



Project Team

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Civic Engagement Knowledge Exchange

From May to November 2017 the research team worked with staff at the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) to engage participants from the research in 'co-creation.' 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. On November 22, 2017 a three-hour knowledge exchange meeting took place between retired immigrant women, staff from the City of Calgary, CIWA and Bow Valley College.

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. 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). 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.

Following Bruce's presentation, Angela Catenacci, Age Friendly Administrator, presented the key components of the Age Friendly Calgary to group. 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." Participants learned about the work that the City is doing in 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.

Following the presentations from Bruce and Angela, the research participants had the opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences related to being an older adult, and an immigrant woman, in the city of Calgary. The discussion centered 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. Participants emphasized that inclusions 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.



Project Update

Phase I: Data Collection & Preliminary Analysis

June 2016 – March 2017 (Complete)

Phase II: Program Co-Creation

April 2017 – December 2017 (Complete)

- Collective reflection on data (May, 2017)
- Prioritizing themes, action planning, and program design (June - August 2017)
- Implementation and evaluation (September - December 2017)

Knowledge Dissemination

February 2017 – Present

- Bow Valley College Brown Bag Lunch presentation (February, 2017)
- Annual Metropolis Conference presentation (March, 2017)

- Western Canadian Conference on Gender, Immigration, and Integration presentation (March, 2017)
- Research in Action stakeholder world café (June, 2017)
- Presentation at Grey Matters conference in Hinton, AB (September, 2017)
- Bow Valley College class presentations (x2), Sociology of Aging (October – November 2017)
- Stakeholder Civic Engagement Exchange, City of Calgary (November, 2017)

Hearing from Participants

Following their participation in the co-creation phase of the research, we asked each of our participants to provide feedback on the process. The research team wanted to hear about what worked, what could have been improved and what each participant got out of participating. Here are a few reflections from our participants:



"[You are] put in a situation where you meet with them not just on a casual basis but actively working with each other on common issues is a very effective way to get over these cross-cultural misunderstandings. Because I myself I said, 'Oh I didn't realize that's how also they think.' Because you think more in terms of your own, your background. So it's just hearing those and listening to those and learning from them that you say, 'Oh, we are the same in our concerns and how we go about it.'" (Co-creation participant)



"I am the type of person that I want to see through a project from beginning to end. And I feel a sense of accomplishment if I do that, so with this project I have this sense of accomplishment. That yes, I was able to contribute. So that's a sense of accomplishment." (Co-creation participant)



"They made us feel as though we're contributing to something to some sort of research project which is really nice. They even said that we could look at it after it was finished which was really nice...I liked breaking out into groups and forming an action plan – all sorts of ideas coming from everybody coming together." (Co-creation participant)

