



Margaret Davis in her living room, reflecting on the time she was growing up, and how the choices she had made in her youth has helped her to live well in her old age.



Having lived on her own terms throughout her life, Davis is determined to keep herself mobile as long as she can.



A family heirloom which is more than 150 years old.



Davis is proud of her grandchildren, who have taken after her healthy lifestyle.



Davis loves the neighbourhood, and has been living in the same house for over four decades.

# TIMESTRETCHED

Aging independently in a world still adapting to the overwhelming rise in its elderly citizens

Photos and story by Moush Sara John

Margaret Davis is 92 years old. Although her apartment is conjoined with her daughter's, she has her own set up, and is very happy with the way she has been living. "My life now is about the choices I have made. I don't smoke or drink. Never have, because I knew it usually catches up."

By 2015, the number of seniors in Canada could surpass the number of children. This trend is expected to continue for the next several decades due mainly to a below replacement fertility rate (i.e. average number of children per woman), an increase in life expectancy, and the aging of the baby boom generation. (Statistics Canada. Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2009–2036.)

Older adults can live longer, healthier lives by staying socially connected, increasing their levels of physical activity, eating in a healthy way, taking steps to minimize their risks for physical harm or injuries, and refraining from smoking.

When Davis was in her 70s, she started a bridge club for seniors. And to this day she heads the club, along with her daughter, who is in her 70s now. She swims twice a week, and plays bridge three times a week with the club: "The club has a lot

of people like me, who are physically active, mentally agile, and live well, independently. At a younger age they started getting mindful and conscious about how they would live the later years."

Most seniors would like to be in their homes independently, thereby aging in place. Some of them would however want to live with their families, while another large cross-section would like to invest in retirement/old age homes. However, creating an aging-friendly environment starts much earlier, with the health-care system, which at the moment focuses primarily on cure rather than health promotion and disease prevention. Davis says, "I know friends who were not able to work out a living situation like mine. And that's sad, because a lot of it depends on your family and support system. Besides, other factors coming together."

One can't argue there are environmental, systemic, and social barriers to adopting these healthy behaviors. Some relate to inequities as a result of gender, culture, ability, income, geography, ageism, and living situations. These barriers and inequities need to be addressed now if we want our aging population to live independently, and well. For more work visit: [www.moushsarajohn.com](http://www.moushsarajohn.com)