

DISCUSSION GROUP 1

Topic: ESL & language learning support

Host: Seogae Yoo, North Shore Multicultural Society

Note taker: Olivia Bornik, North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership (NSIIP)

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ What are the underlying issues?
- ❖ What is already being done in the community? What resources exist?
- ❖ What more could be done?

Underlying Issues

- LINC classes at North Shore Multicultural Society (NSMS) - only available to seniors with permanent residency status.
- Program timing can be challenging, conflict with family obligations.
- Fee of programs can be prohibitive for some seniors.
- Isolation for elders who are in caregiver roles - especially when there is lack of information and awareness of programs and services available to seniors.
- Multi-generational family units: sometimes seniors / elderly family members do not have the resources to connect outside of these insular family units (including limited ability to access English language classes).
- How much do seniors learn in an ESL class when there are maybe limited opportunities to apply learning in daily life / interactions? Maybe for senior learners we need to focus on practical skills (i.e. online banking) with an ESL component vs. more abstract focus on strict language learning.
- Basic “survival skills” for seniors are important - builds confidence and independence from children which can help break down isolation and increase community connectedness.
- Seniors need time & opportunities to practice skills in community.
- Nowadays seniors must overcome language literacy and digital literacy challenges.
- Seniors need a space to talk about who they are and share some of their stories - need more regular “meet-ups” for immigrant and multicultural seniors.
- Need to work on creating more safe spaces in which it is ok to make mistakes when speaking and telling stories in English (Zoom groups should be small... size 3-5 participants).

Existing Resources

- North Van City Library - ESL conversation clubs (also available in other North Shore libraries) ... registration required for these weekly offering.
- North Vancouver District Library (Each branch has weekly conversational sessions).
- West Vancouver Memorial Library-weekly ESL conversation club.
- NSMS: LINC program for PR seniors.
- Seniors conversation Club for seniors in lower levels for PR.
- Silver Harbour has conversation classes/clubs (Iranian and Chinese) - opportunity to speak in first language while also practicing English *helps to build a sense of belonging as well intercultural connections.

What more could be done?

- ✚ Book clubs - (resurrect ethnocultural specific book clubs - linked to building community connections and field trips) - library has tested this already.
- ✚ Translation and interpretation support: WVPD partnering with NSMS to get support in this regard (helping to facilitate communications with lower English level seniors).
- ✚ Connecting to seniors through school districts? Many seniors help bringing children to/from school... good point of access and connection.
- ✚ Information booklets / brochures available at airport (upon arrival) outlining services and programs available to immigrant & multicultural seniors in their first languages.
- ✚ Add information (in multiple languages) about seniors' programs and activities to food delivery packages being distributed in community by organizations such as West Van Seniors Activity Centre, Silver Harbour etc.
- ✚ Maybe also promote seniors' programs by putting up multilingual posters in public spaces: shopping centers, grocery stores, libraries, advertising in the North Shore news
- ✚ Provide spaces for newcomer seniors to share their life journeys & wisdom in English.
- ✚ Bring ESL classes directly where they live, e.g., The Towers.
- ✚ Class should be offered during the times that the seniors who have family obligations during the day, such as taking care of younger grandchildren, etc. can attend.

DISCUSSION GROUP 2

Topic: Celebrating cultures – building intercultural connections

Host: Heather Evans, City of North Vancouver

Note taker: Heather Evans, City of North Vancouver

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ What are the underlying issues?
- ❖ What is already being done in the community? What resources exist?
- ❖ What more could be done?

Underlying issues

- Cultural celebrations are becoming more popular for mainstream residents. Do ethnocultural seniors feel the same connection / invitation to be involved in the mainstream intercultural celebrations?
- Wish that intercultural celebrations could happen more frequently throughout the year not just one or a couple of times.
- Sometimes there are weird dynamics between people who have lived here a long time and speak English, and those who speak a different language. Some longtime residents who speak English are not proactively welcoming - not speaking English is an issue.
- How come we are spending money on another cultural event, or translation etc.? How do we get over this, or do we get over this?
- Festivals are useful for learning more about other cultures and traditions.
- Many seniors are frustrated with not having any opportunities for fun (e.g. stuck looking after grandkids etc.) - intercultural festivals would be a great way to get seniors out!

Existing Resources

- Some of the events that are happening are Filipino festival, Norouz, Caribbean festival.
- North Van City library is doing some recipe sharing etc. through the programming they are running.
- Gospel Church and other churches do some multicultural programming - and other churches. But non-religious leaders as well?
- There was a 10-week NSMS Iranian and Chinese group with lessons and trips etc., and the 2 groups ended up splitting into their 2 language groups and not really interacting.

What more could be done?

- ✚ City and District could be driving the celebrations and schools, but not the organizations.
- ✚ Multicultural day - all cultures coming together on the same day (not just one culture).
- ✚ In schools, bring in different foods to classrooms etc. - allows children to see difference.
- ✚ Grant applications for cultural events - make it more accessible to do grassroots events.
- ✚ Organizations like Mollie Nye House could work with other community groups to and reduce cost, provide partnership etc.
- ✚ Some multicultural seniors are preferring zoom to connect (easier than leaving home for some) and should not underestimate the interest of seniors to connect through zoom. Can have computer training sessions in multiple languages. Could there be intercultural meeting groups to connect seniors? Learning, sharing, conversation groups.
- ✚ Need to make connections with cultural / community connectors who are leaders and involve them in planning and organizing events.
- ✚ Seniors Gathering - put an events calendar together that promotes City of North Van's events calendar, so that people / seniors can be out and about and not be isolated. It is important for people who are longtime residents to learn about other cultures!
- ✚ Encouraging intercultural connection via food - works on food security, sharing, culture.
- ✚ We could try the example of the Tri-Cities seniors planning network event called World Fest - organized by a nonprofit and including 6 multicultural groups.

DISCUSSION GROUP 3

Topic: Informational workshops & services

Host: Margaret Coates, Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society

Note taker: Leah Karlberg, City of North Vancouver

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ What are the underlying issues?
- ❖ What is already being done in the community?
- ❖ What could be done?

Underlying issues

- COVID-19 identified as additional barrier, contributing to seniors staying at home (often taking on roles such as childcare) and unable to attend programming in person, for example at the West Vancouver library.
- Difficulties adapting programs to various groups, and translating workshops through language and culture, for example on recognizing signs of senior's abuse.
- Highlighting the importance of offering presentations and workshops in first languages (difficult due to funding, not having presenters for certain languages, or only being able to cater a workshop to one language audience at a time). Could be an opportunity to engage volunteers to assist with interpretations and translation.
- Services may be inaccessible to many people who do not know about them and do not have a way of dining information (such as churches, online, etc.). Partnerships such as the coalition and in-person opportunities to connect are so important to share resources and events that are going on. The internet may not be the best way to share for all immigrant senior audiences.
- Understanding that those in isolation are the ones that are likely not accessing resources / connecting with opportunities such as the coalition.
- Isolated seniors on the North Shore may not have any connections with adults outside of their families.

Existing Resources

- Lionsview, Silver Harbour, and NSMS, to put on series of workshops in first languages - on topics identified through original report and interviews. However, noting COVID-19 as a new challenge to do so.

- Social gathering and workshops, such as hosted by West Van Library. These workshops foster connections which leads to other opportunities to socialize outside of workshop.
- Opportunities such as LINC for languages which mostly cater to students who are already connected and have a foundation of English-speaking skills.

What more could be done?

- ✚ Translation fees should be included in the cost in any organized event or workshop for seniors on the North Shore where possible
- ✚ In addition to computer and English classes, there could be practical classes for example on finances, with demonstration, for example online banking or phone banking support
- ✚ Distance computer classes, now during COVID, or in person in the future. Could be offered in multiple languages, and even help familiarize seniors with tools such as Zoom
- ✚ Working with the school board, to connect with immigrant seniors who take on childcare roles. The school might be able to support them or provide information to help them create new networks outside of their family.
- ✚ Translating resources, such as posters, to reach a wider audience.

DISCUSSION GROUP 4

Topic: Volunteerism & community engagement

Host: Annwen Loverin, Silver Harbour Seniors Activity Centre

Note Taker: Annwen Loverin, Silver Harbour Seniors Activity Centre

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ What are the underlying issues?
- ❖ What is already being done in the community?
- ❖ What could be done?

Underlying Issues

- Seniors do not feel that their English is sufficient for volunteer positions and therefore shy away from offering their time & skills to the community.
- Organizations do not adapt volunteer positions for different levels of English.
- Organizations prioritize individuals with higher levels of English for positions.
- Transportation issues – access to services and programs can be a huge issue!
- Difficulty reading written materials in English about volunteer positions/programs.
- May not be familiar with volunteerism (seems very North American).
- Compounded with language is feeling intimidated by others' higher level of English or not seeing yourself in the room, shy away from speaking and contributing --what should we do to make people feel more comfortable.
- Health might be challenging (compounded health problems by communication barriers)
- Language barriers can pose huge barriers to engagement.
- Not familiar with concept of volunteerism in Canada (different in other countries).
- Process of getting involved is complicated: forms, online form (requires computer and form literacy in English), interview, arranging an interview time.
- Finding time to volunteer because caregiving duties are time-consuming.
- Understanding of what volunteerism is and what benefits are -- need the opportunity to learn about this and about range of opportunities available.
- Some seniors do not know how to start volunteering, do not know how to share skills, and even start being involved little by little.
- Rigorous paperwork can deter people.

Existing Resources

- Opportunity to participate in programs, staff are welcoming.
- Existing groups (Farsi seniors, Chinese seniors) can volunteer together, self-directed.
- Staff and volunteers do language training, to be more welcoming and understanding.
- Volunteer Centre.

What more could be done?

- ✚ Bring in younger bilingual immigrants to support immigrant seniors with language -- pairing up to volunteer together.
- ✚ Tri cities/Coquitlam event World fest (seniors celebration) on culture, exhibitors, entertainment/performing artists, resulted in more (Ken Kuhn organized).
- ✚ Look for positions that require less English.
- ✚ In planning stages of NSIIP/NSCR volunteer fair, language capacity for sharing information.
- ✚ “Bring a buddy to volunteer” initiatives so that people can be exposed to flexibility that can come with volunteers.
- ✚ Group projects with same language volunteers working together on a project that does not require high level of English.
- ✚ Participation in programs encourages volunteerism.
- ✚ Ensuring multicultural societies are involved.
- ✚ Signage and posters in multiple languages.
- ✚ Grants (e.g. New Horizons) for increasing accessibility of volunteer programs in various organizations.
- ✚ Approach from a different perspective: what skills can the immigrant seniors bring, e.g. can Mandarin seniors teach Mandarin to children, adults, seniors.

Report: Integrating Multicultural Seniors in an Age-friendly Community

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ What are the underlying issues?
- ❖ What is already being done in the community? What resources exist?
- ❖ What more could be done?

Underlying Issues

- Although multicultural seniors were able to move relatively successfully through the community, that is, shop, take public transportation, meet with friends and peers, language skills and to some extent financial losses, cultural isolation, lack of integrative programs and services are barriers to full integration. The barriers restrict their full involvement in the community's programs and services.
- It was also revealed that some seniors are more comfortable within their own cultural group and at this time have not found a need or incentive to become more involved in programs and services in the larger community.
- It was revealed that there is also room for agencies and the municipalities to develop some programs or activities that promote integration more fully in the community.

Existing Resources

- Basic language and cultural training (Farsi and Chinese) for front line staff and volunteers at seniors' organizations: Farsi language and cultural training has been completed with Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre and Capilano Community Services Society staff and volunteers. Chinese language and cultural training are envisioned for the coming year.
- Roll out trained volunteer ambassadors to support individual multicultural seniors in accessing existing seniors' programs: Identification and training of the initial group of volunteer ambassadors is nearly complete and recruitment and training of additional ambassadors will be ongoing.
- Support for three culture-specific programs at seniors' organizations and centres: These included transit bus trips for the Farsi speaking groups meeting at Silver Harbour (learning about and practicing using the transit system) and the establishment of a new Farsi intermediate ESL class. Soon, transit training and bus trips are expected to be held with Chinese seniors as well as additional workshops.

What more could be done?

- ✚ More programming, especially conversational English as a second language (ESL) and classes tailored to ethnocultural seniors' learning styles (Lionsview and SHC are taking this on in the coming year).
- ✚ Specific workshops (translation available if needed) on various topics such as health, housing, technology, supports for seniors, and volunteering in the community.
- ✚ Transportation classes on navigating the North Shore to reduce seniors' reliance on their family and the need to drive themselves.
- ✚ Changes to the built environment to support seniors' integration and movement.
- ✚ Annual or bi-annual intercultural gatherings to celebrate each other's cultures, for example with a fashion show or potluck.
- ✚ Meaningful volunteer opportunities in the community and sharing knowledge about where to find these opportunities.
- ✚ More intercultural conversational programs meant to integrate multicultural seniors from various ethnic groups. Recommendations from the Seniors Coalition and North Shore Multicultural Forum.
- ✚ Produce translated program guides available across the North Shore.
- ✚ Support seniors by offering service in first languages or translators when they visit community organizations.
- ✚ Include Indigenous seniors and LGBTQ+ seniors in future research projects.
- ✚ Introduce health navigation and mental health resources in several languages.
- ✚ Explore what other jurisdictions are doing to support seniors and multiculturalism
- ✚ Drill down specifically into the senior aged members of a cultural demographic when seeking higher proportions of senior newcomers rather than using all ages as a cultural demographic.