



**Name of Organization:** South Granville Seniors Centre

**Program:** Happy Memories Café

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### **What happened last year?**

Inspired by the February 2020 Building Capacity Launch event, South Granville Seniors Centre Executive Director Douglas Dunn started a new initiative known as the Happy Memories Café last year. Accommodating members with memory loss issues was never something the SGSC had done before, but based on their staff's familiarity with its membership, they were able to "find a group of participants who keep coming back and build from there." The in-person concept pivoted to an online format with pandemic restrictions, and from April 2021 to March 31, 2022, they had an average attendance of 10-12 participants plus their friends, care givers, and family members.

The meeting format began with a welcome followed by a chance for participants to introduce themselves. From there, it moved to some brief informational/educational content, a cognitive stimulation game or activity, and then a generous amount of time for open conversation where participants could talk informally, raise issues that came up for them, and offer support to one another. The objective was to engage people living with dementia and their care partners in an ongoing program that offered support, education, and a sense of belonging.

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

As the staff have learned from their experience with this group and with their tablet lending library, people are often reluctant to explicitly identify themselves as having dementia or memory challenges. Members talk about, "wanting to participate in order to practice [using their memory] or in order to prevent or... hav[e] more information about dementia." Towards this end, group leaders engaged participants in a variety of activities (using body and mind) and gathered feedback from participants to shape future sessions.

**What's envisioned going forward into next year:**

An emerging learning from the project is the importance of creating a safe space where members can feel a sense of belonging with others who are like them and have a chance to share and participate together. Part of the learning for this pilot project will be to understand the key features that make the group successful, and to find ways to spread this understanding more broadly to SGSC's other programming to make it more dementia friendly.

In 2022, Happy Memories Café will be held two times a month (once in English, once in Spanish). The SGSC will continue to loan out tablets to its community along with intense digital literacy support, which will include one-on-one digital literacy tutorials, group sessions, and tutored participation in online programming, allowing connection to family, friends, and supportive services and resources.