Community Consultation on Active Aging
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Health communities through parks, recreation, physical activity & culture
Goals of the Project

- To conduct a province-wide consultation on active aging
- To inform the work of BCRPA and its Active Communities Initiative
- To aid in the development of a comprehensive province-wide Active Aging Framework
Community Consultations

- 26 focus groups
- Over 250 community stakeholders
- Excellent information about the current scope of active aging programs and planning
Literature Review

- Priority areas:
  - Healthy eating
  - Injury prevention
  - Physical activity
  - Tobacco cessation
  - Social connectedness

- Strategies, resources, tools, examples and best practices in each priority area
Consultation Outcomes

1. Changing Attitudes and Approaches to Active Aging
2. Support Systems for Active Aging
3. Age-Friendly Communities
Consultation Outcomes

Active Aging

Changing Attitudes and Approaches to Active Aging

- Accepting the Nature of Aging and the Changing Nature of Aging
- Banishing ‘Ageism’
- Broadening the Definition of ‘Activity’
- Building Active Habits Early in Life
- Building Intergenerational Linkages
- Building a Holistic, Multi-Disciplinary Approach
Changing Attitudes and Approaches to Active Aging

Accepting the Changing Nature of Aging

“Planning for active aging is going to require a flexible approach...to programming, to facilities.....but also to attitudes.”

“There is a huge range in the people we refer to as ‘seniors’. They cannot be treated as one group; they represent many niche markets.”
Changing Attitudes and Approaches to Active Aging

Banishing “Ageism”

“Some seniors say that because they are old, people tend to think they are senile and they don’t give credit to what they say. ‘People don’t respect our age’. There needs to be a cultural shift.”
Changing Attitudes and Approaches to Active Aging

Broadening the Definition of ‘Activity’

- Activities relating to ‘active aging’ must be broadly defined
- Activity also includes continuing to contribute to society and the provision of opportunities for this to happen
Changing Attitudes and Approaches to Active Aging

Building Active Habits Early in Life

- Physical activity after age 65 has an extremely beneficial impact on health status
- “Successful aging is continuing to do in your later years what you started doing in your younger years.”
Changing Attitudes and Approaches to Active Aging

Building Intergenerational Linkages

- Value in increasing linkages between older adults and people of other age groups
- In many communities, schools are closing as enrolments decline. At the same time, seniors need seniors centres....an obvious partnering opportunity.
Elements of active aging require cross-sectoral collaboration and partnership.

Strong potential to find synergies through joint efforts of various health, local government, and community agencies.
Support Systems for Active Aging

**Health Systems**

- As a community we need to look at the systemic barriers to good health.
- If older adults do not have nutritious food, good housing, and supportive pedestrian friendly communities, they are not going to be active & healthy.
Aboriginal and First Nations Support Systems

- Elders hold a much more respected position in First Nations communities than do older adults in other communities.
- Elders are seen as people with wisdom who are to be respected.
- “We make great use of our elders to preserve the culture, this makes them feel needed.”
Support Systems for Active Aging

Program Marketing, Mentoring and Information Sharing

- Value of mentoring
- Reluctance, even fear, by older adults of making that first step into a new facility or activity
- Establishing programs that linked ‘old hands’ with new recruits is working well for many communities
Recreation Programming

- Programs must be enjoyable, affordable, accessible, and close to public transportation
- Sense of safety is important
- Participants must feel welcomed - use buddying
- Include a social and food component
- Physical activity needs to focus on ability rather than age
Facilities for Active Aging

- Centres which are multi-generational but have a seniors centre within it, offer the best combination of programming and financial efficiency.
Multi-Cultural Issues

“Mainstream seniors organizations and programs need to reach out to cultural communities: e.g. invite them to come and teach courses, and go to their temples/community centres to learn.”
Support Systems for Active Aging

**Volunteer Support**

- Retired volunteers appreciate the ability to choose what they do and when they do it
- Volunteers see themselves as participants
- We must rethink many aspects of the volunteer system
Age Friendly Communities

Active Aging

Age Friendly Communities

Safe Communities

Smart Growth Communities
Age Friendly Communities

Safe Communities

- Particularly for older women who feel vulnerable
- Lack of safety - whether real or imagined - is a deterrent to physical activity
Age Friendly Communities

**Smart Growth**

- Walkable communities
- Public transit to allow access beyond the walkability limit of older adults
- Accessible housing
- Active aging standards for community facilities
- “Planning for healthy aging needs to take into account that all ages need the same thing (e.g. safe sidewalks).”
Recommendations

1. That there be more mechanisms for sharing information about active aging
2. That a multi-disciplinary planning tool be developed to assist communities to plan for active aging