Timiskaming Seniors' Centre Without Walls Report

October 2019



Acknowledgements

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The Timiskaming Health Unit would like to thank the following individuals for their contribution to this report:

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Executive Summary

Background

In 2018 the Timiskaming Health Unit received funding from the Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation's Spark fund to hire a program coordinator to implement a seniors' social engagement initiative entitled the Seniors Centre without Walls (SCWW) program. This program was run in Timiskaming through Timiskaming Home support in collaboration with the Timiskaming Health Unit. The SCWW program aimed to reduce the feeling of loneliness and social isolation among homebound seniors and adults with physical disabilities aged 55 + in the Timiskaming region using a free conference call type platform to engage participants.

The program was offered to participants from February 2019 – September 2019. An evaluation of the program was conducted to determine if the program had met its objectives and to learn how the program may be improved as funding for future sustainability is explored.

Method

The Timiskaming health unit in consultation with partners lead the development of the SCWW evaluation plan. The evaluation plan underwent ethics review by the Health Unit ethics committee and received evaluation approval. A telephone based survey was developed by the Health Unit using Survey Monkey. A total of 42 individuals agreed to participate in the survey. Telephone interviews were conducted in July of 2019.

Survey data from each participant was collected and recorded in Survey Monkey. Of the 42 individuals who consented to participate in the survey, 31 completed the survey. A total of 2 survey calls were conducted in French. In August 2019 THU staff analyzed the survey results. Findings from the data analysis can be found in the results section of this report.

Results - Highlights

Participation

- A total of 73% of seniors who are registered with the program had participated in a call.
- 48% of participants attend every session they sign-up for

Calls

- A total of 65% of participants were satisfied with 10:00 am calls while approximately three quarters (74%) of participants were satisfied with 2 pm calls
- A total of 87% of participants chose they liked to access the program by telephone best followed by some face-to-face sessions (37%) and then by accessing the program by computer (20%)

Topics

• The top three topics survey participants identified they like to talk about were history (69%), health and wellness (66%) and good news stories (48%)

Services

• A total of 39% of people who learned about new services through SCWW answered yes services helped them take care of themselves and 13% had used the new service

Participant's thoughts about the SCWW Program

- Participants were asked a series of questions to see if they agreed or disagreed with specific statements about the SCWW program. Results showed 71% of people agreed they enjoyed participating in the SCWW calls and agreed activities were mentally stimulating
- Almost all participants (97%) would choose to stay in the SCWW program and a total of 84% of participants responded yes they were happy with the program
- Many participants (58%) felt like they belonged to a community because of the program, had something to look forward to and felt better because of the program (65%)
- A total of 81% of the survey participants too felt the SCWW program provided them with something they don't get anywhere else
- When asked how the SCWW has changed their lives a number of people shared the SCWW program gave them a social outlet to meet more people and feel connected to others

Loneliness and Isolation

- After the SCWW program, 65% of people said they were not lonely after the program
- 62% of SCWW participants said they were not isolated after the program

Marketing

 When participants were asked how they heard of the SCWW program, 68% of people heard about the SCWW through either a presentation, an event/meeting including the Diners Club, Spring Fling and fibromyalgia group meeting or at a seniors centre including the Golden Age Club.

Limitations

When interpreting the results of this survey, the following limitations should be considered. Survey results overall were subject to several form of bias often inherent with survey application including the following:

- Self-selection bias survey participants were not randomized in their response to participate in the survey
- Social desirability bias individual response may have been altered by participants desire to be viewed in a positive light
- Non-response bias individuals who chose not to be part of the survey may have been those who held differing views of the program than those who did participate in the survey
- Recall bias survey participants may have had difficulty remembering past events to refer to
 when answering survey questions and may have been influenced by other events which could
 influence data accuracy and alter response to survey questions

Despite limitations the survey participation rate was still considered good and data generated reflected the opinions of the target population.

Recommendations

Call Times

 10:00 am and 2:00 pm calls work for the majority of SCWW participants. Keep providing calls at these times

Topic Preferences

 Keep offering history, health and wellness topics and good news stories as the top 3 topics of interest for participants

Program Services

• Keep sharing information about services through SCWW calls to help seniors

Program Overall

• Do keep running the SCWW program, 97% of survey participants planned to stay in the program and felt their quality of life had improved because of the program

Program and Social Aspect

• Continue running the SCWW program and ensure the social connections remain at the forefront

Program and Delivery

- Continue offering the SCWW program by telephone (87% agreed telephone was best) and consider hosting some face-to-face sessions as a part of the program
- Ask participants periodically what can be done to improve the SCWW program over time to ensure optimal program delivery

Marketing

Continue to market the SCWW program to seniors through targeted presentations (45% of
participants heard about the program this way), followed by events, seniors centres and existing
social groups as well as through existing seniors service providers including Timiskaming Home
Support and CSCT

Introduction

This report details the evaluation of the Seniors Centre without Walls program (SCWW). The SCWW program is a free, telephone based activity program that used a conference call type platform to engage seniors in the Timiskaming region from November 2018 — September 2019 in order to reduce the feeling of loneliness and social isolation among homebound seniors. The results of the SCWW program evaluation report will be used to improve the SCWW program as well as inform future program direction and implementation among other partners across the Northeast region. Additionally results will be communicated to program funders to advocate for program sustainability. Evaluation results will also form the basis of a business case to advocate the continuance of the program and will contribute to the evidence base on community-based interventions to improve the health and well-being of socially isolated seniors and adults with disabilities for regions in the north east.

Background

Loneliness is a major risk factor to optimal health and social isolation. As people get older, the feeling of loneliness and social isolation increases. As a highly rural area with no seniors activity center, many older adults in Timiskaming are at risk of being social isolated.

The Timiskaming Health Unit District is a geographically vast region, covering 13,300 square kilometers.¹ In our district, there are approx. 7,235 seniors aged 65 years and over, making up 21.8% of the population (approx. 5% higher than the national average).^{1,2} Presently 31% of the seniors in Timiskaming live alone and many are homebound and are not able to attend the educational and social programs offered in the community.³

In 2018 the Timiskaming Health Unit received funding from the Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation's Spark fund to hire a program coordinator to implement a seniors' social engagement initiative entitled the Seniors Centre without Walls (SCWW) program. This program was run in Timiskaming through Timiskaming Home support in collaboration with the Timiskaming Health Unit.

The SCWW program aimed to reduce the feeling of loneliness and social isolation among homebound seniors and adults with physical disabilities aged 55 + in the Timiskaming region using a free conference call type platform to engage participants. The conference call platform allowed participants to increase connection with other community members and facilitate knowledge exchange to support their integration in the community. The SCWW program intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Decrease social isolation among participants
- Increase awareness of social connectedness among participants
- Increase the cognitive health of participants
- Provide educational opportunities for participants
- Increase participants knowledge of community services and the number of people who access these services
- Provide participants an opportunity to be a part of the community
- Create meaningful friendships among participants

The SCWW program was run through Timiskaming Home support with the support of a full-time program coordinator. The program was offered to participants from February 2019 – September 2019 and a range of 20 - 29 social programs were offered via telephone each month. Participants signed up for programs on a monthly basis. In total the SCWW had 102 participants with almost half of the participants (47%) from Temiskaming Shores followed by Kirkland Lake (15%), Cobalt (8%) and North Cobalt (8%). A large majority of the program participants spoke English or both English and French (93%) and 81% of the program participants were female. For a more detailed overview of program demographic statistics please see Appendix A: SCWW Program Statistics. As the SCWW program was new to the Timiskaming region and had been slightly modified to accommodate the diverse population in the area, an evaluation of the program was conducted to determine if the program had met its objectives and to learn how the program may be improved as funding for future sustainability is explored.

Purpose

The purpose of the SCWW program was to support and socially connect adults with disabilities and isolated seniors aged 55 + in the Timiskaming region who may find it difficult to leave their home for extended periods of time and assist them with aging in place.

Method

Over the course of June 2019 – July 2019 the SCWW was evaluated to determine if the program achieved its program objectives, to satisfy funder requirements and to learn from the present model to inform future programming in the Timiskaming and north east regions.

The Timiskaming health unit in consultation with partners lead the development of the SCWW evaluation plan. The evaluation plan underwent ethics review by the Health Unit ethics committee and received evaluation approval. A telephone based survey was developed by the Health Unit using Survey Monkey. The full survey may be found in Appendix B: SCWW Survey Questions. The SCWW program coordinator contacted program participants in April 2019 to obtain verbal consent from each participant to administer the survey. In total 95 individuals (note 5 households had couples) were contacted. Among these households 42 individuals agreed to participate in the telephone survey.

The objectives of the telephone survey were to:

- Examine if there was an increase in seniors access to health and wellness information
- Assess seniors knowledge of programs and services in the community that could assist them
- Determine if there was a decreased feeling of social isolation and loneliness among participants
- Determine if program participants felt an increased sense of belonging in the community and if they were satisfied with the program
- Identify whether the program reached different sub-groups

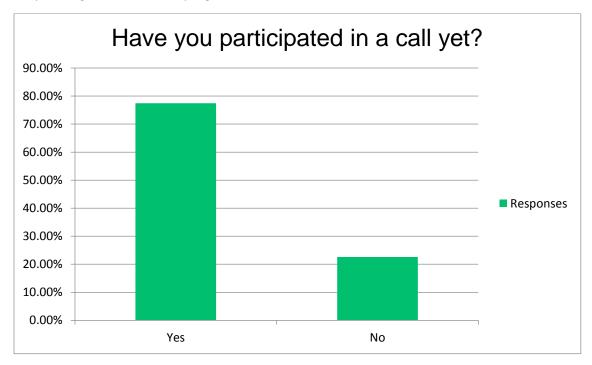
Health unit staff piloted the survey with 5 SCWW program participants in June 2019 using a telephone interview format. The surveys were then modified slightly before telephone interviews were officially conducted in July 2019. Survey data from each participant was then collected and recorded in Survey Monkey. The SCWW telephone interviews were subject to non-response bias. To mitigate the non-response bias the Health Unit staff contacted each participant of the SCWW program who identified they were willing to participate in the survey up to 3 times leaving voicemails at each call in attempts to

minimize bias effect. Of the 42 individuals who consented to participate in the survey, 31 completed the survey while 6 had up to 3 voicemails left and 5 individuals declined to fill-out the survey. A total of 2 survey calls were conducted in French. In August 2019 THU staff analyzed the survey results. Excel was used to analyze Survey Monkey quantitative data results including data frequency, percentages, ranking and medians as well as visuals including graphs. Qualitative data recorded in Survey Monkey was exported to Excel and analyzed by THU staff. Data was consolidated, coded, categorized and analyzed qualitatively to identify common themes and connections. Results of the data analysis are discussed in more detail in the Results section of this report.

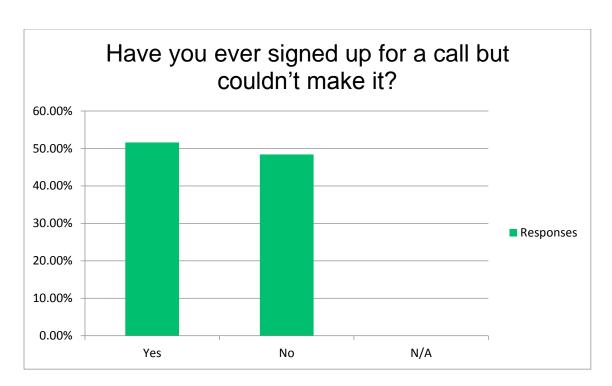
Results

The results of the SCWW survey are detailed below. Unless otherwise specified a total of 31 persons answered each survey question.

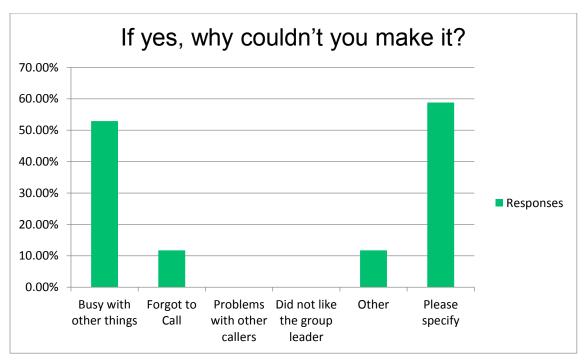
Seniors who took part in the SCWW survey were asked if they had ever participated in an SCWW phone call. A total of 73% of seniors had participated in a call and 23% had never participated in a call although they are registered with the program.



When survey participants were asked if they had ever signed up for an SCWW call but couldn't make it, slightly more than half answered yes (52%) and 48% answered no.

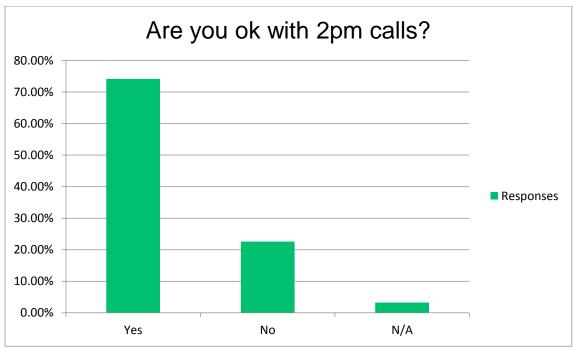


A total of 17 participants answered why they couldn't make a call. The most common reason people couldn't make a call was because they were busy with other things (53%). When asked to specify the reason they couldn't make a call participants most frequently cited because a friend was visiting or because of personal health reasons.

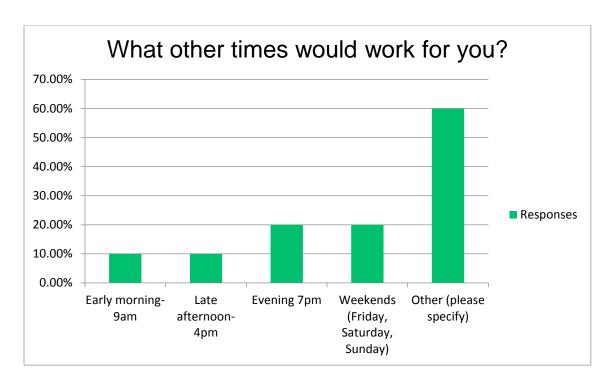


Survey participants were asked about their timing preference for SCWW calls. A total of 65% of participants were satisfied with 10:00 am calls while approximately three quarters (74%) were satisfied with 2 pm calls.

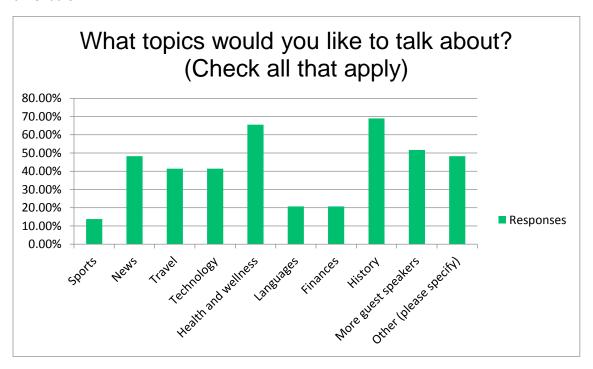




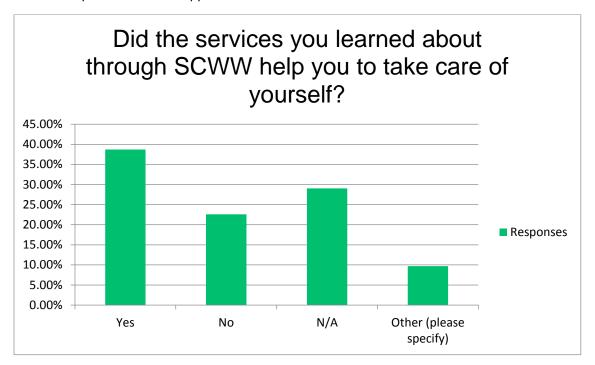
When asked what other times would work for calls there was a very low response rate for this question (10/31 people answered this section). However several people mentioned evening calls or week-end calls would be preferable.



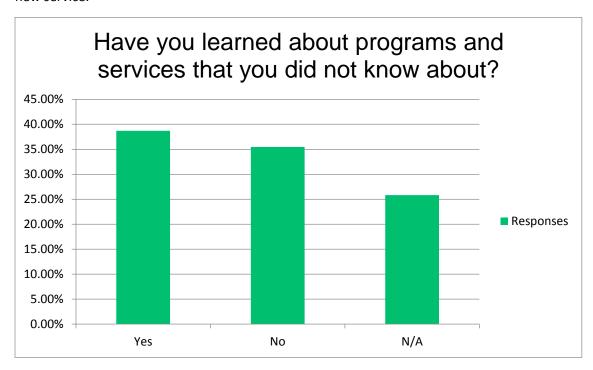
A total of 29 participants shared what topics they would like to talk about. When asked what topics they would like to talk about on SCWW calls, the top three topics survey participants identified were history (69%), health and wellness (66%) and news (48%). Topics that were still enjoyed by a large number of participants included travel (41%) and technology (41%). Many participants also wanted to have more guest speakers (52%). The topics that fewer participants chose they like to talk about were sports (14%) followed by languages and finances (both 21%). Among the 14 survey participants who wanted to talk about "other" programs, answers included gardening, birds, more seated stretching, old music and old time radio.



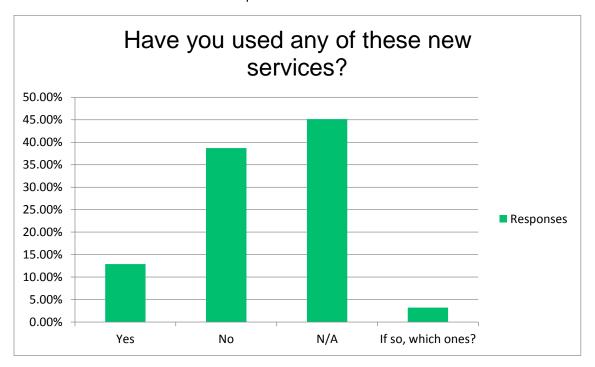
A total of 39% of people who were asked if the services they learned about through SCWW had helped them take care of themselves answered yes and 23% answered no. A total of 29% of survey participants chose this question was not applicable to them.



When participants were asked if they had learned about programs and services they didn't know about, 39% of participants had learned about new programs and services while 35% did not learn about any new service.

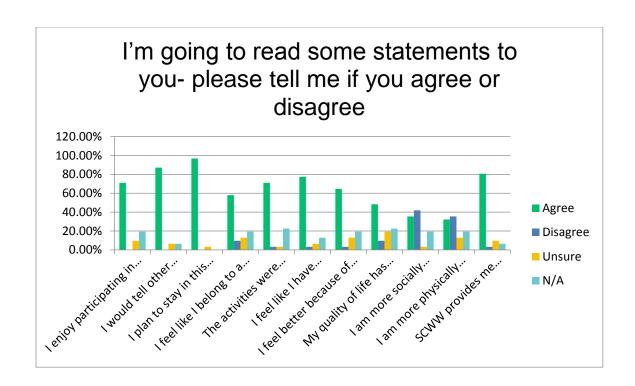


A total of 13% of participants who learned about new services had used these services while 39% had not and 45% chose not to answer this question.

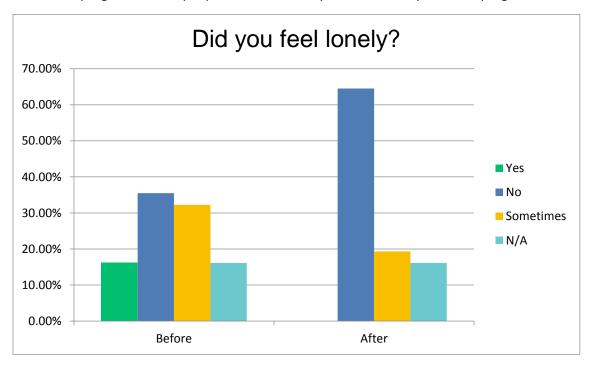


Participants were asked a series of questions to see if they agreed or disagreed with specific statements about the SCWW program. Results showed 71% of people agreed they enjoyed participating in the SCWW calls and agreed activities were mentally stimulating and a total of 87% of people would tell other people about the SCWW program. Almost all participants (97%) would choose to stay in the SCWW program. Many participants (58%) felt like they belonged to a community because of the program, had something to look forward to and felt better because of the program (65%). A total of 81% of the survey participants too felt the SCWW program provided them with something they don't get anywhere else.

Almost half of the program participants (48%) agreed their quality of life had improved because of the program, however only 35% agreed they were more socially active since joining the SCWW program and less than one third (32%) agreed they were more physically active since joining.

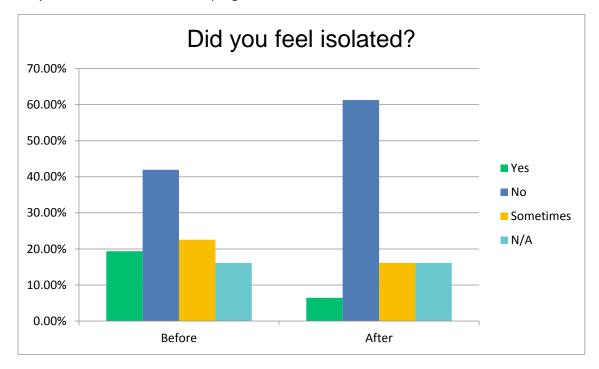


When asked if they felt lonely before vs. after the SCWW program, 16% of participants answered yes they were lonely before the program and 35% of participants answered they were not lonely before the program. A total of 32% of participants shared they were sometimes lonely before the program. After the SCWW program, 65% of people selected no they were not lonely after the program.



Participants were asked if they felt isolated before vs. after the SCWW program. A total of 19% of participants answered yes they felt isolated before the SCWW program and 6% felt isolated after the

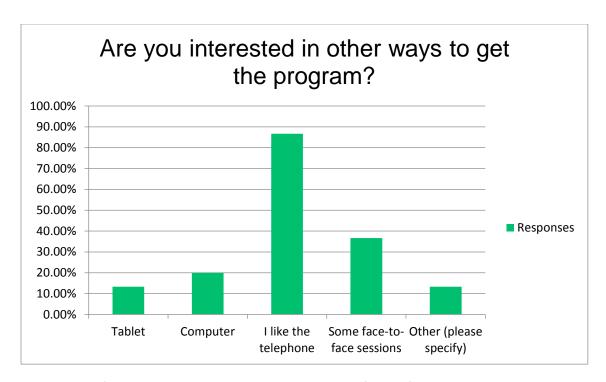
program. Of the 42% of participants who selected they were not isolated before the program, 62% said they were not isolated after the program.



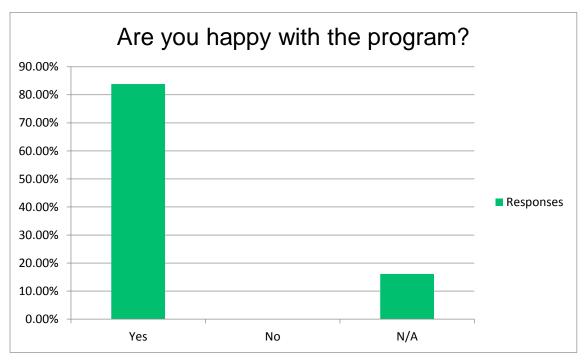
When asked how the SCWW has changed their lives, more than half shared the program was something to look forward to and encouraged them to learn and enrich their life. A number of people too shared the SCWW program gave them a social outlet to meet more people and feel connected to others.

When asked what they liked most about the SCWW a large number of people cited the social aspect of the program was liked best including the camaraderie, being able to chat with someone, being with people and sharing. SCWW program participants also shared the program topics were things they liked most about the program including the seated stretching being the most frequently mentioned. Many participants also enjoyed the flexibility/convenience of the program.

Participants were asked if they were interested in other ways to receive the SCWW program and 30 participants answered this question. A total of 87% of participants chose they liked to access the program by telephone best followed by some face-to-face sessions (37%) and then by accessing the program by computer (20%).



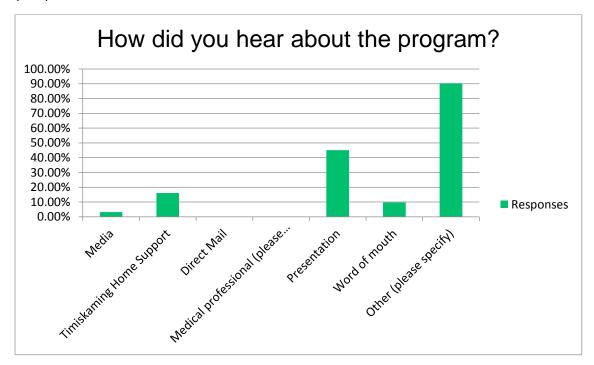
When asked if they are happy with the program, a total of 84% of participants responded yes they were happy with the program and 16% chose not to answer this question.



When asked how the SCWW program could be made better, many of the participants had no suggestions. Several people did provide answers and comments included need to get more people interested and the program has new things and is excellent.

When participants were asked how they heard of the SCWW program, 68% of people heard about the SCWW through either a presentation, an event/meeting including the Diners Club, Spring Fling and

fibromyalgia group meeting or at a seniors centre including the Golden Age Club. Additionally 16% of participants heard about the SCWW through a service provider including Timiskaming Home Support (16%) CSCT and meals on wheels.



When asked if participants had anything else to say about the program, the majority of participants had positive feedback about the program including it's good and thank-you for having it. A smaller number of people had either nothing further to say or chose not to answer this question.

Discussion

Thirty one people answered the complete SCWW evaluation survey however 7 of those persons were not regular SCWW participants and had not yet participated in a call but intended to participate in future. Including those who had not participated in an SCWW call may have resulted in more frequent selection of the answer "not applicable" to survey questions therefore diminishing survey content for some questions as these individuals were not able to speak from experience about the SCWW program.

When asked if they agreed they were more socially active since joining the SCWW program only 35% agreed they were more socially active and only 32% agreed they were more physically active since joining. This was likely due to the fact a number of seniors who answered the survey questions were already socially and physically active before the SCWW program therefore did not report an increase after the program.

Participants were asked a series of questions to see if they agreed or disagreed with a statement about the SCWW program. Results showed 71% of people agreed they enjoyed participating in the SCWW calls, that activities were mentally stimulating and 87% of people would tell other people about the SCWW program. Almost all participants (97%) would choose to stay in the SCWW program. This is all very positive feedback and was anticipated given monthly participant feedback prior to the survey.

It was interesting to note when participants were asked if they were interested in other ways to receive the SCWW program, a total of 87% chose they like to access the program by telephone best followed by some face-to-face sessions (37%) and then by computer (20%). The data shows although most participants are satisfied with telephone calls, many are still interested in attending some face-to-face sessions and one fifth are interested in receiving the program through the computer. These mediums offer possible new avenues to broaden the SCWW program to include new social platforms for connecting.

When participants were asked how they had heard about the SCWW program, 68% of people heard about the SCWW through either a presentation, an event/meeting including the Diners Club, Spring Fling and fibromyalgia group meeting or at a seniors centre including the Golden Age Club. Additionally 16% of participants heard about the SCWW through a service provider including Timiskaming Home Support (16%) CSCT and meals on wheels. This data demonstrates the extensive marketing for the SCWW program and the varied ways seniors heard about the program indicating a broad marketing strategy may still be helpful in recruiting participants for future program growth.

Limitations

When interpreting the results of this survey, the following limitations should be considered. Survey results overall were subject to several form of bias often inherent with survey application including the following:

- Self-selection bias survey participants were not randomized in their response to participate in the survey
- Social desirability bias individual response may have been altered by participants desire to be viewed in a positive light
- Non-response bias individuals who chose not to be part of the survey may have been those who held differing views of the program than those who did participate in the survey
- Recall bias survey participants may have had difficulty remembering past events to refer to
 when answering survey questions and may have been influenced by other events which could
 influence data accuracy and alter response to survey questions

Despite limitations the survey participation rate was still considered good and data generated reflected the opinions of the target population.

Recommendations

Call Times

 10:00 am and 2:00 pm calls work for the majority of SCWW participants. Keep providing calls at these times

Topic Preferences

Keep offering history, health and wellness topics and good news stories as the top 3 topics of
interest for participants. Technology and travel topics were still of interest to participants so do
keep these topics for program. Consider adding more guest speakers to the SCWW program

Program Services

Over one third (39%) of persons who had learned about services through the SCWW program
felt the services had helped them take care of themselves. Keep sharing information about
services to help seniors through SCWW calls

Program Overall

• Do keep running the SCWW program, 97% of survey participants planned to stay in the program and felt their quality of life had improved because of the program. The majority of survey participants also agreed the program was enjoyable, mentally stimulating, gave them something to look forward to, was something they don't get anywhere else and had nothing but positive comments about the program. Additionally there was an upward trend showing the SCWW program had helped reduce loneliness and isolation among seniors who participated

Program and Social Aspect

Continue running the SCWW program and ensure the social connections remain at the forefront
of the program objectives almost half of program participants liked the social aspect of the
SCWW program the most

Program and Delivery

- Continue offering the SCWW program by telephone (87% agreed telephone was best) and consider hosting some face-to-face sessions as a part of the program as 37% participants shared face-to-face sessions would be a good idea
- The majority of participants had either no suggestions for improving the program or chose not to offer suggestions indicating satisfaction with the status quo indicating there is no need to radically change the SCWW program as it stands, however asking participants periodically what can be done to improve the program should continue to be part of the SCWW program delivery in future as participants opinions may change over time

Marketing

 Continue to market the SCWW program to seniors through targeted presentations followed by events, seniors centres and existing social groups as well as through existing seniors service providers including Timiskaming Home Support and CSCT

Next Steps

The next steps for the SWCC program include using a gender lens to determine if there are differences in male vs. female responses and program participation patterns and gender distribution across the district. Additionally further research will be explored in how to better reach and engage the francophone population in the SCWW program as well as investigate future SCWW programming for caregivers. Results of this evaluation report will be shared locally and regionally with partners and the program funder and will be used to support the business case to secure local partner support and sustain funding for the program.

References

September 20, 2019).

¹ Statistics Canada. 2017. **Timiskaming, DIS [Census division], Ontario and Ontario [Province]** (table). **Census Profile**. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.

https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E (accessed September 20, 2019).

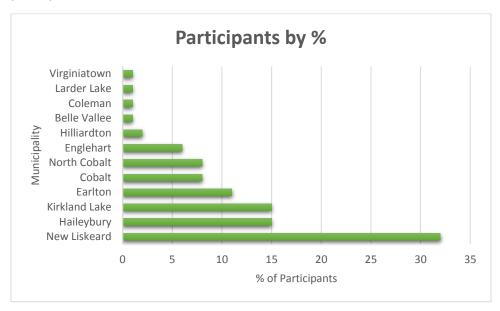
² Statistics Canada. 2017. **Temagami, MU [Census subdivision], Ontario and Nipissing, DIS [Census division], Ontario** (table). **Census Profile**. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E (accessed

³ Statistics Canada. (2012). *Timiskaming, Ontario (Code 3554) and Canada (Code 01)* (table). *Census Profile*. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012. http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E (accessed October 29, 2019).

Appendix A: Seniors Centre without Walls (SCWW) Program Statistics

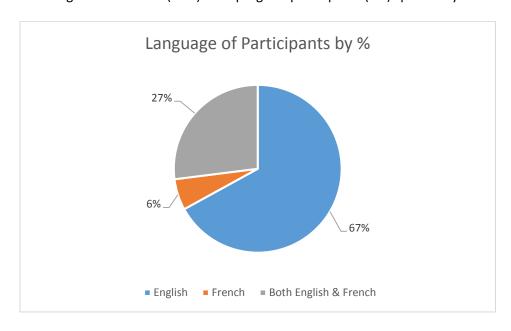
Municipality

A large portion (47%) of the SCWW program participants lived in the city of Temiskaming Shores including New Liskeard and Haileybury. The second largest group of program participants lived in Kirkland Lake (15%) followed by Earlton (11%). Below is a graph of all the municipalities where program participants were located.



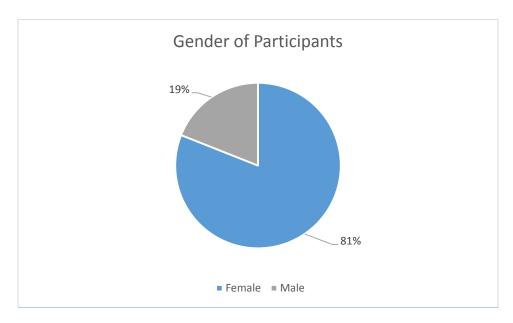
Language

The majority of the SCWW program participants spoke English (67%) followed by participants who speak both English and French (27%). Few program participants (6%) spoke only French.



Gender

Many of the SCWW program participants (81%) were female and 19% were male. Below is a graph showing the break-down of female and male participants.



Appendix B: SCWW Survey Questions

1.	Ha	ave you participated in a call yet?				
	0	Yes				
	0	No				
	0	N/A				
2.	Have you ever signed up for a call but couldn't make it?					
	0	Yes				
	0	No				
	0	N/A				
3.	If	yes, why couldn't you make it?				
	0	Busy with other things				
	0	Forgot to call				
	0	Problems with other callers				
	0	Did not like the group leader				
	0	Other				
	0	Please specify				
4.	Ar	e you ok with 10 am calls?				
	0	Yes				
	0	No				
	0	N/A				
5.	Ar	e you ok with 2 pm calls?				
	0	Yes				
	0	No				
	0	N/A				
6.	W	hat other times would work for you?				
	0	Early mornings – 9 am				
	0	Late afternoons – 4 pm				
	0	Evenings – 7 pm				
	0	Weekends – Friday, Saturday, Sunday				
	0	Other (please specify)				
7.	W	hat topics would you like to talk about? (Check all that apply)				
		Sports				
	0	News				

o Travel

	0	Technology
	0	Health and Wellness
	0	Languages
	0	Finances
	0	History
	0	More guest speakers
	0	Other (please specify)
8.	Did	the services you learned about through SCWW help you take care of yourself?
	0	Yes
	0	No
	0	N/A
	0	Other (please specify)
9.	Hav o	e you learned about programs and services that you did not know about? Yes No
	0	N/A
10.		e you used any of these new services?
	0	Yes
	0	No
	0	N/A If so, which ones?
	0	ii so, willcii ollest

11. I'm going to read some statements to you – please tell me if you agree or disagree

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	N/A
I enjoy participating in the calls	0	0	0	0
I would tell other people about this program	0	0	0	0
I plan to stay in this program	0	0	0	0
I feel like I belong to a community due to the program	O	0	0	O
The activities were mentally stimulating	0	0	0	0
I feel like I have something to look forward to because of	0	0	0	0
the program				
I feel better because of the program	0	0	0	0
My quality of life has improved because of the program	0	0	0	0
I am more socially active since participating in SCWW	0	0	0	0
I am more physically active since participating in SCWW	0	0	0	0
SCWW provides me with something I don't get anywhere	0	0	0	0
else				

12. Did you feel lonely?					
Yes No Sometimes	N/A				
Before o o o	0				
After o o o	О				
13. Did you feel Isolated?					
Yes No Sometimes	N/A				
Before o o o	0				
After o o o	0				
14. How has SCWW changed your life?					
15. What do you like most about Seniors Centre without Walls?					
16. Are you interested in other ways to get the program?					
o Tablet					
 Computer 					
o I like the telephone					
 Some face-to-face sessions 					
 Other (please specify) 					
17. Are you happy with the program?					
 Yes 					
o No					
o N/A					
18. How can we make the program better?					
19. How did you hear about the program?					
o Media					
 Timiskaming Home Support 					
o Direct Mail					
 Medical professional (please specify) 					
 Presentation 					
 Word of mouth 					
 Other (please specify) 					

21. Name of client

20. Do you have anything else to say about the program?

- 22. Phone number
- 23. Attempt #