

CENTRE ON AGING 31ST ANNUAL SPRING RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM



AGING IN A NEW HOMELAND

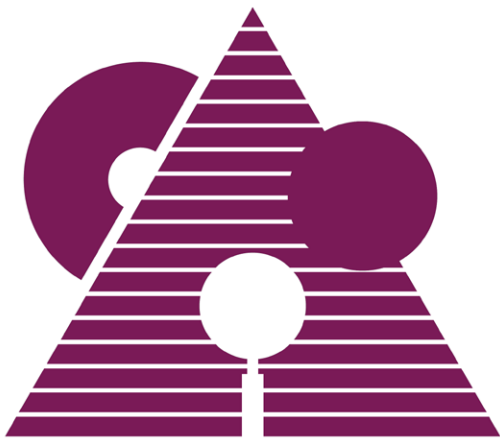
Report of the May 6, 2014

Centre on Aging Spring Research Symposium workshop
on issues affecting older immigrants

REPORT PREPARED BY:

Verena Menec, PhD
Nancy Newall, PhD

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Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba

The Centre on Aging, established on July 1, 1982 is a university-wide research centre with a mandate to conduct, encourage, integrate, and disseminate research on all aspects of aging.

For further information contact:

Centre on Aging
338 Isbister Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
R3T 2N2

Phone: 204.474.8754 | Fax: 204.474.7576

Email: coaman@umanitoba.ca | Web site: www.umanitoba.ca/centres/aging

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CentreOnAging.umanitoba

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Executive summary

The Centre on Aging's 31st Annual Spring Research Symposium was held at the University of Manitoba, Bannatyne Campus from May 5-6, 2014. As part of the Symposium, a half-day workshop was held to allow in-depth discussion among participants on issues affecting older immigrants and their families and look at possible solutions to promote change. A total of 46 individuals attended the workshop and discussed three topics related to immigrant seniors:

- Social engagement and leisure activity participation
- Health care services
- Housing

The goal of the discussion was to identify positive things that are happening, challenges, and solutions in relation to older immigrants and their families within each of the three topic areas.

Key conclusions from the workshop are the need to:

- improve language services (e.g., formal language classes or informal groups)
- provide more easily-understandable, easily-accessible information of services and resources that are available
- target diverse places in disseminating information (e.g., grocery stores, banks, realty offices)
- increase services and opportunities for older immigrants (e.g., interpreting, social programs, orientation to Canadian life, such as dealing with the weather)
- provide transportation services to help older immigrants attend medical appointments, social and educational services and activities
- create more diverse housing options that accommodate the needs of culturally diverse seniors (e.g., three-generation households)
- facilitate and improve connections and partnerships among health, social, and ethno-cultural community organizations, and public and private service providers
- advocate for older immigrants (e.g., to increase funding for services)
- conduct a needs assessment to identify specific needs of seniors from different cultural groups

Background

Each year, thousands of people immigrate to Canada, with a considerable proportion deciding to live in Manitoba. In 2012, 13,312 people immigrated to Manitoba (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Many immigrants have little to no knowledge of either official language. In Manitoba, 14,135 individuals were unable to speak either English or French in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Although the typical immigrant is younger, older people do immigrate to Canada. Moreover, younger immigrants will eventually age in their new chosen homeland. Due to potential language or cultural factors, older immigrants may have unique needs in relation to social engagement services and opportunities, health care services, and housing.

The Centre on Aging's 31st Annual Spring Research Symposium, held at the University of Manitoba, Bannatyne Campus from May 5-6, 2014 was designed to address some of these issues. Specifically, the Symposium focused on two themes: aging as a global phenomenon and issues that aging immigrants face in their new homeland.

On May 5, the Symposium started off with presentations on global aging. The afternoon involved presentations on issues affecting older immigrants and their families locally.

On May 6, a half-day workshop was held to allow in-depth discussion among participants on issues affecting older immigrants and their families and look at possible solutions to promote change.

Workshop participants discussed three topics related to immigrant seniors:

- Social engagement and leisure activity participation
- Health care services
- Housing

Forty-six individuals attended the workshop. Participants were divided into six breakout groups (two groups per topic) of 6–9 individuals per group. Each group had a facilitator and a note taker assigned to it.

This report summarizes the discussions at the May 6, 2014 workshop.

Questions addressed

The goal of the breakout groups was to identify positive things that are happening, challenges, and solutions in relation to older immigrants and their families. Specifically, the following questions were asked:

- What are the good things in Winnipeg (or elsewhere) that help older immigrants and their families in terms of ... (social engagement or health care or housing)? For example, effective services for older immigrants, supportive policies, or other good examples.
- What are the challenges or difficulties that need to be addressed in terms of ... (social engagement or health care or housing)? For example, informational needs, resources, or attitudinal barriers.
- What are the most important solutions to address the challenges experienced by older immigrants and their families?
- Considering the three most important solutions, what needs to happen to implement them?

How this report is organized

This report is organized into three sections:

- Social engagement and leisure activity participation
- Health care services
- Housing

Within each section, good things already in place that were identified by workshop participants are listed, followed by challenges and solutions.



Social engagement and leisure activity participation

Good things already in place

Organizations that provide English language classes for immigrants, such as ...

- A&O: Support Services for Older Adults, Entry Program for Older Adults Immigrants
- Religious groups
- Community centres
- Immigrant settlement services

Organizations that provide services for seniors, such as ...

- Senior resource councils
- Senior centres

Seniors can engage in activities that are free or available at low cost, such as ...

- Physical activity classes
- Walking trails
- Walking clubs
- Mall activities

Values

- Canada is a democratic society that cares for people



Challenges

Challenges to being socially engaged and participating in leisure activities include:

For immigrant seniors

- Language barriers
- Financial barriers (such as expensive fitness classes)
- Transportation
- Not knowing how to access services
- Technology (such as cell phones and computers)
- Seniors' attitudes and perceptions (such as lack of trust, not valuing services enough)
- Elder abuse, which is more difficult to address due to language barriers
- Dealing with the climate which can make it difficult to access services

For organizations

- Dealing with diverse groups (such as different cultural groups, people with differing needs)
- Difficulties in connecting with older immigrants due to language barriers and cultural barriers
- Decreasing government funding for programs
- Lack of cooperation between the levels of government, school divisions, businesses, etc. regarding providing services
- Lack of a permanent physical space to provide services for many groups/ organizations
- Policies (such as Bill C24, which means that older adults would have to be 65+ to be exempt from the Citizenship Test rather than the current exemption age of 55+, yet, there has been no increase in government funding for language classes, etc. for older adults)

Solutions

Build relationships

- Build trust and relationships with immigrant seniors
- Create partnerships, for example, by linking programs and services by area and working together
- Exchange information between communities
- Expand community networks and include older immigrants (e.g., Fort Garry Community Network)
- Connect with leaders in the community to get a sense of how best to communicate with older immigrants

Enhance communication of available services and resources

- Newsletters
- Brochures with pictures and bullets
- Advertisement on shopping bags
- Translate existing information into different languages and distribute through advertisements, grocery stores, etc.

Provide opportunities

- Encourage older immigrants to learn English and provide opportunities for learning through, for example, hobby groups (e.g., gardening, cooking, etc.)
- Provide introduction to services
- Provide opportunities for casual get-togethers (such as going for coffee) to help immigrants learn about transportation, customs, everyday activities, how to handle the weather, etc.
- Get students involved (such as teaching English, connecting with communities)
- Provide transportation to services

Advocate

- Government advocacy
- Advocacy to increase funding

Research

- Conduct a needs assessment to find out what older immigrants want
- Evaluate programs

Good things already in place

Publicly funded health care services, such as ...

- Home care
- Access centres
- Geriatric assessment teams
- Mental health team
- Interpretive services through Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

Organizations that provide services and resources, such as ...

- Welcome centre for newcomers
- Senior resource councils
- Community centres
- Centre on Aging
- Network of Organizations Working for War Affected Newcomers (NOWAN)
- Seniors support line

English language classes

- Classes provided by A&O: Support Services for Older Adults, Entry Program for Older Adults Immigrants

Private businesses that provide services for seniors, such as ...

- Companion care
- Meal delivery

Resource guides, such as ...

- The *Manitoba Seniors' Guide* that is produced and distributed by the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat and the Manitoba Council on Aging
- Newcomers' orientation package published by the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc.

Values

- Canada promotes multiculturalism rather than acculturation and assimilation

Challenges

Challenges in relation to health care services include:

Limited knowledge of the health care system

- Information may not be available in immigrants' first language
- Access to information may require internet use

Cultural differences in communication, such as ...

- Eye contact
- Touching
- Gestures

Cultural differences in understanding of health and health care

- Medical model versus holistic approach
- Medical model versus social model

Lack of time on the part of health care providers

- To spend with older adults and their families
- To build rapport
- To understand needs

Solutions

Enhance communication of available services and resources

- Articles in ethno-cultural community newsletters
- Newcomers' handbook
- Radio, TV, newspapers
- Direct dissemination (personalization)
- Internet
- Seminars with invited speakers
- One unifying presence or source of information
- Translate the *Manitoba Seniors Guide* into more languages

Target diverse settings and people to disseminate health care information

- Health care settings and health care providers
- Banks
- Travel agencies
- Realtors and property managers
- Caregivers
- Workplaces
- Manitoba Start program
- Cultural associations
- Younger family members and grandchildren as point of contact
- Manitoba Health (where people receive their Manitoba Health card)

Enhance translation and interpreting services

- Audio translations for those with low reading skills
- Provide more language options for interpretation in health care settings

Create more cultural sensitivity

- Be aware of differences between different cultures
- Emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity in training programs for health care professionals.
- Increase health care staffing levels to allow building of rapport
- Develop culture-specific guidelines, such as food guideline

Advocate

- Establish advisory committee
- Stress importance of these issues
- Attract more funding for multicultural organizations for communication, planning and delivery of culturally appropriate programs and services to promote health and well-being of immigrant seniors.

Good things already in place

Variety of housing options, such as ...

- Housing specifically for certain ethnic groups or age groups
- Subsidized (low income) housing
- Assisted living apartments
- Supportive housing
- Manitoba Housing is currently piloting a supportive housing model in which residents are provided with two meals a day

Services and resources to help people age in place

- Home care
- Meals on wheels
- Advisory Tenant Committees through Manitoba Housing allow residents to have an input in housing decisions and activities

Older immigrants are supported by family

- There is an intergenerational culture

Housing resources

- A&O: Support Services for Older Adults maintains a listing of seniors apartments and rent prices
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)



Challenges

For immigrant seniors

- Lack of knowledge about housing options
- Immigrants don't always know their rights
- The amount of information can be overwhelming
- Because of language issues, people may not access available options, such a personal care home
- Basic poverty as an issue in accessing safe and appropriate housing

In terms of housing

- Lack of diversity in housing options
 - * For three-generation families
 - * Co-op housing
 - * Low-income housing
- Poorly maintained buildings
- The danger of "ghettoizing" older immigrants who live with family or in housing for specific cultural groups
 - * Lack of integration into Canadian culture
 - * Do not learn English
- Lack of housing policy for older immigrants

Solutions

- Raise awareness of regulations
- Create more diverse housing options, such as co-op housing, housing that accommodates three-generation families
- Match up people from same culture in empty apartments
- Provide subsidies to renovate existing housing to allow people to age in place or to support multi-generation housing design
- Increase the monthly amount of rent aid
- Create housing partnerships with ethno-cultural organizations
- Help relieve poverty in general so that immigrants do not need to depend on subsidized housing
- Ensure that home care services accommodate people from different cultural backgrounds so that older immigrants can age in place



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