

ART Helps

The Magic of Connecting People, Art, and Nature

Evaluation Report
September 2025



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Land Acknowledgment

Ottawa Valley Community Arts (OV-CAOS) is based in what is now known as the Upper Ottawa Valley and operates on unceded Algonquin territory, known as Omàmìwininiaki. The Algonquin Nation has stewarded this land since time immemorial, and we all have a responsibility to care for these lands and waters with good hearts. OV-CAOS is committed to creating meaningful space for Indigenous artistic expression and the creation of community. We seek to honour Indigenous peoples, particularly members of the Algonquin Nation, by creating spaces where all people feel welcome and connected in community through artistic practice.

Executive Summary

- Making art with other people in a natural setting generates and increases feelings of creativity as well as connection to others and to nature; and,
- The non-profit Community Arts approach adopted by OV-CAOS contributes positively to feelings of creativity, connection and well-being among workshop participants.

Introduction

Ottawa Valley Community Arts (OV-CAOS) was created in 2011 with a mandate to promote the integration of visual arts, music, drama, and other creative arts into the lives of individuals, families, and communities in the Ottawa Valley. We work toward a world where creativity is valued and community life abounds with opportunities to come together and come alive through making art about what matters to us as individuals and communities.

This report is an evaluation of a project called **Art Helps – Connecting with Natural Materials**. Ottawa Valley Community Arts received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Resilient

Community Fund to support mental health and community well-being in a post-pandemic world. Between May 2024 and July 2025, OV-CAOS delivered 14 workshops in nine communities with 277 participants. The workshops were held throughout the year in outdoor settings with access to sheltered or indoor spaces. The workshops were designed to enhance participants' connection to the natural world, to their own creativity, and to each other. Each of these elements is positively associated with mental health.

Workshop locations and dates

May 4, 2024 - Shaw Woods Outdoor Education Centre, Eganville

June 8, 2024 - Bonnechere Provincial Park, Round Lake

July 13, 2024 - Barnet Lodge and Park, Calabogie

August 24, 2024 - Lake Dore Lodge, Eganville

September 14, 2024 - Bonnechere Provincial Park, Round Lake

October 19, 2024 - Bongopix, Whitney

November 30, 2024 - Alder Creek Farm and Golden Lake Community Hall, Golden Lake

February 1, 2025 - Shaw Woods Outdoor Education Centre, Eganville

March 1, 2025 - Bonnechere Provincial Park, Round Lake

April 12, 2025 - Round Lake Recreation Centre, Round Lake

May 17, 2025 - Combermere Recreation Centre, Combermere

May 23, 2025 - Barnet Lodge and Park, Calabogie

June 7, 2025 - Shaw Woods Outdoor Education Centre, Eganville

July 12, 2024 - Killaloe Craft and Community Fair Site, Killaloe

Materials and methods explored

Wood - pyrography

Glass - etching and natural objects assemblage

Water - watercolour painting

Clay - handbuilding

Stone - stone wrapping and land art

Plants - natural materials installation; braiding sweetgrass

Animal fibre - felting

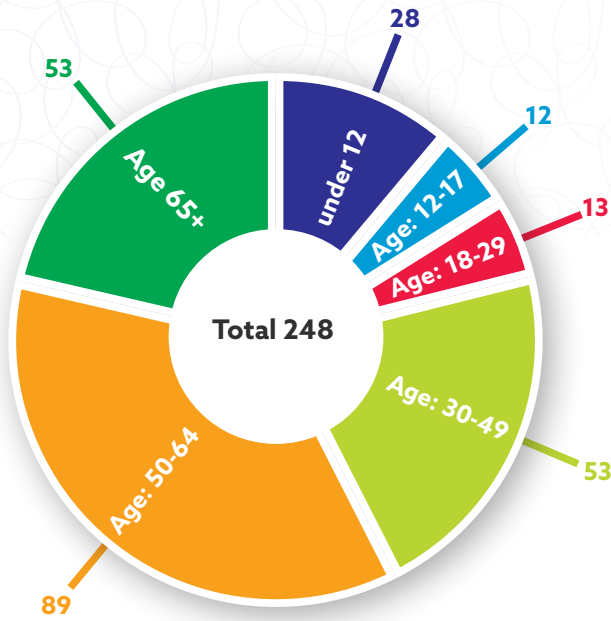
Winter forest sounds - collaborative sound composition

Paper - accordion booklets

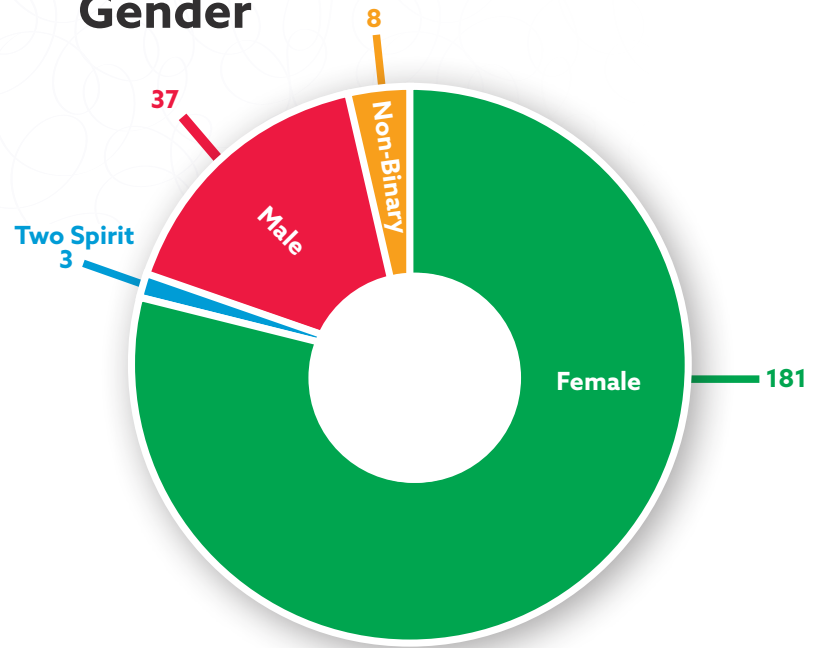


Workshop Participants

Age



Gender



Deux Rivières - 1

Deux-Rivières

Where participants live

Ottawa Valley

Other locations

- Granby, QC - 1
- Peterborough - 1
- Montreal - 2
- Burlington - 2
- Ottawa - 3

Chalk River - 1

Chalk River

Petawawa

Chapeau, QC - 6

Fort-Coulonge

Pembroke - 19

Beachburg - 5

Round Lake - 2

Golden Lake - 12

Cobden - 14

Foresters Falls - 3

Whitney - 5

Wilno - 5

Killaloe - 62

Eganville - 32

Cobden

Shawville

Barry's Bay - 19

Killaloe

Eganville

Renfrew - 21

Arnprior

Barry's Bay

Combermere - 4

Burnstown - 1

Maynooth - 1

Palmer Rapids - 2

Calabogie - 1

Calabogie

Almonte - 4

Clayton - 4

Carleton Place

The Evaluation Process

Workshop participants were asked to fill out a two-part (pre-post) evaluation form (Appendix 1). Part I was completed before the workshop began; it asked for demographic information along with questions about how participants were feeling at that time. These questions were repeated in Part II, which was completed at the end of the workshop with a few additional questions, including asking people what they liked most and least about the workshops.

A total of 277 participants attended the workshops, and there were 239 fully completed evaluation forms. Many of the participants were children who did not complete a form or only answered the demographic questions.

This report includes an analysis of the ranked questions in terms of the percentage of people whose feelings changed before and after the workshop and content analysis of the open-ended questions, which was inductive in nature, with categories, themes and patterns emerging directly from the data. Codes were created to organize responses into identified categories (see Appendix 2: Codebook).

This report presents the results of the data analysis. Tables 1-3 show changes in responses

to scaled questions asking about how creative, connected to others, and connected to nature people felt before and after the workshop (not at all; a little; somewhat; and very). Information from the open-ended question is woven into the discussion.

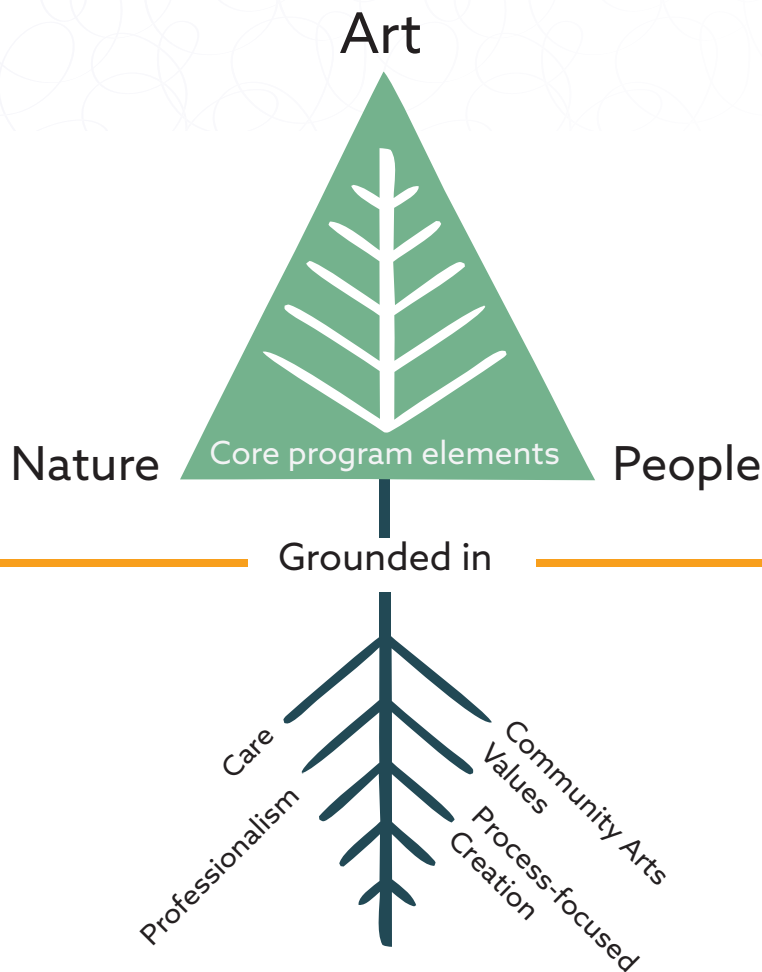
The written responses provide nuance and detail regarding how people were feeling and why, and what they liked most and least. For example, we discovered that although a large number of people indicated no change of feeling in the scaled questions, many of them were feeling positive to begin with (i.e. “very” creative or connected), and they wrote that they felt even more creative and/or connected after the workshop. It was the detailed written responses to the open-ended questions that drove the content analysis and led to the development of the Art Helps Model set out in this report.



Limitations of the Research

This report is based on written feedback from workshop participants; it is not a representative sample of Ottawa Valley residents and the results cannot be generalized to a wider population. That being said, it does accurately reflect the views and feelings of participants. Some were too young to complete their own form, and it appears that some parents completed the forms for them. Others referred to their children’s perspective in their own responses or filled out only the demographic information, while some did not respond at all. Many of the older children did fill out forms on their own.

The Art Helps Model



The triangle at the top symbolizes a tree with each point containing one of the three core program elements – art, nature, and people (i.e. gathering people together to make art in nature using natural materials). The tree is growing in a supportive environment grounded in OV-CAOS’s community arts values and its people, programs and practices. The data point to the interrelatedness of the three core program elements and the fertile workshop environment created by the organization’s community arts orientation. Each piece or element is necessary, and together they create a model that is stronger and more impactful than any single element.

The Art Helps Model was developed based on the following findings from the project evaluation:

1. Making art with other people in a natural setting generates and increases feelings of creativity as well as connection to others and to nature; and,
2. The non-profit Community Arts approach adopted by OV-CAOS contributes positively to feelings of creativity, connection and well-being among workshop participants.

Program Elements: Art, People, and Nature

Workshop participants responded to questions about how creative and connected to nature and other people they felt before and after the workshop. Responses are presented below.

Art and Creativity

"Being creative with others is freeing." - Workshop Participant

Table 1 shows that more than half the people who attended the workshops felt more creative after participating than before.

In addition, when asked what they liked most about the workshop, almost half of workshop participants (49%) mentioned artmaking and creativity, and more than one-quarter (25.9%) specifically referred to the artmaking process, including working with their hands and the materials. Others wrote about the facilitation and the playful, non-judgmental process, which, in one case, allowed them to be **"more open to letting go of being anxious about not producing 'art.'"** Others liked having permission to be creative and, also, getting lost in the process of making art.

Creativity is often associated with being open, curious, playful, and fully present in the moment. A number of people wrote about arriving stressed and overwhelmed by life's responsibilities and then feeling relaxed after letting go of to-do lists and working with their hands. One person arrived feeling "frazzled and rushed" and, afterwards, felt much more relaxed. Another said, **"I feel more in the moment. It's so easy to be focused on a to-do list - I drop that list when I become creative."** Still another wrote, **"Art Play is good for my**

Table 1: Feeling Creative Before/After (n=239)

	number	Percent
More Creative	128	53.6%
No Change	100	41.8%
Less Creative	7	2.9%
Incomplete Responses	4	1.7%
Total	239	100%

soul but the busy-ness of life makes me forget. I need these reminders." The workshops gave people the opportunity to step out of everyday life for a few hours and let their creative spirits loose.

Only a few people felt less creative after participating (2.9%). A couple expressed frustration or dissatisfaction with what they had created: "I got more frustrated as I tried to create something; kept ripping it." Another said, "I am used to having more control over my painting, it's harder to let go." One person felt overstimulated, and another was restless. On the other hand, a participant who went from feeling "not at all creative" to "a little" acknowledged that they were trying something new and appreciated the learning and the people: **"I am not very good at envisioning and then creating that image, but it was new and something to learn, and meeting new people was great."**

The workshops were designed to incorporate learning about the environment in relation to the art materials used. For example, pottery

workshops included a short history of the formation of clay in the Ottawa Valley, a felting workshop was preceded by a visit to a sheep farm, and a woodburning workshop included a "tree talk." One in five participants (49 or 20.5%) noted their appreciation of this learning or the value of learning a new art medium or technique:

"I Loved learning about trees and woodburning and making a dangler out of bark and glass."
 Another appreciated **"hearing about Indigenous teachings and braiding the sweetgrass."**

Overall, workshop participants embraced the creative process and the artmaking. They appreciated the wide range of materials and having the space to learn, explore, and make something with their hands. And they valued the opportunity to do all of this with other people: **"Creating in a group, but individually allows people to connect if they want to. And it was a lovely group."** The benefits of connecting with other workshop participants is discussed in more detail below.



People: Social Connections and Community-Building

"Connecting with folks in my time of anxiety helps me to feel more calm."
 - Workshop Participant

Table 2 shows that almost half of the participants felt more connected to others after the workshop than when they first arrived. Also, many who indicated no change had come to the workshop already feeling "very connected." One person, for example, who reported feeling very connected before, noted afterwards they felt "even more connected and definitely peaceful."

Fifty-three people directly reported that social connection was the reason for a positive change in how they felt. They mentioned feeling like they were part of a community and enjoying the informal chatting and laughing that took

Table 2: Feeling Connected to Others: Before/After (n=239)

	Number	Percent
More Connected	119	49.8%
No Change	109	45.6%
Less Connected	6	2.5%
Incomplete Response	5	2.1%
Total	239	100%

place alongside the artmaking. Participants met new people and connected with old friends and family. Moreover, the workshops themselves were community-building: a participant noted, **"Community is visible here."** Another said, **"I feel a bit happier from the community and conversation."** Other responses were specific to the act of making art in groups:

“Settling down to work with my hands in a relaxed and communal environment is the magic, I believe.”

“Just being around people and creating together; helping each other feels so great!”

“Because watching everyone do art made me feel more creative and connected.”

One person who entered the workshop feeling tired and nervous added that they had “felt really alone lately.” After the workshop they wrote, “feeling great – thanks for everything.” Their reason for

this difference was: **“I feel great after being out with people.”**

A number of participants used the word “frazzled” before the workshop began, and “relaxed, happy, inspired” and/or “connected” afterward. Others noted that the atmosphere was relaxed, playful, and informal: **“Creativity plus laughter always works for me!!”** Being in nature also helped: **“I feel very supported by friendly people and enjoyed the sunshine and beautiful space.”** Below, we look more directly at the connection to nature as a positive influence on well-being.



Nature: Connection to Natural Environment

“Nature brings out the best in people if you give it a chance.”

-Workshop Participant

Table 3 shows that more than one-quarter of the participants (28.5%) felt more connected to nature after the workshop than before, and less than three percent felt less connected. The largest percentage of people indicated no change. However, as Table 4 shows, 51.9% of those who did not experience a change began the workshop feeling very connected; this rose to 71.9 percent at the end.

Table 3: Feeling Connected to Nature: Before/After (n=239)

	Number	Percent
More Connected	68	28.5%
No Change	148	61.9%
Less Connected	7	2.9%
Incomplete Response	16	6.7%
Total	239	100%

Table 4: Feeling Very Connected to Nature (n=239)

	Number	Percent
Before Workshop	124	51.9
After Workshop	171	71.9%

The Ottawa Valley is a rural area and residents are generally very aware of and connected to the natural environment. Even those living in towns are geographically close to the forests, farms, lakes, and rivers of the Valley. Many rural residents plant large vegetable gardens in the summer and heat with wood during the winter. Nature is a part of everyday living. Thus, the large percentage of people who came to the workshop feeling very connected is not surprising, nor is the increased number who felt this way at the end of the workshop. People participated in all four seasons, and even those who disliked the bugs or cold recognized the benefits. After the workshop, one person reported feeling "cold but good. More connected to nature." Another participated despite being "a little bit scared about the cold." In summer, someone who identified "bugs" as what they liked least also said, **"Thank you so much for doing this! It's such a healthy way to spend the afternoon."**

Art, People, and Nature: Putting it all together

"Fresh air, walking, talking, sharing, creating something together." -Workshop Participant

Time spent making art with other people in a natural environment is, in this study, clearly linked with improved feelings of well-being. Table 5 shows that 61.9% of participants reported feeling better after the workshop and only 2.1% felt worse. This difference becomes even more dramatic if we consider that more than one-quarter of the participants did not complete this part of the evaluation form. Responses were coded as "feeling better" if they included words such as, "more relaxed, happier, calmer, better;" if there was a marked positive difference in the nature of their feelings after the workshop compared to before; and if they noted a reduction in physical pain, such as "Headache is gone!").

Connecting with nature contributed to feelings of calm, peacefulness, and relaxation. One person wrote, **"I believe the trees and sun have relaxed me."** There

was also an appreciation of "being immersed in art and nature" as well as working with natural materials: "Handling art materials – using nature to create art" and, "stones settle me, they slow me down." In a similar way, some people mentioned the combination of working with others in the natural environment: **"I feel more relaxed and connected (to people and nature). Being in nature and working together."** One participant reflected on the impact of "working with natural materials during winter months – [it] helps during the darker time of year."



Table 5: How are you feeling now? Before/After Difference (n=239)

	Number	Percent
Feeling Better After Workshop	148	61.9%
No Change	23	9.6%
Feeling Worse After Workshop	5	2.1%
No Response	63	26.4%
Total	239	100%

the state of the world” wrote afterward, **“Yes there’s a difference – likely due to the tactile painting experience and opportunities to socialize and get out of my head!”**

Often participants attributed changes in how they felt to more than one thing. In other words, the whole package – art, nature and people – may be more powerful than any single element. Many related positive changes in their mood to increased feelings of relaxation and peace; reduced stress, anxiety and pain; and being less “frazzled.” These feelings, in turn, were attributed to a combination of “being outside in a natural setting, making art and talking with other participants.” Another participant put it this way: **“Nice people, beautiful environment, feeling supported in a new medium.”** Another attributed changes in how they felt to “time spent connecting to nature, self and other, as well as exploring new creative activity.” Sometimes, only two of the three were mentioned. For example, a participant who arrived feeling tense and “anxious about

Many people reported feeling calmer and more relaxed at the end of the workshop and two no longer had headaches. Some were energized, others more tired; one person was tired, “but not in a bad way.” One person felt better because they were “more grounded and connected” and a number of others also used the word grounded, along with centred, calm, refreshed, and peaceful.

In addition to artmaking and connecting with nature and other people, the workshop format itself and the values, culture, and people in the organization made a significant contribution to the success of the program. This is discussed below as the underlying foundation or ground supporting the core elements of the Arts Helps Model.



Grounded in Community Arts

This section relates to the environment – the ground that supports the core program elements in the Art Helps Model. It includes Ottawa Valley Community Art's mission, vision, values, and practices, which are themselves grounded in community arts.

Mission Statement

We contribute by offering opportunities for people to come together and come alive through song, dance, artmaking, writing and talking about what matters to us as individuals and communities.

Arts Vision Statement

We envision a world where creativity is valued and the arts are woven throughout the multicoloured fabric of daily and community life.

Statement of Values

Creativity, imagination and curiosity – Encouraging the joy of creation and life-long learning.

Equity – Ensuring accessibility and fairness, to recognize diversity in serving all individuals

Intellectual Freedom – Guaranteeing and facilitating access to all expressions of art and intellectual activity.

Community Service – Ensuring high quality and excellence in responding to the needs of our community.

Community Connectedness – Enhancing organization service through partnerships and consultation with the community.

Teamwork – Fostering a work culture that advocates cooperation, communication, respect and training.

Community Arts

Community arts involve the active engagement of community members in the creation of art in collaboration with professional artists and/or organizations. It is a participatory approach that emphasizes the process of making art together and its impact on social change and community well-being. Although there can often be a product created, the process of creative exploration is the focus of the experience. Among the things people liked best about the workshops, many referred to creativity, fun, making and freedom in their response.

The following community arts practices help to create an environment that supports individual and community well-being. These practices were recognized by many of the participants as something they liked about the workshop or as a reason for positive changes in how they felt.

Process-focused creation and flow state

"I love the openness of the workshop."

- *Workshop Participant*

Flow – or being in the "zone" – is a state of being fully immersed in an activity to the point that one's sense of time disappears. Even if working, it can feel more like play. People wrote about being more present and in the moment after "being immersed in art and nature," "getting lost in the making," and feeling "connected to the spirit of play and delight." Some noted that once they opened up to the process or dropped their expectations, they felt more creative: [I feel] "more wide open to impulse" after allowing "the experience to unfold." Others felt "more lively" and "open, grounded and light." The words enjoy, happy, fun, and laughter were mentioned many times. Learning also played a part –

especially working with new materials, art forms and techniques.

The open, judgement-free process was instrumental in creating an atmosphere where flow became possible. One participant grew more comfortable as their "own 'process' started to happen." Another noted the workshop allowed them to take "time to slow down and focus on the moment." Another "liked the slow pace and permission to be creative." Providing a workshop structure that allowed people the "freedom to play and not worry about the outcome" is an important part of the community arts process; this clearly had a positive impact on many of the participants.

Professionalism

"The excellent flow of activities and laidback atmosphere promoted connection and creativity." -Workshop Participant

The combination of a "well-organized structure and freeform fun" mentioned by one participant captures the way that careful planning can create a safe structure, a container to explore and create freely. This is reinforced by the gentle approach to instruction of the artist-facilitators. Many of the things participants liked best were connected to this unique form of quiet professionalism. On the structure side, participants mentioned the design of the workshops; the pace and timing; feeling included and welcomed; and having access to "real" art tools and materials. Artist-facilitators were appreciated for their positive, flexible, people-focussed approach and inspirational instruction. Providing access to appropriate and high quality art materials and professional artist-facilitators shows respect for the participants and for the creative process. Also, participants were encouraged to follow their own creative instincts while participating in

the collective artmaking experience. One person said that the experience made them "appreciate professional art even more!"

Caring/nurturing approach

"I feel very supported by friendly people and enjoyed the sunshine and beautiful space."

-Workshop Participant

It is clear that participants felt welcomed and supported by the organization, the settings, and the facilitators. The atmosphere was often described as welcoming, relaxed, warm, and comfortable. Healthy snacks were provided and appreciated: **"So helpful to have snacks to keep energy going as a break!"** People felt included: "[I was] shy at first - invited to be 'me'." Even the rich variety of materials contributed to people feeling valued. It could be argued that when people feel cared for and cared about, they relax more easily into the artmaking process.

Another element of the overall environment is the growing understanding and appreciation of the community arts process and how it differs from more traditional art instruction. Many of the participants had attended a previous workshop or heard about it by word-of-mouth. A third of participants (80) arrived excited and looking forward to the session. One person wrote, **"My week was high anxiety and I have come to expect these events to bring me much peace. Still anxious from the drive, but happy to arrive on time."**

Afterward, people reported feeling calm, grounded and proud of themselves. More than half (50.2%) expressed gratitude or thanks. Many others said things like, **"I hope this continues to grow and prosper,"** or, when asked for suggestions for future workshops, "Just MORE. Keep 'em coming! Love the variety."

Challenges

The workshops were intergenerational in nature, mirroring the way we live in families and communities. However, teens and young adults (12-29 years) and men were underrepresented among participants. Because people generally reported feeling better after attending the workshops, this suggests that broader participation—including more men and youth—could result in even greater community-wide mental health benefits. It is therefore recommended that OV-CAOS explore ways of encouraging greater participation of men, youth and young adults in community arts activities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Art Helps program delivered a series of unique workshops designed to foster creativity and connection among people living in the Ottawa Valley. This evaluation found overwhelming evidence that bringing people together to make art with natural materials in natural settings supports well-being and builds a sense of community.

The Art Helps program was grounded in the values and structure of OV-CAOS, particularly its strong foundation in community arts, the professionalism of the staff and facilitators, and the culture of care and inclusion that is a part of the organization. Based on the demonstrated impact, Art Helps is recommended as a model for future and ongoing programs within OV-CAOS. The model may also serve as a valuable framework for incorporating arts and the natural world into community mental health strategies.

Recommendations

For OV-CAOS

- Secure funding to continue Art Helps, ideally as an ongoing program
- Continue the practice of offering healthy, locally-sourced snacks during workshops
- Explore partnerships with outdoor recreation facilities, clubs, and community groups to offer programming
- Partner with mental health organizations to develop joint funding proposals based on the Art Helps Model and shared goals of improved mental health and social connection
- Explore ways to reach underrepresented groups, specifically youth, young adults and male-identified participants

- Embed nature-based elements in all programming; this could include hosting entire workshops outdoors, incorporating short outdoor segments (walks, breaks), and/or using natural materials as part of the creative process.

For Other Community Organizations

(including libraries, schools, municipal recreation facilities, seniors' residences, mental health organizations, arts and culture organizations, etc.)

- Consider the Art Helps Model as a framework for combining art, nature, social connections and well-being goals.
- Use this report as a resource for funding proposals, community planning and program development.

For Funders, Governments and Policy Makers

- Recognize the value of community arts programming as a mental health intervention, especially in rural and under-resourced areas.
- Provide sustainable funding streams that support long-term or recurring arts-and-health initiatives.
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration between arts and culture organizations, mental health services, and education, seniors and municipal recreation departments
- Support programs that combine creative expression, nature, and social inclusion.



Credits

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Participant evaluation form



Participant Feedback: Art Helps Workshops

Date :

Workshop Location :

Your Postal Code :

Why we gather feedback

Feedback from participants is used by OV-CAOS to help us understand the impact of our programs and improve workshops. Information about the number of people attending, their age range and gender helps us develop new programs and shows funders that activities like this are supported and needed.

Anonymous Feedback: All information is provided anonymously, so there is no need to put your name anywhere on this form.

Feedback is voluntary: You do not need to complete this form in order to participate in the workshop. Also, please feel free to leave any questions blank if you don't wish to answer.

SECTION 1 is completed before the workshop and SECTION 2 at the end.

SECTION 1: Please fill out this section before the workshop begins.

Age Under 12 years 12-17 18-29 30-49 50-64 65+

Which gender do you identify with most?

Female

I prefer to Self-Identify (please describe):

Male

Non-binary, gender fluid and/or Two Spirit*

I prefer not to answer

Don't know

* Gender-fluid means a person's gender identity may change over time or they don't feel committed to a particular gender. Non-binary is similar: it is used by people whose gender identity is not simply male or female. Two Spirit is a term used in Indigenous communities for people having both a male and female spirit.

How are you feeling?

Take a moment to think about how you are feeling right now, before the workshop begins. In the space below, write a few words to describe how you feel. We will ask this question again at the end of the workshop.

Participant Feedback: Art Helps Workshops

How creative do you feel? (Check the answer that best matches how you feel now)

- Very creative Somewhat creative A little creative Not at all creative

How connected do you feel to other people? (Check the answer that best matches how you feel now)

- Very connected Somewhat connected A little connected Not at all

How connected do you feel to nature? (Check the answer that best matches how you feel now)

- Very connected Somewhat connected A little connected Not at all
-

SECTION 2: Please complete this section at the end of the workshop.

How are you feeling now?

Take a look at what you wrote earlier about how you felt at the beginning of the workshop. How are you feeling now? In the space below, write a few words to describe how you feel now.

How creative do you feel? (Check the answer that best matches how you feel now)

- Very creative Somewhat creative A little creative Not at all creative

How connected do you feel to other people? (Check the answer that best matches how you feel now)

- Very connected Somewhat connected A little connected Not at all

How connected do you feel to nature? (Check the answer that best matches how you feel now)

- Very connected Somewhat connected A little connected Not at all

If there is a difference between how you felt before the workshop and how you feel now, why do you think that is?

What did you like best about this workshop?

What did you like least about this workshop?

Do you have any suggestions for future workshops?

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback!

Appendix 2: Art Helps Codebook

Before (B) After (A)

E1B - Excited/Curious/Inspired, full of anticipation, intrigued

E1A - Excited/Curious/Inspired, full of anticipation, intrigued

W1B - Feeling welcomed, grateful, welcoming environment (warm, safe, comfortable)

W1A - Feeling welcomed, grateful, welcoming environment (warm, safe, comfortable)

P1B - Physical - bodily sensations, positive and negative (pain or absence of pain, tired, energized)

P1A - Physical - bodily sensations, positive and negative (pain or absence of pain, tired, energized)

MH1B - Mental Health - includes both positive and negative feelings: stressed, grumpy, happy, calm, peaceful, grounded, etc.

MH1A - Mental Health - includes both positive and negative feelings: stressed, grumpy, happy, calm, peaceful, grounded, etc.

T1 - Transportation - references to how participants got to the workshops and related feelings

A1A - Accomplishment - references to positive feelings about what was created, pride, etc. (after only)

SC1B - Social Connection - includes positive references to liking being with other people, or feeling connected to others, laughter, etc.

SC1A - Social Connection - includes positive references to liking being with other people, or feeling connected to others, laughter, etc.

NC1B - Connection to Nature - includes positive references to feeling connected to nature, the environment, the setting, being outdoors

NC1A - Connection to Nature - includes positive references to feeling connected to nature, the environment, the setting, being outdoors

RC1 - Reasons for Change: any noted reasons for changes in feelings before and after the workshop, including both positive and negative feelings

CP1 - Creative Process - references to feeling creative, permission to be creative, playing, time to create, getting lost in the making

M1 - Making - references to artmaking, working with your hands, artmaking materials, tools

CAP1 - Community Arts Programming: references to things that fall under community arts, expressive arts and open studio approaches, such as having mental and physical space to explore, flexible

instruction, a focus on the artmaking process more than product, collaboration, and seeing everyone's creations, etc.

L1 - Learning - learning new media and approaches, learning about nature

F1 - Food - references to the food provided as part of the workshop

Pr1 - Professionalism - positive references to staff, artists, and facilitators and the organization of the workshops, etc.

CON1 - Continue offering workshops, more, more often, keep it up, etc.

NR - No response

OT1 - Other - anything that does not fit into a category or we are not sure where it goes; this can be revisited once the coding is complete

Q1 - Quote - not for analysis but as a way to identify good quotes

Codes for Comparing Feelings before and after the workshop

The following codes were used when comparing responses to open-ended questions asking participants how they felt before and after the workshop and a follow-up question asking, "if there is a difference, why do you think that is?" The reason for including responses to the last question is that many people actually addressed what the difference was when explaining why.

F+ Feeling better - after the workshop, more relaxed, happier, calmer, better, less physical pain; also responses about being more creative, enthusiastic, and excited and other positive changes in mood from what was stated in the "before" response

F- Feeling worse - after the workshop, negative statements and changes in mood compared to before the workshop

F0 No change - Responses indicating that there were no major changes in feelings and mood before and after the workshop

FNR No response - to both before and after questions, or no response to only the after question unless a change was indicated elsewhere

Note:

1/ Feelings like being relaxed and calm or stressed have been coded under Mental Health, although we acknowledge that there is also a physical component to these feelings. In reality, many feelings and states have both physical and mental aspects.

[1] Asked what they liked least about the workshop, most responses were blank or said "nothing." Some reaffirmed or added to what they liked and only a few mentioned specific things, often related to the weather (too hot or cold) or bugs.