

# BOOMER ALERT: TAN Forum in Hamilton

by Barry Everatt

## Lifelong Learning Mississauga

Michelle Gold is a strategist who uses both advanced methodological training and deep content knowledge to measure social change and organizational improvements in a variety of settings and sectors. Michelle led the forum in a discussion of baby boomers' impact on later life learning organizations.

Michelle described interviews she had conducted with later life learning groups in Canada and abroad where she had asked questions about how they operate currently and how baby boomers might fit into today's models and future operations.

Baby boomers were born over an 18-year period from 1946 to 1964. This generation comes with certain characteristics that will affect later life learning groups, including challenging the status quo, speaking out, redefining social convention and self-fulfillment. Studies have found that they are not attracted to events or activities that use the word "senior."

Because of baby boomers' facility with social media and the web and their reliance on handheld devices (cell phones and tablets), later life learning groups that want to attract them will need to enhance their websites to ensure that they are both search engine optimized (SEO) and mobile optimized. If later life learning groups do not adapt, they may find that their membership / participation will decline as older adults who are tech-savvy start looking for learning opportunities.

This information seemed contrary to the experience of many later life learning groups at the forum whose lectures are regularly oversubscribed or sold out. Michelle encouraged current groups to identify adaptations and engage boomers so that later life learning can continue to operate at full capacity.

We moved into small groups and discussed several topics concerned with attracting baby boomers to future later life learning events. The

forum provided an excellent opportunity to network. We learned that there is no "one size fits all" for later life learning. Groups offer lectures (both series and one-off) and a peer-led approach, which can include discussions of a wide range of topics as well as book reviews, walking tours and visits to historic sites.

From my perspective, this was a worthwhile forum and the networking was excellent as usual with TAN events.



*Michelle Gold and Norm Archer, our speakers and president Nancy Christie*

