

# Envisioning a McGill University Lifelong Learning and Living (L4) Community

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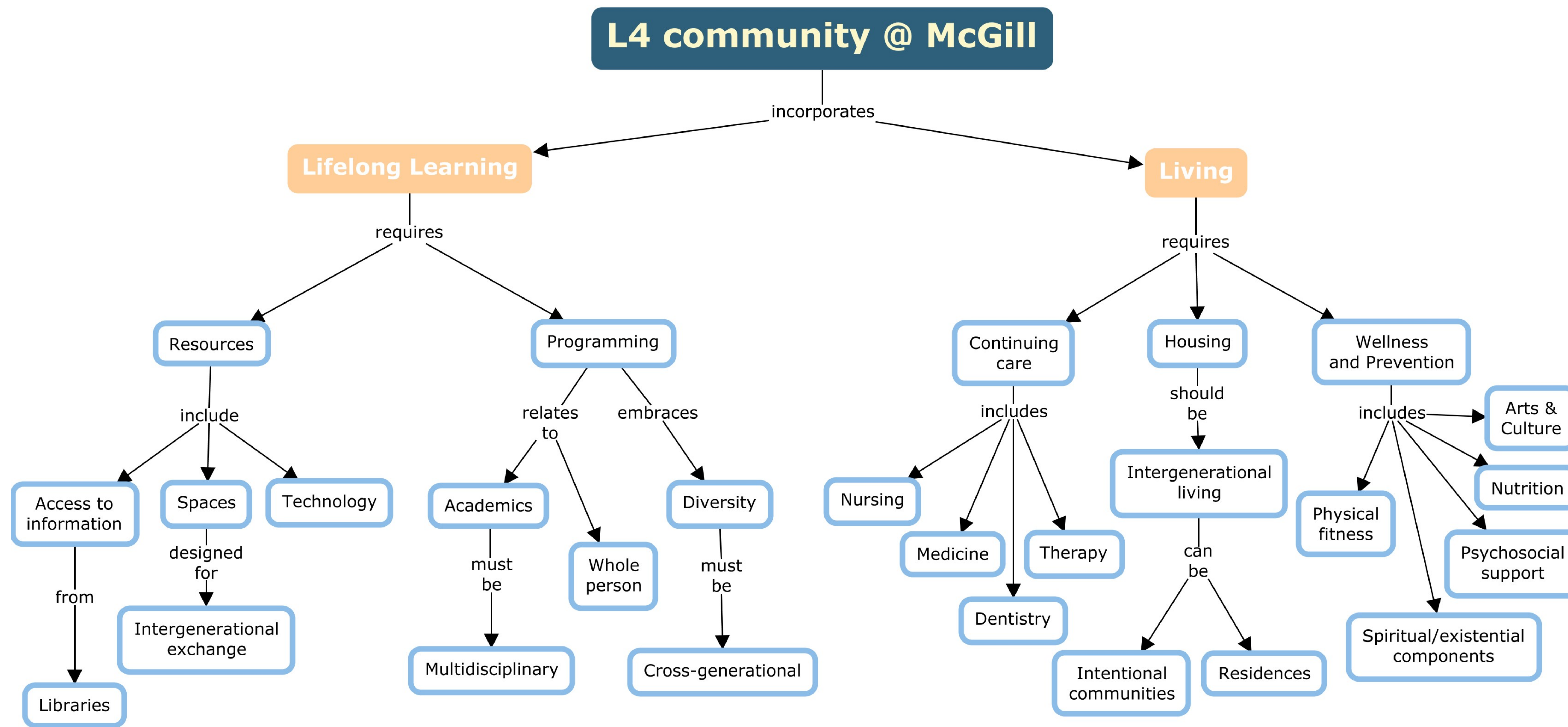


Figure 1. Concept map addressing the question: What are the necessary elements for a lifelong learning and living (L4) community at McGill?

## Introduction

Whole person care can no longer remain synonymous with end of life care; lifelong learning can no longer be synonymous with Third Age learning. Physical and mental space must increasingly be dedicated to the whole life and care of the student on and off campus. The priorities of McGill are already moving in this direction: 1) The McGill Commitment; 2) Unleashing Our Full Research Potential; 3) Community Partnerships; 4) My Workplace; 5) Transforming Our Campus.

Different L4 community options are explored here, building on the experience of the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning (MCLL) over the past 27 years, including opportunities for collaboration with community stakeholders and beyond.

## Stakeholders

McGill is located in the multicultural, bilingual, award-winning city of Montreal, known for innovation, sustainable design and architecture, on the downtown and MacDonald campuses. The McGill School of Architecture would necessarily be engaged to develop an L4 concept, and to guide the process and the creation of the design in close collaboration with Student Life and Learning, Desautels Faculty of Management (Social Learning for Social Impact), MCLL, First Peoples' House and the Faculty of Medicine.

Lifelong learning and whole person care will play a significant role in directing alliances of stakeholders and engaging them in the future of the university. Frontline local stakeholders, such as intentional community collectives, Thomas More Institute, E.N.C.O.R.E., Les Belles Soirées, and the Cummings Centre are pushing the boundaries at the grassroots.

International stakeholders, such as AFU, WHO Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, UNESCO Lifelong Learning Institutes, and research think tanks on every continent provide guidelines and principles. They identify, gather and monitor demographic, economic, and social cultural trends over time of lived experiences shared from around the world.

## Models

Educational models designed to meet the needs of older adults:

- University of the Third Age (U3A) is a movement founded in France in 1972 and dedicated to improving learning opportunities for older adults.
- Age Friendly University (AFU) was established at Dublin City University in 2012. There are a set of 10 AFU principles adopted by partners.
- Lifelong learning institutes are usually linked to colleges and universities, offering non-credit programming. MCLL is McGill's peer-learning institute for people of retirement age. Others include Road Scholar, established in 1977 as Elderhostel with a global network of institutes, and Osher Institutes in the USA for people "50 and better."

Beyond lifelong learning, there are housing options for older adults that support active aging. One Montreal-based group, Radical Resthomes, is connecting projects that meet their criteria for living well as a senior.

University Based Retirement Community (UBRC) is a model that is concerned with whole person care, bringing together lifelong learning and living. UBRCs share common elements: access to campus facilities, classrooms, and continuing care, a financial and residential connection to the school, and two-directional programming (Smith et al., 2014). There are a growing number of UBRCs in the U.S.A, such as Kendal at Hanover, The Village at Penn State, Lasell Village, Forest at Duke, and Oak Hammock at the University of Florida.

## Discussion

Extensive investigative research and analysis, including field visits, would be required to determine the best features of L4 models which might be adapted to the McGill situation. The vision is a unique lifelong learning and living approach through a multigenerational, interdisciplinary, culturally diverse interface at the institutional level. While there are aspects to be emulated, the UBRC model implemented in the USA can be too exclusive, too expensive and externally organized to accommodate the Canadian system of healthcare and retirement circumstances of older adults. In the interim, projects could be undertaken in moving towards L4 by integration into existing spaces and initiatives across campuses.

Currently this generation of DIY citizenry would demand personal space, decision making capacity and the facility to move across various levels of care. Such a community would focus on the whole person -- physical, emotional, social, and spiritual -- along the evolving spectrum of life. This demand for choice would reshape the current landscape. Rapid changes and advances in technology and increased life expectancy have profound implications for teaching, learning, living, education, the transfer of knowledge, the economy, our culture, our capacity to innovate, our quality of life and overall health and well-being.

## Contact

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