

Recruiting diverse older adults  
to research via an anti-  
oppression approach:

Case studies at McMaster University

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Mobility, Technology, and Aging Research



**ABLE.Family – Art  
Based therapies to  
encourage Longevity in  
Elderly participants**

With  
gratitude to  
our partners  
and funders



Centre on Aging



DALHOUSIE  
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Chebucto Links  
Keeping Seniors Connected



DIXON HALL

McMaster Institute for Research on Aging |  
Dixon Hall Centre





Key issue: non-diverse aging data in research  
*(health, wellness, tech development, etc.)*

Historic flawed research practices:

- Extractive
- Exploitative, Harmful, Inhospitable
- White/dominant and settler/colonial culture centered
- Unable to integrate and support diverse subjects in projects

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## Approaches to working with diverse participants

- Non-extractive
- Anti-colonial
- Age-centric/ Critical disability approaches
- Interdisciplinary



# Extraction

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- “the action of taking out something, especially using effort or force”  
Oxford Dictionary
- **Non-extractive research** describes research method and philosophy that recognises, respects, consults and integrates community of practice.



# Theoretical resources

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- **Feminist “third world”, postcolonial, and situated approaches**
  - Local, margins, situated, intersectional
  - Tech dangers:  
Privacy/surveillance/tracking/prediction
- **Indigenous Feminist approaches**
  - Environmental, racial and gender justice
- **Critical aging/ Crip/Critical Disability**
  - Rejects curative and deficit approaches;  
frictive access/flux



# What is extractive research?

- **Exploits** participants and their labour
- **Speaks on behalf** of subjects
- **Retracts:** Creates rewarding tools/ structures and then **retracts** them
- **Reinforces existing inequalities** and hierarchies and ideological values that support inequalities and practices of domination
- **Devalues community knowledges;** reinforce knowledge elitism



Dr. Kim TallBear

- Professor, Faculty of Native Studies, University of Alberta
- Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Indigenous Peoples, Technoscience, and Society
- Decolonial Sexualities
- **#IndigenousSTS #TipiConfess**
- Enrolled Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate. Descended from the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma.



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA



# Collaborative research approaches: “Faithful Knowledges” by Kim Tallbear



**CO-CONSTITUTE MY  
KNOWLEDGE IN  
CONCERT WITH THE  
ACTS AND CLAIMS  
OF THOSE WHO I  
INQUIRE AMONG**



**TURN THE LENS  
BACK ON  
OURSELVES AS  
RESEARCHERS**



**ARTICULATE  
SHARED  
CONCEPTUAL  
GROUND AND  
SHARED STAKES  
WITH THOSE  
AMONG WHOM I  
BUILD KNOWLEDGE.**



**THINK EXPANSIVELY  
ON WHAT CAUSES  
RISKS AND  
RIGHTFUL BENEFITS  
IN KNOWLEDGE  
CREATION  
PRACTICES**

# Key techniques: recruiting with collaborative & anti-oppressive approaches

- **Outreach: transparent, anti-oppressive, age positive**
- **Creating a safe place; build trust and community**
- **Identify shared goals**
- **Co-design, participatory design**
- **Remuneration**
- **Participants gain benefits**
- **Sustainability- benefits continue in community**



# Transparent Anti-Oppressive and Age-friendly recruitment:

## Lack of diversity

Clearly address issue: lack of diverse older adults

- Note history of biased research practices
- Note the harm done
- Note the need to repair research process

## Value of diversity

Clearly address need:

- The right to be included
- To ensure representation diverse older adults in data sets
- To ensure any research outcomes (technologies, health products) are designed to meet needs of diverse communities

## Safe Research methods

Clearly address efforts to make research environment safe/hospitable

- Ongoing consent; rights to withdraw
- Clear description of accessible research space
- Persons to answer questions, discuss research issues
- Shared space, invited opinions, dialogue
- Options for peer leadership
- Remuneration
- Get something back
- Learn about results
- Etc.....

# MAC M3: Monitor My Mobility

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- **What:** Tracks the everyday mobility and health trajectories of older Canadians.
- **How:** Our study aims to recruit **1,500 adults** aged 65 and older and monitor their mobility for at least 1 year using an activity monitoring device called the TicWatch Pro 3 Ultra GPS.
- **Process:** Participants wear the TicWatch on their wrist for a **10-day period at baseline and then at four-month intervals** throughout the year. Additionally, participants have the option to wear a second activity monitoring device called the ActiGraph on their thigh, alongside the wrist-worn device, following the same time and frequency pattern.
- **Outcomes:** The study will measure key outcomes such as **life-space mobility, trip frequency, duration, and mode** using the TicWatch GPS receiver. It will also assess sedentary behavior, including body posture and step counts, using the ActiGraph.
- **Aims:** to provide valuable insights into late-life mobility decline in Canada. As well, it lays the foundation for **developing tools and strategies to help older adults and their caregivers self-manage their mobility as part of their overall health.**



# Mac M3 at Dixon Hall

## Background

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- MacM3 prospective cohort study aims to recruit 1,500 older adults to identify early changes in mobility over a 2-year period.<sup>1</sup>
- We seek a diverse cohort to understand how differences across race, class, ethnicity, etc. articulate to age to impact mobility changes.
- The lack of diverse aging data is an ongoing issue across aging research.

## Purpose

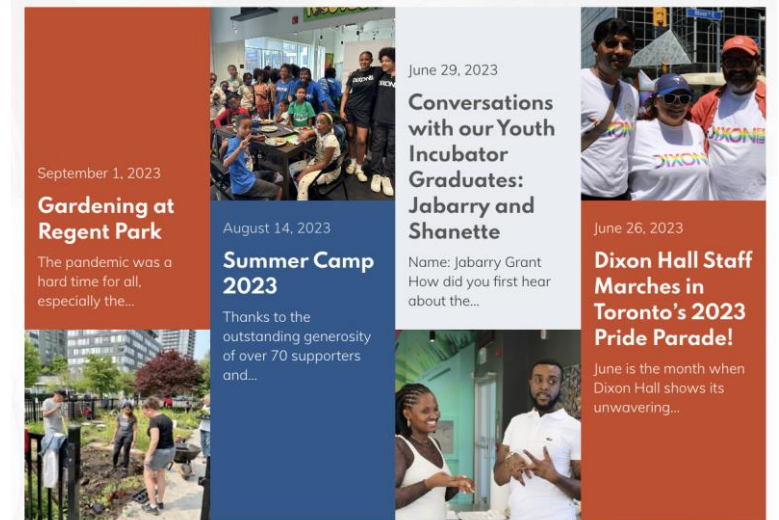
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- To explore differences in participant demographics and characteristics by recruitment site, and to present the strategies we have used to increase diversity in our sample.

## About Us

Here at Dixon Hall, we serve Toronto's Downtown East community, helping those in need, striving to create a city where everyone thrives.

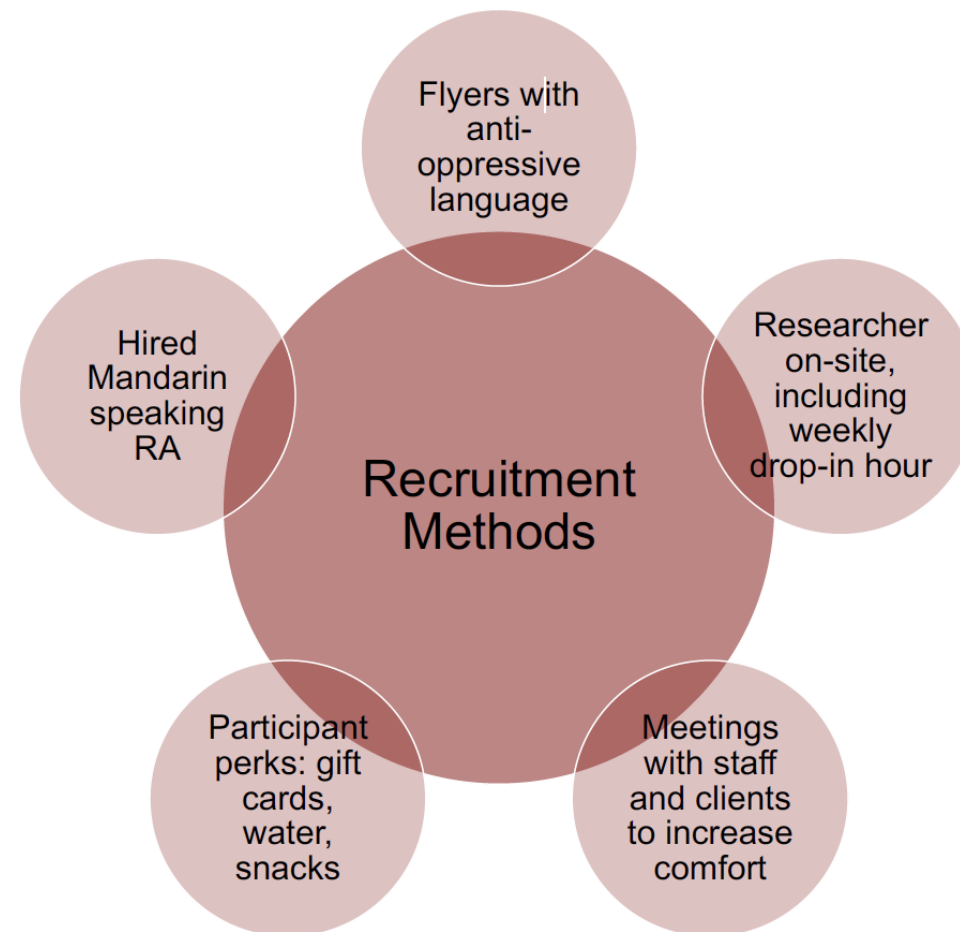
WHO WE ARE



## Methods

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- To obtain greater diversity we:
  - created recruitment flyers detailing our intent to correct the underrepresentation of diverse older adults in research, highlighting safety and security
  - embedded a MacM3 researcher at Dixon Hall, a neighbourhood service center
  - engaged Dixon Hall staff and peer leaders in snowball recruitment
  - provided diverse benefits for participants
  - engaged Mandarin-speaking research assistants
- We conducted preliminary analyses on the first 982 participants (870 recruited through McMaster Innovation Park (MIP) since May 2022 and 112 recruited through Dixon Hall since March 2023).
- Frequencies were compared between groups using one-sided tests of proportions.



# Mac M3/Dixon Hall research success

## Results

**Table 1. Participant characteristics stratified by site**

Characteristic	MIP (Hamilton) n = 870	Dixon Hall (Toronto) n = 112	p-value
Born outside Canada	23.2%	44.6%	<0.001
Race, non-white	4.4%	29.5%	<0.001
Household income <\$20k/year	0.5%	16.1%	<0.001
Marital status, not-married*	33.8%	49.1%	<0.001
Live alone	27.4%	42.9%	<0.001
Lives in apartment or condominium	20.7%	45.5%	<0.001

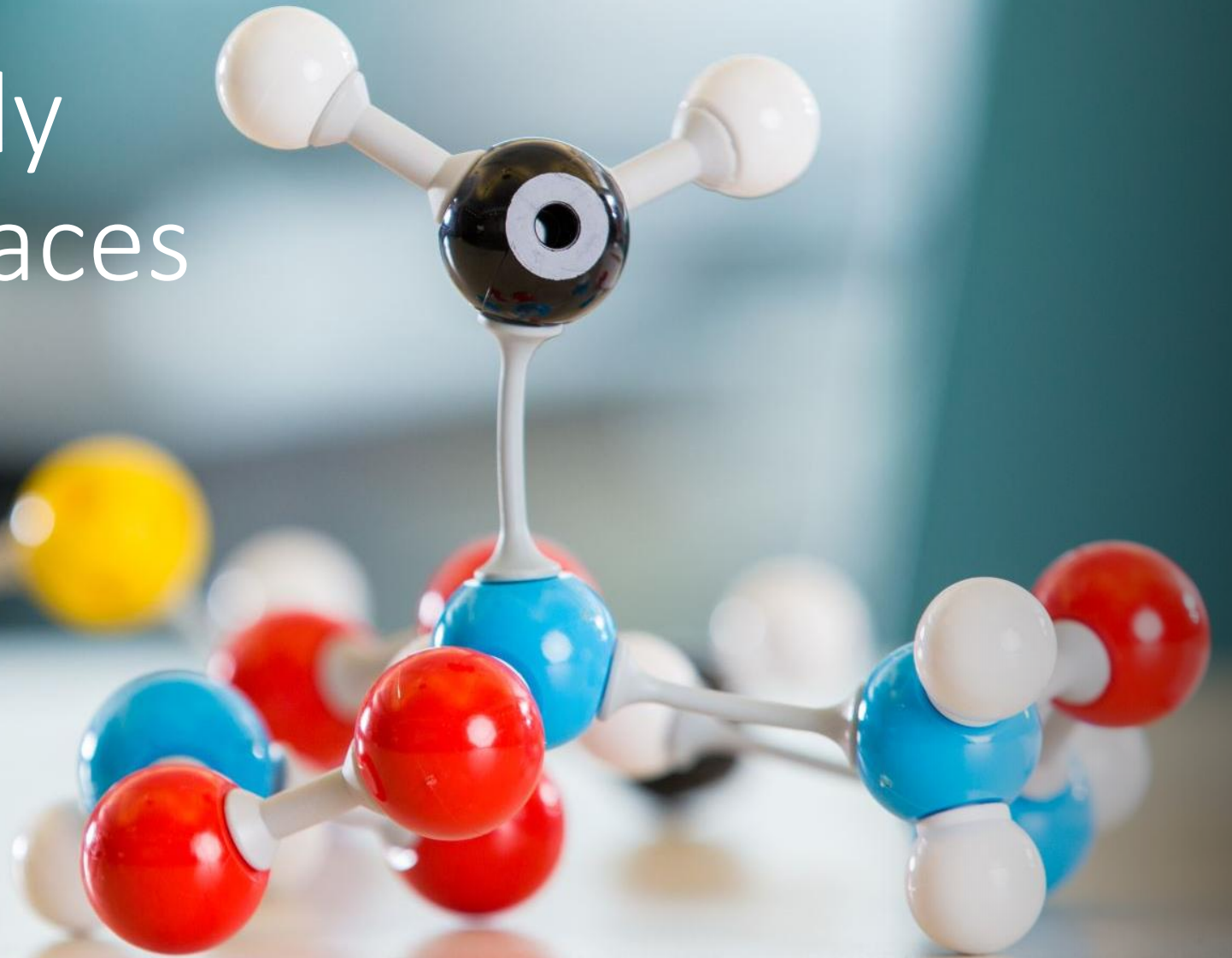
\*single, divorced, separated or widowed

- Mean (SD) age of 73.1 (4.9) years; no difference based on site.
- 70% female; significantly higher proportion of females in Dixon Hall group (68% at MIP vs 80% at Dixon Hall,  $p = 0.005$ ).
- More diversity among Dixon Hall participants (see Table 1).

## Conclusions

Because diverse older adults have experienced bias and/or hostility in research environments, it is crucial in recruitment efforts, that researchers are transparent, note efforts to avoid discrimination, and build a sense of trust, respect, and collaboration—anti-oppressive and “slow” research strategies. While these efforts take more time and resources, they are necessary to ensure research reflects the varied experiences of diverse older adults in Canada.

More age- and  
diversity-friendly  
research approaches





<https://ableplatform-qa.herokuapp.com/>

ablefamily



Hi! Welcome to Able Family, Able is a website where you can play games with your family and friends. I'm going to help you get started. Click start to begin

START

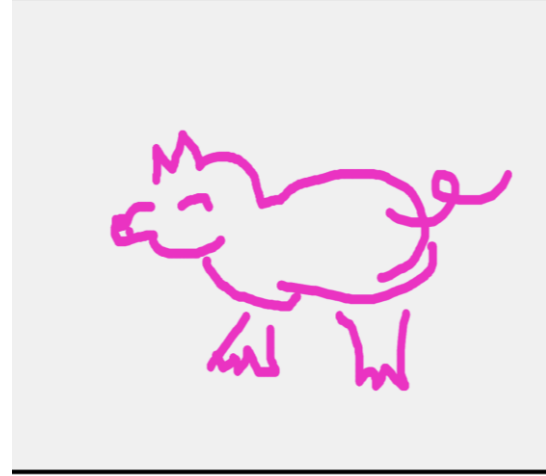
**ABLE.Family – Art Based therapies to encourage Longevity in Elderly participants**



Current Game: Paint



Current Game: Draw

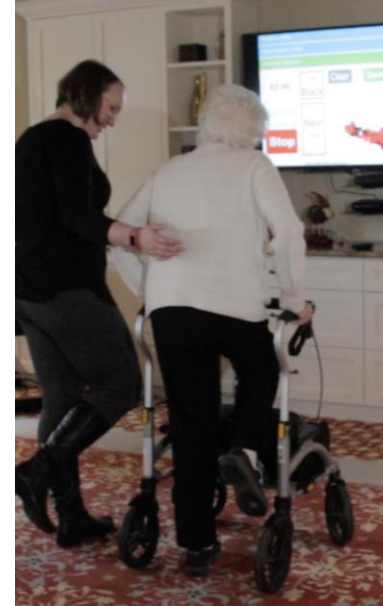
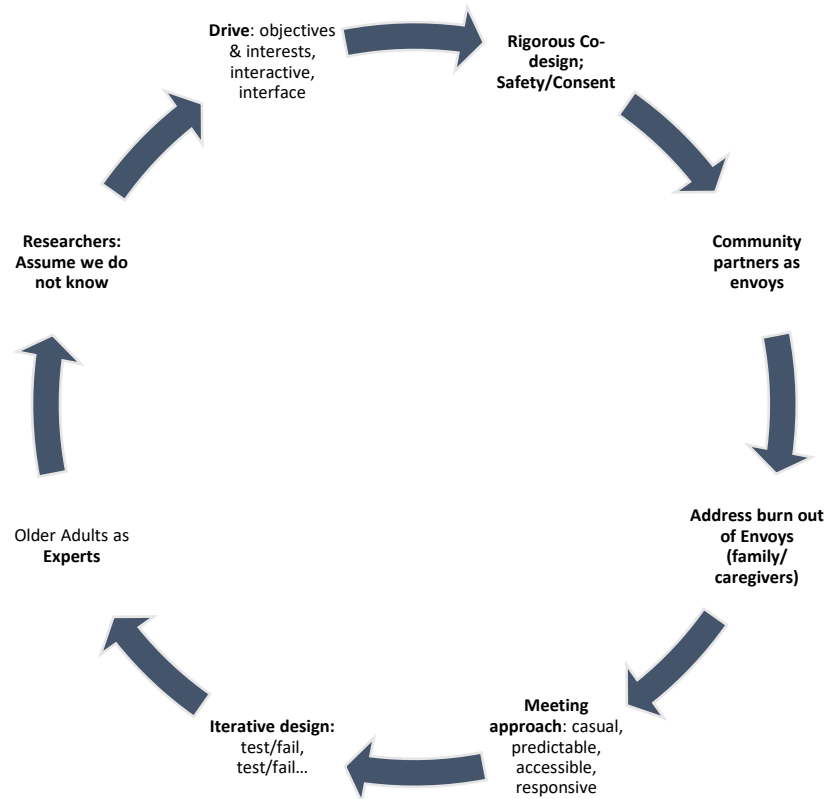


Current Game: Tic-Tac-Toe

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	X	

# Age-friendly research methods

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**ABLE.Family – Art Based therapies to encourage Longevity in Elderly participants**



# Policy recommendations

- **Training tools/modules on anti-oppressive research (Tri-council, partners, universities, etc.) featuring:**
  - **Clear and transparent Recruitment advertising**
  - **Recruitment process: consent, safe engagement, benefits**
  - **Embedding researchers**
  - **Envoys with safe community groups**
  - **Remuneration/ benefits**
  - **shared outcomes**
  - **Co-creation/participatory methods**
  - **Informed by indigenous, critical aging, anti-oppressive approaches**



# Thank you!

## Contact us or check us out:

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- <https://pulselab.humanities.mcmaster.ca/>
- <https://pulselab.humanities.mcmaster.ca/current-project/able-family/>
- <https://ableplatform-qa.herokuapp.com/>
- <https://macm3.com/>



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