



Belong Where You Find Yourself: Evaluation Report

Godfrey Dean Art Gallery (Yorkton)

June 2024

The Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan project team is made up of the Backbone Management Group, the Advisory Committee & Collaborating Organizations.



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Glossary

Term	Definition
Collaborating Organizations	Collaborating organizations are diverse stakeholders from different sectors and organizations who come together in a structured and coordinated way to collectively address complex social issues, pooling their resources and expertise to achieve common goals and create lasting positive change for their community.
Collective Impact	Collective impact is a structured approach to collaboration involving different stakeholders working together to address complex social issues.
Dementia	Dementia is a progressive and degenerative neurocognitive health issue characterized by a decline in cognitive functions including memory, language, reasoning, and the ability to perform daily activities.

List of Acronyms

Term	Definition
DSRS	Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan
PLWD	Person(s) Living with Dementia
GDAG	Godfrey Dean Art Gallery
RaDAR	Rural Dementia Action Research
SPHERU	Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit

Executive Summary

Background

This report provides an assessment of the Belong Where You Find Yourself project, supported by the Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan (DSRS) initiative. DSRS is a five-year (2019-2024) Collective Impact initiative undertaken by the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU), University of Regina, and funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program. The Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan project seeks to improve public awareness of the stigma and social isolation experienced by people living with dementia (PLWD) and their care partners. Through the DSRS initiative, SPHERU has supported eight collaborating organizations, including the Belong Where You Find Yourself project led by the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery, Yorkton. This project supported persons living with dementia and their care partners through community-engaged art. Specific objectives of the project were to improve the feeling of social inclusion of older adults with dementia and their care partners, enhance public awareness, and reduce the level of public stigma about dementia.

The project involved people living with dementia and their care partners as participating artists. The project team involved two lead artists and a management representative from the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery (GDAG). They provided an engaging artistic experience to learn about the lives of real people in the communities. The two lead artists visited Yorkton and surrounding communities monthly from March 2022 – May 2023, and met the participating artists in their homes or as a group at the gallery. During home visits, lead artists spent time getting to know families better as they shared stories, and family photos, sewed, drew, and sang songs. The workshops at the gallery brought together all participating artists who interacted with one another, sharing stories and collaborating in art making. The lead artists encouraged participating artists to explore their existing interests, hobbies, and talents and collaborated with the participating artists to develop individual projects. These activities culminated in an art exhibition at the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery with over 200 attendees and community presentations

that screened short videos that documented and displayed the artworks, personal stories, and experiences of the participating artists involved.

Evaluation

The research team at SPHERU conducted an outcome evaluation of the *Belong Where You Find Yourself* project to assess the progress on objectives and outcomes of the project. The evaluation process involved analysis of data collected through document reviews, community visits, and interviews conducted with the participating artists' families with lived experience and the project team from November to December 2023.

Findings

The project tailored activities to meet three primary objectives of improving feelings of social inclusion for participants, enhancing public awareness, and reducing stigma about dementia.

Within a year, two lead artists and 12 participating artists spent over 258 hours in 38 individual and group sessions to explore diverse artistic expressions including carpentry, storytelling, sculpture, drawing, painting, musical performances, photography, collage, and quilting. The group sessions of the project provided a safe space, supportive framework, and sense of community as families made new acquaintances and received mutual support from other families navigating the dementia journey. A major impact the project made was that the connections the families made with people in their own community continued beyond the main project activities. Throughout the project period, the participating artists and their families worked together on creative projects, with the objective of sharing their artwork and stories with the public. These artmaking activities culminated in a public presentation and celebration of participating artists' work through a one-month art exhibition at the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery and four community presentations in Yorkton and surrounding towns. During community presentations which took place in care homes, public libraries, and communal centres, the artworks and segments from a documentary were shared with audiences. Approximately 200 people participated in these public events; they learned more about how dementia impacts

individuals and their families because they heard and witnessed the self-expression of participating artists with lived experience.

We evaluated the impact of the *Belong Where You Find Yourself* project by assessing the key performance indicators for the short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. With respect to short-term outcomes, we examined the target population's access to the project's services, levels of involvement, interaction, and feedback about the project. Overall, the organic approach adopted by the project team enabled dynamic engagement with the program. Firstly, they cooperated with local organizations that generated interest and facilitated referrals to the project. Also, the flexible structure of the activities allowed participating artists to explore areas of their strength in comfortable spaces and at their convenience. As a result, the project spanned beyond the participating artists involved in the project. Intergenerational connections were observed as younger family members participated in the process of creating art with their loved ones while other local organizations facilitated some of the arts and crafts sessions.

The intermediate impact of the project on the well-being of families was apparent with respect to increasing feelings of social inclusion, raising awareness, and reducing stigma about dementia. The project promoted social connection because it brought families into peer relationships where their input was valued. Primarily, the individual and group sessions provided a safe space and supportive framework for persons living with dementia and their care partners' families. Care partners appreciated being included in the artmaking activities because it provided a support system to reduce some of the pressures of navigating a dementia journey. Through these activities, lead artists and the participating artists built relationships and trust which facilitated the public presentation of participating artists' accomplishments and enabled participants to amplify their voices in the community. The artwork displayed during the public events drew attention to the personhood and diverse abilities of individuals living with dementia and challenged assumptions about dementia. At the end of the project, participants were more willing to share and engage with others about their dementia journey with some care partners adopting an advocacy role in their community.

In terms of sustainability, the project team developed resources including a 60-minute

documentary video, a catalogue of artworks, and a resource kit that highlights the success stories and provides a road map for planning and implementing similar projects. The Godfrey Dean Art Gallery's website displays highlights of the exhibition including artworks, videos, and background information about the origin and process of the Belong Where You Find Yourself project.

Key challenges that emerged during the implementation of the project relate to utilizing non-local lead artists, and the emotional and organizational aptitude required to engage families with lived experience of dementia in community-engaged art. Although these challenges did not significantly affect the project's outcomes, they highlight lessons learned that would be relevant for similar projects.

There was a consensus that smaller communities in general can lead similar art programs to promote awareness and reduce stigma about dementia if provided with appropriate support. Recommended supports include accessible safe spaces for meetings, flexible programming to accommodate the diverse needs of families with lived experience of dementia, training for community representatives facilitating community-engaged art activities, and dementia care training for staff in nursing homes and day wellness centers.



Introduction

Saskatchewan has approximately 1.2 million residents, with about 33% living in rural areas. In 2020, the province also had approximately 17,500 individuals living with dementia with this projected to increase to 42,300 by 2050 (Alzheimer Society of Canada, 2022). It is projected that 62% of Canadians with dementia will be living in their own homes (Alzheimer Society of Canada, 2010).

Older adults residing in small cities and rural areas often face unique barriers to accessing dementia care and services, including accessible facilities. The absence of sufficient services supporting persons living with dementia (PLWD) in rural Saskatchewan may decrease social inclusion and affect the well-being of older adults with dementia and their care partners. Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan (DSRS) is a five-year collective impact initiative undertaken by the Saskatchewan Population Health Evaluation and Research Unit (SPHERU) and funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program. The project focuses on improving the public's awareness of the stigma and social isolation experienced by PLWD and their care partners. SPHERU collaborates with provincial and local organizations to design and implement individual, community, and organizational level interventions that enhance the social inclusion of older adults with dementia living in small towns and rural communities in Saskatchewan.

The project aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To improve the feeling of social inclusion of older adults with dementia and their care partners residing in Yorkton and surrounding rural areas (individual programs)
2. To improve public awareness about dementia (community programs)
3. To reduce the level of public stigma about dementia (community programs)
4. To improve support for customers, clients, and employees who are living with dementia or their care partners residing in Yorkton and surrounding areas (organizational programs)

The DSRS has funded eight collaborating organizations' (COs) programs to address these objectives.

The Godfrey Dean Art Gallery's *Belong Where You Find Yourself* project is one of the projects supported by the DSRS collective impact initiative. It is a community-engaged art project for people whose lives are impacted by dementia. The project objectives were to:

- Improve the feeling of social inclusion of older adults with dementia and their care partners
- Improve public awareness about dementia
- Reduce the level of public stigma about dementia.

Project Activities

The *Belong Where You Find Yourself* project engaged persons living with dementia and care partners as participating artists. Two lead artist facilitators, supported by the GDAG management, worked with families for over a year to explore artistic processes and share their stories and their creativity. The facilitators held individual sessions with participants in residences, and long-term care homes while large group sessions took place in the gallery. During these sessions, there were conversations about interests and personal histories as participants shared artistic ideas beyond drawing and painting. Lead artists identified existing skills, interests, and hobbies, encouraged creative expression, and provided resources for further exploration. The range of artistic projects included quilting, woodworking, drawing, painting, musical performances, photography, videos, and collages. The participating artists worked with the goal of showcasing their artworks to the public. The lead artists worked with participating artists to prepare high-quality and professionally produced works for an exhibition at the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery and presentation at community centers in Yorkton and surrounding areas.

Evaluation

The SPHERU team is conducting two distinct types of evaluation during the collective impact initiative. The **process** evaluation examines the socio-cultural, organizational, and external factors that have shaped and influenced the design and implementation of the DSRS collective

impact projects in Yorkton and surrounding rural areas. The **outcome** evaluation examines the short-term, intermediate, and long-term impact of single CO projects. This report presents the findings of the outcome evaluation for the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery's *Belong Where You Find Yourself* project.

Methods

The outcome evaluation, conducted between November and December 2023, assessed the short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes of the project. We collected data through semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and observations through community visits. We conducted 9 semi-structured interviews with PLWD, care partners, and the project team. Documents reviewed include regular meeting records, bi-annual program completion reports, and stories of change drawn from participants on an ongoing basis. We examined the key performance indicators that reflected the achievement of short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. The subsequent sections present key findings from the evaluation related to progress made in achieving the project's objectives and outcomes.

Findings

Project Objectives

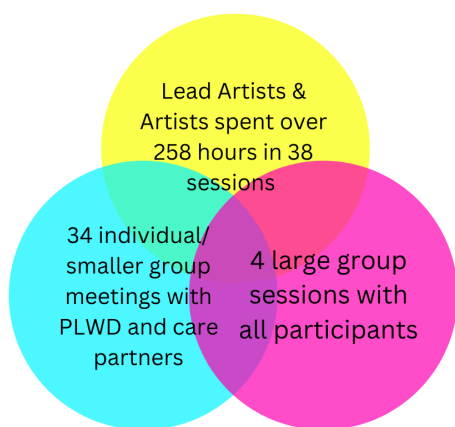
Belong Where You Find Yourself is a community-engaged art project for people whose lives have been impacted by dementia. The project aimed to improve feelings of social inclusion, and public awareness and reduce stigma about dementia. They met these objectives by providing an engaging artistic experience that empowered families impacted by dementia to build relationships and explore and share their creative abilities in ways that challenge stereotypes about dementia.

The main activities engaged people living with dementia and their care partners in creating art and sharing stories and objects with a clear goal of showing these artworks and accompanying stories to the public through an art exhibition and community presentations.

Smaller group sessions involved one or two artist families and at residences or nursing centers. Facilitators observed that during these sessions, participating artists' skills came alive as they worked on individual collaborative art projects in their home spaces. For some, individual sessions brought back fun and cherished memories for the participating artists because family members spent time working together on art projects they enjoyed.

The large group sessions facilitated social connection because they brought participating artists into a peer relationship with families that shared a common experience. The format of the large group sessions demonstrated that the project prioritized relationships over end products; these sessions provided a supportive space for participating artists to experience a sense of belonging (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Belong Where You Find Yourself Art Sessions



By the end of the project, a total of 12 participating artists (or 6 families) had participated in artmaking, exhibition planning, and community tours.

Figure 2: Feedback about Belong Where You Find Yourself Group Sessions (shared by participating artists and observed by lead artists):



Beyond sharing and displaying the aesthetic outputs of the participating artists, the exhibition and community presentations targeted awareness and stigma about dementia. The Godfrey

Dean Art Gallery organized a large-scale gallery exhibition open to the public from April 5 - May 23, and hosted a public reception for the art exhibition on May 7th, 2023, with over 100 people in attendance. Lead artists worked with participating artists to deliver and install artwork in the gallery. The gallery exhibition served as a public platform for participating artists who shared their stories with the community. People of all ages visited the gallery and heard directly from PLWD and care partners, witnessed their self-expression, and learned more about how dementia impacts individuals and their families. The exhibition was documented in still photographs and videos which were shared with participating artists and their families and are included on the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery website: <https://godfreydeanartgallery.ca/belong-where-you-find-yourself/>. The presentations took place in the communities where participants were based including the **Yorkton & District Nursing Home, Yorkton Public Library, Saltcoats Public Library, and Melville Community Works Centre**. During these community meetings, a selection of artwork from the exhibition was displayed along with screenings of short videos, and interviews with participating artists.

Project Outcomes

We evaluated the impact of the Belong Where You Find Yourself project using the key performance indicators (KPIs) (see Appendix A). The KPIs were co-developed with the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery project team and were constantly reviewed during the planning and implementation phases of the project. We assessed the extent to which project activities matched the indicators for the short-term (reach and engagement), intermediate (effectiveness), and long-term (sustainability and transferability) outcomes.

Short-Term Outcomes: Reach and Engagement

In the context of this project, reach and engagement relate to the target population who accessed the project's services and their level of interaction with the project. The project team adopted a strategy to facilitate the participation of the persons living with dementia and their care partners. Primarily, they engaged with local consultants and other Dementia Supports in

Rural Saskatchewan collaborating organizations to generate interest and establish contacts with prospective participants. Moreover, the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery organized a free “*dementia friendly*” gallery reception which featured a gallery tour, an introduction to *Belong Where You Find Yourself*, and another DSRS-supported project, the *ABCs of Dementia* led by the Alzheimer’s Society of Saskatchewan. The first 15 persons who expressed interest in the project were referrals or were participants in other DSRS sub-projects including the SaskAbilities Dementia Friendly Life Enrichment program.

Figure 3: Type of artistic expression in Belong Where You Find Yourself)

- Using carpentry skills to make relief sculptures e.g. birds from scrap wood.
- Performing and recording e.g. singing/whistling to a favourite musical
- Exploration and installation of found objects e.g. beaver logs.
- Photography and collage e.g. collaging photos taken from the artist’s garden in full bloom.
- Sharing stories of the past
- Lightbox sculpture depicting matrilineal history.
- Videography and interviews with multiple generations of family members
- Quilting e.g. granddaughter using quilt pieces from grandmother to make quilt.
- Drawing i.e. landscapes, buildings, and animals rendered on the backs of envelopes and scrap paper.
- Painting e.g. acrylic plein-air paintings of flowers and landscapes

In terms of engagement, participants demonstrated satisfaction and commitment to the project. These interactions were attributed to the flexible structure of the project. Firstly, the lead artists held 34 individual/small sessions with families, which ensured that participating artists worked through artmaking sessions in



comfortable spaces and at times of their convenience. Secondly, there was strong engagement with the art activities because participating artists and other family members were keen to explore their creative abilities. The lead artists encouraged participating artists to choose art projects that they were passionate about instead of prescribing one activity to everyone in the project. According to participants, this organic approach led to greater engagement because it enabled participants to explore areas of their strength.

“It was really organic. You both melded with us and our family. You were both very open. Didn’t have any preconceived ideas of what we should do. But open to what we have in mind. You both came with great ideas, too.” Care Partner /Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



“I don’t see myself as an artist, but this meeting has already opened my eyes to the different possibilities that exist.” PLWD/Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



“I didn’t know my brain could make images like this; I am very interested in what else I can make.” PLWD/Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



“You two worked together great, were so encouraging, and had great ideas and feedback. When [artist] asked about doing some writing, and you two encouraged that, he just lit right up.” Care Partner /Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

The project also spanned further than the persons living with dementia and their care partners. During the exhibition, other family members who had played a role in the artists' creative journey were present. Project team members reported observing family and intergenerational connections as the project provided the opportunity for children and grandchildren to be part of the process of creating art with their loved ones.

"They would ask what we were working on. Yeah, and it brought out anew. Some of our grandkids like to paint. So summer, we've had pictures of the painting and some of the grandkids around the table with their or their painting to just a nice connection." Care Partner /Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



"...I was able to come up with something that was just totally amazing and was able to share it like through photos and so forth with our family, because [PLWD's] children live in Australia. So, we were able to share like his video, like, for example, they were able to just log on to the gallery's website and see it right. That was so powerful." Care Partner/Artist GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



"When we visit, her granddaughters are often there, along with their mother, drawing, reading, or sitting with their grandmother. The room comes alive with the energy of three generations of women, sharing space and creating together" Lead Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

Beyond referring families to the Belong Where You Find Yourself project, Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan collaborating organizations participated in some of the artmaking sessions. Participating Artists who were also participants in the SaskaAbilities Dementia Friendly Life Enrichment program reported that the SaskaAbilities facilitators used some of their direct support

sessions to work with PLWD on their art project. Another collaborating organization, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan in Yorkton cooperated with the lead artists to advertise the gallery exhibition.

Intermediate Outcomes: Effectiveness

For the purpose of this project, effectiveness as an outcome highlights the impact of the intervention on the well-being of families with lived experience of dementia. We examined the extent to which the project contributed to increased quality of life including feelings of social inclusion, raising awareness, and reducing stigma about dementia in the target communities.

Increased feelings of social inclusion

Generally, participants appreciated the range of activities involved with art creation because it gave them something to do beyond “*watching television and going for walks.*” Moreover, the group sessions of the project provided a safe space, supportive framework, and sense of community for families with lived experience of dementia. Lead artists and care partners acknowledged that while some participating artists were acquainted with each other, these families had not shared their experiences with each other until they met during the group sessions.

“When we first walked into the big group, I was actually, I was very taken aback because there was two people in the group that I knew one from years and years ago...But another one is a friend of mine, and we both had partners that had Alzheimer's, but we hadn't shared with each other.”

Care Partner/ Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



“... there's a lot of close community ties and people that know each other but wouldn't necessarily share this kind of information and have that kind of support without a more connecting project.”

Lead Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

Through the group meetings, the families realized that they were all navigating the dementia journey albeit in different phases. Therefore, these gatherings provided space and time for “mutual support” and celebrating successes. Care partners shared how they got to know others who understood the complexities of the dementia journey and therefore empathized with and supported each other.

“Yeah...you know, how much easier it is to talk to someone who understands what you're going through, you know...it's nice sometimes to not to have to explain why you are upset or why you're crying...” Care Partner/Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



“It made it easier for me to express that [PLWD] had Alzheimer's and before that, we really hadn't told very many people...I found that and then the group, a cohesive group of people that are on this journey, but they have, you know, they have their different detours and blocks along the way. But just knowing that we were, we were there for each other, very strong knit group, and we had some laughs, but we also shared hugs and tears.” Care Partner/Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



“I know many of them said to us directly, that they found a supportive community within our project, and a space to connect with other people who are experiencing similar challenges.” Lead Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

For some participating artists, the program provided opportunities to make new acquaintances. Some care partners reported that some persons living with dementia had “instant connections” with each other during these meetings while some looked forward to their artmaking sessions with the lead artists.

“Quality time. It wasn't just a visit it was somebody that knew started feel or knows how to communicate with that's what I would say communication.” Care Partner/ Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

Families involved were able to establish and maintain connections with other participants and project members. It was observed that a major difference the project made was that the connections the families had established with peers in their community were going to last beyond the project. There were care partners who kept the relations and continued to participate in group sessions after their person living with dementia had passed on.

“...they made new friends, their new friends brought stories and more connections to them. And being part of the project also facilitated those connections because they were comfortable.” GDAG Representative, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

The project promoted social connection because it brought families into peer relationships where their input was valued. Through these activities, lead artists and participating artists built relationships and trust, which enabled participating artists to experience greater social inclusion and facilitated the public presentation of participating artists' accomplishments that amplified their voices in the community.

Natural Supports

Care Partners appreciated being included in the artmaking activities because it provided a support system to relieve some of the pressures of navigating a dementia journey. While they had the opportunity to explore their interests, care partners also felt supported because they knew they were not alone in the dementia journey. Working with others through the project

helped reduce isolation because they had a community they could turn to when needed. They expressed that the artmaking sessions with lead artists and in the group enriched their well-being.

"It's such a support system that you don't know you really even need until you need it". Care Partner/ Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



"...it brings people together who are walking through it, are starting to walk with it, through it or have already into one space and...just like talk about it". Care Partner/Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



"... they felt very, very supportive to have themselves included in the project. Yeah, because they're going through a really intense process as well. And there isn't always that time and space given to the caregivers, the primary care partner." Lead Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

Increasing awareness and reducing the level of stigma about dementia

In terms of raising awareness, participants remarked that the art exhibition sparked interest and generated conversations among attendees. There were discussions about the symptoms of dementia including memory issues. A care partner reported that some community members approached her during the exhibition to share that they had observed a loved one displaying symptoms of memory loss and struggling to *"figure things out"*. A project team member concurred with these observations.

*"I heard a lot of people remark that this was really meaningful for them because they know somebody... someone in their family has been diagnosed with dementia" GDAG Representative, GDAG
Belong Where You Find Yourself*

The art exhibition also drew attendees' attention to the personhood of individuals, which is an essential step in reducing the stigma about dementia. According to participants, it is vital for communities to be aware that persons living with dementia have diverse abilities and should not be defined by dementia itself.

*"I just think it's really important to, for people to see that, you know, these people are doing amazing things like it, you know?
Care Partner/Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself*



*"When a person living with dementia creates something, whether through a drawing or a song, we see a part of who they are. This visibility shows us who a person is, beyond a diagnosis, and is so very important in overcoming negative stigmatization for those living with dementia, and elders in general" Lead Artist, GDAG
Belong Where You Find Yourself*

Creating artwork and short videos was an avenue for Belong Where You Find Yourself participants to hold on to important moments and valued memories that were shared with others in the community. For instance, one of the participating artists passed on before the art exhibition. However, the public video presentation of his music theatre performance was an artistic statement about identity and expression through the late stages of dementia.

The project also enabled an engaging artistic experience to learn about the lives of real people in the community thereby reducing the stigma associated with dementia. During one of the community presentations, a community member who was present approached the team to inquire more about dementia. The person in question was worried they were exhibiting some symptoms of dementia. Through the discussions, the community member became aware of and eventually accessed the services of another Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan collaborating organization, the University of Saskatchewan's Rural Dementia Action (RaDAR). With the support of SPHERU, RaDAR has established a memory clinic in Esterhazy, one of the towns around Yorkton. The memory clinic operates at the Esterhazy District Medical Clinic and provides assessment and management support for people with symptoms or concerns about dementia including memory loss.

At an individual level, care partners were emboldened to challenge the stigma about dementia. At the start of the project, there were care partners who were concerned about sharing their experiences because of the stigma. Lead artists observed that during the initial meetings, participants were very hesitant to share that a family member was living with dementia because they were worried about the reaction of others in their community. However, by the end of the project, participants were more willing to share and engage with others in their community about their dementia journey.

"...one of the care partners has gone from being like, you know, nervous and reluctant to share anything to being a really outspoken advocate for dementia, Alzheimer's awareness and, and just like accessibility in spaces generally. And I know that that has a trickle out effect into the broader community." Lead Artist, DAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



"It made it easier for me to express that [PLWD] had Alzheimer's and before that, we really hadn't told very many people..." Care Partner/Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

"I've seen people who started the project, you know, and were very shy, who really opened up, who had an opportunity, a very rare opportunity to speak to and to encounter large groups of people who were there to celebrate them" GDAG Representative, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself



"I was always just kind of struggling with just kind of the whole acceptance part, maybe for myself accepting it, and, and sharing it with others. And I think just the support that I received from other people that I was with, well, that, that really helped me..." Care Partner/Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

Long-Term Outcomes: Sustainability and Transferability

The key factors examined under sustainability relate to measures taken to continue pre-determined aspects of the Belong Where You Find Yourself project. The project team collaborated with the SPHERU evaluation team to identify indicators for activities that could be sustained after Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan funding ends. They focused on the capacity of the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery to develop skills to deliver programs that engage persons living with dementia and their care partners. Regarding transferability, the project team developed resources that highlight project structure, logistics, and successes for organizations interested in community-engaged art.

They used documentation from the exhibition and reception including an hour-long documentary video to create an archive on the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery's website. The website displays features of the exhibition including artworks, videos, and background about the origin and process of the Belong Where You Find Yourself project. The website now serves as a source of information about using art to promote social inclusion for families with lived experience of dementia. With this approach, the Belong Where You Find Yourself project requires minimal funding because the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery already maintains a website that has detailed

information on how community-engaged art can enhance understanding of the complex and diverse experiences of people living with dementia.

The team also produced a one-hour video, a catalogue of artworks and participating artists, a resource kit including instructions for a guided art activity, and a webpage on the GDAG website that highlights the processes, intentions, outcomes, success stories, and guidelines for this kind of socially engaged art project. The video was screened in Regina, Saskatoon, and Yorkton and will have a dedicated page on the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery website. Over 340 printed copies of the catalogue and 50 resource kits have been shared with community members, partner organizations, and stakeholders during video screenings that have taken place in Yorkton, Regina, and Saskatoon. These resources provide a road map for others who may be interested in starting similar projects or used for educational purposes to challenge stereotypes about dementia.

Throughout the project, the lead and participant artists explored features of the project that could be integrated within community spaces to continue raising awareness about dementia. They acknowledged that to maintain the project in its current format will require more funding and proposed alternative pathways to explore community-engaged art. There were suggestions about leveraging assets and resources within the community for this purpose. Some reasoned that the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery or community libraries could provide inclusive spaces for people with lived experience of dementia to meet for artmaking activities. Lead artists observed that external facilitators may not always be required because some participants had become “experts” and could facilitate such group sessions in their community.

“You know, there's always community groups. And I know, with our, our community ...the connections that were formed are like, let's not, let's not stop meeting, maybe not every month, let's not stop, but let's be in touch...I don't know who would start that initiative, or, you know, how that would work... there's maybe even monthly meetings of coming together and doing art, like it doesn't have to be a big support meeting at libraries...” Care Partner/ Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

“I could see it being an ongoing... In a setting where you have somebody that is educated in their in their line of work, that knows how to communicate with, with, with the person with dementia, and then go and pick this up, maybe a weekly, or even a monthly gathering of people on the same journey.” Care Partner /Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

There were also suggestions that interested persons from Yorkton and surrounding communities could be trained periodically on facilitating community-engaged art for people whose lives are being impacted by dementia. A consensus is that lessons learned from the Belong Where You Find Yourself project are relevant for projects exploring community-engaged art to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and improve social inclusion for families with lived experience of dementia. It was observed that smaller communities in general can lead similar art programs to promote awareness and reduce stigma about dementia if provided with appropriate supports. These would include allocating accessible safe spaces in community centres for meetings and training community representatives to facilitate art-engaging activities for persons living with dementia in nursing homes and wellness centres.

Flexibility in program structure:

- Choice of activity (multidisciplinary approach)
- Location (in residence, care homes, day wellness centres and libraries)
- Care partner involvement as participant/facilitator
- Community members take lead as organizers

Characteristics and skills of community engaged artists:

- Comprehension of needs of families with living experience of dementia
- Effective communication with persons living with dementia



Challenges

The key challenges that emerged during the implementation and delivery of this project include utilizing local assets for community-based programs, and the emotional and organizational aptitude required to engage families with lived experience of dementia. While these challenges did not significantly affect the outcomes of the project, they highlight lessons learned that would be relevant for similar projects.

Firstly, the lead artists resided in Regina and Saskatoon. Given that they were not based in the community, the lead artists relied on care partners and community organizations to comprehend the needs of the community. A lead artist described the situation as “jumping into this very specific time in people's lives and trying to get to know them and supporting them as best we could.” Though the lead artists did build relationships with the participating families, they observed that a local artist would have led the process from the start with a stronger connection and comprehension of the communities.

Secondly, some families with experience of dementia that were contacted did not find the program to be an appropriate support for them. They withdrew because the artmaking would have been an additional demand on their time.

Thirdly, there were periods that necessitated the capacity to accommodate moments of joy and grief while managing components of the project. The lead artists had to be flexible and attentive to participants' needs which involved extending the time that was allocated for individual art sessions with families.

"...we would make a schedule for the weekend. And then often it would be approaching the time that we said we were going to, to wrap up and leave and in something really, really emotional or personal would come up. And, you know, not being like professional therapists or something where you're like, your time's up, we gotta go...This isn't the moment that we can leave. Yeah. So, some of that, that real, like extending of time, our willingness to be flexible in that sense, as artists..." Lead Artist, GDAG *Belong Where You Find Yourself*

"So, I think that's such an important part that we didn't plan for, and I think it would, it would be unusual to plan for that to happen, but to but to be prepared is another thing, and to know, what is appropriate, to know what the family wants out of it, how they want to be remembered, or how that artist's participation can contribute to their grieving, to their celebration of the individual's life, these kinds of things..." GDAG Representative, GDAG *Belong where You Find Yourself*

Some participants' dementia progressed significantly during the project period and lead artists continually learned ways to engage and support, including non-verbal communication and artmaking games. Sadly, some persons living with dementia passed on after having completed their artwork. The lead artists reported that in these situations, they felt the loss deeply because they had built relationships with these families. Nonetheless, they had to process their own grief while also navigating the crisis moments with the grieving families in the context of ongoing project activities.

A *fourth* challenge is that there is inadequate information with directives on the next steps after a dementia diagnosis and what support is available in Yorkton and surrounding communities. Lead artists observed that there was no specific resource they could recommend to participants who needed further information on existing supports. They acknowledged that despite the limited dementia care services in smaller and rural towns, it would have been helpful to have a resource or guidebook of all services they could recommend to families.

“...a lot of people don't know where to go and don't know where to turn and don't know where the resources are...I just want everybody who's navigating this to have like, a one on one or like a guidebook? Oh, yeah, resources, and whether it's like, videos, or articles or books or YouTube videos website, with really like, practical, easy ways of finding that support. Because there's so much information out there. And you know, you do like a Google search, where do you even start?” Lead Artist, GDAG Belong Where You Find Yourself

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Broad engagement with families with lived experience of dementia

It is essential to spend quality time at the beginning of a project to help participants understand the scope of the project including how objectives and activities raise awareness and meet the specific needs of families impacted by dementia. This process is beneficial in two ways; firstly, it empowers persons living with dementia and care partners to appreciate the value of wider social gatherings that involve interacting and sharing their experiences and stories. Secondly, it provides ample occasion for facilitators and participating families to explore options to manage crises in the context of socially engaged art activities.

Recommendation 2: Dementia Awareness Training for Staff in Care Homes

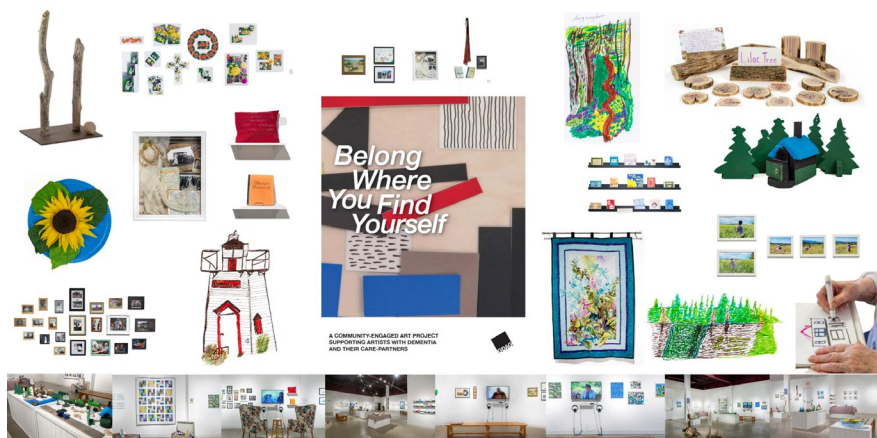
More training on dementia is required for staff in nursing homes who deal directly with persons living with dementia. It was observed that community-engaged art activities could be successfully integrated into nursing homes and Day Wellness centers if the staff has received appropriate training on working with persons living with dementia.

Recommendation 3: Flexible Programming

Similar community-engaged art projects should have flexible programming to accommodate the diverse needs of families with lived experience of dementia. Community facilitators should have options to organize art activities in spaces that are convenient for participants experiencing different stages of dementia. The lead artists and participating artists who were part of this project observed that families were able to participate in the artmaking meetings because they were held in convenient locations, including nursing homes and private residences.

Conclusion

Belong Where Find Yourself was designed and delivered as a community-engaged art project that envisioned and enabled an inclusive space for participants throughout the project duration. It was evident that its flexible structure enabled dynamic engagement that contributed to improving feelings of social inclusion, raising awareness, and reducing stigma about dementia. The inclusion of persons living with dementia and care partners as participating artists brought them into peer relationships where their experience was understood, and inputs valued. The exhibition, community presentations, and video screenings emphasized the personhood and abilities of families with lived experiences of dementia and amplified their voices in different communities. Lessons from the project highlight features of community-engaged art that prioritize relationships above outcomes while recognizing art as a social necessity. Thus, beyond aesthetic works for appreciation, people's personal stories and experiences that are represented as artwork should serve a greater purpose of learning. The resources (videos, catalogue, and resource kit) developed by this project are instrumental for awareness-raising strategies that challenge stereotypes about dementia including educational curricula and creative exhibitions. Key recommendations from *Belong Where You Find Yourself* highlight the possibilities that exist to incorporate community-engaged art within support programs for persons living with dementia and their caregivers in rural communities.



References

- Alzheimer Society of Canada (2022). *Navigating the path forward for Canada: The landmark study*. Toronto, Ontario.
- Alzheimer Society of Canada (2010). *Rising tide: The impact of dementia on Canadian Society*. Toronto, Ontario.

Appendix A: Belong Where You Find Yourself Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPIs to Measure Short-Term Outcomes

Reach: Number of the target population who access the intervention/program.

Engagement (use or participation, acceptability, or uptake): Level of population interactions with the intervention/program or the content of intervention/program such as feedback and comments received.

KPIs to Measure Intermediate Outcomes

Effectiveness (or usefulness): Impact of intervention/program on knowledge (e.g. enhancing public awareness), behaviour (e.g. reducing stigma), and practice (e.g. improving supports for customers and clients).

Unintended Outcomes (positive or negative):

KPIs to Measure Long-Term Outcomes

Sustainability: Degree to which the intervention/program is continuously used, normalized, and incorporated/integrated into public behaviour and/or organizations activities (institutionalized)

Transferability: Extent to which the intervention/program could be effectively implemented in another setting/context

List of Abbreviations:

PLWD: Person Living with Dementia

AC: Advisory Committee

CO: Collaborating Organization

GDAG: Godfrey Dean Art Gallery

Q&A: Question and Answer

Project: Belong Where You Find Yourself

Activity 1: Engage people living with dementia and their care partners in creating art and sharing stories and objects from their past and present.

Activity 2: Create and present an exhibition of artworks created by participants and the Artist Facilitators.

Activity 3: Tour the exhibition to local schools, museums, and community centers to share the work in the communities where participants are based.

Objectives:

- 1) To improve the feeling of social inclusion of older adults with dementia and their care partners residing in Yorkton and surrounding rural areas
- 2) To improve public awareness about dementia
- 3) To reduce the level of public stigma about dementia

Outcome Measures		Indicators	Data Collection Method	
Short-Term Outcomes	Reach	1) # and name of participants' referral sources (i.e. self-referral and referrals by agencies including project partners or members of AC)		
		2) # and location of contacts (PLWD and their care partners) reached out		
		3) # and name of partner organizations (e.g. Film Pool, museums, schools in surrounding communities)		
	Engagement	1) # and location of PLWD and care partners engaged with the program (whether at home or community and in which region)		
		2) # and content/nature of feedback and comments received from client (PLWD and their care partners)		
		3) # and nature of connections or contacts with other COs		
		4) Type of activities provided by the program (art, craft, audio, documentary video)		
		5) # and location of holding exhibition tours		
		6) How many artist facilitators are engaged with the program?		
	Intermediate Outcomes	Effectiveness	1) How much are clients satisfied with the program and in which areas?	
			2) How is the program giving PLWD and their care partners other options and support to increase social inclusion?	
3) # of project referrals from other COs and consultants (e.g. AC members)?				
4) # of facilitated referrals to other COs?				
5) To what extent the program has increased public awareness and reduced stigma around dementia?			Through Q&A activity following each event (e.g. exhibition tour, public talk, etc.)	
Long-Term Outcomes	Sustainability	Capacity for GDAG to learn and develop skills to engage with PLWD and their care partners (e.g. programming workshops or exhibition tours)		
		What are the ways to share the documentary video?		
	Transferability	Sharing information (e.g. developing a curriculum) with interested organizations (e.g. information on project structure or logistics but not information on who participated in the project)		

Appendix B: Godfrey Dean Art Gallery Belong Where You Find Yourself Project Background and Interview Guide

Interview Request: Outcome Evaluation for Godfrey Dean Art Gallery Belong Where You Find Yourself

Belong Where You Find Yourself is a Dementia Friendly Initiative implemented by the Godfrey Dean Art Galley. The project aims to improve public awareness and reduce stigma around dementia through *long-term artistic exploration and gallery exhibition* and enhance the quality of life of persons living with dementia and their care partners by engaging them through arts. The project was supported by Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan (DSRS), a 5-year Collective Impact (CI) initiative (2019-2024) funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program. The DSRS seeks to improve public awareness of the stigma and social isolation experienced by People Living with Dementia (PLWD) and their care partners.

The Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU), at the University of Regina, is working closely with the Art Galley in evaluating the program as it rolls out. At this time, SPHERU is carrying out outcome evaluation to measure short-term, intermediate, and where applicable, the long-term outcomes of the program. Interviews are part of the ongoing evaluation that aims to assess the outcomes of the project.

Participants would receive interview guides and consent forms prior to the interview. The consent form provides details on confidentiality and management of information generated from interviews.

Interview Guide

(The questions to be discussed during the interview are selected from the following list)

1. In what ways has the program increased the quality of life of PLWD? Indicators for measurement may include verbal and non-verbal indicators of their body language.
2. How has the program increased the quality of life of the care partners?
3. In what ways has the program increased the feeling of social inclusion of PLWD?
4. To what extent has the program increased the feeling of social inclusion of care partners?
5. How much and in what areas are clients most satisfied with the program?
6. In what ways has the program increased public awareness and reduced stigma around dementia e.g. exhibition and community presentation
7. To what extent have other family members participated in this program?
8. Thoughts about sharing in another gallery.

Additional questions for lead artists/facilitators:

9. What stood out most to you through this process?
10. To what extent did the Exhibition and community presentations raise awareness in the community?
11. What lessons could be sustained as part of the Gallery's operations or adopted by other institutions?
12. Is there anything you would do or suggest future facilitators of similar community-engaged arts do differently?