

CORAH: The Heart and Health of our Campuses and Rural Aging Communities

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The Centre of Rural Aging and Health (CORAH) is a vibrant community hub and active living centre for older adults aged 55+. Using innovative and participatory approaches to address barriers and increasing health outcomes for older rural adults, CORAH offers social, cultural, educational, and recreational programs to promote health, well-being, and aging well. CORAH has been made possible through a partnership between Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors and Long-term Care. CORAH empowers rural communities by providing relevant information and resources, and opportunities for older adults to engage as participants in activities related to its four pillars of programming: *Healthy Practices, Active Living, Healthy Relationships, Healthy Eating*.

Modelled as a Community Hub “where people come together,” CORAH began as a pilot prototype in 2020 at the NSCC Annapolis Valley Campus in Middleton, with over 21,900 daily registrations and 1,800+ healthy aging sessions. This success led to expansion of 2 additional sites at the NSCC Strait Area Campus (Port Hawkesbury), and Shelburne Campus (Shelburne) in Fall 2023, and continues to respond to rural needs of seniors across Nova Scotia.

This workshop provides an overview and assessment of CORAH to share best practices, lessons learned and findings from four years of programming, with discussion around the ways CORAH meets the needs of older adults in 3 very different and distinct rural areas. Discussions will be had around the project’s successes, gaps, and future research opportunities, examining the similarities and differences of rural communities, with an underlying question: *“What makes ‘the CORAH experience’ an impactful one, and what keeps rural seniors returning to CORAH, again and again, to fill a physical and social prescription?”*

The workshop includes a summary of the project’s design and goals, outcomes, engagement and evaluation data, components, lessons learned, best practices and the impact CORAH continues to have on rural older adults. It includes multi-media, group discussion, and identifies barriers to aging well, and ways that CORAH is addressing barriers. Qualitative and quantitative data highlights the development and effectiveness of CORAH as a rural place-based community hub model for older adults. CORAH is recognized as an upstream health intervention by various levels of government, recommended by rural doctors and health professionals across the province, supported by dozens of community organizations and partners, and utilized by hundreds of older adults, making it an innovative physical and social prescription for rural seniors across Nova Scotia.