

Enhancing the Wellbeing of Immigrant Women Retirees

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CIWA
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

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Centre for Excellence in Immigrant
and Intercultural Advancement

Presentation Outline

- *Enhancing wellbeing and civic engagement of immigrant women retirees*
 - Project overview
 - Literature, methods and theory
 - Key findings
- *Elder abuse research (CIWA)*
- Workshop – working with immigrant seniors

Project Goals

Understand the experiences of retired immigrant women and the barriers and supports related to their wellbeing and social and civic engagement

Co-create and evaluate a program that will facilitate engagement in social and civic activities and contribute to their sense of well being

What did we take in with us?

The “new retirement” and the “3rd age”

Age at time of immigration impacts career track and economic wellbeing in retirement

Older immigrant women are at a higher risk of poor health, and poverty than Canadian born women

Growing body of research critiquing studies that show a decline in social participation among immigrants .



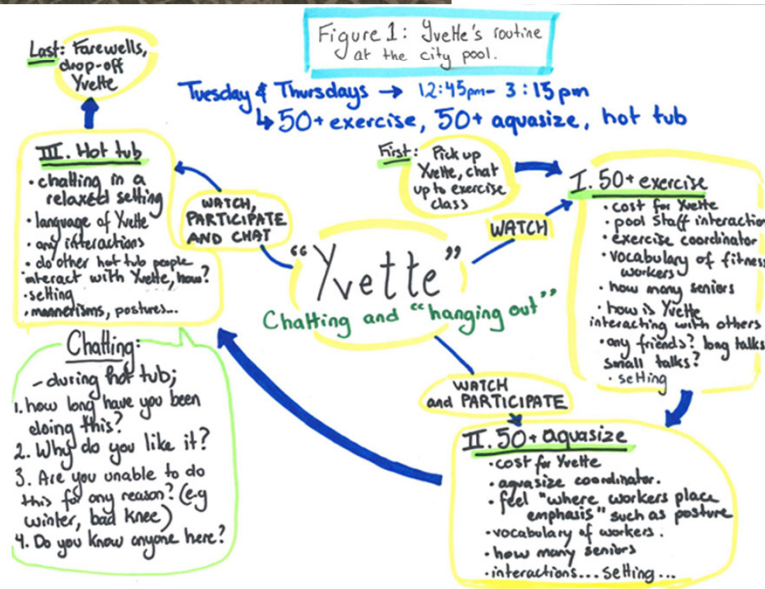
Project Methods

Phase 1 (June 2016- March 2017)

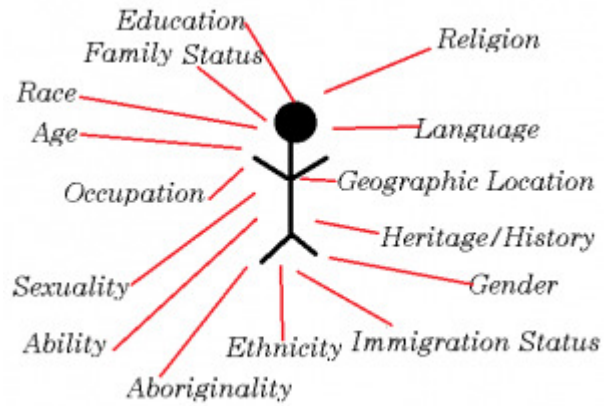
- Literature Review
- Interviews:
 - 25 immigrant women seniors
 - 15 stakeholders
- Focused Ethnography/Participant Observation:
 - Sample of 7 women, over 3 months

Phase 2 (April 2017-December 2017)

- Co creation



Theoretical Lens



Intersectionality

Life course approach



Retirement Planning

Majority of participants did not actively plan for retirement – either financially or socially

Amount of planning depended on when people arrived, and whether their job had a pension plan at work

Some preferred to invest \$\$ in children's education with hopes that they would then support them when they retired

“ *There's nothing sexy about being old and poor* ”

What does Retirement Look Like?

Majority of participants enjoy retirement, and the freedom that comes with it....but ½ struggled to meet financial needs

Large number were worried they would be bored at first, but felt better once they found ways to stay busy

Many worried about the future because of declining health (either theirs, or their spouse)

Single women worried about being able to stay independent as they aged

“ *What does retirement look like for me? It looks like I’m going to keep working, for as long as I can*

“ *I love it. I am really enjoying myself....two things I found: I am running out of time, and I love the freedom that comes with that.*

Enablers of Wellbeing

- Staying active
- Staying connected with Family
- Staying connected with your cultural and/or faith community
- Adequate finances
- Maintaining good health

“ Retirement doesn't mean that you retire from your whole life!

Challenges to Wellbeing

- Poor health
- Lack of information on services and programs
- Not able to access programs (transit, mobility, costs etc.)
- Difficulty with English
- Economic issues
- Limited social networks
- Limited connection/support from family
- Discrimination

“ *Sometimes I feel like my life is done.* ”

Reflections

1) Terms like “wellbeing”, “health”, “coping”, and “social supports” often made sense of in different ways

“Family can be a web that supports you, or a web that entangles you.”

Reflections

2) Differences in what constitutes the “good life” in multicultural society – what values do we attach to what activity should look like in retirement?

How do “caring” activities fit it?
What does being “busy” mean?

“When you get old you have to motivate yourself and you have to do something new everyday. It doesn't have to be big – if you drive the same way everyday change your route, if you sit on the same couch to read, sit in a different seat...keep yourself busy. Change is good!”

Reflections

4) Gendered Impacts

“ The breadwinner is supposed to be a man, and woman is supposed to supplement the income....there were times when it would raise it's ugly head. It was having an impact on the family, it absolutely was.

“ Being a single mother...there were lots of opportunities where I worked....but I never applied for a promotion because I couldn't....I was a mother, I couldn't raise two kids and do too much work like that.

Reflections

5) Accumulated impact of long term social and economic marginalization

“ *She said if you cook curries I’m not interested in renting you a home.* ”

“ *One of the parents complained that their child not be influenced by my accent.* ”

“ *I feel like I’m still struggling, because we couldn’t get a chance to build anything...years later I’m still struggling.* ”

Thank you!

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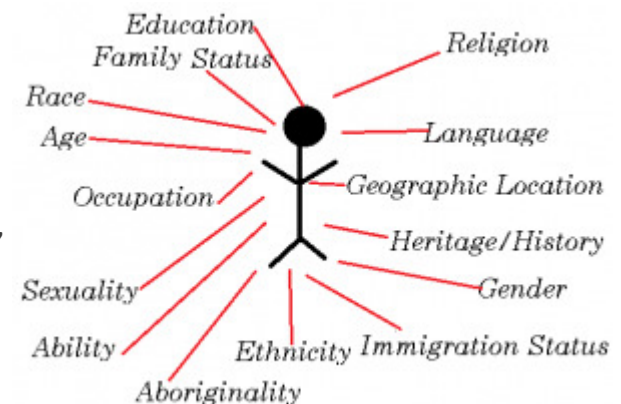
Workshop

Intersectionality:

Everyone has multiple and overlapping social positions and structural factors that shape their lives

Our experiences are “never the result of single, distinct factors. Rather, they are the outcome of intersections of different social locations, power relations, and experiences” (Hankivsky 2014).

Need to consider how these factors interact with existing structures and systems that impact daily life



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Workshop Activity

- 1) What is intersectionality?
- 2) Complete handout
- 3) Discussion



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