



2020-21

ANNUAL REPORT

Alzheimer *Society*
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Keeping our community of care connected

In 2020-21, we provided critical dementia support and education by:



Continuing to offer English-language support on the First Link® Dementia Helpline into the evening, while also offering support in Mandarin, Cantonese and Punjabi.



Investing more than \$1 million in quality-of-life and biomedical research.



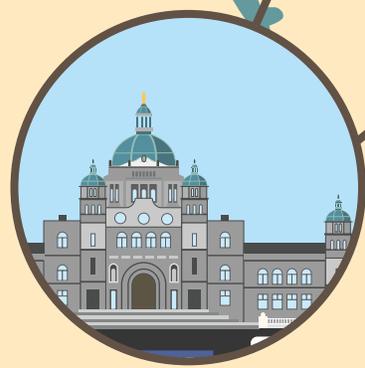
Connecting more people to remote support, including virtual support groups and online Minds in Motion® sessions.



Uniting communities across the province through virtual events such as the online IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's, and the first-ever Cantonese-language Telethon for Alzheimer's.



Sharing the voices of people affected by dementia and inspiring the public during our "Don't change" awareness campaign.



Supporting the families of people living with dementia living in long-term care and advocating to ensure their voices are heard.



Launching weekly webinars and connecting with 2,784 participants – an incredible 873 per cent rise in webinar participation since 2019-20.

With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge that the Alzheimer Society of B.C. operates on traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of Indigenous peoples around the province. Our provincial office is located on the territories of the šxʷməθkʷəy̓əməʔl təməxʷ (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw (Squamish) and səliłwətaʔl təməxʷ (Tsleil-Waututh), with regional resource centres located on

traditional territories in all regions of B.C. Our vision for a dementia-friendly province – where people living with dementia and their caregivers are welcomed, included and supported – will only be possible through ensuring that everyone has access to support that is culturally safe, barrier free and free from Indigenous-specific racism.

Board Chair and Interim CEO message

The pandemic had immeasurable negative impacts on people affected by dementia in B.C. It also inspired incredible generosity from our supporters and pushed forward innovation that will only serve to strengthen the Alzheimer Society of B.C. moving forward.

The 2020-21 fiscal year began just three weeks after the declaration of the pandemic. COVID-19 brought changes to many plans that were in place, including our critical in-person programming and vital signature fundraising events. The suspension of these face-to-face activities also signaled the beginning of a new era in remote support and education, as well as fundraising, propelled by the generosity and creativity of our supporters.

Just as every journey with dementia is different, so are the experiences of life during COVID-19. While we are proud of the remote support we developed, and how it will continue to transform access to services, the loss of in-person programming that

began in the spring and continued throughout the rest of the year created undeniable challenges for so many British Columbians living with dementia and their families and friends.

In a year of many losses, we have much to be proud of. This report, written chronologically, is a look back through the progress made each season of this challenging and unprecedented time.

A sincere thank you to all of the clients, donors, volunteers, partners and other community supporters who were with us along the way.



Barbara Lindsay

Barbara Lindsay, LLB
Interim Chief Executive Officer



Robert Piasentin

Robert Piasentin
Volunteer Board Chair

Welcoming a new CEO



Subsequent to the close of the fiscal year, we confirmed the appointment of Jen Lyle as our new CEO. Our community members may be familiar with Jen through SafeCare BC, a non-profit workplace health and safety association for B.C.'s continuing care sector where she held the role of CEO since 2014. Jen is a long-time collaborator with the Society, including through the development of foundational dementia education for health-care providers. We look forward to continuing our critical work to support people affected by dementia with such a dedicated and valued member of the community leading the way.

We extend our sincerest appreciation to Barbara Lindsay for stepping into the role of Interim CEO and leading the Society for much of this last year. We are pleased Barbara will continue her work with us here at the Society.

Connecting during crisis



Spring: The World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a pandemic just a few weeks before the beginning of the Society's 2020-21 fiscal year. Lockdowns begin and travel is restricted. Care homes restrict visitation and, for many, an extended period of intense isolation begins.



We mobilized support staff to immediately begin outreach calls to all clients at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, **staff made 17,068 calls to 9,204 unique individuals**, in addition to **2,789 calls** to check in with clients who had been registered in our suspended programming.



In April 2020, we began offering weekly webinars to help stay connected and continue dementia education. Last year, we welcomed **2,784 participants to 45 webinars**, compared to 286 participants in the previous year. We will expand remote learning opportunities in 2021, with additional online education currently in development.



Our First Link® Dementia Helpline became more important than ever. The extension of hours, which happened just prior to the beginning of the year, meant that people in need of support could receive it in the evenings as well as during the week. In 2020-21, we received **3,294 contacts* to the English-language Helpline**, including **1,077 new callers**. Additionally, another **210 callers requested culturally-specific support**, a number up nearly 60 per cent over the previous year.

*In addition to phone calls, “contacts” include individual emails to our Helpline email address that are followed up with confidential phone calls.

“My mom learned a lot from the webinar she attended for caregivers, as well as the Chinese-language tele-support group. It is great to have virtual programs since it is hard for my parents to attend meetings in person.”

– Daniel Wang, caregiver



“I really appreciated the First Link® calls, to receive support, information and have a kind and understanding voice to listen and help me through the tough times. It made me feel I was not alone. The calls made me feel happy and that I could go on.”

– Martinus Van Doorn, caregiver

“The webinars for caregivers were very beneficial and I recommend them to anyone I know as a useful tool dealing with this disease.”

– Theresa Hunter, caregiver



“I am very grateful to have attended the virtual caregiver workshop and the Mandarin tele-support group, where I learned from other caregivers about their challenges. I feel fortunate having the support from the facilitator. I feel hope to help my wife retain her quality of life.”

– Tarsi Sung, caregiver



Our staff provided leadership and worked in collaboration with Alzheimer Societies across Canada to quickly transition the 2020 IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's to an online nationwide format.

In 2020-21, we received **2,139 new referrals** from **506 health-care providers**, including **192 referrals for culturally-specific support**.

In 2020-21, our research partners at UBC, who were in the midst of an evaluation of our First Link® dementia support services, created a second survey to ask specifically about the impact of COVID-19 on people affected by dementia. The findings have helped inform the remote support we continue to develop. Researchers interviewed **417 participants**, including **395 care partners** and **22 people living with dementia**.

Mobilizing a community of care



Summer: The Canada-U.S. border remains closed. In-person events are prohibited. Some designated visitors begin to see their family members in care homes, but many people affected by dementia continue to struggle with isolation.



In response to the suspension of in-person programming due to COVID-19, in 2020-21, we began offering **25 new caregiver tele-support groups**, with **481 unique participants**. The loss of support while in-person groups were suspended took a heavy toll on many caregivers.



While we await the return of in-person groups, the virtual format has allowed us to offer specialized virtual support groups to clients across the province, including groups in Cantonese and Mandarin, as well as LGBTQ+ groups. Clients joined us online and by phone from **91 communities across B.C.** and continue to join with new groups opening based on demand in 2021.



We participated in Providence Health's [Dialogue on Aging Public Presentation Series](#) from May 2020 through February 2021, with our staff hosting presentations, facilitating discussions or exhibiting at most sessions.

“Joining a support group of people who are in the same situation as you can help you feel less alone.”

– Ingrid Eriksson, caregiver



◀ “I treat the virtual support group as a resource because I always learn something helpful that supports me in looking after my loved one and myself. When you’re listening to your peers and hear them being vulnerable, it allows you to be vulnerable too.”

– Earla Legault, caregiver



“[The Society] has always been there for me during my mom’s journey with Alzheimer’s. When I struggled, they were always supportive, caring and helpful. They followed up with me on a regular basis even if to say they were thinking about me.”

– Lanny Burton, caregiver



We were heartened by the support of long-standing [Anything for Alzheimer’s](#) independent events and, along with charities across the province, we came together while apart to participate in a virtual [Scotiabank Vancouver Half-Marathon & 5k](#).



We held the first-ever online [Climb for Alzheimer’s](#) and people in all corners of the province hiked their favourite trails to help to raise funds to provide dementia support and education. Hiking in honour of her grandmother, who lived with dementia, our top annual fundraiser [Talia Yorish](#) raised [more than \\$5,000](#) in 2020.

Talia’s call to action: “Let’s kick dementia’s butt!” ▶



Leading a movement



Fall: A second wave of COVID-19 begins. Restrictions on gathering tighten. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the first to be approved by Health Canada. While most care home staff and residents won't receive their first shots until the winter, for many, hope has arrived.



In the fall of 2020, we launched our **“Don't change” awareness campaign** to help break down stigma and encourage British Columbians not to stop including people living with dementia in their lives following a diagnosis.

With the support of Fairchild Television and a dedicated volunteer committee, our first-ever *Telethon for Alzheimer's* **helped us reach a new audience** to help provide support and education for people living with dementia and their caregivers in the Chinese community.

“We valued the phone calls through First Link® which offered us support, education and referrals to other resources. I valued that you were there at my worst and listened.”

– Lynn Straw, caregiver



◀ “Remember we still do have choices to make. We still have rights and responsibilities, and those give us the options to find joy in our lives. If I can do it, imagine what you can do.”

– Myrna Norman, “Lived experience” webinar presenter and member of our Leadership Group of People Living with Dementia



◀ “I really look forward to Minds in Motion®. It’s always on my calendar. The other participants are a huge part of my social life, as I can connect with them on a different level. They are like family to me.”

– Sandee Hall, person living with dementia and participant in online Minds in Motion®



Minds in Motion®, our social and fitness program for people living with dementia and a caregiver, began offering online sessions. In 2020-21, we provided programming to 190 participants in 30 communities across B.C. The online program continues to expand with volunteers joining and new sessions opening regularly.

People living with dementia presented their insights and advice about life with dementia with the launch of our “Lived experience” webinar series.

Throughout the fall, we advocated for a person-centred care approach to dementia through presentations at a variety of virtual conferences and events, while continuing to provide our foundational dementia education for health-care providers. In the lead up to the provincial election, we advocated for dementia priorities that were informed by people living with dementia, including a dementia strategy for B.C. and a health-care system responsive to the needs of people affected by the disease.

Facing challenges, finding solutions



Winter: The province continues to immunize priority groups in Phase 2 of the vaccine roll-out. By March, a third wave begins. In-person events and activities remain on hold along with so many other activities curtailed since March 2020.

“Even if they change, make sure that you stay the same.”

– **Gerri Hinton,**
Alzheimer’s Awareness
Month spokesperson,
pictured with her late
husband Peter



The Dementia-Friendly Canada working group, led by the Alzheimer Society of B.C., worked to develop new online education to help professionals working in the recreation, library, retail, restaurant and public transportation sectors create dementia-friendly awareness within their organizations.



We took part in UBC’s Dementia Week, supporting clients across the province to **help educate medical students** by sharing their lived experience of dementia.



Throughout the winter, we helped families find creative ways of connecting with people in long-term care. We also co-hosted a series of focus groups in collaboration with Emily Carr University’s Health Design Lab to inform “Ideas for connecting: Ideas from families for families,” a resource created by Emily Carr and Vancouver Coastal Health to help support families separated due to pandemic restrictions to care home visitation.



In March 2021, we welcomed business and community leaders to our **reimagined virtual *Breakfast to Remember*** and research event, featuring astronaut Col. Chris Hadfield. The truly one-of-a-kind event, held in lieu of annual in-person breakfast events in Vancouver, Victoria and Kelowna, featured an inspirational Q&A hosted by *Global National's* Dawna Friesen.

“We generally focus on the ‘burden’ of being a caregiver. [COVID-19] revealed many family members felt a greater burden when they were unable to be a caregiver to someone in long-term care. The visit restrictions had a profound effect on the family member, as well as the person in care – and we significantly underestimated this impact.”

– **Isobel Mackenzie, B.C. Seniors Advocate**

◀ “My hope is that caregivers will be invited to the table in the future when there is decision making that has a direct impact on their families. We are a key member of the health-care team and need to be treated as such!”

– **Naomi Mison, Alzheimer’s Awareness Month spokesperson and Leadership Group member**

“Long-term care is experiencing a crisis and there are many differing opinions on how to solve that crisis, but we can’t move forward without being able to talk about it.”

– **Emily Clough, expert in dementia-friendly law and host of our Alzheimer’s Awareness Month panel discussion**



People affected by dementia joined us to address stigma and issues in care during **Alzheimer’s Awareness Month in January** 2021, when they shared their stories with local media and participated in a panel discussion on the state of long-term care.

Volunteering



"It's important to me to be a steward of my skills and experience. The Leadership Group of People Living with Dementia provides a significant voice to the Society's leadership as well as accountability back to us.

Our lived experience provides new ideas for meeting identified needs, expertise for decision making as well as potential new opportunities."

– **Craig Burns**, member of our Leadership Group of People Living with Dementia and Board of Directors

It has been a difficult year for volunteers who have missed giving their time to in-person support groups and Minds in Motion®, activities that add purpose to their lives and help show people affected by dementia in their communities they're not alone. By the end of the 2020-21 year, some of these integral volunteers had transitioned to provide support to online Minds in Motion®, while some were preparing to give their time to virtual support groups. Others, alongside Society staff members across the province, still eagerly await the time when our in-person supports can begin once more. For many people, volunteering provides added meaning to life, and the loss of these groups has been difficult.

For event committee volunteers, including those supporting the online *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, virtual *Breakfast to Remember* and *Telethon for Alzheimer's*, the last year was one of new challenges and incredible successes. Volunteers

collaborated virtually to adapt events to new virtual or online formats, and in the case of the *Telethon*, organized by the Chinese Advisory Committee, they seized an opportunity to reach a whole new audience during an unprecedented time.

We cannot look back on a year of volunteering without recognizing the valued leaders who have guided our way through the pandemic: members of our Board of Directors and the people living with dementia and caregivers in our leadership groups. They have shown resilience and dedication as they continued to connect virtually to ensure the voices of people affected by dementia are heard and inform each decision we make.

We are so grateful for the gift of time from all of our volunteers. Without you, we could not continue our mission to ensure people affected by dementia are not alone.

Research

The unforeseen challenges of the pandemic resulted in innovation and new forms of collaboration, including in the field of dementia research. From sharing information and presenting at virtual conferences to supporting dementia researchers as they hosted online workshops, we were innovative and creative in our commitment to helping change the future of dementia through research over the last year. We are grateful for all our supporters who allowed us to uphold our commitment to funding research, partnering with those leading the way in dementia research and sharing what we learn with British Columbians.

In 2020-21 our diverse activities in support of dementia research continued, including:



Investing more than \$800,000 into the Alzheimer Society Research Program (ASRP), a partnership with Alzheimer Societies across Canada.



Sharing the latest in dementia research with the public, including through interactive events, such as our “Research ready” webinar series and the *Breakfast to Remember* research event with Dr. Alexandre Henri-Bhargava.



Supporting local projects such as “In there out here: Art making space to live well with dementia,” an art exhibit and research project where people living with dementia and their care partners shared what they wanted others to know about their journey through a variety of media.



Promoting dementia-friendly research internationally at Alzheimer’s Disease International’s virtual conference, Emily Carr University’s virtual Dementia Lab conference and the UBC Neuroscience Undergraduate Research Conference.

Donor support allowed us to invest a total of more than \$1 million in dementia research in 2020-21 through these partnerships and initiatives.

Meet the B.C. researchers of the Alzheimer Society Research Program

In 2020, four B.C. researchers continued their work in the areas of cause, improving care for people affected by dementia and diagnosis and detection. They included UBC-based Dr. Thalia Field, who is investigating a method of diagnosing dementia, and PhD student Elyn Rowe, who is studying the role of cholesterol in Alzheimer’s disease. At Simon Fraser University, Dr. Mirza Faisal Beg is developing tools to help doctors better diagnose and treat dementia, while PhD student Kishore Rajaram Seetharaman, pictured below, is studying supportive environmental design for people living with dementia. Contributions made to the ASRP in 2020-21 helped fund awards for additional researchers based in B.C. whose work we look forward to sharing in the year ahead.

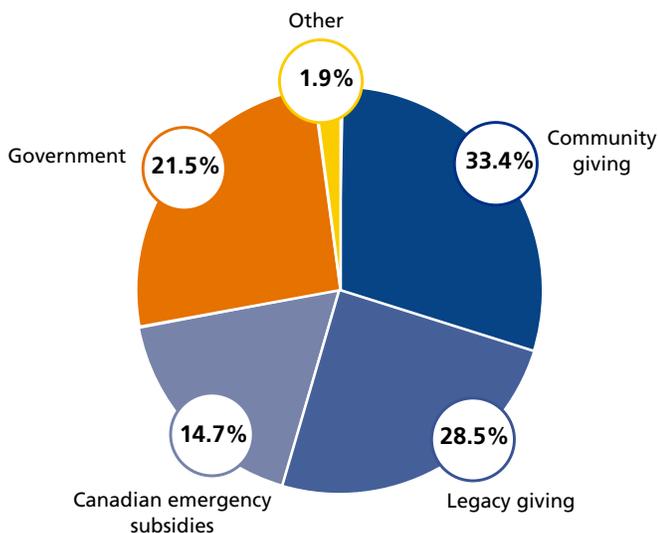


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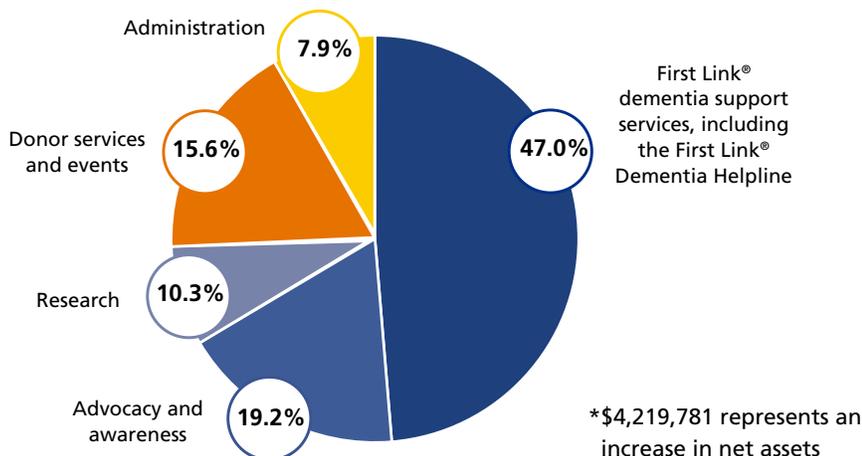
The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is the only provincial charity dedicated to supporting people affected by dementia to live their best lives. We are grateful for the community of people who recognize the critical need for dementia support and education and others committed to changing the future of the disease through research.

Thank you to the many British Columbians who chose to support people affected by dementia during an unprecedented and challenging time. Your belief in our mission to show people affected by dementia that they're not alone and trust in our financial stewardship helped us extend our community of care around people affected by dementia in new ways. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the Society's financial condition is sound, with adequate reserve to meet our commitments and pursue our mission.

How we received our funds – \$14,265,082*



How we invested funds in our mission – \$10,045,301*



Visit www.alzheimerbc.org to see the full, [audited financial statements](#).

2020-21 Board of Directors

Robert Piasentin (Chair) – Partner, McMillan LLP

Doug Pearce (Secretary/Treasurer) – ICD.D Corporate Director

Bill Baker – Principal, BB&Co Strategic Storytelling

Paul Blanchet, Former Vice-President, iCompass Technologies (retired)

Brent Buchan – Client Partner, BC Health Sector – DXC Advanced Solutions

Craig Burns, Former Provincial Manager, Client Services, Canadian Red Cross (retired)

Brenda Eaton – ICD.D Corporate Director

Amy McCallion – Corporate Secretary, BC Hydro Board of Directors

Val Stevens, Former Director, Island Health (retired)

Karen Tanaka – COO, Vancouver Chinatown Foundation

Karen Thompson – Director, Portfolio Manager, Odlum Brown Ltd.

Joann Wong Bittle – Principal, JT Management Inc.



◀ “It feels wonderful. You want whatever you have left to go to something important.”
– Lynn Vail, donor and Circle of Hope member

Building a Circle of Hope around people affected by dementia

When Lynn Vail turned 50, she committed to giving \$10 each month to five charities. When she was updating her will in 2020, she thought about her dear friend John Bramble and the impact Alzheimer’s disease had on him and his family. John, who had a passion for motorcycles, was a father to two young children when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. She decided to do more. Working with Society staff, Lynn set up the John F. Bramble Endowment Fund to honour her friend and to help support other families on the dementia journey, especially those facing a diagnosis of young onset Alzheimer’s disease.

“Research has to be done, but you also have to help people who are dealing with dementia every day,”

says Lynn, pictured above alongside John. “They need help.”

Circle of Hope members are donors like Lynn who have made an investment in the future of dementia care by leaving a gift in their will or other type of planned gift to the Alzheimer Society of B.C. Their incredible gifts ensure we can continue to support leading dementia researchers to change the future of the disease, while providing the critical programs and services that families need today.

If you have left a donation to the Alzheimer Society of B.C. in your will, or you would like to learn more about becoming a [Circle of Hope member](#), please call us at 604-742-4926.

First Link® Dementia Helpline

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| English | 1-800-936-6033 |
| Cantonese or Mandarin | 1-833-674-5007 |
| Punjabi | 1-833-674-5003 |

Toll-free and open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. in English, and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi.

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