

**Taking Charge: New Models for Aging in Place, Designed by Seniors, For Seniors**  
**Webinar 16**  
**Questions & Answers**

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**Date:** June 14, 2018

**Presenters:** Jen Recknagel

**Host:** Age-Friendly Communities (AFC) Outreach Program

**Facilitator:** Sarah Webster, Ontario AFC Outreach Program

**TOPICS COVERED**

1. [Fastest growing age group in Canada](#)
2. [Intergenerational co-housing versus senior specific co-housing](#)
3. [Dementia Village Model in Netherlands](#)
4. [Senior Bullying](#)

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ADDRESSED DURING THE WEBINAR

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01. It was commented that the fastest growing age group in Canada was the 85 plus years. I thought that the fastest growing age group was 100 plus years.

Jen: My apologies – you are correct. The fastest growing age group in Canada is 100 years plus. The 85 plus age group is growing four times faster than the rest of the overall Canadian population. Below is a link to the article.

[A portrait of the population aged 85 and older in 2016 in Canada](#)

02. What's your finding on intergenerational co-housing versus senior specific co-housing?

Jen: There have been more intergenerational co-housing attempts than senior co-housing attempts. It's quite popular in the U.S and there have only been a couple of examples in Canada so far. The people whom I spoke to at Harbourside Cohousing in Sooke, BC said that one of the problems with intergenerational cohousing is that when you're a senior and you're retired, you are at home most of the time and you want other people to talk to and engage with. When you live in intergenerational cohousing, people go to work or school and nobody's around. Therefore, the issue of social isolation is still very present. Another thing that came up for them was that in intergenerational co-housing, you might have dinners and that there are young people and kids who are running around and can be very loud. Although that is wonderful sometimes, it's not something that was desired all the time. However, there were people in the Harbourside community who were still uncertain about the choice of having a seniors-only cohousing, they decided to go ahead with trying it for those reasons – to have more social support and more community, and also have a bit more of a quiet place.

Sarah: I've seen more of the intergenerational piece on the *home sharing* side of things, especially in communities that have universities or colleges in which seniors are living in housing on campus or even within communities close to campus. I know a few communities like this that are really exploring the home sharing model.

Jen: I think that it definitely has been more promoted as an intergenerational model and I don't think there has been a lot of data collected on the experience outcomes of intergenerational living versus senior to senior. These are all quite emergent models that people are just trying, as there's a strong need present in terms of people having extra space, needing a little extra income or perhaps wanting help with things around the house. It's a personality thing as well. Some people like to be around young people and want that type of relationship in their intimate personal space. Other people said that they wanted to be with others who were similar in age, who shared their cultural references, who could relate to that stage of life, to the aches and pains - and that type of reciprocity of life experience had a lot of value for them. So, I

think it really is personal to the people who are involved. In Canada there are a few programs that are starting up where the focus is on the intergenerational homesharing, especially because there's such a lack of affordable housing in many urban cities; but I really feel that the senior to senior idea is quite lovely. [Beverly Suek](#) who started the Women's Housing Initiative Manitoba (WHIM) Homesharing project in Winnipeg said to me that she had gone around knocking on the doors of her neighbours, and she observed that there were many older women who were living alone in these big houses, and they never really get out. They are sitting there all alone, which made her question if there was a better way for them to be living. For her, that looked like living in the same house, where people have their own private space, but there are also communal spaces where you share life together. At WHIM they cook dinner for each other once a week, so there's always a meal. But you don't have to come; it was not an obligation. When I stayed there, I witnessed a sense of camaraderie and mutual support that you can get when you have people of similar ages.

### 03. What's your opinion here on the model in the Netherlands, where residents with dementia live within a virtual village?

Jen: I haven't looked in depth at that and I am not an expert on dementia, but from doing this research and from what I have gathered from speaking with seniors who are at the forefront of reimagining new models, there was a need to want to be part of community and to be a part of society. Often times we treat seniors like they don't exist, that their opinions don't matter and that they don't have anything to say, which creates a situation in which they are not engaging with the rest of society. There's something that seems a bit sad to me about that, so I feel that we could do better at integrating people with cognitive issues into the rest of society.

Sarah: The Dementia Village model (e.g. [Hogeweyk](#), Netherlands or [The Village](#), Canada) could probably be a whole presentation on itself. Gathering from what I've heard about that model, I've heard that argument that you've talked about Jen and then I've also heard the flipside that instead of building long-term care communities, let's make sure that people living with dementia are still part of a community in some way where they can still go shopping and participate in those ways.

Jen: What I thought was quite interesting about that model, if I am not mistaken, was that there was a lot of training for laypeople who might be working in shops or other places in the dementia village, regarding how to interact with people with dementia or some of the impairment issues that might come up with it. So to me, there are some ideas that can come from that which might be valuable in building age-friendly communities in general.

### 04. Do you find that there's an issue with senior bullying in some of these communal living type communities?

Jen: Conflict resolution and models of governance was something I was looking at as part of the study. The places I interviewed had self-organized systems that seem to work for them, and bullying was not something that came up as an issue. I didn't do any formal evaluation however, and did not do surveys of larger groups of people – so perhaps this is something to look at in future evaluations. In the more intimate models of senior living such as senior-to-senior homesharing and cohousing, conflict was something they tried to address directly between parties to minimize gossip and unhealthy group dynamics. However there were more formal protocols in place if the parties could not resolve it on their own. In the case of WHIM, they have each signed an agreement that if it does not work out for whatever reason, each individual will move out to minimize disruption to the community. In general, I think these types of intentional communities are trying to be mutually supportive, and so there is an ethos of figuring out 'how might we can strengthen and support one another to flourish', rather than helping to foster any kind of culture of gossip and bullying that could exist.