Alzheimer Society
BC & YUKON
Spring 2026

Connections

Linking a community of dementia support

Connected communities and healthier minds

Spring offers longer days and opportunities to spend more time enjoying our great outdoors. It's also a wonderful time to focus on brain health. There are many ways to reduce your risk of dementia, including physical and social activities that are easy to try and can help protect your brain.

- **Walk with us.** Join the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto – our largest annual fundraising event on May 31. The *Walk* brings communities together to take action and help change the future for more than 85,000 British Columbians living with dementia, and the people who care for them. Learn more on **page 4**.
- **Join a program.** Learn about Minds in Motion®, our fitness and social program for people living with early-stage dementia and their care partners. Find a session near you or explore online options at **alzbc.org/mm**.
- **Ask for help.** If something feels overwhelming, you're not alone. Our First Link® Dementia Helpline is available to anyone affected by dementia. Learn more at **alzbc.org/fldhl**.

Find support near you

Explore comprehensive support services and dementia education available in your area, available in-person and online. Visit alzbc.org/regional-programs.

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Connecting across BC and Yukon

As the spring unfolds across British Columbia and the Yukon, the season's renewal highlights the importance of community–connecting and continuing to show up for people affected by dementia, wherever they live.

You may notice our new name throughout this issue! As of February 2026, we are now the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon. This change reflects our growing reach and commitment to supporting people affected by dementia in both the province and the territory. While our name has evolved, our mission remains unchanged: to ensure no one faces dementia alone. In BC, the support, education, and advocacy you rely on continue interrupted, while our expanded presence in the Yukon means more people can access the help they need, when they need it.

The *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto, is one of the most meaningful ways our community comes together each year. On May 31, thousands of people will step forward to honour and remember the people in our lives who have been affected by dementia. Whether you walk, volunteer, donate or cheer from the sidelines, your involvement makes a meaningful difference.

This spring, I encourage you take one small action to support someone affected by dementia – share information about our First Link® Helpline, check in on a neighbour or join a community event. Even small gestures can create meaningful connections within our communities.

Jennifer Lyle
Chief Executive Officer
Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon

Caregiver

If you call me her "caregiver"
You have not seen her arms wrapped around me
To comfort me from my day.

You may not have seen how she holds me
And tells me she will always be there for me,
Or the many times each day she tells me she loves me.

You have not noticed how she listens
As I spill my worries into her lap
Though she may forget them a moment later.

You have not listened as she has while I struggle to sing.
She is my patient, willing audience
over and over.

If you call me her "caregiver"
You have not understood how, if she can,
she will always put my wellbeing before her own.

Perhaps when you hear her tell me not to worry
when I leave her alone for a time
You have smiled a wry smile.

But have you seen the joy on our faces
as we are united after a day apart?

You have not known her fierceness
as she wishes me to be careful on my way
and means it as love.

Perhaps I have complained in a moment of frustration.
Perhaps I am sometimes tired or overwhelmed.
Perhaps you think our lives are hard and unfair.

But you have not seen all the rest,
The richness, the love, the playfulness and joy.

So when I complain, when I am tired, when I am overwhelmed
Please remind me of this poem
And allow me to remember all she is to me.

- Margot, caregiver

Identifying feelings and working through ambiguous loss

Navigating emotions as a care partner can be a complex experience, as described by our lived experience partners on **page 6**.

For care partners, it's common to hold back emotions or feel pressured to quickly express them and move on. However, your feelings are valuable for signalling deeper needs, so identifyin them can be important.

Many of us struggle to name how we feel. We may not have been taught to examine our emotions in a specific way. Yet psychologists suggest that human emotions evolved to preserve our safety and health. Identifying how we feel signals what we need to live well.

There are countless words for our different emotions, and "feeling wheels" can help us identify how we are feeling. The feeling wheel shared here includes common responses to a dementia diagnosis.

To use it, start with the feelings in the middle, choose one or more that best match your emotional experience, then move to the outer ring to get more specific. You may find a word that offers a refreshing clarity to understanding and describing your experience as a care partner.

Loss and grief may be the most significant and difficult emotions care partners face. This includes:

- Lost dreams and plans for the future.
- Loss of a confidant and partner.
- Progressive losses in the life of the person living with dementia.

Another form is ambiguous loss, which emerges when a person living with dementia is physically present, but not mentally or emotionally present in the same way as before. This differs from a sudden death. When someone passes away, you often receive support from family and friends and eventually find closure. In comparison, ambiguous loss masks grief, prompting uncertainty about expressing sadness when someone's abilities change.

Naming your feelings and talking about them with health-care providers, staff at the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon or other care partners can help. You may feel less alone when someone truly listens and acknowledges your feelings. Talking with knowledgeable professionals or peers in a support group offers learning opportunities for coping and living with the many under-recognized emotional responses to dementia.

For more information on ambiguous grief, download our booklet. Visit **alzbc.org/loss-grief**.

Join us for the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto.

Who will you walk for?

See how you can get involved in your community on May 31.

WalkForAlzheimers.ca

IG WEALTH MANAGEMENT
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When dementia is another of life's adventures

Jim Stewart and Dawn

Jim and Dawn's life together has been a series of leaps of faith. Jim's careers have run the gamut from steel fish boat building to buying and selling wild mushrooms; from home renovations to commercial recycling; from a stint in the Royal Canadian Navy to harvesting geoducks. Meanwhile, Dawn narrowly escaped when they lost their home – twice. Dawn, who spent years living in a remote boarding school in India as a child, and Jim, who grew up alongside a rotating cast of young farm hands, found it a natural fit to become emergency foster parents. They took in youth in crisis at any time, day or night, while needs were assessed. Later they lived with two young sons aboard a 42-foot motor cruiser Jim built. Even after moving ashore into their apartment in Esquimalt, they continued travelling the world and seeking new experiences. Jim and Dawn are used to the unexpected.

So when Dawn – then a financial manager – saw her doctor in 2019 for back pain and came home with a dementia diagnosis, she and Jim approached it like any other chapter they've written over 55 years together.

"We said, 'Okay,'" Jim says, "'I guess this is the next adventure.'"

Jim is outgoing and curious, the guy making jokes and striking up a conversation with anyone he meets. Dawn is more private and caring, but quick to smile along with her husband's humour, even if they happen to be about traumatic experiences they've experienced. With different needs, very different personalities and a shared love of community, both have found meaningful connection and support through Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon programs. Referred shortly after Dawn's diagnosis, they immediately accessed available support and education.

"We got a hold of the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon and signed up for everything we could that would tell us anything about how to go about things," Jim says. "And we've been doing that ever since."

The Stewarts are regulars at Minds in Motion®, a social and fitness program, and a Coffee & Chat group that has grown into lasting friendships. They also participate in separate support groups tailored to care partners and to people living with dementia.

Their push for connection and community – at the core of their ability to cope – extends beyond the Society's programming. They regularly meet up with longtime friends who aren't affected by dementia, but who are supportive and understanding. Teachers by nature, Jim says they're always willing to share what they've learned about dementia – and appreciate supporting friends through different aspects of aging.

Learning, sharing knowledge and taking each day as it comes has shaped a life rich with experiences. It's an approach they don't plan on stopping any time soon.

The Stewarts are being honoured at the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto, in Victoria on May 31. To join a *Walk* in your community, visit **WalkForAlzheimers.ca**.

Ask us anything: Ambiguous loss

Many family caregivers experience ambiguous loss. It can be confusing to process, especially when the person they are supporting is still physically present. Lived experience partners have found writing or speaking about the emotional aspects of their caregiving experience meaningful. Here are reflections from caregivers on ambiguous grief, loss and feelings of guilt.

"The emotions…barrel up inside me until numbness takes over. A numbness that cannot be explained to anyone who has not lived alongside prolonged loss. It is not the absence of feeling; it is feeling too much for too long."

- Martin, caregiver

I often feel guilty about not measuring up and that guilt can grow until it overshadows all goodness, turning even kindness into self-reproach. I am already drowning in the quiet demands of each day. I watch myself hesitate, lose patience, feel fatigue, and then the guilt rushes in – thick and familiar. I don't want to deny my guilt but to see it clearly – to notice when it stops being my guide and starts being my torment."

- Tobias, caregiver

"When I'm burnt out and tired it seems like the more I sleep the heavier my heart gets. Truthfully, I can not bear the silence of the ambiguous grief and the loss. Volunteering has been huge for me…it gives purpose to the pain and the pressures that are stuck inside my heart."

- Eric, caregiver

Artist in residence spotlight: Actor, caregiver and thinker

The Lived Experience Partner Program's Artist in residence role provides an opportunity for people affected by dementia to share their experience through writing or art. We invite you to read Tobias Jesso's insightful reflections, visit **alzbc.org/artist-residence-act1**.

Exploring attitudes and perceptions of disease-modifying therapies

What are disease-modifying therapies?

Disease-modifying therapies are treatments that could change how a disease develops over time. Unlike current medications that focus on managing symptoms, drugs like lecanemab adress the underlying cause of Alzheimer's disease by removing harmful amyloid plaques from the brain.

In late October 2025, Health Canada announced conditional approval of the disease-modifying therapy (DMT), lecanemab. While not a cure, and only for people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease (i.e., mild cognitive impairment or mild dementia due to Alzheimer's disease), this decision represents an important advancement in how we approach treatment and care. However, we don't know much about how people affected by dementia feel about these treatments.

Between October 2024 and April 2025, we hosted seven virtual focus groups with people affected by dementia to learn about their attitudes and perceptions of DMTs. We gratefully acknowledge the insights of the 21 care partners and 12 people living with dementia who contributed to this project. The discussions highlighted four key themes.

Concerns about equitable access
Participants identified both personal and health-system barriers that could create inequities across the province, especially in rural and remote areas. Beyond financial barriers, care partner support was identified as essential for treatment access, transporting to appointments, monitoring side effects and supporting the overall treatment process.

Family-centred decision-making
Weighing the risks and benefits often reflected personal circumstances, stage of disease and tolerance for serious side effects like brain bleeds or swelling. Participants living with dementia were generally more cautious, emphasizing potential impacts on quality of life and fear of severe complications. Across all focus groups, participants agreed that decisions about DMTs would be shared, with families managing risks together.

The Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon as a trusted guide and advocate
Participants consistently identified the organization as a trusted and reliable source of information to help navigate their dementia experience, including emerging treatments like DMTs.

Therapies as a source of hope and progress
Many described DMTs as an opportunity to regain a sense of agency in the face of a difficult diagnosis. For care partners, they offered a sense of optimism about the possibility of gaining more time with their family member. The promise of innovation provided reassurance, but the potentially lengthier timeline for drug approval processes in Canada left some feeling discouraged.

Findings underscore the need for a clear step-by-step roadmap for the entire progression of the disease. This will allow families to make informed choices and equitably access the benefits of new therapies.

To read the full report, visit **alzbc.org/dmtreport.**

Volunteer spotlight: Isabel Wood and Joy Hsieh

Isabel Wood (left) and Joy Hsieh (right)

Isabel Wood and Joy Hsieh are proof that even a busy life can make room for giving back. Both longtime Vancouver residents, they balance careers, hobbies and family while volunteering as the new Volunteer Coordinators for the 2026 *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto.

"It's being able to let the community know about the disease and help people affected not feel alone," Joy says. Outside of volunteering, she works as an office assistant and is preparing to move into the HR field, all while finding time for life's simple pleasures, like exploring local coffee shops.

Isabel's path to volunteering is deeply personal. After her father was diagnosed with dementia, she turned to the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon for information, webinars and support. "The organization gave me so much, and I felt I needed to give a little more back," she explains. She also balances a busy career in emergency preparedness education and enjoys art journaling, kayaking and running.

In their roles, Joy and Isabel recruit and coordinate volunteers, host orientation sessions and ensure event day runs smoothly from start to finish, working closely with Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon staff. They are passionate about helping others find their place in the volunteer team and making each participant feel supported and valued.

Through their dedication, Joy and Isabel show that volunteering isn't just about giving time, it's about building community, raising awareness and making a difference in the lives of people affected by dementia.

If you'd like to volunteer for the Vancouver *Walk*, join the event-day volunteer team. Learn more at **alzbc.org/volunteernow.**

About Connections

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- **Call** 604-681-6530; 1-800-667-3742 (toll-free)
- **Mail** to the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon
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