

Standing Up to Ageism

Building Connection Between Seniors and Teens Through Intergenerational Programming

Jen Waters and Kate Charuk
Edmonton Public Library

Spread the words.

Icebreaker

What was the first music album you bought with your own money?

What's in it for me?

Today's Session:

1. Our story
2. Demo
3. Discussion

How we got started



Ageism Across Youth & Seniors

Final Report

June 2015

Leger

THE RESEARCH INTELLIGENCE GROUP





Phase 1: Make the kits

11 Kit Maker meetings

- 24 different participants, who contributed 231 hours
- Built 5 Then and Now Kits



KIT THEMES

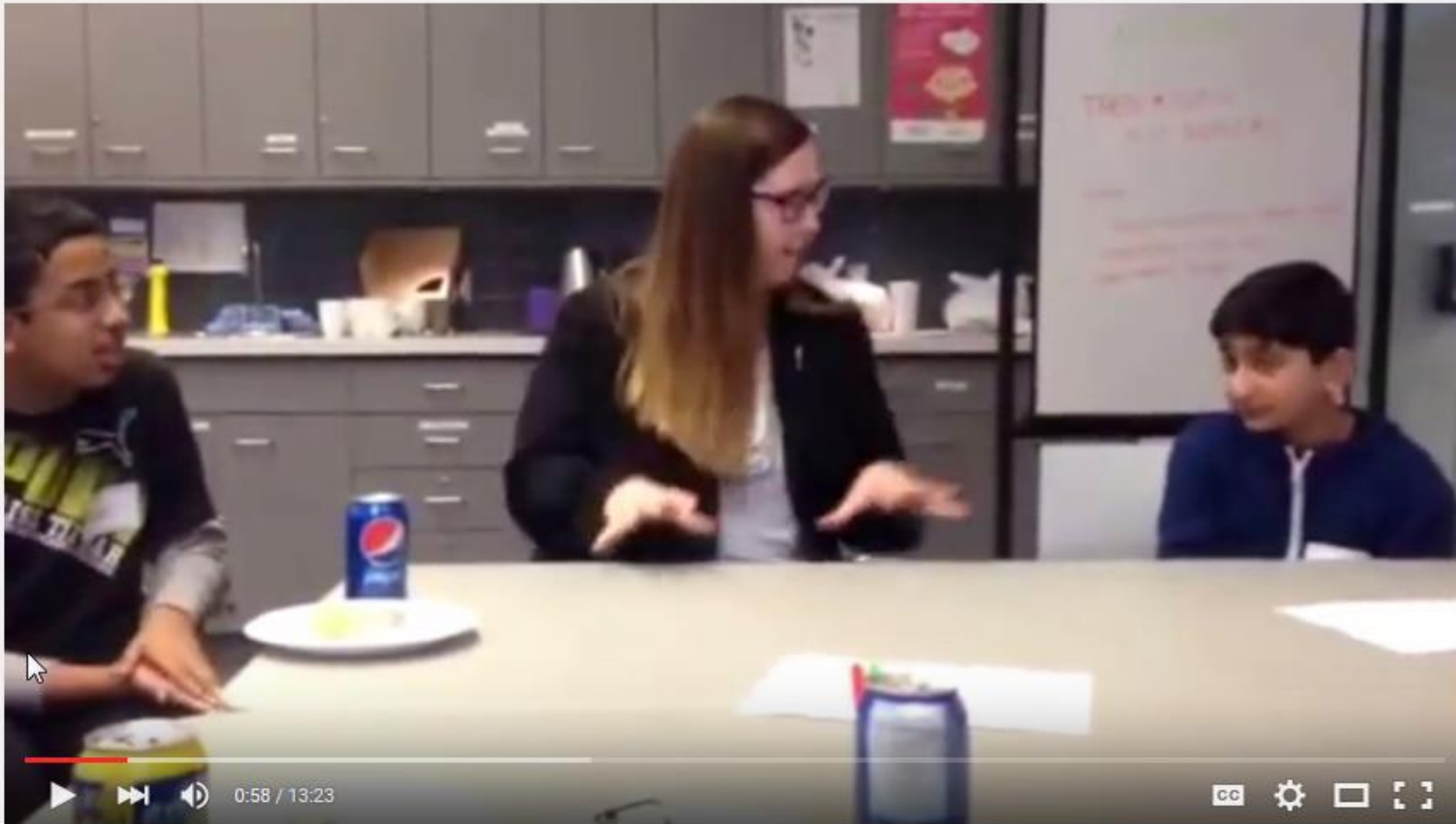
- transportation
- seasonal spices
- sports "
- holiday objects
- school
- travel / immigration
- romance
- building houses
- tools
- books
- countries
- binoculars
- culture / pop culture
- beliefs + heritage
- technology
- clothing
- vegetables + health care
- society
- language
- music
- toys
- food
- hobbies

Kit Themes:

1. School
2. Toys
3. Music
4. Fashion
5. Food and Cooking

“My favourite part of the program is getting to know the seniors”

Interview with Christina Gray



MLA of Edmonton Interview w/ COD Gameplay



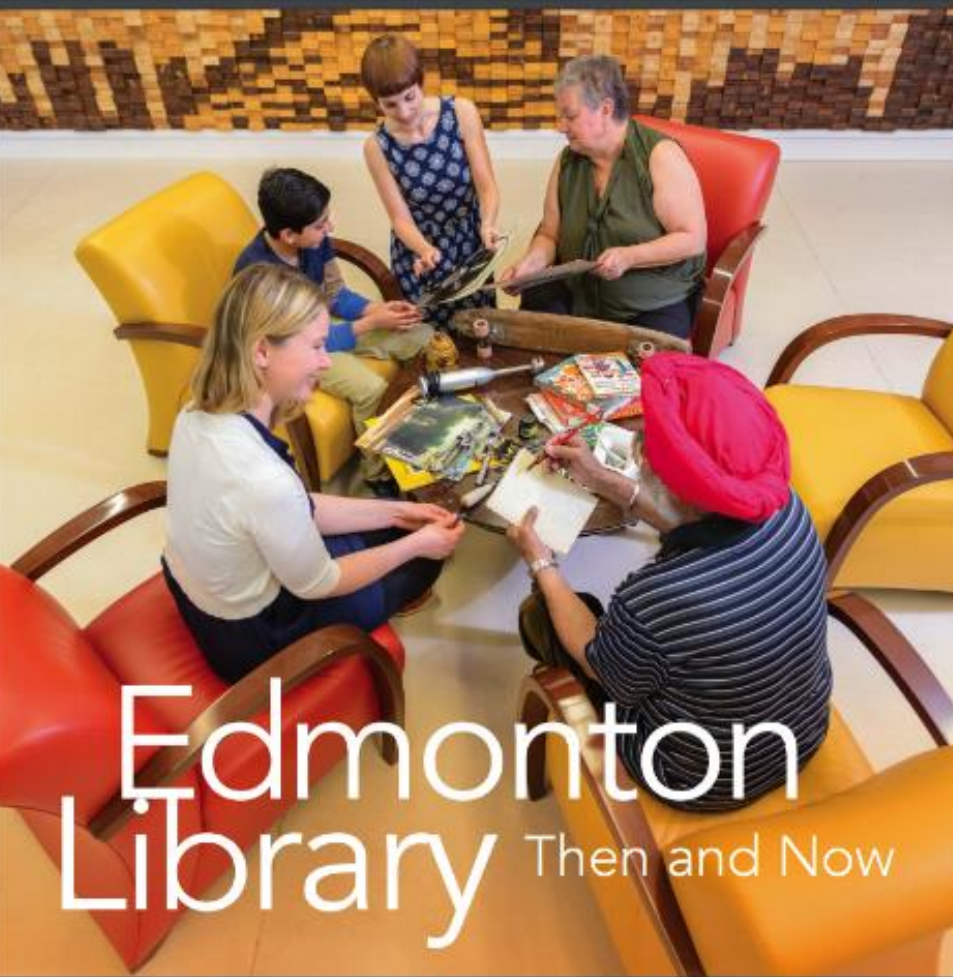
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Key discovery

There is a community need for programs that allow participants to contribute, create, and make a difference.



Edmonton Library

Then and Now

Library mines memories to encourage “good collisions” between seniors and youth

Not long ago, libraries were stand-alone buildings. They were quiet places with books and readers and diligent librarians who could help you with your research project.

Some people worried that the digital revolution would make the library obsolete. But as we've seen in Edmonton, thoughtful leaders have invented a new and even more relevant sort of library, a fusion of books, readers, and other social and cultural goals.

When Edmonton Public Library's new Mill Woods branch was set to open, sharing its space with a seniors and multicultural centre, it seemed a particularly Edmonton thing to do.

“But we did worry, in the beginning, about all the kids that come to the library and how they might collide with the seniors,” says Jennifer Waters, a youth services librarian at the Mill Woods Branch. “The seniors themselves were worried. We wanted to avoid any headbutting.”

Rather than focus on it as a problem, Jennifer and her colleague Kate Charuk, a community services librarian, wondered about making the shared space between youth and seniors into a strength. “The fact is, these are two groups that are both discriminated against,” says Jennifer. “We knew there had to be a way to bring them together.”

They learned about a grant program with the City Council Seniors Initiative that encouraged intergenerational projects. Nudged by a \$5,000 grant, Jennifer and Kate called their idea “Then and Now,” and imagined bringing youth and seniors together to create memory kits. Maybe they would be suitcases. What would they put inside them? They would let the participants decide.

Youth and seniors from Mill Woods met for 10 weeks, on Friday afternoons, to brainstorm ideas for five kits. They started with 25 or 30 potential topics, and discussed their way down to a more manageable list. They decided to look at school, then and now, at food and cooking, at toys, at music. How about clothing?

GROWING AGE FRIENDLY

Five Edmonton organizations have piloted a Toolkit to create intergenerational programs. Learnings from these pilot projects will be catalysts for even more connections between generations.



Phase 2: USE the Kits

Over 6 months we led 9 conversation programs:

- Involved 15 different groups (schools, youth centres, pathfinders, seniors centres, seniors residences).
- Participants aged 13 to 105
- Total attendance: 369





Just the Facts, Ma'am

Participants agreed or strongly agreed that:

88% – “I learned something about seniors/youth that I didn't know before”

87% – “I view seniors/youth more positively than before”

91% – “I am more willing to have conversations with seniors/youth in future”

91% – “I learned something from seniors/youth that is interesting”

85% – “I view seniors/youth more positively”

82% – “I intend to spend more time with seniors/youth”

93% – “I would recommend this program to a friend”

Combatting isolation by creating connections

“I enjoyed this program because I don’t always have a chance to talk with people”
(Program evaluation form)

“It was a great interactive program that got an old man like me to open up more”
(senior)

“I felt special” (senior)



Creating stronger bonds and appreciation

“I had so much fun and wish to see the seniors again!” (youth)

“I loved learning about how it was when the seniors were young. Bob was funny” (youth)

“Conversation was easy; we had lots in common” (program evaluation form)

“How bright, interesting and sharing my students were” (senior answering “What did you like most about the program?”)



Do all the good you can



BERNICE



Catching Fire

Assisting Memory Function

“ProTBack mback memories” (senior)









Miss Gloria
Lysak



Miss Gloria Lysak



Miss Gloria
Lysak

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Except in Canada

Combatting ageism; Increasing Mutual understanding

"I grew up being nervous about talking to seniors for fear of not being able to relate"
(youth)

"I like the curiosity of youth" (senior)

"The most interesting part of the program was that I didn't know as much about my own generation as I thought" (youth)

“[T]he Seniors showed their excitement and interest in the program while being there. **Their views towards the students as the program progressed altered in such a positive direction it was quite remarkable to watch.** Personally, I thought the program was a fantastic idea followed with great delivery by you and the EPL but also the maturity and behaviour of the students. **Seeing usually docile residents come out of their shells to a group of kids, and sharing their knowledge of subjects they’d thought forgotten, was wonderful.** If there are any other projects that I can get any of our residents across Alberta to be a part of, I would be ecstatic to assist with it.”

–Recreation Coordinator

Lessons Learned

- We're not used to doing this type of work
 - EPL often programs for one age bracket, this type of program requires us to think differently
- Involves support from multiple departments
- Scheduling is the hardest part, the programs are EASY
- There is a community need for programs that allow participants to make a difference.
- Involve community members wherever possible.
e.g. item purchase, photos.

And you can do it too!

Why should libraries run a conversation program?

- **Libraries share stories – it's what we do**
- **Strong community appetite**
- **Catalyst for new relationships**
- **Scalable (size/budget)**
- **It's EASY**
 - Program is run “out-of-the-box”
 - No special training required

How to build a kit

Option A

- **Determine Budget – staff time and \$\$**
- **Recruit an intergenerational group of kit makers**
- **Do fun activities and ice breakers for group-building**
- **Figure out kit container(s), storage and transportation**
- **Ask group what to put in the kits**
- **Buy items / Solicit donations and source images**
- **Catalogue and package items and prepare facilitation materials**

Option B: Don't build a kit

How to run a Then and Now conversation program

- **Schedule 2 groups to come together**
- **[Use the kits to] have a conversation**
- **Record stories if you want (or not)**
- **Evaluate**



Knotty Pine
Snacks

Furby
Party

PUSH

DEMO

Small Group Discussion:

1. How was that? Impressions, questions.
2. What intergenerational programming are you already doing?
3. How could you start an intergenerational program at your branch, or adapt programming you are currently doing to be intergenerational?

REPORT BACK: Decide as a small group what ideas or questions you'd like to share with the big group.

Questions?

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