

# The Arts, Health and Seniors Project

Healthy Aging Through the Arts

## Project Summary

The Arts, Health and Seniors Project will explore how involvement in the arts can improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable seniors. This initiative will also support the development of new knowledge and expertise in the fields of seniors' wellness, chronic disease management, and community-engaged arts.

This three-year pilot project will document the impacts of involvement on the physical health, mental health and social connections of participant seniors, with the hope of facilitating their ability to "age in place", and will build new expertise amongst senior workers and artists in Vancouver and the three municipalities of the North Shore.



Engagement in the arts has maintained and often improved the health and wellbeing of seniors

## Context

The Arts, Health and Seniors Project will address many current issues for seniors and artists:

- Our population is aging and marginalization is increasing amongst the elderly.
- Health practitioners across North America are recognizing the need for new models of care.
- Current approaches to recreation are being expanded and enriched to support seniors' wellness.
- Community-engaged artists and those working with seniors seek support for their work in community partnership towards wellness through the arts.
- Research is needed to demonstrate the link between participation in the arts and health in the Canadian context.

## Goals

- To maintain and/or improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable seniors in Vancouver and the North Shore through their participation in community-engaged arts practices;
- To create a supportive environment for community engaged arts practices and increase their use within health environments and centres for community programming;
- To demonstrate the positive impact of participation in arts-based activities on the health and well-being of seniors in Vancouver and the North Shore.

## Activities

Over three years, the project will:

- Offer regular participatory arts workshops to six groups of vulnerable seniors from a wide range of demographic clusters (health status, cultural, economic, etc.);
- Engage participants in “Arts Experiences”, opportunities for seniors to attend presentations of work by professional artists in their discipline and, where possible, of their peer group;
- Support a strong research component which will demonstrate real health outcomes for seniors and contribute to increasing the programming capacity of health and recreation services

Three of these groups will be located in the City of Vancouver and three on the North Shore (City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver and District of West Vancouver). Artists from a variety of disciplines (e.g. dance, visual arts, theatre, new media, literary arts) will develop works with the seniors and facilitate the creative process.



Seniors bring to the arts the narrative potential of a life-long story.

For more information about this project please contact:

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### Additional readings

North Dakota Council on the Arts. “Arts for Life: The Therapeutic Power and Promise of the Arts.” [http://www.state.nd.us/arts/publications\\_recordings/publications/art\\_for\\_life.htm](http://www.state.nd.us/arts/publications_recordings/publications/art_for_life.htm)

Washington Post Article on Artful Aging <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A9593-2005Jan14.html>

National Endowment for the Arts article on the Gene Cohen’s Study “Creative Aging.” <http://www.arts.gov/about/NEARTS/Aging.html>



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