

Connections

Linking a community of dementia support



Starting the conversation: Accepting help

Support networks are vital for people affected by dementia – whether someone is living with the disease or caring for someone who is, being able to rely on the people in our lives can be critical during difficult times. This is particularly true at this time of the year. Caregivers are often challenged to find balance during a season filled with change and transition – routines may be upset when preparing for a busy holiday season with the days becoming shorter.

Many resources and tools can help caregivers on the dementia journey. The more you know and make use of them, the better you and your family can prepare yourselves and develop strategies so you can face unpredictable situations. But one of the most important things is to never forget that you are not alone. Turn to the people around you for support.

Ask for help when you need it:

The First Link® Dementia Helpline is available during challenging times – or if you have questions about dementia. Helpline staff will give people the support they need, when they need it. Learn more at alzbc.org/FLDHL.

In this issue

Greetings

Caregiver story

Page 2

Page 3

Resources

Research

Volunteering

Page 4

Page 7

Page 8

Showing support across communities during challenging times

Fall is here, following a difficult summer for many British Columbians, with wildfires affecting a number of communities across the province and evacuations proving an extra stressor for people living with dementia and their care partners. We are thinking of people in affected communities in B.C., the Yukon and the Northwest Territories as they recover and, as always, our First Link® Dementia Helpline is a resource for people affected by dementia.

We're looking ahead to a new season and the change it brings as we continue to focus on meeting the needs of people affected by dementia. In this issue, you'll meet a caregiver who is diagnosed with caregiver burnout and on her healing journey. Learn about what we've been up to recently as we contribute to policy discussions on issues affecting people living with dementia and their caregivers. Get inspired by reading about how Canadians can create a lasting legacy when they include a gift to charity in their wills.

Stay connected and learn about what's coming up at the Society! Join us for the "Flipping stigma" series, which explores the valuable toolkit of the same name.

The series shares insights and strategies for addressing the stigma associated with dementia and helping build skills and confidence in the community. As well, registrations are open for our newest social programs available in English and Chinese.

We're thrilled to launch the First Link® Yukon Dementia Helpline, allowing Yukon-based community members affected by the disease to have access to support services to help build confidence and skills to maintain the best quality of life possible. Learn more on [page 6](#).

We hope reading the stories of people affected by dementia will inspire you to become connected to the Society or talk to others about the disease and the services we offer.



Jen Lyle
Chief Executive Officer
Alzheimer Society of B.C.



alzbc.org/FLDHL

Questions or concerns about dementia or memory loss?

First Link® Dementia Helpline

English (9 a.m. to 8 p.m.)	1-800-936-6033
Cantonese and Mandarin (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)	1-833-674-5007
Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)	1-833-674-5003

A caregiver's healing journey



Heather Inglis feeling anxious and stressed in her first week in Bali (left).
Heather 30 days later, focused on self-care (right).

Heather Inglis, who lives in Ashcroft, B.C., cared for her late mother who was living with dementia. Heather has been attending the Society's caregiver support groups since 2015 and is now training to become a support group facilitator.

Guilt: this is a word Heather Inglis has learned to erase from her vocabulary. When she was caring for her mother who was living with dementia and her husband Gary who was in end-stage liver failure and also diagnosed with cancer, Heather often felt guilt that she hadn't lived up to her own expectations. By 2018, she was diagnosed with caregiver burnout.

Heather ignored the signs. With her mental health suffering, her levels of anxiety and exhaustion were high. "When you're inside the situation, you can't see things," says Heather. "Unfortunately, there was nothing I could do about it."

It took a trip to Bali with her best friend to help her recognize her own needs and begin to be able to accept support. "It was the first time in five years that I got to breathe and laugh," says Heather. After returning from her trip, Heather prioritized self-care, including regular massages and weekly date nights with her husband.

After Bali, Heather continued to care for her mom and Gary for eight years, until her mom passed away in 2020 and Gary in 2022. She still feels the effects of caregiver burnout and is focused on her own healing journey. In honour of Gary's 70th birthday, Heather will be traveling across Europe, a trip the pair had hoped to celebrate together. "Travel brings me joy and I can honour Gary's birthday," says Heather. "That's very special for me."

This fall, Heather looks forward to supporting other caregivers on the dementia journey at the Society's support groups in Ashcroft. "I'm in the process of rebuilding my life and rediscovering purpose," she says. "Support groups helped me as a caregiver and now I'm paying it forward."

Learn more about self-care

If you want to learn more about self-care, think about attending one of our caregiver support groups or attending the family caregiver series education. To learn more or to register, call the First Link® Dementia Helpline or visit alzbc.org/FLDHL.

Legacy giving in B.C. is on the rise



More and more people are realizing the power of leaving a gift in their wills. According to Will Power, a national awareness campaign for legacy giving, the number of Canadians leaving a charitable bequest in their will has risen in recent years from five to eight per cent. That means that 1.2 million more Canadians have decided to make a gift to charity part of their legacy!

What Canadians are learning is that it's possible to support your loved ones in your will while also making a significant contribution to the causes you care about. For example, people commonly leave 90 – 95 per cent of their estate to their loved ones, and the remainder to a charity they care about. They support the people in

their lives first – and the remaining five to 10 per cent can make a major impact to the charity. Plus, there are significant tax benefits: by leaving a portion to charity, the tax paid by the estate can be drastically reduced or even eliminated.

People often tell us they wish they could do more to support people affected by dementia. A gift in your will can be an amazing way to achieve this. Even a small percentage of an estate can make a truly significant difference and is usually by far the largest donation a person will make. Funds received from such gifts are crucial in helping us expand our services to meet the needs of the growing number of British Columbians affected by dementia, and for one day achieving our vision of a future without dementia.

The Will Power website has tools to answer your questions and help you decide whether this is right for you. Check out our page on the Will Power site to access these tools and learn more: alzbc.org/Will-Power.

As a supporter of the Alzheimer Society of B.C., we hope that you will consider making our vision part of your lasting legacy by remembering us in your will.

Learn more!

Questions about legacy giving? Have you already left a gift to the Alzheimer Society of B.C. in your will? Contact Bryan Irving at 604-742-4906 or birving@alzheimerbc.org.

What's coming up



**Wednesday, November 22
2 – 3 p.m. PT.**

**To register, visit
alzbc.org/flipping-stigma**

Upcoming webinar: Flipping stigma in action

Many people living with dementia experience stigma and discrimination; for example, people may make assumptions that someone living with dementia is incapable of doing things on their own.

We can challenge stigma and prevent discrimination through education, awareness and advocacy. In the “Flipping stigma” webinar series, we hear directly from people living with dementia who worked on the “Flipping stigma on its ear” toolkit, a valuable resource created alongside UBC researchers. These participants share insights on addressing the stigma associated with dementia.

Part three of the four-part series is coming up. In the “Flipping stigma in action: Building confidence and competence in advocacy” webinar, our guest speakers discuss how family, friends and health-care providers benefit from this toolkit. The webinar will also explore the strategies people living with dementia may find useful when building skills and confidence as an advocate.

*Parts one and two of the webinar series are available on demand:
alzbc.org/flipping-stigma.*



**To register, call the First Link®
Dementia Helpline:**

**English: 1-800-936-6033
Chinese: 1-833-674-5007**

Coffee and Chat is a new way to socialize

Coffee and Chat is our newest social program, designed to help people living with early-stage dementia meet others who are also on the dementia journey. At Coffee and Chat, participants share experiences, laughter and build friendships: the goal is to get connected and have fun!

People living with early-stage dementia, caregivers (a family member, friend or care partner) and mixed groups of people living with early-stage dementia joined by a care partner are welcome to join. There are weekly in-person (90-minute) sessions in select locations or bi-weekly online (60-minute) meetings, available in English and Chinese.

Stay connected! Learn what's coming up in your region

For a listing of in-person and online programs and services in your region, subscribe to the First Link® bulletin by scanning the QR code on your mobile phone or visit alzbc.org/subscribe.



Specialized support for Yukoners



In collaboration with the Government of Yukon, we have launched the First Link® Yukon Dementia Helpline, providing Yukon-based community members – including people living with dementia and caregivers and health-care providers – access to dementia support services.

The First Link® Yukon Dementia Helpline is the first support service the Society is offering across the territory to help provide comprehensive support for seniors and caregivers, as well as supporting recommendations from the Government of Yukon’s *Putting People First* and the *Aging in Place* action plans.

Anyone living with dementia or caring for someone either personally or professionally, as well anyone concerned about dementia or memory loss, is encouraged to call the helpline. Helpline staff can provide care and support to anyone facing dementia, at any stage of the journey: from diagnosis – or before – to end of life.

Yukoners can reach the Helpline by calling the toll-free number: **1-888-852-2579**, available from Monday to Friday (10 a.m. to 8 p.m.) to access the help and guidance they need. All calls are confidential.

If you or someone you know in the Yukon is living with dementia or caring for a person living with dementia remember that you are not alone. We are here to support you to build the confidence and skills to live the best life possible.

More information will be shared soon as we continue to develop additional services to support the well-being of the community members affected by dementia in the Yukon.

For email inquiries: info.yukondhl@alzheimerbcb.org

Learn more!

For more information and updates on dementia education and resources including webinars and online workshops, visit alzbc.org/yukon.

Engaging in policy discussions to enhance support

To help address the challenges people living with dementia and their caregivers face, the Society actively engages in policy discussions. We recently presented recommendations in person before the provincial Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, highlighting the pressing need for a provincial dementia strategy and more support for British Columbians affected by dementia. The committee's report was published on August 3, 2023 and included the Society's recommendation to fund a provincial dementia strategy.

We also shared our feedback federally with a parliamentary committee assigned to review Bill C-295, proposed changes to the Criminal Code to address the abuse and neglect of people living in long-term care. Developed in consultation with people with lived experience, our recommendations included increasing funding in the long-term care sector to meet the new care standards introduced by the Health Standards Organization and the Canadian Standards Association. Alongside funding, we emphasized the need for a human resources strategy to address recruitment, retention and professional development of staff to improve quality of care for everyone living in long-term care.

People directly affected by dementia also shared their thoughts on spending priorities in advance of the next federal budget. Based on their input, we submitted two recommendations: allocate one per cent of dementia care costs to federal dementia research; and prioritize diverse types of support, including financial assistance and programs for unpaid caregivers of people living with dementia as a part of a larger national caregiver strategy.



The Society will soon be working on policy submissions for two other issues on the horizon: the federal government's development of national standards on long-term care and *Safe Long-Term Care Act*. We will be reaching out to people living with dementia and caregivers to help inform our recommendations for the act. We will also respond to the federal Standing Committee on Health's invitation to make a submission on women's health issues. As with the other submissions outlined here, the Society will move this work forward in consultation with people living with dementia and their care partners.

Raise your voice

Help us advocate for a comprehensive dementia strategy, improved long-term care and enhanced support for caregivers. To join us and create positive change for people living with dementia in British Columbia and beyond, email advocacy@alzheimercbc.org.

Join our team: Help support caregivers!



Laura Matsuda, caregiver

“I know the benefits of support groups – it means so much to be heard and have your feelings validated.”

Laura Matsuda reflects on her experience and how rewarding it felt to facilitate a support group in 100 Mile House, B.C. Today, Laura has stepped away from her volunteer role to care for her husband Jim who is living with dementia.

Married for 54 years, Laura and Jim moved to Langley in 2020 to be closer to their children. As they settled in the community, Jim built new friendships

at a local adult day program with others living with dementia. “He loves his program – they tease each other and joke back. It’s like a family setting,” Laura says.

Hoping to join a group herself, Laura is on a Society support group waitlist until volunteers have filled vacant facilitating roles. Laura encourages anyone looking to get involved in their community to get into volunteering. “We could not operate without volunteers. It can be us next and if you’re looking for something to do, browse through the Society’s volunteer website for available positions.”

There are many community members on our support group waitlists waiting to connect with others on the dementia journey. By facilitating a support group, you are supporting people who are living with the challenges of dementia by helping create a safe and open space for people affected by the disease.

If you are interested in joining our team as a volunteer support group facilitator, apply at alzbc.org/MyImpact.

About Connections

Connections is a quarterly print and digital publication produced by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. Articles cannot be reproduced without written permission.

Contact us to contribute content or to subscribe to receive *Connections* regularly.

- **Online** at alzbc.org/connections-newsletter
- **Email** newsletter@alzheimerbc.org
- **Call** 604-681-6530; 1-800-667-3742 (toll-free)
- **Mail** to the Alzheimer Society of B.C.
300-828 West 8th Avenue,
Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E2

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Are you a person living with dementia?

We also publish *Insight*, a publication for people living with dementia or cognitive impairment. For more information, visit alzbc.org/insight-newsletter.



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