The Human Rights, Participatory Growth, and Poverty Eradication Program

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Human Rights Participatory Growth and Poverty Eradication Program

Draft Proposal:

Seniors' ESL Empowerment:

Overview

Produced at the request of:

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Under the Supervision of:

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Abstract

The goal of this project is to implement a program for seniors (65+) to learn English for practical purposes such as communicating with medical and support staff, but also for conversational means. Learning English for these reasons offers seniors opportunities to be more active in their community and to have the option of being more self-sufficient. It can assist them in important routine activities such as grocery shopping or going to the hospital. It will not only help seniors to develop their English skills, but will also provide a tool to achieve self-empowerment. There are currently ESL programs available in Toronto for adults or seniors of specific ethnic groups. The Seniors' ESL Empowerment program is not meant to replace those programs, but is a framework program catering solely to the ESL needs of seniors which can stretch across all Toronto communities. As a framework the program will remain flexible to modifications in order to cater to different groups and can be taken as a blanket project which can be implemented across the city of Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area.

Needs Statement

In Canada, the population of seniors is increasing. In the 2006 census, 14.95% of the population consisted of seniors. In a diverse metropolitan city such as Toronto, there is also a growing population of seniors who have English as their second language. In the 2006 census, only 60.86% of senior Canadians (65+) spoke English at home. However, there continues to be a lack of facilities and programs that cater to seniors' needs, specifically in terms of accessibility, outreach, and facilities which are essential to a quality living.

Project Objectives

Through the process of data collection, the researchers will compile a foundation of knowledge that can be used in future programs that assist senior citizens and develop their capabilities, in communicating through the English language to access resources. The researchers want to be able to use what they collect in order to improve programs or create new/additional programs. There is not much existing research about the ESL programs specifically focused on seniors who speak English as a second language. The researchers will analyze what is currently available and has been implemented in other areas and learn from them. Because of the lack of information, there is definitely a need for this type of preliminary research to be done beforehand. The research methods will be both in the form of quantitative and qualitative research. Once this is completed, the data will be used to create a template that can be used across the board, or help improve programs that already exist. Through the data collection, researchers will be able to identify similarities, differences, issues, and/or problems that will help them further develop this project.

Geographic and Demographic Focus of the Project

The project will focus on seniors (65+) who have English as their second language, living in the City of Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area.

Summary of Methods

A list of boundary partners has been prepared, and is will continue to be added to throughout the project. The primary methods to collect data are listed below:

• Surveys

Surveys will be created by researchers and distributed to boundary partners. The data collected will help the researchers understand how other ESL projects are conducted, as well as how other organizations deal with seniors and language barriers. This will allow the researchers to develop a program that is not already existent. Surveys will be sent to senior homes, community centres, community organizations, community workers, etc.

• Interviews

Sometimes surveys will not be sufficient as researchers will not be able to assess the opinions of the individual. Interviews will be conducted with community workers, ESL teachers and seniors to understand the barriers they go through on a daily basis. Virgil and staff will be helping us conduct these interviews, as the researchers will not be allowed to conduct these themselves.

• Researching on the Internet

Researchers have also been using the Internet as a tool to find information on the different regions they are looking at. Simple research has included identifying amount of seniors in each region, how many new seniors immigrate to Toronto, senior homes, community centres, ESL programs for seniors that are already existent, etc.

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V. Haden-Pawlowski (former ESL teacher), personal communication, December 15, 2010