



A place. A space. A community.

*Inspired by an innovative French alternative to traditional living facilities for seniors, a Toronto group is working to create a made-in-Canada version. It will be called **Baba Yaga Place**.*

What is Baba Yaga Place?

Baba Yaga Place Toronto is a fresh, original model of living that will enable community members to age within their own walls through mutual care, surrounded by like-minded companions. Community members pursue both their personal interests and a commitment to the broader community.

The foundation for Baba Yaga Place Toronto will be based on the following principles, which are consistent with the model from France:

- *A self-managed model where key decisions are made by the residents themselves;*
- *Feminism: commitment to equality, equity, and social justice, with a particular focus on the empowerment of women;*
- *Interdependence: respect for each other's personal autonomy and privacy, while supporting each other;*
- *Community engagement: involvement with the political, social, and cultural life of the broader community; and*
- *Environmental responsibility: commitment to environmental sustainability and environmental justice.*

What's a Baba Yaga?

From Slavic folklore, Baba Yaga is a supernatural being who appears as an old crone. She dwells deep in the forest in a hut which stands on chicken legs. Baba Yaga flies with a mortar and pestle, evoking an image of the preparation of food or healing herbs. In European mythology, witches were healers who predated medical doctors. Baba Yaga is an unpredictable force of nature, representing both fear and hope, who destroys those who demonstrate folly, greed, or pride but spares the innocent.

Where did the idea of Baba Yaga Place come from?

In 1999 in Paris, Thérèse Clerc, a single mother caring for her own aging parents, realized the need for an alternative model to medically-based, isolating settings which promote dependence. Based on her ideas, a group of activist feminist women was formed. They worked to develop a model based on taking charge of their own lives, caring for each other, and staying active within the local community. Their goal was not only to create a place for seniors, but to be an example of a positive way to address the socio-economic pressures of the baby boom bulge, particularly the social and economic challenges faced by women. After 13 years of hard work they received funding, largely from the government. Baba Yaga House opened its doors in 2012 with 24 apartments, communal areas, and gardens.

*For more information, visit our website at www.babayagaplace.ca
or send us a message at info.babayagaplace@gmail.com*

Why is Baba Yaga Place needed?

Canadian women heard about Baba Yaga House in France (La Maison Babayaga) via two radio programs which aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 2013 and resulted in an unprecedented flurry of calls and emails to the CBC. Listeners clamoured to learn more about an initiative that responded so well to seniors' needs for affordable, self-managed housing. They wanted to know if there was a Canadian version, a community of peers with personal autonomy and increased mutual caring as they aged, thus possibly avoiding the burden of care being placed on adult children or other family members. This speaks loudly, if anecdotally, to the significant need for a Canadian version of Baba Yaga House.

Statistics pointing further to this need include:

- Worldwide, longer life expectancies and lower fertility rates are leading to aging populations.
 - The frontline of the baby boom demographic bulge, affecting many regions, reached 65 years in 2011.
- In Canada, seniors (65+) make up a record nearly 14% of the total population. Within the next 25 years the proportion of seniors is expected to nearly double to 27%.
 - The majority of seniors in Canada (83%) live in large urban centres.
- In Ontario, older seniors (75+) are expected to increase from less than 1 million to 2.2 million by 2036.
 - Those 90 years and over will more than triple in number, from 75,000 to 261,000, during the same period.
- In Toronto and the GTA, the proportion of seniors will rise from 12% to 20.4% by 2036.
- Among seniors, the groups most at risk are **women**, unattached seniors and **immigrant women**. These groups are most likely to suffer from isolation, lower income and poor health.
- Healthcare delivery systems for seniors either overlap or are fragmented.
 - There is a major disconnect between healthcare and other services such as social services, transportation, and preventive health.
 - This contributes to the number of seniors who move into retirement homes or long-term care facilities prematurely.
 - Between 15 and 25% of seniors in such facilities have symptoms of major depression.
- Experience with the 'aging in place' concept highlights significant shortcomings.
 - Overstressed informal (unpaid) caregivers (especially adult children and other family members) take on the burden of care.
 - Public funding for professional (often poorly paid) caregivers is inadequate.
 - The risks of social isolation and elder abuse increase.

The Toronto Baba Yagas look forward to partnering with others in our community to move this vision to a reality! For more information, visit our website at

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