



2024 REGIONAL GATHERING REPORT



In the spring of 2024, Healthy Aging Alberta (HAA) hosted the third annual Regional Gatherings across the province, with one virtual and 11 in-person Gatherings. The events reached 433 attendees and featured presentations on various topics tailored to fit regional trends and ongoing work unique to each area. **In-person Gatherings were held in Anzac, Ardrossan, Bonnyville, Coaldale, Calgary, Drumheller, Grande Prairie, Hinton, Innisfail, Medicine Hat, and Okotoks.**

People from community-based organizations, healthcare, housing, and other allied sectors came together for inspiring professional learning days that were both engaging and transformative. The events were designed to foster growth, collaboration, and innovation and provide valuable insights into the current state of the seniors-serving sector. Through a series of dynamic conversation cafes, thought-provoking discussions, and authentic keynotes, we explored strategies and ideas to propel us forward.

The Gatherings shared a similar format, including an HAA overview and update, ongoing work on three service delivery models guided by HAA (Home & Community Supports, Assisted Transportation, and Social Prescribing), obtaining feedback on HAA's Strategic Priorities and the Baseline of Services, as well as a variety of keynote presentations and conversation cafes with the Community-Based Seniors Serving (CBSS) sector.



“Thank you for keeping communication open, offering the possibility to network and sharing what else is going on in the province”

Participant Quote

“I HAD NO IDEA ABOUT ALL THESE AMAZING ORGANIZATIONS, RESOURCES, AND PEOPLE - HUGELY INFORMATIVE”

Regional Gatherings were hosted across Alberta and were welcomed onto the Treaty Territories of the Cree, Dene, Cree/Saulteaux, Stoney, Nakoda, Sioux and Blackfoot Nations. We also acknowledge the Métis Nations throughout Alberta.

We honour the truth of the shared history and acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations.

We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us.



Land
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In collaboration with an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) consultant, EDI sessions were conducted at each Gathering, with facilitated discussions around six questions outlined here (see *Discussion Questions to the right*).

Participants were curious about deepening their understanding and knowledge of implementation of EDI strategies. This interest offers a significant opportunity and a growing need for education, resources, and tools to effectively incorporate EDI principles into services for older adults. We have started the foundation for HAA's future EDI initiatives with the input gathered.

HAA is committed to developing these strategies, ensuring a bottom-up approach by building this alongside community. Additionally, it is vital to ensure that the voices of older adults shape HAA's EDI. The full report will be released in early 2025.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO MAKE COMMUNITIES FEEL INCLUSIVE, WHERE EVERYONE FEELS VALUED AND RESPECTED?

2

WHAT DOES THE DIVERSITY OF YOUR COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

3

HOW DO YOU BUILD TRUST AND CONNECT WITH THE DIVERSITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

4

ARE THERE COMMUNITIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO ENGAGE WITH MORE?

5

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES YOU'RE FACING IN ENGAGING DIVERSE GROUPS AND MAKING SURE COMMUNITIES FEEL INCLUDED?

6

HOW CAN THE NETWORK HELP YOU WITH YOUR EDI EFFORTS?

Participant Quote

"NEXT YEAR I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE ON EDI, IT WAS A WONDERFUL DISCUSSION AT OUR TABLE AND WE ALL WANTED TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS WORK."



Equity, Diversity & INCLUSION

Featured Event Partners

Connecting People & Community for Living Well (CPCLW)

CPCLW is a Health Canada-funded project that works provincially with rural multi-sector community teams to build and sustain the well-being of local underserved populations such as seniors impacted by dementia and others who may benefit from enhanced support within their community. CPCLW's work incorporates well-being at its foundation, honouring the multiple factors that contribute to living well and building on the strengths of communities in responding to the evolving needs of their local population.

Men's Sheds

A Men's Shed, often called a *Shed*, is a community-based group or organization that offers an unstructured space for men to connect, socialize, and work on projects together. The projects the men work on are often something to benefit their local community. It is a place where men can come together to tinker, share stories, and enjoy good company and, frequently, good food! The term "Men's Shed" is inspired by the idea of a backyard shed where one can go to create and repair things. Men's Sheds provide a shared environment where friendships are formed, knowledge is exchanged, and connections are made. No matter where they are in your town, joining a Shed is straightforward, and they are always eager to welcome new members, affectionately known as *Shedders*.

Participant Quote

"THE BEST PART OF THE DAY WAS THE MEN'S SHEDS, GAINED A LOT KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE TO SHARE WITH OUR MEMBERS."





“I enjoyed the presentations & made connections to help me go ahead & plan for aging in place in community.”

Grande Prairie Area

We kicked off the regional gathering season by returning to Grande Prairie.

Keynote Presentations

Aging Well Together-Older Adult Engagement Process with the City of Grande Prairie

Anna Stewart provided an overview of the engagement process that the city is undertaking to collect feedback from older adults through multiple open houses and stakeholder engagement sessions.

Smoky River Transportation Project

Crystal Tremblay presented on the Smoky River Transportation project, highlighting its role in providing affordable and accessible transportation. This project is an inspiring model for a successful transportation program in a rural northern community, encouraging similar initiatives across the province.

Serving Urban Indigenous Older Adults

Natascha Okimaw highlighted the collaborative efforts of the Friendship Centre in supporting Indigenous older adults. By partnering with other community agencies, the Centre works to eliminate daily barriers faced by the Indigenous community, offering culturally appropriate opportunities and support for healthy aging.

Conversation Cafés

- Men’s Sheds, hosted by Richard Nasedkin
- GP County Pen Pals & Home Supports hosted by Dale Bond

Participant Quote

“WELL ORGANIZED AND WELCOMING.”

Drumheller Area

The day was enriched by the presence of several older adults whose participation provided invaluable perspectives and deepened our understanding of their contributions, needs, and experiences.

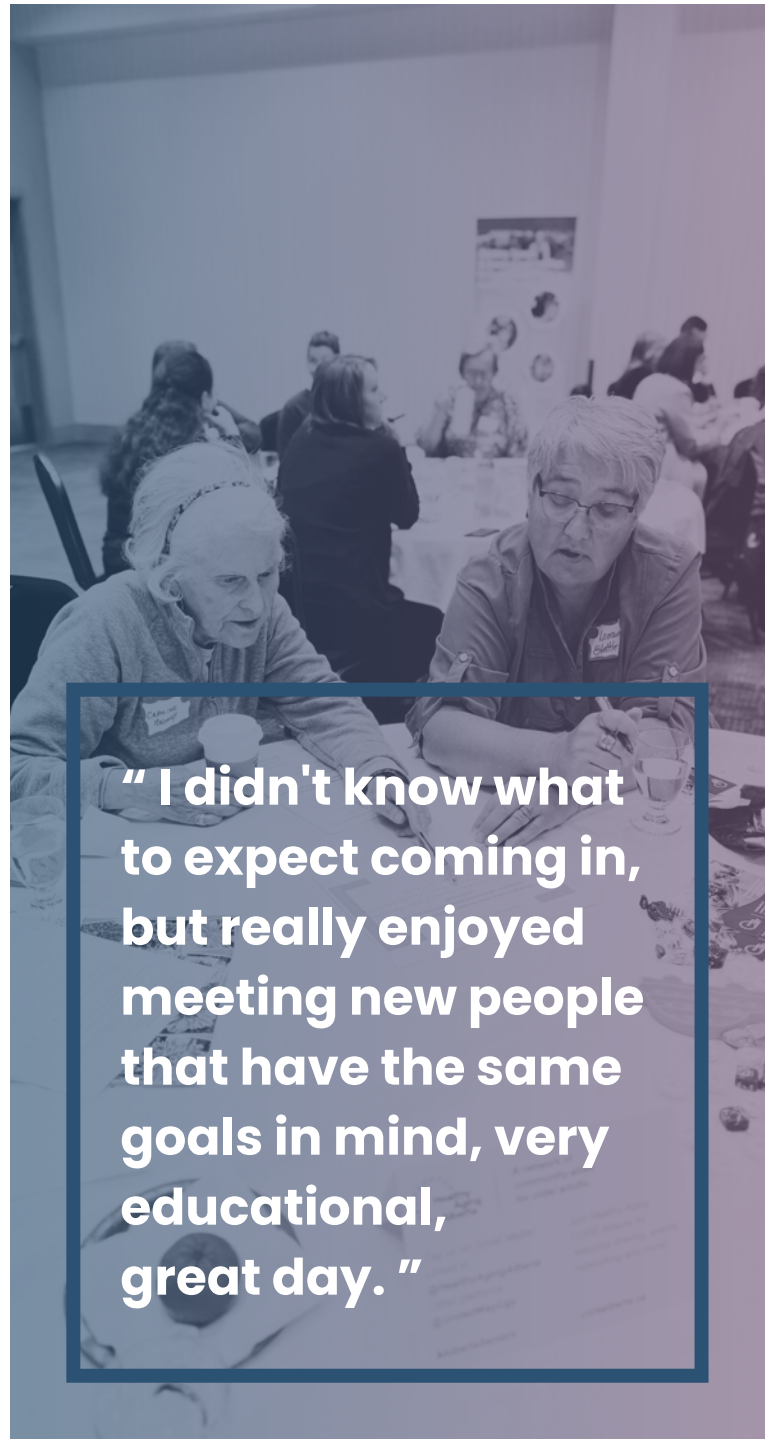
Keynote Presentation

Bashaw Model of Service

Presented by Christine Buelow and Jackie Northey, they challenged us to explore the impact of overcoming local historical narratives and the incredible strength found in their small-town community. They shared their journey of understanding and reshaping Bashaw's collective history to build a more inclusive and vibrant future, where collaboration and mutual support are not just ideal but everyday practices.

Conversation Cafés

- Innisfail Social Prescribing, hosted by Dixie McLeod
- Men's Sheds, hosted by Merv Graham and Bob Woods
- Drumheller Home Supports, hosted by Kim Larsen and Amanda Pasiak
- Oyen Transportation Project, hosted by Chris Wilkinson and Maryanne Burns
- Planning Ahead, hosted by the Madison Colberg



“ I didn't know what to expect coming in, but really enjoyed meeting new people that have the same goals in mind, very educational, great day. ”

Participant Quote

“ENJOYED THE OPPORTUNITY TO NETWORK WITH COMMUNITIES ABOUT THEIR INITIATIVES. ALSO APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE OUR WORK.”

Innisfail Area

This year's largest annual gathering celebrated the great work being done locally, highlighting special projects and the committed people behind them. It was a great chance to build partnerships, start new initiatives, and show the positive changes these efforts are making to help older adults live better in in the Region.


Keynote Presentation

Bashaw Model of Service

Christine Buelow and Jackie Northey discussed redefining Bashaw's deeply rooted historical narratives. They described how their small-town community has embraced collaboration and mutual support, turning these ideals into daily practices to create a more inclusive and vibrant future.

Conversation Cafés

- Social Prescribing, hosted by Tasha Mclean, Anna Hautman, Terri Anderson and Wendy Prediger
- Men's Sheds, hosted by Bob Woods and Ted Parks
- Drumheller Seniors Coalition, hosted by Kim Larsen and Amanda Pasiak
- Sundre Community Van, hosted by Debbie Scheibner



“The opportunity to gather with like minded individuals has been soul filling.”

Participant Quote

“I REALLY ENJOYED THE NETWORKING AND LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE SERVICES THAT ARE AVAILABLE IN MY COMMUNITY AND OTHERS.”

Hinton Area

This was our first gathering in Hinton as we strive to increase our accessibility in the Northern parts of the province.

Keynote Presentations

Social Prescribing-Community Projects (Jasper & Whitecourt)

Kacie Whyte, Heidi Bilau, and Angela Mitchell shared their experiences with launching Social Prescribing initiatives in their respective communities. They shared several inspiring success stories and talked about implementation challenges due to limited community resources in rural areas.

Protect Your Assets - For Seniors by Seniors

Charlene Sitar and Willie Lischewski shared a great example of a senior-led community initiative. Protect Your Assets (PYA) is an educational fraud prevention program designed to be delivered by older adults for older adults, making it relatable and approachable for the target audience. This unique program helps break down the stigma of falling for scams, providing concrete information about how to prevent becoming a victim of fraud and what to do if it happens.

Conversation Cafés

- Men's Sheds, hosted by Jeff Wilson and fellow Jasper Shedders
- Connecting People & Community for Living Well-Wellness Guide, hosted by Helen Lightfoot
- Pine Valley-Aging Well at Home, hosted by Bianca Hannula
- Elder Abuse Prevention, hosted by Charlene Sitar



Participant Quote

“MAIN TAKEAWAY: CONNECTION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF WELL-BEING.”

Edmonton Area

The Strathcona Wilderness Centre afforded some scenic spots for our Edmonton area gathering, allowing us to host some of the conversation cafés outdoors.

Keynote Presentations

Supporting Immigrant & Newcomer Older Adults

Dr. Mustafa Elhawi and Yaa (Agnes) Somuah spoke about the importance of providing culturally comfortable spaces for immigrant and newcomer older adults to share knowledge and skills, thereby gaining the confidence to interact with the larger community.

Supporting Older Adults in Lamont & Area

Michelle Andriashuyk and Sara Rindero from Lamont County FCSS shared learnings from their Aging Well in Community initiative, which has had a significant impact on the lives of many rural older adults who might otherwise be at risk for social isolation, poor health, and loss of independence.

Edmonton Age Friendly Alliance (EAFA)

Caroline Gee with the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council (ESCC) gave an overview of the newly formed EAFA, a network for the well-being of older adults, bringing allies together to help make Edmonton more age-friendly by recognizing the diverse needs of seniors and actively supporting their inclusion, engagement, and well-being.

Conversation Cafés

- Men's Sheds, hosted by Morris Reid and Doug Hartman
- Connecting People & Community for Living Well, hosted by Helen Lightfoot and Blair Wold
- Healthy Aging in Strathcona County, hosted by Stephanie Williston
- Rural Transportation for Older Adults, hosted by Fred Malott
- Supporting Healthy Aging, hosted by Lorena Smalley



"I appreciated being able to smudge before the formal portion of today's event. The cafes were great."

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Anzac

The Anzac Regional Gathering was a vibrant event that brought together folks from the City of Fort McMurray and surrounding hamlets. The day began with a heartfelt welcome from the late City Councillor Jane Stroud, whose legacy continues to inspire the community.

Keynote Presentation

Connecting People & Community for Living Well

Helen Lightfoot presented the Wellbeing Guide, showcasing its positive impact on creating dementia-friendly communities. Genevieve Warren from Caregivers Alberta highlighted the support available to caregivers, both in-person and virtually, empowering attendees with valuable resources.

Conversation Cafés


- Connecting People & Community for Living Well, hosted by Helen Lightfoot
- Grassroots Programs for Older Adults from Diverse Backgrounds, hosted by Farzana Imran
- Caregiver Coach (Caregivers Alberta), hosted by Genevieve Warren



“It was rewarding to participate as a member of the aging population”

Participant Quote

"VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE AND INFORMATIVE - BOTH FROM A WORK AND PERSONAL LEVEL WITH AGING PARENTS AND SELF.



"It was thought-provoking to see how my work can fit into the HAA Framework and where to go from here."

Bonnyville and Lakeland Area

The Bonnyville and Lakeland Regional Gathering, hosted at the Bonnyville Senior Citizens Drop-In Centre, brought together a diverse crowd of service providers, elected officials, health and housing sector partners, and community members interested in HAA's initiatives.

Keynote Presentation

Connecting People & Community for Living Well

Helen Lightfoot presented the Wellbeing Guide, a tool crafted to assist communities in becoming more dementia-friendly. This guide emphasizes practical strategies and tools to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with dementia. It focuses on creating inclusive spaces, fostering social connections, and supporting environments where individuals can thrive.

Conversation Cafés

- Connecting People & Community for Living Well, hosted by Helen Lightfoot
- Age Friendly Cold Lake and Men's Sheds, hosted by Dianne Stonehocker and Wayne Warner
- The Healthy Aging Alberta Social Prescribing Toolkit, hosted by Michael Procinsky

Participant Quote

"EXCELLENT CROSS-SECTION OF COMMUNITY BUILDERS AND KNOWLEDGE"



**"I enjoyed today,
learned a lot of
new things and
how senior
services are
organized in
Southern AB."**

Medicine Hat

Medicine Hat hosted Southeast Alberta's Regional Gathering for the second year in a row.

Keynote Presentation

Connecting People and Community for Living Well

Helen Lightfoot and Blair Wold presented an overview of their Model aimed at supporting individual and collective wellbeing at the community level. They also presented the Wellbeing Guide, which offers practical strategies and tools to support individuals living with dementia, community collaboratives, and caregivers. It focuses on creating inclusive spaces, promoting social connections, and enhancing the quality of life for those affected by dementia.

Conversation Cafes

- Lethbridge Social Prescribing Project "Seniors Community Services Partnership," hosted by Rob Miyashiro
- Oyen's Assisted Transportation Project, hosted by Chris Wilkinson and Maryann Burns
- Men's Sheds, hosted by Dave Williamson
- Unison at Veiner Centre's Community and Home Supports Projects, hosted by Nicole Deline and Tammy Poole

Participant Quote

"VERY INFORMATIVE AND ENGAGING - GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO NETWORK."

Calgary and Area

This year's Gathering at the Scarborough Community Association was a vibrant showcase of Calgary's diverse programs and services.

Keynote Presentations

Memory Loss and Brain Health

Jennifer Mallamo, a Brain Health Catalyst, hosted a presentation on Support for Seniors and how to enhance their journey through customized coaching, courses, memory and nutrition offerings.

Maturepreneur Presentation

Jannette Anderson and Nelda Schulte shared insights on creating the Maturepreneur World, celebrating older adults' role in the workforce and innovation.

Conversation Cafés

- Bridge to Oasis Foundation, hosted by Bukola Ojemakinde
- Social Prescribing with Diverse Partners, hosted by Megan Hincks
- Launching Social Prescribing in a Rural Setting, hosted by Budd Brazier
- Connecting People & Community for Living Well, hosted by Helen Lightfoot and Blair Wold



"It was a great experience to connect with like minded colleagues."

Participant Quote

"I LEARNED MORE ABOUT SOME INITIATIVES I WAS AWARE OF, ALONG WITH NEW ONES"

Coaldale

Barons Eureka Warner FCSS proudly hosted this year's Southwest Alberta Regional Gathering, bringing together a diverse group of senior service providers, municipal leaders, volunteer organizations, academia, and healthcare providers.

Keynote Presentation

Maturepreneur Presentation

Presented by Nelda Schulte discussing people aged 55 and up who started new businesses instead of retiring. These "Maturepreneurs" were full of creativity and new ideas and needed more support and resources. The presentation introduced the Maturepreneur World, which offers podcasts, a membership network, conferences, and online learning to help seasoned entrepreneurs.

Conversation Cafés

- Crowsnest Pass Assisted Transportation Project, hosted by Pauline Desjardins and Rick Jeune
- Lethbridge Social Prescribing Project, hosted by Amy Labossiere and Camille Sherwood
- Vulcan Community & Home Supports and Social Prescribing Projects, hosted by Dawn Wiseman, Lori Gair, Christy Elliot, Donna Anderson, and Ruth Mueller



"It was nice to connect with others that are working towards the same goals."

Participant Quote

"THIS WAS A VERY POSITIVE, INFORMATIVE, AND UPLIFTING DAY."

Okotoks

Hosted by the Town of Okotoks, the Gathering brought together a diverse group of attendees from various organizations in health and the seniors-serving sector, as well as community members, including older adults.

Keynote Presentation

Caregiver Centered Care

Jennifer Mallamo presented on how family caregivers are pivotal in patient care and underscored the necessity for healthcare providers to support and collaborate with them effectively.

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention (how to find them and how to keep them)

LeAnne Alexander spoke on volunteer recruitment and retention, outlining the volunteer management cycle and providing practical tips for engaging and appreciating volunteers.

Conversation Cafes

- Senior Conexx-Putting the Plan of Aging Well in Place in Action, hosted by Marianne Dickson
- Vulcan Community & Home Supports and Social Prescribing Projects, hosted by Dawn Wiseman and Ruth Mueller
- Men's Sheds, hosted by Merv Graham



"This was a great way to meet groups that can support each other with a common goal."

Participant Quote

"IT WAS A GREAT EVENT TO CONNECT WITH THE SECTOR AND LISTEN TO THE INITIATIVES"



“The contacts available at these gatherings are always valuable.”

Virtual

Our final gathering was a virtual session that allowed folks from across the province to participate if they could not do so in person.

Keynote Presentation

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention (how to find them and how to keep them)

LeeAnne Alexander with Volunteer Services, Children's Grief Centre, Living with Advanced Illness Centre, and Rosedale Hospice spoke on volunteer recruitment and retention, outlining the volunteer management cycle and providing practical tips for engaging and appreciating volunteers.

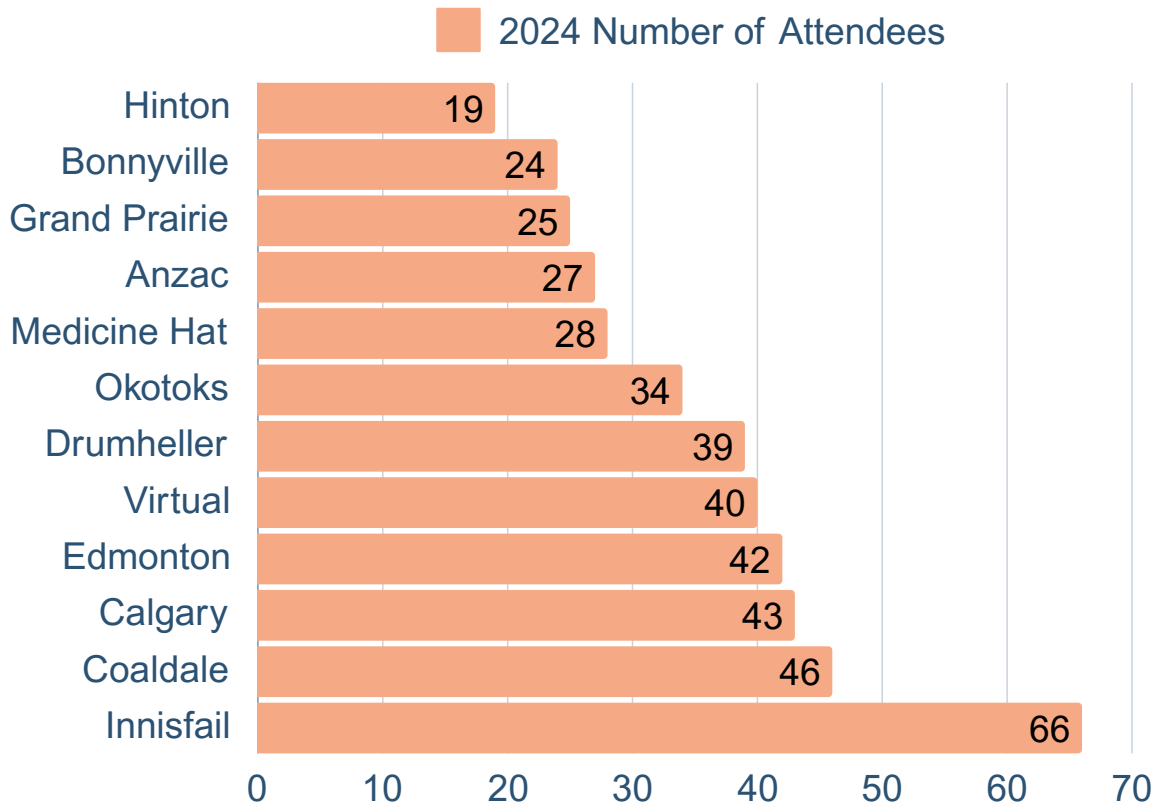
Conversation Cafés

- Protect Your Assets, hosted by Brooke Alden and Senior Community Champion
- Connecting People & Community for Living Well, hosted by Helen Lightfoot and Blair Wold
- Men's SMen's hosted by Punch Jackson
- Sylvan Lake Social Prescribing, hosted by Lindsay Mach and Wendy Prediger
- Supporting Immigrant and Newcomer Older Adults, hosted by Dr. Mustafa Elhawi and Yaa (Agnes) Somuah

Participant Quote

“I FOUND THE EDI CONVERSATIONS INTERESTING AND PRACTICAL. I ALSO ALWAYS ENJOY HEARING ABOUT SOCIAL PRESCRIBING.”

In 2022, HAA hosted our first six Regional Gatherings, followed by eight Regional Gatherings in 2023. This year, twelve Regional Gatherings were held throughout the province, **with the largest attendance to date.**



Participant Quote

“I WOULD LIKE TO LEARN HOW BEST TO COLLABORATE WITH AGING ADULTS TO CREATE PROGRAMS WITH THEM, NOT JUST FOR THEM.”

Evaluating & Enhancing
OUR IMPACT

The locations, format, and content of the 2024 Regional Gatherings were in response to post-event feedback from the previous two years and the regional context. HAA strives to improve Regional Gatherings, ensuring they meet the needs of community-based seniors serving (CBSS) organizations and allies in other sectors such as housing and health.

Post-event survey respondents shared that they'd like to explore the topics outlined below at future gatherings.

FUTURE TOPICS TO EXPLORE

PROGRAMMING

FUNDING/GRANTS

AGESIM

AGING IN PLACE

EQUITY, DIVERSITY,
& INCLUSION

SHARED LEARNINGS

NETWORKING

COLLABORATION

INTERGENERATIONAL
INITIATIVES

ELDER ABUSE

CAPACITY BUILDING

RURAL FOCUS



Data collection and community feedback are essential to ensuring our strategies remain relevant and effective. By actively seeking and incorporating these insights, we can better address the evolving needs of older adults and make informed decisions that reflect community priorities. Community feedback is invaluable, and we thank everyone who participated in the live Menti Meters and the post-event surveys.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS AGREED

94%

I HAVE GAINED KNOWLEDGE THAT WILL SUPPORT MY WORK IN ENHANCING THE LIVES OF OLDER ADULTS

94%

I HAVE GAINED CONNECTIONS THAT WILL SUPPORT MY WORK IN ENHANCING OLDER ALBERTANS' LIVES

89%

I SEE MY WORK REPRESENTED IN HAA'S PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

83%

THERE IS A CLEAR AVENUE FOR ME TO SHARE AND DISCUSS KEY ISSUES IN THE SECTOR WITH HAA

69%

THE CAPACITY OF THE SECTOR HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE INCEPTION OF HAA'S COLLECTIVE ACTION WORK



"Today was a beautiful array of information."

HOW ATTENDEES DESCRIBED
THEIR EXPERIENCE
AT THE GATHERINGS




A word cloud of attendee feedback. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern around the central word 'informative'. The words vary in size and color, with 'informative' being the largest and most prominent. Other large words include 'inspiring', 'collaborative', 'engaging', 'educational', and 'relationship building'. Smaller words include 'well organized', 'encouraging', 'hopeful', 'networking', 'eye opening', 'wonderful', 'empowering', 'insightful', 'inclusive', 'energizing', 'phenomenal experience', 'connection', and 'reflection and growth'.

inspiring
fantastic
well organized
encouraging
hopeful
educational
networking
relationship building
informative
empowering
eye opening
wonderful
insightful
engaging
inclusive
collaborative
welcoming
energizing
phenomenal experience
reflection and growth
connection

Continuously improving...

Healthy Aging Alberta is committed to providing the best experience possible for attendees. Areas we will continue to improve upon include:

- **Enhanced Audio and Visual Support**
 - Ensuring microphones and speakers are of high quality and adequately calibrated.
- **Comfortable Environment**
 - Choosing venues with minimal background noise and good acoustics.
 - Ensuring seating is comfortable and accessible.
- **Pacing and Clarity in Presentations**
 - Encouraging speakers to slow down and use clear, simple language.
 - Breaking down information into manageable segments and allowing time for questions.
 - Providing handouts or summaries of key points.
- **Inclusive Discussions**
 - Allocating sufficient time for discussions and ensuring everyone understands the norms and goals before starting.
 - Continuing to facilitate small group discussions to ensure all voices are heard.

A photograph of a woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a patterned top, standing at a podium and gesturing with her right hand. In the foreground, the back of a person's head with long, light-colored hair is visible. The image has a semi-transparent pink overlay.

“Thank you for arranging and all the work HAA is doing. We appreciate you!”

Participant Quote

“I WILL BE LOOKING FOR MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE.”

Conclusion

The 2024 Regional Gathering season brought together a wide range of participants from across Alberta, including community-based organizations, older adults, sector champions, elected officials, and members of the Community Leadership Council. The discussions were lively and thought-provoking, focusing on services for older adults and sparking important conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusion in the seniors-serving sector.

The cross-sector collaboration was truly inspiring, with the interactive conversation cafés adding energy and engagement to the gatherings. The shared excitement and optimism for the future of the seniors-serving sector left participants energized and ready to embrace the opportunities ahead.

Acknowledgements

We extend our deepest gratitude to our keynote speakers and conversation café facilitators. Many of you travelled significant distances and supported multiple events across the province. Your passion, expertise, and practical tools have been invaluable in advancing the work within our sector.

A special thank you goes to our host organizations for their ongoing support and those who generously donated spaces to host these gatherings. Your contributions played a vital role in making these events possible.

Finally, thank you to all the participants who attended and contributed to the success of the 2024 Regional Gatherings. Your commitment and collaboration are making a meaningful impact on the future of the seniors-serving sector in Alberta. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive community for older adults.

Thank you!

Participant Quote

"I WAS GRATIFIED TO MEET SO MANY LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE AND AM HOPEFUL THAT THE INFORMATION AND CONNECTIONS I MADE HERE WILL BENEFIT MY COMMUNITY"



Conclusion &
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS