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“Collectively We Care – Collectively We Help” Forum



Social Planning Council of Ottawa Forum Report: Elder Abuse and Neglect

Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre, Ottawa, October 16, 2019

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Background

These proceedings provide a summary of events that took place at the ethno-cultural senior forum “Collectively We Care- Collectively We Help” held on October 16, 2019. This forum is part of a broader project developed by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO) that seeks to empower, inform and educate ethnocultural seniors on what constitutes elder abuse and neglect, their rights when abuse occurs and available support services.

The project began December 2018, as a response to the needs of 26 grassroots ethnocultural seniors’ groups that support ethnocultural seniors in Ottawa. Many of these ethnocultural seniors’ groups work together to prevent social isolation and address several needs of ethnocultural seniors. The idea of a forum became apparent after grassroots ethnocultural seniors’ groups showed immense interest in focus group discussions and presentations organized in collaboration with the SPCO. Many of the leaders of grassroots seniors’ groups were involved from the conception of the ideas that shaped the forum to its actual organization and delivery. Preceding the forum, were several discussions and consultations, the development of a brochure on elder abuse and neglect which was translated into ten languages, and the creation of short videos produced in collaboration with Hot Shoe productions. This project is the result of synergistic efforts of strong ethnocultural seniors who came together to give voice to an important issue in their community. As succinctly captured in the title, “collectively we care- collectively we help”, this forum is a product of real community based collaborative effort.

The forum was purposively designed to create dialogue between ethno-cultural seniors and service providers, as a step towards the development and implementation of a culturally

appropriate service delivery model that prevents abuse and neglect and promotes the wellbeing of ethnocultural seniors. The forum was successful in opening up conversation about an issue that is very silenced within ethno-cultural communities. The document presents an overview of the forum and prospective next steps.

Elder Abuse is a growing issue within the ethnocultural senior population in Ottawa. This issue impacts a significant number of the near 80,000 immigrant seniors living in Ottawa¹. However, because of the silence and obscurity that surrounds elder abuse and neglect, it is almost never brought to the fore in public policy discussions. The forum was in this regard very disruptive, as it broke through the silence that shades elder abuse and neglect. Ethnocultural seniors demonstrated they were invested in the forum as they volunteered their time, services and donated funds to support the program. Discussions were lively as ethnocultural seniors actively participated in the forum. It was an issue about them, organized by them and for them.

The forum was able to break through the barrier of silence bringing together key stakeholders, service providers and seniors together to discuss a very sensitive and important issue that impacts the lives of many ethnocultural seniors.

¹ Statistics Canada, 2016 Canadian Census

Acknowledgements

This forum was organized collaboratively under the leadership of the forum planning committee with the assistance of many community stakeholders including ethnocultural group leaders', SPCO, service providers, volunteers, exhibitors, community members and funders.

Forum Planning Committee

- Sybil Braganza, Social Planning Council of Ottawa
- Maya Pareek
- Nilambri Ghai
- Judy Madhosingh
- Chandra Hapuarachchi
- Thi bach mai Nguyen

Technical Design Support

- Luong Le Phan, Chair, Vietnamese Canadian Community of Ottawa

Forum Funders

- Government of Ontario, through the New Horizons Project
- United Way Ottawa

Other Contributors

- Shalini Konanur, Executive Director / Lawyer, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
- All panel discussants
- Ms. Sophia Jacob
- Ethnocultural seniors' groups
- Hot Shoe Productions
- Sponsors and Exhibitors
- Tim Hortons, 2970 Carling Avenue
- Volunteers

Forum Program
Collectively We Care – Collectively We Help
Elder Abuse and Neglect Forum

Ron Kolbus Lakeside Center, 102 Greenview Avenue

Wednesday, October 16, 2019. 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

MC for the Day: Ms. Sophia Jacob, Board Member, Social Planning Council of Ottawa

- 8:30 am–9:00 am Registration/Breakfast/Networking.
- 9:00 am–9:05 am Welcoming Remarks: Sybil Braganza, Social Planning Council of Ottawa
- 9:05 am–9:10 am Greetings – Mr. Chandra Arya, MP, Nepean
- 9:10 am–9:15 am Greetings – Mr. Joel Harding, MPP, Ottawa Centre
- 9:15 am–9:20 am Greetings – Deputy Mayor, Mr. George Darouze
- 9:20 am–10:00 am Key Note Speaker: Shalini Konanur, Executive Director / Lawyer
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO)
- 10:00 am–10:20 am Break – Raffle Prizes Draw
- 10:20 am–10:25 am Monologue – Mrs. Nilambri Ghai
- 10:25am–10:30 am Video Presentation
- 10:30am–11:30am Panel Discussions
- 11:30 am–11:40 am Closing Remarks: Dianne Urquhart,
Executive Director, Social Planning Council of Ottawa
- 11:40 am– 12:30pm Next Steps Display Tables/Networking – Raffle Prizes Draw

Summary of the Forum

The forum was well attended by about 160 ethnocultural seniors and community stakeholders. Notably, the forum presenters and attendees included leaders and members from 26 grassroots ethnocultural seniors organization; Shalini Konanur, Executive Director/Lawyer, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO); service providers and panel members including, Stéphanie Cadieu, Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario's Regional Consultant, Eastern Region; Det. Isabelle Ouellette, Ottawa Police Service, Elder Abuse and Vulnerable Adult section; Kim McDonald and Andréa Katz, Elder Abuse Response and Referral Service (EARRS); and Dr. Indu Gambhir, a physician; local politicians, Mr. Chandra Arya, MP, Nepean; Mr. Joel Harding, MPP, Ottawa Centre; Deputy Mayor, Mr. George Darouze; and many community members and stakeholders in the ethnocultural community.

The objectives of the forum were:

- To create awareness on elder abuse and neglect among ethnocultural seniors and community stakeholders.
- To increase the knowledge and understanding of what constitutes elder abuse within the ethnocultural seniors' groups.
- To work with service providers to enhance their current way of service delivery so that they are better equipped to help ethnocultural seniors who experience abuse and neglect.
- To advocate for support for ethnocultural seniors who require supportive counselling.
- To develop culturally appropriate training materials on elder abuse.

A brief breakfast networking time preceded the forum and allowed ethnocultural seniors to connect and exchange pleasantries before the event. The forum started with a welcoming

address from Sybil Braganza, the program coordinator, and greetings from local politicians who pledged their support for ethnocultural seniors. Shalini Konanur, the keynote speaker for the forum gave an informative overview of elder abuse and neglect which set the tone for the forum. She explored the issue holistically, weaving through with case studies which brought alive her presentation and made it relatable. An ethnocultural senior's response to evaluation questions captures it best; "I thought the keynote speaker covered the topic very well and I could relate to the fear some elders had and the courage they had to muster to come and complain". Indeed, the reception of her message was palpable; many ethnocultural seniors visibly nodded their heads and sighed in affirmation as she parsed through the different facets of elder abuse and neglect in everyday life. In her presentation, Shalini noted that ethnocultural seniors play important roles in the Canadian society, yet their issues are seldom brought to the fore. She encouraged forum attendees to recognize the conditions under which ethnocultural seniors live as it has implications for the abuse and neglect, they face. She emphasized that elder abuse and neglect is often the consequence of family poverty as many ethnocultural families struggle to meet their basic needs.

Mrs. Nilambri Ghai captivating monologue was next, thrilling attendees with a poetic masterpiece that recounted the trajectory of life and lived experiences of ethnocultural seniors. Next on the program were impactful co-produced videos by ethnocultural seniors and Hot Shoe productions. Ethnocultural seniors were the actors in the videos embodying characters that were very familiar to them in many respects. Afterwards, our panel discussants took the stage and educated seniors on the services they provide as well as other available community resources. Also, panel discussants, who were mainly service providers, responded to questions from

ethnocultural seniors. Finally, Dianne Urquhart, the Executive Director of Social Planning Council of Ottawa gave closing remarks presenting key highlights of the forum as well as the next steps including funding challenges. The different program activities were interspersed with breaks and raffle draws by ethnocultural seniors.

Key Messages from the forum:

- Many ethnocultural seniors suffer elder abuse and neglect in silence and isolation, because it mainly happens in familial relationships.
- Language barriers impact ethnocultural seniors' access to community services and exacerbate neglect and abuse.
- Family oriented preventative measures against elder abuse and neglect are most effective
- There is a general lack of services in Ottawa tailored to meet the needs of ethnocultural seniors experiencing abuse and neglect.
- There is the need for more culturally appropriate services in Ottawa.
- Seniors, service providers, decision-makers, and community members need to work together to address the elder abuse and neglect.
- Elder abuse and neglect are part of a broader social issue which might include poverty that many immigrant ethnocultural families experience.

Introduction

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is a hazy term for many ethnocultural seniors. For them, it juxtaposes two sharply contradictory terms. On one side is the term elder, which implies or exudes, respect, honor, wisdom and love. On the other side the word abuse, which, connotes deliberate harm, misuse and disrespect. Consequently, there is no direct translation of elder abuse in the language of many ethnocultural seniors. The question that emerges is how can we intentionally harm and hurt those we revere and honour at the same time? Although linguistic parallels cannot be drawn between the English language and the languages of many ethnocultural seniors, the scourge of elder abuse cannot be underestimated. In fact, the reverse is true, its consequences are exacerbated. Particularly, because there is a lot of silence around the term elder abuse- silence that is produced by the negative connotations the term evokes. The Ottawa police calls elder abuse a contemporary issue that is likely to intensify in the coming years². In order to further unpack elder abuse and neglect among ethnocultural communities we need to know more about ethnocultural seniors in Ottawa.

Who are Ethnocultural seniors?

Ethnocultural seniors are immigrant seniors from diverse ethnic origins with different social locations in Canada. Many of them do not speak either of Canada's two official languages or have them as a second or third language. This challenge makes it difficult to access social services in Canada. In Ottawa specifically, ethnocultural seniors speak over 93 different first languages. A

² Ottawa police website (<https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/about-us/Elder-Abuse.aspx>)

significant number of them come to Canada through family sponsorship and refugee claims. Taking a cue from the number of languages they speak, it is safe to say that they are not a homogenous group of people. They come from different parts of the world and enrich Canada's multiculturalism. While most of them might have been sponsored, a number of them immigrated to Canada when they were much younger and have pursued illustrious careers in Canada, serving their new country and home. Generally, immigrants contribute immensely to Canada's economy.

Ethnocultural seniors recognize the rich diversity in their communities and have elected to organize on their own with little or no support. Through these associations and groups, they reach out to community members, give voice to their pressing needs and celebrate their culture. They also play instrumental roles in helping newcomers to settle in. It is through the desire of these groups to speak out, know more and organize that the forum idea and topic was conceived.

Why ethnocultural seniors are silent about elder abuse?

Ethnocultural seniors are mainly silent about elder abuse because it is enmeshed in familial relationships. Many of them are worried that contesting or reporting abuse may disrupt their family. Also, they may be worried that outside intervention may not solve the problem but may create division and tension in the home. They mainly consider it a family problem that can be internally resolved. Beyond that, they do not trust that service providers outside the home may be able to resolve the problem. For instance, they fear police involvement would lead to the arrest and prosecution of their "own" family members and in some cases their children. Family members or children could have sponsored them to Canada or could be their primary caregivers. These peculiarities make elder abuse intimately complex and pervasive. Many elders continue to

suffer in silence and in isolation. It is thus important to understand how silence works to exacerbate the conditions of life of ethnocultural seniors experiencing abuse and neglect.

Silence around elder abuse in immigrant and ethnocultural communities makes it more pervasive and hidden. It was thus an important and laudable step to open up discussions in ethnocultural communities. Thanks to the Social Planning Council of Ottawa and the various stakeholders these conversations were started at the forum. The following sections of this report presents highlights from a collaborative forum designed and organized by ethnocultural seniors and the Social Planning Council of Ottawa.



Summary of Keynote Presentation



The keynote presentation was one of the major highlights of the forum. Ethnocultural seniors enjoyed the presentation by Shalini Konanur enormously as they could relate with the stories and case examples shared during her speech. All seniors were very attentive, and a few were observed nodding their heads in affirmation. The keynote speaker discussed the complexities of elder abuse and neglect by describing the multiple meanings it may have for ethnocultural seniors, and the ways in which she has navigated it in her legal practice.

Drawing on the World Health Organization's definition of elder abuse as "a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation

of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”³, Shalini discussed several facets of elder abuse. She explained barriers to understanding and resolving elder abuse in ethnocultural communities and discussed the types of abuse she has worked on in her practice at the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario.

According to Shalini, elder abuse and neglect in ethnocultural communities is considered an issue that should not be discussed outside the confines of the home. Elder abuse tends to be stigmatized within ethnocultural communities and that presents a barrier to access of social services. Another barrier that complicates elder abuse and neglect and compounds its effects is language barrier. The term “abuse” connotes horrifying images and understanding in many ethnocultural communities. Again, in many of the languages of ethnocultural seniors there is no direct translation of the term elder abuse and neglect so they may not understand the concept. Shalini cautioned that experts who use the term bluntly without considering the culture of ethnocultural seniors may run into communication barriers as the terms of use may differ for ethnocultural seniors. For Shalini, the way forward is to have a neutral interpretation of the word “abuse” when working with ethnocultural seniors. For example; constant yelling, belittling and social isolation may not be considered abuse. Shalini also noted that elder abuse and neglect is gendered in ethnocultural communities. The at-risk populations are typically women who are widowed, with limited access to resources, with children who have been in Canada for less than 10 years, have language barriers, and with healthcare needs⁴.

³ World Health Organization definition of elder abuse and neglect (https://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/en/)

⁴ Ammar, N.H. & Zaidi, A. (2016). Elderly abuse: An exploratory study of elderly members of the South Asian Community in the Greater Toronto Area. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal* 6:150. doi:10.4172/2151-6200.1000150

Case Example 1: Language Barrier

Marina came to my office recently. She came to Canada 6 years ago and was sponsored by her son. She is a widow and was told that she had to come and live with him in Canada.

Marina described many things that we would view as elder abuse but when we spoke, she was shocked but the use of the word “abuse”. She did not want to accept that her son’s treatment was abusive. She just wanted to know if we could convince him to give her some money to take the bus to the local mall.

Another contributing factor to elder abuse and neglect and the silence around it, is the precarious immigration status of some ethnocultural seniors. Many ethnocultural seniors may be sponsored to Canada by their children. Shalini notes that sponsors sign a 20-year undertaking to support their parents without relying on social assistance. Any assistance received would have to be paid back to the Canadian state. Ethnocultural seniors being aware of this, feel indebted to their children, and that may add to their vulnerability.

Additionally, some ethnocultural seniors may overstay their temporary resident visas and end up without a status or have a failed refugee claim. Shalini mentioned that in her experience, these seniors are the most vulnerable to abuse because they do not have access to many supports available to permanent residents. They may not even want to access supports or disclose abuse because of the fear of being deported. The fear of the police may also complicate issues further.

The case below provides an example

Case Example 2: Precarious immigration status

Last year I worked with Stella. Stella came to visit her children in Canada but then never returned to India. She had lived in Canada for almost 7 years when she came to see me. Stella was living with her daughter and son-in-law, who was physically abusive to her daughter and to her. Stella and her daughter refused to call the police because they were scared that Stella would be reported to immigration authorities and would be removed from Canada.

Elder abuse and neglect may be considered a criminal offence if the abusive act contravenes the criminal code. Some sections of the criminal code could be applied in family violence cases, including threats, assaults, etc. Under those cases people have the option of engaging the police. Shalini outlines a typical scenario of conversations that ensue between SALCO and victims of abuse and neglect.

“Can I get the charges dropped – No

Can I speak to my partner if there is a Recognizance of Bail (with conditions not to communicate) – No

Will CAS get involved if I call the police – Maybe

Can I be charged – some police forces subscribe to mandatory double charging (meaning that if your partner says that you also injured her/him then you could be charged as well)

Can criminal convictions impact immigration status – It depends (it can if you are a permanent resident, but it depends on the seriousness of the charge / the sentence given)”

Sometimes ethnocultural seniors may get confused because of the multiple layers of the law and do require patience and commitment in order to fully understand the complexities of the law. According to Shalini, although many ethnocultural seniors may not be in the know, there is a legal provision for compensation resulting from violent crime, including people who were hurt while trying to prevent a crime in Ontario. Violent crimes include (but not limited to) assault, sexual assault, and domestic assault (abuse by a spouse/partner).

Financial abuse is another form of abuse discussed by Shalini during her presentation. According to her, financial abuse is one of the most common and pervasive forms of elder abuse her outfit deals with. It takes varying forms within and outside ethnocultural communities. It may include:

- Taking pension money
- Pressuring an ethnocultural senior sign over property, sometimes internationally
- Coercing an ethnocultural senior to jointly buy property or take a loan

- Coercing an ethnocultural senior to change or sign a will or POA that they don't understand
- Misusing a Power of Attorney
- Health Care and Insurance Fraud
- Compelling an older adult to claim Employment Insurance for fake work
- Not providing any financial support
- Scams (tax scam, furnace scam and other forms of financial exploitation)
- Identity Theft

How do we support ethnocultural seniors experiencing elder abuse and neglect?

Shalini in her presentation, recommended the use of collaborative approaches that bring together culturally sensitive service providers to support ethnocultural seniors. Agencies who work on issues of family violence and those that provide non-legal support including supportive counseling, friendship circles, food support and other social supports could work collaboratively to curtail elder abuse. These agencies could work to;

- Create spaces to combat isolation
- Flag legal issues and connect ethnocultural seniors to appropriate resources
- Provide culturally and linguistically sensitive services
- Advocate for stronger supports for these vulnerable communities at all levels of government
- Educate and train service providers to understand the subtle and different ways elder abuse and neglect shows up in ethnocultural communities

Case Example 3: When collaborative approaches work

Mohammed came to see us in Mississauga. He had come to Canada 2 years back and was essentially stuck in the home. He did not understand the transit system and got no support from his family to leave the house, except with them. He had lost all of his independence that he had back home. We linked him to a group for Persian seniors that was run out of a local agency. Within one-year Mohammed has become active in the community and is now the vice-president of that senior's group. He was also able to stand up to his son and get back his immigration

documents and with the help of the group he opened his own bank account and gets his pension from back home directly into that account.

At the end of her presentation, Shalini shared some resources which are listed below;

Legal Aid: provides certificate coverage for refugee claims and for people without immigration status who want to make a humanitarian and compassionate application for permanent residence.

SALCO (South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario): we work with clients who have lost temporary status (ex visitor status) to see if we can gain it back, or to see what options are available for permanent residence in Canada (like the humanitarian and compassionate application). We also work with clients who are facing removal from Canada because of a lack of status, or who are being investigated by IRCC (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada) for misrepresentation.

Local Legal Clinics: Some legal clinics across the province provide immigration services while others do not. Each clinic has different levels of coverage

Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE) is another legal clinic that works in the area of elder abuse:

http://www.advocacycentreelderly.org/elder_abuse_-_introduction.php

Legal Aid Ontario has no services specifically related to financial abuse.

Nilambri's Monologue

On Growing Old: A Monologue

I am growing old. I do not hear very well – therefore, I am excluded, or at times I exclude myself. Deliberately. I am not as quick on my feet or as clever with my words as I used to be. I cannot help as much, and therefore feel I am becoming distant from my family members who are growing busier every minute of the day. They are surrounded by communication, but I cannot communicate with them – at least not at the pace they would like me to. I do not understand my grandchildren who have so many things to do and places to go to. Everyone is trying to turn them into super beings. I watch from where I am and feel dizzy simply thinking of all that their little minds are supposed to hold, and their little bodies supposed to do. My children grew up with so much less. They played outdoors with children from the neighbourhood. Wherever they found a field, they ran and kicked whatever they could find. It was very different. We were not as careful and did not seem as caring as the parents I see today.

I am also not that easy to live with, thanks to the pain in my joints. There are times when I am frustrated and want everything and everyone to go away. I cannot enjoy what I used to love in the past.

But I have lived long and worked hard. I have memories. I am your history. I can narrate in words what you will not find in a book. Sometimes, I feel like sitting in a museum, waiting for people to visit me. I see letters written by war heroes displayed in small, lit alcoves. I see faded parchment, old and stained. I see visitors poring over these letters. But here I am - a living letter. I promise, each time you read me, you will find something new. And the best part of it is that I am still

writing my stories and yours. I need you just as much as you need me, for I am your future just as much as you are my past.

Often, we tell our children that they have forgotten their culture, that they do not speak their language of origin. They have become too American or Canadian. What culture are we talking about? I tell you that these children and youth are on whom I have pinned my hopes. They might not speak my language, but they are the ones who will preserve it. If they do not understand me, I have not tried to understand them either. I have not been witness to their lives in schools and universities. I have been busy with my own issues. I have loved them but not lived them. I have not acknowledged their pain in growing up here as children, of not feeling like belonging anywhere. I need to experience their tears just as much as I love to speak of their growth and achievements.

The flight of stairs over which you jumped, five steps at a time, seems all too small now. The warm April air from mountains does not seem as warm anymore. The clear October Himalayan skies are no longer as blue, and the red and orange rhododendrons that used to set forest trees aflame are paler now. Even the howls of hungry jackals are too far to be heard. The sounds of the nagaras and the flute are subdued. There is an eerie calm waiting for the inevitable.

Listen to the silence spoken through eyes. Look for struggles behind wrinkles. Find new secrets - regrets, disappointments, and those unforgettable moments when we met, when you smiled, or when you spoke your first words. Listen to the soft fall of blossoms in the spring and snowflakes in the winter. They tell you that you will become me. In Wordsworth's words written over 200 years ago:

.....move along these shades

In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand

Touch – for there is a spirit in the woods.

“Gentle” is the word. Gentle, so that neither you nor I destroy the sweet balance of things.

Reflections:

Nilambri Ghai, an ethnocultural senior from the Sikh Community Services Ottawa and the ICCC (Seniors’ Program) presented a poetic piece that succinctly explored the trajectory of life of ethnocultural seniors. She begins by questioning our misconceptions of the aging body and addressing the social relations that produce ageism. She prods us to see value in the things we take for granted and urges us not to overlook our history in a fast-paced world. She questions our consumerist behaviours and our desire to know more and do more which places a lot of pressure on children. Concurrently, she invites seniors to tap into the intergenerational tensions that may exist in their everyday lives as they observe grandchildren being raised differently than they raised their kids.

Furthermore, she explores the frailties of the ageing body as though to prompt her listeners to think about the inevitable truth of their own ageing. She then switches swiftly to set her gaze on the valuable experience and knowledge that comes with age - knowledge and experience that is often neglected and unexplored by this generation, she asserts. Nilambri then bring us to a place of intergenerational engagement and collaboration, resolute in her claim that it is the only way we can advance our identity and culture.

Nilambri concludes by reminding listeners that openness to seniors would allow them to uncover many important aspects of the future in the past.



Video presentation

Three impactful videos were presented at the forum by Chandra Hapuarachchi and Judy Madhosingh on behalf of ethnocultural seniors and Hot Shoe production. The creation of the videos was a collaborative process in which Hot Shoe production and ethnocultural seniors worked through several iterations of the videos until the final version was made. The videos depicted scenarios of financial abuse, physical and emotional abuse.

More importantly, the videos were used as a catalyst to stir up conversations and discussions that would last beyond the duration of the forum. The videos were a powerful means of conveying truths about elder abuse and neglect and how it operates within ethnocultural communities. The forum planning committee believed that videos could convey the message more effectively than other means, hence their choice.

Furthermore, the video making process itself was an empowering one for the seniors who participated in it as they felt the video gave them the opportunity to share their stories and experiences. The videos were appreciated by ethnocultural seniors with applause after each of them was played. Many pondered about the issues discussed in the videos. Altogether the videos provided a good background for the panel discussions that followed.

Panel discussions

Panel discussions which followed the video presentations were very informative. The panel discussants were, Stéphanie Cadieu- an Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario's Regional Consultant, Eastern Region; Det. Isabelle Ouellette, Ottawa Police Service, Elder Abuse and Vulnerable Adult section; Kim McDonald and Andréa Katz, Elder Abuse Response and Referral Service (EARRS); and Dr. Indu Gambhir, a physician. The diverse practice experience of panel members enriched the conversations at the forum. They were able to unpack and explain several issues and services as they related to ethnocultural seniors.



Among other things panel discussants talked about the social isolation their clients experienced, the difficulties in communicating with ethnocultural seniors for whom English or French is not a first language, stigmatization of abuse in ethnocultural communities, and the

challenges of reaching populations who are experiencing abuse behind closed doors. Also, all discussants agreed that the services they provided needed to improve in order to meet the needs of ethnocultural seniors. That notwithstanding, they talked about utilizing several workarounds to adapt services to many immigrant seniors.

Det. Isabelle Ouellette mentioned a third-party report system that allowed another person to report elder abuse on behalf of the elder and an online report system that allows individuals experiencing elder abuse to send a report in any language. She also noted that the Ottawa police had two officers designated to investigate elder abuse in the Ottawa area.

Kim McDonald and Andréa Katz talked about community outreach and engagement as a means of meeting the needs of ethnocultural seniors in Ottawa. Andréa explained that the model that works best in their experience is face-to-face engagement. In her account, word of mouth exchange is a strong means of advertising services as it allows providers to explain services and clarify any misunderstanding.

Stéphanie Cadieu focused mainly on services her organization provides to support elders in abusive relationships. She was very reflexive in her discussions as she recognized the many challenges her agency experienced in their work with ethnocultural seniors. She highlighted the lack of capacity to reach seniors because of the limited number of employees and consultants in her agency.

Dr. Indu Gambhir also explained the intersections between elder abuse and neglect, and the health care system. For Dr. Gambhir, issues of privacy are deeply enmeshed in elder abuse especially, in cases where victims cover up for the perpetrator. In her experience, doctors

cannot do much if victims do not want to take action. Additionally, Dr. Gambhir discussed language barriers and the complexities that emerge when patients are not mentally competent to communicate their experiences.

Ethnocultural seniors were very engaged throughout the panel discussions. After the panel presentations, discussants were asked several important questions. Ethnocultural seniors were concerned about the following questions;

- How can we identify and resolve hidden elder abuse and neglect?
- How can we involve faith communities in breaking the silence around elder abuse and neglect?
- Can social service agencies involved in teaching English as a second language potentially solve the language barrier problem?
- What about the broader issues like poverty, mobility, and funding?
- How do we empower seniors to help each other?
- How do we create opportunities for intergenerational engagement as we address elder abuse and neglect?
- What can seniors do if their identity is stolen?

Panel discussants responded to these questions to the best of their abilities. However, because of time constraints, the conversations ended with a number of seniors wanting to engage further. While that demonstrated the keenness of seniors to engage in productive conversations during the forum, it is a flaw that needs to be addressed in future forums.

Concluding remarks



Dianne Urquhart, the Executive Director SPCO gave the concluding remarks of the forum. She succinctly presented an overview of the program and encouraged ethnocultural seniors and community stakeholders to keep the conversation going. She noted that the next steps would include:

- Carrying on conversations that will break the silence around elder abuse and neglect
- Empowering seniors experiencing abuse and neglect
- Continually engaging service providers on the complexities and intersections of culture, behavior, language, poverty and other structural issues in elder abuse and neglect
- Training culturally competent knowledge brokers
- Creating an Advocacy and Access committee
- Debrief meeting December 12, 2019

Daine further elaborated on SPCO's involvement with the 26 grassroots ethnocultural groups and their leaders who work collectively with SPCO. She also asserted that the funding landscape was changing as the three-year New Horizons grant from the Federal government was coming to an end. She also talked about the ongoing projects like the push for a second free day for seniors in Ottawa to take the OC Transpo. Her concluding thoughts were very remarkable as she laid emphasis on the overall purpose of the forum and SPCO's mandate as an agency.

Among other things, she noted that;

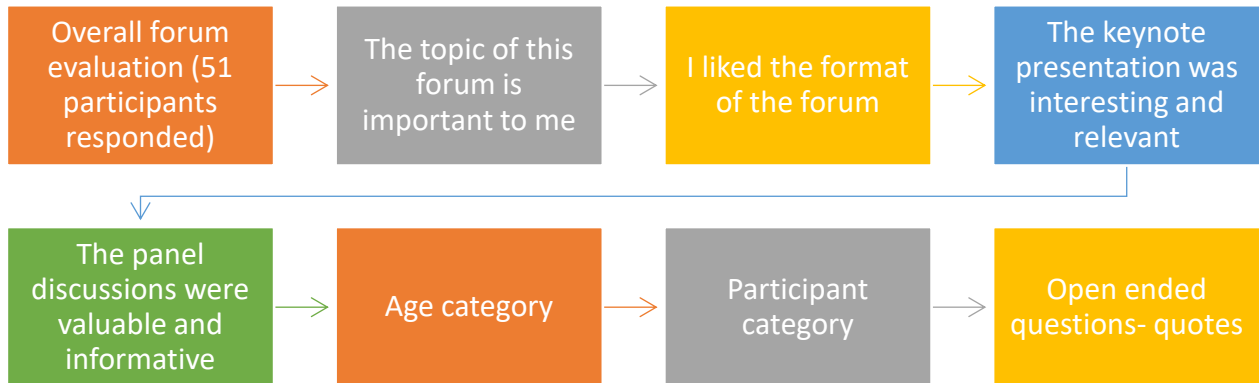
- Seniors want to age in communities with strong community organizations, infrastructure and social services that are publicly funded.
- Seniors need strong communities that provide healthcare, social services, consistent income, home care, and support for families with seniors.
- The future of our communities should be one of communities of support and communities of identity. When we have strong communities of identity positive things happen.
- We need to address the increasing cost of living, rental space, insurance, transportation, individualized care and other systemic and structural challenges.

The forum closed with lots of cheers and congratulatory messages to SPCO and ethnocultural seniors for a successful event.

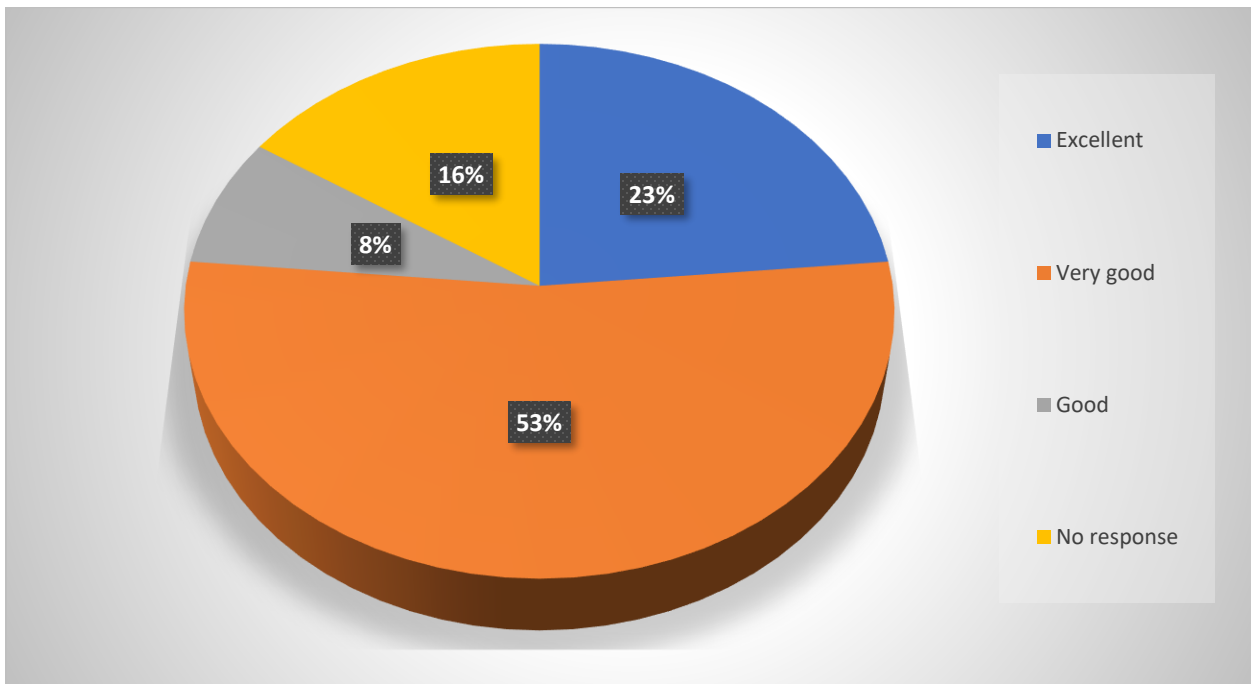
Program Evaluation

Evaluation questions were a mix of open and closed ended questions. In all, fifty-one participants completed the evaluation form. Their responses are reviewed below.

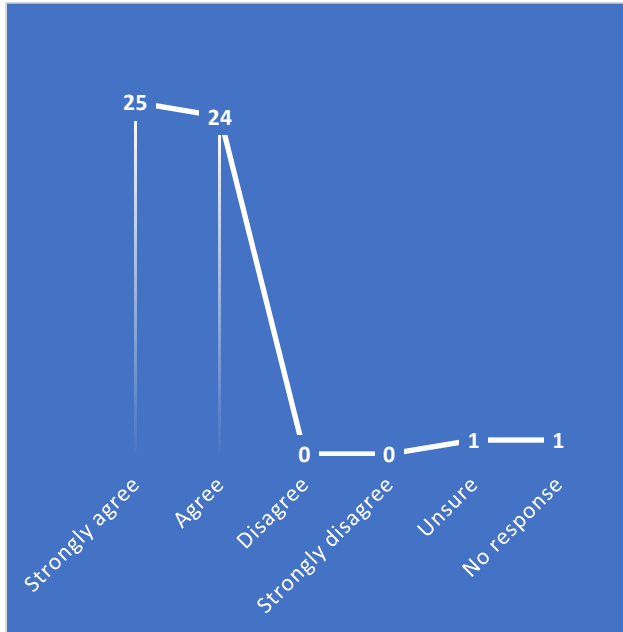
Questions:



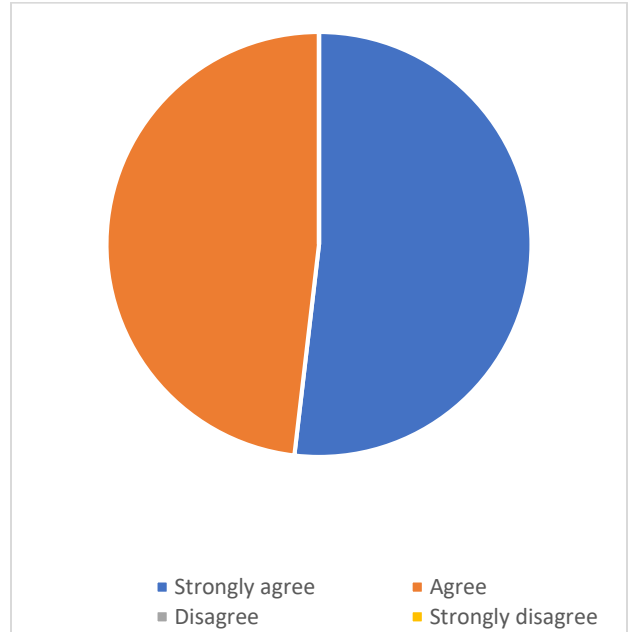
Overall forum evaluation:



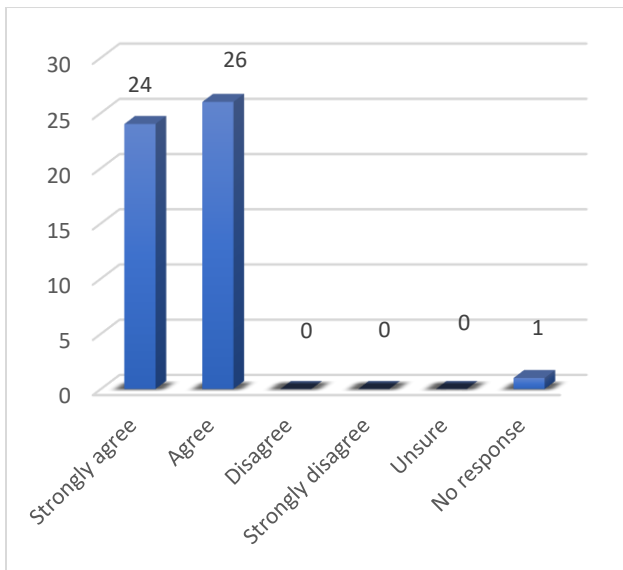
The topic of this forum was important to me:



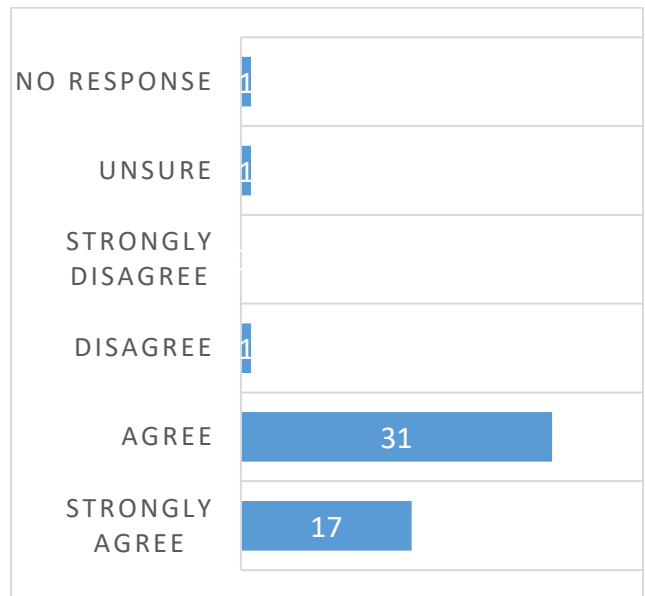
The keynote presentation was interesting and relevant:



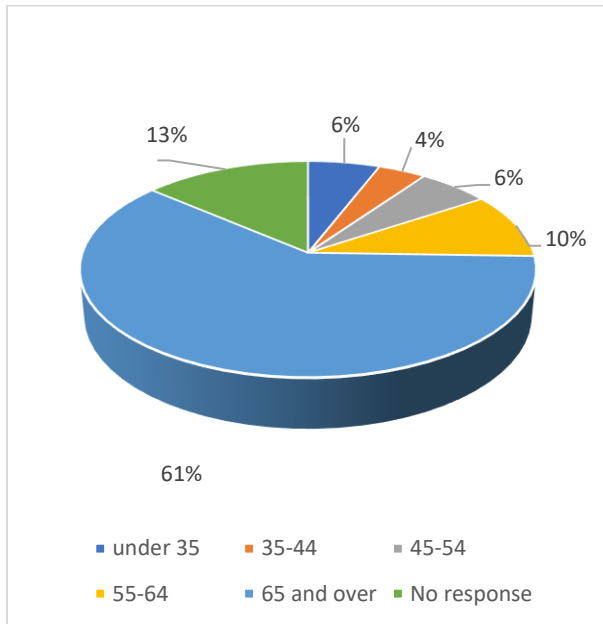
I liked the format of the forum:



The panel discussions were valuable and informative:



Age Category:



What did You find most useful about the forum?

Keynote, panel presentations, knowledge on financial abuse, teamwork and participation, awareness created, the opportunities for networking, the involvement of the police, how immigration status is connected to abuse, legal resources, and knowledge on available resources and services.

Direct quotes

“Excellent presentation from the keynote speaker; great legal resources”

“Keynote speaker was very interesting and informative. Good focus on community resources available”

“All presentations were good, useful and very informative, specially videos and panel discussions”

“Overall the forum provided lots of information on the work of SPCO and its partners”

“We all learned lots of rights we have, ones we did not know, also being the leader of the community, I learned a lot which I could talk to my seniors’ about in social gatherings”

“well presented and full of knowledgeable information. I thought the keynote speaker covered the topic very well and I could relate to the fear some elders had and the courage they had to muster to come and complain”

Participant category:



How could the forum be improved for next time?

More time for questions, limit the time for answers, small group discussions, community members on the panel, brochures about community resources, involving seniors and their children, inter-generational panel discussion, less time on raffle, French translation, more time for lunch, and opportunities for elders to present real life experiences.

Direct quotes

“Involving more seniors will be great”

“I believe this valuable forum should be planned to cover the whole day”

“Limit forum questions to one person, limit length of answers. Will keep it more focused”

“Occasionally hold these forums on the weekend and encourage seniors to bring their adult children”

“Brochures about different community resources from representing organizations or service providers. Provide interpretation”

“Elders presenting their experience in their own language and translation by interpreter”

What topics do you think should be addressed at a future ethno-cultural minority senior’s forum?

Senior involvement in the community, immigration and family sponsorship, ageing at home, financial literacy, accessing health services, advice about scams, and funding for ethnocultural senior groups.

Direct quotes

“Ageing at home with family”

“SPCO direction and support for ethnocultural seniors’ groups. What service and resources are available to them including training?”

“Someone from Immigration Canada can be invited to share on family sponsorship at the next forum”

“Barriers to accessing health services”

“How to encourage seniors’ involvement in the community”

“Language and cultural barriers in diverse community”

“Longer video on elder abuse and discussion after the video presentation”

“financial literacy for seniors”

“The next topics should be about health; how to prevent falling down, dementia, public transportation”

Appendix A: Links to Videos

Below are links to videos produced by SPCO, Ethnocultural Seniors, and Hot Shoes Productions. These videos allowed ethnocultural seniors to portray scenarios of financial, physical and emotional abuse. They are powerful, evocative and short. They were created to trigger the sensibilities of viewers to a very important issue. The silence, pauses and gestures of actors and actresses speak volumes about elder abuse and neglect in our communities.

1. PSA 1- <https://youtu.be/oW9LRs95HG4>
2. PSA 2- <https://youtu.be/7jaOvS3d7ew>
3. PSA 3- https://youtu.be/dL_lujlefN4

Appendix B: Sponsors and Exhibitors

Gold Sponsors



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Sincere gratitude and thanks to



**United Way
Centraide
Ottawa**



Exhibitors



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Appendix C: Photos from the Event





