



# Rural age-friendly communities: Insights from Trent University

*Utah Association for Area Agencies on Aging (U4A) Elder Justice Conference – May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021*



Salt Lake City



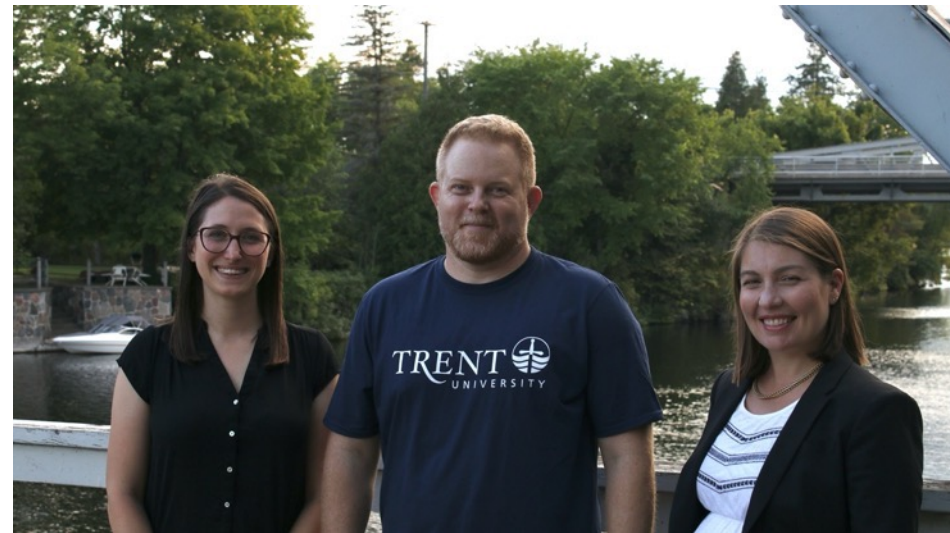
Trent University,  
Peterborough, Ontario



Elizabeth Russell

## The Rural Aging Research Program:

- **Left:** Amber Colibaba, M.A., Research Coordinator, Rural Aging CRC Program
- **Centre:** Mark Skinner, Ph.D., Canada Research Chair & Dean of Social Sciences
- **Right:** Elizabeth Russell, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Psychology; Director, Trent Centre for Aging & Society



# Collaborators and funders

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# Perspectives on population aging



# Presentation outline

- 3 goals: Share insights from our research related to...
  1. Services for an aging rural population
  2. Building sustainable rural age-friendly communities
  3. Next steps



# 1. Services for an aging rural population



# 1. Services for an aging rural population: Healthcare & community support services





## Ontario announces new nursing home with 36 additional beds in Arnprior



Premier Kathleen Wynne was in Arnprior Wednesday to announce the construction of a new nursing home, assuming residents in the community can pay for it up front.

Wynne attended a breakfast with residents at The Grove, which is currently a 60-bed nursing home, and announced plans for the construction of a new 96-bed facility which will have much more modern accommodations.

The news about a new facility came as a surprise to area residents who had been involved in a letter-writing and fundraising campaign aimed at increasing the Grove's capacity.

As recently as February, the chief executive of Arnprior Regional Health, which oversees the Grove, stated that without significant investment in the nursing home and the ability to add additional beds, the facility would be forced to close.

The province has not agreed to provide any money prior to the construction of the new nursing home, leaving Arnprior Regional Health to raise the cash for the project through a mix of charitable donations and debt. However, requiring health-care facilities such as hospitals or nursing homes to secure their own financing is a fairly normal practice in the province.

# 1. Services for an aging rural population: Housing



# Abbeyfield House Society of Lakefield:



*"I think there's a great need for affordable housing for seniors."*



An Abbeyfield House for Lakefield seniors is one step closer to reality

# 1. Services for an aging rural population: Transportation



# A Look at Temiskaming Shores' Age-Friendly Community Plan



## ▶ Temiskaming Shores

- Created a 1-800 number to call in order to be connected to the appropriate transportation
- Credentialing process in place for non-municipal transportation providers

# 1. Services for an aging rural population: Recreation



NOTICE TO READERS: Register now to support your local journalism!

# WITH VIDEO: Arnprior opens Canada’s only men’s shed linked to health group

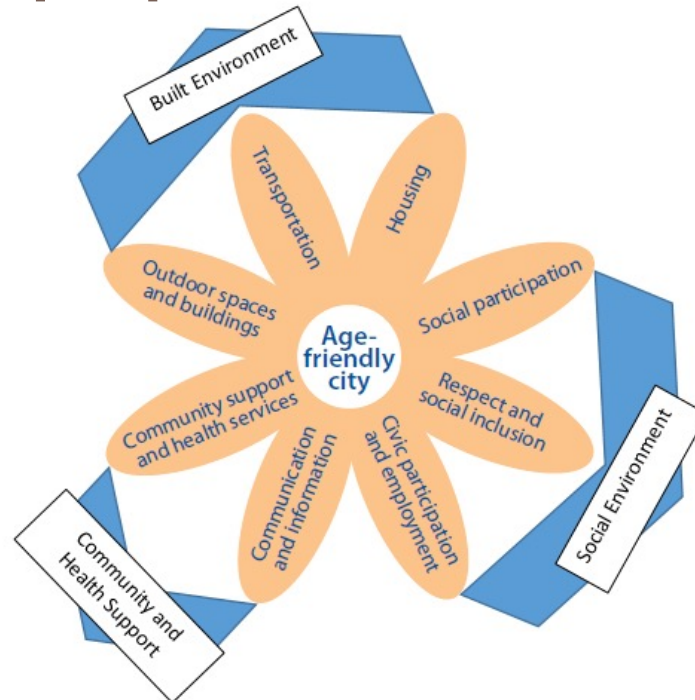
COMMUNITY Mar 03, 2019 by [Derek Dunn](#) Arnprior Chronicle-Guide



During the official opening of Canada’s 22nd Men’s Shed, in the township of McNab/Braeside, participants gathered around a plank and circular saw instead of ribbon and scissors. Joining building owner Judi Asselin is township Mayor Tom Peckett, Jean-Guy Asselin, Seniors Active Living Centre’s Darrel O’Shaughnessy, Arnprior Mayor Walter Stack, and Arnprior Regional Health’s Eric Hanna. - Derek Dunn/Metroland

## 2. Building rural age-friendly communities

Age-friendly communities are more accessible to, and inclusive of, their aging populations.







## 2. Building rural age-friendly communities

- Rural age-friendly sustainability
- Exclusion in rural age-friendly programs
- 1. Program evaluation; Rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada (Russell et al., 2019)
- 2. Pilot study; Rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada (Russell, Skinner, & Colibaba, under review)
- 3. Case study; Rural Ontario, Canada (Colibaba et al., 2020; Russell, Skinner, & Colibaba, 2021)
- Total: 102 interviews with older adults and age-friendly stakeholders in NL & ON
- Goal: Explore rural AFC implementation and sustainability



## 2. Building rural age-friendly communities

- Prior research: Established “implementation gap” concept (Russell, Skinner, & Fowler, 2019)
- Follow up Q: Who is excluded by age-friendly policy?
- Ontario case study
  - $N = 56$  interviews with committee members, older adults in 5 rural ON communities
- Key findings: Limited sustainability, scope, & reach



### The Trent University Research Team

**Dr. Elizabeth Russell**  
Department of Psychology  
Principal Investigator



**Dr. Mark Skinner**  
Canada Research Chair  
Co-Investigator

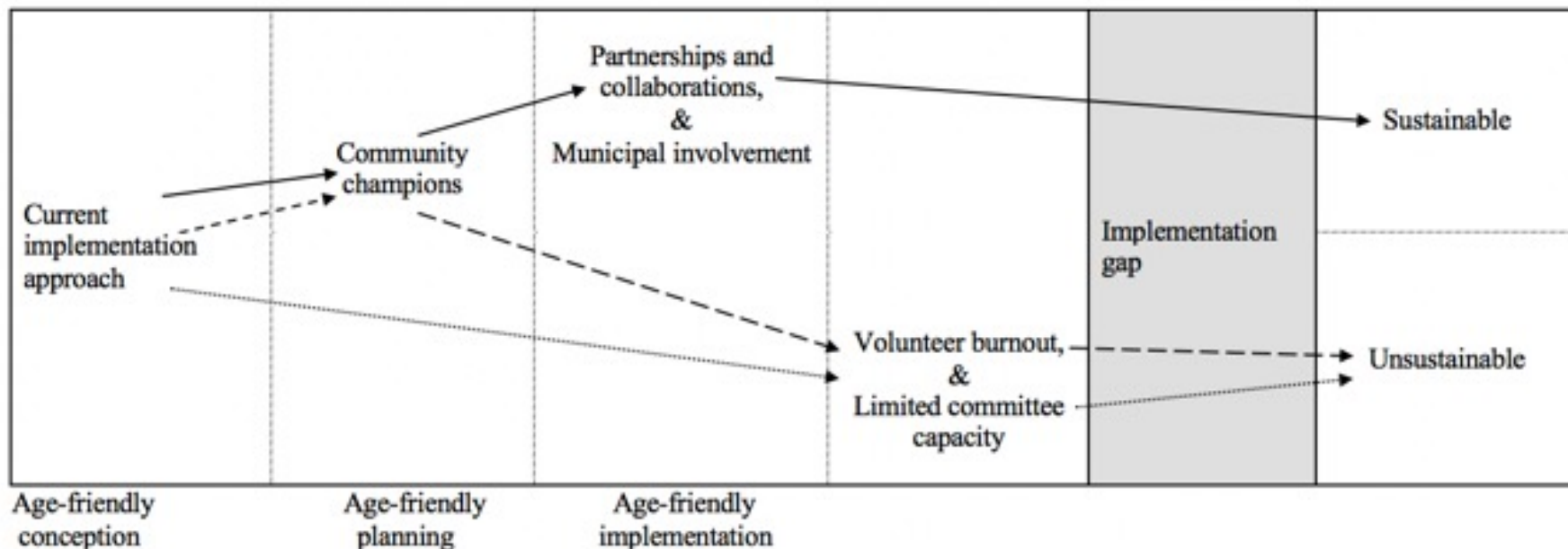


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If you are interested in participating or would like more information on the project, please contact Amber Colibaba

Fig. 1. Emergent challenges and opportunities to sustaining age-friendly initiatives



Typical age-friendly implementation pathways:

—————> = Pathway 1: Age-friendly initiative likely to be sustainable

- - - - -> = Pathway 2: Age-friendly initiative likely to be unsustainable

.....> = Pathway 3: Age-friendly initiative likely to be unsustainable



## Limited **sustainability** of rural age-friendly programs

“You cannot push volunteers forty hours a week.”

## Limited **scope** of rural age-friendly programs

“All this saying about housing, transportation, isolation... a good attempt has been made. But, solve the problem? A big no.”

## Limited **reach** of rural age-friendly programs

“If you live in a rural community, somehow your healthcare needs aren't as important as those who live where the critical mass can give you programs...people who live in rural communities are just expected to survive and rely on their communities. Our most vulnerable citizens are seniors, they're traveling the furthest, they live in rural communities, and some of them don't even drive.”

## 2. Building rural age-friendly communities

- Who benefits from age-friendly policy?
  1. Limited scope, reach, & sustainability of age-friendly programming (Russell, Skinner, & Colibaba, under review)
  2. Aging in place not a dependable outcome (Russell, Skinner, & Colibaba, 2020; Colibaba, Russell, & Skinner, 2020)



## 2. Building rural age-friendly communities



Aging in place



## 2. Building rural age-friendly communities



vs. stuck in place

## 2. Building rural age-friendly communities

### Age-friendly programs and policies....

...fundamentally exclude older people marginalized by social, economic, and cultural factors... (Russell, Skinner, & Colibaba, 2021)

...and may not be effective, sustainable approaches that support the well-being of older adults in rural communities. (Russell, Skinner, & Fowler, 2019).

# 2. Building rural age-friendly communities

Creating practical outcomes is critical to allowing research to support older rural residents and communities.

## Aging During COVID-19: Trent Centre for Aging & Society Launches Video Series

September 25, 2020

Series highlights three research projects exploring older volunteerism, social isolation and age-friendly policies in the context of COVID-19



A new three-part video series is delving into Trent Centre for Aging & Society (TCAS) research projects – exploring aging during a global pandemic and highlighting successes to date. *Aging During COVID-19* explores projects funded through the Trent Office for Research and Innovation that explore the timely topics of older volunteerism, social connections and age-friendly policy frameworks.

### SENSATIONAL SENIORS

## MUSKOKA FEATURED IN TRENT UNIVERSITY RURAL AGE-FRIENDLY CASE STUDY

**ELIZABETH RUSSELL, MARK SKINNER, AMBER COLIBABA**

MUSKOKA - Several years ago, the District of Muskoka received funding from the Ontario government to support the community in becoming more age-friendly: more accessible to and inclusive of the aging population.

This process included conducting a needs assessment to identify local older adults' needs and forming a steering committee to assess and implement key recommendations. Age-friendly committee memberships typically are comprised of municipal, community, and private citizen members, often including

local older residents.

This community-level implementation process has, however, been shown to have challenges with sustainability e.g. not becoming permanent or institutionalized within a host organization.

Based out of Trent University in Peterborough, Ont., our project aims to

document the expert perspectives of rural and small-town age-friendly leaders about the barriers that may prevent, and factors that may support, sustainable age-friendly programming.

Between September 2018 and April 2019, we travelled over 6,000 kilometres (that's approximately the distance of travelling from St. Johns, N.I. to Victoria, B.C.) to five rural Ontario communities implementing age-friendly programming and spoke with nearly 60 age-friendly leaders. With multiple visits each to Temiskaming Shores, Perth County, District of Muskoka, the Durham Region (focused on the rural municipalities) and the greater Arrigolet area, participants told us stories about the on-the-ground challenges of developing age-friendly communities, but also the successes, both major and minor, of achieving a more inclusive community.

We found that there is an implementation gap between short and long-term sustainability. However the involvement of community champions, partnerships (e.g. local businesses, non-profits, faith groups, and health and community-based services) and active municipal involvement are pathways toward sustainability. Involving these important factors at the community level will help ensure age-friendly program-



Amber Colibaba

Elizabeth Russell

support local residents are they older.

Since receiving the funding, the District of Muskoka's age-friendly initiative has developed a diverse steering committee primarily comprised of representatives from the municipality and local stakeholders who conducted a robust needs assessment that evaluated the needs of older adults in Muskoka. Volunteers who were involved on the committee are currently working to move forward on implementing recommendations from the needs assessment.

Thank you for welcoming us to the District of Muskoka and showing us the momentum that exists within your community. We value the time and contributions of everyone involved with the study.

Dr. Elizabeth Russell is an assistant professor in the department of psychology at Trent University in Peterborough and an execu-



Trent University photos  
Mark Skinner

Centre for Aging and Society.

Dr. Mark Skinner is the dean of social sciences at Trent University and Canada research chair in rural health, aging and social care.

Amber Colibaba, M.A., is the research co-ordinator for the Canada research chair program in rural health, aging and social care, and for the building sustainable rural age-friendly communities research project, both housed

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**Trent Centre for Aging & Society**  
TCAS 14h

TCAS is thrilled to showcase research by Dr. Mark Skinner, TCAS executive member and founding director; Dr. Elizabeth McCrillis, TCAS Director; and Amber Colibaba, TCAS Research Associate that explores the experiences and challenges of older volunteers and volunteer-based programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This video is the first in the new three-part TCAS video series *Aging During COVID-19*, highlighting TCAS members' research funded through Trent's Office of Research a... See More

# Older voluntarism and the global pandemic

- “Addressing the need to understand how volunteer-based programs and older volunteers in rural communities are coping with the impacts of physical/social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic”

□ Colibaba, Skinner, Russell, 2021



### 3. Next steps: Age-friendly services and sustainability in the 2020s

- Aging in place vs. stuck in place
- Rural services
- Age-friendly success & sustainability:
  1. Program specific factors: Drawing on individual, community, and jurisdictional factors to extend the scope, reach, sustainability, and inclusion of age-friendly programs
  2. Funding: Consistent, renewable funding that considers these factors is needed



Thank you for taking the time to listen to this talk!



**Elizabeth Russell:**  
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For more information on this research, please visit:  
<https://www.ruralagefriendlyresearch.com>



**BUILDING SUSTAINABLE RURAL AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES**

Led by Dr. Elizabeth McCrillis (Trent University) and Dr. Mark Skinner (Trent University), a SSHRC funded study of the factors that both strengthen and inhibit the sustainability of age-friendly community programs in rural Canada.

Building Sustainable Rural Age-Friendly Communities