



# 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:

Welcome to the summer newsletter! We are excited to share our latest updates on the ICOI project activities.

In particular, we are pleased to highlight the status of Phase 2 data analysis and the start of Phase 3 work.

We are also delighted to welcome new members to the ICOI project. As in our previous newsletters, you will find their bios to get to know them better.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment as we advance the ICOI project together!

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

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## ICOI Team Member Greeting

### Juman Al-Jumaili, ICOI Research Assistant, ON Team



Juman holds a Bachelor's degree in Criminology with a minor in English from Western University and currently works as a Resettlement Counsellor. She has over six years of experience supporting newcomers and children through front-line service, case management, and program development. Juman has also contributed to various research projects through data collection efforts. She has extensive experience working with diverse communities and collaborating with mainstream service providers to help non-English-speaking clients access essential social services. Passionate about advocacy, equity, and community building, Juman is dedicated to helping individuals navigate complex systems and build meaningful lives in their new communities.

### Jasmine Chen, ICOI Research Assistant, BC Team



Jasmine Chen is a Research Assistant who supported the ICOI project's Phase 2 activities by recruiting participants, carrying out interviews, translating interview transcripts, and completing data entry. She is a Master of Public Health student at University of Victoria, with research interests in health equity, marginalized communities, healthy aging, nutrition, food security, chronic health conditions, social determinants of health, and applications of virtual reality in health research. Jasmine's research experience includes population-based analyses using CLSA and NHANES, where she examined vitamin D-related genetic variants, cognitive health, and the links between chromium levels and chronic conditions, to rapid reviews on chronic disease among minority communities in Canada, and food environment studies in the Lower Mainland. Her work has contributed to peer-reviewed publications and presentations at national and international conferences. Jasmine has also contributed to studies on virtual reality, personalized nutrition education, and mental health interventions, and has prior lab experience working with esophageal and intestinal organoids. She hopes to pursue a PhD and continue contributing to public health research and policy.

## Shiney Choudhary, ICOI Research Assistant, AB Team



Shiney is a graduate student at University of Calgary in the Faculty of Social Work. Shiney is contributing to a project focused on bringing forward the voices of Punjabi-speaking people in Calgary. Having grown up in New Delhi, India, with ancestral roots in Punjab on both sides of the border, Shiney brings lived and cultural knowledge to this work. Through this project, Shiney is strengthening compassion and building meaningful connections with the local community in Calgary, located on Treaty 7 territory, Moh'kins'tsis (MOH-kin-stiss), the Blackfoot word for "elbow," referring to the bend of the river as it flows through the city.

## Gaurav Sharma, ICOI Research Assistant, QC Team



Gaurav has been based in Montreal since 2019 and has served as a Community Organizer at the Immigrant Workers Centre (IWC) since October 2020. This role involves leading workshops on workers' rights, health and safety, and employment standards, with a particular focus on Asian immigrant communities in Montreal. Fluent in Punjabi, Hindi, and English, Gaurav works closely with the Punjabi community in Parc-Extension, one of Montreal's most diverse neighborhoods. Engagement with local organizations extends to arts and culture initiatives that use theatre and creative expression as tools for education and empowerment. As part of ongoing advocacy efforts, Gaurav supports workers in navigating the CNESST complaint process to help them claim their rights and access workplace justice. Numerous campaigns and collaborative projects with partner organizations have been led or

supported, always centering the experiences of immigrant and racialized workers. Gaurav holds a Bachelor's degree in Arts from India and brings a strong commitment to social justice, community empowerment, and culturally rooted organizing. Gaurav is a Research Assistant who supported Phase 2 activities in the ICOI project by recruiting participants, conducting interviews, and translating transcripts.

# ICOI Activities: Progress to Date

## Phase 2 Data Collection and Analysis

We are pleased to share that in July 2025, the ICOI team successfully completed Phase 2 data collection across all participating sites, marking a key step forward in advancing the project's objectives.

Phase 2 focused on examining the acceptability of interventions for social connectedness. Results of a literature review identified eight interventions shown to be effective in reducing social isolation and loneliness among older adults, either directly or indirectly by addressing key determinants. However, these interventions have primarily been evaluated in the general older adult population, and little is known about how older immigrants perceive their acceptability.

To address this gap, Phase 2 project aimed to examine the acceptability of these interventions among older immigrants and community leaders from Arabic-, Mandarin-, and Punjabi-speaking communities and also service providers who work with older immigrants from these communities. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to explore participants' perspectives on the cultural and contextual acceptability of these interventions.

Academic team members provided invaluable support by training, mentoring, and supervising research assistants, as well as ensuring consistent data collection procedures across sites. Community partners played a vital role in helping recruit participants from the three communities. .

Following data collection, Kaveenaa Chandrasekaran (Project Manager) and Dr. Lingqian Li (Postdoctoral Fellow) led the process of data cleaning. In August 2025, the team initiated quantitative data analysis under the leadership of Professor Souraya Sidani, the ICOI project's co-lead.

We extend our appreciation to all team members who contributed to this phase of data collection. Your collaboration continues to strengthen the ICOI project's goal of advancing equitable, evidence-informed approaches to support older immigrants' social wellbeing in Canada.

## Phase 3: Co-Designing a Multi-Component Intervention

Building on the findings from Phase 2, Phase 3 of the ICOI project focuses on co-designing a multi-component intervention to enhance social connectedness among Arabic-, Mandarin-, and Punjabi-speaking older immigrants in Canada. This phase also aims to create a logic model to guide the delivery of the multi-component intervention in community settings.

Phase 3 uses a collaborative, co-design approach that brings together three key stakeholder groups:

1. **Older Immigrants:** The intended recipients of the multi-component intervention
2. **Service Providers:** Including health, social, and settlement workers who may be involved in the delivery of the multi-component intervention
3. **Community Leaders:** Individuals from the Arabic, Mandarin, and Punjabi-speaking immigrant communities who engage in unpaid leadership work to support and/or advocate for older adults within their communities

Through a series of facilitated workgroup meetings, these stakeholders will collaboratively identify the content and activities that make up the multi-component intervention. The co-design process encourages creativity, inclusivity, and cultural relevance, taking into account the social determinants of health, cultural values, and available community resources. The outcome will be a collaboratively developed logic model that outlines the resources, activities, and delivery strategies required to provide the multi-component intervention in diverse communities.

The ICOI team has also submitted a research ethics board application to Toronto Metropolitan University's Research Ethics Board. Once Research Ethics Board approval is received at Toronto Metropolitan University, we will proceed with obtaining approvals at our other academic partner institutions to move Phase 3 forward.



## ICOI Team Member Highlights



We are pleased to highlight two recent publications by our co-investigator, Bharati Sethi. These studies offer important insights into caregiving and transnational responsibilities among Indigenous and visible minority communities in Canada.

The full citations and brief details about each publication are shared below:

Sethi, B., & \*Van Haaften, J. (2025). Holistic experiences of Indigenous carer-employees in Southern Ontario. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 13 (3). 84-110. <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/jisd/article/view/80085/58462>

\*Shahbaz, R., Williams, A., Sethi, B., & Wahoush, O. (2025). Transnational caregiving: Experiences of visible minority carer-employees. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 2025(1), 4282271. <https://doi.org/10.1155/hsc/4282271>



We are also pleased to share a policy review that was recently published by our co-investigator, John Shields (co-authored with Hya Ali and Valerie Preston) *Reforming Settlement Services to Include Temporary Migrants, A BMRC Policy Preview*. This open access policy review examines recent efforts to expand eligibility for settlement services to temporary residents by outlining recent policy changes and consultations about federally funded services and assessing recent initiatives that provide settlement and integration services to temporary migrants such as Ukrainian asylum seekers and temporary foreign workers. The recent expansion of eligibility for services to international students, temporary foreign workers and asylum seekers in Quebec and other provinces is given special attention. The importance of this issue is highlighted both by the increasing need by temporary migrants during and after the pandemic, and by

the current government embrace of austerity and restructuring of settlement services by IRCC which has sidelined efforts toward needed progressive reform.

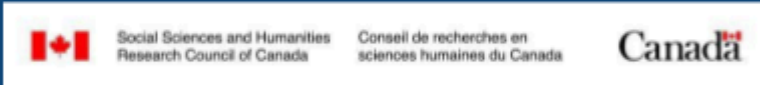
**Available at the link:**

<https://www.yorku.ca/research/bmrc-irmu/wp-content/uploads/sites/869/2025/02/Reforming-Settlement-Services-policy-preview-Final-2025clean.pdf>

Summer 2025

*Inside the Next Issue*

*The upcoming ICOI newsletter will share the latest updates on Phase 2 data collection and analysis.*



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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