



Key Learnings from ‘Seniors of Canada’: A Community Project Aimed to Disrupt Ageism

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Abstract

Visual representations of aging have historically relied upon binarized clichés: idealized youthfulness versus frailty and illness. To challenge these oversimplified depictions, graduate students developed a community outreach project titled ‘Seniors of Canada’. The aim of this project was twofold: (1) share images and stories of people in later life; and (2) challenge dominant narratives and stereotypes of aging. In this note, we outline the prevailing discourse of what aging ‘looks like’, how we collected stories and images, and implications for knowledge mobilization and research in Canada. This article highlights insights gained since the inception of the project, including three key learnings: (1) *Building bridges across academia and community*, (2) *Intergenerational connection and digital tools*, and (3) *The power of visual storytelling*. We provide a practical overview of a successful knowledge mobilization/community outreach project and showcase the power of bridging academia and community for social change.

Résumé

Les représentations visuelles du vieillissement ont toujours reposé sur des clichés binarisés : jeunesse idéalisée par opposition à fragilité et maladie. Pour remettre en question ces représentations simplifiées, des étudiants de cycles supérieurs ont mis au point un projet de sensibilisation communautaire intitulé « Seniors of Canada ». L’objectif de ce projet était double : (1) partager des images et des témoignages de personnes âgées; et (2) remettre en question les récits et stéréotypes dominants sur le vieillissement. Dans cette note, nous décrivons le discours dominant sur ce à quoi ressemble le vieillissement, ainsi que notre démarche de collecte de témoignages et d’images, et les implications de notre projet pour la mobilisation des connaissances et la recherche au Canada. Ce document met en lumière les connaissances acquises depuis le début du projet, notamment trois thèmes d’apprentissage clés : (1) la création de liens entre le monde universitaire et la communauté, (2) les liens intergénérationnels et les outils numériques et (3) le pouvoir de la narration visuelle. Nous donnons un aperçu pratique d’un projet réussi de mobilisation des connaissances et de sensibilisation de la communauté, et montrons le pouvoir des liens entre le monde universitaire et la communauté dans les efforts de changement social.

Introduction

Human aging is embedded in social contexts and shaped by social and relational factors across the life course. Ageism, prejudice, or discrimination against people based on age most often involves older people (Butler, 1980; Mikton, de la Fuente-Núñez, Officer, & Krug, 2021). Negative age-related stereotypes have the potential to significantly impact the lives of older people. Age-related stereotypes can be deeply rooted and reaching old age can be embraced or rejected in different cultures (Donlon, Ashman, & Levy, 2005). In response, innovative initiatives to address and disrupt stereotypes of aging are becoming increasingly visible and relevant. These have served to further progress the anti-ageism movement (Burnes et al., 2019).

The presence of ageism, the pervasive negative stereotyping of older people, and contemporary conditions, including technological advancements and COVID19, expand the possibility of increasing incidents of intergenerational conflict (Woodman, 2020). A ‘generational conflict’ narrative has been discussed in the press and has even been the subject of discussion across the world (Ayalon et al., 2022). The contemporary popular imagination, reflected in the news and social media, has accepted this concept of intergenerational conflict, and is acting on it (Hatzifalalithis, 2022). From a global perspective, the World Health Organization (WHO) in (2021) released a report on ageism emphasizing the critical importance of disrupting age-based stereotypes and involving older persons in any research/projects on aging. The WHO also

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developed a toolkit that was designed for their global campaign (integral to the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing [2021–2030]) that included intergenerational educational activities to disrupt ageism.

Simultaneously, national government priorities aimed at addressing aging-related challenges echo the need for knowledge mobilization (KM) in their research mandates (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2023).¹ In addition to national-level funding opportunities encouraging community-engaged research to promote inclusion, participation, and well-being in later life (see New Horizons for Seniors Program), some Canadian funding agencies require awardees to strategically collaborate with community partners and have become a requirement for government-supported research funding.

Given the complexity of the aging process and its often-oversimplified representation in various media, it is suggested that interventions take a multidisciplinary and community-engaged approach to affect greater change and impact. One example is the student-led *Seniors of Canada* project launched at McMaster University. The aim of this project was threefold: (1) share images and stories of people in later life; (2) challenge dominant narratives and stereotypes of aging by leveraging digital media; and (3) break down barriers across academic and community silos. The purpose of this research note is to share valuable insights gained through the process of launching and facilitating the *Seniors of Canada* project. We begin with a brief overview of the traditions within gerontology and our perspective, ageism in a contemporary context, and then move to discuss visual representations of later life. Later, we discuss the genesis of *Seniors of Canada*, including the inspiration to launch a community-engaged project on aging, as well as how the project has evolved over time. We also consider several benefits gained by leveraging digital media to initiate conversations about later life. Finally, we speak to the importance of KM and meaningful engagement including the potential to transform representations of aging in the Canadian context.

Critical perspective

As many critical gerontologists have previously indicated, the oversimplified and cliché representations of aging do not accurately reflect the heterogeneity of experience and can contribute to harmful outcomes (Bytheway, 2003). A critical gerontological perspective on aging considers the taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions and describes a broad spectrum of theoretical interests. The field aims to understand the relationship between structure and experience (Baars & Phillipson, 2013), social relations, political, and economic conditions (Estes, Biggs, & Phillipson, 2003), the interpretive (Cole, Ray, & Kastenbaum, 2010), and cultural interpretations of aging and later life (Twigg & Martin, 2015). Drawing on a critical perspective, images are powerful and can impact how older adults view and understand the aging process (Featherstone & Hepworth, 2005).

At the individual level, older people may internalize stereotypes and/or engage in negative self-stereotyping as a result of viewing and consuming media permeated with negative age-based stereotypes (Levy, 1999). Intersectional ageism may contribute to the

exclusion (Weldrick & Canham, 2023) and ‘invisibility’ (Hurd Clarke & Griffin, 2008) of older people in society. This exclusion and invisibility may contribute to harmful outcomes such as loneliness and or social isolation (Weldrick & Grenier, 2018), reduced well-being among older people (Lyons et al., 2018), and weakened bonds across multiple generations within a community (Buffel, Rémillard-Boilard, & Phillipson, 2015).

Ageism and COVID-19

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen evidence of openly ageist discourses, which complicate our interpretations and representations of later life (Jimenez-Sotomayor, Gomez-Moreno, & Soto-Perez-de-Celis, 2020; Meisner et al., 2020). Ageism and notions of intergenerational conflict can be seen in phrases such as #BoomerRemover or #OKBoomer that are often accompanied by memes on social media platforms (Meisner, 2021). Internationally, health authorities and governments are warning older people that they are at a higher risk of more serious and possible fatal illness associated with COVID-19 (Xiang et al., 2021).

These simplified messages suggest that age is the primary risk factor for COVID-19, when in fact data reveal that chronological age itself is not a risk factor. Rather, additional factors (e.g., chronic health conditions) can increase the risk for all adults (Fraser et al., 2020). According to the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) (2021), many factors influence rates of COVID-19 and deaths caused by the virus, including social determinants of health (SDOH) such as status, age, sex, race, ethnicity, economic status, location, and occupation.² The high death rates among older people – especially those in nursing homes and long-term care – are, in part, related to an increase in the number of medical conditions (multiple comorbidities) as people age, including cardiovascular and pulmonary disease, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic conditions.

Research has shown that the more comorbidities a person in long-term care is experiencing, the more likely they would be excluded from health care and not provided with equitable access to health care, often labelled as ‘untreatable’, and thus, ‘expendable’ (Bravo-Segal & Villar, 2020; Jimenez-Sotomayor et al., 2020). Older people are considered to be more expensive and valued as less than their younger counterparts. Furthermore, there have been reports of older people being abandoned in care homes as well as issues around accessing vaccinations in care homes (Lagacé, Doucet, Dangoisse, & Bergeron, 2021). The representation of older people in media discourse surrounding COVID-19, discussions, and commentaries about the rations of care have framed older people as disadvantaged and more expendable than people in other age groups (Bravo-Segal & Villar, 2020; Jimenez-Sotomayor et al., 2020). In fact, some media coverage had gone so far as to employ language suggesting that the ‘death’ of older people was not as important to the ‘loss of life’ of their younger counterparts (Haffower, 2020). These sentiments were echoed in news images depicting older people as isolated victims, often in dehumanized representations wherein their faces were not displayed (Martikainen & Sakki, 2021).

¹The Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) defines KM as “the reciprocal and complementary flow and uptake of research knowledge between researchers, knowledge brokers and knowledge users – both within and beyond academia – in such a way that may benefit users and create positive impacts within Canada and/ or internationally.”

²The WHO report on Ageism mentions the importance of how SDOH can link to overall ageing processes and experiences. Ageist practices exclude older persons from equitable access to SDOH (WHO, 2021).

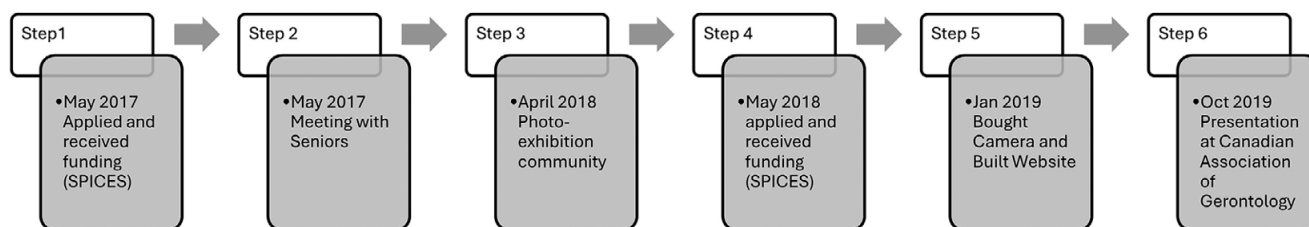


Figure 1. Steps and timeline of project development.

Visual representations of later life

Studying images and representations of aging across the life course of all age groups can be valuable and productive, particularly as life in the twenty-first century is saturated in visual content and images (Featherstone & Wernick, 2005). Rose (2001) posits the value of images in our culture, and states, ‘...the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies’ (p. 6). Furthermore, images can provide insight into the values, norms, and standards within a given culture. Images are constructed (Rose, 2001) and are often assembled to convey certain messages (Featherstone & Wernick, 2005). However, the embedded meaning of images may not always be immediately clear to the observer. The fact that images are *constructed* means that images can be *de-constructed* to better elucidate the meanings embedded within them (Featherstone & Wernick, 2005).

Foundational work in this area has found that older people are often represented in one of two ways: in positions of decline and/or frailty, or in positions of virility and success (Bytheway, 2003; Featherstone & Hepworth, 2005). This fits well with debates in gerontology surrounding the previously dominating decline ideology and the more recent narrative of ‘successful aging’ (Katz & Calasanti, 2015). These debates suggest that representations of aging bodies are often situated across a binary of either positive and negative images, the promotion of optimal health and longevity, and ageist cultures and industries. Richards, Warren, and Gott (2012) solicited two professional photographers to create what they say are ‘honest’ images of older age. The photographers aimed to create images evoking reminiscent and humorous qualities, respectively, yet these images still perpetuated problematic representation of old age and aging. These trends present aging as a crystalized vision, one in which nuance is missing. The tension that occurs in the absence of fluidity calls for the creation of a space within which binaries can be disrupted, a space within which a holistic and cohesive perspective can grow and expand, which our project aims to undertake.

What is seniors of Canada? Genesis of a project

Seniors of Canada was funded by the Student Proposals for Intellectual Community and Engaged Scholarship (SPICES) (administered by the School of Graduate Studies at McMaster University). The SPICES programme supports new initiatives driven by graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to build community, address a need, and create opportunities on campus or beyond. These funds are not a call for research proposals. The aim of SPICES is, as is noted in their objectives, to support graduate students make community difference through outreach.³

³We had consulted with the funding board (SPICES) within the School of Graduate Studies including the legal team at McMaster University about the

ethical implications and were given the appropriate suggestions given the context of the project and eligibility of funding (not be about research). They provided us with a template of a ‘waiver/release form for photographs, video, and voice recordings’ that we adapted for our project. In this release form, we had contributors grant permission to the project (“Seniors of Canada”) and its representatives to photograph and otherwise capture their image and story and to document that they have read the form and waive any right to the use of the images or other material. They also signed this release form which outlined how Seniors of Canada had all licensing/rights to the images and stories including how these could be distributed as we saw fit.

Seniors of Canada was developed with the purpose of sharing images and stories of experiences related to aging. As early career gerontologists, our goal was to spark productive dialogue about both aging and ageism, and work to mitigate age-related stereotypes while shining a light on the diverse, everyday lives of older people in Canada. Inspired after a project titled ‘Humans of New York’ (a photo-story project that aims to showcase the diversity of everyday New-Yorkers through social media), we set out to capture and share photos and stories of people to move beyond the picturesque ideals often promoted in the media and provide people with a glimpse into the lives of seniors in Canada today. Students leading the project were volunteers and all part of the Gilbrea student group at the Gilbrea Centre for Studies in Aging at McMaster University with an interest in aging. The students are supported by and work closely with staff and faculty affiliated with the centre, the aim of which is to support research, teaching, and outreach. This project was not developed as a research project, rather Seniors of Canada was and has continued to be a community outreach project.

The project began with a meeting of five local seniors to gather feedback on the project concept, including the project name and goals (see Figure 1). This advisory community provided valuable feedback that strongly shaped the advancement of the project. We held meetings that helped identify specifics of the project, preferred mediums to mobilize content, and the adoption and endorsement of the designation ‘seniors’. The older persons involved in the project explicitly adopted and endorsed the use of the designation ‘seniors’, accepting its use despite public contention around its meaning. In our meetings, seniors felt as though this term provided them with a legitimization of their status, privilege, and value that they deemed important. Since then, the project has grown but has maintained the goal of representing older people the way they want to be represented. Upon launching, the project team attended many community events to discuss ideas with older people from across the city of Hamilton, and widely distributed a call for contributors to various community centres and organizations. These organizations included seniors’ centres, long-term care and retirement homes, religious groups, community centres, and cultural groups across Hamilton. This process in turn led to information about the project being shared via word of mouth and social media. Seniors in

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the area contacted the project team to express interest in sharing their stories.

The next step in the project's development involved meeting with several of the self-identified seniors who had expressed an interest in contributing to record their stories and capture photographs. We collaborated with approximately 20 seniors. In most instances, meetings would take place between two project team members and the older person.⁴ Meetings would take place at a time and location of their choosing (e.g., home, church, recreation centre, etc.). Most older people suggested a location that was meaningful to them in some way, which would typically allow for the project team to photograph people while engaging in something they enjoyed (e.g., walking their dog, volunteering). At the beginning of each meeting, project team members would communicate that despite being students, the Seniors of Canada project was not related to research, and that the intention was to share photographs and stories of their lives and experiences. This was aligned with the intention of the project and the aim of the SPICES programme.

In conversation, we would ask questions about their lives and their perspectives on aging. Conversations were loose and often covered topics of interest to the contributor. At some point during the meeting, we would take several photographs. During our meeting, one team member would be collecting detailed notes on their computer and would compile a story or notes. At the end of the meeting, we would discuss with the individual which pictures and direct quotes or stories they approved of us sharing.⁵ For some contributors, this happened more formally with them sending us an edited document, while others approved after the meeting. The stories were the words of the contributors and not the Seniors of Canada team members. All conversations and notes were later approved by the contributors themselves who would modify in consultation with team members as they saw fit.⁶ These quotes and photographs were then distributed on our social media accounts and publicly accessible website to reach a wide audience. For examples of these stories, see www.seniorsofcanada.org. During this time, we have gathered images and stories of seniors in southern Ontario and have since amassed over 600 followers on our social media accounts.

The final goal was to showcase our project in a free and accessible photo exhibit event in Hamilton, where the public was welcome to come and see the everyday lives and stories of people in their community. We had the opportunity to host over five photo/story showcase events over the course of the two years. We presented our work at multiple community-wide photo exhibits, including but not limited to local breweries, public libraries, recreation centres, and annual events such as the 'Senior of the Year Awards'.⁷ Our 100+ event attendees included members of the

public, people across age groups and of various professions, faculty, and staff of McMaster University, employees of the City of Hamilton, and other stakeholders and community leaders. We have also since showcased our work in various guest lectures on campus at, and more recently, spoke about our project at the Canadian Association on Gerontology conference.

Key learnings

In this section, we present three key learnings from the *Seniors of Canada* project. While not a research project, our engagement with this community-based project contributed to several key learnings that may be both useful and applicable to those conducting aging research in Canada and beyond. We first begin by outlining the importance of bridging community and academic settings. We then discuss the value of intergenerational connections and the importance of using digital tools and discuss the value and importance of storytelling. We hope that our key learnings translate and engage researchers at all levels to find ways to mobilize scholarly knowledge and engage more directly with their field of study.

Building bridges across academia and community (via KM and meaningful connection)

KM and university–community outreach have been embraced across Canadian postsecondary institutions through various mechanisms and strategies (Beaulieu, Breton, & Brousselle, 2018). These have included community-based experiential learning, community-based participatory research, and community-based research (Hall, 2009). It has been suggested that Universities are a collective community resource that can address critical social, economic, and cultural challenges by transferring and mobilizing knowledge more readily to the public (Bramwell, Hepburn, & Wolfe, 2012). It is imperative to acknowledge and speak about how we can practically and effectively enhance the presence of KM and translation across university and community boundaries.

Seniors of Canada was created as a community outreach project to disrupt stereotypes of aging through university–community partnership. As part of this project, we sought out community feedback on the project, and hosted free and publicly accessible photo exhibits in Hamilton, at community events, and public library workshops. Our aim in doing so was to bring academic debates to the forefront of the community and engage people with discourse in gerontology. These events were not held on university property to support our community partnerships. We produced a photo-book that was widely distributed at various community centres, neighbourhoods, and coffee shops for no fee to ensure access. We also had the opportunity to incorporate aspects of the project into a second-year gerontology undergraduate class of over 100 students. These initiatives always aimed to start conversations about later life, intergenerational engagement, and yielded many significant learnings. They highlighted the value and importance of Seniors of Canada in that it moved towards taking steps towards building bridges across academia and community.

Intergenerational connection and digital tools

Contemporary features of life including new definitions and lifestyles of aging, the geographic mobility of children, and extended working lives render current ideas of intergenerational connection

⁴This was often the case as it was helpful for one team-member to focus on taking pictures and the other to take notes and make conversation. Meetings to photograph seniors would be one-on-two for the most part. Unless the senior chose to be photographed alongside someone of their choosing.

⁵A story refers to anything that the contributor (in this case the senior) could have said or mentioned in conversation with the team members, this could vary from a full paragraph of that conversation/interaction or a brief sentence.

⁶The contributors were also given a written explanation of the aim of the project, as well as a photo and story release form, and were also consulted in the final approval of photos and stories they would feel comfortable being distributed.

⁷The Senior of the Year Awards is an annual awards night hosted and organized by the City of Hamilton to recognize local seniors and their contributions to their communities.

in need of revisiting (Hatzifilalithis, 2022). Intergenerational connections need to span far beyond a familial setting in the twenty-first century, and we must find new and innovative ways of fostering connections across generational cohorts in this conflict-oriented social imaginary (Meisner, 2021). Social media represents one way of achieving meaningful connection between generations and is one of the most pervasive outlets of communication in the world. For most social media platforms, the sole requirement is an e-mail address and an internet connection to be exposed to a person's life anywhere in the world. Through these platforms, one can share everything from culture, ideas, and the mundane of everyday life. Social media is increasingly becoming the main source of communication for younger generations, and usage among older adults is climbing (Statistics Canada, 2019, 2021). According to Statista (2021), people spend an average of 147 minutes a day on social media (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, etc.). Social media and digital tools have the ability to connect people of all ages in a way that does not require effort out of their daily routine. Whether this is good or bad, researchers are increasingly recognizing the potential for digital tools to contribute to KM efforts (e.g., Twitter threads, snapshot videos, abstract videos for journals, etc.).

During the first year of the project, we shared the stories we collected strictly on some of the most widely used social platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). We then built a website to showcase the stories to have greater flexibility to post more images, alongside longer quotes and stories. Despite using both web and social media platforms as dissemination tools, we continue to predominantly mobilize our images through social media. This has proven to be a success among younger people who actively follow and engage with our accounts. One of the key components to engaging with social media is that it is budget neutral. Most are free to users and have costs only associated with labour in the use of them. This is key for grant budgets and the push for KM that does not require a lot of overhead and/or time.

The power of visual storytelling

The power of visual storytelling became apparent throughout this project. Humanity is entrenched in mythology, and brains are hardwired to understand life at a greater capacity through story form. Great visuals can bend the social imaginary to add narrative and create myth by its very nature, and photography is a medium that can capture attention and interest in a way that words often cannot. By working with our older people to capture 'shareable' moments through photos, we have been able to engage with audiences in Canada and beyond. By centring our project around photography, we were able to host an exhibit/event that sparked conversations between people of all ages in addition to inspiring meaningful dialogue on social media.

We gathered stories in the Hamilton community with hopes to elucidate a greater understanding of later life through visual storytelling. To share these stories with community members, we hosted a free, public photo-exhibit and showcased our images and stories online. By sharing our content in this way, we have been able to connect with community members, students, and academics alike, and reach audiences that may be traditionally excluded from academic materials. Visual storytelling is compelling and often relatable. From the initial conception of this project, we have recognized that to connect with people and begin to break down age-related stereotypes, we needed to share stories which our audience could empathize. All of this points to the value of visual

storytelling to disseminate important messages across disciplinary and social boundaries.

Critical reflections

As the project has progressed, we have critically reflected on the process and outcomes to date. As discussed, this project has been insightful and valuable in several ways. Yet, there are several areas for improvement that warrant discussion. We acknowledge an ongoing need for improved representation and diversity of both life experience and social location(s) in our images and stories. As it stands, the project has included only older individuals that have contacted the project with an interest in contributing. Many of our contributors to date have been recruited via calls for participation via community groups, in addition to word-of-mouth sharing. However, it is likely that there are seniors in the community that did not feel able or willing to share their stories within the context of this project. We recognize that there is room to grow with regard to representing a more diverse range of aging experiences, including but not limited to experiences related to dementia, 2SLGBTQ+ identities, and the fourth age (Gilleard & Higgs, 2010).

As graduate students undertaking a project on aging and later life, we recognized our positionality and the dynamic that exists between a team of 'younger' people and the older people that choose to participate in this project. Existing gerontological work has found that intergenerational research encounters can lead to both connection and, at times, conflict and it is likely that this would apply in non-research encounters as well (Grenier, 2007). With that being said, it was important for our team to remain critically reflexive about how and why we engaged in this type of outreach.

While storytelling can be part of research approaches such as narrative inquiry, Seniors of Canada is a community outreach project and was not conceptualized as research. However, we want to recognize the complex forces that shape identity and the self, including the story of the self that are constantly evolving in relation to others, especially when we write or narrate about who we think we are (see John Paul Eakin's 'How Our Lives Become Stories'). Additionally, we recognize that there are many structural challenges to consider. Ageism is a widespread and long-standing challenge that will not be erased through a single project. Age-based stereotypes and discrimination is embedded within many aspects of Western culture (Meisner, 2021). We acknowledge the value of this project but are wary of overstating its potential. This project will not 'solve' ageism, but it can nonetheless contribute to forward progress and provide support for future projects aiming to connect and bridge KM in academia and community work.

Future directions and conclusion

Seniors of Canada has yielded several key learnings that can provide valuable insights for those in the academic sphere. Additionally, we have identified several next steps and future directions for the project in honour of transparency and progress. As we continue to gather stories and images of older people to share through the project, we will continue to move away from the traditional binary of success and failure that is often represented in images of aging and work to showcase an increasingly heterogeneous group of people with a diversity of life experience and history. While stories from older people to date have centred around all aspects of life and experience, we see value in hearing more about older people's perspectives on what it means to grow older. These perspectives

could be powerful tools for change with respect to breaking age-related stereotypes often held by younger people.

We would like to move into additional forms of media to further engage potential audiences. For example, short videos and podcasts could be used to further examine and demystify experiences related to aging and later life with wider audiences across the life course while continuing to push against dominant ageist narratives. Although the Seniors of Canada project has been successful, we see the potential to expand beyond pictures and stories. With new modes of social technology developing, we aim to support the creation of video snapshots on various platforms (e.g., TikTok) to showcase the stories we have been privileged to capture. We want to ensure that the aim and spirit of this project is one that is heard across university and community, as well as generational boundaries.

We hope that the project continues to challenge notions of ageism and the aging process. In our view as early career researchers, it is high time for change. At the risk of sounding overly optimistic, our goal is for others to see what we see daily as gerontologists, that aging is not something to be feared and it certainly does not detract from the value of someone's story. We hope that other researchers build upon these ideas and thoughts and perhaps integrate components of this community-engaged project into their research agendas.

From the outset, the project's senior advisory committee, and the seniors later photographed, emphasized that age did not hold any significance in how they were represented. Emphasis was placed on showing that their daily lives were similar and relatable to younger people. The conversations we had and stories we heard are something we will take with us on our journey into our professional careers. Based on the interest generated since project inception, we expect to make a greater impact by spreading the word through our website, social media, and in-person community exhibits. The structure will evolve but we hope to continue to centre the lives and stories of older people to ultimately disrupt ageism. We recognize that Seniors of Canada cannot remedy all problems associated with the representation of later life in the media or eradicate ageism. Nevertheless, we hope to build conversation. We encourage others to self-reflect and consider their assumptions and ideas concerning later life and what aging means to them. We hope that the stories and pictures have encouraged others to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds and to learn across and within generational boundaries.

We trust that academic institutions and agencies will support and laud innovative forms of KM and provide opportunities for early career researchers to engage with their community of interest. This article has provided a sketch of critical gerontological knowledge and implementing community-based work across generational boundaries that include and highlight the perspectives of older people. By outlining steps and processes, lessons learned, and key contributions, we have provided an outline for researchers to engage in KM in the context of aging research. While it will not always be feasible to create and sustain community-engaged projects as such, we hope to have provided a practical overview for researchers who wish to see how they can get involved with KM. The purpose of this note was to share valuable insights gained through the process of launching and facilitating a community project and trust that we have showcased the power of bridging academia and community for social change.

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