



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 you found joy in the summer weather.

First, we would like to acknowledge the hard work being done in communities across Canada to support older immigrants. The pandemic’s third wave was very difficult, and community organizations continue to step up and serve with perseverance and ingenuity. We truly hope that the worst is behind us as the vaccine rollout continues.

An update from the ICOI Covid-19 Sub-studies Committee is included here, as well as a summary of the Community Partner Panel from the ICOI Virtual Summit 2021, where strategies to serve clients during the pandemic were discussed.

As we move well into the 2nd year of the project, ICOI Research Stream teams, Support Committees, and literature review teams continue to prepare for data collection in the coming fall/winter. Updates and invitations from these groups are included in the newsletter.

A big thank you to Michèle Charpentier, Sonia Ben Soltane, and Ilyan Ferrer for their leadership as Provincial Leads/Co-Leads over the first year of the project. We would like to welcome Marie-Emmanuelle Laquerre and Maryse Soulières as the newly-appointed Quebec Provincial Co-Leads, Jordana Salma as the newly-appointed Alberta Provincial Co-Lead, and Denise Cloutier as the newly-appointed BC Provincial Co-Lead. They look forward to working with you all.

As in the past ICOI newsletters, we feature several team members here. We hope you will enjoy reading their bios. An update about the ICOI website is also included. We are pleased to continue to move the project forward with you all. Please stay in touch with us.

Warmest regards,
 Sepali Guruge, ICOI Project Director
 Kerith Paul, ICOI Project Manager

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Introducing More ICOI Partners

Dima Amad, ACCT, Toronto, ON (Community Partner)



Dima Amad has extensive experience in the non-profit sector in Canada and abroad. She is the Executive Director of the Arab Community Centre of Toronto (ACCT). Before that, she was the Director of Programs and Services at BMC, a multi-service agency in Peel. There, she helped develop innovative programs to address issues facing newcomers, youth, women, and seniors. Dima has a degree in Electrical Engineering from McGill University. She also has a postgraduate degree in Project Management. Dima immigrated from Palestine with her husband and two children in 2002. Her work in Palestine focused on access and equity issues affecting women and youth.

Daisy Au, MOSAIC, Vancouver, BC (Community Partner)



Daisy has been working in the immigrant settlement sector for almost 20 years. She is the Coordinator at MOSAIC Specialized Seniors Program. Daisy is committed to empower immigrant seniors to be leaders, raise awareness of elder abuse

and neglect through her coordinator role in the BC Chinese Community Response Network. She aims to be the voice for immigrant seniors in the underserved immigrant seniors population, helps breaking social isolation.

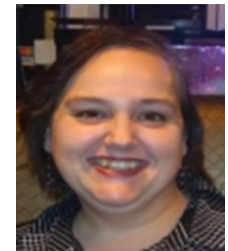
Balbir Gurm (BC Academic Partner)

Balbir Gurm is a leader and professor of nursing at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. With over 30 years of experience in education, health promotion, leadership, social justice, and cultural safety, Balbir influences policy through leadership on boards, organizations, advisory panels, and committees to improve communities. As founding member and facilitator for the Network to Eliminate Violence (NEVR) and lead author of *Making Sense of a Global Pandemic: Relationship Violence & Working Together Towards a Violence Free Society*, Balbir works with a cross-sectoral/ multi-disciplinary team of 200+ members to merge academic and practice-based knowledge to advocate for change.



Nadia Hébert, Action Centre Ville, Montreal, QC (Community Partner)

Nadia Hébert graduated from Cégep du Vieux Montréal in social work techniques. She has been at Action Center-Ville since the end of her studies in 2008. She began as a community worker and was responsible for a project to integrate the Chinese community living at Habitations Jeanne-Mance. Action Center-Ville has a good number of members with different cultural origins; 49% of recipients are from a country other than Canada. The organization works to integrate different cultures with the help of specific activities during the year.



Nadia Hébert est diplômée du Cégep du Vieux Montréal en techniques de travail social. Elle est à Action Centre-Ville depuis la fin de ses études, soit depuis 2008. Elle a commencé comme intervenante de milieu et a été responsable d'un projet d'intégration de la communauté chinoise résidant aux Habitations Jeanne-Mance. Action Centre-Ville compte bon nombre de membres ayant différentes origines culturelles ; 49% des bénéficiaires proviennent d'un pays autre que le Canada. L'organisme fait un travail d'intégration des différentes cultures avec l'aide d'activités spécifiques durant l'année.



Krista James (Advisory Council)



Krista James is a lawyer and National Director of the Canadian Centre for Elder Law. Her work explores legal and policy issues related to aging, including legal research, policy analysis, and public legal education. She has written on topics such as abuse and neglect of older people, mental capacity, and health care consent. She has a particular interest in how aging, gender and other aspects of identity intersect to impact experience. Before joining the CCEL, Krista worked as an advocate and a victim assistance worker. You can find her writing at www.bcli.org/ccel and on Twitter at @KristaElan..

Daniel Lai (Advisory Council)



Daniel W.L. Lai is Chair Professor of Social Work and Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences in the Hong Kong Baptist University. His expertise includes health and aging, culture and immigration, and outcome evaluation. One of his funded research projects is on social capital and integration of South Asian and Chinese older adults in Hong Kong. Daniel serves on the Board of Directors of the American Society on Aging, is Vice-President of the Hong Kong Association of Gerontology, and is on the editorial board of *Research on Aging* and *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*.

Jordana Salma (AB Provincial Co-Lead)



Jordana Salma, RN, is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. Her program of research focuses on psychosocial dimensions of health and chronic disease management in immigrant, refugee, and racialized older adults. Drawing from Feminist, Transnational and Post-Colonial perspectives, she aims to identify and implement community-based interventions that improve health outcomes in these populations. Jordana has worked with Arab, South Asian, and African immigrant communities on stroke prevention, healthy aging, mental health, social connectedness, and physical activity.

Maryse Soulières (QC Provincial Co-Lead)



Maryse Soulières is an adjunct professor at the School of Social Work at the University of Montreal. Her research focuses on the elderly in vulnerable situations including those experiencing major neurocognitive disorders, end of life, and housing and long-term care concerns. She was part of the team that established the Elder Abuse Help Line, a provincial telephone intervention line against mistreatment towards the elderly. She previously worked in various senior housing settings, as beneficiary attendant, social worker, living environment advisor and service quality and complaints commissioner.

Maryse Soulières est professeure adjointe à l'École de travail social de l'Université de Montréal. Ses intérêts de recherche concernent les personnes âgées en situation de vulnérabilité, notamment en lien avec les troubles neurocognitifs majeurs, la fin de vie et les milieux d'hébergement et de soins de longue durée. Elle a fait partie de l'équipe qui a mis sur pieds la Ligne Aide Abus Aînés, ligne d'intervention téléphonique provinciale contre la maltraitance envers les aînés. Elle a auparavant travaillé dans divers milieux d'hébergement pour aînés, à titre de préposée aux bénéficiaires, travailleuse sociale, conseillère en milieu de vie et commissaire aux plaintes et à la qualité des services.

Josephine Tsang, Calgary, AB (Community Partner)



Josephine Tsang is the CEO of Diversecities, a charity in the social services sector helping ethnocultural groups in Calgary to gain confidence and abilities to live fulfilling lives, in alignment with United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. As a champion of equal opportunity, she believes in integrating inquisitiveness and empathy to foster partnerships that powerfully scale collective efforts and impacts. Named as one of "80 Canadian Women to Watch" in *Chatelaine*, Josephine holds a PhD in physical organic chemistry from Queen's University and has 15+ years of experience working in private, research, and not-for-profit sectors.

ICOI Summit 2021

The inaugural ICOI Summit (March 25-26, 2021), was a great success. There were 150 registrants and 18 speakers with presentations from community partners, international researchers, and academic partners. 100% of the respondents to the Summit feedback form agreed that the sessions helped raise their level of awareness about social isolation/connectedness among older immigrants.

Four community partner representatives from each participating province presented their perspectives on community agency challenges during the pandemic. Summaries of their engaging presentations (recordings available on the ICOI website) are included below. Thank you again to all of our community partners for your tireless efforts in our communities during this challenging time.

Huda Bukhari, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture



Located in Toronto, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) is the second agency of its kind in the world. With the motto “hope after the horror” the CCVT aids survivors coping with the effects of war and crimes against humanity, such as torture and genocide. The

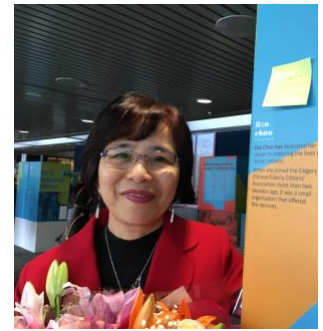
CCVT has programs to support settlement, mental health, community engagement, and skills education.

During the pandemic, it became obvious that clients without access to computers and smartphones struggled to find information about COVID-19 guidelines. Pandemic-related social isolation exacerbated pre-existing mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. This was especially hard on individuals living alone or facing housing evictions and financial hardship.

After assessing pandemic needs with almost 300 client seniors, the CCVT created virtual programs to connect them with volunteers who spoke their language for check-ins, counselors for psychosocial support, and senior support groups to address the isolation. CCVT also secured funding for food, computers, and other necessities through partnerships with other agencies and online fundraising campaigns. Support from volunteers ensured the successful changes to these programs.

Liza Chan, Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association

The Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizen's Association (CCECA) is a non-profit organization that aims to enhance the well-being of Chinese seniors and is the largest Chinese seniors' drop-in centre



in Calgary, with over 50 programs that support approximately 4000 seniors.

During the pandemic, CCECA transitioned its services to online or telephone. Staff and volunteers made calls to assess the needs of seniors and offered online classes for computer skills, exercise, and how to use Zoom. A telephone line was established for seniors without online access to call in and/or connect with the support groups offered.

CCECA also created an online education series on COVID-19 and a radio program to share community resources and inform about topics ranging from positive psychology to elder abuse. CCECA also worked with other agencies to transport seniors for vaccinations.

CCECA now offers online and phone programs, as well as an emotional support line, grocery delivery service, and mindfulness workshops.

Queenie Choo, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.



Located in the city of Vancouver, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the largest social service agencies in Canada, providing a range of newcomer settlement and community services to over 72,000

clients yearly.

It includes programs specific to senior immigrants, with services framed around economic stability, health and health care, social and community context, education, and neighbourhood or the built environment.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. saw an increase in its Chinese helpline service during the pandemic. The agency offered multi-lingual webinars about COVID-19 vaccination information and programs to help seniors build digital literacy skills, and subscriptions to meal deliveries by volunteers.

A social prescription program was created whereby physicians “prescribed” activities for seniors to help address social isolation. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. also created a “seniors call seniors” program to check in and support one another.



Caroline Sauriol, Les Petits Frères

Located in Montreal, Les Petits Frères is a non-profit organization that serves about 2000 seniors over the age of 75 across Quebec. They



offer a variety of programs, from holiday celebrations and hospital visits to specialized care and end-of-life support.

During the pandemic, much of the support provided by Les Petits Frères had to be changed from in-person to phone, with up to 2,500 social calls made per week by volunteers and staff. A 12-hour phone line connected 300 seniors with more than 300 volunteers. The organization also partnered with local municipal police services to check in on vulnerable seniors who lacked phone access. Various task forces were assembled to target the different care needs of the seniors: a sweets team to deliver meals and treats, a letter team to write weekly letters of joy and hope to members without phone access, and a vaccination team to support registration and follow-up.

Pandemic restrictions forced the organization to focus on providing seniors with comfort and a sense of being important. The pandemic also brought to light existing service limitations, barriers to access, poor living conditions, and the need for a stronger network to target more isolated seniors.

Literature Review Updates

Understanding which factors increase the risk of social isolation in older immigrants is critical to developing successful interventions. For this purpose, we conducted several literature reviews. Provided below is info about the reviews.

English Literature Search/Review (Quantitative) – led by Souraya Sidani

With the assistance of a librarian, we searched about 17 bibliographic databases (e.g., PSYCINFO, AGELINE), using multiple keywords, for articles published between 2000 and 2020 that focused on quantitative or mixed methods results of studies that examined factors associated with social isolation in older immigrants.

We wanted to (1) generate a comprehensive list of individual, community, and societal factors, and (2) figure out whether they increase or decrease the risk of social isolation.

The search resulted in 5,475 articles, of which 269 reported on quantitative or mixed methods studies. Of the 74 relevant studies, the majority were cross-sectional, survey-type research designs and were conducted in the US, Canada, and the UK. The target sample composition varied: in some studies, older immigrants from any country were included, whereas other studies included older immigrants from specific countries.

A wide range of factors has been examined: (1) Demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender, education), (2) Health profile (e.g. self-rated physical and mental health), (3) Social or situational factors related to living arrangements, social network sizes, frequency of network contact, and (4) Immigration-related factors (e.g. proficiency in the local language). Currently, we are in the process of synthesizing the results to determine which factors are most influential in increasing or decreasing the risk of social isolation.

English Literature Search/Review (Qualitative) – led by Sharon Koehn

Articles reporting on qualitative and mixed methods studies were identified from database searches and by team members were synthesized using Critical Interpretive Synthesis.

Of the 228 potential articles that were subjected to a deeper screening, 80 were selected for full review. Of these, 77 were identified as most relevant, and were coded using the qualitative data management software, NVivo 12[®].

Each article was coded for its sample characteristics, research design, and any theories/frameworks used, and the ways in which social isolation and/or loneliness were understood. The largest and most important category is ‘Characteristics and constructs influencing social isolation or loneliness’.

All categories and the nodes within them were listed and described in a codebook, and the sample characteristics were summarized in a framework matrix.

Text was often coded at multiple nodes to allow for exploration of possible relationships between them. For example, to explore the ways in which some of the frequently coded sample characteristics—such as gender, country of origin, or living alone/together — correlate with key influences on social isolation, such as dependence on family, constructing ethnicity and culture, fluency in and acquisition of recipient primary language, mental health, or transportation.

These fall into a few big themes, which along with the connections between them will be elaborated as lines of argument in the final report.

French Literature Search/Review (Qual./Quan.) – led by Michèle Charpentier

À la mi-juin, l'équipe Québec complétait une recension de la littérature francophone internationale en lien avec l'isolement social, économique ou politique ou touchant à l'exclusion/l'inclusion vécues par les aînées migrantes. 46 ouvrages francophones regroupant des ouvrages scientifiques et de la littérature grise – publiés entre 2000 et 2021 – ont alors été identifiés comme étant éligibles à l'analyse en fonction des critères de sélection élaborés dans le protocole de revue de la littérature.

Lors de la phase d'analyse, 12 d'entre eux ont été rejetés pour un total final de 34 études considérées. Un document condensé de l'analyse nommé « Faits saillants de la recension francophone » a été produit par l'équipe Québec en début juillet. Celui-ci dénombre les dimensions reliées à l'isolement social et à la solitude des aînées migrantes qui sont ressorties de ces 34 études tout en les présentant sommairement.

In mid-June, the Quebec team completed a review of international Francophone literature related to social, economic, and political isolation or affecting the exclusion / inclusion experienced by immigrant seniors. 46 French-language works bringing together scientific works and gray literature that was published between 2000 and 2021 - were identified as being eligible for analysis according to the selection criteria developed in the literature review protocol.

During the analysis phase, 12 of them were rejected and a final total of 34 studies considered. A condensed document of the analysis called "Highlights of the Francophone review" was produced by the Quebec team in early July. These results highlight the dimensions linked to the social isolation and loneliness of immigrant seniors which emerged from these 34 studies while summarizing them.

Covid-19 Sub-Studies Update

The COVID-19 sub-committee was formed in December 2020 to understand how the pandemic is affecting older immigrants' lives in the Canadian context. The committee has received ethics approval from Ryerson, UQAM, UCalgary, UVic, and will begin data collection in October. Service providers are invited to participate in a virtual focus group to:

- examine the intersecting factors that have an impact on social isolation and connectedness during the pandemic;
- identify the strategies that older adults and service providers have adopted since the pandemic's onset; and
- develop sustainable knowledge-sharing and research collaborations among key players to better inform partners about how older immigrants and service providers have addressed COVID-19 in everyday operations and lived experiences.

We hope that the findings will inform future practices as well as help leverage partnerships in support of future research. The ICOI COVID-19 sub-committee is also undertaking a scoping review of recent literature on COVID and older immigrants in Canada, and summaries of the findings will be presented during the focus groups. If you have any questions, please contact Ilyan Ferrer:

ilyan.ferrer@ucalgary.ca.

ICOI Website

We are excited to share that the recordings of the ICOI Virtual Summit presentations are now available on the ICOI website, in both English and French via closed captioning. These presentations are the first of many resources we plan to develop, and make available related to research, policy, advocacy, and activism in the area of social isolation and connectedness. Please visit

www.icoi.ca/summit-2021/ to learn more. We are also currently developing a French version of the website, which will be ready in the winter of 2022.

Research Stream Updates

Political Inclusion Research Stream – led by John Shields

Political inclusion is a broad concept that includes the lived reality of political exclusion. While the big ‘P’ dimensions of ‘Political’ include voting, running for office, and importantly, laws, policies and programs that have an impact on immigrant seniors, the small ‘p’ dimensions of ‘political’ are equally important, such as broader participation in civic society, knowledge acquisition to facilitate engagement, and the immigrant senior ‘voice’ and its amplification through organizations like settlement agencies and faith bodies. There is recognition of the salience of immigration status, and that citizenship for immigrant seniors can be incomplete, a form of semi-citizenship. Many elements of life within neoliberal society have been politicized, including the redefining of ‘rights’ versus ‘responsibilities’ and the expectations of individual and family resiliency to endure multifaceted challenges without reliance on state assistance. Social and economic inclusion overlap in many ways with political inclusion, hence the need to embrace a holistic and intersectional approach to our research .

The immediate work of this research stream is to continue to discuss and enrich our understanding of political inclusion for immigrant seniors; conduct literature reviews and extract political inclusion themes; and identify the key political inclusion variables with respect to older immigrants that can be used to inform our data collection instruments and activities. This work is informed by the ongoing grounded work of community-based researchers and practitioners in order to co-create research outcomes.

If you would like to add to the above discussion, please join the Political Inclusion Stream.

Economic Inclusion Research Stream – led by Sandeep Agrawal

The purpose of the Economic Inclusion Stream is to collectively understand the theories, factors, and practice models that inform how economic

challenges such as the precarious nature of employment, income, housing, and social entrepreneurship affect social isolation among immigrant seniors.

This Stream has engaged in broad discussions with its membership, and also conducted a literature review. In addition to some of the more apparent themes like language, family ties, and occupation status, our review and discussions elicited other factors that have an impact on the economic situation of older immigrants: 1. Older immigrant’s length of residency in Canada; 2. Lack of access to federal government’s old-age pension plan or municipal government’s subsidy programs; 3. Municipal restrictions on home-based businesses impeding financial independence; 4. Issues with government intervention in the case of sponsorship breakdown; and 5. Lack of financial and legal knowledge among older immigrants.

If you would like to contribute to the above discussion, please join the Economic Inclusion Stream.

Social Inclusion Research Stream – led by Jill Hanley

The purpose of the Social Inclusion Stream is to collectively understand the theories, factors, and practice models that inform how social relationships (friends, acquaintances, neighbours, coworkers, family, religious networks/connections, service providers) affect the social isolation/connectedness among immigrant seniors.

The Stream has engaged in two broad discussions with its membership, and has developed a plan for how to engage with the literature review results, both quantitative and qualitative, in order to inform the development of the data collection instruments for Phase 1, Activity 2 (data collection to validate the factors).

If you would like to engage in this discussion, please join the Social Inclusion Stream.

Support Committee Updates

ICOI Data, Design & Evaluation Support Committee – led by Souraya Sidani

This committee engages academic and community partners in the design and execution of several projects that aim to generate knowledge about social isolation, and to develop and evaluate interventions or services to promote social connectedness among older immigrants.

This committee will develop protocols that describe the steps and methods for recruitment, screening, data collection and analysis, inform the conduct of projects in a comparable way, and offer options for adapting the research methods to fit the characteristics, resources or preferences of different immigrant communities in the local city context.

The committee members are responsible for: (1) Selecting the overall research design (or blueprint) for each project; (2) Developing the protocol that describe the steps and methods for recruitment, screening, data collection and analysis, and inform the conduct of projects in a comparable way, while offering options for the methods across cities and immigrant communities; (3) Helping to address emerging problems related to data collection, analysis, and reporting; (4) Preparing manuals to inform the adaptation and the implementation of interventions or services; and, (5) Organizing and providing training for community partners as well as advising on the adaptation and the implementation of interventions or services.

We strongly encourage ICOI community partners to join this committee – your perspective is *essential* to ensure the relevance of the projects to immigrant communities. If interested in joining, please contact: Souraya Sidani (Committee Lead) at ssidani@ryerson.ca, or Kerith Paul (ICOI Project Manager) at kerith.paul@ryerson.ca.

ICOI Education & Training Committee– led by Sandeep Agrawal

The Education and Training Committee, in concert with the other two support committees, aims to promote social connectedness between ICOI team members and partners. A key objective is to work closely with the provincial teams to provide specialized support and

training to all members. The support includes educational opportunities for academics, students and/or community partners, and strategies to offer applied sessions, such as how to reduce stress at work *and* at home and how to master professional networking.

The committee plans to share best practices, experiences and perspectives and offer options to inform and organize ICOI members based on their specific needs. The committee will create material, initiate opportunities and share knowledge mobilization activities to support the entire ICOI team. Opportunities will also be created for students to contribute towards the research designs, write documents and present findings in different venues.

If interested in joining, please contact: Sandeep Agrawal (Committee Chair) at sagrawal@ualberta.ca, or Kerith Paul (ICOI Project Manager) at kerith.paul@ryerson.ca.

ICOI Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) & Policy Support Committee – led by Sepali Guruge

This committee will develop an integrated KmB plan that spans the 7 years of the project, and will use feedback loops, beginning in Years 1 and 2, to inform subsequent steps and activities that ensure effective multi-directional outreach and engagement.

Working closely with the provincial site leads and co-leads, and leads of the other two support committees, this Committee will set annual goals and timelines based on the KmB plan proposed in the application in order to ensure timely dissemination of the findings. The committee will draft and revise a publication plan, and also plan and lead the 4 summits to bring together the team in discussing study findings. They will ensure that the KmB outputs focus on a wide range of audiences using a range of activities and deliverables.

We strongly encourage ICOI community partners to join this committee. If interested in joining, please contact: Sepali Guruge (Committee Lead) at sguruge@ryerson.ca, or Kerith Paul (ICOI Project Manager) at kerith.paul@ryerson.ca.

Inside the Next Issue

The next ICOI newsletter will introduce more ICOI team members, share news about a newly created Research Stream, and will feature further project activity updates.

The Inclusive Communities for Older Immigrants
is a 7-year Partnership.

It is supported by the Social Sciences and
Humanities Research Council of Canada.



Please share this newsletter with
your networks

Please email kerith.paul@ryerson.ca to
offer ideas or suggestions for this
newsletter.



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