

Living North of 50

FREE

Northern Ontario Magazine for those getting better with age.

SPRING/SUMMER 2025



“Old” is a relative concept!

As life expectancy continues to rise, many individuals aged 50 and over refuse to label themselves as “old,” and for good reason. The lifestyle of a 50-something in 2025 differs significantly from that of a 50-something in 1960.

Nowadays, being “old” can be divided into two distinct

groups: the “young old,” who remain active and healthy, and the “old old,” who experience a decline in their abilities. For instance, a 78-year-old woman who volunteers, takes dance classes and travels frequently might not feel old

enough to move into a seniors’ residence.

Ultimately, the idea of old age—beyond biological factors—is highly subjective. Some people associate being old with a lack of interest in modernity. Whether they’re 60 or 80, those

who shy away from new technologies or watch only classic movies and listen to the hits of yesteryear may seem older than their peers who engage with contemporary culture.

According to science, cellular aging accelerates significantly

after age 75. However, healthy lifestyle practices can help individuals navigate this stage more smoothly.

Remember that getting older should never become an excuse to stop evolving or learning new things.





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Trash or treasure?

Some people like to declutter-- but I don't.

Is decluttering a joy or punishment? Maybe the queen of neat, Marie Kondo says it is a complete joy, but my mother and I would say, it is punishment.

There are so many things in our house that have wonderful memories attached to them.

How can I possibly entertain the idea of throwing those cherished possessions away?

I have kept old report cards of my daughter's, her Brownie sash with all her badges on it and her first speech she wrote in Grade One.

She earned a trophy for that speech

and continued to shine in public speaking contests for most of her elementary school life.

She could stand up in front of 400 people in a gymnasium, with no cards and deliver a speech that she wrote herself, with humour and much clarity.

Public speaking is a wonderful skill to have.

If I look closely, I may have a Polly Pocket or Hello Kitty toy of hers and maybe even a big purple Barney stuffed toy.

I still have anything in the handwriting of my mother, and my father's photos of mines he worked at over the years.

After I moved home to live with my

mother, we were surely looking at a hoarding crisis, if that is what you want to call keeping stuff.

If we get rid of our cherished mementos, don't we also get rid of those special memories?

After mom passed away, I held a yard sale and did some decluttering.

Mom had stuff from both my grandmother's homes that she could not part with. I recall a specific winter coat I had bought my mother that I put in the yard sale after asking family members if they wanted it.

And it was absolutely thrilling for me to see a woman wearing the coat in downtown New Liskeard one day.

I could have cried. I was so happy to see mom's coat. I had to resist the impulse to go over and hug that woman because I was afraid I would not let her go.

Seeing that coat brought back so many happy memories of my mother

wearing the coat when we took her ice fishing or cross-country skiing or when she went for her daily walks around Cobalt Lake.

Our homes can certainly turn into mausoleums if we aren't careful though.

The amazing nostalgia of our past lives and all that stuff is precious and very difficult to get rid of.

I am amazed at the personal mementos people put in yard sales and give away to thrift stores.

Sometimes family memories passed down the line are not as valued by family members as they once were.

And when the trend these days is to live simplistically and minimal, nostalgic items are more likely to make it to the curb.

I am reminded that it's okay to hold onto an item that holds a special place in our hearts.



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How to choose the best seniors' residence 7 things to consider

Choosing a seniors' residence is a significant decision that requires careful consideration. Here are seven criteria to help you find the one that best meets your needs:

- 1. Your health
Evaluate your current and future healthcare needs and choose a facility that can accommodate them.
- 2. Available services
Find out which services are included or available for an additional fee, such as housekeeping, laundry and recreational activities. These offerings can heavily influence your decision.
- 3. Food quality
If you choose a residence that provides meals, ensure the food is varied, nutritious and suitable for any dietary restrictions you may have.
- 4. Accommodations
Visit the available suites to evaluate their size, soundproofing, brightness and accessibility. A comfortable and functional environment is essential for your well-being.
- 5. Budget
Set a budget by considering rent and additional expenses, like internet access. Look for a residence that meets your financial needs without straining your budget.
- 6. Location



Choose a facility that's close to essential services, such as pharmacies, grocery stores and public transportation. You may also want to be near places of interest like libraries, restaurants and boutiques. Don't forget being close to family and friends!

- 7. Atmosphere
During your visit, take note of the general atmosphere of the residence. Are the staff friendly? Do the residents seem happy and engaged? A welcoming environment and clean common areas are positive signs.

Good luck with your research!



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Dan's Dallies

Grandpa: This writer is a grandfather and great grandfather – the following struck a chord and made my eyes water.

A young grandson asked his Grandpa, “How did you live in the past? Without technology, without computers, without drones, without Bitcoins, without internet connection, without TV’s, without air conditioners, without cell phones?”

The wise Grandpa replied: “Just as your generation lives today grandson but we had compassion, respect, a real education, personality, human kindness, shame, modesty and honesty. Our generation were survivors.”

Grandpa continued to orate; “We, as seniors, were born

between 1930 and 1960 as the blessed ones. Our lives are living proof: While playing and riding our bikes – we never wore a helmet. After school, we did our own homework ourselves. We played outside until sunset. We played with real friends – not virtual friends. When we were thirsty, we would drink from a fountain, a spring and waterfalls not mineral water. We never worried nor got sick even as we shared the same cup or plate.”

“We never gained weight by eating bread and pasta everyday. Nothing happened to our feet despite walking barefoot. We never used food supplements to stay healthy. We would make our own toys and play with them.”

“Our parents weren’t rich – they gave us love – not material gifts. We never had a cell phone, DVD, game console, Xbox, video games, PC Laptop, or Internet Chat – we had true friends.”

“We visited our friends without being invited and shared and enjoyed the food with their family. All our parents lived nearby to take advantage of family time. We had black and white photos with colourful memories.”

“In those photos, we are unique and the most understanding generation: We listened to our parents and we focused to listen to our children and grandchildren. We are a limited edition – you must learn from us ‘Grasshopper’ as



we are a treasure and destined to disappear.”

Of all the things in life, dear seniors, this is true: If you don’t know us by now, you will never, never, know us. The

youth today must seize the moment – before it is too late. Until next time, may God bless. I thank you.

J.D. (Dan) McNamara
705-622-9706.

Your municipality is age-friendly, but is your company?

In Canada, an Age-Friendly Community (AFC) actively adapts its policies, services and structures to promote the active participation of seniors. If you’re a business owner in an AFC, here are a few steps you can take to make your business more inclusive.

Focus on accessibility

Ensure your facility is easily accessible for seniors who may use mobility aids such as canes, walkers or wheelchairs. Install ramps, elevators and adapted washrooms. Keep aisles clear and wide to help seniors navigate your space comfortably. Provide chairs or benches so they can rest during their visit.

Adapt your customer service

Train your staff to offer courteous, friendly and patient service to older customers. Educate employees about the needs of older adults who may not be familiar with new technologies.

Use clear communication tools

Design your communication materials

—such as posters, flyers, website and business cards—with seniors in mind. For example, use large print and contrasting colours for maximum readability.

By taking these inclusive measures, you can help create a more age-friendly society and build valuable customer loyalty.



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Not Changing Too Much

As I write this, younger people in my family have started the huge task of repairing the cabin.

Built about 1960 as a fish hut on an island, it sits about 25 feet from the shore and about 25 feet above the water.

So many of those factors would not be allowed today but it has been grandfathered in. You could never construct a new one like it. It wouldn't be allowed, being that close to the water and sitting on an island. No new structures are allowed on islands on that lake anymore.

All alone, it is a beacon of the past.

I first visited that cabin when I was 18. It was Thanksgiving and my new boyfriend who I had met in journalism school had asked his mother if I could be invited for Thanksgiving at the cabin too.

The reds of mountain ash, sumac and the first hints of gold touched the leaves on the island and the surrounding landscape.

Back then the far shore was only occupied by one lodge, unlike today when it is a long

shoreline of million-dollar seasonal homes with manicured lawns and massive docks and gazebos.

Back then the area was quite wild.

Back then, my boyfriend's mother insisted that the water of the lake was perfectly fine to drink. A cup of cabin tea made from lake water was quite safe to drink, she insisted.

Water for all purposes was hauled from the lake in metal buckets, and meals were made on a log-burning cookstove. Kerosene lanterns and candles provided the light.

Well, that new boyfriend lasted. It must have been the Irish in both of us. After we were finished college we were married.

The cabin was part of our relationship as much as journalism, our families, our common love of the outdoors, and exploring Northeastern Ontario.

After a few years, we added another great love and that was our daughter.

That little baby arrived at the

cabin for the first time when she was just a few months old and grew up gathering blueberries and playing in a moss-covered clearing, sitting reading on a rock ledge overlooking a fern-filled ravine, and happily touring around the island in a canoe being steered by her father while she soaked up the sunshine and love.

Almost every weekend we would pick up my husband's mother and her cat and we would all head up to the cabin where we would spend the weekend playing games or doing the jobs around the property that always needed to be done.

When she was 65, my mother-in-law said to me, "I'm turning it over to you now. You can do what you want to it. But don't change it too much or I won't come here anymore."

My daughter and her husband have now been handed the reins of the cabin. I have reached that age where just getting over to the water-access-only property is task enough.



At first they had thoughts of a complete makeover, but high costs and the fact that it is on an island downsized their plans. Maybe my mother-in-law was overseeing the plans from above, and with pencil and ledger book in hand was gently but firmly pointing out the financial realities. "Don't change it too much," she might have been saying.

Our good neighbour has agreed to allow his shoreline to be a drop-off point for materials including a yard of gravel.

So these days the sturdy little cabin, in much need of some TLC, is the scene of much busyness as the area around and under and inside are being cleaned, packed, measured, raked and readied for some serious improvements.

But it won't be changed too much. There have been a few generations enjoying their time at the cabin so far, and we plan to keep it that way for a long, long time yet.



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What does it mean to be an age-friendly community?

Almost one-fifth of Canadians are 65 or older. As the nation's population continues to age, communities must adapt to address the unique needs of seniors. This is

where the Age-Friendly Community (AFC) approach comes in. Learn more about this essential initiative.

Becoming an AFC means creating

an environment that supports seniors, both physically and socially. It strives to create more inclusive spaces, allowing seniors to actively participate in community life, maintain their health and enjoy an optimal quality of life. Inspired by the World Health Organization's Global Age-Friendly Cities Project, this initiative proposes concrete actions to enhance transportation, housing, health services and social life.

challenges of an aging population.

Regardless of your age or health status, you stand to benefit from supporting this initiative. It's time to work together to build a more equitable and inclusive society.

Are you neglecting your mental health?



According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, nearly one-third of people over 65 live with a mental health problem. Additionally, chronic physical illnesses, such as diabetes, arthritis, Crohn's disease, obesity and Parkinson's disease often accompany mental health problems. Consequently, more healthcare professionals are emphasizing the importance of caring for both your mental and physical health to improve the aging process.

Healthy habits

Consider adopting the following habits to support your mental well-being:

- **Exercise.** Regular physical activity boosts the production of mood-enhancing hormones called endorphins.
- **Diet.** Eating a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables supports your psychological well-being.
- **Hobbies.** Engaging in activities you enjoy, such as gardening or playing board games, keeps your mind active and fosters a positive outlook.
- **Social interaction.** Participating in community activities, volunteering and maintaining regular contact with your loved ones can help reduce feelings of isolation.
- **Professional support.** If you experience persistent feelings of dread or sadness that interfere with your daily life, seek help. You can find valuable resources by reaching out to a helpline, joining a support group or talking to a healthcare professional like a doctor or psychologist.

Listen to your needs and adopt these simple strategies for better mental health.



What are the advantages of being an age-friendly community?

Becoming an age-friendly community offers numerous benefits. First, it attracts and retains citizens of all ages by fostering dynamic, safe living environments. Becoming an AFC also strengthens community ties by promoting solidarity, reducing ageism and encouraging positive interactions across generations. Additionally, an AFC is better prepared to tackle the

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5 tried-and-tested tips for healthy lungs

Lung disease affects many older adults. However, you can take several steps to keep your lungs healthy. Regularly visiting your doctor can lead to early diagnosis, improving your treatment options. Follow these expert tips for better lung health:

1. Protect yourself from respiratory infections

Wash your hands frequently and wear a mask in crowded places, especially during peak infection seasons. Stay up to date with vaccinations recommended for your age and health conditions, such as influenza and COVID-19.

2. Monitor your home's air quality

Ensure your home is well-ventilated and free from pollutants and irritants, such as smoke from fireplaces and chemical household products. If necessary, invest in an air purifier to enhance your indoor air quality.

3. Don't smoke

Smoking severely damages your

lungs and increases your risk of diseases like lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). If you smoke, remember that it's never too late to quit. You can find various products and resources to support your journey.

4. Stay away from second-hand smoke

Avoid breathing in smoke from others—it can be just as harmful as smoking yourself. Maintain a smoke-free environment in your home, car and workplace, and steer clear of smoky areas.

5. Exercise regularly

Engage in physical activities that strengthen your lungs and improve their capacity. Walking, dancing, cycling and swimming all provide excellent benefits for your lung health.

Follow these tips to keep your lungs healthy and improve your overall well-being.



In Canada, approximately 12 million people suffer from lung disease. That's about one in every three people! Lung disease ranks as the second leading cause of death in the country.

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What is gonarthrosis and how is it treated?

Gonarthrosis, also known as knee osteoarthritis, is a common condition among older adults. It's characterized by the progressive wear of the cartilage in the knee joint. Here's an overview.

Causes
Several factors can contribute to the development of gonarthrosis, including natural aging, being overweight, having a history of knee injuries or certain anatomical anomalies.

Symptoms
Common symptoms of gonarthrosis include pain when walking or climbing stairs, creaking or crackling noises in the knee, swelling of the joint and stiffness after periods of rest. These symptoms can significantly limit daily activities and impact overall quality of life.

Available treatments
Various treatments may alleviate the symptoms of gonarthrosis, including:

- Wearing compression splints
- Making changes to your diet to promote weight loss
- Engaging in low-impact exercises
- Wearing knee or foot orthoses

In some cases, your doctor may recommend medical interventions such as anti-inflammatory medications or injections. As a last resort, surgery may be considered.

Finally, early diagnosis and appropriate treatment can improve your comfort and preserve your mobility. If you're experiencing knee pain, consult a health-care professional as soon as possible.



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Do you know about the risks of gambling?

Gambling, whether through lottery tickets, bingo or online casinos, can be fun and entertaining. However, it's important to keep an eye on your habits. These activities carry significant risks that can harm your well-being. Here's an overview.

A 2022 study by Statistics Canada revealed that over half of people aged 65 and older participate in some form of gambling. Although it may seem harmless, risking your money on games of chance can have numerous negative impacts. For instance, a senior who frequently buys lottery tickets might spend more than they can afford, putting their budget for essential items like food or rent at risk.

Similarly, online gambling platforms, which are available 24/7, heighten the risk for individuals with a lot of free time, such as retirees. Many seniors find themselves depleting their savings and jeopardizing their financial security.

The risks aren't just financial. Excessive gambling can seriously affect a person's mental health. Gamblers often experience stress, anxiety and social isolation. Their gambling may lead to conflicts with loved ones if they lie about their gambling habits or borrow money without repaying it.

If you or someone you know is showing worrying signs, such as a growing interest in gambling or mounting debt, don't hesitate to seek help. Many organizations provide free, confidential, round-the-clock support.



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Why and how to find a stimulating hobby in retirement

Retirement often brings a mix of emotions: the joy of having free time and, at times, a sense of emptiness that can be difficult to navigate. After dedicating most of your life to work, how will you embrace this new chapter? You can enrich your daily life post-retirement by finding a stimulating hobby to keep you active and fulfilled.

Benefits

Having hobbies offers numerous benefits. An engaging activity stimulates your brain, reduces stress and improves your mood. It may also help you forge new social connections and boost your self-esteem. Whether you want to stay active or simply unwind, incorporating hobbies into your daily routine is an excellent next step.

Options

When choosing a hobby, consider your interests. If you enjoy creative activities, explore painting or knitting. If you prefer movement, take up dancing or yoga, or perhaps join a walking group. If you find joy in observing the birds in your backyard, look for a local birdwatching club and connect with fellow enthusiasts. The key is to explore different hobbies until you find the one that excites you the most. The possibilities are endless!

If you want to check out a wide range of exciting hobbies, look for courses and activities offered by your municipality or local community of seniors. From watercolour painting and writing to stamp collecting, gardening, music and photography—which hobby will you choose?



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