

**Collaborative for  
Healthy Aging and Care**



**Exploring our Stories  
and Shaping our Future  
2<sup>nd</sup> SUMMIT EVENT**

**SUMMIT 2017**

**November 14-15 • Fredericton, NB**

**Summary Report  
Prepared by Charles Holmes**



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## Executive Summary

This summary report contains key insights collected during the 2017 Collaborative for Healthy Aging and Care Summit, Nov 14-15, Fredericton, NB.

250 participants representing a cross-section of the population concerned with the notions of aging and care in New Brunswick, from social work students to care home workers to older adults, gathered together to listen to a program of guest speakers and participate in discussions.

Participants were grouped at tables and their dialogue was transcribed by student notetakers as they discussed questions based on the guest speaker talks and panel discussion.



The discussions were vibrant and participants were fully engaged throughout, sharing their personal experiences, ideas and suggestions. Feedback from the Summit was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of those who gave feedback suggesting they are inspired to take action.

“This is one of the most inspiring events I have attended. It is good to hear people in different organizations and walks of life share experiences. Wonderful collaboration!”

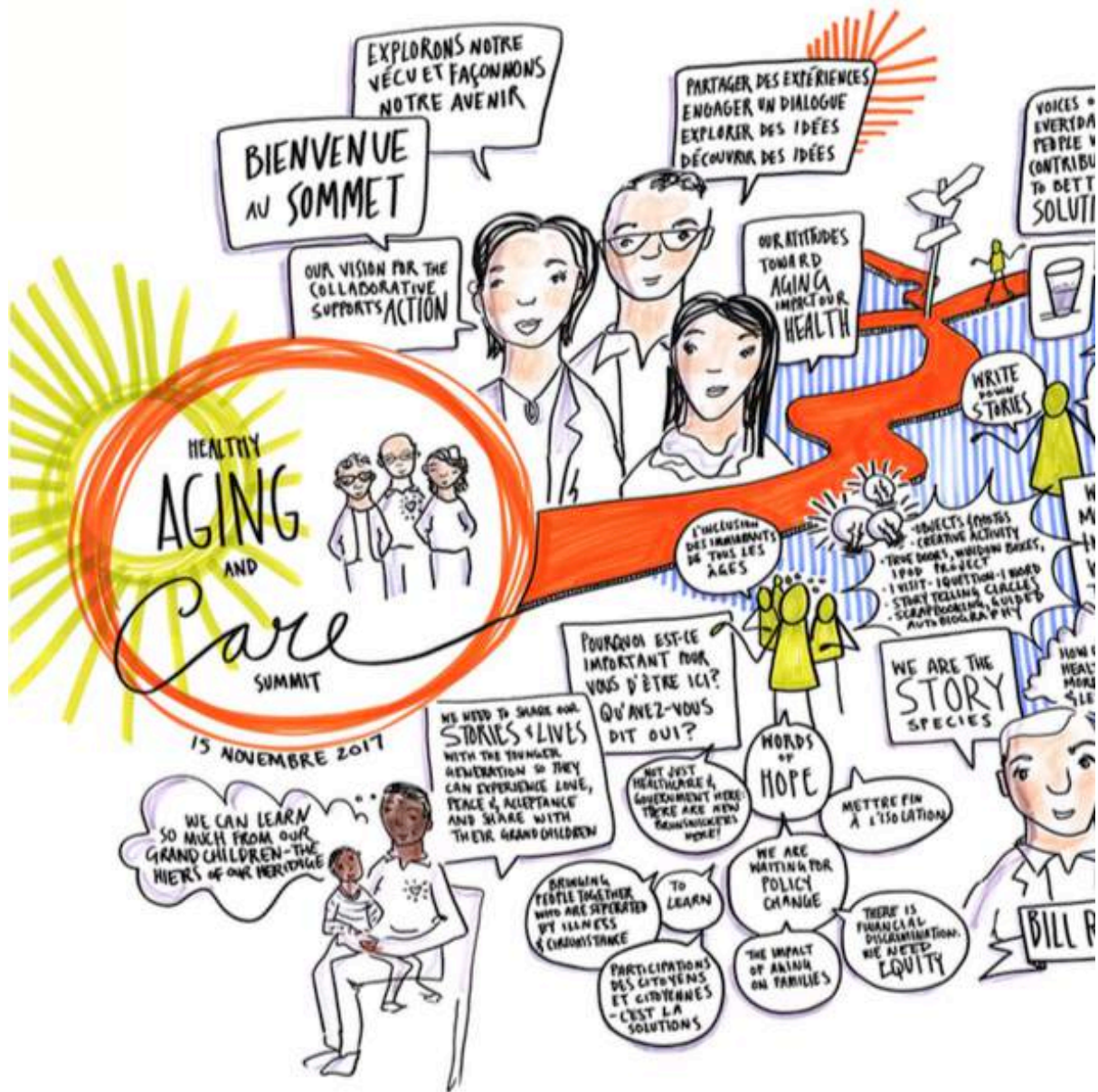
“Very engaging speakers and discussion. Feeling inspired to make a change.”

“I loved the table discussions and have been able to connect with many new people.”

“Félicitations pour l’organisation et le programme! Évènement interactif et instructif.”  
(*Congratulations on the organization and the program. It was an interactive and educational event*)



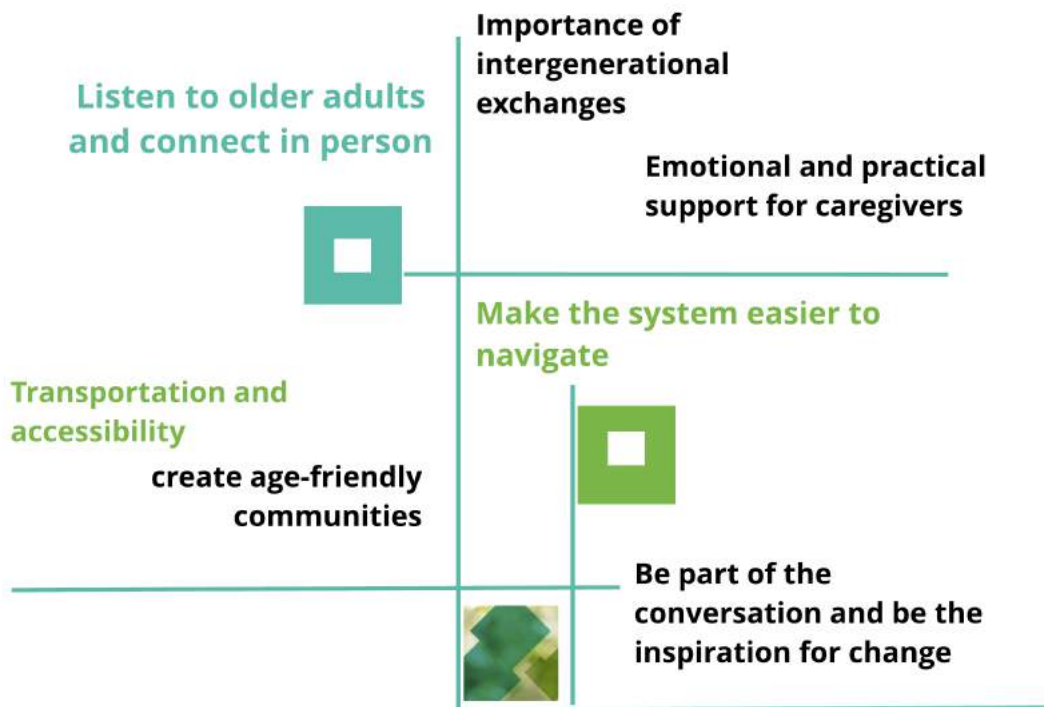




The Key Insights from the discussions are summarized in the following pages. For each Conversation, the comments are organized into themes and presented in order of importance – from the most frequently cited themes or notions down to the least. A theme was defined here as an idea or insight that was mentioned by at least two participants. Verbatim quotes are used throughout to illustrate key points.

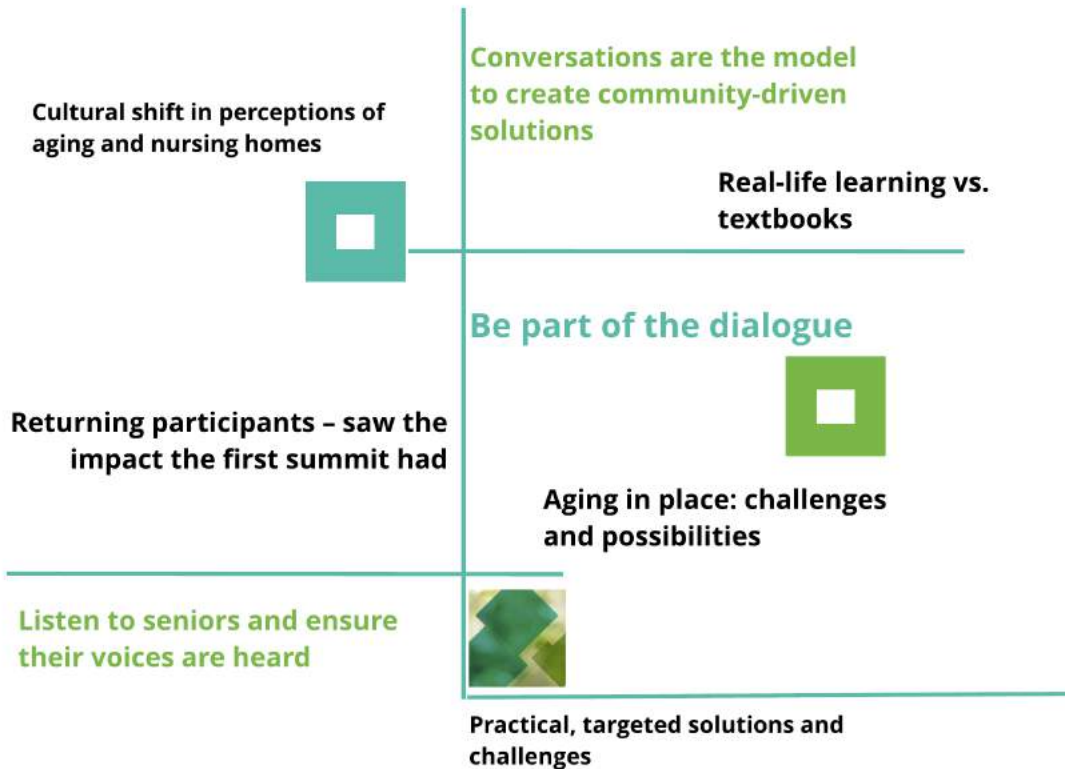
Overall, **certain key themes and ideas** stand out as relevant to all discussions on healthy aging and care:

- Listen to older adults and connect in person
- Transport and accessibility – create age-friendly communities
- Importance of intergenerational exchanges
- Emotional and practical support for caregivers
- Make the system easier to navigate
- Be part of the conversation and be the inspiration for change





## Conversation 1 Importance of this Dialogue



### Dialogue Question:

#### Why is it important for people to be here today?

Participants were invited to discuss why they felt it was important for them to attend this Summit and what they had said “yes” to in attending. Many of the comments heard relate directly to the work a participant does or her/his specific circumstance. Social work students, for example, are here as part of their degree work to gain a greater understanding of care for older adults while older adults themselves are here to learn more about the choices available to them as they age.

Comments below are summarized and organized into theme in order of importance (frequency cited). During the discussions, one participant noted the importance of distinguishing between the words “elder” and “senior”, as discussed by a guest speaker. Throughout the report the term “older adult” is used for descriptive purposes and “elder” or “senior” in direct quotes or when paraphrasing a participant’s comments to honour the choice of word he or she chose.

### Be part of the dialogue

The most frequent reason given for a person’s participation in this event was to be part of the dialogue and network with other like-minded people in order to find solutions or stay on the right track and move forward together. It is important for people to have their voice heard and also to listen to the perspective of others and connect with them in person.

“Good thing about coming here is that you get all kinds of ideas and see what other people are doing and are able to apply it to our situation.”

“Pour partager avec tout le monde de la province et voir si on partage les mêmes idées.” (*To share with everyone in the province and see if we share the same ideas*)

They are coming to hear issues from around the province, to be engaged citizens and meet new people. Many shared that they enjoy the “collective idea” and the opportunities that present themselves when people are open to working together even when they have their own agendas to attend to. They are inspired by hearing from others and note that this how change happens – many people used the word “collaboration” here in a very positive sense. For many, it is also a way of shifting perspectives to see opportunities rather than barriers. Through these conversations, they hope to make connections and gain new insights and ideas to improve the quality of care in aging and make a real difference to the lives of older adults.

“Find solutions of coming together more effectively.”

“Want change to happen, move forward together.”

“We want to be optimistic about our future! We want to be part of the new system!”



## Conversations are the model to create community-driven solutions

Related to the above theme, some participants spoke directly to the significance of dialogue and conversations in creating solutions. They feel this is how actionable change happens, and want to look at ways to change the conversations and attitudes about aging in New Brunswick.

“It’s important to have provincial conversations around complex issues that are happening. This is the model to create solutions – having conversations.”

“Un élément important, question de la participation de la citoyenneté; la solution est parmi la communauté; ceci est un rôle essentiel et important. La perception est que le gouvernement arrive avec les décisions déjà prises lors des consultations.” (*An important aspect is citizen participation – the solution is within the community; it’s an essential and important role. There’s a perception that the government arrives to consultations with its decisions already made*)

## Real-life learning vs. textbooks

Many participants shared they were here to learn and become educated on issues affecting older adults. Several noted that the Summit was an opportunity to experience “real life learning” rather than learning from textbooks or other forms of research. Some of the participants are students who are here to meet the aging population in person while others have family members who are aging and want to learn general information to help them in their decision making. Some participants work with seniors and want to learn more about older adult care while some are older adults themselves wanting to learn more about what is happening in the province. Learning more about aging and care specifically in New Brunswick was important for most people.

“Know more beyond what is in the class room” / “Better perspectives not only from textbooks but from real life experiences.” / “In University we discuss textbook topics for the most part and I’m curious and looking forward to seeing what’s happening in the ‘right now’ and learn what else is out there.”

“Expand knowledge as a board member.”

“I came here to learn.”

“Came here to help own understanding.”

“I’m becoming a senior and I want to see what’s going and I want to see what’s out there.”

“Learn more about the seniors who immigrate here and what is offered for them.”

## Cultural shift in perceptions of aging and nursing homes

There are many negative images of nursing homes and the aging process in general that participants would like to see change. There is a desire to see more of a connection between the nursing home and the community, and to see “artificial barriers” torn down so there can be more interaction between those in a nursing home and the wider community.

It was also noted that there has been a cultural shift in mentality towards the idea of the nursing home, which is now seen as the last resort for many rather than the place that will take care of you when you are older. At the same time, healthy aging has become a common theme for people to hear and the community is seen as more open to the idea of aging and the aging population. Expectations of care have also changed with people not accepting “nuclear Jello and bingo” anymore but wanting quality care.

“La communauté est plus ouverte au vieillissement. On est en train de voir un changement de culture, tout est une question de perspective.” (*The community is more open towards the idea of aging. We’re seeing a change in culture – everything is a question of perspective*)

“Avant, les gens disaient : ‘Quand je serai vieux, le foyer va prendre soins de moi!’ Maintenant le discours des gens a changé : ‘On veut rester à la maison le plus longtemps possible et le foyer est le dernier recours.’ (*In the past, people would say, “When I’m old, the nursing home will take care of me.” Now the discourse has changed: “We want to stay at home as long as possible and the care home is the last resort”*)

## Listen to seniors and ensure their voices are heard

Some participants shared that they feel it is important to listen to older adults and ensure their voices are heard. Storytelling was cited here as one way to achieve this. One participant talked about podcasts he is working on, “the gray wave”, which focus on older adults in New Brunswick discussing their issues and struggles.

“Excited to be present because the theme of aging and health and the idea of story-sharing is very exciting to me. Hearing seniors’ stories is so important.”

“PhD student – research – travelling around province and collecting narratives about what happens in this field – here to hear stories.”

## Returning participants – saw the impact the first summit had

Several participants shared that they attended the first Summit 5 years ago and have seen the positive impact it has made. They enjoyed the experience so much they are excited to be back and also happy to meet people they haven’t seen for a while. They are also curious to hear what changes have happened since the first Summit.

“I was here in 2012 and it was the first time I was here to participate in something big. Happy to come again because I see the change that happened since the last Summit – excited to continue doing my part.”

“Pour voir quelles sont les choses qui ont changé en 5 ans depuis le dernier Sommet.” (*To see what things have changed since the last Summit 5 years ago*)

### **Aging in place: challenges and possibilities**

Aging in place was an important topic for many participants. A variety of perspectives was represented here including those from Home Care agencies working to keep seniors in the home to those looking at the challenges and solutions at the community-level when older adults age in place. Participants want to explore ways to create an age-friendly community and how best to help older adults through collaborative care.

“I am the president of a French organization that hopes to help French older adults in small communities, and helping adults in the Fredericton area be able to stay and age in Fredericton, instead of moving home.”

“Les gens qui aiment rester chez eux, mais la famille veut qu’ils sortent, est-ce qu’on les entend? Même avec la démence, est-ce qu’on fait tout pour que les gens choisissent leur demeure de choix.” (*Those who want to stay at home but their family wants them to leave, do we listen to them? Even with dementia, are we doing everything we can so that people can choose where they live?*)

### **Practical, targeted solutions and challenges**

Some participants came to the Summit due to very specific interests or reasons. Examples include:

- Creation of office of Senior’s Advocate
- Dental care for older adults
- Start-up/small companies working with older adults (“Aging with Confidence”; care navigator)
- Programs for the 65-75 age group
- Helping those in rural communities age well
- Transportation and Meals on Wheels
- Real estate
- How the arts helps aging
- Advocate for female care workers
- La zoothérapie (Animal-assisted therapy)
- L’ergothérapie (Occupational therapy)
- Dementia

Dialogue Question:  
**What did you say yes to?**

About a quarter of the participants discussed this question specifically.

### Connecting with others and hearing other viewpoints

The most frequently cited response here was to connect with other people and listen to their points of view and perspectives. In this way, they can share their voice and be an advocate for older adults as well as be energized by the different people they meet and learn from them.

“To hear from others and come together to discuss.”

“To be included in [this] important conversation.”

“An opportunity to be rejuvenated again – Rejuvenate the soul!”

“Pour mieux comprendre les services d’autres organisations.” (*To better understand the services offered by different organizations*)

### Sharing stories

Closely related to the above theme, sharing stories and experiences was very important for some participants.

“Said yes to being here and sharing their stories, their knowledge.”

### New possibilities

Several participants said yes to actionable change and new possibilities, to turning “problems” into possibilities and keeping up with a changing society.

“We need change, we need a shift.”





## Conversation 2 Narrative Care with Bill Randall



### Dialogue Questions:

#### What can you do? Where are these opportunities to help others tell/share their stories?

This conversation inspired a wide range of responses, with participants seeming energized and very positive about the notion of narrative care. Overall, the benefits of storytelling and becoming the “hero” of your own story rather than the “victim” were discussed as well as the concept of person-centered care. Many participants discussed the concept of narrative care in a general way focusing on its value while some discussed specific examples of opportunities to help others tell their stories. The challenges of bringing narrative care into nursing homes and to those aging in place were also widely discussed here.

“Let’s be story catchers.”

### Why we need narrative care

The most frequently discussed theme during this discussion centered on the need for narrative care and the manifold benefits of it. Participants were in agreement that narrative care is incredibly important for both older adults themselves and society as a whole. Reasons given for the importance of narrative care include:

- Narrative care makes people feel like someone cares, it gives people control in situations and at a time of life when they may feel they have little control
- It safeguards wisdom, knowledge and history for the generations to come
- Through stories, the younger generation can also feel a sense of hope about the future and learn vital life lessons from their elders
- It inspires personal connections and encourages emotionally healthy relationships.
- It helps caregivers understand where people come from and who they are, thus making caring easier
- It helps caregivers, family members and others see past the broken hips or other physical ailments to the wealth of stories
- Helps people feel less lonely and isolated
- Builds trust
- Helps us understand the changing world and provides a valuable perspective
- Helps us understand the importance of focusing on the individual rather than the group, thereby boosting self-esteem and self-care
- Helps focus on emotional needs rather than just physical

“A few years ago got a call from a lady to visit her husband who has MS and she needed a break. He discovered that the man came from the same part of the country that he grew up in. Then he continued to tell him stories and they ended up developing a friendship and said their friendship started from stories.”

“My family are story tellers and I’ve always admired the fact that they take such pride in their individual lives – they’ve instilled the value in me of individual importance.”

“Little things in everyday life that cue stories and if we take the time to listen we can learn some really interesting things.”

“One older lady and her story of her grandmother and how she would tell the kids they could only stay until the sugar bag was empty. Became a personal story between a nurse and herself. Common phrase between them is how is that sugar bag holding up.”

### Examples in action

Many participants shared examples of narrative care in action as well as ideas for what they would like to see happen:

- Alzheimer’s society booklet: All About Me
- Personalizing nursing home rooms/doors makes it easier for people to draw on conversations about a person’s past or interests
- The narrative program at York Care Centre – you can honour and explain people’s life stories for obituaries why not do it when they’re alive? The special day idea: have a day just for the resident and share their life story to a group [group loved this idea]
- Birthdays connected with a bio, like how they do at nursing homes
- They picked a story, a happy story, and everyone added on it and it was their way of finding a way in the community to share their stories
- Always took bus rides around the town, there were only 50 residents in the home and when they went for bus rides there were always residents saying “I lived there”, “I used to hang out there” and have stories going along with all these places
- When working in the nursing home even the smallest things made [residents] so happy, even something like peeling potatoes
- Used to do a resident of the month, was great, info about their life to share
- Family can be a big help, get a bigger picture of the person
- Ipod programs, music therapy help bring out the stories
- Encourage a wooden shelf, nick-knacks for the residents to add to their shelf, encourage all those things. As its meaningful to them, personal
- A reminiscing program
- True doors project is a wonderful project
- Eden project
- More volunteers to come in and spend time with the residents
- Create a gardening program
- Try to get out in the community a little more on outings
- Sharing and creating new educational models
- Record stories, potentially call them “the Fredericton story”
- What about teaming up with the museums and allowing seniors to speak about their experiences? The public and seniors could benefit
- Il y a un programme qui est en discussion pour que les jeunes mamans amènent leurs bébés aux résidents. (*There’s talk of a program for young mothers to bring their babies into the care home*)

- Des visites d’animaux de compagnie. La zoothérapie. Les foyers de soins ne sont pas des hôpitaux, ce sont des maisons pour les résidents. (*Animal-assisted therapy – bringing animals in. Care homes are not hospitals, they are homes for residents*)
- Avoir les étudiants visiter les aînés dans leur communauté – ceci ferait parti de leur cours. Sa petite fille joue le violon pour sa mère au foyer. (*Have students visit seniors in their community – make it part of their courses. Her [a participant’s] daughter played violon for her mother in a care home*)
- Implique la communauté, pas toujours le rôle du gouvernement (*Get the community involved – it’s not always the government’s role*)
- «Roots of Empathy » avec aînés (*Roots of Empathy with seniors*)
- Things like arranging card tournaments and activities where a natural pairing between the ages with a common goal
- Roots of empathy (baby brought in) but maybe schools can do it with elders. Made as part of the curriculum
- Europe’s innovative program to make phone calls to seniors every morning and ask how seniors are doing, and chatting about their daily lives/activities
- Memory boxes outside of resident’s room are so important because it takes you beyond who is in the bed and lets you connect with who they were in their lives. True doors are incredible, and residents are so excited about telling their stories
- Couples who have lost their partner are able to remember them by sharing their stories
- Recounting stories of war/shared hardship
- Meals on Wheels: even small interaction with elderly can turn into stories inadvertently. Highlight of their day (the elderly) when someone comes to deliver their food, moment of interaction

### Challenges (lack of time, training, dementia, etc.)

There are many challenges to implementing narrative care. The benefits of narrative care are clear but participants feel it does not happen enough and is not yet part of the culture. Some suggestions to change the culture included designing spaces that encourage conversations and interactions when looking to build new care homes or re-arrange existing facilities. In addition to the need for a shift in culture to embrace narrative care, the following are seen as significant challenges:

#### Time

- Staffing – they feel like they don’t have the time
- Staff doesn’t feel like they have time
- Talked to someone who was criticized by their staff members for taking too much time with conversation. Sometimes clients are surprised when people are engaging in narrative care because they don’t get that often
- Frustrated by not being able to change staff’s opinions, too many are task oriented, she struggles with people not being able to “give that extra little bit”, they are humans and deserve the interaction
- Could be a staffing issue. You need to get the tasks done and don’t have enough people to do it all. Needs to be a team effort
- Doctors and nurses don’t feel like they have time to ask the personal questions – this must change!



- Time. Especially for nursing home workers and people that work in hospital settings – even taking a minute to pay attention can make all the difference.
- Resources and time comes up, I can't make more time but how can I optimize the time that I do have?

### **Knowing how to interact with people with dementia and Alzheimer's**

- A lot of difficult people who would break out swearing
- We can care a lot at home now so the people in homes are usually sicker, cognitively and physically
- If a person has dementia you are not really able to tell stories
- Alzheimer's – hard to have conversations – barely talk – get to know them through family – her story continuing without her telling it
- About Alzheimer's – people just aren't telling stories in the way we understand but there is still a message there – we just need to listen
- A lot of homes are multigenerational homes – complex if you have dementia

### **Isolation and boredom**

- Family – economy – people share stories or they used to, but now seniors are becoming isolated when their kids move
- Parents – idea of foreclosure – not having new exciting experiences that they are dying to tell someone about – wish they would get out more and have more stories to tell
- So much energy to get someone in a wheelchair and getting her out of the house – worthwhile but a lot of work. How do you ignite a desire to get a person to want to experience more things and more stories?
- People outside of nursing homes – family members pass – don't have the same connections to the world – isolation – if they go to a home, it is an institution and sometimes they become isolated there too
- Rural, francophone communities – lot of seniors isolated in the north of the province
- Potlucks stopped happening – decline in conversations
- Not always environments that nurture narrative care opportunities
- Language barriers, refugee Syrian family was able to share their story as their English improved, created way to understand their life story(-ies)

### **Staff training and knowledge**

- ALC – seniors are awaiting placement – we don't have staff with training or knowledge
- Acute care nurses don't have training in that kind of environment – cure and get out

### **Money**

- Shannex – ideal care. People who have money can go to good facilities, high quality care – might be more dialogue at places like this for residents and staff – they have the capabilities

### **Technology and interaction**

- People go to visit and sit on their phones. Lack of interaction in general

## Listen and allow older adults to talk

One of the most fundamental aspects of narrative care according to many participants is the ability to simply listen to older adults and afford them the time and space to talk. As seen in Challenges above, time is a major hurdle to narrative care, and many feel this needs to shift and the culture in care homes and for those aging in place needs to emphasize time for sitting and listening to older adults. Listening is part of the emotional care needed for older adults, which is as important as physical care.

It was also noted that, at times, older adults can be spoken about or over rather than to. In these situations they become excluded from the conversations and it can feel as if “nobody pays attention.” The notion of WAIT (why am I talking?) was appreciated by many participants as a way of shifting this habit. For the culture to change, everyone needs to remember to focus on the person, and listening is one simple yet critical component of that. Care workers can also be encouraged to keep notes and review them ahead of appointments to help residents feel valued and heard, and can also be mindful of the language they use: “Instead of ‘how was your day?’ ‘What was the best part of your day?’”

“Sometimes even when there are lots of activities the days can be long. One lady asked me to sit with her and talk to her and I said sure. It’s not about an assembly line; it’s more about being just a person. [The table] discussed how it was sad that the lady even had to ask.”

“At Pine Grove, every 4 quarters when they have a meeting, they bring in a resident and their family. This helps to establish what is needed, and helps to let them be recognized within the nursing home.”

## Person-centered care

The notion of person-centered or patient-centered care was seen as closely related to narrative care by many during these discussions. Caregivers who are trained to be person-centered rather than task-centered will use narrative care as part of their work – unfortunately, in many cases, the task is seen as more important than the person. There was a call for narrative care to be included in university social work and medical programs to instill the importance of focusing on the person and understanding that he or she is more than the ailments s/he presents. Person-centered care can help reduce stress and anxiety and improve self-esteem and overall health.

“Patient centered care is a must.”

“Person Centered Care: new terminology. Sat with a man who had a procedure and he started asking questions. Allowing him talk. A week later a letter arrived in the mail, the man had written an insight letter to continue his journey. This helped define person centered care.”

Supporting the family is another vital aspect of person centered care as the family knows the resident better than any of the health care providers.

## Importance of intergenerational connection

Multigenerational communities are beneficial for teaching and passing down wisdom and are considered important for the implementation of narrative care. Understanding what the world was like before the digital revolution is critical for younger people while older adults enjoy the interaction and opportunity to connect with the younger generation. There is a call here from many for more interaction between the generations as it teaches valuable skills and can also give the younger generation a sense of hope as they hear what their elders have been through and the resilience they have shown.

Many examples were offered here of ways in which the younger and older generations can and already do connect:

- High school students to visit/work with individuals in nursing homes to help with reviewing their lives (i.e., making a life review film or book)
- School in Saint John got to talk to seniors via “speed chatting”
- Niece [of participant] decided to go into nursing homes for her summer job to chat with seniors. The seniors told her stories about their childhoods. One of the clients was “Beaming”, brought a breath of fresh air
- I ran a kid’s summer camp in the nursing home I work for (Kingsway Care Centre, Quispamsis) and I asked each child to spend 45 minutes with a resident each day to spend time learning and listening to their stories. This is important for younger generations to learn how to be less self-centered and more focused on learning about their elders. This allows them to learn patience, compassion, respect and listening skills
- Schools – curriculum must have narrative care as part of their studies
- Une professeure d’histoire avait un projet pour les étudiants pour “interviewer vos grands-parents.” Des belles choses ont sorti... *(A history teacher created a project for students to interview your grand-parents. Some very good things came out of this...)*

## Props to facilitate storytelling

Sometimes props can help facilitate storytelling. Photos, diaries, scrapbooking or even asking an older adult to teach a skill can all inspire storytelling and encourage people to speak up. Performance artists or other storytelling professionals can also come to nursing homes which brings “joy and happiness” to residents. For older adults with dementia sometimes a prop related to their past can help them feel calm and connected:

“Dementia patients tend to revert back to who they ‘were.’ If you listen to who they were or watch their daily activities, you will see their puzzle pieces that tell why they are upset or ways to make them happy. Such as a bookkeeper with dementia wanting a log book to work from. Buying them their own log book.”

## Document the stories

The importance of documenting stories by writing them down or creating another form of keepsake was emphasized by several participants. It's a step that often gets forgotten as it can be time-consuming and sometimes difficult to do. Without a written or video record of stories, however, they can easily become lost and forgotten. It was also noted that, at times, the telling of stories can uncover emotional baggage that can be difficult for both the storyteller and listener to handle. It is, therefore, at times, important to have a trained writer or social worker facilitate storytelling.

"It is important to write these stories down because they become lost once the person is lost."

"I think that when you're in a family setting I haven't thought about documenting the stories, I do not think that, wow, one day I am going to forget these stories."

## Dangers of technology

Several participants wondered if technology was having a negative impact on both storytelling and establishing meaningful relationships. In a changing world where the younger generation especially is more dependent than ever on smart phones or other forms of newer technology, it is vital that people continue to be personable and expand their social interactions.

"Feels like she is missing out on a deeper relationship."

## Where has story – narrative – made a difference in your life or the lives of others you care about?

While many participants touched on this question in their discussion of the opportunities for storytelling, some specific examples are given here as to ways in which story and narrative have made a difference in their lives.

## Makes caring easier

One big difference that is seen from using a narrative approach to care is how much easier it makes the work of caregiving. From dental hygienists to care home staff to family members, using stories allowed people to connect to the person they were working with, which made everything go more smoothly. Patients and older adults were more positive in their interactions with care providers who were willing to take the time and connect on a personal level through story.

"By knowing their story their approach is better and less aggressive."

"Narrative care is a huge part of my job (working in activities in a memory care home). I feel it is my responsibility to find new ways to listen to the stories that I am told throughout my day by



the residents that I work with. Having those conversations – sitting on the couch beside someone and asking them to reminisce and reflect on their stories.”

### **Promotes happiness, health and longevity**

One participant quoted studies showing that people who are the heroes of their stories live longer than those who see themselves as a victim in their story. This concept was reinforced by other participants as they shared their own stories of how narrative care puts the older adult back in a position of control and allows him/her to focus on the positive. Stories can give people a sense of purpose and hope, and can help in difficult times such as the loss of a loved one. There was a general consensus around the table that narrative care has an extremely positive influence on the lives of seniors in nursing homes. It relieves loneliness, inspires happiness and joy among residents and older adults, which, in turn, impacts their physical and overall health.

### **Tool for connection and promoting empathy**

Narrative also makes a difference in people’s lives by being a tool for promoting empathy and a means by which human beings can relate to one another. It is seen as very rewarding to fully connect with another person and understand who they are. Many people mentioned how simple it is as a tool to employ and yet its benefits are hugely significant. It provides a wider perspective and speaks to our basic need to feel heard. It was noted that First Nations communities tell and keep stories well, passing down wisdom and traditions. As seen above, and throughout the discussions, as our lives today are so busy, it is important to be mindful of the needs for storytelling and make that a priority.

“You feel so special when someone asks [about you] and that doesn’t go away with age.”

“As soon as you find something of interest to the both of you, there is no stopping and that connection is forever made.”

“I think stories are everything, everyone has a story and sometimes you have to reminded [of] that.”

“Noticed as you grow older yourself that people start treating you differently so you notice the importance of having your own story define you rather than your age.”

### **Holders of knowledge and wisdom**

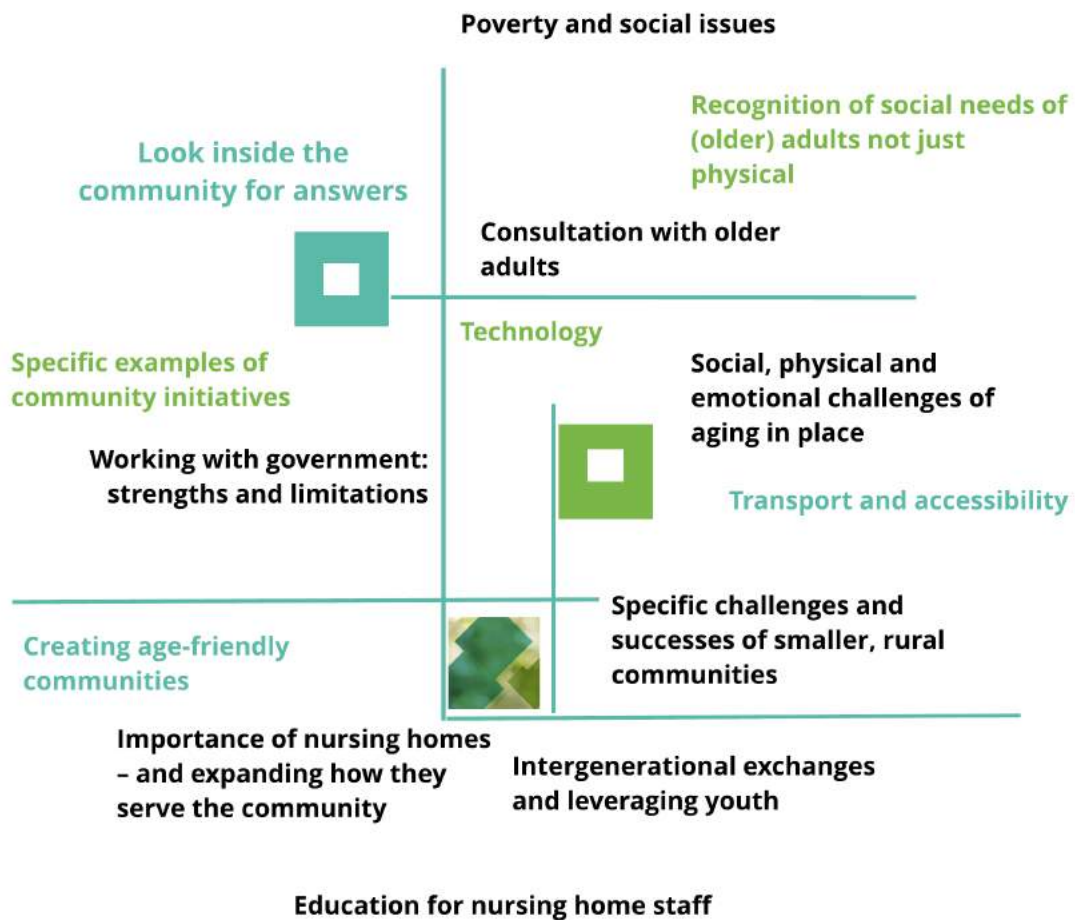
Narrative makes a difference on many different levels, especially as it relates to passing down knowledge and wisdom. Older adults are the holders of this wisdom and it is through story that the younger generation are able to understand aspects of our shared history that textbooks or the internet do not explore. One group of participants made the analogy to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, discussing how important the role of storytelling is for the individuals and families involved in this process.

It is equally important to remember to ask family members about events and knowledge that only they hold as one day it may be too late: “I better ask my aunt because she is the only one who knows certain things for sure.”



### Conversation 3

## Asset-Based Community Development with Dr. Deborah Puntenny



### Dialogue Questions:

**What examples are you seeing in your community that reflect the ideas Deborah has shared?  
What ideas for action are stimulated by what you've heard?**

Most participants discussed both these questions simultaneously and the comments below reflect responses to one or both questions. Much of the conversation for this dialogue centered on the need to look inside a community rather than outside of it when thinking about assets. There was a great deal of interest and excitement about the questions with the tone staying very positive throughout. Within the thematic summary below a certain number of ideas and insights overlap – the issue of transport, for example, shows up in many different areas.

### Look inside the community for answers

The most frequently cited idea in these discussions was that assets are to be found within communities, with the people, facilities and services the community already has. Specific examples are given below. Overall, grassroots programs were seen as positive and generally very successful especially when local seniors are involved and identify a need in their community. Small actions can make a significant difference, and one of the key factors is getting organized and doing your homework before reaching out and approaching the public for help. Local churches and non-profit groups can initiate projects or see them through, especially when they are focused on solutions rather than barriers.

Looking within the community is particularly important today with changing demographics, and an intergenerational approach is often needed for projects. It is important to know how to tap into resources and connect the right people to the right initiatives and also how to spread the word and let people know what the possibilities are and what is happening in their community. This will foster engagement and bring in volunteers. A Day for the Ages was cited here by several participants as an excellent initiative that is rooted in community.

It was noted that there is now a community spirit within retired francophone communities in the Fredericton area with talk of a care home specifically for the francophone population. This was seen as a positive step forward.

“There is a point where you have to stop expecting to ‘take take take’, and we have to start wondering what we can do to help ourselves.”

“A group of people gathering and deciding that it’s up to us to figure out what we can do to help ourselves and start looking at the assets that they had within themselves. Once they put this together, then they had the strength to go outside of it to discuss what they were willing to do, and then ask what they were willing to do to support us.”

“Let’s not demand government to do something, let’s be partners make it happen.”

“Asset-Based Community Development is a great project because it requires community engagement.”

“L’élément fondamentale est que les populations s’engagent, qu’ils ne restent pas tous les détails aux gouvernements. Il ne faut pas attendre après le gouvernement pour faire les choses, ont est capable de les faire.” (*The most important thing is that the population mobilizes, that we don’t leave all the details to the government. We shouldn’t wait for the government to do things – we’re capable of doing them ourselves*)

### Specific examples of community initiatives

- Work with community gardens and share knowledge about how to garden. Result of relationship: started a food sharing program because lack of grocery store for 30 minutes, residents help pack grocery bags, community and care staff buy the groceries for \$15, use our facility and residents help
- Daycare programs and education programs for children
- Reading and arts and crafts with older adults
- Storytelling
- Invite community members in to have coffee with the residents and have a chat
- Partnering with community kitchen and residents volunteer at the community kitchen helping serve, cook, make lunches for children
- Help with gardening – potatoes and they bagged them and donated food to Meals on Wheels
- Harvest jazz and blues
- Meals on wheels (wish they offered it more than three days a week)
- Community gardens for older adults who will miss gardening if they have to relocate – gardens in nursing homes for residents to help maintain
- Services for older adults to get to doctors appointment, groceries, etc.
- Training on hand massage for residents for comfort and relaxation for seniors
- Animal programs in LTCs for seniors
- Hike for Hospice
- Meals on Wheels, Memory Café, Elderdog Fredericton
- Bring Tim Horton’s into long-term care facility and have people sit and have coffee and chat
- Bringing dental care to seniors – making it accessible through mobile clinic (Dental Hygienists)
- Age friendly community committee – business building ramps
- Tantramar Seniors College
- On voit plusieurs. Pense que les évènements à Fredericton aux Jeux de L’Acadie ont récupéré toutes les générations. Mais plutôt pour tous et non pour juste une génération. (*There are lots. I think the events in Fredericton for the Jeux de L’Acadie involved all generations. For everyone and not just one generation*)
- Des programmes de mieux-être sont organisés dans la communauté, comme les jardins et des raisons de sortir des maisons. (*Well-being programs are organized in the community, like gardens and reasons for leaving the house*)

## Working with government: strengths and limitations

Although there was a good amount of consensus regarding assets coming within the community, as seen above, it was also widely acknowledged that the government has a vital role to play in both funding initiatives and bringing them to fruition. Both the strengths and limitations of working with the government were discussed here.

It was noted that, at times, there are barriers to getting things done when working with government as they do not do enough to put ideas into action and it can be difficult to find someone to lead a project. It can be hard for communities to become organized when funding is unclear or unavailable for projects and when municipalities have other priorities. Community centres closing was cited as an example of governments making decisions that do not benefit older adults or the larger community.

At the same time, many examples were given of ways in which funding has been available and governmental collaboration has been effective (politicians in Dieppe, for example, finding interactive ways to communicate with older adults). Certain MLAs and mayors are seen as very open to hearing questions and raising awareness of issues affecting older adults. Moncton and other municipalities have many initiatives in progress, and there is federal funding now in place.

It is therefore important to shift the power a little and turn to community-based assets before – or instead of – the government. There can be a mentality of thinking that bringing things to action is limited to the government. By persevering and working with the government in a proactive and positive way, change can happen:

“Perth-Andover to save money decided not to put in indoor walking track. Recently seniors said they need it to walk safely inside in the winter. Over the summer compiled a list of 60 people who needed it, called a meeting – invited deputy mayor – who went to the recreation director – found a space under the bleachers – indoor walking track has been made!”

## Creating age-friendly communities

The term “age-friendly community” was used frequently by participants during these discussions, and it was noted that some age-friendly initiatives are based on ABCD. Moncton’s age-friendly status was explored here (and will be more fully discussed in Conversation 7) and participants were impressed by the initiatives being taken there. In addition to the practical considerations for an age-friendly community (lighting, no steps in stores, staff training, etc.), it was noted that it is important to also shift attitudes and the language used: “From asset-draining to asset-based (respect, listening, etc.)” Participants wanted to find out if other municipalities have mayor advisory committees and ways for older adults to have their voices heard at the municipal level.

## Importance of nursing homes – and expanding how they serve the community

The nursing home was itself seen as an important asset and part of the community that could be further leveraged to benefit older adults who are choosing to age in place as well as those who



reside in the home. The concept of the nursing home is changing, the quality of care is improving, and it needs to stay relevant and continue to be part of the community:

“I don’t want to be eating squishy jello; I want to be drinking wine.”

“Lentement, petit à petit, on voit un changement. Il y a des opportunités de mieux comprendre et connaître le milieu. Pas de stigma. Tout le monde devrait y aller visiter le foyer de soins. Le foyer est le ‘hub’ de notre communauté.” *(Slowly, little by little, we’re seeing a change. There are opportunities to get to know the place better. No stigma. Everyone should visit the nursing home. It’s the “hub” of our community)*

Several suggestions were offered as to ways of fully utilizing our nursing homes:

- Opening facilities to the outside (i.e., day programs)
- One stop shops for everything you may need (all in the same building) which would generate multigenerational interaction (areas for nurse practitioners, shopping centres, food court, etc.)
- Partnered with business Fredericton North to bring once a month concert to the care centre to bring the community and nursing home together
- Bringing the community in – foot care specialist, hair dresser, students to help with ceremonies such as Remembrance Day
- Utiliser le foyer pour réduire l’ennui et offrir de la relève *(Use the care home to reduce boredom and offer respite care)*
- Services pourraient être développés à partir du foyer pour aider les gens à demeurer à la maison le plus longtemps possible – mais comment ceci sera possible avec l’entreprise privée? *(Services could be developed in care homes to help people stay at home as long as possible, but how is this possible if they are privately funded?)*
- On peut ouvrir le foyer à la communauté (plus qu’on le fait déjà) – Ex : Chez moi, il y a un groupe de danse de la communauté et on leur prête la salle qui est non utilisée les soirs et fins de semaines. Nous l’ouvrons au public *(We can open the care home to the community – more than we already do. Example : Where I am, there is a dance group and we lend them a room that is not in use on evenings and weekends. We open it to the public)*
- Salle conférence pas utilisée les soirs et les fins de semaines. Venez l’utiliser! Les portes sont ouvertes À TOUS! *(Meeting room that’s not used on evenings and weekends. Come use it. The doors are open to EVERYONE)*
- La messe de l’église de la semaine est faite au foyer dans plusieurs établissements au lieu qu’à l’église. Aussi, on filme la messe à l’église, et autre évènement à l’église pour que nos résidents sentent le sentiment d’appartenance à notre communauté puisque c’est ce qu’ils faisaient avant d’être au foyer *(The weekday church service takes place in the nursing home instead of in the church. We also film church services and other events at church so that residents have the sense of belonging and participating in the community as that’s what they did before coming to the nursing home)*

## Education for nursing home staff

A sub-theme of the above, some participants suggested that it is important for caregivers to have access to education. Online training and education can be an accessible and affordable way of delivering this.

## Intergenerational exchanges and leveraging youth

Many examples were given of ways in which intergenerational programs are benefiting both the older and younger generations. These include:

- In Newfoundland, teenagers putting on bus tours for older adults
- North side library where older adults are teaching younger kids to knit
- Having younger students in Hampton to work together with younger residents in the nursing homes by planning events for the oldest residents to make them feel included
- Working with universities for day centres with students for placements, such as art therapy, music therapy, research
- Provide funding to bring everyone together to allow for innovation
- Grandson at Devon middle school. The band teacher had seniors to come in and help with the band. They are connecting with the students, which is flourishing. Enriched music program and participation, now the band is doing very well
- Seniors that had music skills going into schools to volunteer to teach them music, they were at risk of losing their music program because of funding
- Activism in the community using schools to bring children to nursing home to interview people and identifying their stories and history
- To get seniors to access children's graduation where high school students are going to the senior's home and giving back to them
- Students and seniors planning together
- On approche les jeunes à l'école secondaire pour conduire les repas « meals on wheels » (*We reach out to young people in high school to deliver Meals on Wheels*)

It was noted, however, that it can be hard to find volunteers from the younger generation as it is not part of their culture to volunteer. Some felt that young people can be powerful assets for getting things done while others thought that younger people are not as motivated to affect change.

## Specific challenges and successes of smaller, rural communities

Rural communities pose their own unique challenges. Finding volunteers can be harder in smaller areas compared to urban centres and funding and resources are often lacking. Some rural towns and villages are also experiencing population declines (younger people going out west for work). Questions were raised surrounding ways to strengthen communities in decline and how to bring back a sense of community to villages and towns. Transport is also a key issue for rural areas as many older adults will need to travel to a larger urban centre for health or service needs.

“I’ll just whip up to Fredericton on a train, but that does not happen. We have a rural province but don’t have proper connections for most of the people living in the province.”

There are, however, benefits for older adults in living in smaller communities. There can be a lot of assets in a village and the determination to get things done and fund projects. An example was also given of a program with a team of nurses and social workers who make weekly check-ups on older adults.

### **Transport and accessibility**

Transport shows up in several areas within these discussions and is seen as a specific issue in its own right by many. Transportation and accessibility are seen as key, with many arguing that we need better transport to meet the needs of older adults such as doing errands, getting to appointments and just getting out of the house.

“Wheel chair access is getting better but it is not where it should be.”

“Transportation is a huge need.”

Ideas were shared of success stories in respect to transport as well as ways to improve access to transport for older adults. As seen above, funding is an issue here. Examples include nursing homes sharing a bus with another facility, people visiting older adults if s/he has no access to transport, using private vans owned by care facilities for the public, using community vans for smaller towns, car-pooling, transferring residents using an adapted bus rather than an ambulance when the latter is not medically required.

### **Social, physical and emotional challenges of aging in place**

The challenges of aging in place were raised by several participants with particular reference to isolation. Some felt it can be isolating to have to leave your community or home when you need the extra care of a nursing home. Others suggest that it can be equally isolating to stay in your home when it is difficult to get out and meet other people. Some suggestions were given here as to ways to alleviate the isolation such as having volunteers visit the homes of older adults to share stories and assist with household issues. It is also important to prevent caregiver strain when thinking about aging in place by providing relief services to caregivers.

“We always try and look at integrating people who are in their homes and integrate them into the community.”

### **Consultation with older adults – narrative care, dialogue and intergenerational conversations**

Including older adults in the conversation is key here, several participants agreed, and it is equally important to ensure those currently without a voice are given one. Examples of how to best ensure voices are heard include:

- A multigenerational council
- Hosting conversations on ageing and invite seniors

- Inviting more seniors to attend community groups/committees – and for seniors to push to be on these
- Asking older adults what mistakes we are making and how we can do better
- Surveys
- Narrative care groups

“The people are our community. Bring different people of all ages and cultures together to discuss problems and turn them into possibilities.”

### **Technology**

It was noted by a few participants that technological innovations can be leveraged to help older adults. Skype, for example, can be used to ensure voices are heard even if a person cannot physically attend a meeting.

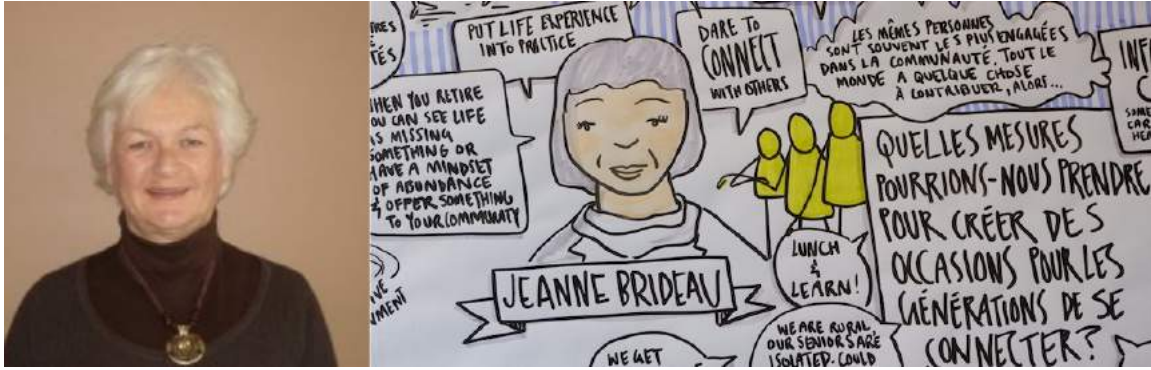
### **Recognition of social needs of older adults, not just physical**

It is important to recognize that older adults have social needs as well as purely physical health needs. “Extra-curricula” events such as attending concerts or programs to help keep people socially as well as physically active were given as examples here.

### **Poverty and social issues**

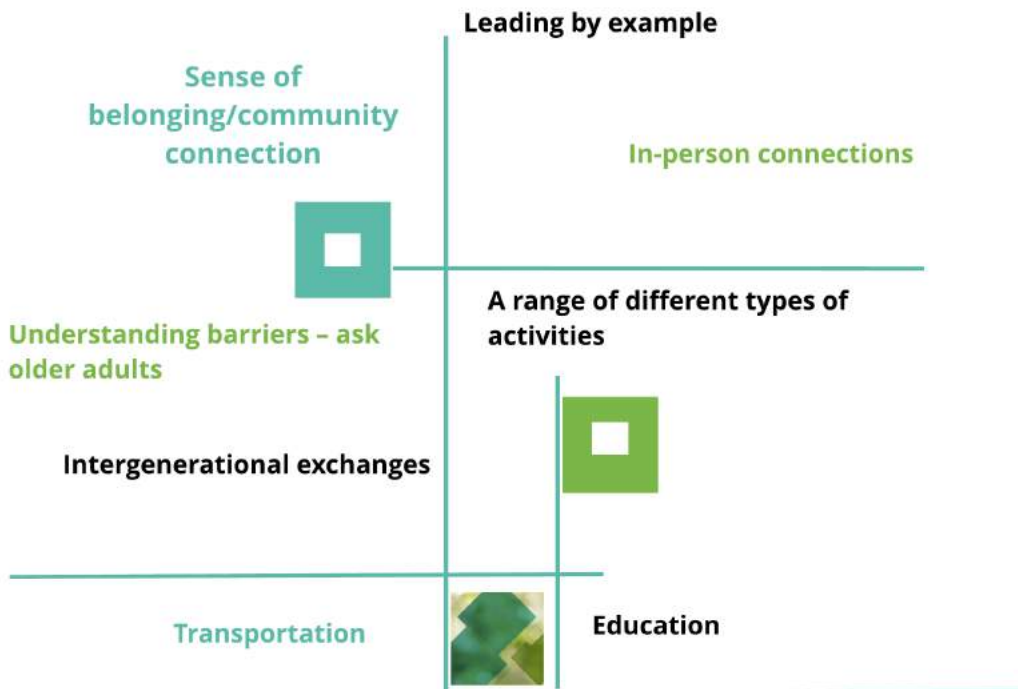
A few participants spoke to groups who are specifically targeting poverty in areas of Saint John. An example given was residents packing backpacks of food to hand out, and it was noted there are good partnerships with different sections of the community collaborating.

“It doesn’t take a lot, it can be small and it changes lives for people.”



## Conversation 4

### Debunking Ageism: Connecting the Generations with Jeanne Brideau



### Dialogue Question

**The same people are often the most engaged in the community. Everyone has something to contribute so, how do we engage those who aren't normally engaged in the community?**

This question raised many further questions as well as suggestions from participants, with some tables struggling to find answers. The notion of engagement was questioned, with some participants asking, "What does engaged mean? That you're vocal? At events? Can you engage and stay at home?" It was noted that since the last Summit there has been more engagement and also more involvement with conversations about what is happening and how to increase engagement. In addition to the questions raised many insightful suggestions and comments were offered during the dialogue.

### In-person connections

One of the most commonly cited ways to boost engagement was reaching out to people in person through face-to-face connection. Putting aside a fear of rejection is important here as many people will say no when asked to get involved, but some will say yes. Participants shared ways they had successfully reached out to people who were not yet active in the community and asked them to lunch or for a conversation about ways to become involved. Some people approached figures in the community, some went door to door, while others spread the word through events.

It was largely agreed that if we continue to ask the same groups of people to be involved they will eventually burn out. It is therefore very important to expand networks and continue to build connections.

"Take them out for dinner – 'free food' will bring people. Even though they may not have been originally interested, if you give an incentive to just listen to you, they may hear what you have to say and like it and join, or you may be rejected, it's the risk you must take."

"The key is to ask."

It is also important to remember that many older adults are not accustomed to online conversations and may not have access to social media channels. In-person conversations are therefore more familiar to them and more effective. Conversations also help us get to know people who could potentially become engaged, and personal connection is vital to the process of engagement.

"Il faut aller les chercher en allant les chercher à la maison, ça leur permet de nous connaître."  
*(We need to go looking for them in their homes – this gives them a way of getting to know us)*

### A range of different types of activities

Many participants discussed the need for a range of activities to cater for all personality types (introverts and extroverts), personal tastes (hobbies, passions) and time commitments. Finding



activities that people would actually like to be engaged in and that seem relevant to them was important here: “Open up to other forms of activities that would target other populations besides activities like weekly bingo or church.”

It was also noted that some people may be afraid to participate or may be unsure about ways in which they can help. Giving people specific tasks or inviting them to shadow other volunteers were both suggested as ways of gently bringing people on board.

As many people are concerned with time these days and having a good work-life balance it is also important to ensure there are activities and forms of engagement to fit in with different levels of time commitments.

Specific examples of different activities and ways of encouraging involvement include:

- Dogs coming in [animal therapy]
- Fundraiser breakfasts, things that draw people in unintentionally and then let them decide for themselves
- Set the end date, before you set the start date
- Engaging people through associations – even if they aren’t professionals; local businessman association, fire fighters association, etc. ... It will bring a more diverse outlook than always looking to the same group of people
- Demonstrating a task or skill would be useful so that people know what to do in the community; even making a quilt, preparing an engine, building a bird house... People like to share their own gifts, but probably don’t feel like involving a lesson plan but rather having the protection of their own talent
- Give people options, the introvert isn’t going to want to do an extroverted task or be good at it
- Potluck (if there is food, they will come), transportation for elderly
- Hold gatherings for people in places run by community (rinks, fire hall, church, etc.) instead of government-run buildings (hospital, school, etc.)
- Home-economic students/incarcerated women donating their quilting, crochet or baking to special care homes
- Writing groups and storytelling groups
- Engaged doesn’t mean that people need to be verbal and noticed; small groups like knitting groups, writing groups, walking groups can help build self esteem and confidence
- Nature walk groups, dinner and storytelling groups
- Bringing people back to their workplaces to share stories and how the work has changed since their departure into retirement. This could help current staff learn from older adults and allow older adults to network with young professionals
- Club d’âge d’or

### Intergenerational exchanges

Many of the comments in this dialogue pointed to the need for intergenerational exchanges through a variety of different formats. It was noted that volunteering was a necessary

requirement of some university programs, and more programs like this could be implemented to encourage participation. Through intergenerational programs important knowledge and life experiences can be passed down from one generation to the next. Sometimes it takes courage and innovation to establish such programs as there can be rules and regulations to navigate, but the impact is worth the effort. It is important to find common interests here as this will help a program succeed rather than forcing either generation to show up. Social media could be used to promote these types of programs to the younger generation as well as presentations in schools promoting the different opportunities for getting involved.

Specific ideas and examples of programs include:

- Showing the differences between trades/jobs from 20 years ago to today and how it has changed (share stories and connect through passions and stories)
- Children going into nursing homes to practice Christmas carols, do baking, reading programs
- Volunteering as a part of course work/curriculum in universities, high schools
- “Give back” day at community college
- Circle time with older adults, at a local library with children. That involves parents, grandparents and their children. Sharing stories
- Marysville “The ville” is a place that the community bought and uses to bring in different generations of people in different natural habitats
- Older men working in woodshops with younger girls and boys
- Get the kids into the natural environment of the seniors – going to the pier, farming – taking them to the senior’s natural habitat
- Have students in school teach older adults how to use present-day technology so they are better able to connect with those around them, younger family members and the community
- Even something like raking leaves and going out on a fun outing – in this scenario they are giving back to the seniors and spending time together
- Educational institutions should invite older adults into their classrooms to educate children on ageism. By doing this older adults can share stories
- Getting more co-op students in high school. Not sure about volunteering in the beginning at nursing homes but after they are there they want to come back
- “Literacy Elf” – seniors support children to read
- Programme Grand frère/grande sœur – mais avec les résidents. Non seulement au foyer, mais aussi pour les gens qui sont à la maison (intergénérationnel) (*Big Brother/Big Sister program, but with residents. Not only for those in care homes but also for those aging at home (intergenerational)*)
- Jardinage intergénérationnel (*intergenerational gardening*)
- Pour faire un réseau des guides français pour la galerie Beaverbrook à Fredericton (*Establishing a network of francophone tour guides at the Beaverbrook gallery in Fredericton*)
- Program in Holland or other country for students that live in homes with older adults with free rent but need to be good neighbours (we are too caught up with regulation standards that stop us from these activities)

It was also noted that while intergenerational programs have a lot of merit it is also important for seniors to have interaction with their own peer group.

### Leading by example

Leading by example is seen as an excellent way to promote engagement as people will follow once they see a friend or colleague getting involved. Intentionally asking people to bring a friend can be helpful in this respect as well as looking for the leaders or influencers in the community as they will naturally inspire others to step forward. As some people are afraid to try something new or do things alone, leading by example is a way to make others feel comfortable enough to take a chance and get involved.

“Set up structure so that volunteers who want to be involved can talk to friends and family and it can trickle down from there.”

“We have to speak out and ask. Even if we assume someone does not want to get involved, it never hurts to say something like... Hey, I am going here to do this, why don't you join me, it will be fun! They may just need a boost to get them started.”

“Cibler les champions dans la communauté, cibler les leaders pour influencer les gens moins engagés puisque, souvent, les gens ont peur ou sont gênés. Ça ne prend qu'une fois qu'ils s'engagent et ensuite ils seront peut-être plus engagés. [...] Être l'exemple pour le bénévolat toi-même.” (*Target the champions and leaders in the community so that they will influence those who are less engaged as, often, people are afraid or hesitant. It only takes them one instance of getting involved and that might be enough to encourage future engagement. [...] Be the example for others of volunteering*)

### Sense of belonging/community connection

When people have a sense of belonging and connection to the community they are more inclined to engage and volunteer. There was some debate as to whether it is easier or more difficult to feel a sense of belonging in rural areas compared to urban. Community involvement was also suggested as a way for newer people to the community to meet others and feel at home. Becoming involved in the community can be empowering for people and offer a sense of purpose as well as helping people to feel welcomed, accepted and embraced.

“No matter what endeavour you're in, if a person feels involved they're more apt to work within the community.”

“Maybe these people have a lack of sense of belonging – if they felt they belonged to their community, they might be more inclined to participate in community activities. So, start events that these people would like to go to and this would allow them to foster connections, 'friends' and then they would start going to more things together.”

“Trouver des façons pour que tout le monde se sente accepté.” (*Find ways to help everyone feel accepted*)

## Understanding barriers – ask older adults

More research needs to be done in order to find out why some people become engaged while others don't.

“We need to find out what the barriers are that make them not want to get involved.”

While sometimes there needs to be an acceptance that not everyone will become engaged, at other times, it may be a question of asking questions differently to ensure everyone feels they can express themselves and have a voice. A better understanding of the issues can be reached through asking people. An example was given here of a meeting where Post-it notes were used to invite ideas – everyone could write their thoughts quietly on paper so that those who do not usually want to speak up had a chance to voice their opinions. Innovative ideas such as this can help everyone participate.

“When developing plans for Seniors, don't forget to involve them as Care Partners.”

## Transportation

A small number of comments suggested that issues with transport can prevent people from becoming engaged in their community and participating in events. Older adults can become isolated, especially in winter months and/or in rural areas. Other practical needs such as providing transport to those with dementia can be obstacles to engagement.

“Transportation is a big issue.”

“We have seniors that are isolated and don't get out as much. They can't hop on a bus and there are no general stores anymore, unless someone takes them out.”

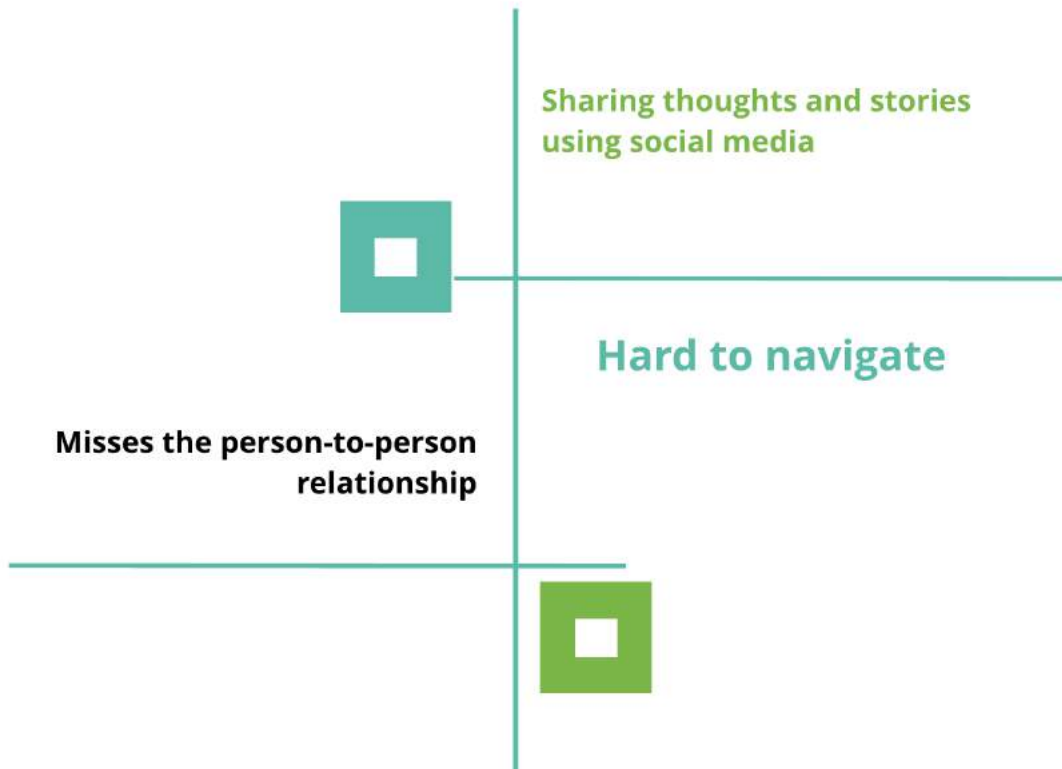
## Education

Educating people as to the types of opportunities available was noted by some participants as important to overcoming a lack of engagement. Information sessions, a town crier, apps (such as “V-Harmony”), live streaming videos at the doctor's office or grocery store, announcements in church, pictures and visual representations were all given as examples of ways to share information and raise awareness of engagement possibilities.



## Conversation 5

### Does Technology Scare You with Don Hemmings



#### Dialogue Question:

#### What about using your technology challenges you the most?

Only a very small number of participants offered responses to the discussion question due to time restraints.

#### Hard to navigate

Participants shared that the internet, and technology generally, seems a great resource but it is hard to navigate and understand, which can lead to frustrations for older adults. It can also be difficult to know where to go for support in this area. One suggestion given here was the creation of more opportunities for older adults to attend classes on understanding technology which would help them feel more connected and gain confidence. Technology was also connected to storytelling:

“Basic human need other than food/water is.... Being heard! This is where storytelling is so important.”

#### Misses the person-to-person relationship

It was noted that “we cannot feel or see emotions” when communicating through social media or other types of new technology. The person-to-person interactions and relationships are therefore missed. Similarly, as one participant noted, by “liking” organizations and initiatives on social media it is easy to not be engaged in the community as you can stay home and use social media instead of getting out and engaging with people.

#### Dialogue Question:

#### How have you used technology to share your stories?

#### Sharing thoughts and stories using social media

Participants offered that they have used social media to share family moments with distant loved ones, to share stories and to raise awareness of important issues.

“One of the most basic human needs is to be heard. Sharing your thoughts on social media could help build confidence if what you are saying receives praise.”

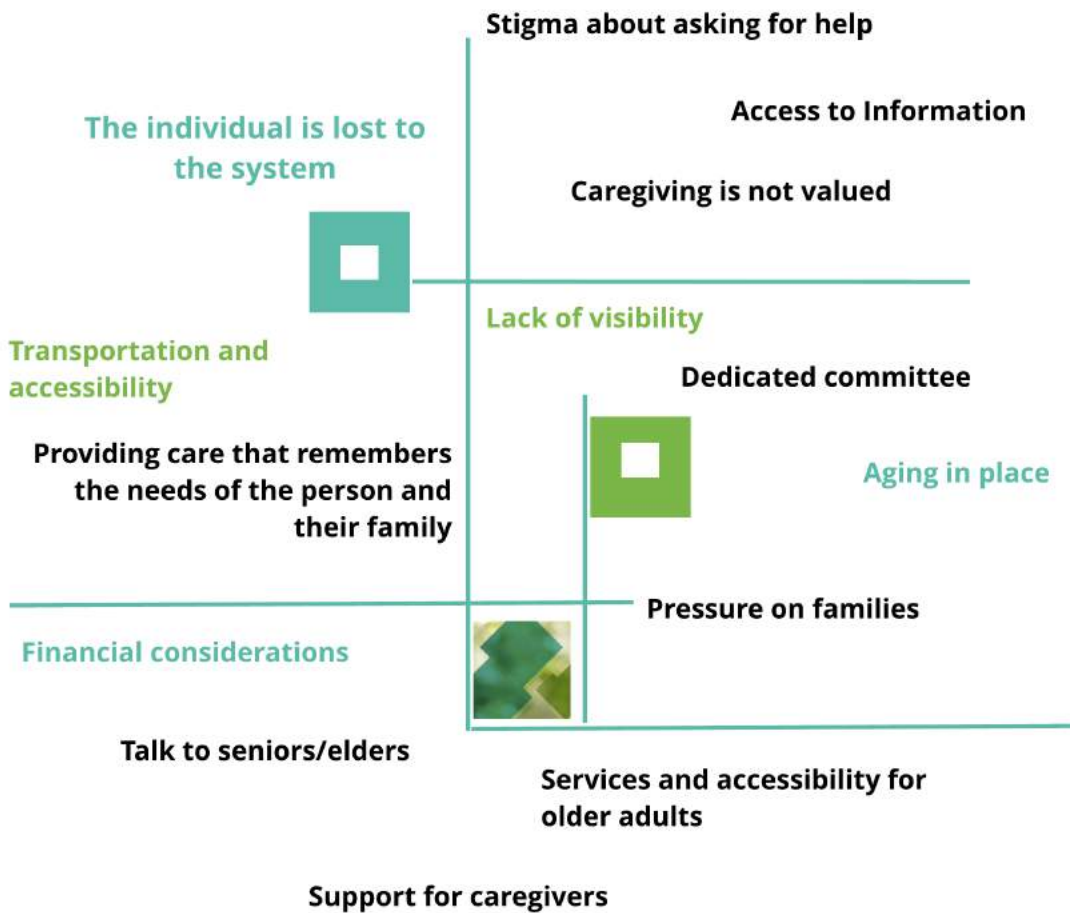
It was also noted that technology can be used to bring awareness and understanding to issues affecting older adults, and that the creation of social networks can help them feel connected to their communities and allow them to plan opportunities. Note the nuance here in that in the question above, social media is also seen to be a barrier to personal interaction in that by liking things from the comfort of your living room you don't feel the need to leave the house.





## Conversation 6

### Informal Caregiving and Aging in Place: Panel Presentation



### Dialogue Question:

#### What are you learning about informal care giving and aging in place?

The dialogue for this question was less upbeat and positive than for other dialogue questions. Many participants expressed frustrations with the system and shared issues and problems they see with informal care giving and aging in place.

#### The individual is lost to the system

The most frequently cited comments relate to the fact that the individual often gets lost in a hard-to-navigate system. It was commented that if you don't fit a specific model you become invisible and it is very difficult to get the help needed. Social workers were mentioned several times in this respect. Two specific issues were noted – individuals are often referred to as “cases” rather than people and 15-minute assessments are not an accurate way to understand a person's situation. It was also noted that social workers are often overworked which feeds into these issues.

“Social worker talking about ‘cases’ but what about the individual?”

“How can you make an assessment off of knowing someone for 15 minutes and what if that person is having an off day, no one to speak up for them, how can there be an accurate assessment if they don't really know the person?”

As everyone's needs are different it was suggested one set of rules is not a good way to address needs and issues. Currently, there also seems to be a lack of appreciation for how fragile and vulnerable people are.

“Karen's job [helping those navigate services] should not be needed. It is because the system is broken.”

“If someone is lost in the system, the system is the problem.”

“The system is built for the system managers not the people using it.”

Participants shared that there seemed to be barriers on every corner and if a caregiver needs a weekend off, it is extremely difficult to know who to call or where to get help. It is therefore important to understand what caregivers need and create a system that is less difficult to navigate in both urban and rural areas.

#### Providing care that remembers the needs of the person and their family

Connected to the theme above, it was also commented that when providing care, it is important to remember the emotional and physical needs of the person and their family. When a couple is separated due to needing care, it can be very difficult for them, for example. Also, sometimes, there are expectations that family members and informal caregivers can carry out tasks that professionals are trained to do (changing a feeding tube was given here as an example).

## Lack of visibility

A lack of visibility was apparent in two related areas. First, although it seems there are projects and initiatives happening it is hard to see what exactly is happening and whether changes will be long-lived. It was noted that changes can take time and that when politicians change “we are back at the starting point”. Second, many caregivers do not know what support is available to them as information is not shared well enough or, as seen above, the system is so hard to navigate. Lots of information is learned inadvertently rather than easily accessed, and participants feel there needs to be a better way to share information with informal caregivers. One suggestion given was an online hub for the province, which would be cost-effective and far-reaching.

“People need to know about the services in order to use them but can’t use services if there is no information.”

“Caregivers don’t know what is available because the system is so hard to navigate.”

“Caregivers are struggling significantly due to a lack of support and not knowing what to do or where to start.”

“No support, no literacy, too much paperwork, etc.”

“Not many people know of the relief care beds available at some hospitals. Need to get the word out so people know, making it a sustainable service.”

## Caregiving is not valued

The role of caregiving often falls to women and is not valued work. Many implications of this as well as causes were given during the dialogues. On the one hand, informal caregivers are not seen as “caregivers” because they are not recognized by the health system as professionals; yet, on the other hand, informal caregiving is critical – it is the “backbone of caregiving in our province”. The role is seen as very demanding and can become overwhelming, taking a major toll on the caregivers in the form of stress, anxiety, depression, financial strain, etc.

It is therefore extremely important that the province recognizes caregivers and also recognizes when a caregiver needs help. At that point, help and support need to be easy to find and access.

“Who do you call for help??”

## Aging in place

Many felt that if given the choice most older people would prefer to age in place as their home is where memories are made and they feel more comfortable in their own community. It was suggested that newer, innovative models of housing are required for older adults, and it is equally important to start thinking about the “in between”, such as following Scandinavian

models for those with dementia so loved ones can stay together. Consultation with older adults when designing facilities was suggested here as important to ensuring needs are met.

### Pressure on families

There is a lot of pressure on family members to become informal caregivers to a parent or spouse as they age, and often an expectation that they will take on the role. However, many family members live far away from each other these days and are unable to take on the role of caregiver.

### Transportation and accessibility

As seen in other Conversations also, transportation and accessibility play an important role in caregiving and aging in place. The winter months can be difficult due to weather conditions and higher power bills for those on a low or fixed income and without adequate transportation or an age-friendly city or community it can be difficult to get out of the house.

### Stigma about asking for help

There can be a stigma and shame about needing help, both from the older adult him/herself and the caregiver. Caregivers can feel guilty that there is no-one to look after their parents or spouse when they need time to themselves and older adults can feel shame about losing independence.

### Financial considerations

Financial considerations are also important when thinking about caregiving and aging in place. The example of Shannex was given here – “it is shiny, welcoming, new BUT there is a waitlist to get in and financial [strain]”.

“La famille n’a pas accès à l’aide financière. Il n’y a pas de logique si tu veux aider quelqu’un.”  
(*The family does not have access to financial support. There is no logic in this if you’re looking to help someone*)

### Dialogue Question:

**What actions can we, as individuals and as communities, take to enhance informal caregiving and aging in place in NB?**

### Services and accessibility for older adults

Making cities and communities more accessible year-round was cited as very important here as well as ensuring good transit so that older adults can get around (taxi vouchers, free buses on

Wednesdays, well-maintained sidewalks, reserved parking, etc.). Other suggestions in this category include:

- Home visits from doctors
- Day cares for older adults, a centre for caregivers to bring their loved ones so that they are not caring for them just on their own
- Social groups for seniors (bingo, swimming, etc.)
- Services for the hearing and vision impaired (educating communities)
- Accessible apartments
- Big brother, little brother

### **Talk to seniors/elders**

Talking to older adults and inviting them to be part of home care committees is seen as important in order to ensure they feel valued and to know what they need in order to age in place. It is equally important to recognize that leaving their home can also mean losing their sense of identity.

“Take the time to talk with elders and have meaningful conversations to show that they are important.”

### **Support for caregivers**

Providing better support for family caregivers is important as it shows this work is valued and it provides much-needed rest for the caregiver. It is essential that someone takes the time to listen to the needs of the caregiver, and that both time and money are invested to help them.

“Need a caregiver for the caregivers.”

### **Access to Information**

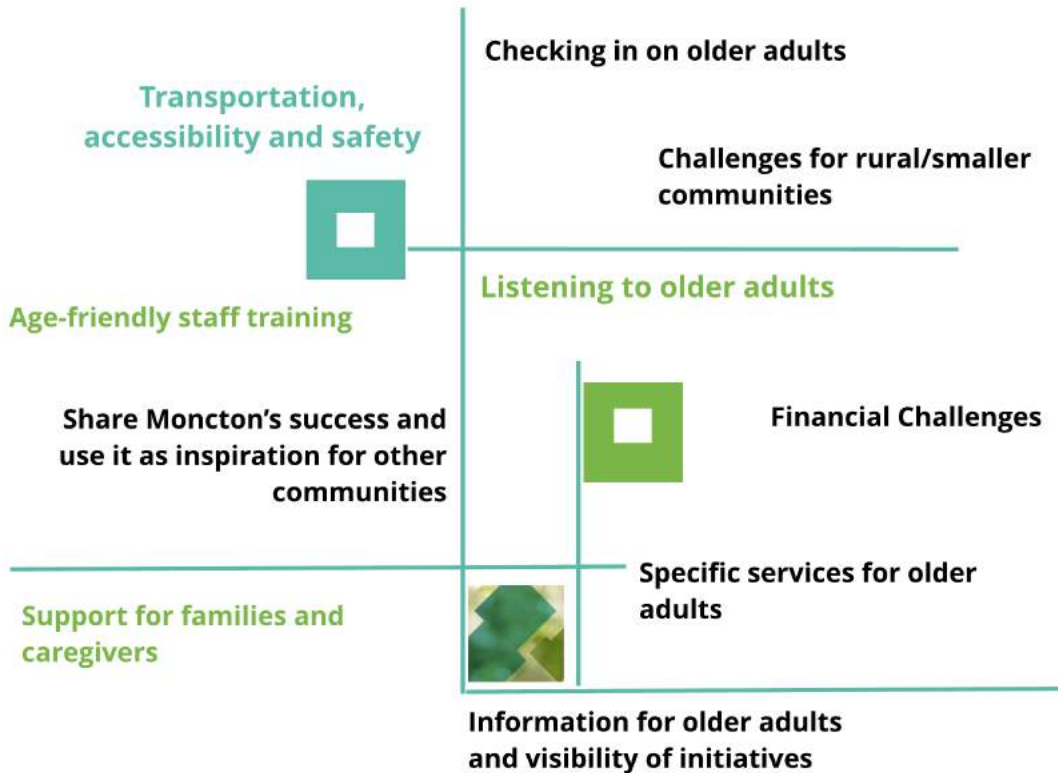
As seen above, it can be difficult to access information. As individuals and communities, we can spread awareness and educate members of the public on the benefits of home care, and we can ensure materials are reader friendly and push for better access to information.

### **Dedicated committee**

As seen with the Moncton age-friendly model, it was suggested to have a dedicated committee to focus on aging in place and rally for government support and community engagement. There was also the suggestion to bring together integrated teams of occupational therapists, counselors, social workers, nurses, doctors, etc. to discuss in-home care and aging.



## Conversation 7 Moncton's Age-Friendly Community Initiative with Flora Dell





### Dialogue Question:

#### What has been done in Moncton that could be replicated in other parts of the province?

Overall, participants were inspired by Moncton's focus on age-friendliness and were excited about ways in which to replicate it. Specific examples, grouped by theme, are given below. The speaker, Flora Dell, was also a participant in the group dialogues and commented that, "a lot of our older adults have come out and become more a part of our community and we are finally seeing that. Creating a space for them to come out and feel welcome. There is a lot more alertness happening for older adults and addressing their issues." In general it was noted that a community needs to be inclusive to older adults to combat loneliness or a lowered sense of self-esteem. Flora's hard work and energy was well appreciated around the tables.

"You can't say no to Flora Dell." / "We need more Flora."

"Older adults will become a vibrant part of the community if you allow them (create the space and invite them)."

"There is no expiration date on the value or wisdom from an adult."

### Transportation, accessibility and safety

The majority of feedback to this dialogue question relates to the connected themes of transport, accessibility and safety. It was noted that many of these ideas are free or a low-cost solution and relatively easy to implement – the impact of these simple changes, however, is significant. Participants commented that it is often a case of being aware and mindful of the issues affecting older adults. Fredericton, for example, has many lovely walking trails but they are not very "age-friendly" – they lack sufficient lighting and benches. Similarly, local businesses may not be accessible to older adults or those who use a wheelchair although the "shop local" initiative is one that many older adults would like to embrace. Many of the suggested initiatives explored here can also benefit other members of the community, such as those pushing strollers, and can lead to a healthier population in general. The winter months can be hard for older adults – the above initiatives along with good snow clearing of sidewalks has a major impact and allows everyone to get outside in the winter.

Specific examples given include:

- More benches (in parks and in town/city centres)
- Free bus rides on a Wednesday (+ store promotions for seniors on same day)
- Good public transit, including request stops and ramps on buses
- Designated parking spaces for seniors
- Well-maintained sidewalks (that are cleared in winter), including those with a lower curb
- Accessible walking trails
- Good lighting
- Snow removal
- Fitness parks with equipment for all ages

## Listening to older adults

It was noted that often the needs of older adults are ignored and acknowledging that they exist and are part of the solution is a positive step forward. This can be achieved through listening to them to understand their needs. While new technology can help older adults share stories, the “online world” can also marginalize them, especially when they don’t have advocates to help them or listen to them. Through consultation and conversations there is an opportunity for everyone to feel part of the community and tell their stories. It was equally noted that it is important to listen in order to understand the world older adults grew up in and gain an historical perspective. Some participants commented that if anyone is looking for places to find seniors in order to have these conversations, you just need to look in Tim Horton’s or MacDonald’s in the morning until around 11.30am: “They have found a network and meet there almost everyday and share information and after that they leave. They can be apart of the solution for the city.”

“Ask the seniors what it is they need to make their city more senior friendly – they’re the ones who need this, they’re the ones who notice what makes living in their city challenging... they’re the ones with the answers and we’re the ones who need to be asking them the questions.”

“Working together is the best way to build and promote strengths to build a senior friendly community.”

## Share Moncton’s success and use it as inspiration for other communities

Many participants expressed their admiration for Moncton’s success and hoped that the information and learning from Moncton would be spread across the province.

“Moncton jumped ahead of other communities, working on developing age-friendly communities.”

“Everything should be replicated and even more!”

Moncton can act as inspiration for other parts of New Brunswick to work toward creating an age-friendly community. Initiatives such as “A Day for the Ages” have already begun in some places. Although there is much to learn from Moncton, every community is different and has its unique challenges so needs to develop a form of action to best suit its population.

Participants were particularly impressed with the fact that the City had accepted the age-friendly focus and incorporated it into government policy. It was suggested that other areas could build committees specifically to focus on this and make change happen.

“If they did it there, then we can do it here.”

## Financial Challenges

A smaller number of comments related to the financial implications of age-friendly initiatives and changes. On the one hand, it was noted that age friendliness is hard when there is no funding, and on the other hand, that it is interesting to see a positive financial impact of the changes and initiatives Flora spoke about.

“Economically beneficial for communities to be age friendly, when seniors are looking for a place to retire.”

Some participants suggested it is important to think of older adults as an asset rather than a burden and to remember the value of older citizens who have a lot to offer. Although financial considerations are important, it was noted that it's not always about the money – it's about the willingness to get things done and find solutions.

“C'est des initiatives qui ne coute pas chère à la municipalité... Pour les arrêts d'autobus, la demande au conducteur de faieres des arrêts spéciaux pour les ainés.” (*It's initiatives that don't cost the City a lot of money... For bus stops, it's asking the driver to make a special stop for seniors*)

“You could replicate all that has been done in Moncton elsewhere in the province, as long as resources were accessible.”

## Age-friendly staff training

A few comments related to specific training for staff so they are more aware of the needs of older adults and/or those with visual, hearing or physical disabilities. Carrying bags to the car or greeting people appropriately were cited here as examples.

“Orientation of employees how to handle, greet and assist seniors is an AMAZING idea.”

## Information for older adults and visibility of initiatives

There are many great initiatives happening and it is important to ensure they are visible and older adults know about them. A senior-friendly logo is one way to make seniors feel welcome and show which places are age-friendly in a city or community. It was also suggested that as people start thinking about retirement they could receive training or an orientation in what's available to them.

“So many good things happening but we don't hear about them.”

## Support for families and caregivers

Some comments during this discussion related to the importance of having resources for the families of older adults and support for caregivers to prevent burnout and strain.

“Caregiver should be recognized from a governmental stand point.”

### Checking in on older adults

A couple of participants noted that it is important to have a system to check in on older adults during storms. Also, it is important to know what medications somebody is taking, including oxygen, so that if somebody finds a person in an unsafe state they can quickly identify their needs or know of any precautions.

### Specific services for older adults

A few comments spoke to specific or targeted initiatives that are happening or participants would like to see happen:

- Grocery stores should have access to a dietician
- The WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities – must follow the WHO guidelines
- Home-First Strategy: assist senior’s independence to stay in their own community/home
- We need to learn how to engage with seniors who are not from here (immigrants)
- Immigrants have different cultural differences and this impacts their aging experience – we must learn how to adjust our policies and practices for this

### Challenges for rural/smaller communities

Two participants noted that it can be challenging in rural or smaller communities to find a volunteer base to make initiatives happen.