RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

“Seniors in the Suburbs”: Understanding belonging & community connection - together!

WHO? (Researcher Team)

Investigators:
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WHY? (Purpose)

The roles of place & belonging on wellbeing are increasingly understood. Seniors are increasingly living in suburbs – though little is known about the strengths, strategies and struggles! The views of seniors were the place for Vivo to begin to understand how to work together.

This study asked:
- What does belonging mean to seniors in Calgary’s NE/Central suburbs?
- What are the facilitators & barriers?
- What could belonging look like for seniors in the suburbs?

WHAT? (Research Process)

This exploratory research project used focus group methods to learn about community health and belonging for seniors living in Calgary NE/N. Central suburbs. The purpose was to gather the views and opinions of groups of seniors who were already engaged in community outreach and activities. In 2015, a total of 36 seniors were consulted from 3 existing groups, including an activity group and 2 cultural (Punjabi and Chinese) groups.
Belonging in the community means...

- **FEELING** ... attached, comforted, accepted, respected, visible & useful
- **KNOWING** ... the resources & activities available
- **BEING** ... part of something bigger (community of all ages, abilities, & cultures)
- **DOING** ... sharing experiences & activities, meeting together, reading/gathering information, hearing & being heard

Belonging is supported (or hindered) by ...

- **PERSONAL FACTORS** eg. curiosity/interest, hope, desire/will
- **RELATIONAL FACTORS** eg. leadership, seeking similarities, inclusion
- **COMMUNITY FACTORS** eg. isolation/separation, professionalized helping

Belonging looks like...

- Connecting to others of all ages, cultures & circumstances
- Contributing to wellbeing & social life
- Learning & recreating in cooperation & common spaces

NOW WHAT? Next Steps...

- Seniors are connecting – activity day event August 2016!
- Research Dissemination (Participant feedback, ARPA Conference, City of Calgary Active Aging Think Tank, Canadian Assoc. for Gerontology, papers in progress)
- Spin off proposals (programming, student experiences and further research)

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