



## 90 Canadian Cities Proclaim Intergenerational Day

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As June 1<sup>st</sup> was declared Intergenerational Day by 90 cities across Canada it is timely to examine how one of our members, Retirement Concepts (<http://retirementconcepts13-px.rtrk.ca/>), has fully embraced the benefits and values of full immersion in intergenerational programming at its Williams Lake Seniors Village.

The **izi** Intergenerational Society of Canada was created in 2008 to assist Canadians in the building of bridges between generations. Founder Sharon Mackenzie has worked for over thirty years connecting school aged children and youth to different generations within their communities. In 2000, then a teacher in Vernon, Sharon approached a neighbor who had recently purchased an Assisted Living Facility. Unsatisfied with the impact of occasional visits to senior care facilities with her students, Sharon was looking for something that would create sustainable relationships and provide unique learning opportunities for both generations. The "Meadows School Project" was born. (<https://bccare.ca/wp-content/uploads/intergenerational1.jpg>)



A make (<https://bccare.ca/wp-content/uploads/retirementconceptslogo.jpg>)

shift

classroom for thirty students, 9-12 years of age, was set up in

the Assisted Living Residence, which housed fifty seniors. Within two weeks Sharon realized that this intergenerational immersion provided a host of benefits for all parties involved. Visible improvement was immediately seen in the mental, physical, and social health of the seniors. The seniors experienced a renewed interest in life and a newly found sense of purpose as a result. As Sharon commented: "Care facilities can be isolating in their very nature. The young students brought with them the life pulse of the community and pulsed back out into the community the wisdom and experience of the seniors."



For the students the educational and social goals mandated by the Ministries of Education and Health were met. The project plan required that students spend time on their dedicated studies, which for a large part adapted well into the senior context. Sharon discovered that the curriculum really resonated with the students in this environment and that the students had a measurable increase in curriculum retention. The program also required each student to participate in at least ninety minutes of public service each week. This service component provided the students with the opportunity to develop their work ethic. As well, the project created designated daily times for the seniors and students to connect one-on-one. This provided the most valuable outcome. The mutually empathetic and concrete connections made between the seniors and students could only be forged in this setting.

(<https://bccare.ca/wp-content/uploads/intergenerational3.jpg>)



Sharon believes that this was the best experience of her life: "How often in your life do you have the opportunity to change lives?" The legacy of Sharon's project can be seen today on the board of directors of the i2i Intergenerational Society: one of the original Meadow School Project students, Sam Nolan, is now the president of the board.

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Intergenerational learning has become a new model for senior's residences and has benefits for the entire community. The Retirement Concepts Williams Lake Seniors Village has embraced an intergenerational immersion project with great success. Janet Catalano, the Recreation Manager, was familiar with the innovative work of Sharon Mackenzie. Janet and the entire leadership team were eager to improve the quality of life of the residents and believed that the immersion of youth and seniors would allow wisdom and experience to be shared throughout the generations. Janet reached out to Mike Grace, the principal of the nearby Cataline Elementary School who was immediately interested. "It was a fantastic opportunity for us to be involved with our community and for us to branch out and incorporate other people into our education."

Modeled on Sharon's original project; the Williams Lake Seniors Village Project's program integrates the students in the daily lives of seniors while allowing them to focus on their ministry-mandated curriculum. Again the approach to the program focuses on academics, service and relationship building between the generations. And again; the intergenerational immersion has been a great success. "I have been teaching school for twenty years and I can honestly say this has been the most rewarding year of my career thus far," says Cataline Elementary teacher Steve Dickens. (<https://bccare.ca/wp-content/uploads/intergenerational4.jpg>)

The experience proved that the intergenerational immersion program could build understanding and bridges; and it could dissolve boundaries between generations. Buoyed by the success of the Williams Lake Seniors Village Project, Retirement Concepts is working with Sharon and the i2i Intergenerational Society to implement the intergenerational project in their Summerland Seniors Village and Kamloops Seniors Village facilities. Residents will be able to enjoy the programming this September. Retirement Concepts is dedicated to implementing full immersion intergenerational programming across all of their residences. Let the intergenerational movement begin!



For more information, resources, sharing, and celebrations in the field of intergenerational relations please visit the i2i Intergenerational Society website at <http://www.intergenerational.ca> (<http://www.intergenerational.ca>). You will also find more information on the groundbreaking Meadows School Project.

For a video on the Williams Lake Seniors Village intergenerational experience please visit <http://www.williamslakeseniorsvillage.com> (<http://www.williamslakeseniorsvillage.com>)

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