

AIRP
Aging in the Right Place
PARTNERSHIP

VABE
Vieillir au Bon Endroit
PARTENARIAT



2021 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

May 2021



CONTENTS

02

A Message from our Program Director

03

Featured - Open Access Article

04

City Updates

Vancouver - 4

Montreal - 7

Calgary - 9

10

Profiles on Postdoctoral Fellows

14

Blog Posts

A Message from our Program Director

What a year it's been! Last April, we were fortunate to be awarded a 5-year grant from the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council joint initiative. Looking back at how much has happened in the past 12 months, I am amazed at what has been achieved amidst such a trying and turbulent time. While the pandemic introduced a number of new challenges and hoops to jump through, I am so pleased to serve as the Project Director on a project that involves collaboration and partnership with such a dedicated and committed group of colleagues, community partners, students, and lived experience advisors!

Research activities were initiated this past October in Vancouver, Calgary, and Montreal. In each of the cities we have been working with one community organization that is the provider of a “promising practice.” In Vancouver, we have been working with [Senior Services Society of BC](#), which operates the [Temporary Housing Program](#), which provides temporary accommodations to homeless seniors for 3 to 6 months while they look for permanent housing. In Calgary, we are now working with Kerby Centre, which operates the [Kerby Rotary Shelter](#), an emergency shelter for adults age 55+ fleeing from elder abuse. And, in Montreal, we have been working with the [Old Brewery Mission](#), which operates La Traversée, long-term affordable community housing for persons aged 50+ without fixed homes. These “promising practices” offer models of emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing for older persons experiencing homelessness. We have been reviewing existing documents, conducting interviews with providers and clients, and have developed a new tool to conduct environmental audits of these promising practices. Over the next several months, we will be sifting through the data to identify ways in which these models support the health and social needs of older persons experiencing homelessness and the ability for these models to support aging in the right place.

As we move into Year 2 of the AIRP-VABE Partnership, I am looking forward to hearing everyone's feedback through our Annual Partnership Survey and finding ways to increase our connections through research, training, and knowledge mobilization activities. Be sure to stay up-to-date with our project updates on [our new website](#) and on our social media channels: [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Stay safe and be well,



Sarah Canham
Project Director

Featured - Open Access Article

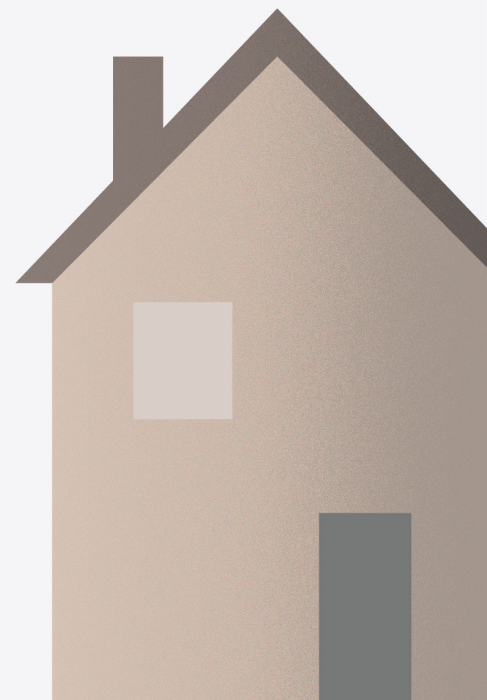
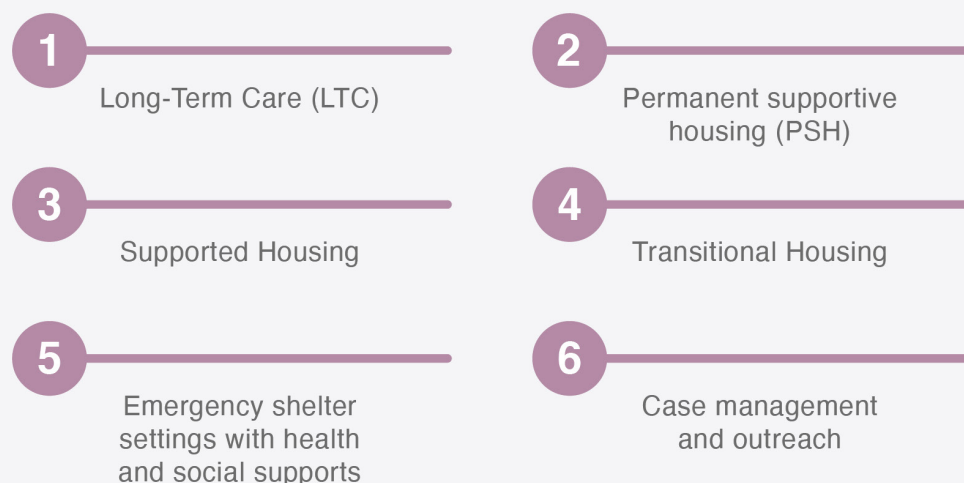
In March, our team published “Shelter/housing options, supports and interventions for older people experiencing homelessness” as an open access article in *Ageing & Society*.

While experiences of later-life homelessness are known to vary, classification of shelter, housing and service models that meet the diverse needs of older people with experiences of homelessness (OPEH) are limited. To address this gap, a scoping review was conducted of shelter/housing options, supports and interventions for OPEH. Fourteen databases were searched for English-language peer-reviewed and/or empirical literature published between 1999 and 2019, resulting in the inclusion of 22 sources. Through a collaborative, iterative process of reading, discussing and coding, data extracted from the studies were organised into six models: (1) long-term care, (2) permanent supportive housing (PSH), including PSH delivered through Housing First, (3) supported housing, (4) transitional housing, (5) emergency shelter settings with health and social supports, and (6) case management and outreach.

[Read the full article here](#)

Shelter / Housing Options, Supports and Interventions for OPEH

(Older people with experiences of homelessness)



Data Collection During a Global Pandemic: Environmental Audits for the AIRP Project

City Update: Vancouver



Data collection for the Aging in the Right Place (AIRP) project (funded by CMHC & SSHRC) was launched in October 2020. This project includes four stages of data collection; (1) de-identified document review, (2) environmental audits, (3) provider interviews and (4) client interviews. Each stage involves gathering information on different social, spatial and organizational/management aspects of the promising practice. The goal of the project

is to discover what supports older adults who are experiencing homeless or are at risk of homelessness feel support them to age in the right place in each of these promising practices. The data collection stages are designed to collect data that is complementary and sometimes overlapping information on the promising practice. A set of aging in the right place concepts pulled from relevant literature (such as sense of belonging, financial security or access to community resources) is used to guide analysis of this data.

In the months preceding October 2020, the Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal research teams re-evaluated their data collection methods in response to the current global COVID-19 pandemic. These revisions were guided by conversations and materials developed by other research communities (such as Simon Fraser University's Community Engaged Research Initiative (CERi)) to identify ways to continue to move forward with each phase using a distanced approach. With current video communication technology available, all stages of data collection were redesigned for virtual format with in-person data collection also kept as an option where possible. For example, the document review process included gathering information on the promising practice through involved-requests to the provider to share relevant documents. This also included reviewing the promising practice website for organizational and client information all these tasks could be done efficiently through

virtual connections. Interview format with providers and clients were also modified from in-person to either over the phone or through the use of video communications software such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. The environmental audits however, required detailed observation of the indoor and outdoor environment of the promising practice. This type of data collected is best done in-person. Thus, much attention and rigorous planning was involved to ensure the safety of research assistants, service providers, residents and community members during data collection. A backup option of doing these audits via Zoom was also developed for promising practices where in-person access was not possible due to the pandemic restrictions.

The Aging in the Right Place Environmental Audit tool (AIRP-ENV) and Aging in the Right Place Environmental Audit Secondary Observation tool (AIRP-ENV-SO) was developed based on existing tools, Physical and Architectural Features Checklist (PAF) of the Multiphasic Environmental Assessment Procedure (MEAP) (Mahmood et al., 2020; Moos & Lemke, 1996). The AIRP-ENV and AIRP-ENV-SO tools are designed to assess the presence (or absence) of built environment features that support aging in the right place for older adults experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. This audit tool can be used to collect data on transitional housing, as well as independent housing with offsite or onsite (non-medical) supports as well as permanent



Vancouver research team conducting onsite environmental audit in personal protective equipment.

supportive housing with onsite medical and/or specialized services. These audit tools were developed by SSHRC Research trainees (Shelby Elkes and Muhammad Qureshi) under the guidance and direction of Dr. Atiya Mahmood and Dr. Habib Chaudhury with the Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University. Montreal and Calgary team members also provided feedback during the tool development process. The AIRP-ENV consists of 241 questions assessing exterior and interior environmental features of the housing sites with an additional 7 questions evaluating built and natural environmental features of the surrounding community. Completing the audit (includes both the AIRP-ENV and AIRP-ENV-SO) takes a minimum of 3-hour onsite visit to each promising practice building site.

The Vancouver research team (under the guidance of federal and provincial health guidelines, as well as approval from Simon Fraser University ethics board) prepared for their onsite visit by purchasing personal protective equipment including face masks, shields, gloves and hand sanitizer. Research assistants also adhered to provincial and federal health guidelines conducting self-assessments and maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other, the provider and residents whenever possible. With these safety precautions in place, the trained research assistants were able to safely enter the building site and successfully complete the audits within the time period allotted.

As the AIRP research teams in Calgary, Vancouver and Montreal continue to collect data amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to work and be guided by provincial and federal health guidelines. It is imperative to prioritize the safety of our communities and strive to create a safe space to express concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus, both for the research teams as well as the community members we work with.

References

- Mahmood, A., O'Dea, E., Bigonnesse, C., Labbe, D., Mahal, T., Qureshi, M., & Mortenson, W. B. (2020). Stakeholders Walkability/Wheelability Audit in Neighbourhoods (SWAN): user-led audit and photographic documentation in Canada. *Disability & Society*, 35(6), 902–925. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1649127>
- Moos, R., & Lemke, S. (1996). Development and use of the Multiphasic Environmental Assessment Procedure in Evaluating Residential Facilities: The Multiphasic Environmental Assessment Procedure. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Montreal's Experiences Conducting Virtual Service Provider Interviews

Émilie Cormier & Diandra Serrano

City Update: Montreal



Data collection for the Aging in the Right Place project (AIRP-funded by CMHC and SSHRC) began in the fall of 2020 for all three cities. While some of the planned aspects of data collection such as site specific document reviews could go forward as initially conceptualized, others such as the on-site environmental audits and service providers interviews required adaptations due to COVID related restrictions. In Montreal specifically, where on-site face -to -face

interactions were impossible, the team decided to delay the on-site environmental audit and move forward with virtual service provider interviews which were completed in the winter of 2021.

While transitioning to an on-line interview platform certainly allowed the team to move forward with data collection, the Montreal team was concerned that the virtual nature of the interviews would challenge the rapport that is critical when conducting qualitative interviews (Gaglio, 2006) and when working to establish collaboration with study sites.

However, much to the team's surprise this was not the case. In fact, in keeping with Weller's observations (2017) the team found that the technology fostered a sense of closeness free of the pressures that can sometimes come when interviewers and participants are together in the practice site. It also appeared to assist with equalizing the balance between those conducting and those participating in the interviews supporting an informal relaxed atmosphere. Even some of the obstacles experienced during the interviewing process such as lost internet connections and sound echoing, supported our connections with one another because they forced each of us to listen with renewed attention (Weller, 2017).

Of course, the ease associated with online interviews is partially dependent on the technological comfort of both interviewees and

interviewers (Lo Lacono et al., 2016). With telecommunication becoming the norm throughout the pandemic this comfort was certainly present amongst service providers and the research team by the time we embarked on service provider interviews.

As the COVID restrictions in Montreal begin to ease we look forward to meeting our study partners face to face. In the meantime, we have learnt that good qualitative interviewing can take place virtually. We thank all service providers who participated in this first stage of data collection for their authenticity, flexibility, support and dedication to the project's aims.

References

- Gaglio, B., Nelson, C. C., & King, D. (2006). The role of rapport: Lessons learned from conducting research in a primary care setting. *Qualitative Health Research*, 16(5), 723-734.
- Lo Lacono, V., Symonds, P., & Brown, D. H. (2016). Skype as a tool for qualitative research interviews. *Sociological Research Online*, 21(2), 103-117.
- Weller, S. (2017). Using internet video calls in qualitative (longitudinal) interviews: Some implications for rapport. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20(6), 613-625.
- Salmons, J. (2014). *Qualitative online interviews: Strategies, design, and skills*. Sage Publications.



City Update: Calgary

The Calgary AIRP group has been busy building its team, with Amber Dukart (MSW Candidate), Jill Hoselton (MSW Candidate), and Alison Grittner (PhD Candidate in Social Work) joining as research assistants for the foreseeable future. We also have a BSW practicum student – Anita Shepherd – lined up to jump in and learn with us this fall. With this increased person-power the team is now analyzing the five completed service provider interviews and has finished the document review. Alberta currently has the highest per-capita rate of covid-19 infection in Canada and the U.S., forcing us to postpone our environmental audit of the Kerby Rotary Shelter - a safe place for men and women 55+ who are experiencing elder abuse - until public health restrictions are lifted and the pandemic situation improves. We anticipate this audit will take place at the beginning of June, at which time we can also begin relationship building with the residents and scheduling photo-voice interviews. As a team, we were excited to submit an abstract for the 2022 Society for Social Work and Research conference, titled: “Picturing the supportive shelter needs of older adults experiencing elder abuse,” as part of the proposed “Avenues for aging in place for older adults who are experiencing housing precarity” symposium. We look forward to developing this piece of research over the summer months.



An Interview With Dr. Rachel Weldrick — Postdoctoral Fellow



Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I've recently completed my PhD in Social Gerontology at McMaster University and am thrilled to be joining the AIRP team. At my core, I'm a social scientist and a gerontologist. When I'm not working, I spend a lot of time reading... mostly fantasy and science fiction, but some non-fiction as well. I also spend a lot of time on my beloved gravel bike. It's basically an extension of my body. This interest in biking has led me to volunteer with my local cycling advocacy organization over the past 4 years, where we advocate for a safer and more accessible city. I'm an animal lover and enjoy filling my camera roll with photos of our cats, Gandalf & Kahlua, sitting in our back garden.

What current research are you working on?

I'm currently working on a few interesting pieces of research. First, I'm working on a project that's re-conceptualizing what we know (and think we know) about social isolation and social inclusion in long-term care homes. This work is also tying into a larger project on age-friendly and age-optimizing communities that promote "healthy" aging for all people. Alongside the AIRP team, I'm working on a piece to develop a framework for aging-in-the-right-place that includes relevant indicators for older people with experiences of homelessness. Lastly, I'm working on a little side-project examining the intersection of age-friendly communities and active transportation.

What do you most enjoy about working with the AIRP?

I love working with the AIRP for countless reasons. My experience thus far has been wonderful, and every member of the team has been incredibly welcoming. The AIRP project is comprised of passionate and hardworking people, all of whom are deeply invested in what they do. It's a privilege to work with this team.

What inspired you to study aging/gerontology?

I started my academic career in psychology but pivoted to gerontology after completing my undergraduate studies. My attention was drawn to the astonishing rates of social isolation and exclusion among older people in certain areas. I realized how ignorant I had been to the needs of the older population... and how many of those needs were not being met. In some ways my entry into gerontology as a scholar was a selfish endeavor. I don't want to be left behind or forced to the margins in my later years. Why should anyone else? There's a lot of work that still needs to be done and I hope to be part of it.

What are your goals for your time at the AIRP?

I have a number of goals that I'm hoping to achieve in my time at the AIRP. I hope to join a vast network of talented people across Canada working to both end homelessness and ensure aging with dignity and wellness for all people. I hope to learn from this network and contribute to the emerging body of literature on aging in the right place. I also hope to engage in some creative knowledge mobilization efforts to share the fantastic work being done by this team.



An Interview With Dr. Vibha Kaushik — Postdoctoral Fellow



Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I recently received my PhD from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. I am a social worker based in Calgary and working on the AIRP project as a Postdoctoral Associate. I am originally from India where I completed my high school, undergraduate studies in social work and anthropology, and master's program in social work. I have lived in Germany for a decade and have a master's degree in German. I came to Canada over ten years ago and since then Canada is my home. When I am not working, I am cooking, exercising, hiking, chatting with friends and family, or simply dreaming about my next holidays. I love to travel, and my favorite places are India, Italy, and Switzerland. I also love to watch Netflix.

What current research are you working on?

My program of research centers upon newcomer research. My research interests include social work with newcomers, newcomer integration, diversity and intersectionality, welcoming communities, social development, linguistic challenges of non-native speakers, and mixed-methods research. My most recent work has examined the settlement and integration needs of skilled immigrants. I am currently focusing on diversifying my portfolio and that brings me to AIRP. I am working with the Calgary city lead Dr. Christine Walsh on identifying promising practices for housing and shelter for older adults who have experienced homelessness. My other work informs the development of sustainable social work field education models.

What do you most enjoy about working with the AIRP?

Everything. I am privileged to be working with the team and learning from the experts in the field. I love how each member of the AIRP team has made me feel welcomed despite being an “outsider” in the field of social gerontology.

What inspired you to study aging/gerontology?

To be honest, it was a series of events that inspired me to study this topic. So far, my academic work has not necessarily focused on age-friendly communities; however, I have a long-standing relationship (16 years) as a volunteer with a not-for-profit in India that offers social and emotional support to older adults. Then, in my PhD days, I served as a research assistant on an age-friendly communities project. Recently, I have had the opportunity to attend some presentations on elder abuse, development in older adulthood, and common needs and concerns of older adults. All of this inspired me to first do some self-directed study and then finally get involved with the topic areas as a researcher.

What are your goals for your time at the AIRP?

My main goal is to learn as much I can from the interdisciplinary team during my time at the AIRP. I am looking at cultivating connections and developing the skills that will help me in advancing my career as an academic. My goals include getting involved with knowledge mobilization, publishing high-quality research papers, finding opportunities for creating smaller side projects to connect immigrant issues to the AIRP project, and networking.



Aging – and Moving Around – In the Right Place

By Dr. Rachel Weldrick, Postdoctoral Fellow



‘Aging in the right place’ is an approach aimed at supporting older people to age in their homes and communities as long as possible, while simultaneously recognizing that where an individual lives is likely to impact their ability to age optimally. Aging in the right place acknowledges that housing must support an individual’s unique lifestyles, vulnerabilities, and values. This applies to all people but can be especially critical as we age, and for older persons with experiences of homelessness (OPEH). Regardless of where you live, the features of your residence should ideally support and enable you to age as well as possible.

Outside of the home, local residential areas are key sites of daily activities and social engagement for many older people. As we age, it’s common to spend more and more time in our neighbourhood and immediate residential areas (Baltes & Baltes, 1993; Golant, 1984). This typically means that in later life people tend to take fewer trips out of the area than they do at younger ages. On the other hand, this also means that many older people tend to rely on short trips within the neighbourhood and broader community in order to meet their needs, and access amenities and services such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and appointments. As such,

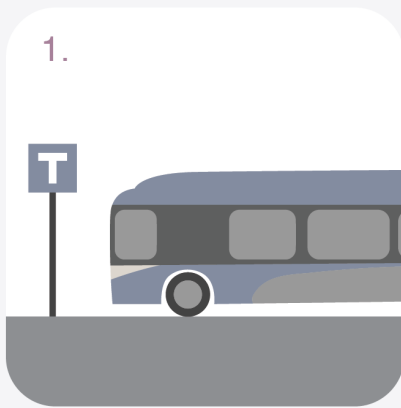
accessible and equitable local transportation options are essential to support the needs of older people and contribute to aging in the right place.

What do we mean when we say accessible and equitable transportation options? Equitable transportation means that high-quality transportation to and from important destinations is available to those who need it, in forms that are accessible to them in terms of design, cost, and inclusivity. Equitable transportation also means developing local and regional transportation options alongside community members to ensure the inclusion of residents and communities that have historically been excluded (Stacy et al., 2020). Ultimately, it's crucial that as people age in their communities, they maintain access to safe and reliable transportation options regardless of identity, income, or (dis)ability.

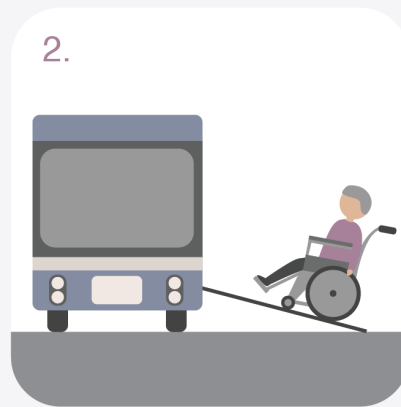
When accessible and equitable transportation options are made available to older residents, aging in the right place becomes a more attainable reality. Across many parts of Canada, car-dependent neighbourhoods are contributing to social isolation and disconnect among older people (Miller, 2017) – a social experience linked to a vast array of harmful effects (Weldrick & Grenier, 2018). This can be especially detrimental to those who do not have access to a car and/or are unable to walk extended distances to access essential amenities.



What is Equitable Transportation?



High quality transportation options to and from important destinations.



Accessible by all regardless of identity, income, or (dis)ability.



Collaborating with community members in development of transportation options.

At the same time, older people living in communities that have invested in substantial public transportation networks and active transportation infrastructure are likely to experience significant benefits to their overall wellbeing and social inclusion (Lamanna et al., 2020; Marquet et al., 2017).

What about older people with experiences of homelessness and/or housing insecurity (OPEH)? Accessible and equitable transportation options are critical. A recent review found that transportation options (or lack thereof) have the ability to shape both housing and non-housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness (Murphy, 2019). In fact, research has found

that a lack of accessible transportation options creates a major barrier to accessing key services (e.g., housing services, food banks, employment opportunities) among homeless individuals (Acosta & Toro, 2000; Barile et al., 2020). In addition, many people who are homeless or precariously housed report relying on active transportation (i.e., cycling and walking) because no other feasible options exist (Lugo, 2018). This type of service exclusion can make it very challenging for OPEH to ‘break the cycle’ of homelessness in the long term (Grenier et al., 2016). Building up public and active transportation infrastructure is therefore integral to supporting the needs and well-being of OPEH.

Together these experiences and findings underscore the importance of accessible and equitable transportation options for older people – including older individuals with experiences of homelessness. Local transportation in and around the community has the potential to facilitate inclusion, service access, and wellbeing on many fronts, and influences the relationship(s) we have with our place of residence. In order to age in the right place, older people – and indeed, people of all ages – must be able to move in the right place. Let's make sure that equitable transportation remains at the forefront of our planning.

References

- Acosta, O., & Toro, P. A. (2000). Let's ask the homeless people themselves: A needs assessment based on a probability sample of adults. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(3), 343–366.
- Baltes, P. B., & Baltes, M. M. (1993). *Successful aging: Perspectives from the behavioral sciences* (Vol. 4). Cambridge University Press.
- Barile, J. P., Pruitt, A. S., & Parker, J. L. (2020). Identifying and understanding gaps in services for adults experiencing homelessness. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 30(3), 262–277.
- Golant, S. M. (1984). *A place to grow old. The Meaning of Environment in old Age*. Columbia University Press.
- Grenier, A., Sussman, T., Barken, R., Bourgeois-Guérin, V., & Rothwell, D. (2016). 'Growing old' in shelters and 'on the street': Experiences of older homeless people. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 59(6), 458–477.
- Lamanna, M., Klinger, C. A., Liu, A., & Mirza, R. M. (2020). The association between public transportation and social isolation in older adults: A scoping review of the literature. *Canadian Journal on Aging/La Revue Canadienne Du Vieillissement*, 39(3), 393–405.
- Lugo, A. E. (2018). *Bicycle/Race: Transportation, Culture, & Resistance*. Microcosm Publishing.
- Marquet, O., Hipp, J. A., & Miralles-Guasch, C. (2017). Neighborhood walkability and active ageing: A difference in differences assessment of active transportation over ten years. *Journal of Transport & Health*, 7, 190–201.
- Miller, G. (2017). No place to grow old: How Canadian suburbs can become age-friendly. Institute for Research on Public Policy. <http://irpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/insight-no14.pdf>
- Murphy, E. R. (2019). Transportation and homelessness: A systematic review. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 28(2), 96–105.
- Stacy, C., Su, Y., Noble, E., Stern, A., Blagg, K., Rainer, M., & Ezike, R. (2020). *Access to Opportunity through Equitable Transportation: Lessons from Four Metropolitan Regions*. Urban Institute.
- Weldrick, R., & Grenier, A. (2018). Social Isolation in Later Life: Extending the Conversation. *Canadian Journal on Aging / La Revue Canadienne Du Vieillissement*, 37(1), 76–83. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S071498081700054X>



Vieillir au bon endroit

Un poème écrit par Dyane Provost
A poem written by Dyane Provost

Me voyant vieillissante, célibataire
Au revenu plutôt précaire
C'est la peur qui m'a propulsée
Vers une résidence pour personnes
âgées

Un toit sur la tête
Logement subventionné
Chauffé, électricité
Même un agent de sécurité !

Vous me direz
C'est bien assez !
Tu es bien 'casée' !
Et pour un temps
Ce fut la vérité

Vous auriez entièrement raison de
penser
Que je suis une des privilégiées
Je le sais, je le sais ...

Mais si vous me demandez :
Ce serait quoi, pour toi,
Vieillir au bon endroit ?

J'y pense, je cogite
c'est évidemment vital d'avoir un
gîte
Je pense à toutes les femmes

comme moi
qui apprécient vraiment d'avoir un
toit
Ou pire encore, qui n'en ont tout
simplement pas ...

Mais il y a plus que ça
Pour que ce soit le bon endroit...

La solitude et le sentiment de n'être
pas désiré
sont les plus grandes pauvretés
Dixit mère Teresa
Qui en a vu d'autres ... à Calcutta !

On a beau avoir les plus beaux
bâtiments de la terre
Si personne ne prend le temps de
dire
Un Comment ça va sincère
Le coeur s'atrophie, se resserre
Et on se demande parfois : à quoi
ça sert ?

En ces temps de pandémie
planétaire
Où l'isolement est nécessaire
Je réalise que le bon endroit
c'est où je suis, 'drette' là ...
... à demander Comment ça va

ou parfois un beau bonjour suffira
La cerise sur le sundae, bien
évidemment
serait de rester
quelques minutes de plus, est-ce
que j'ai le temps?
pour laisser la personne me
raconter
un brin de sa journée, de sa vie, de
sa santé

Gandhi l'a dit :
Sois le changement
que tu veux voir dans le monde

Et dans ce sens, j'abonde :

Intéressons-nous à nos vieux
C'est tout simple
ça coûte rien
Et ça change les coeurs
Le vôtre et le mien ...
Mine de rien

*Auteur, Dyane Provost, Membre
du comité consultatif local de
Montréal, et membre avec une
expérience vécue*