

**Assignment 5: Intergenerational Recreation Programs  
Improve Emotional and Social Wellbeing**

RECR 4400 Major Research Project

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## **Executive Summary**

This research paper seeks to determine how Intergenerational Recreation Programs (IRPs) improve the social and emotional wellbeing of its participants and how increasing the regularity of IRP benefit the South Granville Seniors Centre (SGSC) and community partners. Primary research and secondary research of the topic area were conducted over the course of Week 4 of February 2025 to Week 3 of March 2025, which consisted of interviews, observations, content analysis, and a literature review. The research paper discusses how regular connections between seniors and young people through regular IRPs can increase wellbeing as well as community capacity.

## **Introduction**

Intergenerational recreation programs (IRPs) provide the benefits of emotional and social wellness to both seniors and young people (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019). There are recountable evidence that bringing different age groups together in leisure activities produce healthier individuals as well as perception change. IRPs present opportunities to develop intergenerational connections, which increase “functioning and quality of life” of seniors and “positive attitudes toward older adults... and improved social skills” of young people (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; p. 364). The Fairview neighbourhood of Vancouver, where SGSC and other community organizations are located, is not without the facility or environment for IRPs, and can utilize them to develop dedicated IRPs. Increasing regularly scheduled IRPs and their promotion will develop healthier community members, stronger community partnerships, and a more integrated social connectedness.

The Fairview community has seen a population growth of both seniors aged 65+ and children aged 0-14 according to the Neighbourhood Social Indicators Profile 2020 of Fairview (2020). BC Community Health Data (2023) present the rise of seniors aged 65+ and children aged 0-17 years old rise steadily to 25% and approximately 20% of the Fairview population, respectively, between 2021 to 2041. The significance of this data is that the increase in the age groups within the Fairview community further necessitates the increase of services.

This applied research paper gathers evidence-based data to learn about the overall benefits of IRPs and seek creative strategies that will augment the effectiveness and regularity of intergenerational programming at (SGSC) and their community partners. SGSC intergenerational programs have yielded positive interpersonal interactions with younger community members, and there is an organizational desire to increase regularity of these intergenerational programs. Through primary and secondary research methods that include interviews with staff members, volunteers, and a graduate student associated with intergenerational connections as well as analysis of scholarly journals and field-based magazines, the paper provides information that aims to describe novel approaches to answering the research question.

**Research Question (RQ):** How do intergenerational recreation programs increase the social and emotional well-being of seniors and young people? How would increasing the regularity of intergenerational recreation programs benefit South Granville Seniors Centre and their community partners?

***Operationalized Key Terms of the RQ:***

- “Increase” is described as the improvement in the quality of a state; in this context, how intergenerational connections increasingly improve the health quotient in seniors (Giraudeau et al., 2019). Progress tracking, observation, and incident reports will measure progress and achievement.
- “Social and emotional well-being” is defined as the actual social inclusion of seniors into their community and the feeling of safety, belonging, and confidence in their personal mental wellness as well as a positive perception of community acceptance (Webster et al., 2023).
- “Seniors” describes adults aged 65+ in the Fairview neighbourhood in Vancouver and other similar aged adults who use the services of SGSC (South Granville Seniors Centre, 2024). This description can include prospective patrons who would benefit from the services of SGSC.
- “Regularity” describes the biweekly or monthly facilitation of the intergenerational recreation program that serves seniors of SGSC. Measurable performance and notable occurrences will be documented in a tracking report for evaluation.

- “Intergenerational recreational program” describes the matching and socialization of seniors and individuals and groups from different age groups within recreation. Through recreation such as painting, art projects, and cultural sharing, seniors will have opportunities to share personal experiences, stories, and learn about various perspectives (Baum & Ochoa, 2024).

## **Background and Context**

The Fairview community of Vancouver, where South Granville Seniors Centre is located, has seen a population growth of both seniors aged 65+ and children aged 0-14 according to the Neighbourhood Social Indicators Profile 2020 of Fairview (2020). BC Community Health Data (2023) present the rise of seniors aged 65+ and children aged 0-17 years old rise steadily to 25% and approximately 20% of the Fairview population, respectively, between 2021 to 2041. The significance of this data is that the trend necessitates the increase of services to the Fairview community.

Building connections between seniors and young people is important to a community that values everyone’s dignity and inclusion. In a youth-focussed society that faces constant change, seniors are not having equal participation, and this has detrimental effects on their emotional and social health (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019). Senior social exclusion and social isolation is concerning. “30% of Canadian seniors are at risk of becoming socially isolated” and “the number one emerging issue facing seniors in Canada is keeping older people socially connected and active” according to a report on senior social isolation by the Government of Canada (2024, Section Part 1).

Senior social isolation is associated with loneliness and medical conditions including depression, anxiety, and heart disease (National Institute of Aging, 2019). To a community, “the exclusion of older adults is harmful to individuals and the effectiveness and solidarity of communities” (Walsh et al., 2021, Section 1.7). In positive contrast, primary research conducted for this research project noted that both seniors and young people elicited positive emotions when interacting with each other and community members, which was reinforcing feedback to continue socialization. According to an academic report on Intergenerational Programs by Rachelle Patille and Habib

Chaudhury, IRPs “have the potential to combat ageism and stereotypes as well as improve older adults’ sense of well-being” (Patille et al., n.d., p. 3). Continuous learning and meaningful relationships contribute to kindness in between community members. To understanding others in a compassionate world, this research project seeks to identify community capacity to strengthen relationships. Through authentic action by individuals, they can inspire and empower positive endeavours in others towards stronger and healthier communities.

Stronger and healthier communities are important to the SGSC. Its mission statement is, “We work with adults 55+ to support their well-being through programs and activities that promote friendship, diversity, and individual worth” (South Granville Seniors Centre, 2024, landing page). Altogether, community connectedness and individual dignity is linked to the social inclusion and empowerment of seniors. The project aims to learn more about how intergenerational connections are linked to positive health and well-being in seniors to bring about regular participation in intergenerational programs.

The topic area is important to the field of community recreation because the health and well-being of seniors affect everyone. From those caring about ageing family members and friends as well as the health care cost of ailing community members, the topic area is relevant. To the field of community recreation, senior inclusion is related to the ‘Leisure Ideals’ such as community, happiness, inclusion and accessibility, servant leadership, safety, meaning, personal growth, optimal experience amongst many others (Stebbins, 2012). A senior centre like SGSC is a beacon for these leisure ideals by enhancing intergenerational recreation that empowers seniors and young people equally. New information will include data that provides discussion about policies that contribute to intergenerational recreation and connections. Additionally, how young people equally benefit from such programs and connections.

## **Literature Review**

### **Context and Relevancy within Community Recreation**

There are several important reasons to promote intergenerational recreation as a regular program at SGSC and their community partners. Research data from scholarly journals, field-based magazines, statistical databases, and open-source newspaper articles present evidence that the benefits of intergeneration recreation programs support organizations in reaching their mission objectives. Intergenerational programs build connections between generations, which enhance participants' social and emotional well-being, and in addition, catalyzes a change in perceptions that they may have had of each other (Webster et al., 2023).

Findings of the research data presented the following: 1) How intergenerational programs increase participant well-being, 2) Types of programs and activities, 3) Evaluation methods, 4) Outcomes of program participants, and 5) Discussions of program strengths, challenges, and recommendations. A comparative analysis of research data produces similar results that intergenerational programs not only improve participants' mental health and socialization into their community, but in reaching organizational missions. Increasing and maintaining the regularity of intergenerational programs reinforces the benefits. This literature review seeks to gather the findings and learn how increasing the regularity of IRPs help SGSC and community partners reach their objectives.

### ***How the Topic and RQ are Situated within Community Recreation***

Exploring the contextual history of intergeneration connections in Canada shows its role and benefits. Ball et al. (2002) explained that building connections between Indigenous Elders and young people transfers values as well as directs continuous commitment to their community. Elders are 'Knowledge Keepers' and young people are the purveyors of new ideas, sustained by the information and identity they receive from Elders (Ball et al., 2002): Ball et al. points to a 'mutually transformative process' gained from exchanging wisdom, skills, and knowledge that instills social inclusion and values relationship. Encouraging the need to maintain intergenerational connections, the

literature highlights the positive impacts that have on participants' dignity, identity, and social well-being that is fruitful to a healthy community.

Research described the building of intergenerational connections and their activities as producing high-quality recreation. Martin et al. (2019) describe participants having fun and losing track of time, which aligns with Stebbins' (1996) descriptions of a leisure experience.

### ***Types of Intergenerational Activities:***

- Mentoring and life skills support, i.e. interview skills, health promotion
- Knowledge exchange, writing and sharing stories, and reminiscence talks
- Computer training and exergaming
- Musical activities and performance art
- Playing games
- Exercise activities (tai-chi classes)
- Handicrafts, craftwork, and photography
- Fieldtrips to museums and different locations

(Martin et al., 2019).

### **Outcomes of Program**

One research study provided quantitative data to the benefits of increased intergenerational connections in programs. The study by Martin et al. (2019) produced positive results for both seniors and young people, who participated in intergenerational programs with a focus on individual self-esteem and community inclusion. In the post-study evaluation, participants of both generations showed a decline in depression and anxiety, improved quality of life, and improved feelings of empowerment and life satisfaction (Martin et al., 2019). Patille et al., (n.d., p. 3) echo the sentiment that intergenerational programs “have the potential to combat ageism... as well as improve older adults' sense of well-being, health, life satisfaction, and quality of life”.



## ***Areas of Controversy***

Varied research studies indicated that digital technology was beneficial to IRPs yet other research studies highlighted the necessity of in-person interactions on emotional well-being. Conflicts in the research amplify the assumptions that technology augments intergenerational socialization and, at the same time, produces the mutuality of positive emotions in participants. Beyond the anecdote that online technology and in-person can be both 'good' is a significant opportunity to identify integration models that enhance both intergenerational socialization and positive feelings of individuals.

Although some research stated that digital technology has facilitated communication between generations and enhanced intergenerational recreation programs, contesting research present 'traditional' programs, i.e. in-person interactions, as more effective to increase social and emotional well-being of individual participants. Another research study focused on online digital technology's ability to build intergenerational social collaboration (Hausknecht et al., 2021). A parallel research study described the benefits of virtual intergenerational programs at home, but seniors, and those that live with dementia, were disadvantaged by hearing difficulties when they were online and preferred the in-person programs for their face-to-face contact (Sun et al., 2024).

## ***Identified Gaps in the Literature***

Some research data lack the exploration into the diversity of cultural contexts in planning, implementing, and evaluating intergenerational recreation programs, which limits their effectiveness. Although all participants can benefit from intergenerational recreation programs, applying a cultural lens supports a multicultural society like Vancouver.

There are generalizations in the research that pertain to people of different cultures and generations view each other. Indigenous culture view Elders as the purveyor of community stories and knowledge that structures the community framework, whereas in western society, aged-based segregation is the trend and knowledge is often absorbed from peer-level social norms or social media (Hausknecht et al., 2021; Drury et al., 2016). Kaplan (1998) states that, in traditionally multigeneration households, Japanese

people view seniors with 'loyalty and responsibility'. However, research also notes this changing perspective as societal and cultural norm shift. There is missing research data in western literature on the best practices to integrate intergenerational participants of varied cultural backgrounds into intergenerational programs.

The research gap indicates the need to investigate how intergenerational programs can inform how young people of varied backgrounds and customs to interact with diverse seniors.

### **Summary of Literature Discussions**

The importance of intergenerational recreation programs is described in the research literature. Participants of varied generations benefit from increased emotional and social well-being in the shared connections they have when having conversations or enjoying activities together. Research indicates that intergenerational programs further leisure ideals of enjoyment in the activity with participants but also, increases feelings of self-worth, self-esteem, and inclusion into their communities. This implies the importance of dignity and respect participants in intergenerational programs gain from each other, and within individuals. Whether the type of program or the use of technology, data confirms that communication and interaction between generations enhance overall well-being.

## **Methodology**

### **Overview and Rationale**

Primary research methods included five interviews, four content analyzed, and five observations of programs at SGSC and Oppenheimer Park Fieldhouse between February 23, 2025 to March 18, 2025. Interviews provided qualitative data into the unique experiences and perspectives of various IRP facilitators. Interviewees were chosen from varied roles and responsibilities to share their diverse experiences with IRPs within their respective organization and context. Observations were conducted to note the interconnections between the changes of emotional behaviour of a senior and/or a young person when interacting with others and with program activities. Content analysis gave objective information about IRPs such as key terms, availability, and

accessibility present in internal and external documents. These primary research methods were chosen because of their ability to effectively gather qualitative and quantitative data in a compressed timeframe. Every effort to comply with Article 2.2, 2.3, & 2.4 of TCPS 2: Research Exempt from Research Ethics Board Review were made to ensure participant anonymity.

## **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted in a casual approach that maintained an even social dynamic. The chosen in-person method optimized the ability to explore further questions based on interviewer or interviewee prompting further discussion. Prepared questions were designed to be open-ended, unbiased, and focused on attaining objective data (See Appendix A for the Interview Questions Template). In the interviews with SGSC staff members, interviewees/interviewers sat facing one another at a table, while notes were recorded on the laptop computer word processor to quickly transcribe key information and verbatim quotes. The interviews with volunteers and a graduate student conducted at a lounge room or at a park bench to invite a relaxed atmosphere to share information and were recorded by pen to notepad.

Four interviews were conducted with SGSC staff members (Executive Director, Volunteer Coordinator, Community Engagement Specialist, and Program Assistant). SGSC staff members joined together for an in-person panel interview, which yielded data about their team-based dynamic and collaborative approach as IRP facilitators (one SGSC staff member attended via Zoom video conference). The Executive Director of SGSC, Danna Garcia Wigueras, is responsible for the daily operations, strategic planning, and communication with Centre board members. Wigueras shared that SGSC has 400 senior members who participate in SGSC programs, which has young people in roles of activity leaders, program instructors, and volunteers. Karen Pineda (Volunteer Coordinator), Jennifer Nordquist (Community Engagement Specialist), and Sydney Comeau (Program Assistant) work with Wigueras to recruit volunteers, perform community outreach, and facilitate programs. Although regular dedicated IRPs are desired and is in development, the interview with SGSC staff members offered insight

into how IRPs benefit the emotional and social wellbeing of seniors as well as opportunities and strategies to increase regularity of IRPs.

Three interviews were conducted with volunteers – two from SGSC and one from Oppenheimer Park Fieldhouse (OPFH). Interviews with volunteers were conducted impromptu as their availability was on the day of the observed program. Gladys is a senior-aged OPFH Volunteer who gives her time weekly to support arts and crafts projects with community members of various ages. Her perspective presented the positive intergenerational connections when older adults and young people work together on arts and crafts projects as well as her personal experience as a senior. Molly and Caitlyn, teenaged SGSC Volunteers, provided their experience of how interacting with seniors changed their perceptions as well as stated the challenges that overlapping school schedules has with volunteer hours. Melisa Nelson, a Graduate Student of the University of British Columbia, provided her insight to the benefits of intergenerational connections derived from her research studies that she conducted.

The diversity of perspectives and perceptions related individuals involved in IRPs or intergenerational connections provided insight to similar and different patterns that pertain to their community and context. The interviews resulted in data to be analyzed against the literature review. Occasionally, discussions were redirected to maintain objectivity and alignment with gathering information regarding the answering the RQ. One interview proceeded to discuss subjective opinions about external workers and their responsibilities unassociated with the topic area, which required realignment. Another interview was conducted in a public area, which resulted in community members requesting assistance from the interviewee and leaving intermittently. Interviewees were engaged and dedicated to providing their insight about IRPs and intergenerational connections, which provided varied perspectives and care.

### ***Interviewees, Title, Location, and Dates***

- Gladys, Arts & Crafts Volunteer, Oppenheimer Park Fieldhouse, 3:00 pm, February 23, 2025
- Melisa Nelson, Graduate Student, University of British Columbia, 2:00 pm, March 11, 2025

- Danna Garcia Wiguerras, Executive Director, South Granville Seniors Centre (SGSC), 12:30 pm, March 12, 2025
- Karen Pineda, Volunteer Coordinator, SGSC, 12:30 pm, March 12, 2025
- Jennifer Nordquist, Community Engagement Specialist, SGSC, 12:30 pm, March 12, 2025
- Sydney Comeau, Programs Assistant, SGSC, 12:30 pm, March 12, 2025
- Molly, Volunteer, SGSC, 1:40 pm, March 14, 2025
- Caitlyn, Volunteer, SGSC, 1:40 pm, March 14, 2025

## **Observations**

General public observations in publicly accessible areas and special status observations, as a volunteer and employee, were performed as part of the primary research plan to gather data from intergenerational connections and IRPs without researcher interference (Langara College, n.d.). Observations were conducted at SGSC and OPFH, which are in two different neighbourhoods of Vancouver. The decision to record data during or as soon as possible after a program were based on instances where observations would not interfere those who were observed.

### ***Programs attended and conducted with General Public Observation:***

At SGSC, general public observations were performed at three programs and special status observations were conducted at two programs. General public observations were made from a distance of seniors and young people involved in cultural celebration programs, which provided a “birds-eye view” of the social interactions of the larger program area. An observation checklist sheet recorded changes in emotions and behaviours that pertained to interactions to program elements and interactions between individuals of different age groups (See Appendix B for the Observation Checklist Sheet). The research plan was successful to view several interactions occurring simultaneously and recording the data to the observation checklist. At the same time, a challenge was present because individuals that were observed may walk by the public area of the observer and have a curious conversation. This challenge was resolved after subsequent visits familiarized individuals to the observer.

- 'Dominican Republic Cultural Celebration' at SGSC, senior-aged patrons and young volunteers, 12:00pm, March 5, 2025
- 'International Women's Day' at SGSC, senior-aged patrons and young volunteers, 12:00 pm, March 7, 2025
- 'St. Patrick's Day' at SGSC, senior-aged patrons and young volunteers, 12:00 pm, March 14, 2025

***Programs attended and conducted with Special Status Observation:***

Special status observations were conducted as a volunteer at a health presentation and digital literacy program at SGSC, and as an employee at a cooking service and chess game at OPFH. The observation sheet used for the general public observations were applied in this setting because the relevant data to be gained were the same. The health presentation was facilitated by a pharmacist from the neighbourhood that appeared to be in his 30s, which presented an opportunity to observe seniors learning from and asking questions to someone younger than them. Observing the presentation as part of the group provided an opportunity to share in a program with the seniors and converse with them to exchange wellness strategies. Observations provided data regarding what health topics elicited engagement. Conducting special status observations as a volunteer in the digital literacy program provided direct one-on-one interaction with a senior, which provided several learning points of what effective and ineffective communication methods were. Adjusting to the needs of the senior improved the outcome of the program and connection, which were inputted into the observation sheet. At OPFH, cooking as an employee with young staff members and volunteers for community members who represented seniors and young people provided an opportunity to observe firsthand how individuals cared for, problem solved and resolved conflict with each other. Observing chess matches between intergenerational individuals and as a participant provided data regarding the dynamics of conversational banter between players of different age groups. Positive and negative expressions related to interactions were recorded on the observation sheet.

- 'Community Cooking Service' at Oppenheimer Park Fieldhouse, youth-led, 1:00 pm, March 9, 2025
- 'Chess' at Oppenheimer Fieldhouse, volunteer and community-led, 3:50 pm, March 9, 2025
- 'Health Presentation' at SGSC, led by pharmacist, 1:00 pm, March 18, 2025
- 'Digital Literacy Tablet Social' at SGSC, youth-led, 2:15 pm, March 18, 2025

## **Content Analysis**

Publicly available documents such as newsletters, program guides, and websites from both SGSC and OPFH were used for content analysis. These materials were selected because of their accessibility and provided a viewpoint from the public's perspective. SGSC provided the publicly accessible 2024 Annual Report and internal documents such as the SGSC Volunteer Orientation Guide and a draft of the 2025-2028 SGSC Strategic Plan. The research method was completed by analyzing the documents for images that depicted intergenerational connections and their occurrences and mentions of intergenerational programs in the written materials. These materials were analyzed to determine whether there is representation of IGPs or elements IGPs and gaps.

- South Granville Seniors Centre Annual Report
- South Granville Seniors Centre Newsletter
- South Granville Seniors Centre Strategic Plan 2025-2028
- South Granville Seniors Centre Volunteer Orientation Guide
- South Granville Seniors Centre website
- Oppenheimer Park Fieldhouse (OPFH) Weekly Programs Guide

## **Research Findings and Analysis**

The analysis of primary and secondary research results produced several key findings to support answering the RQ. Categorized into the main themes and patterns related to the RQ – IRPs and Emotional Wellbeing, IRPs and Social Wellbeing, and the Benefits of Increasing the Regularity of IRPs – brings together a clearer picture of why these

factors matter to SGSC and strategies to implement, which will be discussed in the Recommendations.

### **IRPs and Emotional Wellbeing**

A key finding from general public observations at SGSC show that seniors initiated several times to approach and interact with young people who were in the roles of volunteers. The young people, in service roles, were observed to be socially withdrawn; the initiation by seniors to interact with the young people with a smile or a thankful touch to their hand resulted in young people coming out of their “shell” and produced a smile on their face. For example, a young person approached a table where a senior person was sitting and obtained a plate; the senior person smiled and touched the young person’s hand as an appreciative gesture and the young person smiled back. Martins et al. (2019) discuss the ‘Empowerment Theory” that intergenerational connections enhance community togetherness and positive emotions derived from caring for each other. The positive emotions were reciprocated by the young person because of the friendly, empathetic, and welcoming interaction with the senior person. The interconnection between community togetherness and mutual respect with one another lessened the anxiety, as observed, of the young person to have more positive facial expressions when they returned to other volunteer duties (Webster et al., 2023). The confidence gained from social inclusion empowers the senior person and young person to amplify positive behaviour, communication, and interaction towards each other (Lui et al., 2025). In addition to the IRP being a catalyst for pro-social behaviours, the intergenerational connection produced positive emotions. An interview with the young person concluded that they felt happier because of the welcoming interaction and that volunteering at SGSC provided them a chance to connect with community members outside of the age group they regularly interact with.

### **IRPs and Social Wellbeing**

A pivotal finding from special status observations at a chess match at OPFH is regarding the conversations between seniors when young people are present. Observing a match between two senior-aged individuals and a young person playing another match next to them brought conversation from the senior-aged individuals



about the stories of Oppenheimer Park and their experiences with members of the community. The young person returned conversation by asking them to elaborate on the stories. Subsequently, everyone appeared to elicit smiles and laughter from competitive remarks. One of the senior-aged individuals was observed to give advice about pending chess moves as the young person appeared to be inexperienced at the game. The senior-aged individual who appeared to be 40-years senior to the young person, began to ask them where they are from and information about community resources. Both individuals of different age groups were observed to have genuine mutual interest to learn about and from each other, which encouraged a few other individuals watching the chess match to share the same sentiments. The observation list recorded the several smiles, laughter, and positive interactions such as friendly conversation and complements. Another pivotal finding is that the chess match was played outdoors on a table under a small tent, and it appeared the setting was temporarily assembled. The players, young and old, did not appear dissuaded to have a good time. A sense of belonging to a community encouraged conversation and positiveness. Their unity of being together as chess players with a shared interest was observed to have pro-social behaviours regardless of the setting (Larkin, 2010). The environment and activity provided the opportunity for social engagement, which encouraged social interaction and tolerance of others (Webster et al., 2023).

Content analysis of SGSC's documents continued the significant pattern of setting and interactions that foster a sense of identity and belonging to a community. The March 2025 edition of Our Times, the newsletter of the SGSC, depicts a front cover representing diversity and celebration to promote International Women's Day (Our Times, 2025). Several page photos and text present exciting programs and current events that showcase community togetherness that produce a sense of belonging that matched the program observations. A key finding is that, although there is a photo of a young person on page 5 of the newsletter and the mention of a program "developed by our UBC pharmacy students" on page 14 that presumable are young people, there is an absence of terms related to 'intergenerational recreation programs' or 'intergenerational connections' (Our Times, 2025, pp. 5, 14). While SGSC programs have elements of intergenerational interactions through volunteers and instruction-based roles, a

promotional gap exists between current representation of young people interacting with senior members of the SGSC. A dedicated intergeneration recreation program is absent; innovatively, the SGSC 2025-2028 Strategic Plan (2025) indicated that expanding intergenerational programs is a strategic goal.

### **The Benefits of Increasing the Regularity of IRPs**

The SGSC mission “to provide a welcoming space where seniors can engage in activities that promote social connection, health, and lifelong learning” is instrumentally linked to social inclusive programs that involve seniors and young people because they enhance emotional and social wellbeing of seniors (Webster, 2023). In addition, young people develop pro-social attitudes when they build connections seniors (Drury et al., 2016). Rachel Cohen of Aging Dynamics and LinkAGES stated that the social benefits of intergenerational connections build supportive and caring communities, stating that “Ageism exist and separates communities; we need to come together” (Baum & Ochoa, 2024, p. 41). Increasing cultural inclusivity was a key finding echoed from interviews, observations, and content analysis.

The Oppenheimer Park Fieldhouse (2025) March 2025 program guide offered several community services and programs yet does not provide Chinese-language services to support Chinese-speaking only community members who visit the fieldhouse, indicating a service gap. The 2025-2028 SGSC Strategic Plan (2025) indicated the strategic goal to increase volunteer recruitment; interviews with SGSC staff members presented an interest to recruit diverse volunteers to match the needs of new senior members who require language assistance.

. The absence of language choice dissuades seniors to seek assistance (Dupuis-Blanchard et al., 2015). Furthermore, this could result in social exclusion and a reduced sense of belonging to the community (Nyqvist et al., 2021). Again, analysis brings about an opportunity along with the strategic mission of SGSC.

The most significant key finding is the natural development of programs, lending of skills, and bringing in new members to the SGSC. “Organic” was a term used several times during interviews with SGSC staff members, which extends to community

development, building community capacity, and increasing social capital. Interviews presented information that volunteers provide a word-of-mouth recommendation for others to volunteer at SGSC because of the welcoming and caring environment. In addition, the talent observed of others was recognized to apply them towards programs.

## **Recommendations**

### **“Organic” Volunteer Recruitment**

Sourcing volunteers from the community that match the needs of seniors increases a sense of belonging for everyone (Nyqvist et al., 2021). Where individuals of the community lend their skills that match the needs of other community members, community capacity is built on this foundation. Communities that recognize their social interconnections build trust and connections towards a shared goal (Hausknecht et al., 2021). Upon analysis, SGSC was observed to have the social capacity to provide new senior members a sense of belonging through culturally diverse programs such as Dominican Republic Cultural Celebration; word-or-mouth promotion and advertisement to reach potential community members who can offer their skills can fill the gap towards strategic goals such as language assistance and IRP facilitators.

### **“Intergenerational Connections Corner”**

A key finding is that the environment of SGSC produced positive emotions linked to IRPs and a sense of community. A young volunteer stated that the “intimate” space of SGSC encouraged bonding with older volunteers (Caitlyn, personal communication, March 14, 2025). Larkin et al. (2010, p. 172) stated that “the environment is instrumental” and “is a prerequisite for intergenerational appeal”. For both seniors and young people, “creating spaces for positive interactions” is critical to positive emotions related to safety, learning, and a sense of belonging (Larkin et al., 2010, p. 172). A space within SGSC could be designated as the “Intergenerational Connections Corner” that provides a meeting place for sharing of stories and experiences between different generations.

### **Creating an Intergenerational Recreation Programs Committee**

SGSC was observed to have several programs that have elements of intergenerational interactions in service roles and youth-led programs were mentioned in their newsletter. While it is recognized that SGSC serves older adults and seniors aged 55+, creating dedicated IRPs that place seniors and young people on even plain such an intergenerational conversation social hour or an intergenerational photography session can augment connections and word-of-mouth for young people to participate in SGSC programs. To empower and create ownership in both seniors and young people, an intergenerational recreation programs committee can support activities planning, implementation, and evaluation. Participation can increase ownership and a sense of belonging as well as assist in achieving SGSC strategic goals of recruiting diverse volunteers with various skills and augmenting intergenerational programs.

### **Multiculturalism**

Interviews mentioned that 20% of the Centre's membership are primarily Spanish-speaking and that more Spanish-language communications and newsletter sections needed. At the same time, non-Spanish speaking seniors have expressed desire to learn the Spanish language and connect with others to learn about their culture. An opportunity arises to promote young people to volunteer into roles of facilitators of language exchange and translation of SGSC promotional materials into Spanish. Role and skill-specific volunteer postings, and word-of-mouth promotions, have potential to increase young peoples' involvement at SGSC and augment intergenerational connections.

### **Conclusion**

The results from primary research and secondary research conducted in this study supports the central themes that community connections and inclusion between different age groups support the emotional and social wellness of participants. The steady increase of seniors and young people in the Fairview community necessitates social support systems that enhance a sense of belonging to a community. SGSC is a hub of activity for senior members and young people who volunteer.

The benefits of IRPs and their connection to the emotional and social wellbeing of seniors and young people is a repeated theme in the literature review. Identified research gaps and key findings inform future research to better apply to specific communities and cultures. The primary research presented data from two community organizations that shared similar patterns that shared activities between generations increase positive perceptions of each other. At the same time, individuals have positive emotions about themselves and of their community.

Continued research can be conducted to learn about the positive impacts of IRPs but the evidence leads to implementation. SGSC and similar community organizations have capacity to implement strategic goals. Identifying resources and effective methods to collaborate with community members, volunteers, and partners with the right skill set and mission have potential to increase the regularity of IRPs. Together, increase community inclusion and connectedness.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Questions Template**

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewees:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time/Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Interview Question Guide:**

- Why is the development of intergenerational programs important at your organization / in the community?
- Can you share some examples of successful intergenerational programs you have facilitated / participated in?
- How do you match younger participants (like students or volunteers) with older adults for intergenerational activities / how did you, as a young person, discover the opportunity to volunteer at South Granville Seniors Centre?
- What are some of the key benefits you've observed from bringing different generations together in your programs / from participating as a young volunteer and interacting with seniors?
- What challenges have you faced in running intergenerational programs, and how have you overcome them / from participating as a young volunteer/person?
- How do you ensure that intergenerational activities are accessible?
- What role do technology and digital tools play in facilitating intergenerational and community-integration programs?
- Can you share any partnerships or collaborations you've formed with schools, community groups, or other organizations to support intergenerational programming?
- What feedback have you received from participants—both seniors and younger people—regarding their experiences with intergenerational activities?

## Appendix B

### Observation Checklist Sheet

Observation Sheet			
Date/Time: _____	Observer: _____		
Agency: _____	Staff/Volunteer Name: _____		
Program: _____	Ages of Participants: _____		
Location: _____	Number of Participants: _____		
Description of program activity: _____			
To facilitate program activity: # Volunteers:      # Staff:      # Student interns:			

**How do intergenerational recreation programs increase the social and emotional well-being of seniors and young people? How would increasing the regularity of intergenerational recreation programs benefit a community organization and their community partners?**

Notes:

Time & Description of activity	Observed Behaviour: Expressions of positive/negative re: emotions & social well-being	Interaction Dynamic: One-on-one? Group? Verbal/Non-Verbal?	Duration of Behaviour	Intensity Rating (1-5): emotions/ social expression

## Appendix C

### Example of Observation Notes

Observation Sheet	
Date/Time: March 18, 2025 (1200 - 1300)	Observer: Kevin Mo (Special Status)
Agency: South Granville Seniors Centre	Staff/Volunteer Name: Sydney Comeau & Karen Pineda
Program: Health Presentation by pharmacist	Ages of Participants: 40s - 80s
Location: SGSC	Number of Participants: <del>10</del> <del>12</del> <del>14</del> 11
Description of program activity: Community Partner (Pharmacist) Presentation about Health, Diet	
To facilitate program activity: Volunteers: 4 staff: 2 program student interns: 3	

How do intergenerational recreation programs increase the social and emotional well-being of seniors and young people?

How would increasing the regularity of intergenerational recreation programs benefit a community organization and their community partners?

Notes:

Presentation title: VITAMINS, SUPPLEMENTS, &  
(Gran. Me + 16 Pharmacy) DIET.  
"Medicine Shoppe"  
30-35 Pharmacist provided presentation  
Y.O. on knowledge, definitions of  
vitamins, diet, minerals needed in  
human body + of aging persons.



Page: 1 /     Date: March 18/25Agency/Program: Pharmacist Health Presentation.

Time & Description of activity	Observed Behaviour: Expressions of positive/negative re: emotions & social well-being	Interaction Dynamic: One-on-one? Group? Verbal/Non-Verbal?	Duration of Behaviour	Intensity Rating (1-5): emotions/ social expression
Set up trouble shooting for # 1308	(P) (Participants) speaking among themselves - smiles + engagement	one-on-one verbal	5 min	3
1310 start presentation	(P) engaged in attention & taking notes	group, non-verbal facing presentation		3
1320	(P) "	focused group attention to presentation.		
" short video on Vitamins	Mixed indication of distraction as other people speaking of program in shared room	"Annoyance" look from 2 (P), of presentation.	1 min	3
1322 Q on video "Vitamins"	Focused listening by (P) to Pharmacist.	Pharmacist to group		
1331 Cont. Pharmacist Presentation + Information.	Focused attention + listening.	"		3

Page: 2Date: Mar 18 / 25Agency/Program: Pharm. Health Pres.

Time & Description of activity	Observed Behaviour: Expressions of positive/negative re: emotions & social well-being	Interaction Dynamic: One-on-one? Group? Verbal/Non-Verbal?	Duration of Behaviour	Intensity Rating (1-5): emotions/ social expression
1340 Cont. Pres. on Vitamin terms & Defs	(P) attn, listening & note taking. Neutral emotions	Group (P) non-verbal		2
1348 Cont Presentation	Most attn to presentation; some turn head distracted or taking notes	"		2
1349 Q from (P)	Engagement positive/ intrigued	one to one verbal	5 sec	3
1350 More Qs from (P)s.	laughter, smiles, engagement	one to group verbal/ non-verbal.	10 sec	4
1352	attentive listening to each (P)'s questions	one to group verbal/ non-verbal	10 sec	3

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Notes – Interview with SGSC staff team**

**Interviewer: Kevin Mo**

**Interviewees: Danna Garcia Wiguerras (In-person), Jennifer Nordquist (Zoom), Karen Pineda (In-person), Sydney Comeau (In-person)**

**Location: Backroom of SGSC**

**Agency: South Granville Seniors Centre**

**Time: 1215-1335 (1-hr and 20-min.)**

**Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2025**

**Instructor: Joanne Edey-Nicoll**

**RQ: *How do intergenerational recreation programs increase the social and emotional well-being of seniors and young people? How would increasing the regularity of intergenerational recreation programs benefit a community organization and their community partners?***

#### **Interview Question Guide:**

- **Why is the development of intergenerational programs important at your organization / in the community?**

Karen:

Students interpreted; language assistance; Canadian and Latin people; Asian; Video Game program oncoming; Wii blowing; vehicle to put together intergenerational programs and connections; intergenerational program = youth;

Danna: Youth to come into teach; mutual community and mutual exchange mutual sharing;

Karen: Digital literacy; seniors; young people learn – young people learn about seniors communication when they are teaching;

Program as a vehicle for learning between both courses

Jennifer: enables young and old people to see each other in a different light”; age gap; empathy, respect; books in common; breaks down the barrier

Sydney: laughing “Brain Games” –

Agency in young people; young person becoming a facilitator when they are engaged and empowered;

Old people building up young people;

Danna: preconception; young people have of seniors programs; better

Karen: Empathy; older adults have of the young people; receive more respect when getting to know each other; more Respect

**Can you share some examples of successful intergenerational programs you have facilitated / participated in?**

- **How do you match younger participants (like students or volunteers) with older adults for intergenerational activities / how did you, as a young person, discover the opportunity to volunteer at South Granville Seniors Centre?**

Karen: Planning

Seniors

Danna: Programs of the month;

Volunteers: “I like to wash the dishes; teach them to use the computers

Seniors: intrinsic)

Karen:

Volunteers approach.

Word of mouth among volunteers; fill out application on website;

Key finding word of mouth.

Brain Games: volunteer to see;

Danna: process fill out form; come to centre; two ways to know and expectations; info to guide;

Karen: organic growth of programs; people talking about others; or see their talents and recommended

Key finding: organic

Key finding: word of mouth;

Sydney and Karen: “six sense” of signs and draw on the board;

Sydney: planning:

Karen: volunteers ask about others they haven't seen. – organic, community.

- **What are some of the key benefits you've observed from bringing different generations together in your programs / from participating as a young volunteer and interacting with seniors?**
- **What challenges have you faced in running intergenerational programs, and how have you overcome them / from participating as a young volunteer/person?**

Karen: challenges: volunteers that say they are present; preferred pronouns; seniors centre;

Danna: introduce volunteers with a proper pronoun; add pronouns in e application;

Sydney: school volunteer International Women's Day; save volunteers;

Karen: volunteers and seniors feel comfortable speaking with Karen; openness;

Danna: those who don't feel comfortable; will not participate; are not respectful.

Karen: politics; current effects program; culture of the centre is positive

Jennifer: seniors than the kids; seniors that have challenges with different languages; volunteers open-minded; seniors, staff let them see different perspective; inclusive group and centre. One-to-one conversation; staff coordination.

### **Challenges:**

Danna: volunteer in English; Spanish speak for; Spanish/English

SGSC – 400 members: 80 are Spanish speaking. AGM: 82 % female; 45% immigrant; 20% speak Spanish; 94% 65-84. '

Karen and Jennifer: 55+ area of Fairview; government subsidies and assistance; open the services to others and more people; seniors have challenges; carers looking after themselves; dementia.

Program for carers; dementia; friendly signage for dementia; for care

Current needs; 55+ and needs

ORGANIC – everchanging needs, senior members from Colombia and Mexico.

Karen: Intercultural connections; seniors want to share more with other cultures. Korean chef; KEY FINDING: seniors want to connect with other seniors. More women volunteers than men. Non-Spanish speaking seniors learning Spanish language.

Karen: Multicultural members. Exchange teach and learn.

- **How do you ensure that intergenerational activities are accessible?**

Syndy: Partnership with VPL. Exchange. UBC.

Pharmacist knowing others.

Karen: “Seniors” “Spanish” Google – SGSC leads to.

Members come from as far as Langley.

Promote more English program. Fairview are English-speaking members.

Come again to learn.

Improve Engagement to all

Social media - FB I

- **What role do technology and digital tools play in facilitating intergenerational and community-integration programs?**

Tablet social, digital literacy;

50 tablets; grant during COVID; to reach out to members who were isolated; one-on-one tutorials; audio books,

‘Tablet social hour’ –

Org Goals of the senior’s centre for the members to be good at technology (aside from multicultural)

- **Can you share any partnerships or collaborations you’ve formed with schools, community groups, or other organizations to support intergenerational programming?**

UBC ‘golden voices’ ‘passes’

Spanish speakers; neighbours and... connections to centre through connections

Sometimes an ask.

Challenge: skills-based for the programs

Good SEO and word-of-mouth

- **What feedback have you received from participants—both seniors and younger people—regarding their experiences with intergenerational activities?**

Both groups want more; capacity and facility room;

Young people: and All ages: 5-10 years; techniques; skills pass on; life skills; purpose and commitment; includes them in community; and in their learning; gaining 'I make in a role like grandma and brother; "like a family"; seniors see the commitment and reciprocal ; invest in more to know each other relationships;

Seniors easy to open; volunteers open; "feelings for community"

Volunteers move changes their relationships;

Different cultures is not a barrier: volunteers especially from latin America is 'family oriented' and seniors respected; shown to members; embrace them; seniors (Anglo-Saxon);

Seniors are themselves when they are open. Latin volunteers show other volunteers; they follow to be more effective;

Latin volunteers more 'comfortable'; familiar, more experience.

Hajib, disability varied volunteers;

Seniors complement volunteers;

End 1335 hours.