

# LEAD Seniors' Art Project



## WELCOME TO OUR Quarterly Newsletter

Welcome to the first quarterly newsletter of the LEAD Seniors' Art Project! We're excited to bring together participants of all ages to explore the power of creativity through art. This project aims to foster meaningful connections, allowing everyone to share experiences, learn from one another, and create something beautiful.

Over the next few months, we have a range of engaging activities planned, including creative arts-focused events and educational sessions. We believe that art has the unique ability to connect people, spark conversation, and break down generational barriers.

We invite you to join us in our project activities. Whether you're looking to explore your artistic side, learn new things, or connect with others, our events have something for everyone. Stay tuned for updates. We can't wait to see you at one of our upcoming events!

Kind regards,

LEAD

In this newsletter,  
you'll read about the  
following events:

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**Thrilling Tales:  
British Royal  
Weddings**

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**Chair Stretch &  
Strength Sessions**

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**Anticipatory Grief  
Session**

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**Petting Zoo**

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**Art Therapy  
Workshop**

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**Dementia  
Overview Session**

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# Thrilling Tales: British Royal Weddings

Thank you to Bradley from the Toronto Public Library for facilitating this event. For more information on the services provided by the Toronto Public Library, visit [www.torontopubliclibrary.ca](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca).

## Royal Weddings in History

- **Victoria:** Queen Victoria married her first cousin Albert, Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha on February 10, 1840.
- **Elizabeth II:** Elizabeth II married Philip Mountbatten, her second cousin once removed on November 20, 1947. The wedding was broadcasted across the world via BBC Radio to around 200 million people.
- **Diana:** Diana married Charles III, the current King of the United Kingdom, on July 29, 1981. The wedding was broadcast on television to around 750 million people across 74 countries worldwide.
- **William and Kate:** Prince William married Kate Middleton on April 29, 2011. It is estimated that around two billion people watched the royal wedding when it happened.
- **Henry and Meghan:** Prince Harry married Meghan Markle on May 19, 2018.

## Wedding Dresses

- **Victoria:** When you think of the wedding dress, you likely think of the white dress worn by the bride. In fact, the origins of this stem from Queen Victoria herself. Traditionally, royals would wear robes for their wedding; however, Victoria eschewed that in favour of wearing an ivory, silk, and satin dress.
- **Elizabeth:** Elizabeth wore a white wedding dress made of ivory silk satin, had 10,000 seed pearls, and was embroidered with star lilies and orange blossoms.
- **Diana:** Diana's dress was made of silk and taffeta, Carrickmacross lace, and embroidered with mother-of-pearl and around 10,000 regular pearls. The train of the dress was 25 feet long.
- **William and Kate:** The dress, rumoured to cost a quarter million pounds at the time, was made of English lace. Kate had a second dress that was used after the main event.
- **Henry and Meghan:** The dress is made of double-bonded silk and triple-silk organza.

## Cake

The origin of fruitcake as part of the royal wedding goes back to Queen Victoria. In the making of her wedding cake, the fruitcake incorporated many components that were quite expensive at the time, including fruit, sugar, liquor, and spices. However, not only were fruitcakes expensive, but they were also durable. The alcohol in the cake effectively served as a preservative, allowing it to have a longer shelf life.



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## Chair Stretch & Strength Sessions

Thank you to everyone who joined us on May 15 and June 19 for the fun and energizing Chair Stretch & Strength sessions. It was great to see seniors participating, creating a warm and lively atmosphere. Led by instructor Guy Lew, the class focused on movements to improve strength, flexibility, and mobility. It was a great opportunity for seniors and youth to focus on their well-being in a supportive and welcoming environment.

We're looking forward to our next session on July 29.



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# Anticipatory Grief Session

During the Anticipatory Grief session on May 20, we explored the emotional complexities of grief before loss, helping you better understand and navigate these feelings. Thank you to Iris Cheung and Rich Janes for organizing this session.

## Understanding Anticipatory Grief

Anticipatory grief manifests through various emotional, physical and psychological symptoms that can include:

- Sadness and tearfulness that may come in waves
- Anger or resentment about the situation
- Anxiety and fear about the future
- Feelings of guilt or emotional numbness
- Poor concentration and forgetfulness
- Fatigue and changes in sleep patterns

Anticipatory grief can happen due to:

- Psychological response to witnessing decline
- Emotional preparation for loss
- Spiritual and existential dimensions

Practical steps to take when coping with anticipatory grief:

1. Acknowledge your feelings
2. Seek support and connection
3. Self-care when the waves of grief hit

## A Gentle Guide Through Anticipatory Grief

Use this guide as a gentle path through your grief, not as a checklist to complete, but as a rhythm to help you stay grounded and supported in love.

- **Give it a name:** Grief that comes before loss is still grief. It's real, and it matters. Name what you're experiencing--sadness, anger, fear, numbness--and let yourself admit: "I'm grieving."
- **Reach out for support:** You're not alone in carrying this weight. Talk to family, friends, spiritual leaders, or grief support groups. Even a small conversation can bring great relief.
- **Allow space to feel:** Let yourself cry, sit in silence, pray, journal, or feel deeply--without guilt. Giving yourself space to grieve helps prevent emotional shutdown and opens the door to healing.
- **Create memory rituals:** Find simple ways to honour your loved one now. This deepens your connection and preserves their legacy.
- **Embrace spiritual anchors:** Lean into your spiritual practices: prayer, Scripture, worship, and stillness. God meets us most intimately in our pain.
- **Seek professional help when needed:** If the weight is too much, reach out to a counsellor, therapist or chaplain. Professional support is not a sign of weakness--it's a step toward healing.

Grief is not a  
problem to  
solve--it's a  
reality to carry  
with kindness  
and grace.



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## Petting Zoo

On June 11, we had the pleasure of welcoming some new furry friends during a lively village-wide petting zoo event. Residents were treated to a delightful afternoon filled with a wide variety of animals, including goats, sheep, donkeys, ponies, rabbits, alpacas, a camel, and even a momma cow with her calf. Everyone had the opportunity to feed and gently pet the animals. The goats and sheep were especially eager to approach anyone with a handful of treats. The alpacas, with their soft coats and calm demeanour, stole the show and were a particular favourite among the seniors, drawing plenty of attention and smiles. The event brought residents from all buildings outdoors to enjoy the beautiful weather, which created a wonderful sense of community and reconnecting with nature.

Thank you to Estelle and her team for putting this event together!





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# Art Therapy Workshop

On June 13, we held our first art therapy session led by Raquel McNamee, Student Art Psychotherapist from the Toronto Art Therapy Institute. The theme was 'Make an artwork that tells the world one thing you want others to know about you'.

## What is Art Therapy?

Art therapy is all about using art making, creative expression, in all kinds of mediums as a way of processing our emotions, engaging with self reflection, and learning new things about ourselves through the creation process. Art Therapists are trained to guide others in using art as a healing and self-discovery tool. They point out things we see and use both your finished pieces and the process as a way to spark conversation about the things you want to work on, learn about, or heal from within yourself.

Art therapy is a type of psychotherapy, and most art therapists are registered with the College of Psychotherapists of Ontario. However, art can also be made as therapy, which means the whole experience of creating something on your own can be healing and helpful on its own.



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# Dementia Overview Session

We recently enjoyed an informative presentation called "Dementia Overview" by Bernice Chan, Public Education Coordinator from the Alzheimer Society of Toronto on June 24.

## 10 Warning Signs

1. Challenges understanding visual and spatial information
2. Changes in mood, personality and behaviour
3. Memory problems that disrupt daily life
4. Difficulty performing familiar tasks
5. Disorientation of time and space
6. Problems with abstract thinking
7. Problems with language
8. Impaired judgement
9. Misplacing things
10. Loss of initiative



**The World Health Organization recommends that seniors have at least 2.5 hours of exercise each week.**

## Dementia

Dementia is a set of symptoms. It is not a specific disease. All true dementia are:

- **Progressive:** Symptoms increase over time
- **Irreversible:** Damage cannot be repaired
- **Degenerative:** Brain cells die

## Risk Factors of Dementia

- Hearing loss that is not corrected
- Low levels of formal education
- Cardiovascular disease
- Family history/Genes
- Sex assigned at birth
- Brain injury
- Depression
- Loneliness
- Diabetes
- Age

## Dispelling the Myths

- **True or false:** Because someone in my family has Alzheimer's disease, I'm going to get it.
  - **False.** Reality is that genetics play a minor role in the disease, and fewer than 5% of cases are associated with the young onset inherited familial form of the disease.
- **True or false:** Alzheimer's disease is a disease that only affects older people.
  - **False.** Reality is that dementia is not a normal part of aging. Dementia also affects a younger population.
- **True or false:** There is a cure for Alzheimer's disease.
  - **False.** Reality is that there is not current cure for Alzheimer's disease. However, there are medications and healthy lifestyle practices that can slow the progression of the disease and allow individuals to live well with dementia.
- **True or false:** Memory loss means Alzheimer's disease.
  - **False.** Reality is that many people have trouble with memory loss as they get older. That does not mean they have Alzheimer's disease. Many conditions, often treatable, can cause memory loss.



**The Canadian Multicultural LEAD Organization for Mentoring and Training**

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