



# Inclusive Communities for Older Immigrants (ICOI) Partnership

Developing multi-level, multi-component interventions to reduce social isolation and promote connectedness among older immigrants in Canada



## Greetings

Dear ICOI team members:

We hope that this academic term has been off to a great start!

As we continue to move forward with Phase 3 REB approval, the ICOI project team has been actively engaged in a range of project activities, including ongoing data analysis and knowledge mobilization efforts.

In this issue, we are excited to introduce more members of the ICOI team. We hope you enjoy learning a bit more about them!

This issue also highlights several outstanding contributions from our team members.

We are grateful for your ongoing support and look forward to working collaboratively as the project progresses.

Warmest regards,  
Sepali Guruge, ICOI Project Director  
Kaveenaa Chandrasekaran, ICOI Project Manager

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## ICOI Team Member Greeting

### Kaltrina Kusari, ICOI Academic Partner, AB Team



Kaltrina Kusari is an Albanian-Canadian social work scholar, educator, and researcher whose work is shaped by her experiences of growing up in a post-war Kosovo. She holds a PhD in Social Work from University of Calgary and currently serves as Vice-Rector for Academic Development, Quality Assurance, and Research at University of Gjakova, Republic of Kosovo. Her research integrates postcolonial and transnational feminist theories with qualitative methods including autoethnography and photovoice. Kaltrina grounds her work in the lived experiences of marginalized migrant populations and has been involved in research projects which explore return migration; refugee resettlement; financial literacy among older migrants in Canada; and the complexities of the nexus between immigration and disability. Kaltrina most recently completed a postdoctoral fellowship with the Aging in the Right Place Partnership, during which she focused specifically on analyzing the experiences of aging migrant populations in Canada through an intersectional and critical lens.

### Lun Li, ICOI Academic Partner, AB Team



Lun Li is an assistant professor in the School of Social Work at MacEwan University, Edmonton, Alberta. His work focuses on healthy aging of older immigrants and the health and wellbeing of family caregivers of older adults. Jun applies both community-based methods and national secondary data analysis to understand the intersectionality of aging and other factors, including caregiving, immigration, and healthy behaviors. In addition, Jun emphasizes the engagement of community organizations and community members in all his projects, which enhances the capabilities of organizations and communities to support older adults and their families. Jun is also active in promoting gerontological education in social work programs through various pedagogical strategies, including experiential learning and content infusion.

# ICOI Activities: Progress to Date

## Phase 3 REB Protocol

We are currently awaiting Research Ethics Board approval from Toronto Metropolitan University for Phase 3 of the project. Professor Sepali Guruge and Professor Souraya Sidani are addressing required revisions as they arise. Once approval is obtained at Toronto Metropolitan University, we will move forward with submitting applications to our other academic partner institutions to ensure all required institutional approvals are in place before starting Phase 3 activities across sites.

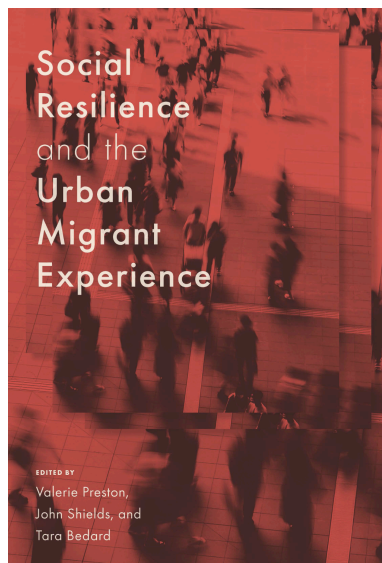
## Knowledge Mobilization Activities

While we continue to work toward Phase 3 REB approval, a range of knowledge mobilization activities are underway. Multiple teams are actively engaged in quantitative and qualitative analyses of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 data, with several manuscripts and conference submissions currently in development.

We are also pleased to share that Professor Sepali Guruge and Professor Souraya Sidani are leading the development of an ICOI open-access textbook that will highlight key findings from Phase 1. Co-investigators are contributing to individual chapters, bringing together diverse perspectives and disciplinary expertise. Designed as an accessible knowledge mobilization resource for students, researchers, practitioners, and community partners, the open-access format will ensure that these findings are widely available to academic, community, and policy audiences.



## Team Member Highlights



Dr. John Shields has had a December 2025 release of his co-edited book (with Valerie Preston and Tara Bedard), *Social Resilience and the Urban Migrant Experience*, published by McGill-Queen's University Press. The volume was listed as one of the *Hill Times* Best Books of 2025. The book is available at the link:

<https://hdl.handle.net/1974/35995>

Two chapters in the volume are contributions from Dr. Shields. Chapter 1, "International migrants, resistance, and social resilience: An introduction" (co-authored with Valerie Preston and Tara Bedard), and Chapter 2, "Municipal "sanctuary policies in Canada": A view from immigrant serving organizations" (co-authored with Mireille Paquet, Meghan Joy, Idil Atak, and Graham Hudson).



We are delighted to share that Dr. Kateryna Metersky, co-city lead for the ICOI project in Toronto, was honoured with the 2025 Open Access Wall of Fame award from Toronto Metropolitan University Libraries.

This award honours researchers who have demonstrated a commitment to ensuring their research and outputs are available to all.

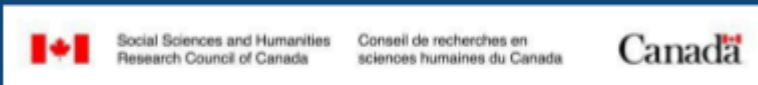
TMU Libraries strives to recognize and support researchers who choose open access options when publishing their work. This year Dr. Metersky posted over 60 articles to our institutional repository Rshare and published two open educational textbooks supported with funding from the [TMU Libraries Open Textbook grants](#).

Congratulations to Dr. Metersky on this well-deserved recognition and her continued contributions to open scholarship and nursing research!

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*Inside the Next Issue*

*The next ICOI newsletter will introduce more ICOI team members, share news about Phase 2, and provide further project activity updates.*



The Inclusive Communities for Older Immigrants  
is a 8-year Partnership.

Please share this newsletter with  
your networks

## Management/Editorial Team

Sepali Guruge, Project Director

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