

## **The Walking our Way to Wellness Program: A Community Intergenerational Partnership with Membertou First Nation**

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Walking our Way to Wellness was a healthy aging program that combined evidenced based lifestyle interventions to improve the ability to age in place at home through lifestyle modification, including exercise, cognitive stimulation, and social interaction. The program was co-designed with staff from Membertou Health and Wellness Centre and included n=15 participants aged 50+. Individuals engaged within 12 healthy aging sessions during a 6-week period. Healthy aging sessions included indoor and outdoor walking, chair fitness, aqua therapy, resistance and muscular strength and flexibility-balance exercises. The program also used clinically validated assessments administered by students within the Bachelor of Nursing program under the supervision of licensed clinicians to promote intergenerational learning with the outcomes of reducing ageism and promoting cultural awareness in future healthcare workers and professionals. One youth community member also participated and assisted with health programming tasks.

The program was delivered in a group format to promote social inclusion. It took place twice weekly, for approximately 60 minutes with guest presentations on nutrition, menu planning and balance exercises being scheduled based on participant need. Upon completion of the program, participants travelled to the Friends United Centre for a cultural educational session and celebration lunch.

In conclusion, participants gained an improve awareness of their own health and risk profile based on the findings of these assessments, promoting an increase in self-efficacy and agency in understanding risk factors associated with aging. Results indicated that social engagement and improved physical activity levels were primary features recognized by participants. Further and continued research for community partnerships which are focused upon health programming would be recommended.