

Age Friendly Communities: Cultural Perspectives of the Aging Chinese Immigrants in Calgary

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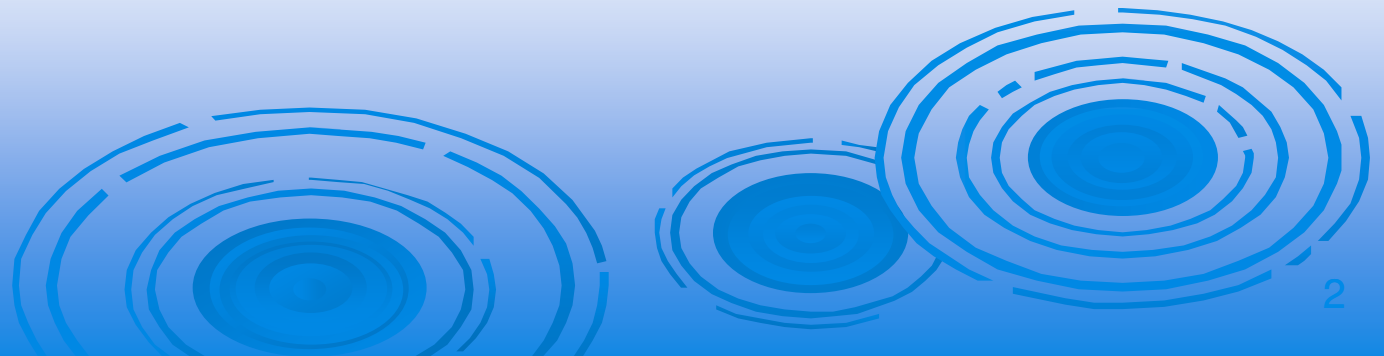
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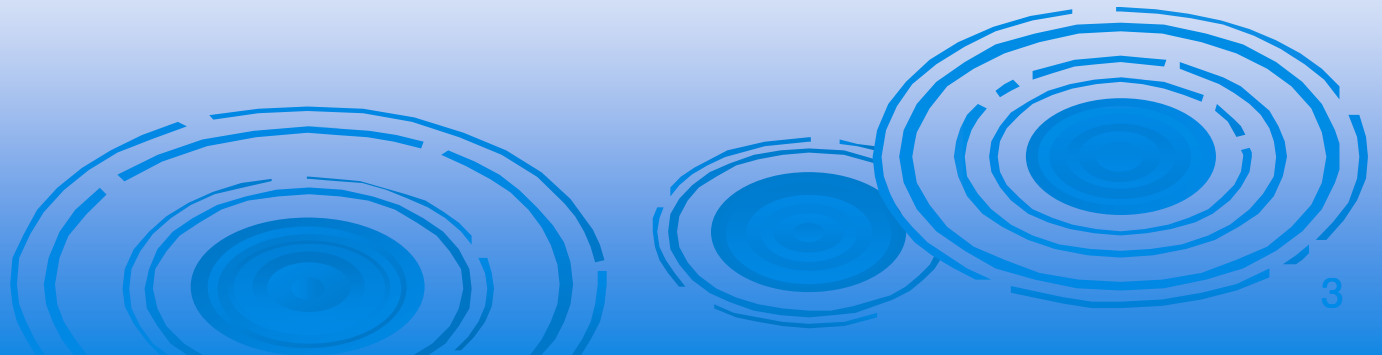
About Age Friendly Communities

- **Definition of Age Friendly Communities**
- **Age Friendly Communities Initiatives**
- **Existing Gaps on Previous Studies**



Barriers faced by aging immigrants

- **Cultural Barriers**
- **Barriers to accessing information**
- **Language barriers**



Purpose and Research Questions

Purpose

To explore the cultural perspectives that aging Chinese immigrants have toward the meanings and essential components of age Friendly Communities in Calgary.

Research Questions

From the perspective of the aging Chinese immigrants in Calgary, what are the socio-cultural interpretations of “age friendly communities”, the essential features of age friendly communities, and what improvements or changes should be made to achieve “age friendly communities”?



Participants

Four focus groups were conducted with aging Chinese 65 years and older who were born outside of Canada. Two focus groups were conducted in Cantonese (19 participants) and two in Mandarin (19 participants). A total of 38 participants were included.



Findings...

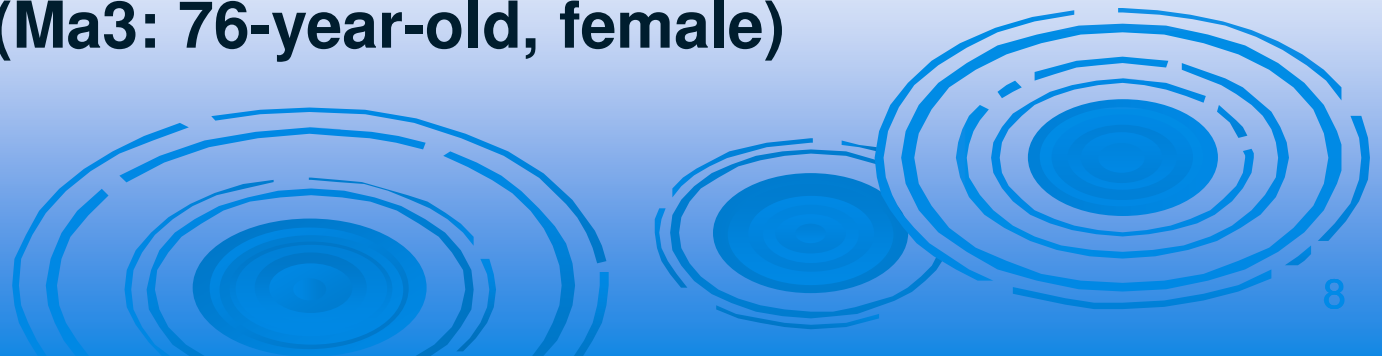


Essential Features of an Age Friendly Community



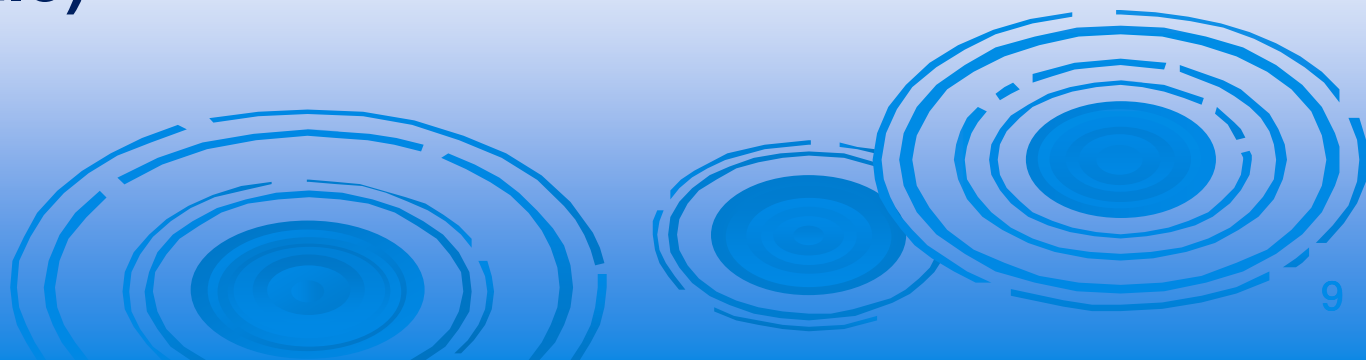
Essential Feature 1. Presence of culturally compatible (Chinese) social agencies to facilitate integration

“The recognition and support of the Canadian government is very important....., and these Chinese agencies and communities integrate the Chinese people in Calgary, including people from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The function of the community makes us further settle in the life in Canada, better integrate into Canadian society, and further know about Canada. With the Chinese agencies, we can naturally incorporate into this society.” (Ma3: 76-year-old, female)



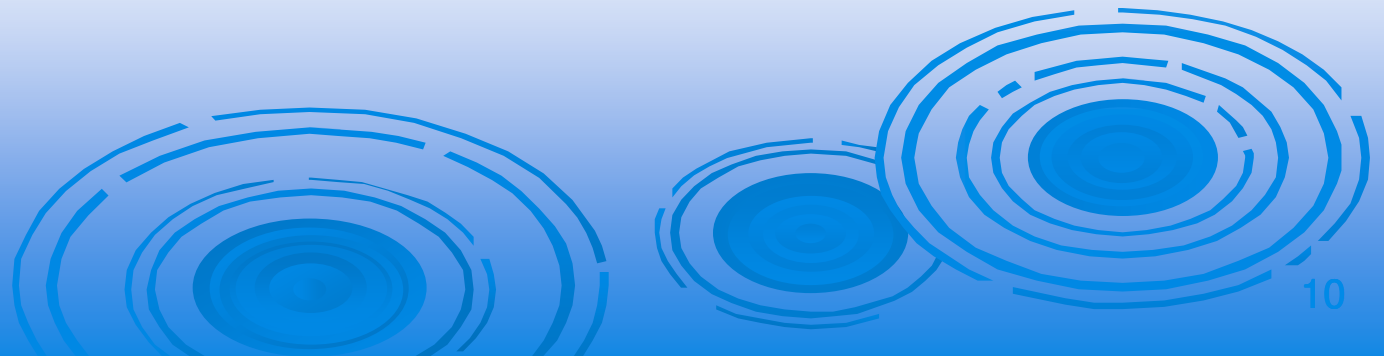
Essential Feature #2. -- Accessing information and services through culturally appropriate channels and contexts

“CCECA helps seniors a lot, with welfare application, health, and services application. It will send outreach workers to provide different information to seniors. If seniors need help, they can come to CCECA. It has a library, newspapers, and computers for seniors. Its outreach department and volunteer department have home visits to understand seniors needs, and talking with them, I myself feel very satisfied.” (Ca2: 84-year-old, female)



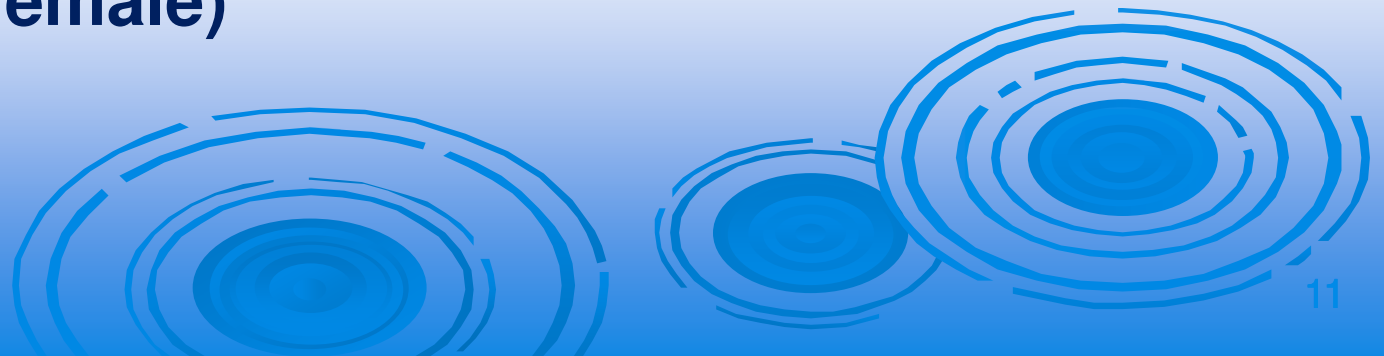
Essential Feature #3. Opportunities for culturally familiar social contacts and meaningful activities

“Every week we come to CCECA to get together for activities. I feel affectionate when I see these seniors, and I feel that it is a very pleasant and very happy thing that we Chinese people who came from different parts of China can get together here. So every week, however heavily it snows and however thick the ice on the ground, some seniors still insist on coming.” (Ma2: 67-year-old, female)



Essential Feature #4. Physical and social hubs

“The community and age friendly are inseparable. CCECA offers us a very good place, where we chat, commune, get much happier, and forget all our worries. We feel like brothers and sisters, and we feel very happy and are in good moods. Besides CCECA, we also participate in other community activities like Jiang Zhe Shanghai Association to get together, where we chat and feel like brothers and sisters, and feel very happy to be together ” (Ma6: 66-year-old, female)



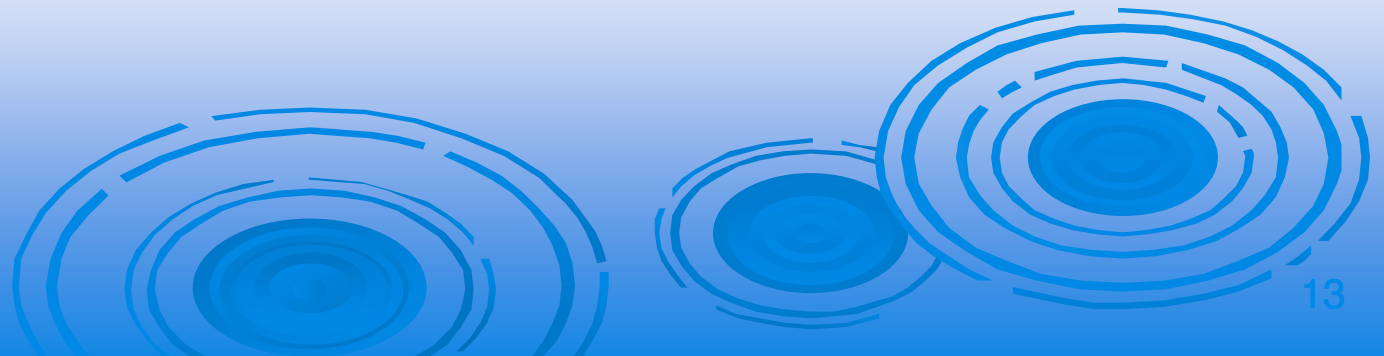
Essential Feature #5. Cultural consensus and similarity

“We are very happy to get together in the Chinese social agencies, there are a lot of activities here, and everyone is very passionate and is willing to dedicate. We can communicate with each other, we can talk about the unhappy things with each other, and we can also ask other people if we don’t know something, this is a great help. We can support each other, and communicate information with each other. For example, if we meet with some hardship, a friend gets sick, everyone will send regards to him. People take care of each other, and it will be very helpful to him.” (Ma4: 81-year-old, female)

Incompatibility of Communities

1. Restrictive social participation

“...first there’s a lot of service information that is unknown, and second, although you know you still can’t use it, you can’t integrate. It’s impossible to participate in activities of Westerns’ communities, even if the seniors know the information, they are afraid to go....” (Ca6: 70-year-old, female)



Incompatibility #2 -- Limited civic participation

“Chinese seniors seldom participate in the civic community, public affairs or politics. Only if there are people doing translation, but otherwise, Chinese seniors can’t participate or express. I didn’t go vote, because it’s all in English.” (Cb5: female)

“Mostly, seniors only vote. Because of language barriers, they can’t participate more in politics or public affairs. Even if we have suggestions, we can’t express them.” (Cb6: 80-year-old, male)

Incompatibility #3 -- Scarcity of age appropriate English language training opportunities

“I Because of language problem, our activities are limited only within Chinese communities. These are quite hard. Most of the seniors here are quite old, but they are very active to learn English. I have two formal English classes which are sponsored by the government. But these English classes are not in good quality. For me, I really want to learn English, but I can’t catch up with the teacher in class. The teacher should care more about the learning situations of the students. I am not satisfied with current English classes. I have spent a lot of time but gained little, and it’s really a waste of time.” (Mb6: 77-year-old, female)

“Some teachers only know English, but they don’t know how to teach. The purpose that senior want to learn English is to deal with daily life. Current English teaching doesn’t fit seniors, it doesn’t match with the needs and characteristics of seniors.” (Mb4: 77-year-old, male)



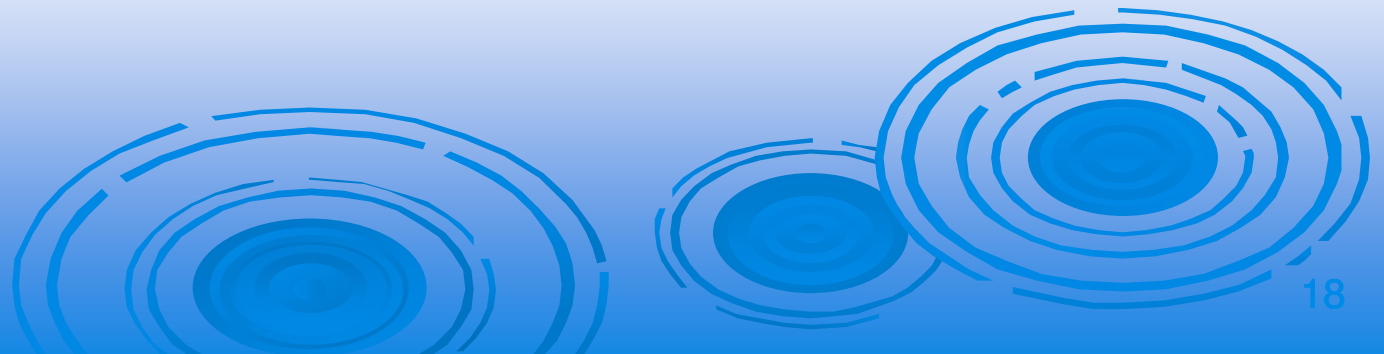
Incompatibility #4. Restrictive operational issues in service delivery

**“It’s said that Health Line has Cantonese services, and I asked for Chinese services, but was told that I have to make an appointment for another time. It’s inconvenient for seniors who need help and services.”
(Cb3: 76-year-old, male)**



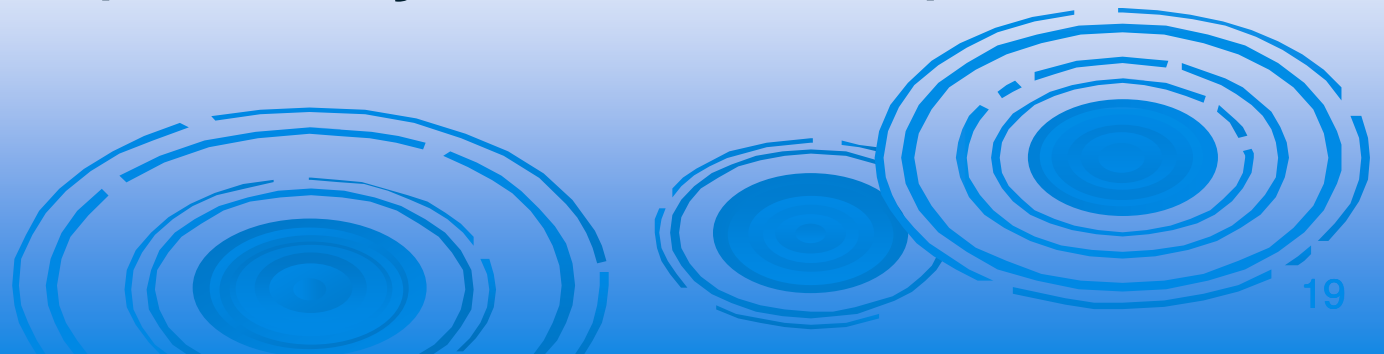
Incompatibility #5. Linguistically and physically challenged transportation system

**“Some seniors are afraid to use Handi-Bus... I do see several seniors who have great difficulties walking, and they are afraid to go out, and gradually they can only stay at home, and can’t go out for activities.”
(Ma4: 81-year-old, female)**



Incompatibility #6. Insufficient culturally appropriate housing and caring facilities

“For Chinese seniors who live in Western senior nursing homes, there are language barriers, dietary incompatibilities. As “blind”, “deaf”, and “dumb”, it is very hard to adapt. Seniors are unhappy there...They have no communication if there are no Chinese volunteers coming to visit them. Because of language barriers, the Chinese seniors can’t participate in the activities at the Western senior nursing home.” (Cb7: 71-year-old, female)



Incompatibility #7. Intergenerational dissonance

“As for the relationship between the seniors and the younger generation, seniors need more care, and children should be more concerned about seniors. In the past, Chinese children took very good care of the seniors, as there is “filial piety” in ancient China. But here, young people only care of themselves and don’t care about the seniors.” (Cb6: 71-year-old, female)



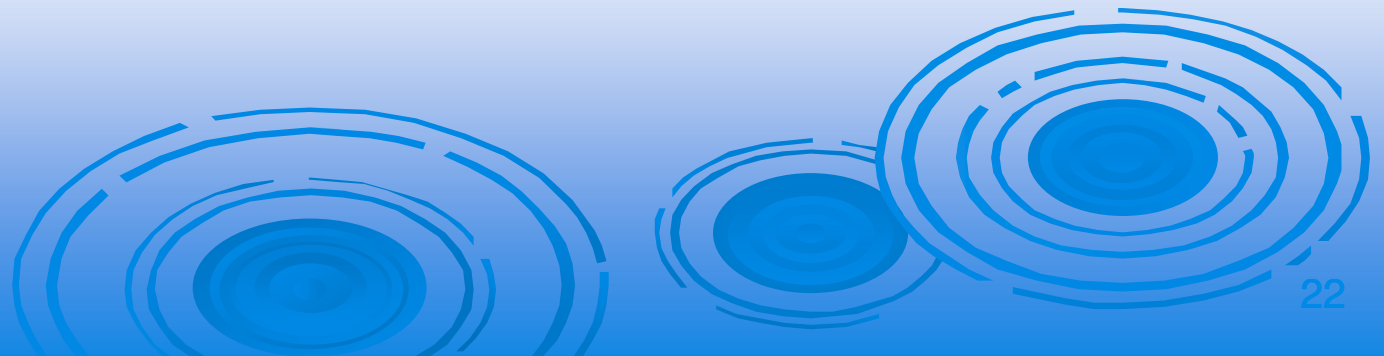
Incompatibility #8. Vulnerability in family relationship

“The aging immigrants have no income, and can only depend on their children. The seniors also feel that they shouldn’t bother their children. But their children don’t remember to give financial assistance to the seniors. The seniors don’t have money to take the bus or to buy things, and don’t have pocket money.” (Cb6: 71-year-old, female)

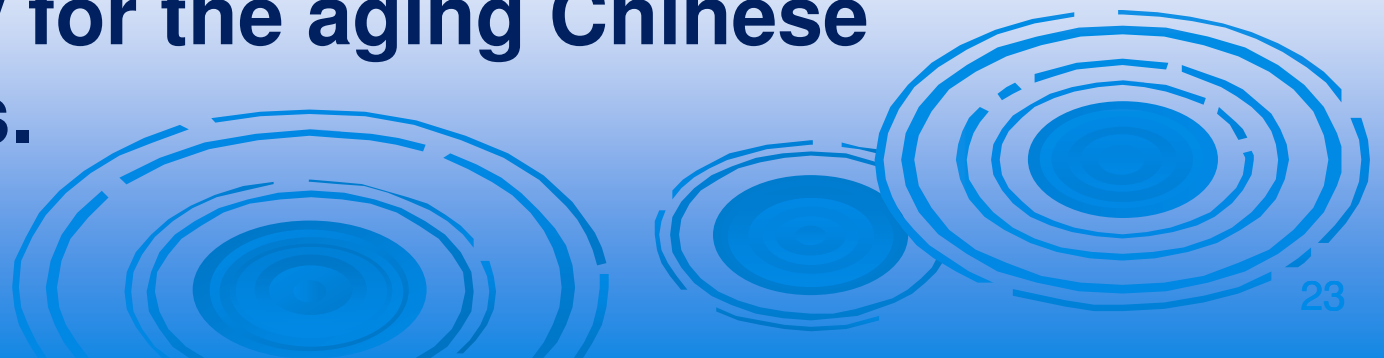
“For seniors, if they don’t take care of their grandchildren, it would be considered as a breach of duty.” (Ma3: 76-year-old, female)

Implications for achieving age friendly communities

- 1. Age Friendly Communities should not only focus on active seniors, but should also integrate relatively dependent or isolated seniors, who are excluded from the communities due to physical challenges, financial status, and language or cultural barriers.**



2. In response to the specific needs of the aging Chinese immigrants and cultural concerns, an age friendly community for aging Chinese immigrants extends beyond physical environment and service delivery. It should also focus on building a caring, supportive, and culturally sensitive family relationship and a culturally familiar community for the aging Chinese immigrants.



3. Virtually of having services available is not adequate. For aging Chinese immigrants, “age friendly” also means having a service delivery system that is accessible, and based on their socio-cultural perspectives and contexts.

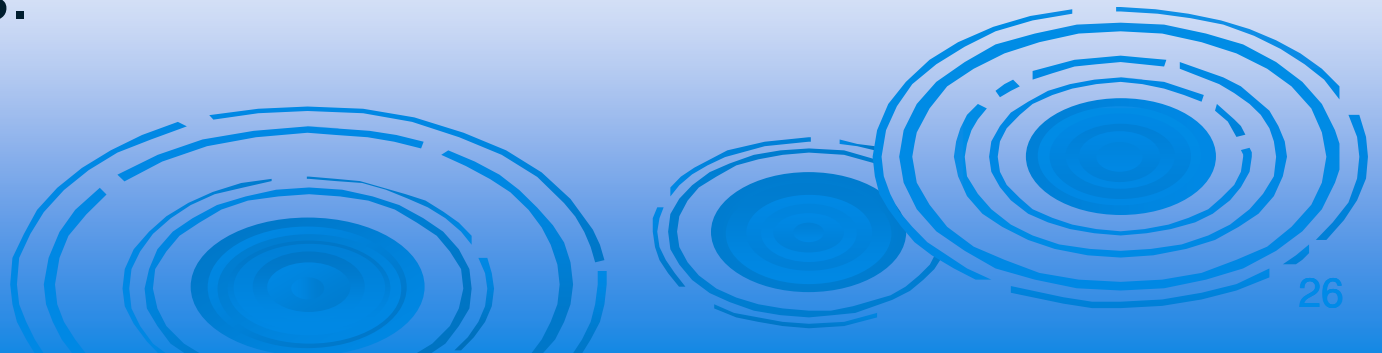


4. For aging Chinese immigrants, an age friendly community also means strengthening their rights to culturally and linguistically appropriate social and civic participation opportunities.



Conclusions

- Culture and language are embedded in the age friendly community context of the aging Chinese immigrants.
- The interactions of the physical, social, and cultural environment determines the comfort level of the aging Chinese immigrants in a community.
- Culturally compatible and linguistically appropriate facilities, services, and delivery systems are key considerations in understanding age friendly communities.



Questions?

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Thank you!

