



IMMIGRANT SENIORS PROJECT BY Senior Protection Partnership

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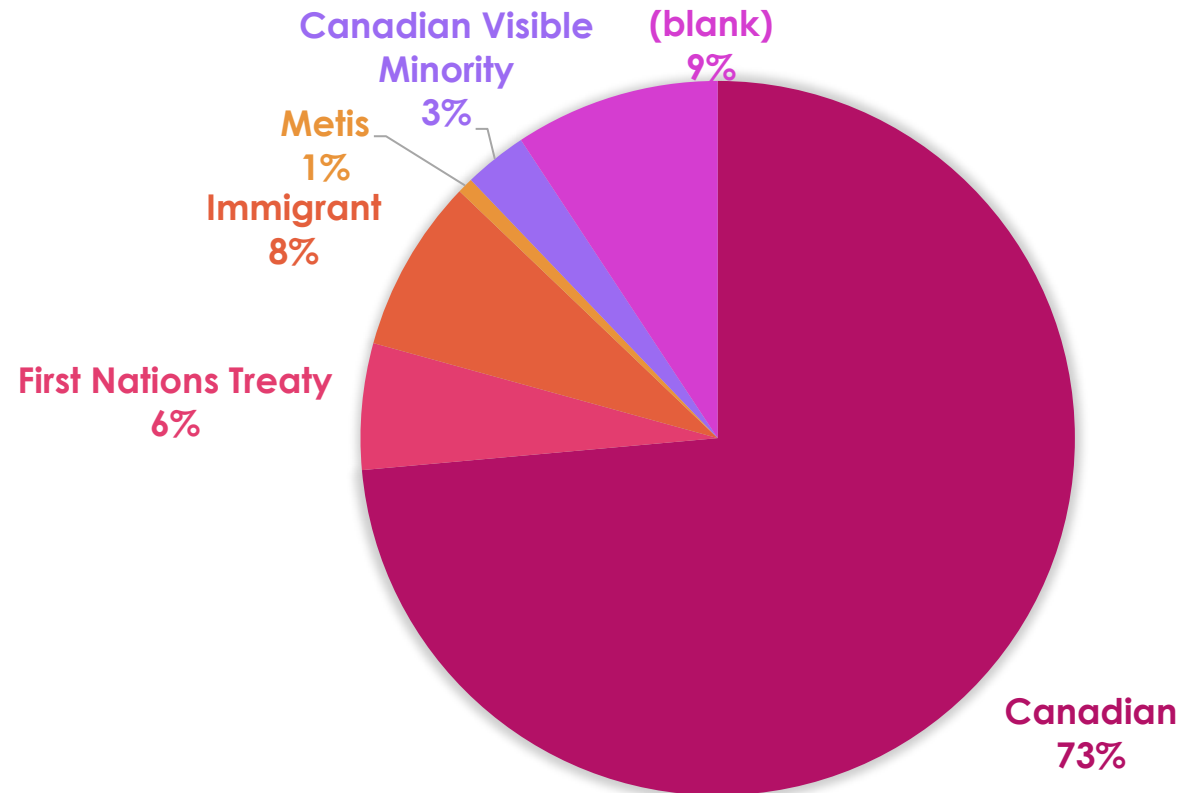
Introduction

- ▶ The Immigrant Seniors Project is a community development project that aims to enhance the Seniors Protection Partnership's services with immigrant seniors. The pilot project aims to work specifically with the Chinese and the South Asian communities in Edmonton.

Methodology

- ▶ Information was gathered from primary sources via a community engagement process by conducting formal and informal interviews, and from secondary sources such as articles, conference publications, and reports. Initially, the Steering Committee identified key contacts for the Project Coordinator to reach out and connect with. Criteria for key contacts included agencies or service providers who: respond to Elder Abuse in immigrant communities; who respond to Family Violence in immigrant communities; or who work with immigrant seniors.

Senior's Family of Origin





Service Providers

Best Practices/Strengths

- ▶ Dual relationships/role i.e. professional skills and belong to community. Ingrained knowledge of language and culture along with know how of a profession
- ▶ Cultural navigator/community connector role more effective when the individual has community's regard or informal/formal status in their community
- ▶ Clients may identify a person rather than a service as preferred contact point (feel more comfortable in a trusting relationship)
- ▶ Companion the client and allow the client to be in control (empower)
- ▶ Using pictures, English-to-[language] dictionaries to bridge language barriers
- ▶ Use strengths based approach
- ▶ Work together as allies

Challenges/Obstacles

- ▶ Language barrier/gap i.e.. rely on translators: some info “lost in translation”; translator may not have training in DV/EA; doubles time
- ▶ Unaware of cultural nuances i.e. feel disoriented
- ▶ Interpreter: subgrouping with client can occur, excluding frontline staff; if professional, can end up “taking over” assessment (also a strength)
- ▶ Service provider may hesitate to work within/with their ethnic community for fear of implications: community members continuing to seek them out during personal time; over-dependency of client on them due to feelings of being entitled to “extra special” treatment
- ▶ Client may prioritize preference for a service provider vs their actual role ie. service provider may feel awkward when presented with expectations that are out of scope of their role
- ▶ Service provider could become scapegoat for client if client does not want to take accountability for their actions
- ▶ Service providers with dual roles experience extremes with clients rather than middle road i.e. black and white attitudes such as trust vs no trust, cooperation vs no cooperation

Words of Wisdom

- ▶ Conduct good, thorough skillful assessments
- ▶ Utilizing narrative approach (ie. storytelling). Starting broad then narrowing it down is a more successful interview technique vs pointed questions that feel invasive
- ▶ Confidential practice is VERY IMPORTANT



SENIORS

Strengths/Best Practices

- ▶ Seniors Helping seniors: nominate informal leader in group
- ▶ Curious life-long learners: retirees who like to learn and try new things
- ▶ Find regulated, grade-driven classes (i.e.. English language classes) too strict and too stressful: prefer value-driven learning (i.e.. how to buy groceries, banking, using public transportation)

Challenges/Obstacles

- ▶ Money
- ▶ Immigration status i.e.. Immigrant PR Card, Supervisa
- ▶ Unaware of sponsorship agreement/process/related supports/own rights/sponsor's legal obligations and responsibilities
- ▶ Transportation: can't drive; don't know how to use bus; can't use bus in winter; depending on family for rides
- ▶ Extremely reluctant to break down relationship or get loved one in trouble ie. will prefer to endure abuse rather than take these options
- ▶ Unfamiliar with norms/laws/rights/legalities in Edmonton/Canada (disoriented, confused, uncertain...might come across as needy/clingy)
- ▶ Fear ramifications and are wary of point of no return (when reaching for outside support)
- ▶ Emotional abuse can include threats of deportation, buying 1-way tickets, letting passport expire
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Loneliness
- ▶ Sense of loss i.e.. independence/capacity/ability to help in family
- ▶ Trauma from pre-immigration life
- ▶ Possible hidden addictions issues

Words of Wisdom

- ▶ Tend to “feel out” or “test” service providers/organizations before trusting them (ie. buy in)
- ▶ Timeliness: may have tasks (ie. childcare, housekeeping) that keep them busy; may have different regard of time
- ▶ Possible bias (re: privacy): often strong desire to either connect with support/frontline staff from own culture vs wanting to work with staff who are not part of their community
- ▶ Early intervention: seniors most likely to reach out to informal supports
- ▶ Onset of gaps and barriers can decrease seniors’ self-esteem and impact sense of self-worth



FAMILY

Strengths/Best Practices

- ▶ Resourceful: Often well-educated, with professional background
- ▶ Target stressors in family i.e. financial, parenting, gender roles, childcare
- ▶ Decrease family violence by increasing family well-being and health

Challenges/Obstacles

Challenges/Obstacles

- ▶ Family Caregiving
- ▶ Multigenerational households
- ▶ Wisdom keeper role has shifted to adult children
- ▶ Not understanding aging: loss of capacity; loss of ability to help in family
- ▶ Cycle of abuse can be set up inter-generationally ie. senior + adult child + grandchild (ex. adult child encourages grandchild to hit grandparent)
- ▶ Extra levels/layers of complexity in ethnic context: family values/dynamics; language, cultural norms; power of social status
- ▶ Increased caregiver complexity: sandwich generation squished by responsibility to care for senior and children: language barrier; health events; financial support; cultural expectations high ie. adhering to traditional family roles
- ▶ Cultural distances between mainstream and own ethnic culture
- ▶ Pre-existing relationship problems resulting from life stressors
- ▶ Family may expect senior to “help out”, to reciprocate sponsorship with housekeeping and child-minding
- ▶ Immigration can upset relationship dynamics
- ▶ Honor-based violence over the life-span
- ▶ Intergenerational cultural distances, and language barriers within the family unit

Words of Wisdom

- ▶ Talking to both parties in order to support family unit
- ▶ Family roles are more inclusive in ethnic communities. For example, cousins are considered like siblings, or aunts and uncles can be considered like surrogate parents
- ▶ A household can house extended family members and multiple generations of the same family
- ▶ Target stressors in family i.e. financial issues, parenting, gender roles, childcare
- ▶ Decrease family violence by increasing family well-being and health



COMMUNITY

Strengths/Best Practices

- ▶ Generous to respond to needs ie. providing food, clothing, etc.
- ▶ Radio, newspaper effective methods of circulating information
- ▶ Gossip/ Rumor Mill
- ▶ Strong communication network to rapidly disperse information
- ▶ Natural helpers can be key people to connect with to activate towards helping
- ▶ There exist many grassroots efforts within the community that do work similar to outreach support

Challenges/Obstacles

- ▶ Lack knowledge of system and unaware of available resources ie. wayfinding
- ▶ Sub-grouping: the community is not uniform, pre existing dynamics/relationships between sub-groups
- ▶ Unable to coordinate response with services because not part of system (ie. no MOU)
- ▶ Gossip/ Rumor Mill
- ▶ Does not discriminate between positive and negative impact resulting from information dispersal
- ▶ Creates shame and stigma towards individuals/families/groups (fear based, responding with aggression)
- ▶ Clashes in values and cultural conflicts between mainstream and immigrant/ethnic
- ▶ Hesitant to trust outsiders to act in accordance with values and in best interest
- ▶ Community may not understand how abuse is defined nor its repercussions
- ▶ Lack of check and balance
- ▶ Lack of language/words to describe mental health issues in some ethnic languages
- ▶ 'Revolving door' of services
- ▶ React to events in community without gaining traction or having deeper, collective response

Words of Wisdom

- ▶ Build capacity of natural helpers and supporters
- ▶ Build capacity of formal and informal leaders who can play role of “gatekeeper”/“connector” to SPP service access points (points of entry)
- ▶ Value on collectivism: vertical collectivism is based on hierarchical structures of power and
- ▶ On moral and structural conformity, and is therefore based on centralization

RESOURCES

- Elder Abuse Intake Line **780-477-2929** (Catholic Social Services and Senior Protection Partnership)
- Safe House: **780-702-1520** (Provides shelter for seniors experiencing abuse)
- Call Edmonton Police Service Complaint Line **780-423-4567** (Ask for a check on welfare)
- Give the senior the Senior's Abuse Helpline **780-454-8888** (Encourage the senior to call)
- Immigrant support services available in the community.

RESOURCES

- * **Legal Aid Society of Alberta:**
 - * Provides support with legal challenges related to immigration.
 - * 1-866-845-3425
- * **SAGE (Senior's Association of Greater Edmonton):**
 - * 780-423-5510
 - * Have recreational programs, drop-in counseling, social workers
 - * Develop a yearly directory of services for seniors
- * **211 Edmonton:**
 - * Provides resources
- * **Senior's Centers:**
 - * There are many centers located throughout Edmonton that provide recreational programs and social workers for support
- * **Family Doctor:**
 - * Your doctor and other care professionals at your doctor's office can provide resources and referrals to meet your needs