

Memory Cafes Nova Scotia

A Collaboration between Municipalities, Businesses, Artists, Health Care Providers and Support Organizations and Volunteers to help build Age-Friendly Communities in Nova Scotia

What is a Memory Café?

Memory Cafes were first started in the Netherlands by a Dutch psychologist, Bere Miesen, who wanted to break stigma around dementia and create welcoming social spaces in the community for older adults with cognitive challenges and their families and caregivers. Since that time, Memory Cafes have sprung up in communities across Europe and North America. They are part of Age -friendly Community Initiatives and can have many forms, though all have two purposes: to ensure that those with dementia and their caregivers feel included and welcome in their communities and to share fun positive social experiences. To watch a TEDx Talk on Memory Cafes check out: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vje71rXP8Z0>

Why are Cafes Important?

In Nova Scotia, we have many small communities where cafes are a central part of community life. They make great places to meet, and are a sustainable setting for group get togethers, especially in winter. Research shows that social isolation is a significant risk factor for physical and mental health of caregivers and those with dementia alike. Caregiver burnout is the main reason that persons with dementia go into long term care. Research also shows that one of the main concerns for people with dementia is to feel that they continue to belong in their community.

What Happens in a Café?

Cafes can have many forms: some happen in community centres or churches as well as actual cafes. At a Memory Café, attendees come together to relax, chat, enjoy some music or a guest artist who is invited to the café, and of course enjoy a hot drink and snack! Sometimes a guest may be invited to share useful information, including support for caregivers in the area, or for education on memory disorders, including dementia supports and other local resources.

How Do I Start a Memory Café in My Community?

Contact provincial coordinator Dr Beverley Cassidy at beverley.Cassidy@nshealth.ca

