

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



About the Project

The Inclusive Communities for Older Immigrants (ICOI) partnership will engage in a 7-year multidisciplinary, multi-sector, multi-province project that will build sustainable connections to generate knowledge about social isolation and connectedness among older immigrants, support multidirectional knowledge exchange, and improve older immigrants' lives.

Specifically, the project will:

- 1) clarify intersecting factors affecting older immigrants social isolation vis-a-vis their social, economic, and political inclusion/exclusion in urban and suburban settings;
- 2) contribute to models related to social isolation/connectedness based on empirical data;
- 3) design, implement, and evaluate interventions to promote social connectedness; and
- 4) develop sustainable knowledge-sharing and research collaborations among key players.

Continued on page 2

Inside this issue

About the Project	1-2
Project Director	2
Provincial Leads	3
Research Stream Leads	4
Project Manager	4
Governance Structure	5
Overall Project Activities	6
Year 1 Work in Progress	7
Inside Next Issue	8

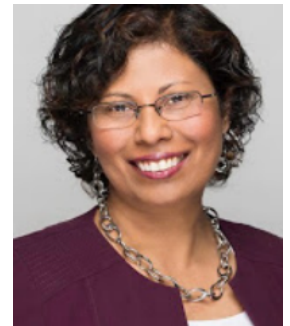
About the Project (cont. from p.1)

Older adults are the fastest-growing subpopulation in Canada, projected to reach 25% of the population by 2030. In preparation, governments at all levels have committed to prioritizing their needs through the design and delivery of age-friendly initiatives, services, and cities. Despite these efforts, insufficient attention has been paid to the specific concerns of older immigrants, who comprise 30% of all older adults in Canada, and more in major cities like Toronto (65%) and Vancouver (50%). A critical but unaddressed issue is social isolation of older immigrants, which limits their community and civic engagement, reduces income security, and increases risk of elder abuse, disability, and early death. All older adults are vulnerable to isolation, but older immigrants are at greater risk due to migration-related social, cultural, and economic challenges that affect their sense of isolation/connectedness.

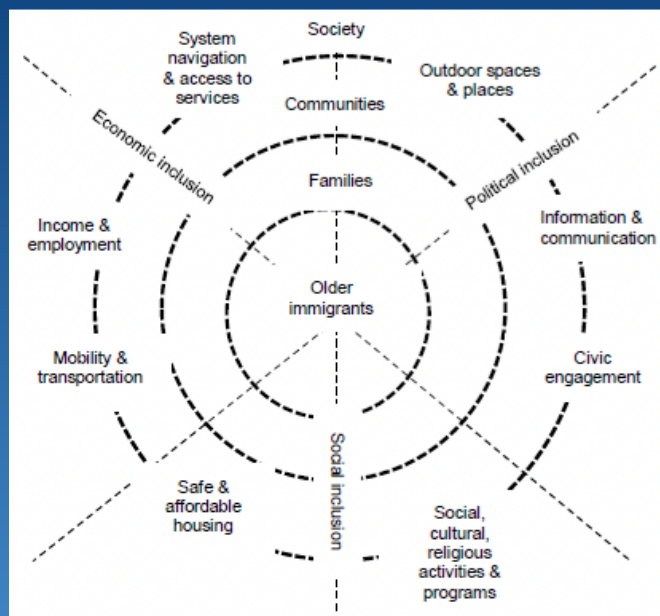
ICOI currently includes 48 researchers and 38 community partners in 9 cities in 4 major immigrant-receiving provinces (BC, AB, ON, QC). Partners in each city are committed to improving policy and services for older immigrants; have strong connections with the Punjabi-, Arabic-, and Mandarin-speaking communities we focus on; and bring practice and policy expertise in aging, immigration, aging-in-place, age-friendly cities, capacity-building and resilience, and programs and services.

Introducing the ICOI Project Director

Sepali Guruge, Ryerson University, is a Full Professor in the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing. For the past 25 years, Sepali has demonstrated a solid commitment to increasing the visibility and highlighting the resiliency of marginalized populations. Her program of research focuses on immigrant health, with particular attention to the complex intersections between health, immigration, gender, violence, and aging. She has led related projects in several countries. Her work can be found at: www.ImmigrantHealthResearch.ca



The ICOI partnership will engage in 3 Research Streams – social inclusion, economic inclusion, and political inclusion – to ensure the comprehensiveness of our emerging theoretical and practice model in addressing the range of factors contributing to social isolation among older immigrants (tentatively depicted here).



Introducing the ICOI Provincial Leads

They lead project work in their respective provinces.

Alberta Calgary, Edmonton



Ilyan Ferrer, University of Calgary (Alberta – Co-Lead), is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Social Work. His research focuses on the intersections of aging, im/migration, labour, and care experiences of racialized communities in Canada. Ilyan's

work incorporates intersectionality, oral history, and anti-oppressive social work theory and practice.

Christine A. Walsh University of Calgary (Alberta – Lead), is a Full Professor at the Faculty of Social Work. In her community-based, action-oriented and arts-informed research she partners with community-based agencies and older adults who are impacted by interpersonal violence, poverty, housing insecurity and homelessness and disaster. In addition, her research interests concern socially excluded older immigrants.



British Columbia Vancouver, Victoria



Karen Kobayashi, University of Victoria (BC – Lead), is Associate Dean Research and Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences, a Professor in the Department of Sociology, and a Research Fellow at the Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health. She is a social gerontologist who uses a life

course perspective to explore the intersections of structural, cultural, and individual factors/experiences affecting health and aging in the Canadian population.

Quebec Gatineau, Montreal

Michèle Charpentier, Université du Québec à Montreal (Quebec – Lead), is a Professor and Chair in the School of Social Work and internationally recognized for her expertise in social gerontology. After working for several years with the elderly in the health and social services network, she devoted herself to teaching and research on issues related to the exercise of rights and the empowerment of elderly people, particularly those in vulnerable situations.



Sonia Ben Soltane, University of Ottawa (Quebec – Co-Lead), is a Professor of Social Work in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Her work explores female immigration with a feminist intersectional posture. She also has an extensive research experience in relation to immigration in Canada and in France.

Ontario Hamilton, London, Toronto

Souraya Sidani, Ryerson University (Ontario – Lead), is a Full Professor at the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing and Canada Research Chair in Design and Evaluation of Health Interventions. Her areas of expertise are in quantitative research methods, intervention design and evaluation, and measurement. Souraya's research interests focus on evaluating interventions and advanced practice roles, on examining patient preferences for treatments, and on refining research methods and measures for determining the clinical effectiveness of interventions.



Oona St-Amant, Ryerson University (Ontario – Co-Lead), is an Associate Professor in the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing. Oona's program of research examines various forms of unpaid care work. She has used a variety of ethnographic methods to examine the various intersections of culture, socio-political and economic aspects of care.

Introducing the ICOI Research Stream Leads

They lead project activities across sites.

Sandeep Agrawal, University of Alberta, is a Full Professor & Director, School of Urban and Regional Planning and Associate Chair, Faculty of Science, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences. Sandeep is an urban and regional planner whose research interests include land use planning and design, international planning, multiculturalism and human rights and planning policy. Sandeep will lead the ICOI Political Inclusion Research Stream.



The project involves a national and comparative approach to the general and specific needs among older immigrants from diverse backgrounds, a gender-based analysis of factors and interventions, and an in-depth understanding of social isolation by incorporating different stakeholders, communities, and local knowledge.



Jill Hanley, McGill University, is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and Scientific Director of the Sherpa Research Institute on Migration, Health and Social Services. Jill's work focuses on closing the gaps between policies and practice concerning the social rights of

migrant populations. Jill will lead the ICOI Social Inclusion Research Stream.

John Shields, Ryerson University, is a tenured Full Professor with over twenty-five years of university teaching and research experience in the areas of public administration and public policy, Canadian politics, the political economy of labour market and welfare state. John is also a member of the Yeates School of Graduate Studies at Ryerson. John will lead the ICOI Economic Inclusion Research Stream.

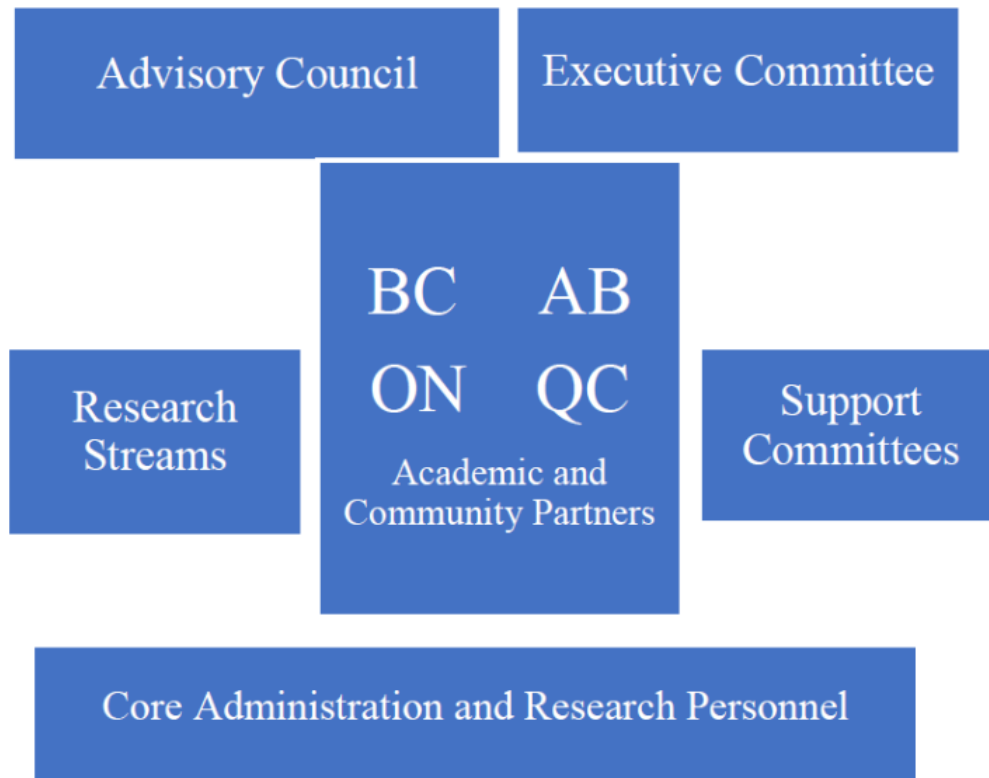


Introducing the ICOI Project Manager

Kerith Paul obtained her M.A. in Immigration & Settlement Studies from Ryerson in 2009 and since then has worked for the YMCA of Greater Toronto in the Ontario-wide CSS Government-Assisted Refugee Program, coordinated the Ryerson University Lifeline Syria Project, a private refugee sponsorship project, and most recently worked for the International Department at Trent University.



ICOI Governance Structure



Advisory Council

- Eva Soom Ammann, Bern, Switzerland
- Mohammed Baoboid, London
- Lori Cameron, Burnaby
- Eralba Cela, Milan, Italy
- Ruxandra Oana Ciobanu, Geneva, Switzerland
- Tineke Fokkema, The Hague, The Netherlands
- Krista James, Vancouver
- Maribel Javier, Calgary
- Parvathy Kanthsamy, Toronto
- Daniel Lai, Hong Kong
- Kahir Lalji, Vancouver
- Guida Man, Toronto
- Raphael Massé, Montreal
- Henry Parada, Toronto
- Annie Pontbriand, Montreal
- Roxanne Riddell, London
- Kim Turcotte, Edmonton

Executive Committee

Consists of:

- Project Director and Provincial Leads (permanent)
- Research Stream Leads (rotating)
- Community members (rotating):
 - Huda Bukhari (CCVT, Toronto)
 - Liza Chan (CCECA, Calgary)
 - Winnie Lee (ICA, Victoria)
 - Caroline Sauriol (Les Petits Frères, Montreal)

Please look for the introduction of full complement of academic and community members in the next newsletter.

Overall Project Activities

Phase 1 aims to generate a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to social isolation/connectedness.

Activity 1: A mixed-methods literature review and synthesis will be conducted to identify the social, economic and political factors that contribute to social isolation/connectedness.

Activity 2: An analysis of the data from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) will be conducted to examine changes in social network and participation as older immigrants age.

Activity 3: A Spatial/geographical analysis will be conducted to clarify complex relationships between residential location, neighbourhood resource distribution, personal characteristics, and social networks by analyzing data collected in activity 2.

Activity 4: A mixed-method descriptive study will be conducted to validate the factors contributing to social isolation/connectedness, using quantitative measures and qualitative interviews.

Phase 2 aims to identify interventions addressing social isolation/connectedness.

Activity 1: A mixed-methods literature review and synthesis will be conducted to identify interventions found useful in mitigating factors restricting social connectedness.

Activity 2: A questionnaire will be prepared to assess the perceived acceptability of evidence-based interventions.

Activity 3: A mixed-method study will be conducted to assess the acceptability of evidence-based interventions to older adults, community leaders, and service providers by having group sessions to complete a questionnaire and discussing aspects of interventions that should be modified to enhance acceptability and feasibility.

Phase 3 aims to co-design interventions addressing social isolation/connectedness in collaboration with project partners.

Activity 1: Interventions will be co-designed to fit the local context by modifying the interventions perceived as acceptable by older immigrants. This will be accomplished by meeting with partners to finalize the content of interventions and prepare materials guiding implementation.

Activity 2: Provision and evaluation of training will be conducted in order to build capacity for intervention implementation. This will be accomplished by providing a 2-day training workshop for local champions (selected by partner agencies), in addition to support and coaching sessions.

Phase 4 aims to evaluate the interventions' feasibility, satisfaction, and preliminary effectiveness.

Activity 1: Interventions will be implemented and evaluated in context. This will be accomplished by: local champions training staff, staff implementing the interventions, and researchers interviewing staff to identify concerns in implementation.

Activity 2: An outcome evaluation will be conducted by using a group pre- to post-test design. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected from older immigrants receiving the interventions.

Year 1 Work in Progress

Literature Review

- A comprehensive literature search is currently underway to find literature based on quantitative and qualitative research that examined factors associated with social isolation/connectedness among older immigrants.
- The search focuses on literature published in English or French since 2000.
- Depending on the data available, we may engage in meta-analyses and/or meta-syntheses.
- Please let your provincial lead know if you are interested in reviewing and synthesizing the literature.

CLSA Data Analysis

- Currently an application is in progress for submission in January to obtain access to the data from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA).
- We are interested in examining how social networks, participation, and support change as older immigrants age.
- We also aim to understand the demographic and socio-economic factors that contribute to these changes in social networks, participation, and support.
- Please let your provincial lead know if you are interested in being part of this work.



Inside Next Issue:

The next ICOI newsletter will highlight some of our community partners and collaborators, and also provide information about the Year 1 Summit to be attended virtually by all our partners.

The Inclusive Communities for Older Immigrants is a 7-year Partnership. It is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



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newsletter.

Management/Editorial Team

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Kerith Paul, Project Manager