



ANISHINAABE INDIGENOUS INTERGENERATIONAL GROWING OLD/AGING



January 15, 2025
Peterborough Public Library,
Nogjiwanong/Ptbo, Ontario



Table of Contents

3 • The AIIGO and its Importance

5 • Description of the Gathering

8 • Community Impact: Insights on the Impact of the AIIGO Gathering

11 • Decolonization/Indigenization

13 • Key Takeaways

Acknowledgements

The event was generously supported by the Canada Institutes of Health Research Café Scientifique program and the Office of the President, Trent University. We also thank Janice McCue Turtle Crossing and Thomas O. GrandFather's Kitchen for their delicious food and the Trent Colleges for gifts provided.

This report was prepared in summer 2025 by Dr. Nadine Changfoot, Leighla Foster, Darien Kenny, and William Rizza.

Photography by Justin Beaudoin, Matthew Dishaw, Elenor Marano, Devyn Pulver

To cite this Report: Foster, L., Kenny, D., Rizza, W., Changfoot, N. Anishinaabe Indigenous Intergenerational Growing Old/Aging Gathering Report (AIIGO). (2025). Trent Centre for Aging & Society, 14pp.



Photo: Nadine Changfoot (dark/silver hair, black shirt) and Alice Olsen Williams (dark/silver hair, red cardigan) smiling in front of a quilt.

The AIIGO & Its Importance

AIIGO stands for Anishinaabe Indigenous Intergenerational Growing Old/Aging Gathering. Developed with support from the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies, the Trent Centre for Aging & Society (TCAS) hosted this community-engaged event, focusing on bringing together Indigenous knowledge, academic research, and public engagement to explore Indigenous perspectives on growing old/aging.



Dr. Nadine Changfoot (dark/silver hair, sparkly black top) speaks at a lectern.



Group photo of about 30 of the event's attendees featuring Alice Olsen Williams' quilt work in the background. Many people are wearing red or orange.

TCAS partnered with Indigenous Elders and community members from Anishinaabe nations Curve Lake and Hiawatha on January 15, 2025 by hosting a Gathering for interested and enthusiastic learners living in and around Peterborough/Nogojiwanong, regionally, nationally, and internationally (via Zoom) by integrating panels, keynote speakers, and cultural practices surrounding Indigenous views on growing old/aging.

AIIGO challenged dominant Western biomedical aging models, such as the idea of “successful aging” and showcased the critical gap in public and academic discussions by forefronting Indigenous ways of growing old/aging instead. At this time, the phrase “growing old” is more commonly used by Anishinaabeg of Curve Lake and Hiawatha. By bringing in Indigenous intergenerational knowledge, community-based and culturally rooted approaches that incorporate spirituality, land, and communal well-being, and increasing the awareness of systemic racism, classism, and ableism’s effects on growing old/aging in Indigenous communities, the AIIGO aimed to foster a more inclusive and equitable understanding of aging.



Bailey Taylor (long dark hair, green sweatshirt, and red-patterned ribbon skirt) sits on a blue chair speaking into a mic with a plushie dog, "Sage", on her lap. Anne Taylor (dark braided hair, orange cardigan, black patterned ribbon skirt) sits near her, smiling.

Don't be scared to age, cause it's going to happen, but also realize that it is going to happen, so don't make any regrets along the way because it happens fast.

—Bailey Taylor



But they'd sit there and they'd visit and it was so beautiful because it would be filled with laughter and joy and love and the stories would keep going. And it didn't matter who it was who'd come to visit, Granny always had something to share with them.

—Anne Taylor



From left to right: Alice Olsen Williams, Bailey Taylor, Anne Taylor, Sandra Moore. They are all sitting on separate blue chairs, all smiling at one another. The AIIGO logo is on screen behind them.

The main goals of this event were to foster intergenerational dialogue between Elders, youth, researchers, and community members; integrate Indigenous values such as spiritual, emotional, cultural, and environmental into understandings and practices of growing old/aging; use community-centred conversations that decolonize research on growing old/aging and promote inclusivity; share knowledge and experiences around Indigenous growing old/aging with the audience to enhance public understanding; and to create network-building among Indigenous and settler participants to promote ongoing collaboration and advocacy.

Description of the Gathering



Dr. Nadine Changfoot (dark/silver hair, black sweater) stands at a lectern. Alice Olsen Williams (dark/silver hair, yellow shirt) and panellist Bailey Taylor (dark hair, green sweater, and red ribbon skirt) are seated.

*While you're alive, do it.
—Sandra Moore*

This was followed by a keynote panel moderated by Dr. Nadine Changfoot (Director (Acting), of TCAS) and Alice Olsen Williams. The speakers—Sandra Moore (Hiawatha First Nation), Anne Taylor (Curve Lake First Nation), and Bailey Taylor (Curve Lake First Nation)—were asked to share a story of growing old/aging intergenerationally.

Moore spoke first, sharing several lessons she learned throughout her life watching older family members as a child and discovering new passions as an adult. From painful memories of embarrassment to humorous tales of parental lenience for youngest siblings, Moore kept the audience rapt, rendering her final piece of wisdom all the more powerful. Through bold career moves and exploring traditional Anishinaabe art, Moore came to realize that “you’re never too old to reinvent yourself,” and has taken up the calling of sharing her knowledge with as many people as she can.

Hosted at the Peterborough Public Library, the event was physically accessible, and further accessibility efforts included the virtual participation option, accessible seating, and an access guide. The event opened with breakfast from Janice McCue’s Turtle Crossing Catering (Curve Lake), an opening ceremony by Anishinaabe Elder Alice Olsen Williams (Trout Lake/Curve Lake First Nation), and a moving and powerful performance by spoken word poet Sarah Lewis (Curve Lake First Nation). Following this, Julie Davis, Vice President of External Relations and Development at Trent, gave an update on the University’s Integrated Seniors Village initiative.

More on the senior’s village:
trentu.ca/aging/university-integrated-seniors-village



Sandra Moore (short silver hair, long-sleeved red shirt) speaks at the lectern. Dr. Nadine Changfoot (dark/silver hair, black sweater) listens with eyes closed.

*What a beautiful way to end this life,
to go out with a smile on your face,
with your arms wide open and
talking to those you love in your own
language. —Anne Taylor*



Bailey Taylor (long dark hair, green shirt, red ribbon skirt) listens to Anne Taylor (dark braided hair, orange cardigan, ribbon skirt). Both are seated in blue chairs

Next to speak was Anne Taylor, who depicted a moving portrait of her intergenerational, community-oriented household growing up. She emphasized the teachings of several of her grandparents, though much of the focus was on her great-granny, who taught kindness and generosity by sharing her home, food, and drink with anyone who needed it. Taylor's most important lesson came from witnessing her great granny pass away on her own terms, surrounded by family: "You don't have to fear what's coming; it's going to come anyway."



Access the keynote panel:
trentu.ca/aging/indigenous-aging

Finally, Bailey Taylor shared insights on growing up with an Indigenous mother and a non-Indigenous father. She noted distance and a fear of growing old/aging on her father's side, with intergenerationality and anticipation for growing old/aging on her mother's side. Taylor grew emotional, frustrated with the Western tendency to avoid and ignore death, while Anishinaabeg keep their loved ones alive through storytelling. Through parenting, addictions work, and guidance from her family, she has learned that "[aging is] going to be okay," joking, "I don't mean to brag—but I got my first white hair like a month ago."

After the learning, laughter, and tears of the morning, it was time for lunch—traditional and delicious Anishinaabe food catered by Thomas O's Grandfather's Kitchen (Curve Lake) —as well as a talk by Guelph PhD candidate, now UofT faculty, Angela Easby (Métis & Anishinaabe). Titled "Learning How to be in Good Relation Across Generations through Anishinaabemowin," Easby highlighted the importance of building a language learning approach based on care, being trauma-informed, and making space to be imaginative and silly together.

Aging is a beautiful thing. It's a blessing.

—Bailey Taylor



Angela Easby (dark hair, orange shirt, greenish shawl) speaks into a mic at a lectern.



Elenor Marano (dark curly hair, black shirt with red rose pattern) speaks into a mic and holds a notebook.

As part of the effort to value the knowledge of participants as well as speakers, TCAS Knowledge Mobilization Assistant Elenor Marano shared “Conversation Connections” with the group, which were discussion topics, reactions, and reflections that audience members had during the break.

We need to reimagine what growing old should be like, not just for Indigenous people, but for everybody.
—Dr. Sean Hillier

The afternoon keynote, “Indigenous approaches to aging: how we can achieve ‘living the good life’ during our later stages of life,” was by Dr. Sean Hillier (Mi’kmaw, Qalipu First Nation), Associate Dean of Research & Innovation and an associate professor in the Faculty of Health at York University. His research involved travelling around Canada and the world, exploring aging-related initiatives led by Indigenous peoples. A main similarity he noted was the effort to shift from eldercare based on arbitrary numbers (i.e. age 65) to one that “meet[s] people where they are.”

Among the strategies Hillier featured were programming and learning opportunities for seniors and youth, language revitalization through the use of a large language model, and Māori iwi in Aotearoa/New Zealand that developed a long-term care facility, not for their own community, but for the settlers outside. The process allowed them to invest money in education, create infrastructure like intergenerational homes, and share their traditional care practices with wider society. Hillier urged that for these types of changes to occur, we need to consider seven “interconnected elements...culture, community, holistic health, spirituality, respect, land, and resilience.”

Following this was a question period where audience members prompted Dr. Hillier to expand on the challenges of incorporating Artificial Intelligence into Indigenous language preservation, the knowledge emerging on sexuality in older adults and how that overlaps with Hillier’s HIV work, and a dementia-friendly community created by Indigenous peoples in Taiwan. Alice Olsen Williams led the closing ceremony, and all speakers were offered honorariums and gifts for sharing their knowledge and time.



Dr. Sean Hillier (short dark hair, beard, pale blue dress shirt with a beaded red t-shirt pin on it) speaks at a lectern.



Access Dr. Hillier’s Talk:
[trentu.ca/aging/
indigenous-aging](https://trentu.ca/aging/indigenous-aging)

Community Impact

The impact of the AIIGO Gathering on the community highlights its importance in centring Indigenous knowledge, reframing growing old/aging through Anishinaabe perspectives, and fostering meaningful dialogue among community members, researchers, and knowledge users. Drawing from detailed survey responses shows that the AIIGO was impactful and transformative for many attendees. The survey results provide strong evidence of community engagement, emotional resonance, and participant satisfaction, while also offering critical feedback for future AIIGO events. Together, these responses affirm the value of the AIIGO and underscore the importance of supporting culturally grounded, community-led research events.

The Importance of the AIIGO

The Anishinaabe Indigenous Intergenerational Growing Old (AIIGO) Gathering, was a powerful example of how Indigenous-led, community-based events can create transformative public dialogue. Rather than following a conventional academic model, the AIIGO grounded itself in Anishinaabe worldviews, food, story-sharing, and intergenerational exchange, challenging colonial assumptions about growing old/aging, research, and knowledge production.

At the heart of AIIGO's importance was its ability to reframe growing old/aging. In settler-colonial contexts, aging is often associated with decline, isolation, and loss of value. AIIGO instead offered a perspective rooted in being seen (recognition), connection, wisdom, and responsibility. A participant shared that the event made them rethink growing old/aging entirely, saying, "if settlers could say the same, what a difference that would be." This shift in perspective is not simply symbolic; it has real implications for how health research, care, and policy are understood and developed in Canada through the perspective of aging studies.



Feeling "a sense of hope" about aging —A participant following the Gathering



Alice Olsen Williams (dark/silver hair with bangs, a yellow T-shirt, and red patterned cardigan) speaks into a microphone.



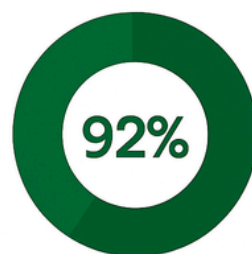
Julie Davis (dark/silver hair, grey blazer) smiling and speaking at a lectern.

The event's format was central to its impact. Designed to be inclusive, relational, and culturally grounded, AllGO welcomed e/Elders, youth, researchers, knowledge users, and community members into the same space. Participants shared food, listened to stories, and connected across age and background. Children played, people knitted, and informal conversation flowed between structured sessions. These elements made the Gathering feel deeply relational and accessible. Survey responses repeatedly praised this atmosphere, with one calling it "transformative" and another describing it as "unlike any academic or public event I've attended."

Survey Results from the Café Scientifique Program

The post-event survey, completed by 49 attendees, offers compelling evidence of AllGO's success and significance. Satisfaction levels were overwhelmingly high: 100% of respondents were satisfied, with 92% saying they were very satisfied. All respondents agreed that the Gathering met its key objective of bringing together researchers, knowledge users, and the public to share and learn from one another. Importantly, participants also found value across all forms of knowledge shared: of respondents, 98% appreciated the insights of researchers, 100% found knowledge users' contributions helpful, and 92% valued audience perspectives.

POST-EVENT SURVEY RESULTS



**Very
satisfied**

49 respondents agreed that the gathering met its key objective of bringing together researchers, knowledge users, and the public to share and learn from one another

98%

Appreciated the insights of researchers

100%

Found knowledge users' contributions helpful

92%

Valued audience perspectives

More than just metrics of success, these responses highlight the power of community-led engagement. One attendee noted that “being able to share academic research with public audiences is really important, particularly for decolonizing research topics.” AllGO showed that when research is rooted in community priorities and presented through culturally meaningful formats, it becomes more relevant, accessible, and transformative.

At the same time, the survey surfaced areas for growth. Respondents asked for stronger accessibility, such as live captioning, larger slide fonts, and clearer break schedules. Some wanted more opportunities for audience participation and activities that encouraged interaction among attendees. Many appreciated that community voices were the highest priority and would like to see more of this when space is shared between community and academics. .

“A larger, longer event...could be more impactful with more community involvement.”
—A participant following the event

Key learnings, Recommendations, and the Future of AllGO

These reflections from participants are evidence of deep engagement. Attendees were highly engaged; they were active participants who cared enough to offer honest feedback. 88% of respondents said they would attend a future Café Scientifique, and 86% would recommend it to others. This sustained interest speaks to the importance of AllGO and future gatherings on Indigenous growing old/aging.

Ultimately, AllGO is important because it models what ethical, decolonial, and community-driven public engagement can look like. It demonstrated that Indigenous knowledge doesn't belong on the margins of research—it belongs at the centre. By creating space for listening, learning, and intergenerational connection, AllGO offered a new way of thinking about growing old/aging and a new way of doing research itself.



Sarah Lewis (dark ponytail, pale pink blazer) reciting poetry at a lectern.

Decolonization/Indigenization

One of TCAS's Key Objectives is to share the experiences and knowledge of Indigenous older adults and Elders and emphasize the possibilities opened by incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing about growing old/aging into academia. AllGO upheld this goal by bringing together Indigenous peoples and settlers and breaking down academic and generational barriers, both decolonizing and Indigenizing those relationships. This is particularly vital work for TCAS to carry out as an academic organization.

A study at a Canadian university found that Indigenous faculty and students often end up taking on more decolonizing work than their settler counterparts and that they do so without recognition or compensation (Steinman & Scoggins, 2020). Furthermore, faculty described feeling isolated from their communities as they prioritized projects like research papers over community engagement just to "survive" within the university (Steinman & Scoggins, 2020, p. 83). Decolonization and Indigenization are therefore integral to revalidating community advocacy, the arts, and other 'non-academic' forms of sharing knowledge. They also play a role in designing healthier ways of growing old/aging as Dr. Sean Hillier emphasized in his keynote.

Decolonization is "the dismantling of colonial ideologies that continue to subjugate Indigenous Peoples whilst prioritizing Euro-Western thought-ways, systems, and approaches" (Huguenin, 2021).

Indigenization for an academic institution means creating space for both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems to inform our learning, without positioning one over the other. Indigenizing is emphasized in this process due to the way Western epistemologies are already accepted as the norm (Huguenin, 2021).

These terms can have different meanings for different places, times, communities or individuals (Steinman & Scoggins, 2020). They are ongoing, evolving processes, not quantifiable goals to achieve. The short explanations provided here are informed by the writers' positionalities as settler and Indigenous persons living in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe territory in Nogojiwanong/Peterborough.



Lauren Briand (dark braid, maroon shirt) presents Sean Hillier (short dark hair, beard, light blue dress shirt) with a black giftbag.

Hillier's work is part of a growing body of research exploring the health benefits of decolonization. Cornect-Benoit et al. (2020) analyze the effects of colonization on 'brain aging,' a term which recognizes the disproportionate effects of Alzheimer's and dementia on Indigenous populations in Canada. Their study demonstrates how Anishinaabe approaches to brain aging like two-way knowledge sharing can improve memory and wellbeing, preserve language and culture, and turn barriers (e.g., technology) into learning opportunities. Current systemic factors, like government funding that divides age groups, necessitate widespread decolonization and Indigenization to enable "the impacts that intergenerational interactions will have on all the generations and the community as a whole" (p. 280).

There is local interest in initiatives like this, from survey responses asking for more events like AIIGO and previous intergenerational events held in 2019, for example. One was a two-day arts-based project had participants create a collaborative art piece reflecting on questions like 'what would make this community age-friendly?' (Chazan & Whetung, 2022, p 2). A second was an art-based research project where participants created short multimedia documentaries of their lived experience of growing old/aging (Changfoot et al., 2022). These past projects amplify older peoples' lives, resonating with the poignant growing old stories shared by morning keynote panelists at the AIIGO.

TCAS looks forward to being a continuing part of decolonizing and Indigenizing growing old/aging to build healthier, more connected communities.



Alice Olsen Williams (dark hair, bangs, yellow t-shirt) smudges Anne Taylor (dark braid, orange cardigan) with a feather during the morning panel.

References:

- Chazan, May & Whetung, Madeline. (2022). "Carving a future out of the past and the present": *Rethinking aging futures*. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 63, 100937–100937. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2021.100937>
- Changfoot, N., et al. 2022. Revisioning aging: Indigenous, crip and queer renderings. *Journal of Aging Studies* 63: 1-9.
- Cornect-Benoit, Ashley; Pitawanakwat, Karen; Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory Collaborating First Nation Community, Walker, Jennifer; Manitowabi, Darrel & Jacklin, Kristen. (2020). Nurturing Meaningful Intergenerational Social Engagements to Support Healthy Brain Aging for Anishinaabe Older Adults. *Canadian journal on aging = La revue canadienne du vieillissement*, 39(2), 263–283. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0714980819000527>
- Huguenin, Mitchell. (2021). Communicating positively: A guide on terminology. *Trent Teaching Commons*. <https://www.trentu.ca/teaching/communicating-positively-guide-terminology>
- Steinman, Erich & Scoggins, Scott. (2020). Cautionary Stories of University Indigenization: Institutional Dynamics, Accountability Struggles, and Resilient Settler Colonial Power. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 44(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.17953/aicrj.44.1.steinman_scoggins

Key Takeaways



AIIGO room during the morning panel. Sandra Moore speaks to the crowd, who are sitting around white circular tables and looking in her direction.

An outstanding, transformative, and creative event! —A participant following the event

This gathering was truly moving. I am so thankful I witnessed and heard the teaching and stories shared. —An AIIGO participant



From left to right: Dr. Nadine Changfoot, Alice Olsen Williams, Bailey Taylor, Anne Taylor, Sandra Moore. Nadine is standing and speaking, while the rest are all sitting on blue chairs.

- AIIGO placed Intergenerational Indigenous knowledge at the forefront, challenging conventional academic models and promoting community-led perspectives on growing old/aging.
- The Gathering shifted the narrative around growing old/aging from one of decline to one of connection, wisdom, and intergenerational responsibility rooted in Anishinaabe and Indigenous worldviews.
- AIIGO created an inclusive space where Elders, youth, researchers, and community members shared stories, knowledge, and experiences, promoting understanding and collaboration.
- AIIGO modelled ethical, decolonial research practices by prioritizing community needs, incorporating cultural protocols, and ensuring accessibility for all participants.
- The event had a transformative impact on participants by promoting a sense of hope and connection, encouraging new ways of thinking about growing old/aging, and fostering a deeper appreciation for Indigenous traditions and values.

"I think this event was really important to educate the public about Indigenous perspectives on aging. It reminded everyone that there is not only one way, or a "right" way to age. The insights shared by the panel and by the researchers can help those working in the field of geriatrics." —A participant



AIIGO
TRENT UNIVERSITY
TRENT CENTRE FOR AGING & SOCIETY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
CIHR
IRSC Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

Looking for more from TCAS?

Check us out:



trentu.ca/aging/



aging@trentu.ca



[@trentaging](https://twitter.com/trentaging)



[@trentaging](https://www.instagram.com/trentaging)



[TrentAging](https://www.facebook.com/TrentAging)



[@trentaging](https://www.youtube.com/trentaging)

AIIGO Organizers

Dr. Nadine Changfoot- TCAS Director (Acting)

Dr. Elizabeth Russell - TCAS Executive

Dr. Liana Brown- TCAS Executive

Dr. Paula Sherman- Co-Director, Chanie Wenjack School of Indigenous Studies

Dr. Suzanne Bailey- TCAS Executive, Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Mariana Castelli Rosa - PhD Candidate, Cultural Studies

Heidi Burns- TCAS Graduate Associate

Matt Dishaw- TCAS Knowledge Mobilization Hub Coordinator

Taylor Reilly-Smith- TCAS Administrative Assistant

Lauren Briand - TCAS Knowledge Mobilization Assistant

Elenor Marano - TCAS Knowledge Mobilization Assistant

Leighla Foster - TCAS Knowledge Mobilization Assistant

Isabelle Row- TCAS Undergraduate Associate

Devyn Pulver - TCAS Knowledge Mobilization Assistant

AIIGO Group Photo

Digital Copy

