



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 your Fall season is off to a good start!

The ICOI project team has been busy with various project activities, and this newsletter includes more information about their progress.

As in past ICOI newsletters, this issue introduces more team members. We hope you will enjoy reading their bios.

It also includes an update on the Phase 2 REB protocol and participant observation data collection.

We thank you for your support for the ICOI project work and look forward to moving the project forward with you.

Wish you a restful holiday season, and a very happy and healthy New Year.

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Greetings	1
Introducing ICOI Team Members	2
ICOI Activities Progress	3-5
2025 ICOI Summit Planning	5
Team Member Highlights	6-7
Next Issue	8

ICOI Team Member Greetings

Hafsah Umer, Research Assistant, AB Team



Hafsah is a Master of Social Work student specializing in international and community development. She is passionate about supporting her community, through her work as a Graduate Research

Assistant for the Aging in the Right Place (AIRP) Project and the ICOI Project. As Lead Convenor at Vibrant Communities Calgary, Hafsah works to address poverty and advance equity through collaborative initiatives.

JiaRui Zhu, Research Assistant, BC Team



JiaRui is a Master of Science candidate in Social Dimensions of Health at the University of Victoria. Originally from China, her research explores the intersection of healthy aging, green spaces, and older immigrants' well-being. With a background in urban and rural planning, she is

committed to social justice and creating inclusive community spaces. JiaRui has been featured in the *New York Times* and *CBC*.

Kamal Sidhu, Research Assistant, BC Team



Kamaljit holds master's degrees in both English and Education. She works as a research assistant, translator, and data analyst across several universities. Kamal has had a diverse career, starting as a teacher, and then becoming a business

owner for 14 years. Now, she enjoys her role as a research assistant committed to impactful and ethical research for the benefit of her community.

Layal Ajaj, Research Assistant, ON Team



Layal holds a Bachelor's in Psychology and a Master's in Immigration and Settlement Studies from Toronto Metropolitan University. As a dedicated settlement worker and a research assistant, she contributes to multiple projects including the

ICOI Project. With Syrian and Lebanese roots, Layal advocates for Arab immigrant issues, and aims to expand her expertise in research and community development.

ICOI Activities: Progress to Date

Update on Qualitative Data Analysis

In collaboration with our community partners, the ICOI research assistants (collectively) conducted 207 qualitative interviews. In the summer of 2024, five research assistants received training in coding individual interview data using Nvivo. Led by professors Oona St-Amant and Sepali Guruge, our academic partners contributed to the development of the coding scheme. Using the coding scheme, the research assistants coded all translated and transcribed individual interviews by the end of October. Following this, further data analysis has begun at city levels.

The table below illustrates the number of qualitative interviews conducted in each city, categorized by language group.

City	Language	Arabic	Mandarin	Punjabi
Montreal		9	10	-
Gatineau		-	-	-
Toronto		15	15	17
Hamilton		10	-	-
London		15	35	
Edmonton		9	11	10
Calgary		-	10	10
Vancouver		-	10	10
Victoria		-	11	-

Participant Observation Data Collection

Research assistants across the ICOI study sites met with professors Oona St-Amant and Sepali Guruge bi-weekly (via Zoom) to learn about how to conduct participant observations. These sessions continued from August until after the participant observation data collection was completed in November.

We are pleased to announce that the participant observation data collection is now complete, and the research assistants are currently finishing their field notes. We will share updates on this in our next newsletter.

The table below illustrates the number of participant observations conducted in each city categorized by language group.

City	Language	Arabic	Mandarin	Punjabi
Montreal		2	2	-
Gatineau		-	-	-
Toronto		3	3	3
Hamilton		-	-	-
London		3	3	-
Edmonton		2	-	3
Calgary		-	3	2
Vancouver		-	2	2
Victoria		-	3	-

Phase 2 REB Protocol

In Phase 2, we are aiming to identify and assess intervention strategies to foster social connectedness among immigrant older adults from Arabic, Mandarin, and Punjabi-speaking communities in the nine cities. Professors Souraya Sidani and Sepali Guruge have already conducted a literature search and review to identify evidence-based interventions aimed at promoting social connectedness. Based on the insights gained from this review, they drafted a protocol for this phase of the work, and submitted an application to the Research Ethics Board at Toronto Metropolitan University for approval. The application was shared with City Leads, Provincial Leads, and Research Stream Leads for their feedback.

Looking Ahead: 2025 ICOI Summit

We are excited to begin planning for the 2025 ICOI Summit, which is scheduled to take place from March 26 to 28 in Montreal, Quebec. The last ICOI summit took place at University of Calgary, Alberta, and was attended in person by 32 ICOI team members, and virtually by 50 team members. We are excited to connect with our academic and community partners again soon. This event will offer a valuable opportunity for collaboration, discussions, sharing progress, and making plans for the remainder of the project.

Stay tuned for more updates on event registration, venue, agenda, and other key information as we finalize plans.



Team Member Highlights



Congratulations to Professor Bharati Sethi, who was a keynote speaker at the Canadian Association on Gerontology 2024 conference held in Edmonton, Alberta. Her keynote presentation was based on over a decade of her research with immigrants, including both formal and informal caregivers, older adults, and Bharathi's own experiences as a racialized immigrant and personal support worker. Immigrants' institutional experiences of racism and migration policies that increase the risk of abuse for migrant workers were highlighted. Bharathi also discussed the impacts of racism on the health and

well-being of personal support workers, organizational productivity, and the overall healthcare system. The inconsistency of educational and professional requirements across Canada was noted as a significant concern for the quality of care provided to aging populations. She emphasized that addressing racism in healthcare is a shared responsibility among academics, governments, organizations, and other stakeholders.

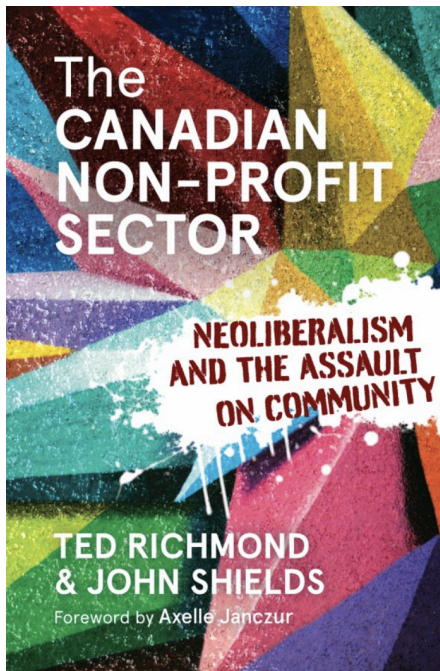


Dr. Sepali Guruge recently published an edited book titled *Intersections of Aging and Immigration: The Promise and Paradox of a Better Life*. In this book, the authors focus on the many barriers faced by older immigrants, as well as their resilience in coping with these. Some of the chapters were co-authored by members of the ICOI team. Details about the book will be shared in the next newsletter .

Guruge, S. (Ed.). (2024). *Intersections of aging and immigration: The promise and paradox of a better life*. Toronto Metropolitan University.

The link to the book is below:

<https://doi.org/10.32920/27138984.v1>



We are excited to share that Professor John Shields has recently co-authored a book titled *The Canadian Non-profit Sector: Neoliberalism and the Assault on Community*.

The authors discuss the challenges facing the immigrant-serving non-profit sector. Neoliberal restructuring has left individuals and families scrambling for survival, and increasingly, reliant on the under-funded and over-regulated non-profit sector. The book examines the creativity and resilience of nonprofits in maintaining and expanding their services under difficult circumstances. It also delves into the vital role of nonprofits in advocating for human rights, anti-racism, Indigenous claims, migrant rights, and improved health and social services. The authors argue that the over-stretched and under-resourced non-profit sector has been left to address the ever-expanding needs of Canadians amidst growing inequality. The volume applies a critical lens in the analysis of the place of the non-profit

sector organizations, like settlement agencies, in neoliberal times in Canada. The link to the book is below:

<https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/the-canadian-non-profit-sector>

In addition to this book, Prof. Shields was a panelist on a CBC Ideas program on Canadian conservatism. We hope that you enjoy listening to this program as this discussion provides further insights into the complexities of the conservative movement in Canada. The link to this podcast is below:

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-23-ideas/clip/16105695-can-new-conservatism-offer-solutions-modern-social-problems>

Prof. Shields also recently published two recent journal articles:

Shields, J., Joy, M., & Cheng, S. M. (2024). The Limits of the Community Nonprofit Sector Resilience: Evidence from Canadian Nonprofit Sector Surveys During the Pandemic. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research*, 15(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjnser661>

Preston, V., Shields, J., & D'Souza, J. (2024). Transforming settlement and integration services during a pandemic. *International Migration*, 62(2), 22–37. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13245>

Fall 2024

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

Kaveenaa Chandrasekaran, Project Manager