

# Building sustainable Age-friendly communities

through partnerships and community connection



April 28, 2026



**Age-friendly  
Communities**

# Land acknowledgement

**BC Healthy Communities** is located within the territory of Ləkʷəŋən peoples known today as Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the ƵSÁNEĆ peoples, represented today by the ƵJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), SƆÁUTƵ (Tsawout), ƵSIKEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nations.

**The First Peoples have been here since time immemorial and their history in this area is long and rich.**



**Age-friendly  
Communities**



# About BC Healthy Communities

- A team of planners, public health specialists and community engagement practitioners, operating at the intersection of planning and public health
- Province-wide not-for-profit facilitating the ongoing development of communities where it's easier for people to be healthy and well



**Age-friendly  
Communities**



# Housekeeping

- Post questions in Q&A
- Recorded Session
- Survey link in chat



**Age-friendly  
Communities**

# Welcome & Introductions



**Mario Paris**  
Associate Professor,  
Moncton University



**Alyssa Roehrich**  
Age-friendly Communities  
Program Lead



**Vanessa Manuel**  
Executive Director

# Building Sustainable Age-friendly Communities Through Partnerships and Community Connection

---

Mario Paris  
Associate Professor  
School of Social Work



Webinar Age-Friendly Communities / BC Healthy Communities  
April 28, 2026

“... mutual aid is the  
rule, the law of  
progress”

Kropotkine (1902).

*Mutual Aid: A Factor of  
Evolution*



Municipalités (& Villes)  
Amies des Aînés  
au Québec



UNIVERSITÉ DE  
SHERBROOKE

**Suzanne Garon**, Professor Emerita, University of  
Sherbrooke

**Samuèle Rémillard-Boilard**, Assistant Professor,  
University of Sherbrooke

**Anne Veil**, Research Professional, Research Centre  
on Aging



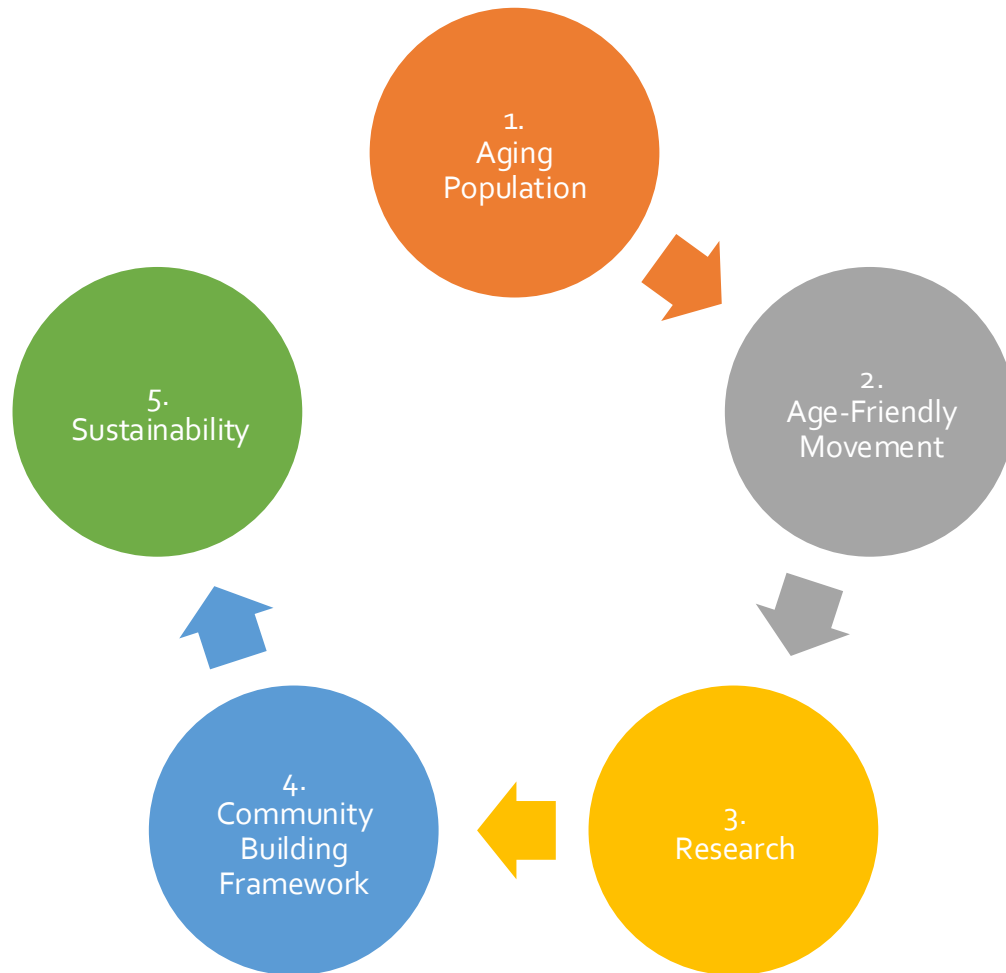
UNIVERSITÉ DE MONCTON

**Suzanne Dupuis-Blanchard**, Full Professor,  
University of Moncton

**Brenda Lee and Gérald Arseneault**, Community  
Coordinator, AFC-NB

**Majella Simard**, Full Professor, University of  
Moncton

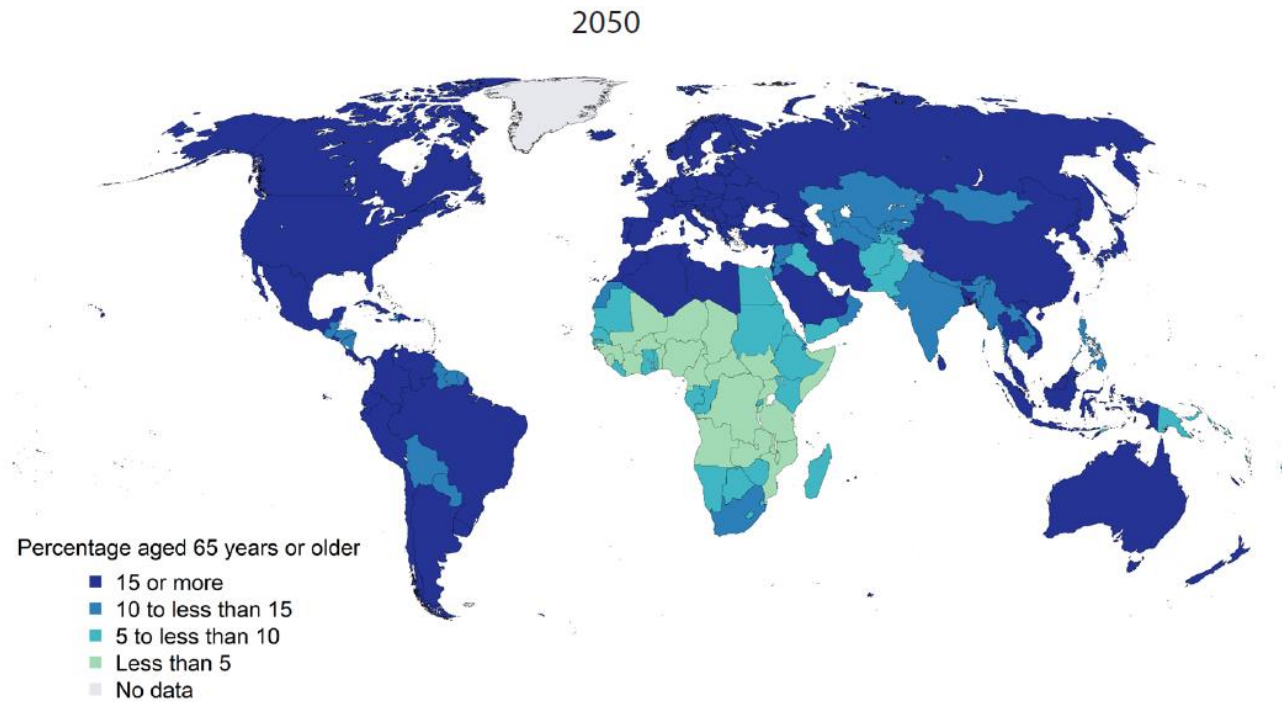
# Scope of Presentation



# 1. AGING POPULATION

# Aging Population

- **Fact 1. Worldwide phenomenon**

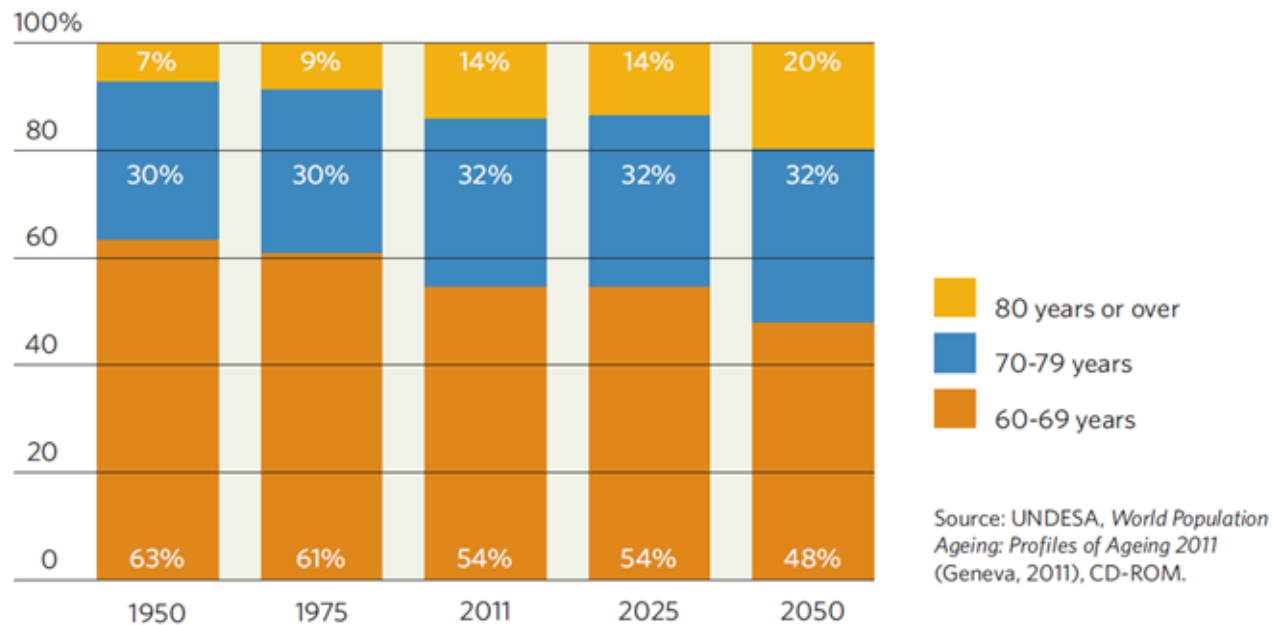


Data source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019*.

# Aging Population

- **Fact 2. Aging of Aged**

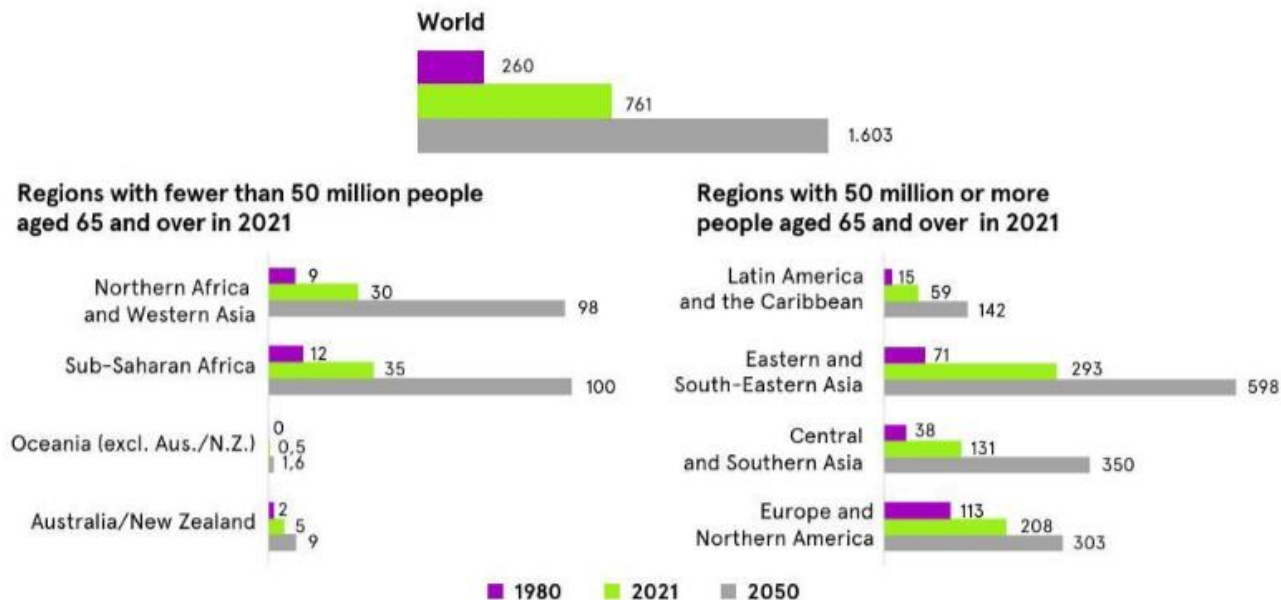
Figure 4: Global distribution of population over 60, 1950-2050



# Aging Population

- **Fact 3. Aging in the Global South**

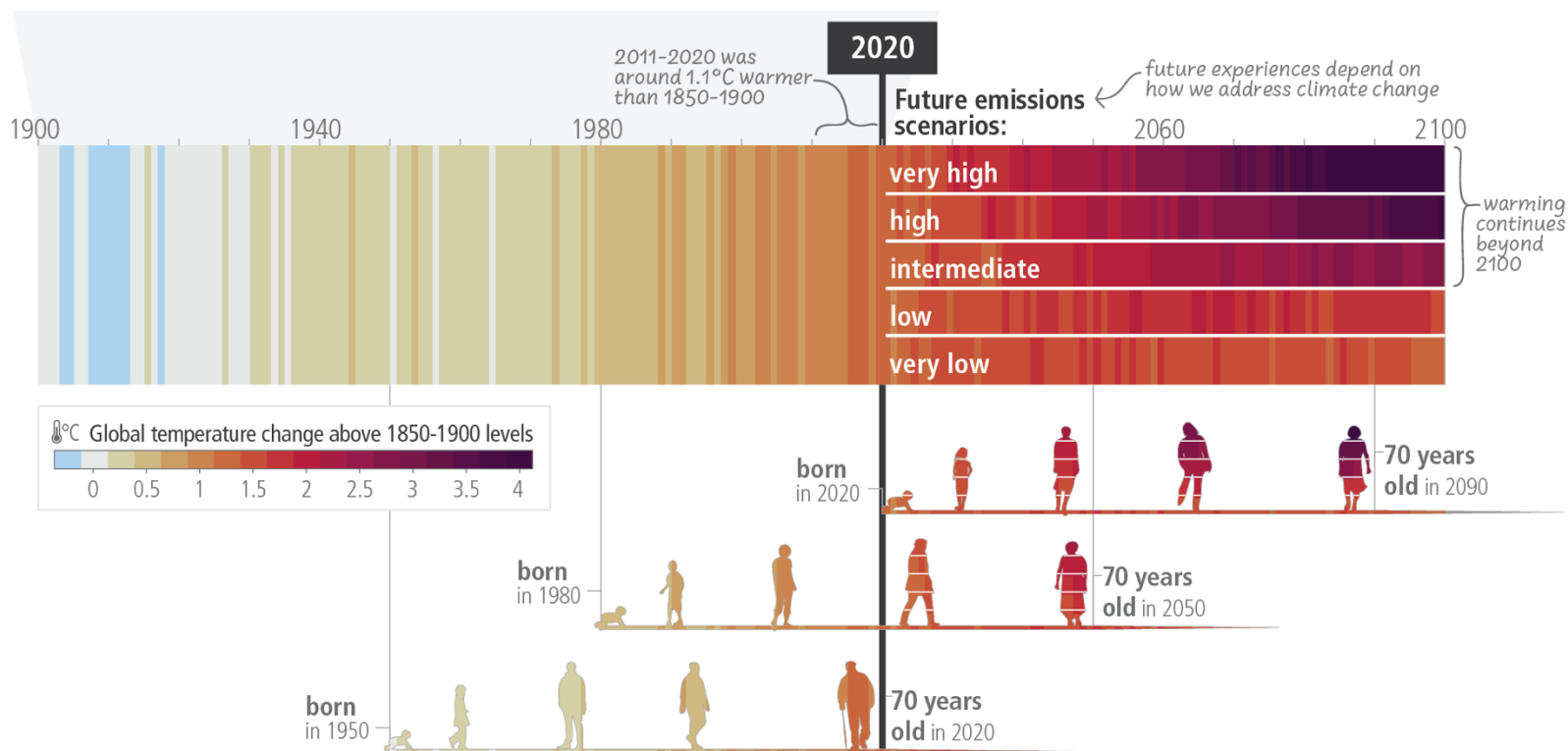
Number of people aged 65 years or above in millions, world and regions, 1980, 2021 and 2050



Source: United Nations (2022a).

# Aging Population

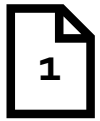
- **Fact 4. Aging in a Hotter World**



## 2. AGE-FRIENDLY MOVEMENT

---

# Framework for a Shared Narrative



- Age-friendly Communities (AFC) is a global network coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO)
- There is considerable scientific literature on AFC
- Four common pillars:
  - A transformation of built and social environments through the adaptation and accessibility of public spaces;
  - An improvement in social relations and the social integration of older adults;
  - The promotion of social and civic engagement; and
  - A fundamental cultural shift in local and regional organizations.

# Framework for a Shared Narrative



- Publication of the ***Active Ageing: A Policy Framework*** during the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid (WHO, 2002).
- First outlines of the AFC program in 2005 at the 18th World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- Release of ***Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide***, establishing the 8 Domains of City Life (e.g., Housing, Outdoor Spaces, Social Participation) (WHO, 2007)
- Launch of the ***WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities*** to foster international knowledge exchange in 2010 (WHO, 2018).
- Publication of the ***World Report on Ageing and Health***, pivoting toward "Functional Ability" and environmental fit (WHO, 2015).
- The AFC movement becomes a central pillar of the **UN's 10-year strategy (2021-2030)** to combat ageism and improve the lives of older people.

Emergence



Coalescence



Institution-  
alization



Decline (?)

# Framework for a Shared Narrative

- Becoming an AFC is a standardized process consisting of four to six stages.
- **Key Components:**



- A. Steering Committee
- B. Needs Assessment (or Diagnosis)
- C. Action Plan
- D. Implementation

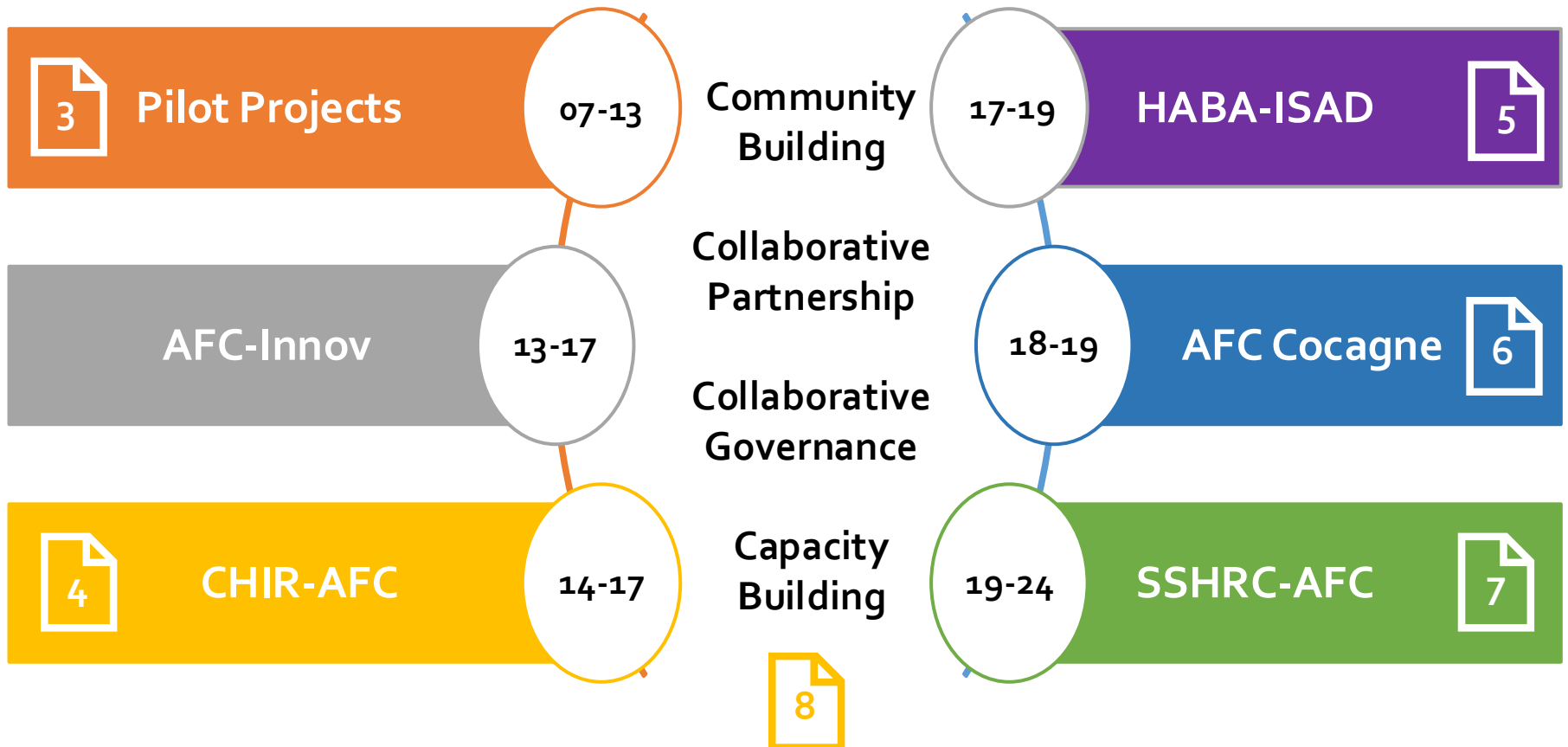


**1,739 Cities and Communities**  
**57 Countries and Territories**  
**370M+ People worldwide**

# 3. RESEARCH

---

# Past and Present Research on AFC



# 4. COMMUNITY BUILDING FRAMEWORK

# Community Building Framework

- "[...] a process of voluntary cooperation, mutual aid, and the building of social ties between residents and local institutions, aimed at improving physical, social, and economic living conditions" (INSPQ, 2002, 16, my translation)



## Principles:

- Promotes **mobilization, participation, and empowerment** strategies aimed at strengthening **community capacity**.
- Fosters **partnerships** within venues for local **collaboration** and **coordinated** action.
- Creates a climate conducive to **intersectoral action** by relying on the **participation** of all local stakeholders.

# Community Building Framework

## Participatory approach

- A process "**for and by**" individuals and communities.
- **Bottom-up** approach

## Empowerment

- "A process through which an individual or a **community gains power over their own lives** and the capacity to exercise it" (Ninacs, 2003, my translation)
- Capacity to act (agency):
  - Choosing freely
  - Transforming choice into decision
  - Acting upon one's decision

# Community Building Framework

## Collaboration

- A loosely structured and formalized relationship between two organizations.  
**≠ common goal**

## Coordinated action

- A collective process of coordination based on a structured and lasting relationship between autonomous social actors.  
**= common goal**

## Partnership

- A contractual commitment to share responsibilities, pool resources, and divide tasks following a negotiated agreement.

# 5. SUSTAINABILITY



# Co-construction and Engagement

## Moving from consultation to engagement

- Engaging older adults not as passive beneficiaries, but as **co-designers of their own environment**.
- Establishing steering committees **where decision-making power is distributed** among the municipality, community organizations, and citizens.
- Initiatives driven by **grassroots organizations** are less vulnerable to the fluctuations of political cycles.



## Why it ensures sustainability?

- Co-construction ensures that **actions address pressing needs**. A solution that genuinely works is much harder to cut than a merely "cosmetic" measure.
- This process **creates networks of solidarity** that endure long after the initial project is completed.
- Top-down projects often stall when funding or leadership disappears. When seniors and citizens co-design the initiative, they become its **guardians and advocates**.

# Intersectorality and Partnerships

## Breaking down silos for more resilience

- Identifying how **AFC objectives also serve the mandates** of public health, urban planning, and public works.
- **Pooling resources** (facilities, staff, expertise) to reduce dependency on a single funding source.



## Why it ensures sustainability?

- If a project is **co-led** by multiple departments (e.g., Urban Planning, Recreation, and Communication) rather than one, it becomes **more resilient** to budget cuts in any single sector.
- Partnerships allow for **tapping into various budget** envelopes (provincial, federal, municipal, and private).

# Institutionalization and Policy

## Anchoring action within formal structures



- **Embedding AFC principles** into strategic plans, zoning bylaws, and municipal social policies.
- **Formalizing partnerships** to ensure continuity despite staff turnover.
- **Using evaluation to prove** that preventive investment (e.g., social isolation initiatives) reduces health and social costs in the long term.

## Why it ensures sustainability?

- By **embedding AFC goals** into the strategic plans or municipal bylaws, **they are shielded from changes** in elected leadership. Commitments evolve into formal legal or administrative obligations.
- Shifting from "project-based" funding (precarious) to a **recurring budget** line.
- Written Memoranda of Understanding **prevent institutional knowledge** from disappearing when a key employee retires.

# Community Capacity

## Cultivating community roots



- Supporting **small community organizations** through mentorship and access to technical resources.
- Implementing recognition strategies to **prevent volunteer burnout** among older adults.
- Establishing **communities of practice** to share successes and challenges across sectors.

## Why it ensures sustainability?

- By training local actors (volunteers, small organizations), we ensure they **have the tools to continue the work** autonomously.
- The community becomes **less reliant on external consultants** or one-time start-up grants.
- A "**capacitated**" community knows **how to adapt** its actions to new challenges (such as climate change) without starting from scratch.

**CONCLUSION**



# AFC at a Crossroads

## Climate Changes

- More than 15 Years of Impact!
- It is more crucial than ever to adapt communities to the needs of older adults.
- However, what does the future hold for AFC in the context of climate change?
- Older adults remain a vulnerable and at-risk population.
- The importance of a participatory approach.

**C.-B. : Lytton bat le record national de chaleur pour une 3e journée consécutive**

Le village de Lytton enregistré un mercure de 47,9 °C lundi et de 46,6 °C dimanche.



**Au rapport**  
**La canicule exceptionnelle en Inde et au Pakistan a été rendue trente fois plus probable par le changement climatique**

Une nouvelle étude du World Weather Attribution, qui travaille sur l'attribution des événements climatiques extrêmes, estime que l'épisode de fournaise dans le sous-continent indien «aurait été extraordinairement rare» dans le passé.



**India to Africa, countries worst affected get the least help in climate change research**

Study shows 80% of climate research funding across the world between 1990 & 2020 was spent in the UK, US and EU.

DOUGLAS BROOM 22 May 2022 09:30 pm BST



#### Most Popular

**Cloones to Indra Gandhi made bigwigs call RJD 'Dhawan Saab'. He even made her offer namah**

Rachesh Kishor - 24 May 2022

**In Rahul Gandhi-Jai Shankar clash on diplomats, why India's national interest is the loser**

jeeth Malhotra - 24 May 2022

**For BJP: Churnup to like Babel. Y'll swing elections but take India back to a dark past**

Vij Sarin - 24 May 2022

**Thank you**

mario.paris@umoncton.ca

# AFC Recognition



The **BC Age-friendly Communities (AFC) Recognition Program** is designed to recognize success and encourage communities to act towards becoming age-friendly. This involves taking action to meet the evolving needs of older residents, helping communities remain welcoming places that support the health, safety, and engagement of people of all ages.



# Purpose of the Program

- Formally recognize and reward communities in BC that have completed age-friendly work.
- Support and guide additional communities in BC to attain formal age-friendly recognition.
- Build upon the momentum of the importance of age-friendly concepts
- Raise awareness in communities



**Age-friendly  
Communities**

# Benefits of the recognition program

- Recognition letter
- Digital seal
- Networking opportunities
- Supports funding visibility



**Age-friendly  
Communities**

# Application Requirements

## The four requirements

**1**

Establish an Age-friendly Communities Committee or Group, with the active participation of older adults

**2**

Pass a Council/District Board or Band Council Resolution

**3**

Conduct an Age-friendly Assessment

**4**

Develop and Publish an Action Plan



**Age-friendly  
Communities**

# Application Tips

- Make sure the Key features of an age -friendly community are included in your plan
- Identify Gaps
- Community input
- Older adult involvement
- Survey and Consultations
- Involve Community members, Non-profits, Businesses



Age-friendly  
Communities

# After recognition

To maintain recognition, communities are encouraged to:

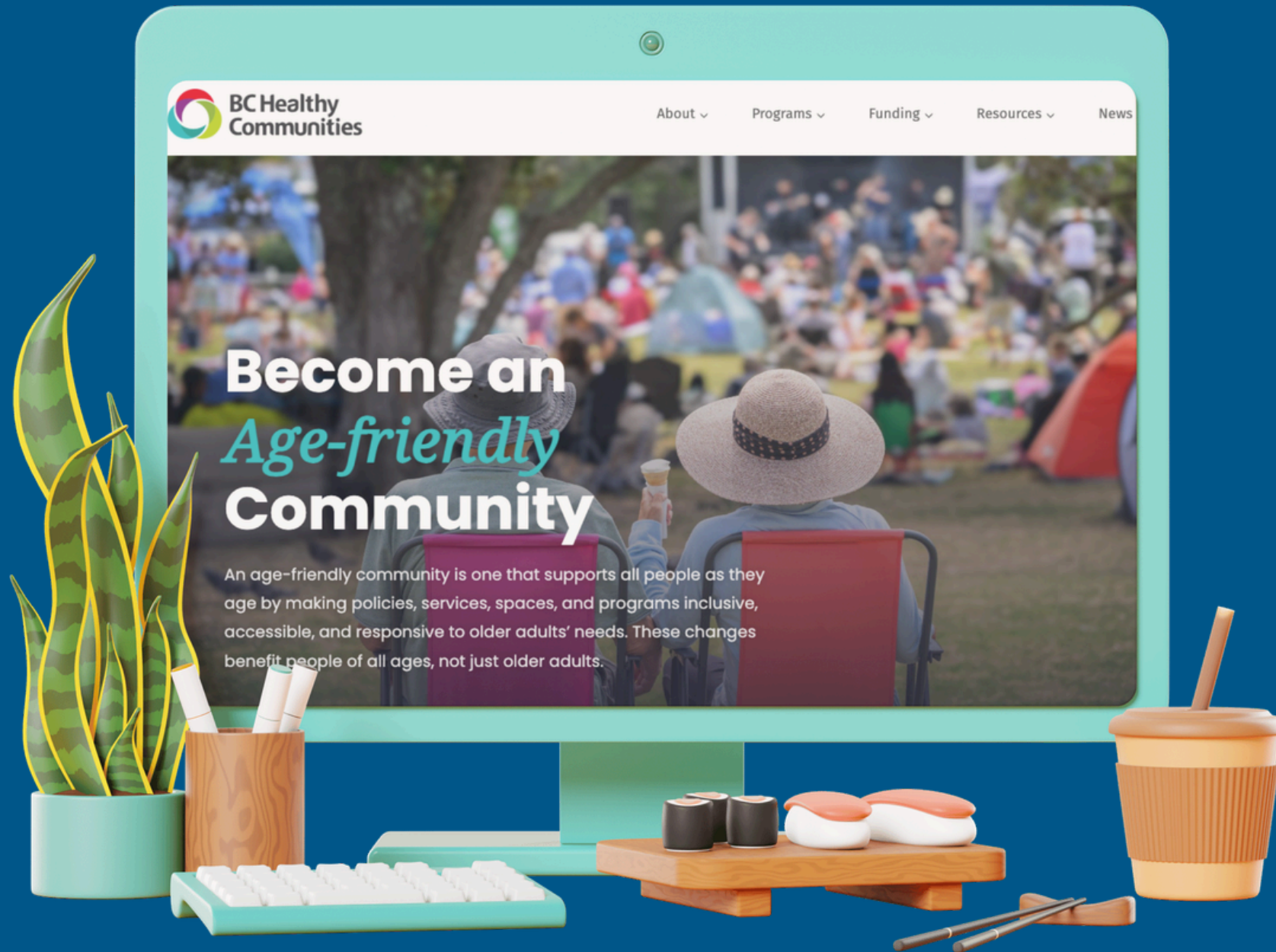
- Implement their action plan
- Monitor and publicly report progress
- Update priorities over time
- Progress is reviewed periodically to ensure continued impact.

WORK IN PROGRESS



Age-friendly  
Communities

# AFC Recognition Website



<https://bchealthycommunities.ca/index.php/become-an-age-friendly-community/>



**Age-friendly  
Communities**

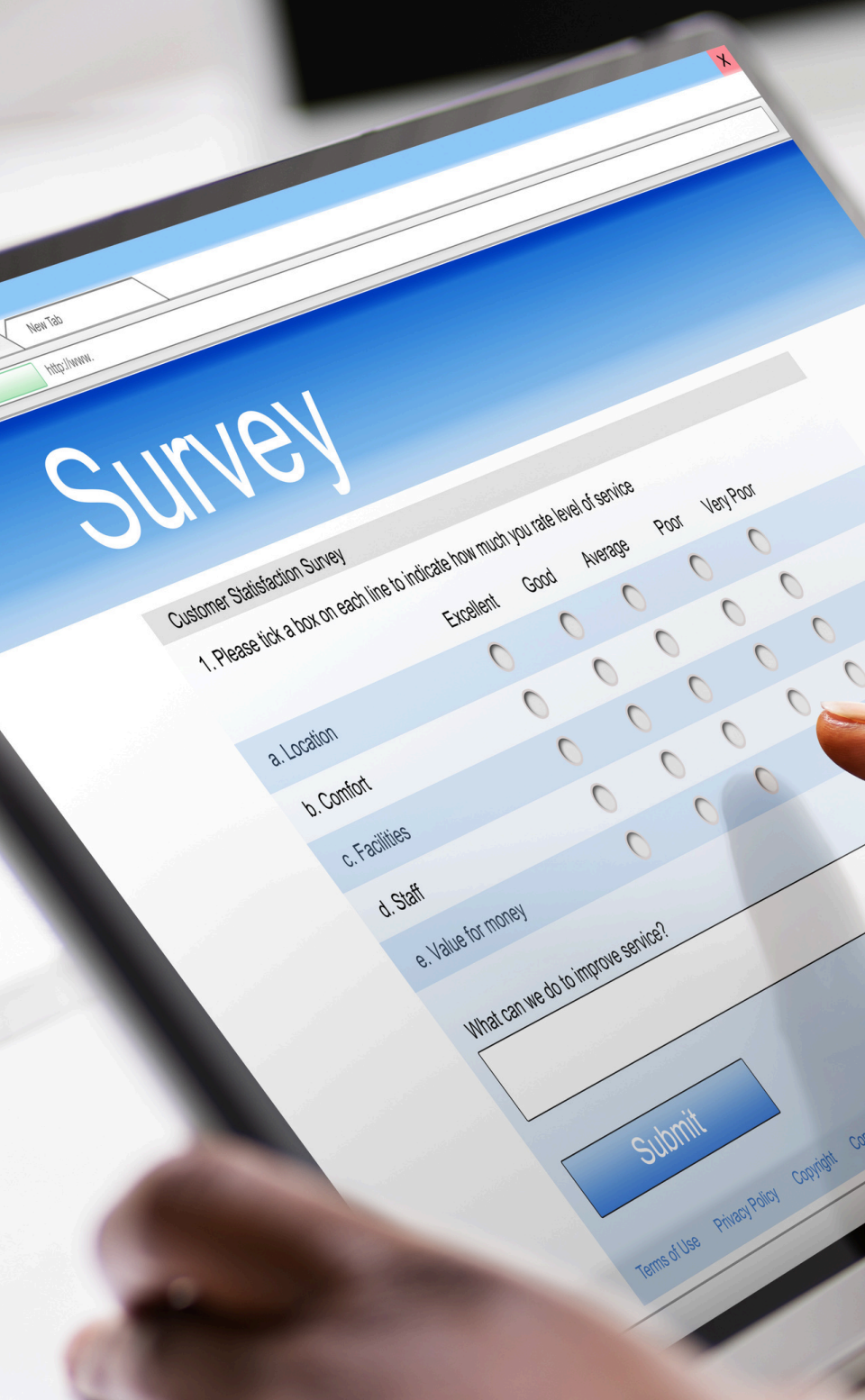
# Questions?



**Age-friendly  
Communities**

# Survey

**Please take a few minutes to fill out our webinar survey.**  
The link is in the webinar chat.



**Age-friendly  
Communities**

# Thank You!

Alyssa Roehrich  
alyssa@bchealthycommunities.ca



**Age-friendly  
Communities**