

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of the project was to better understand the experiences of Chinese older adults in accessing services and programs in senior serving organizations. Also, to identify the barriers to community integration, and to build the capacity of communities (specifically immigrant serving organizations and senior serving organizations to create welcoming and inclusive communities.

BACKGROUND

- Chinese immigrants make up the second largest population by ethnic origin in Alberta with 6.2% of them living in Edmonton, Alberta.
- Nearly, 28% of Edmonton's older immigrants speak Chinese (including all Chinese languages) (city of Edmonton 2010) and therefore, face difficulty in connecting with seniors serving organizations services in Edmonton.
- Currently, both immigrant service organizations and senior serving organizations services are providing services/program to the immigrant population.
- A partnership project was created between assist community services, and the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for newcomers, and the faculty of social work at the university of Calgary.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What services are available in Edmonton for Chinese older adults in the community?
- What senior serving organization services are aimed specifically towards the older Chinese and are they accessing them?
- What are the barriers to accessing senior serving organization services?
- Do both senior serving organization services providers and Chinese older adults in the community feel that there are sufficient services to meet their needs?
- What are the attitudes of service providers towards the provision of social services that specifically target Chinese older adults?
- Where are the challenges that senior serving organization service providers face in providing services to Chinese older adults?
- What recommendations are needed to improve access to social services for Chinese older adults in the community?

METHODOLOGY

- Literature Review
- Document Analysis
- Focus Group Discussion
 - ✓ Cantonese Speaking Chinese Older Adults (10)
 - ✓ Mandarin Speaking Chinese Older adults (10)
- In-depth Interviews from Service Providers
 - ✓ Seniors Serving Organization (10)
 - ✓ Immigrant Serving Organization (10)

	Focus Group Participants (Cantonese) n=10	Focus Group Participants (Mandarin) n=10
Gender	Female 8 Male 2	Female 8 Male 2
Mean Age (in years)	73.9	77.8
Education	1 No formal Education 1 Elementary 6 Secondary 2 Post Secondary & Above	
Employment Status (Retired)	10	10
Average Length of Residency (in years)	37	8
Immigration Status (upon entry)	8 Family Class 1 Skilled Immigrant 1 Refugee	10 Family Class
Household Composition	5 living alone 3 two people 2 three people	1 living alone 4 two people 2 three people 1 four people 1 five people 1 more than five people

Awareness and Access to Senior Serving Organization Services and Information

Language, transportation, cultural preferences, and finances were reported as barriers in accessing services.

"ETS routes keeps on changing and sometimes the information is not made available to them or in their own language." (Focus group participant)

"The senior serving organization to us is really the Canadian. Not unless you and I are not really taking or having different meanings. To me, a senior serving organization is the Canadian culture. That's the senior serving organization." (ISO Service Provider)

"For me actually, I see the major challenge was the culture differences for the senior. Like the way they see that the way they were living back home, their family system and the way it works here is a lot of difference in those two kinds of....so the culture difference is the major kind of area." (ISO Service Provider)

Perception of Services

Participants talked about improvements in services like, provision of age and culturally friendly services, culturally appropriate healthcare and seniors' homecare services, and diverse ethnocultural centers and programs.

"...Our treatment plans especially regarding the diet and the food. Because a lot of resources, especially for example the diabetes resources we were talking about, Western food like sandwiches or pasta, because that's the Chinese seniors – they won't eat it at all so that can be challenging. Especially for our dietician to teach them regarding the diet." (ISO Service Provider)

"Like the programs are available at settlement agencies. Then they make every effort to make programs culturally appropriate for seniors. So, this is a commendable thing which settlement organizations." (Seniors Serving Organization Service Provider)

Limited Funding and Resources

The government could help us a lot if they made those forms more straightforward and simple. Then it wouldn't be such a job to not only interpret the words but the concepts. And we saw that a lot in the taxes, people that had come to get their taxes done. They had just messed up their taxes so badly. Not because they're dumb, because they're not, but because the concepts were not really explained. (ISO Service Provider)

System Improvements

Service providers talked about including diversity in the programs, increased collaboration and resources for improvements in the services.

"... It seems to me like every time I talk to a group their needs are a little different. And so, it's not 'a one size fits all' which is why I love having conversations because then you can figure out what's needed and how to move forward and how to measure that. Otherwise you are just kind of throwing a lot of stuff in one direction and hoping it sticks." (Service Provider, ISO)

"How amazing it would be to go work collaboratively with other seniors' centers that aren't reaching those populations, how amazing would that be? Or enhancing the capacity of those senior centers to address supporting seniors from various backgrounds and cultures." (Service Provider, Seniors Serving Organization)

"Funding will enable us to develop various diversity programs for the people. Funding would also help us to offer follow-ups." (Service Provider, ISO)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Voices and perspectives of older Chinese older adults and their families should be included in the planning, design, engagement, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programs.
- A collaborative and coordinated team approach among the senior serving organizations and immigrant serving organizations in Edmonton.
- Service providers are requested to look into issues like elder abuse and violence. There is a need to arrange culturally appropriate awareness sessions and build programs for these issues.
- Social media should be utilized effectively in engaging people as well as in the provision of diverse services.
- Promote ethno-culturally based programs targeting the specific needs of older Chinese adults rather than taking a common approach of 'one size fits all'.
- Service agencies should reconsider how spaces can be transformed to support culturally sensitive programs and services to meet diverse needs of older adults.

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