition and discussion about civic engagement
- Discussing ways people can get engaged in civic issues (through volunteering, taking an interest in an issue that impacts you, taking a course or setting up a meeting with an elected representative, such as your City Councillor)
- Discussing ways of staying informed (through newspapers, social media, the Calgary Public Library, phone lines and websites)
- Discussing ways of getting involved at the City of Calgary level (attending Council meetings, attending Committee meetings, by participating in a City Hall 101 session, attend a community association meeting, meet your councillor)
- Explaining how to navigate the City of Calgary websites including how to find your councillor using your address; the Calgary Transit website; the Engage website to find out about City engagement events in your neighbourhood and the Age Friendly Calgary website
- The differences between 211, 311, 411, 511, 811, 911 and how to use the online 311 system

Meeting Goals

- Knowledge exchange between staff from the City of Calgary and co-creation participants
- Co-creation participants learn about civic engagement
- Co-Creation participants gain a deeper understanding of the Age Friendly Strategy
- Co-creation participants gain comfort and skill speaking to stakeholders
- City of Calgary staff gain insight from lived experiences of older adults from immigrant backgrounds

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement means making an effort to become more involved, engaged and informed as a citizen about important matters that relate to you and your city. It also means enhancing the quality of life in your community, through political and non-political processes.



Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy

Following Bruce's presentation, Angela Catenacci, Age Friendly Administrator, presented the key components of the Age Friendly Calgary to group. These were the key take-aways from this presentation:

- Age-Friendly Calgary is a community directed initiative to prepare for Calgary's aging population
- The vision for the Strategy is "an age-friendly city where all people have lifelong opportunities to thrive."
- The key partners who are involve include all levels of government, the healthcare system (AHS), post-secondary education and research, the non-profit sector, the private sector and individual community members
- Participants learned about the work that the City is doing in each of the six priority areas. For example, improving access to information and services for older adults in Calgary by developing a 'Best Practices Communication Guide' for organizations, business and community services on how to communicate more effectively with older adults
- Participants learned about other initiatives related to community support and health, housing, participation and inclusion, prevention and responses to elder abuse and issues and solutions around transportation and mobility
- The discussion concluded with ways Calgarians can get involved with the strategy including: Being a good neighbour by offering to help cut grass or shovel snow; Learning about changes you can make now to stay in your home as you age; Continuing to learn and challenge yourself; Learning a new skill or try a new activity; Signing up for the Age-Friendly Calgary newsletter; and learning more about programs and services that are available for seniors and sharing your knowledge with others.

Age Friendly Calgary Priority Areas

1. Access to Information and Services
2. Community Support and health
3. Housing
4. Participation and Inclusion
5. Prevention and Response to elder abuse
6. Transportation and mobility

Insights From Retired Immigrant Women

Following the presentations from Bruce and Angela, the co-creation participants were invited to share their experiences around the facilitators and barriers to civic engagement and participation. The key themes resulting from this discussion are summarized here:

- The cost of programs is a barrier for participation in some programs. Participants expressed a desire to continue their learning but shared that sometimes the cost of educational programs is prohibitively expensive.
- The location of a program is significant and plays a role in whether they are able to attend the program. While participants expressed that they like to attend programs that are close to their home, they also shared that they will travel to attend programs especially if a friend is going with them.
- Participants shared that they are all comfortable and experienced at using Calgary Transit and many spoke highly of the service that Calgary Transit offers. One challenge they experience is that in the winter the bus stops tend to be icy and it would be better if they could be cleared of snow and ice to prevent falls.
- Related to transportation and mobility, several participants expressed that they appreciate the accessibility and availability of transit because it allows them to maintain their independence and autonomy which they value.
- One participant shared that she volunteers at a long-term care facility and works with women from her cultural community. She shared with the group that she feels these seniors are especially isolated and lonely as they often have very few people to speak to in their first language or who share their cultural background. Her hope is for long-term care facilities to be more attentive to the needs of immigrant seniors, including providing language and culturally appropriate care and support
- The discussion concluded with an emphasis on the need to make sure all City services and programs are sensitive to the needs of older adults from immigrant backgrounds, especially as this population continues to grow, this means more than having immigrant serving agencies providing programs for immigrant seniors. There should be a broader effort to ensure that all programs are inclusive and welcoming spaces for older adults from immigrant backgrounds.

