



**THERAPEUTIC
RECREATION
ONTARIO**

2026 TRO Conference Program at a Glance

Sunday, June 7	
Optional Pre-Conference Events	
7:00 - 8:00 PM	Registration table opens: come grab your name tag & delegate bag
9:00 - 11:00 PM	Social in the Rainbow Room - casual meet & greet, fireworks @ 10 pm

Monday, June 8	
7:00 AM	Registration & Breakfast opens
7:45 - 7:55 AM	Welcome & Announcements
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Keynote: Empower. Engage. Evolve. The power of Caring for Yourself as a Therapeutic Recreation Professional
9:00 - 9:15 AM	Break
9:15 - 10:15 AM	10 Wacky Facts That'll Empower, Engage, and Evolve You as a Recreation Therapist
	Global TR internships
	Cultivating Happiness Together: Resident & Family Voices Shaping Quality of Life
	Practice First, Research Later: Empowering Practitioners to Explore Through Research
10:15 - 10:35 AM	Break
10:35 AM - 11:35 PM	Empower and Engage: Best Practice Behavioural Support Resources to Evolve Your Practice
	How Do We Demonstrate TR Outcomes? Measuring Positive Emotions Through Yoga Interventions
	Knowledge, Skills and Competencies of Ideal TR Grads
11:35 - 1:10 PM	Lunch & Annual General Meeting

**please note this program is subject to change*

- PURPLE: Children & youth
- PINK: Long-term care & seniors
- TEAL: Research
- ORANGE: Applicable to all populations
- BLUE: Community
- GREEN: Hospital & Rehab
- YELLOW: Mental Health

Monday, June 8

1:15 - 2:45 PM	The Dreaded B-Word: Understanding Client Boredom, Motivation, and the Role of Recreation Therapy
	Playing Without Limits: How Brain-Computer Interfaces Empower Meaningful Recreation
	Fins & Feathers: Using Robotic Seals and Birds in Dementia Care.
	Create More Champions: Benefits of novel creativity supplies for recreation staff and residents in long-term care
2:45 - 3:05 PM	Break
3:05 - 4:35 PM	Flourishing Through Leisure: An Application of Strengths-Based Therapeutic Recreation
	Going for Goals: Designing and Documenting Meaningful Goals for Adults who have an Intellectual Disability
	Emerging Voices: Student Research in Therapeutic Recreation
	Let's Talk Connections and Conversations: Two New Practical Tools to Address Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults
4:35 - 6:00 PM	Break
7:00 - 9:00 PM	Sip & Social or Niagara Lights & Game Nights
9:00 - 9:30 PM	Student Pre-Mixer Social
9:00 - 11:00 PM	TRO Mixer

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Tuesday, June 9

Visit our Exhibitor Tradeshow booths all day!

7:00 AM	Registration & Breakfast opens
8:00 - 8:15 AM	Energizer (subject to change)
8:15 - 8:30 AM	Q&A with Jeff Burch (subject to change)
8:30 - 10:00 AM	Transforming Thoughts into Actions: Using Brain Computer Interface For Therapeutic Recreation Access for Children and Youth with Physical Disabilities
	Beyond the Cut: Cricut in Therapeutic Recreation
	When Relations Matter Most
10:00 - 10:20 AM	Break
10:20 - 11:20 AM	Songs of Strength: How Songwriting Supports Mental Health Recovery in Therapeutic Recreation
	Stream of Dreams Legacy Project: Building Community through Art, Education & Partnership
	Empowering Change Through Language: The Leadership Journey
	Adapting and Collaborating in Community-Based TR: Lessons from the H.A.C. (Health, Activity, Community) Program
11:20 AM - 12:00 PM	Lunch & Awards Presentation
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Official Exhibitor Tradeshow
1:05 - 2:05 PM	Recreation Therapy and Transitional Support: Supporting Patients with Complex Discharges
	Trauma-Informed Volunteerism: How Recreation Therapists Can Help Shape Safer Volunteer Environments
	Designing Music-Based Interventions to Support Care Partner Well-Being
2:05 - 2:25 PM	Break
2:25 - 3:25 PM	Community of Practice meetings
3:30 - 3:45 PM	Closing remarks, giveaways/prizes, Exhibitor giveaways

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2026 TRO Conference Session Descriptions

Keynote: Empower. Engage. Evolve. The power of Caring for Yourself as a Therapeutic Recreation Professional

~ **Leanne Fitzmaurice**

After working in Long Term Care for over 20 years, Leanne developed a new passion when she became a Certified Facilitator of The Working Mind through Opening Minds, an initiative of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

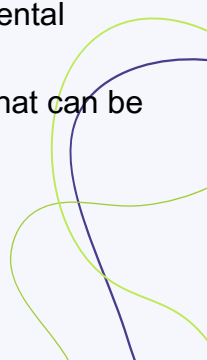
Leanne has always believed that being a good leader means truly looking out for your team. The Working Mind really spoke to her values—and took her leadership to the next level. Through the program, she's seen how stigma can quietly show up at work, and how powerful it can be when people start talking about it. It's inspired her to help create workplaces where everyone feels supported, understood, and able to bring their best selves every day.

In addition to The Working Mind, Leanne offers customized workshops and presentations on workplace mental health tailored to your organization's specific needs. She would be honoured to partner with you to help your team strengthen resilience and thrive.

As Therapeutic Recreation professionals navigate fast-paced and emotionally demanding work environments, it can be easy to overlook changes in their own well-being. Yet practitioner self-awareness and resilience are essential to sustaining ethical, effective, and client-centered practice.

In this keynote session, Leanne invites participants to pause and reflect on their own mental health and professional sustainability. Attendees will explore early warning signs of stress and burnout, examine the unique occupational risks associated with therapeutic recreation practice, and learn practical strategies to support personal resilience and professional longevity.

By strengthening self-awareness and well-being, TR professionals can remain fully present and effective in their roles. This session supports reflective practice and professional responsibility, helping practitioners maintain therapeutic relationships, promote positive client outcomes, and sustain long-term engagement in the field.

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify 4 signs of declining mental health across multiple Domains of Health.
 2. By the end of the session, participants will be able to describe 3 challenges associated with the Therapeutic Recreation professional role and explain how they may impact practitioner mental health
 3. By the end of the session, participants will be able to demonstrate 2 self care techniques that can be implemented during the work day to support practitioner well-being
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10 Wacky Facts That'll Empower, Engage, and Evolve You as a Recreation Therapist

~ Emily Johnson

Get ready to laugh, learn, and look at your work through a whole new lens! In this lighthearted yet deeply meaningful session, Emily Johnson takes you on a journey through 10 truly wacky (but real!) facts from nature, science, and the world around us, each one offering a powerful professional takeaway for Recreation Therapists.

From octopuses with three hearts to sunflowers that turn toward each other on cloudy days, you'll discover how these quirky truths can inspire resilience, connection, and creativity in your daily practice. Walk away feeling recharged, reminded of your "why," and equipped with simple mindset shifts to empower yourself, engage your community, and evolve your professional impact.

This session blends laughter, reflection, and practical insight, a perfect reminder that the best lessons in Recreation Therapy often come from the most unexpected places.

1. By the end of this session participants will be able to identify 5 unconventional, yet meaningful lessons that can impact professional growth in Recreation Therapy.
2. By the end of this session participants will be able to integrate one creative or connection-focused concept into therapeutic interactions, groups, or community engagement strategies
3. By the end of this session, participants will be able to apply a minimum of three mindset shifts or teamwork strategies in their professional practice

Global TR internships

~ Candice McMullen

~ Megan Foster

This session is designed for educators and Therapeutic Recreation (TR) students, interested in expanding professional practice through global internship experiences. Presenters Candice McMullen, professor, and Megan Foster, TR graduate, will share their experience developing and implementing a global internship partnership, between St. Lawrence College and St. Andrews village a retirement community in New Zealand.

Using a case-study approach, the session explores how international internships support professional development, cultural competence, and community-based TR practice. Participants will examine program development, supervision, ethical considerations, and interdisciplinary collaboration, as well as lessons learned in supporting students beyond local placements.

Attendees will leave with practical strategies for initiating and sustaining global internship opportunities, enhancing experiential learning, and preparing students for diverse TR practice settings. The professor and student wanted to explore a global internship option, for cultural exposure and to learn about best practices in aged care in another country where geriatrics in therapeutic recreation is needed.

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify at least three professional development benefits of participating in or supporting a global Therapeutic Recreation internship experience.
2. By the end of the session, participants will be able to describe at least three considerations related to program development, supervision, and ethical practice when implementing a global TR internship.
3. By the end of this session, learners will be able to identify three resources they can use to support students participating in international TR internships.

Cultivating Happiness Together: Resident & Family Voices Shaping Quality of Life

~ Erin Matresky

We are excited to share two programs developed to enhance Resident and Family Engagement as part of Sienna's Circle Approach. Gems in our Community supports residents in pursuing personal interests while recognizing their strengths, talents, and contributions within the long-term care community.

Meaningful Visits provides practical resources to foster meaningful connection between residents and families across all stages of the care journey.

This session will explore how core principles of Therapeutic Recreation informed the collaborative design of these programs, including person-centred practice, empowerment, inclusivity, and a strengths-based approach. Participants will learn how engaging residents, families, and interdisciplinary team members in program development can enhance connection, purpose, and well-being in long-term care. The session will include reflections from residents and team members on the impact of these programs and their role in supporting meaningful engagement.

1. By the end of this session learners will be able to identify 3 ways they can foster a sense of purpose within their organization.
2. By the end of the session, learners will be able to describe at least 3 ways that having a sense of purpose can improve Quality of Life, social connectivity, and a sense of belonging for residents in long-term care.
3. By the end of the session, learners will be able to identify 4 approaches to promoting enriching, meaningful visits between residents and their loved ones at specific stages: Move-in, Settling In, Challenging Visits, and End of Life

Practice First, Research Later: Empowering Practitioners to Explore Through Research

~ Kelly Bulley

~ Ashley Palmer

In this presentation, we share our journey from frontline Therapeutic Recreation clinicians to research facilitators and primary investigators, highlighting the challenges, learning experiences, and rewards of leading TR-driven research in a hospital setting. Drawing on real-world experience, we will discuss navigating ethics applications, grant writing and budgeting, scheduling research within a secure environment, and managing the unique barriers and opportunities of conducting hospital-based research where TR-led studies are still uncommon. Through practical insights and honest reflection, this session aims to demystify the research process and equip Therapeutic Recreation professionals with the confidence and tools to pursue their own evidence-based research initiatives.

1. By the end of this session participants will be able to identify three key resources and supports available to front-line Therapeutic Recreation (TR) professionals who are considering initiating or participating in TR-focused research.
2. By the end of this session, participants will be able to outline three essential steps in developing and completing a TR-led research project within a clinical or mental health setting.
3. By the end of this session participants will be able to describe three practical strategies to effectively navigate common research related barriers faced by TR professionals.

Empower and Engage: Best Practice Behavioural Support Resources to Evolve Your Practice

~ Courtney Stasiuk-Mohr

Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO) develops tools and resources to empower teams caring for older adults with, or at risk of, responsive behaviours/personal expressions related to dementia, complex mental health, substance use and/or other neurological conditions.

This session will provide an overview of new tools which complement and build upon one another to support person-centred care, holistic assessment, and meaningful engagement.

Assessment tools include My Personhood Summary[©], a resource that surfaces a person's life experiences, important relationships, and personal preferences, and the BSO-DOS[©], which provides objective behavioural data. Both support the implementation of non-pharmacological interventions for responsive behaviours.

Complementing these assessments, the Meaningful Engagement Resource Guide offers a range of therapeutic recreation activities and adaptation tips, grounded in personhood and cultural safety.

Clues Causes and Care to Consider for Responsive Behaviours help supports care teams to identify unmet needs being communicated by responsive behaviours, implement preventative strategies, and respond effectively in the moment.

1. By the end of this session learners will be able to compare two BSO tools and articulate their applicability to their practice based on setting, service-user population, and available resources.
2. By the end of this session learners will be able to identify practical ways to apply two BSO tools using adaptable, person-centred, and culturally safe techniques.
3. By the end of this session, learners will be able to identify how and where to access BSO tools for ongoing use in their practice.

How Do We Demonstrate TR Outcomes? Measuring Positive Emotions Through Yoga Interventions

~ Sanghee Chun, M.S., M.Ed., Ph.D., CTRS

~ Maya Koot, BTR, Certified Yoga Teacher

This session will demonstrate how to measure the outcomes of a Therapeutic Recreation (TR) intervention using yoga as an example. Establishing valid and reliable assessment and outcome measures is essential for the continued growth and recognition of TR within the healthcare field. Participants will explore the importance of assessment and evaluation in demonstrating program effectiveness. The session will include a brief, guided yoga practice led by a yoga instructor. Participants will complete a positive emotion assessment before and after the yoga session using a valid and reliable measurement tool. The results will be shared and discussed to illustrate how outcome measurement can be applied in TR practice. This session will help practitioners recognize that integrating outcome measurement into everyday TR practice is both feasible and valuable for demonstrating intervention effectiveness in clinical and community settings.

1. By the end of this session learners will be able to identify two important functions of outcome measurement in Therapeutic Recreation practice
2. By the end of the session, learners will be able to describe three ways in which a guided yoga session can foster positive emotional outcomes
3. By the end of the session, learners will be able to identify 3 key criteria for effectively evaluating the results of a TR intervention



Knowledge, Skills and Competencies of Ideal TR Grads

~ Colleen Whyte, PhD, CTRS

What knowledge, skills and competencies characterize an 'ideal' TR graduate? This session will present findings from 15 faculty members working at degree-granting institutions across Canada on core professional knowledge (described as the "what" of practice), along with essential skills and competencies (the "how" of practice), and the underlying values that guide the "why" of TR practice, including inclusion, social justice and equality. The second part of this session will layer the voices of practitioners, inviting attendees to share their perspectives on the skills, knowledge and competencies that define ideal TR graduates.

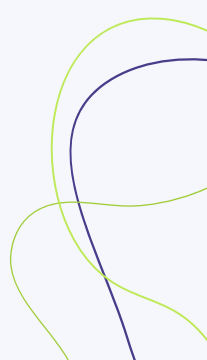
1. By the end of this session, participants will be able to identify 2 areas of professional knowledge, skills and competencies that characterize an ideal TR graduate, according to Canadian TR faculty.
2. Drawing on your own experiences in the field, share two examples of professional knowledge, skills and competencies that characterize an ideal TR graduate.
3. By the end of this session, participants will be able to identify 2 strategies that integrate knowledge, skills and competencies into education (including experiential education) to better prepare graduates for entry to practice.

The Dreaded B-Word: Understanding Client Boredom, Motivation, and the Role of Recreation Therapy

~ Lindsey Oretan, BA, R/TRO

~ Mary Afable, BA, MA RLS, R/TRO

The session will explore how the word boredom is interpreted, within the context of the utilization of Recreation Therapy and how, as Practitioners, we approach both the experience of the patient, our own professional practice and within the team. Time will also be spent investigating motivational strategies and theories, to enable the Recreation Therapist to better support our patients values.

1. Participants will be able to identify three significant differences between the definitions of boredom and motivation
 2. Participants will be able to identify 2 motivational strategies that are evidence -based and applicable to TR practice
 3. Participants will be able to share and explain one example of how boredom is expressed in their daily practice and one example of how knowing motivational strategies can impact their daily professional practice through active discussion in small groups.
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Playing Without Limits: How Brain-Computer Interfaces Empower Meaningful Recreation

~ Kaitlyn Large, R/TRO

~ Mursal Rizaey, BA

Recreational activities are a significant part of an individual's life and can come in many forms. These experiences are about more than just fun; they foster connections, a sense of belonging, and emotional wellbeing. However, for some individuals with physical, cognitive, or developmental differences, participation in various recreational activities may be limited to passively watching rather than active engagement- until now.

In this session, the therapeutic recreation team at Holland Bloorview's Clinical Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) Program will provide an overview of BCI technology. They will explain its role in the implementation of therapeutic recreation, supporting social connection, autonomous play, and increased confidence for clients with various disabilities. They will explain how BCI creates an even playing field for recreation regardless of ability. The session will conclude with a live BCI demonstration where some attendees can try playing video games using only their minds!

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify three populations that benefit from implementing therapeutic recreation using BCI
2. By the end of the session, participants will be able to list five benefits of using BCI technology in therapeutic recreation interventions for individuals with disabilities.
3. By the end of the session, participants will be able to list 3 challenges associated with using BCI in a clinical setting.

Fins & Feathers: Using Robotic Seals and Birds in Dementia Care

~ Christine Wilkinson, MSc, R/TRO

~ Christine Maleta

~ Bill Livingstone

What happens when technology, research, partnerships, innovation, and compassion come together in dementia care? The results can be truly transformative for all involved: residents, researchers, practitioners, and students alike.

Building on a 10-month, three-phase 2024 study on the use of robotic animals in dementia care, this presentation will showcase the process and outcomes from a 2025 project extension. The extension focused on refining, testing and evaluating evidence-informed robotic animal intervention toolkits, as well as developing, trialing and evaluating a pilot training program for long-term care staff and recreation therapy students on how to effectively facilitate these interventions.

In addition to sharing key features and outcomes from the toolkits and training program, this presentation will also explore insights from participating long-term care staff regarding the meaningful impact of therapeutic robotic seal and bird interventions for residents, and the value of the collaborative researcher-practitioner partnership established through this work.

1. By the end of this session, learners will be able to describe a minimum of 5 approaches that were found to be effective when engaging residents with robotic seals and/or birds.
2. By the end of this session, learners will be able to identify a minimum of 5 resident outcomes noted during therapeutic robotic animal interventions.
3. By the end of this session, learners will be able to explain a minimum of 4 benefits experienced by staff and researchers through this research-practitioner collaboration.

Create More Champions: Benefits of novel creativity supplies for recreation staff and residents in long-term care

~ Kate Dupuis, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Arts, creativity, and self-expression are staples of long-term care recreation programming, but limited budgets often restrict how often and how fully these opportunities can be offered. Drawing on research conducted across 15 Ontario long-term care homes, this interactive workshop explores how access to simple, curated creativity kits can expand arts-based programming without increasing costs. Participants will learn how recreation professionals used these kits with residents, incorporated them into their own practice, and shared them collaboratively with colleagues over a three-month period. The session will include a hands-on art-making experience using materials from the creativity kits, along with a discussion of key findings, practical insights, and real-world applications. Attendees will leave with concrete ideas for increasing access to meaningful creative engagement in long-term care, regardless of budget constraints.

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify 3 benefits of arts engagement across multiple domains of well-being relevant to long-term care residents.
2. By the end of the session, participants will be able to outline the steps required to implement Creativity Kits within a long-term care recreation program.
3. By the end of the session, participants will be able to justify the use of Creativity Kits as a strategy to increase access to arts-based programming for both residents and staff in long-term care.

Flourishing Through Leisure: An Application of Strengths-Based Therapeutic Recreation

~ Alyssa Vanwyck, BA, MA, R/TRO, CTRS

This workshop will take an in-depth look at the Flourishing Through Leisure: An Ecological Extension of the Leisure and Well-Being Model (Anderson & Heyne, 2012) and explore its application to a variety of settings and populations. With a focus on strengths-based therapeutic recreation practice, participants will have the opportunity to explore the components of this model and discover ways to improve client's well-being through the implementation of key ideas and theories rooted in an ecological approach and the social model of disability. Participants will discuss strengths-based assessment techniques, intervention and program development, and ways to enhance client's leisure experiences and development both personal and environmental strengths and resources across five life domains.

1. Upon completion of the session, participants will be able to differentiate between the medical model and the social model of disability and identify three ways that a strengths-based therapeutic recreation approach is rooted in the social model
2. Upon completion of this session, participants will articulate three ways they can enhance client leisure experiences through the application of the Flourishing Through Leisure model.
3. Upon completion of the session, participants will be able to apply an ecological approach by identifying three strengths and resources within the physical and social environment that support client leisure participation.



Going for Goals: Designing and Documenting Meaningful Goals for Adults who have an Intellectual Disability

~ Rebecca Allison, BSc

How do we create goals that truly matter? In this interactive workshop, we'll explore how recreation therapy can support adults who have an intellectual disability in achieving meaningful, personalized outcomes that enhance their well-being and quality of life. Goals are not static—they evolve as individuals grow, connect, and discover new possibilities. This session will introduce the concept of Personal Outcome Measures and how they can guide the design and documentation of goals that reflect each person's unique journey. Through discussion, hands-on activities, and real-world examples, participants will learn how to craft goals that promote inclusion, independence, and community engagement. Whether you're new to goal development or looking to refresh your approach, this session offers practical tools and inspiration to make goal-setting a dynamic and person-centered process.

1. By the end of this session, learners will be able to identify three Personal Outcome Measures and their impact on personal well-being and quality of life.
2. By the end of this session, learners will be able to identify three ways meaningful goals can positively impact adults who have an intellectual disability
3. By the end of this session, learners will be able to develop an example of a meaningful goal based on specific objectives.

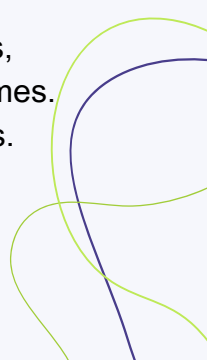
Emerging Voices: Student Research in Therapeutic Recreation

~ Alicia Kuhr, MA, CTRS

~ Maya Koot, MA

~ Kendra McConkey, MA

This session showcases 3 research studies examining the practice of therapeutic recreation (TR), each offering insights and takeaways to inspire professional practice. The first study explores how TR in forensic psychiatry can be mapped to the Good Lives Model (GLM). Drawing on qualitative insights from TR practitioners, an adapted TR-GLM model will be presented to demonstrate the synergies between the model and TR outcomes and client-centered goals. The second study examines the role of Hatha yoga on emotional well-being among university students experiencing anxiety. Research involved a pre- and post-intervention assessment measuring positive and negative emotions among participants after engaging in a 4-week yoga program. The final presentation examines experiences and motivations of TR practitioners working in mental health who incorporate self-care into their lives. Findings suggest that participants view self-care as highly personal and dynamic, influenced by both individual values and professional demands.

1. Engagement strategies for residents with low engagement by identifying individual barriers,
 2. Identify two ways engagement in mindfulness experiences can affect mental health outcomes.
 3. Describe two professional factors that influence self-care practices among TR practitioners.
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Let's Talk Connections and Conversations: Two New Practical Tools to Address Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults

~ Peter Snow, MSW

This interactive session will provide hands-on learning for Therapeutic Recreation professionals seeking practical ways to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older adults. Participants will explore two new, evidence-based tools that support meaningful connection and holistic well-being.

The Collaborative C.A.R.E. Tool offers a structured approach to Connect with empathy, Assess social risk, Respond through tailored referrals and social prescribing, and Educate about the health impacts of isolation. The Conversation Starter Resource helps practitioners initiate open, empathetic dialogue about social health and belonging.

Through case examples and group discussion, participants will discover how these tools can be integrated into Therapeutic Recreation practice to foster inclusion, strengthen relationships, and enhance overall quality of life for older adults in their care.

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to describe key steps for implementing either the Collaborative C.A.R.E. Tool or the Conversation Starter Resource within Therapeutic Recreation practice
2. By the end of the session participants will be able to apply to Conversation Starter Resource to initiate a compassionate, strengths-based conversation that builds trust and identifies an older adults social health needs.
3. By the end of the session, participants will be able to apply the Collaborative C.A.R.E. Tool to assess social isolation and loneliness in older adult patients.

Transforming Thoughts into Actions: Using Brain Computer Interface For Therapeutic Recreation Access for Children and Youth with Physical Disabilities

~ Julie Jones

Transforming Thoughts into Actions: Using Brain Computer Interface For Therapeutic Recreation Access for Children and Youth with Physical Disabilities presents preliminary outcomes from the application of BCI technology within pediatric therapeutic recreation practice.

Led by the Recreation Therapist and BCI Team Lead at The John McGivney Children's Centre, this session highlights one of Ontario's first pediatric BCI-based therapeutic recreation programs, developed in collaboration with Holland Bloorview, EKO, and the Slight Family Foundation. Over the past year, both group and individual BCI-supported TR programs have been designed and implemented to increase access to meaningful recreation for children and youth with physical disabilities.

Participants will:

- Examine practical considerations and strategies for implementing BCI within TR programming
- Explore the structure and facilitation of group and individual BCI-based recreation sessions
- Review preliminary outcomes, lessons learned, and emerging practice insights
- Reflect on client and family experiences using BCI to support engagement, autonomy, and participation in recreation

1. By the end of this session, participants will identify three benefits of using BCI in TR practice.
2. Upon completion of this session, participants will identify at least three practical applications of brain-computer interface (BCI) technology within their therapeutic recreation practice.
3. By the end of this session, participants will be able to identify at least three potential resource sources they can use for implementing BCI within therapeutic recreation practice.

Beyond the Cut: Cricut in Therapeutic Recreation

~ Alicia Kuhr, MA, CTRS

~ Amber Somerville, R/TRO

This session explores the integration of Cricut technology as a Therapeutic Recreation (TR) intervention to enhance creativity, skill development, and leisure education. Cricut is a user-friendly digital cutting system that allows individuals to design and create customized projects using materials such as vinyl and paper. Rooted in assessment findings identifying a need for hands-on creative leisure opportunities, this program was developed and implemented with clients in forensic psychiatry. Presenters will share the program rationale, structure, and evaluation process, emphasizing intended outcomes. Participants will gain an understanding of Cricut tools and technology through a live demonstration and hands-on activity, linking practice to NCTRC domains and TRO areas including assessment, intervention, evaluation, program development, professional development, and diagnostic groupings. Discussion will address barriers, adaptations, and strategies for integrating peer support and accessible leisure education resources. Reflections and client testimonials will illustrate how creative, technology-based interventions support autonomy, self-expression, and engagement across settings.

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to describe at least three ways Cricut technology can be used as a TR intervention to enhance creativity, self-expression, and leisure education across diverse client populations and settings.
2. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify two strategies for adapting Cricut-based programs to meet client needs related to ability level, environment, and available resources.
3. By the end of the session, participants will demonstrate an understanding of Cricut operation and its therapeutic applications by engaging in a hands-on activity.

When Relations Matter Most

~ Erin Delaney, BA, MA

This workshop is grounded in qualitative research exploring the experiences of nine Recreation Therapists across Canada working in diverse settings. The study used storytelling and visual arts: paint, collage, and digital media to create artistic personifications of death, offering insight into how recreation therapists experience dying, grief, and care. Drawing from this research, the interactive workshop introduces artistic personification of death as a reflective, practice-based tool.

Participants will engage in creative reflection, explore death as a relational process, and gain strategies to support grief processing, ritual, and relationship-centred end-of-life care. Findings highlight the emotional labour of frequent exposure to death, role restrictions within fragmented healthcare systems, and limited formal training. Despite these challenges, recreation therapists demonstrated resilience, fostering moments of dignity, beauty, and connection. Their artistic personifications revealed the complex entanglement of solace and finality, underscoring the vital role Recreation Therapist play in shaping the experience of end-of-life.

1. By the end of the session, learners will describe and interpret at least three ways Recreation Therapists experience and personify death across diverse healthcare settings
2. By the end of this session, learners will identify and articulate a minimum of two practical strategies to support Recreation Therapists in managing personal and professional grief and facilitating end-of-life conversations
3. By the end of this session, learners will create one simple Recreation Therapy idea or activity that helps support emotional connection or relationships for people at the end of life.

Songs of Strength: How Songwriting Supports Mental Health Recovery in Therapeutic Recreation

~ Regina Wasalinska-Hannah, R/TRO

~ Katie DuTemple, BFA

This session explores how songwriting can support recovery and confidence-building in Therapeutic Recreation practice. Drawing from a pilot study at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), participants completed the Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction Scale before and after a single-session songwriting workshop co-facilitated by a Recreation Therapist and musician. Results showed increases in competence, with participants reporting greater confidence, improved mood, and emotional release. Using Self-Determination Theory as a framework, the session will share program design, key findings, and adaptable strategies — including rewriting familiar lyrics, co-facilitating with artists, and guided reflection. Attendees will also engage in a brief songwriting activity to experience creativity as a pathway to recovery and connection.

1. By the end of this session, participants will be able to describe how the songwriting program was structured and facilitated, and how a single creative session can build confidence and support recovery in a mental health setting.
2. By the end of this session, participants will be able to identify at least two creative strategies, such as rewriting familiar lyrics or using guided reflection, to help clients express themselves and feel more connected.
3. By the end of this session, participants will be able to describe how simple evaluation tools, such as pre/post measures and participant reflections, can be used to demonstrate outcomes and strengthen creative programming in TR.

Stream of Dreams Legacy Project: Building Community through Art, Education & Partnership

~ Cheryl Gilmour, R/TRO

~ Linda Smith

~ Christie Mills, BA

This session highlights the Stream of Dreams Legacy Project, a unique partnership between the City of London Dearness Home Long Term Care and Adult Day Program & Wellness Centre and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. Participants will explore how Therapeutic Recreation can build meaningful community connections through collaborative mural-making, environmental education, and art-based engagement. The session demonstrates how creative programming fosters inclusion, self-expression, and environmental stewardship while supporting resident and client goals across social, emotional, cognitive, and leisure domains. Attendees will gain practical strategies for facilitating meaningful participation, developing cross-sector partnerships, and delivering person-centred, strengths-based programs that enhance quality of life and community integration through recreation and art.

1. By the end of this session, participants will be able to identify three methods to advance the TR profession through program development and delivery, including establishing cross-sector partnerships, integrating art-based environmental education, and using community-integrated, strengths-based approaches in program planning.
2. By the end of this session, participants will be able to identify three facilitation methods to support diverse abilities and skill levels, such as hand-over-hand assistance, adaptive tool selection, and sensory-focused strategies, to promote meaningful participation in art-based programs.
3. By the end of this session, participants will be able to identify three art-based or environmental education initiatives for partnership-building that enhance inclusion and community engagement.

Empowering Change Through Language: The Leadership Journey

~ Courtney Stasiuk-Mohr, (Hon)BRLS, CTRS

~ Emily Lambe, (Hon)BES

Person-Centred Language (PCL) shapes how we see, speak about, and support others. This session introduces the emerging PCL Leadership Implementation Guide, designed to guide organizations in embedding PCL principles into everyday practice. Participants will explore components that define and empower leaders, from conducting a needs assessment and addressing HR considerations, to onboarding approaches for residents, staff, and volunteers. The package also highlights strategies for ongoing education, mentorship, recognizing champions, and sustaining momentum over time. Rooted in professionalism and leadership development, this session provides practical tools to foster person-centred cultures, strengthen communication, and support meaningful, lasting change.

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify two traits of a leader and describe how leaders can use PCL to enhance organizational culture and communication.
2. By the end of the session, participants will be able to navigate the PCL Leadership Implementation Guide to locate two tools or resources that enable the consistent use of PCL across organizational practices.
3. By the end of the session, participants will be able to develop a brief action plan to support ongoing PCL education, mentorship, or recognition in their workplace to sustain person-centred culture.

Adapting and Collaborating in Community-Based TR: Lessons from the H.A.C. (Health, Activity, Community) Program

~ Ashley Everets

~ Linda Smith

~ Christie Mills, BA

The H.A.C. (Health, Activity, Community), a program of the Alzheimer Society Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk, Hamilton, and Halton, offers community-based Therapeutic Recreation (TR) programs that engage and support diverse populations. This session will explore effective facilitation techniques and adaptable strategies for delivering inclusive programs that meet the needs of multiple participant groups within a single setting. In addition, participants will learn how collaborative approaches can be leveraged to enhance program quality, foster engagement, and improve overall service delivery for clients.

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify at least two facilitation techniques and two adaptable strategies that increase client engagement and support the delivery of inclusive TR programs for diverse participant groups.
2. By the end of the session, participants will be able to analyze at least two collaborative approaches that enhance program quality and improve service delivery in community-based TR settings.
3. Within the session, participants will develop one actionable plan or example for integrating inclusivity and client-centered practices into a TR program within their own organization or setting.

Recreation Therapy and Transitional Support: Supporting Patients with Complex Discharges

~ Elizabeth Davidson, BA, R/TRO

~ Sarah Cutmore, R/TRO

Due to the growing needs of the geriatric population on the Complex Care Unit at Norfolk General Hospital, TR services have evolved to support patients with extended hospital stays and neurocognitive disorders, including those whose responsive behaviours complicate LTC placement. This presentation will highlight the role of Recreation Therapy in supporting patients from admission through discharge, including the development of transitional support into LTC homes. Attendees will learn how TR services integrate behavioural supports, person-centred care, assessment and intervention planning, interdisciplinary communication, documentation, patient and family advocacy, and community relations to improve discharge outcomes and enhance connections between the hospital and LTC settings.

1. By the end of this session learners will be able to identify 3 benefits of Therapeutic Recreation Staff supporting patients with their transition from hospital to LTC.
2. By the end of this session learners will be able to provide 3 strategies that Therapeutic Recreation staff can do to facilitate successful patient transitions to LTC.
3. By the end of this session learners will be able to identify 2 patient care needs that contribute to a complex discharge and describe TR interventions that can support these patients.

Trauma-Informed Volunteerism: How Recreation Therapists Can Help Shape Safer Volunteer Environments

~ Lyndsey Charles, R/TRO

Recreation Therapists are in a unique position to champion trauma-informed practices, not only in their work with clients, but also in how volunteers are supported. In high-emotion settings such as mental health, long-term care, and palliative care, volunteers often encounter emotionally complex situations that can lead to fatigue or burnout if not properly supported.

This session will share best practices in administration, focusing on how trauma-informed principles can be integrated into volunteer management and program coordination. Discussion will include key professional considerations such as emotional safety, boundary setting, and preserving therapeutic intent across interdisciplinary teams. By working collaboratively with Volunteer Resources, Recreation Therapists can help build volunteer roles that are both compassionate and sustainable. Participants will leave with practical strategies for creating emotionally safe, trauma-informed environments that strengthen volunteer engagement and enhance the overall impact of therapeutic recreation.

1. By the end of the session, participants will be able to identify at least two reasons why trauma-informed volunteerism is important within recreation and therapeutic settings.
2. By the end of the session, participants will be able to describe how the six trauma-informed principles of safety, trustworthiness, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural/historical/gender awareness, can be adapted for volunteer onboarding, supervision, and recognition.
3. By the end of the session, participants will be able to articulate at least one strategy they can use to positively influence volunteer culture within their work setting.



Designing Music-Based Interventions to Support Care Partner Well-Being

~ Kate Dupuis, Ph.D.

~ Debra Chandler, MCM

Family and friend care partners of long-term care residents often spend many hours at the home visiting and caring for their loved one. Despite their frequent presence in the home, there is a lack of programming, support, and connection opportunities for these vital individuals.

We worked together with the recreation team at a long-term care home in Scarborough, Ontario, to create a “Caring Connections” group that met weekly for 10 weeks. Care partners were invited to come to weekly concerts with their loved one, then meet together in supported conversations for one hour.

Participants shared resources, discussed envisioned opportunities and supports, and connected emotionally with one another around their roles and responsibilities.

This project speaks to the crucial need to support those visiting residents in long-term care homes and emphasizes the importance of providing them with a “third space” to meet, share, and connect.

1. By the end of the session, attendees will be able to identify current research limitations and describe how these gaps impact recreation programming for family and friend care partners in long-term care settings.
 2. By the end of the session, attendees will be able to outline the key steps and resources required to develop a care partner support group with integrated arts-based activities in a long-term care home.
 3. By the end of the session, attendees will be able to describe the psychosocial and relational benefits observed among care partners who participated in the Caring Connections pilot program.
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