

In 2023, the Prince Edward County Arts Council (County Arts) was awarded a \$25,000 Seniors' Community Grant from the Government of Ontario to run Prince Edward County's first ever arts mentorship program. 65% of program participants were older adults, creating meaningful opportunities for intergenerational learning and connection.

10 mentor-mentee pairs working in and across a variety of artistic disciplines – including painting, poetry, theatre performance, furniture making, textile arts, ceramics, writing, and dance – participated in 25 hours of mentorship activities over a period of 4 months, from Fall 2023–Winter 2024. Mentors, who were selected following an Open Call and Peer Assessment process, were compensated for their time, and mentees also received an honorarium to help cover their costs.

Participants delighted and inspired community members in a special culminating event on March 26th 2024. Mentees exhibited and presented work created during the program, and participants shared stories about their mentorship journey and its impact on their lives and artistic careers.

In this Program Highlight document, we share photos, impact data, and testimonials to celebrate the success of this program, and to hopefully inspire similar initiatives in Prince Edward County and beyond.



Mentee Delane Cooper with new work entitled Spiral of Life



Mentee Heather Lindsay reads from her poetry chapbook

100%:

- of participants experienced increased well-being as a result of their participation
- of participants felt more socially connected as a result of their participation, and felt the program helped reduce social isolation in our community
- of mentees (half of whom were older adults) gained new skills as a result of their participation

“Working with my mentor provided an incredible opportunity to explore the approach and practice of an established artist. My mentor’s artistic perspective, techniques and philosophy deeply informed and positively modified my own approach to art. Thanks for facilitating and supporting this mentorship program, an incredible opportunity to advance my own artistic career, connect with the arts community, and work and connect with someone with a high level of expertise and accomplishment.”

“My experience as a mentee has felt so welcoming, and has allowed me to gain a new skill set in an artistic practice that I’m passionate about. I was paired with a mentor that made me feel safe, taught me so many amazing skills, and made me feel excited and ready to learn during our sessions.”



Mentor pair Katrina Tompkins and Hale Ferguson; the chair Hale created appears in the foreground



Mentee Hedy Campbell discusses her work at the culminating event

“This program was exactly what my artistic practice needed: motivation to explore new formats for my writing. I never imagined I’d create a stage play, but thanks to my mentor’s guidance I’ve been able to see all the possibilities for bringing my short stories out of the page. When I applied for the program I felt stuck, but now I’m truly excited for the future of my writing career.” – G L Barrett



Mentee Michelle Kosoy discusses her work at the culminating event

"Sharing passion for material and process, in a collegial manner during the mentorship induced connectivity that otherwise may not have happened. Sparking new patterns and examining reasons for artful making in one's journey is enlightening and affirming."

– Andrea Piller



Crowd shot from the culminating event

"I've laughed. I've cried. I've learned. I've experienced new things. I've learned much about another. And I've learned, and re-learned, so much about me. I'm in a decade when I was taught to believe that there was nothing more to learn; that I had become 'the elder'. As it turns out, that isn't true! I am older, but there is still so much for me to learn. I have always tried to express my truth in my work. Thank you for this opportunity to expand that truth. I am not the same person. I am changed for the better. Now, to reflect that in my work."

– Bill Stearman



Mentee Gemma Barrett with Mentor Kamee Abrahamian, presenting at the culminating event

"It was a particular pleasure for me to mentor a young aspiring actor whose talent, passion and enthusiasm rekindled the joy I had experienced as an acting instructor many years ago. I was reminded of what a privilege it is to have the opportunity to nurture and encourage our next generation of storytellers!"

– Joan McBride