

Building a Mosaic: Learning how to be Culturally Responsive

Seniors Services Conference

September 25, 2009

Edmonton, Alberta

Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op

Mandate:

To support immigrants and refugee individuals and families in attaining optimum health through health education, community development and advocacy support.

Our Principles

- ★ Democratic governance
- ★ Direct responsiveness and accountability
- ★ Equity and social justice



Key Programs and Services

All our programs and services are delivered in the first language of our clients and families. We serve new immigrants moms, children from 0-6 years, children with disability, parents, adults and seniors.

1. Perinatal Health

- ❖ Pre and post-natal education and outreach support
- ❖ Access to family physician
- ❖ Access to Health for Two resources
- ❖ Family planning/birth control education
- ❖ Parenting classes

2. Multicultural Family Connections & Home Visitation

- ❖ Early intervention and Intensive Family supports
- ❖ Early childhood development programming
- ❖ Multicultural parenting
- ❖ Access to community supports

Key Programs and Services

3. Chronic Disease Prevention

- ❖ Health education on a variety of chronic diseases
- ❖ Health promotion projects i.e. healthy eating
- ❖ In-home and clinic support on cultural adaptation of interventions

4. Cultural Competency Training & Workshops

The MCHB Co-op designs and delivers training and workshops to provide learning experiences for participants to develop and strengthen their capacities to serve people and communities from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Who is a multicultural health broker?

a bilingual and bicultural worker who is familiar with the biomedical system and Canadian culture that they can act confidently within the formal system and be trusted by the providers they work with. At the same time, their indigenous cultural backgrounds enable them to serve as a trusted peer and advocate for non-English speaking families of the same ethnic background.



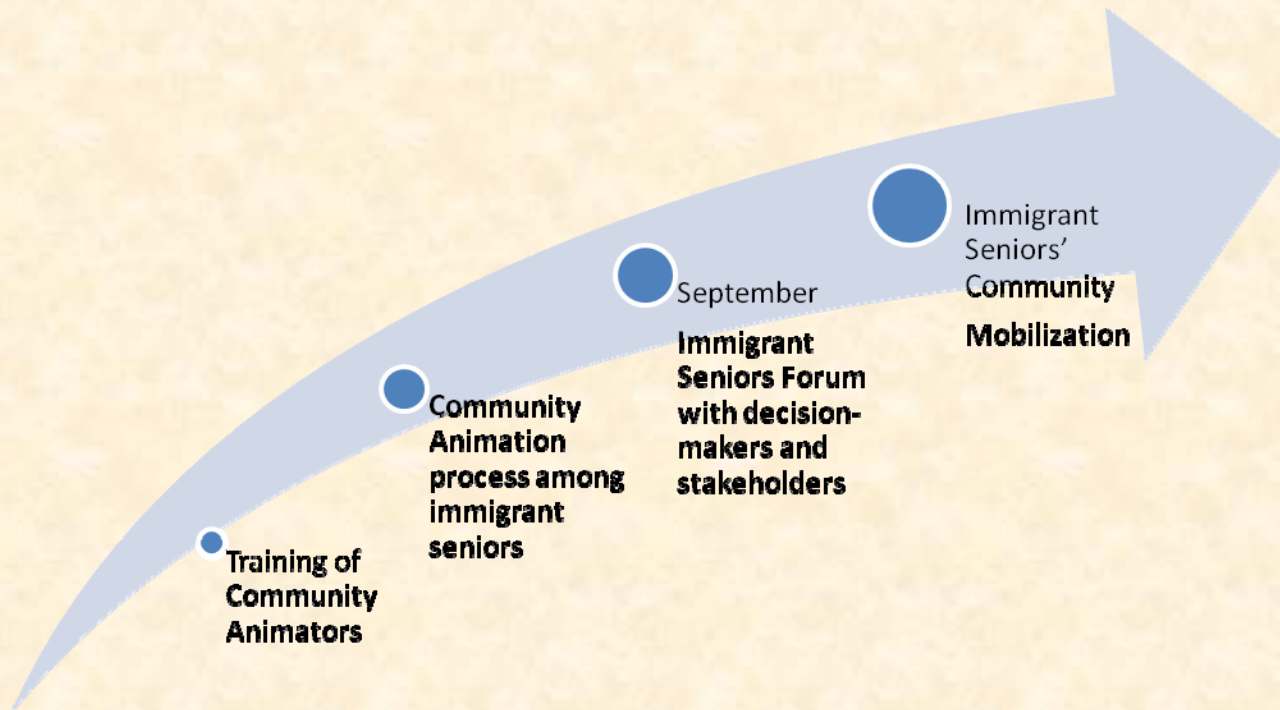
Immigrant Seniors Forum

September 12, 2009

- Organized by a group of 70 immigrant seniors from several communities
- Forum Objectives:
 - Create awareness of immigrant seniors' realities (difficulties, strengths and hopes) within our own community and among policy makers and service providers.
 - Practice democracy by starting a dialogue with relevant decision makers and discuss ways to improve our community's quality of life and wellbeing.

How did it work?

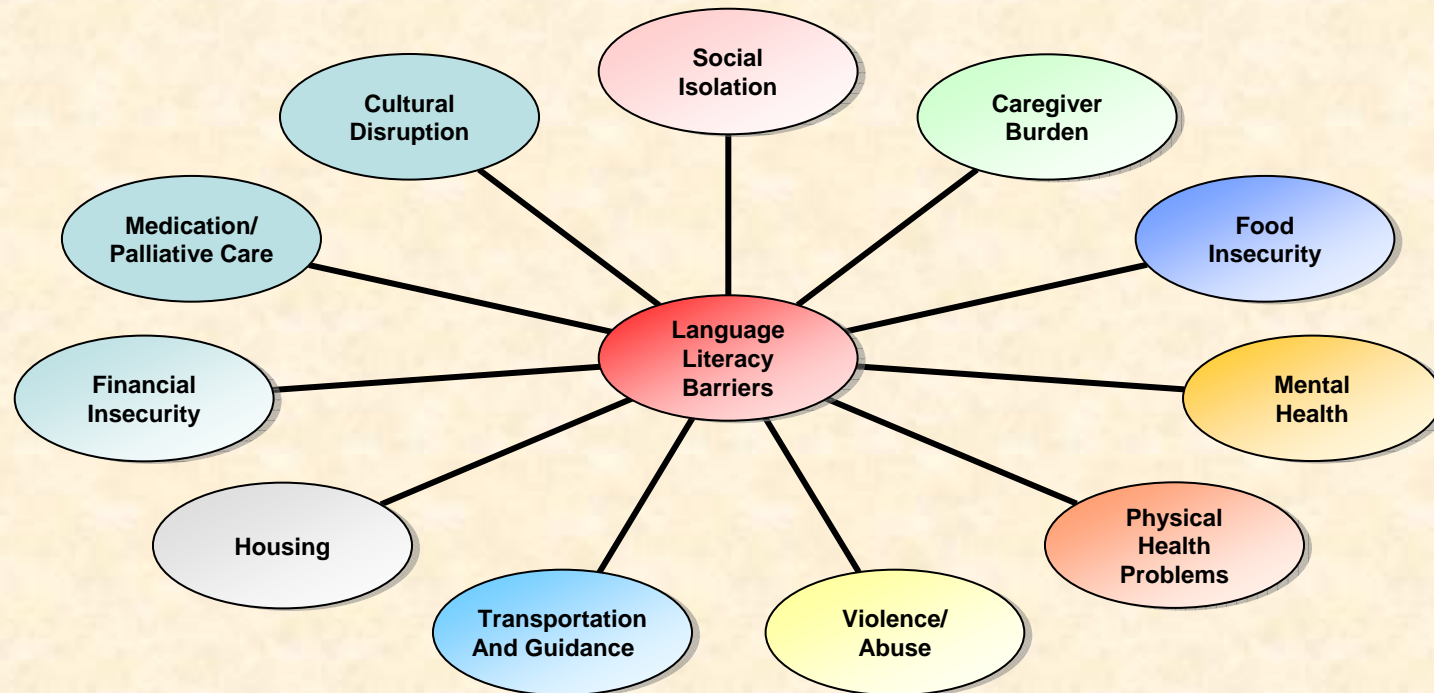
- Funding from New Horizons for Seniors Community Participation and Leadership Program (January 2009)
- **Community Animation Process:** Animation is a process of stimulating people to become aware and conscious of the problems and deprivation they suffer from while they regard themselves as principal actors in their lives and not mere objects.



What we learned through the community animation process...

- Immigrant Seniors:
 - want to and can learn English
 - want to become full contributing citizens (employment and civic engagement)
 - will speak out about their hopes, strengths and barriers once they have built a relationship with service providers, governments, etc.
 - Want to build a dialogue with service providers in order to develop solutions to their problems and build on their strengths

What the immigrant seniors said about their lives in Edmonton...



What the immigrant seniors said about their lives in Edmonton...



Difficulties navigating health care and social systems
Reduced access to social and health services
Reduced health, safety, social connections
Intergenerational gap with acculturated grandchildren
Acculturation stress, interpersonal role conflicts and familial conflicts
Social and emotional isolation
Loss of integrity, diminished self-esteem, increased vulnerability
Decreased mobility
Loss of independence and autonomy
Lack of pension benefits (old age pension and guaranteed income supplement)

Our personal struggles in Canada affect our health, wellbeing and civic participation...

Being a burden for our families

- “[I was sponsored by my children to come here]...I live depend on what [my] children can give [me], but it makes me feel like I am a burden to them” (Spanish Senior)
- “I am ashamed to ask my children to buy me something...I am uncomfortable calling back home because my children (sponsors) have to pay my telephone bills” (Former Yugoslavia Senior)

Losing respect

- “I have lost my grandchildren’s respect because I cannot speak to them in English...” (Kurdish Senior)
- “I am not able to communicate with my grandchildren as they do not speak their mother tongue any longer” (Former Yugoslavia Senior)

Isolation

- “I don’t go out because I am scared of getting lost on the bus...I can’t always ask my children to give me rides to visit friends or got to church...” (Former Yugoslavia Senior)
- My children do not understand that I need more than food and medication” (Former Yugoslavia Senior)
- “I don’t understand the system...I don’t fit in the system...I have lost my identity” (Kurdish Senior)

Edmonton, Canada is great places to live

- Democratic country
 - Peaceful country
 - Health services are good
 - Pension is available to seniors
 - Young people have great opportunities
 - Our children and grandchildren have good education and jobs
- People are friendly and relaxed
 - Lots of parks and green areas
 - The City is clean
 - The air is clean

Immigrant seniors hope that...

- the federal government would reduce the 10-year residency and sponsorship requirement in order to qualify for *Old Age Security and the related Guaranteed Income Supplement*
- the federal government reduce processing times for immigration applications from parents joining their children in Canada;
- the *Alberta Seniors Benefit* program does not have to be linked to the federal *Old Age Security* benefits and can be available to all of immigrant seniors in need at the full rate;
- the federal government increase social security agreements to co-ordinate pension programs with more countries;
- housing costs are controlled and that subsidized housing and/or ethno specific affordable housing for seniors who need or desire it is available to immigrant seniors;
- English as a Second Language (ESL) training are available and accessible to immigrant seniors;
- immigrant seniors who want and can work get the opportunity to contribute to society;
- governments provide more support services (translation and social support) for immigrant seniors;
- ethnic media is supported and promoted by government and communities;
- transportation services to immigrant seniors are improved and affordable;
- home care agencies hire more workers who speak our languages;
- MLAs, MPs, and city councilors try to support and promote civic participation of immigrant seniors. Help us make our voices heard!