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Fall 2019

# Living North of 50



A Northern Ontario Magazine for those of us getting better with age.

## Tuff's Talk

by Tuffy McNamara

## I am my silence

by Sue Nielsen

## Keep The Gold In Your Golden Years

How to Spot and Stop Elder Abuse.

by Lisa Neil, B.A., LL.B

## Living a rewarding life in the North

by Darlene Wroe

## 5 myths about Alzheimer's disease

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# CONTENTS

4 | **I am my silence**

*by Sue Nielsen*

6 | **Keep The Gold In Your Golden Years**

How to Spot and Stop Elder Abuse.

8 | **5 myths about Alzheimer's disease**

9 | **Online dating: are you a senior looking for love?**

10 | **Tuff's Talk**

*by Tuffy MacNamara*



11 | **Overcome your fear of flying**

12 | **Living a rewarding life in the North**

*by Darlene Wroe*

14 | **Swim to stay in shape and slow down aging**

15 | **What are the first signs of cataracts?**

17 | **Music: a hobby with many benefits**

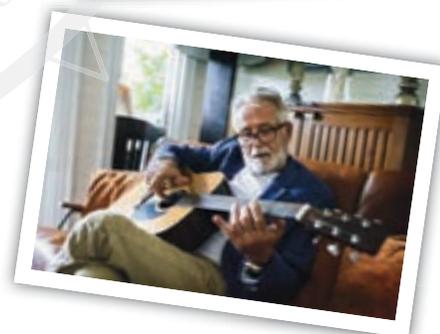




PHOTO: Sue Nielsen

# I am my silence

by Sue Nielsen

Whenever I am canoeing or hiking the wild places of this region, Indigenous author Richard Wagamese is never far from my heart.

He goes along with me when I paddle around my favourite lake.

When he died in March of 2017 it took me months and months to come to terms with his death.

Imagine that, someone I had never met touched me on such an emotional and spiritual level that I actually grieved his loss.

I carry his book called *Embers*, a group of short vignettes with matching photographs best read a few pages at a time. The book comes with me in the canoe, the car and my

backpack.

When I am stressed and need a shot of calmness, Wagamese's words do the trick.

There is no bottle, pill, potion or guru that can come close to the natural high of nature and reading well-written literature.

In the chapter called gratitude I have placed a photo of my daughter Whitney's wedding inside the page.

His writing reminds me of my connection to the earth, to family and the gratitude I feel about my life.

Wagamese's writings instantly transport me to my sixteen-foot long water church, where

I kneel and pray with paddle in hand to the gods of water, air, earth and fire.

I don't know much about prayer, but I do know that being in a canoe on a calm lake in the height of summer is all the spirituality I need and want.

I know how to dip my paddle softly into the waters over and over again in a meditative motion.

One stroke after another propels me around the next bend allowing me to breathe deeply and fully.

When Wagamese spoke about being in love with nature, with place and with one's own body, he read my thoughts.

There's a section of the book that I fully understand and can relate to. It's when Wagamese says, "I am my silence. I am not the busyness of my thoughts or the daily rhythm of my actions. I am not the stuff that constitutes my world. I am not my talk. I am not my actions. I am my silence."

I try to be idle long enough to immerse myself in wonder.

I am learning how to let the blade of my paddle align with my heartbeat, to follow a fog shrouded shoreline and how to be still, listening, hearing, seeing, smelling and touching the natural world, senses on high alert.

I am moved by the gentle magic of a canoe and all that it brings to my life.

The sound of birds, fish swimming in the shallow waters, the wind high up on the ridge and a full moon sharing its silvery light across the water.

I don't care about diamonds, a big home, a mega car or the latest fashions. Just give me the smell of pine needles found in an old growth pine forest or the sound of the loon calling for its mate at dawn, and of course a beat up old canoe.

Toss in Wagamese's brilliant writings and I have the perfect prescription for life.

***You're never fully dressed without a smile.***

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# YOUR LIFE & The Law

By Lisa Neil, B.A., LL.B

## Keep The Gold In Your Golden Years

### How to Spot and Stop Elder Abuse.

It is vitally important to the health, strength and growth of any community that our elders be deeply respected, cared for and protected. Knowing how to identify elder abuse, what to do if you or someone you know experiences it and what safeguards to put in place to prevent it, can greatly help you, or the elders in your family and in your community.

Elder abuse is any form of harm caused to a senior person. It can take many different forms with the most common falling into these main areas:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Financial abuse which includes
  - Online financial scams
  - Fraud and theft
  - Family theft and manipulation
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Spiritual abuse

Elders often have a great fear of speaking out about abuse because it can involve a family member, friend or caregiver. An elder may be scared to speak out and to ask for help because they are ashamed, embarrassed or are fearful of being punished or abandoned by family or caregivers. Elders sometimes do not even realize that they are being abused or financially manipulated because the abuse isn't always obvious and easy to spot. It also often comes in the form of the familiar faces of family members, friends and trusted caregivers that an elder would never imagine could abuse or take advantage of them.

Signs to watch out for include: being asked to give your family, friends or a new online acquaintance money; to transfer property or sell property for the benefit of another person; to make changes to the beneficiaries in your will to favour someone and disinherit others; to make changes to or appoint someone new as your power of attorney for property or personal care; to transfer invest-

\*This article is provided for general information purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.

ments or change beneficiary designations or to transfer money to anyone asking for financial help or saying that you owe them money in an email, telephone call or letter. It is important to remember that fraudsters are very convincing and what they are offering or asking for can seem real and legitimate. Elders who are isolated and lonely are particularly vulnerable to abuse. A growing number of elders are active on social media, use electronic devices and do their banking online which leaves them open to being lured into scams.

Elders have rights and there are laws in place to help and to protect them. Resources are available to assist elders dealing with abuse and to safeguard and empower them. If you, or someone you know, is being abused, taken advantage of or, is feeling frightened or pressured, it is important to tell someone what is happening and to ask for help. Reach out to someone that you trust such as a family member, a friend, the administrator or staff of the nursing home or seniors' residence, a doctor or other health professional, the police, or a lawyer (some provide free consultations to elders and their families). Elder Abuse Ontario offers a helpline for elders called the Senior Safety Line 1-866-299-1011 and a resource filled website - elderabuseontario.com.

Staying in touch with, and checking in on, our elders not only helps to keep them safe but also has immeasurable benefits for us. More than ever before, our communities need the love, connections to our ancestors and teachings that only our elders can provide.



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# 5 myths about Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is poorly understood. To prevent stigmatizing those afflicted, here are five myths that need to be dispelled.

## **ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ONLY AFFECTS MEMORY**

While memory loss is the symptom that's most often associated with Alzheimer's, the condition can cause a host of other cognitive issues. For instance, it may manifest as a loss of interest in one's favourite pastimes, a loss of co-ordination such as difficulties with eating or getting dressed, word repetition, getting lost in familiar surroundings and becoming easily agitated.

## **ONLY SENIORS ARE AFFECTED**

We tend to think of Alzheimer's disease as only affecting the elderly. However, while people

over 65 years of age are more likely to be diagnosed, early-onset Alzheimer's can afflict people in their forties or fifties.

## **LIFE STOPS AT DIAGNOSIS**

With treatment and close monitoring, it's possible to pursue projects and live a fulfilling life for many years after the disease is detected.

## **PEOPLE WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ARE VIOLENT**

Alzheimer's disease manifests in varying ways among different people. Some individuals diagnosed with it may express their frustration in aggressive ways, but not always. Ensuring those with Alzheimer's have a calm and stable environment will reduce the likelihood of violent behaviour.



## **IT'S POSSIBLE TO PREVENT ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE**

There's no way to entirely prevent Alzheimer's, but it is possible to significantly reduce your risk of developing it by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Stay active, eat well, and above all, avoid smoking. Tobacco smoking increases your risk of developing cognitive disease by up to 45 per cent. Maintaining a healthy social life is also important.

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# Online dating: are you a senior looking for love?

If you think online dating is reserved for young people, then think again. The internet is a great resource for people of all ages to find love. In fact, more seniors than ever are successfully finding companionship online.

**USE THE RIGHT SITE.** Sign up for one of the big sites with lots of regular users to increase your chances of meeting someone. Alternatively, use a specialized site to find a person who shares your interests or beliefs.

**BE HONEST.** It can be tempting to fib about your age, body type or education to attract other people. Don't do it. You're looking for someone who likes you, not a made up version of you.

**STAY SAFE.** Most people you'll meet online are normal individuals looking for love. However, there are a few bad eggs. Protect yourself online by creating a separate email address that doesn't use your full name. Make sure your first encounter is somewhere public, that you tell a friend where you'll be and that you stay sober.



Online dating requires patience. Your perfect match is bound to be out there looking for you too; it just may take some time to find him or her.

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# Tuff's Talk

by Tuffy McNamara



## The Courteous Employee

While shopping at a local grocery store, one can't help but notice the employee who is always on hand once the seniors' bus arrives. He rushes out to assist the seniors getting off the bus, removes their walkers and sets them up near the bus, and then helps them into the store. Everyone has a nice greeting for him and he returns the greeting! The customers always praise him.

He is also very helpful sweeping or shovelling the entrances and assisting people as required.

Once the seniors have finished their shopping and are ready to leave for

home, Pascal repeats the process. He assists them with their carts of groceries, folds their walkers and helps them back onto the bus. Pascal is a personable young man and helpful to everyone AND he deserves to be recognized as one of the best and kindest workers you have. HE is the true meaning of customer service!

Pascal Hamel is the young man who was "CUBAROO" at the arena, where I first met him. He was so kind with the "little people" who were around the lobby, always a kind word to them all. The kids all loved him - he never missed a game.

He always came to me (the ticket seller) when he needed help with his head gear. He sure enjoyed the job of CUBAROO!

*You are number one employee Pascal!!*

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# Happy travels

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## Overcome your fear of flying

**Is your fear of flying stopping you from taking your dream vacation? This phobia is a common one, but it can be overcome. Here are some tips to help you manage it.**

**Pinpoint the source.** For some people, being afraid to fly stems from a fear of heights. For others, it's the lack of control. Knowing where your fear comes from will help you take the necessary steps to surmount it.

**Learn everything you can.** Knowing how a plane stays in the air, where turbulence comes from and what built-in safety features are featured on airplanes can be comforting and help dispel some of your worst what-if scenarios.

**Talk to the cabin crew.** Pilots and flight attendants help keep you safe while you're in the air. Meeting with them and chatting for a few minutes can help assure you that you're in good hands.

**Optimize your experience.** Book a direct flight to minimize the number of take-offs and landings necessary to make the trip. Additionally, choose a seat near the wing where you'll feel the least amount of turbulence.

**Distract yourself.** Deep breathing exercises can help you remain calm during tense moments on a flight. Or, settle in with a good movie or book to help keep your mind occupied.

If you're struggling to get over your fear of flying, don't hesitate to reach out. A psychologist can help you identify the root of

your anxiety and provide you with the tools to overcome it.



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# Living a rewarding life in the North

by Darlene Wroe

Northern Ontario is a special place.

This part of Ontario has a cornucopia of health benefits to improve a person's quality of life.

For people of all ages and all walks of life, the North offers something that can be found nowhere else.

Many people have lived their lives in Northern Ontario, and many people have done well, while not necessarily growing financially rich.

They were rich in character, and many of that type still remain, making a life in the North, when others have taken a different path.

Those who face the North and overcame its challenges, and soaked up its beauty and other offerings, established a legacy by which other people have been able to set their own standards of personal conduct.

Growing up, I had many opportunities to watch my grandmother and her way of life.

She was fiercely independent and would never give up.

She had allergies but almost completely ignored them. If she accidentally touched a plant that might cause a skin blister, she would dab it with something extremely powerful. I hate to say it, but, yes, at times I saw her use bleach. She seemed content with the outcome.

Her husband died when she was 50. She was left with a small house and over 150 acres of bush.

She had two cows which were basically pets, and a whole flock of hens, with one wild rooster. She didn't flinch when the time came for the addition of some poultry to the dinner table. Axe in hand and chicken by neck, she was very capable of doing the deed herself.

There were many birds, animals, cats, dogs and children for her to take care of, and I was one of them.

She never hesitated to call on family to help her.

My uncle would annually come up and fill two huge gardens. One was for vegetables and the other was for potatoes. Grandchildren (I being one) were rounded up for the planting, weeding and harvesting.

Child labour (again me) was often utilized for the churning of the milk to produce cream (which takes a lot of work), the plucking of chicken feathers (they stink at that stage of their march to the table), the mowing of the yard (a big yard, but the task fell mostly to my brother), the chopping of the wood (my brother again), the carrying of the wood (we all pitched in for this), and on and on. If there was a job to do, she called everyone in for the task.

Basically, my grandmother used all resources which she had on hand.

However, there were things she did on her own.

She slept in the room next to the wood stove, even though, in retrospect, I think she was allergic to woodsmoke. She slept there to make sure that it kept stoked through the night. The house had no running water really. There was an indoor pump connected to the well, but that was it. Hot water was maintained by the constant fire which my grandmother kept going in the cookstove in the kitchen.

The mornings opened with a trip to the barn to feed and water them, carrying the heavy buckets from the house to the barn. She would milk them, then let them out of their stalls to roam freely in the pasture. The chickens were also allowed out to roam wherever they chose to go.

The cows loved her. They trusted her, and on one occasion, the younger of the two cows came to the edge of the pasture and bawled and bawled until my grandmother came. The young cow turned and started walking back into the bush where she and the older cow often wandered along strange trails. They came to the older cow who was having a difficult time giving birth to a calf. My grandmother set to the job of helping.

Others who trusted her were the birds. A wild winter storm drew to the attention of all the birds in that area that the safest place for them to be would be Grannie's house.

All around the house she constantly had mesh bags of suet nailed to trees, and bird feeders and hummingbird feeders.

She nurtured every living thing.

The house was surrounded by gladiolas, tiger lilies, day lilies, irises, snapdragons, sweet peas, petunias, pansies and more.

Inside the small house, every window ledge was filled with geraniums, while sheer white curtains floated in the breezes. During the warmer months, the windows and doors were almost always open.

She was constantly baking. Bread, cakes, cookies, casseroles, roasts, vegetable dishes were all constantly flowing from her oven. Her homemade candies were to die for. Many of her recipes are eagerly received by several generations who have descended from her. Her potato salad instantly turns any of today's meals into a feast.

She also canned and preserved the produce from her garden and the fields. Blueberry and

raspberry picking were encouraged. Again, grandchildren were an important asset in this project.

She was constantly knitting, and also crocheted, sewed and quilted.

She kept albums which were filled with newspaper clippings, photographs, and cards.

She loved to read and her handwriting and spelling were perfect.

Chimes, pinwheels and suncatchers were everywhere inside and outside her home, and she collected coloured glass and the weirdest plants. There were swings all around the house, and inside were boxes of toys, games, colouring books and dress-up clothes by which to attract and entertain grandchildren.

There were always one or two cats and one or two dogs.

If guests pulled up, there was always tea and cookies, and if it was that time of day, there was a meal.

The biggest thing about Grannie is that she loved us all, and she let us know it. She was honoured by us, and we in turn are honoured to be her descendants.

She left us a legacy, and set values for us.

She was a Northern woman, and showed how it can be done, and why it is a noble and wise objective to be a Northerner living a healthy and rewarding life for which you will be remembered.

Remembering Daisy Allen.



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# Swim to stay in shape and slow down aging



According to a recent study, people who swim three to five times a week showed delayed changes in traditional aging indicators such as loss of muscle mass, high blood pressure and reduced lung capacity. If you're a senior who's looking for a way to stay in shape, here's why swimming may be right for you.

Swimming is gentle on the body and over time, it can improve your flexibility. The water supports your weight and takes the strain off your limbs and joints, making it a great activity for those who struggle with joint pain or mobility issues.

Even a leisurely swim is enough to burn a significant number of calories. Water is nearly 800 times denser than air and provides enough resistance to

make even low-impact, gentle swimming a good way to shed a few pounds and help you maintain a healthy weight.

While high intensity swims are great for increasing your fitness level, you don't need to get your heart pounding to reap the benefits. Regular swims, even gentle ones, can help your heart and lungs stay healthier.

Like most physical activities, swimming can help improve your mental health. In addition, since water-based exercise is gentler on your body than other types, you can reap these benefits without risking getting injured.

All you need is a bathing suit and access to a pool. No expensive equipment required.

Visiting the pool on a regular basis may even lead to you forming new friendships. This lends a social dimension to your swimming sessions that makes them all the more beneficial.



  
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# What are the first signs of cataracts?

As we age, our vision changes. Vision may become blurry and faces of loved ones become difficult to see. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you may have cataracts, a natural eye condition that usually forms as we age. If left untreated, cataracts can cause significant vision loss and blindness.

Our eyes are our windows to the world and no two are the same. It's so important that everyone is proactive about their eye health, especially if there are changes in their vision.

Cataracts affect over 2.5 million Canadians every year, but among patients who have cataracts, only 20 percent had a full understanding of their condition. They occur when the lens in the eye becomes cloudy from natural proteins that build up over time, leading to clouded vision, light sensitivity and fading of colours.

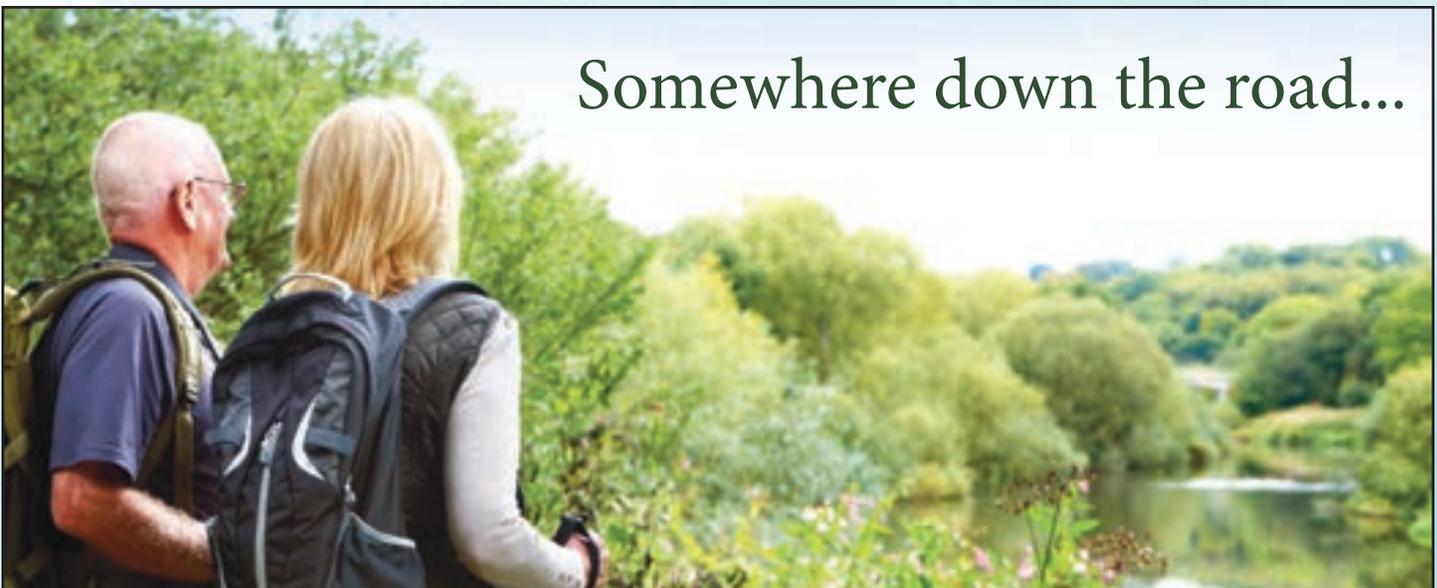
The only way to repair cataracts is surgery. Modern cataract surgery is a safe procedure

where a surgeon replaces the natural clouded lens of the eye with an artificial lens. Nowadays, there is a variety of surgical lens options available to achieve individual vision goals.

While every surgery should be carefully considered, cataract surgery is generally safe and done on an outpatient basis, which means patients go home the same day after surgery, and often start to notice vision improvements within a couple of days and may return to regular life activities shortly after.

If you're considering cataract surgery, you need to have an informed conversation with your surgeon about your vision goals to select the cataract lens replacement that's right for you.

Visit your eye care professional to learn more about cataracts, cataract surgery and lens options. Find more information at [seethefullpicture.ca](http://seethefullpicture.ca).



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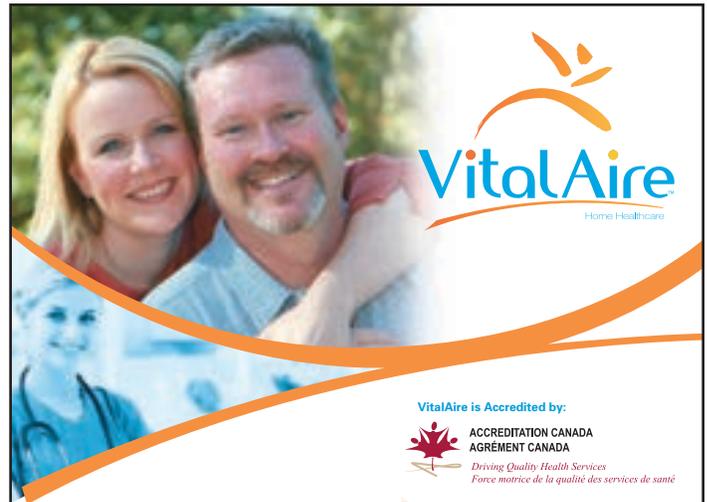


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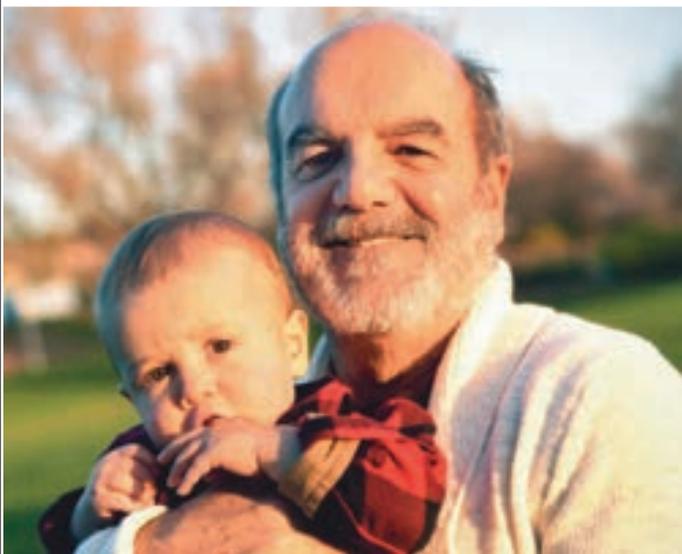
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# Music: a hobby with many benefits

Hundreds of studies support the idea that listening to music can help improve mood and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. However, for older adults adjusting to retirement, music can provide many additional benefits. Here are some ways you can make music a part of your life and the advantages of doing so.

## LEARN AN INSTRUMENT

Playing a musical instrument is a great way to incorporate music in your life. If you previously played one, consider picking it up again and if you didn't, try it now. Playing music improves co-ordination, memory and cognition in addition to bolstering self-esteem and confidence.



ple and might even become friends with some of the other choir members.

## PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES

If you live in a retirement community or an assisted living facility, it's likely that there are musical activities you can take part in. These events offer seniors the opportunity to listen to music together and participate in sing-alongs. They also foster social interactions and help new arrivals feel welcome.

Finally, live musical performances are presented throughout the year by the theatres and various other venues in our community. Some venues may even offer special rates for seniors. Whatever your situation, there's a way to enrich your retirement years with music.

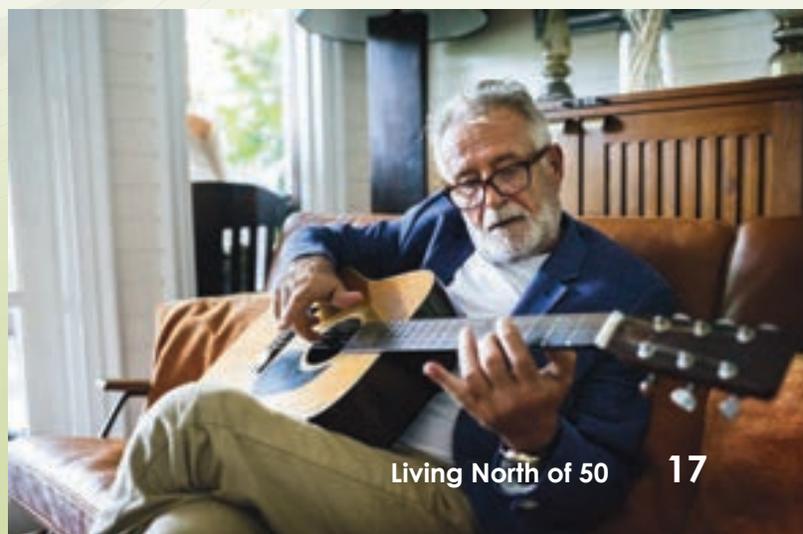


## TAKE DANCE CLASSES

Staying active is a crucial part of aging well, so why not take a dance class and enjoy the benefits of music at the same time? It's the perfect way to stay in shape while enjoying timeless tunes.

## JOIN A CHOIR

You don't need to learn an instrument to reap the physical and psychological benefits of music. Joining a choir is a great way to stimulate your memory while increasing your confidence. You'll also get to meet new peo-





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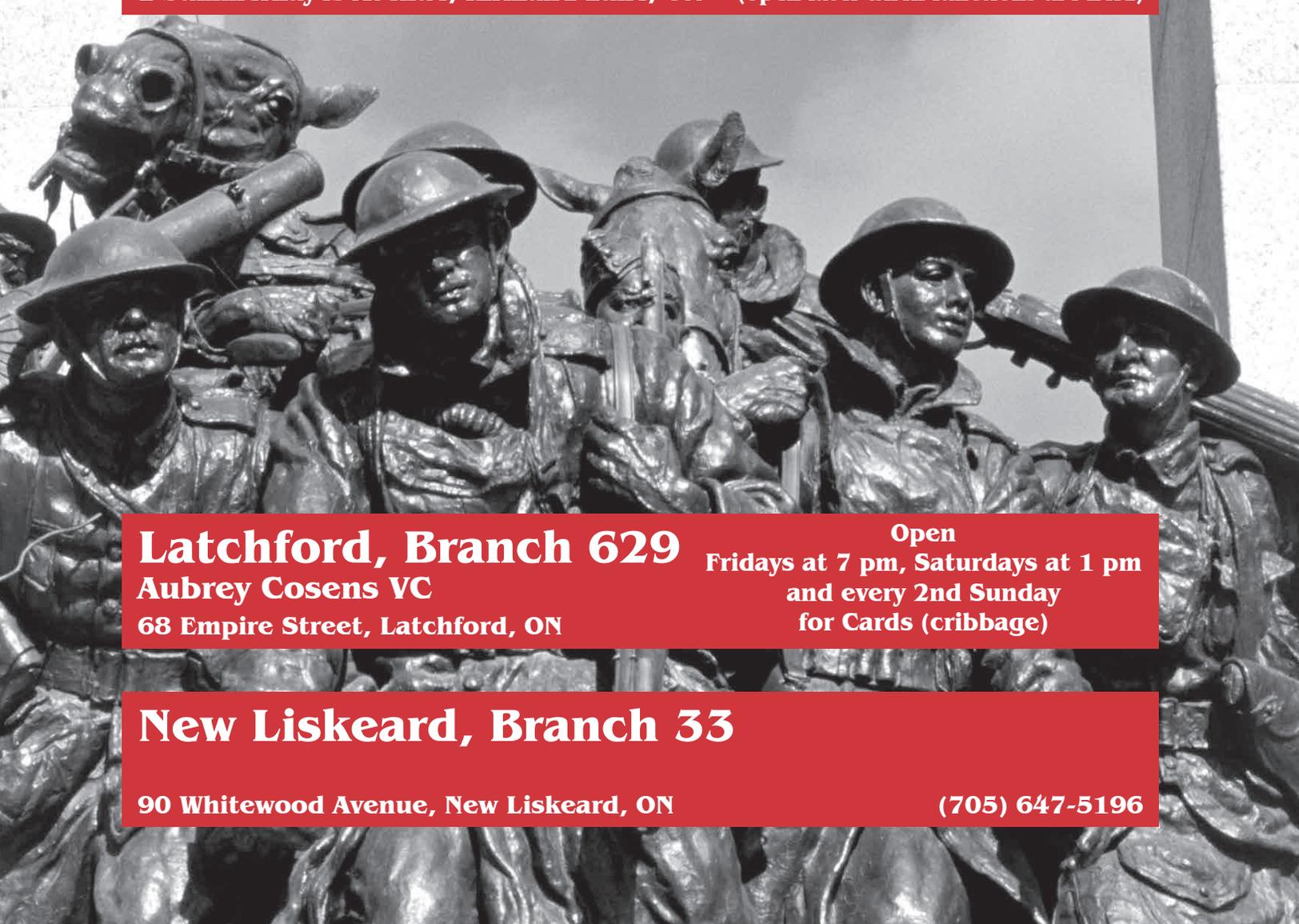
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