



Spring brings a renewed commitment to community

As spring arrives and the days grow brighter, we're reminded that this season is about renewal, connection and hope. It's a time to look ahead and to come together in support of one another.

One of the most meaningful ways to do that is through our fundraising event, the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by go Auto. Happening in 19 communities across BC, the *Walk* is a wonderful way to honour the people affected by dementia and connect with others in your community affected by the disease.

This season also marks an important evolution for our organization.

You may notice our new name: Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon. In 2023, we began piloting our First Link® Dementia Helpline in the Yukon. As our services in the territory continue to grow, our name now better reflects who we are and who we serve. Our programs and services in BC remain the same, ensuring no matter where you live, you are not alone.

Save the date and connect with your community!

Find the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto, closest to you. See **page 4** to learn more.

In this issue

A personal reflection

Page 2

Feature story

Page 4

Resources

Page 3

Research

Page 6

Discovery, spring and faith: A personal reflection



Mike Wood, person living with young-onset dementia

The first time I heard the diagnosis of dementia in 2024, it was as if a heavy veil dropped over my entire world. The doctor's words echoed long after I left the office, and the walk home felt surreal. The question of what lay ahead — for myself, for those I love, for the fabric of my days — loomed large. All I could think of was retreating to the greenhouse on my balcony. Throughout that fall and winter, as I grappled with my new reality, I clung to the hope of spring — my favourite time of year.

Spring, for me, is always filled with wonder — a season that speaks of possibilities yet to unfold. Each morning, I'm met with the surprise of new seedlings pushing through the soil. Tending to my plants — watering, pruning, watching the delicate green shoots unfurl — connects me not only to nature, but to hope itself.

My faith is woven through all of this. Spring carries the promise of resurrection — the bulbs rising from frozen ground, the leaves waking after a long dormancy. My faith, like my greenhouse, shelters and renews me, teaching that every ending is also a beginning. And with support, I know I will continue — never alone.

There are mornings I still find myself bargaining with reality, convincing myself that the diagnosis can be overcome, that I might somehow return to my old routine and reclaim what's lost. That hope glimmers, even as reality quietly asserts itself: moments when memory falters, when confusion and frustration interrupt the simplest of tasks, bringing me back to where I am.

I think back to my first call to the First Link® Dementia Helpline. Their gentle reassurance reminded me that, though the road ahead would be challenging, I would not be alone and, like the renewal that comes with spring, there remains room to grow through these times, to acknowledge the truth and face it with grace, courage, and purpose.

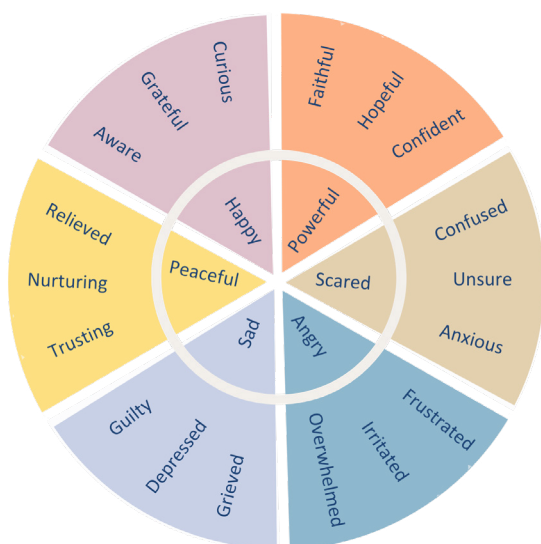
Read Mike's poem, *Filling time* on [page 7](#).

Addressing feelings

How are you feeling? Can you say what you feel? Navigating emotions can be difficult.

We often try to hold back emotions or express them quickly and get them out of the way. However, feelings are valuable as signals of our deeper needs. Psychologists suggest human emotions have evolved to maintain our safety and health. Identifying our feelings and responding to the needs that they highlight is linked to living well. Mike Wood's reflection on page 2 is one emotional response to living with dementia. His poem, "Filling time," on page 7 is another.

Many of us struggle to name exactly how we feel. In fact, as children we may have been urged by adults to ignore or stifle our feelings. But as adults, we can choose from many specific emotions. One tool to jumpstart this activity is a "feelings wheel" — the example shared here has some common emotional responses to a diagnosis of dementia that may reflect what you are feeling.



To use the wheel, start with the middle, choose one or more feelings that best match your emotional experience, then move to the outer ring to get more specific. You may find just the right word for how you feel, and it might give you new way to understand and describe your experience.

There's one emotion, however, that may still be hard to pin down. This is ambiguous loss, a phrase that refers to the confusing mix of grief, fear and other emotions that people feel after a dementia diagnosis. It's valuable to try to talk openly about these feelings with someone you trust. Identifying and talking about your emotions during conversations about planning for the future can help your care partners with decisions that reflect your values, beliefs and preferences.

Naming your feelings and talking about them with health-care providers, staff at the Alzheimer Society BC and Yukon or other care partners can also help. You may also feel less alone when someone is truly listening and acknowledging these emotions. Talking with knowledgeable professionals, or peers in a support group, offers learning opportunities for living with the many aspects of dementia.

We are here for you. Our First Link[®] Dementia Helpline offers information, connection and understanding for anyone affected by dementia. Learn more at alzbc.org/FLDHL.

Rebel with a cause



Artist Simon Yam is pushing artistic boundaries post-diagnosis

Almost every day, the music room in Simon Yam's Burnaby apartment is filled with the warm sound of classical compositions on the baby grand. For the self-described loving, resourceful daydreamer, practising piano is a favourite creative pursuit — and one of many that continue to flourish as Simon leans into shifting his mindset and finding boundless enthusiasm for his art following a dementia diagnosis.

"I was involved in art for a long time, but that was just for a living. I always had limitations in business. Now there are no boundaries," says Simon, a retired commercial photographer and fine art painter, who operated a retail space catering to both the general public and professionals.

His photography has taken on a new direction post-dementia. "I am exploring new territories," he says.

Two years ago, on a trip to Hong Kong and Taiwan, Simon's friend noticed memory changes and encouraged him to see a doctor. On his return home to Burnaby, Simon followed up and was eventually diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

"I felt frustrated and lost," Simon says. "I often struggle in vain to find my way home in my dreams ever since I learned I have Alzheimer's disease."

Despite the frustrations that have accompanied his cognitive changes — sitting at the piano and forgetting the notes or a growing impatience with people or situations that wouldn't have bothered him in the past — Simon exudes joy and optimism. "Life is good, even with dementia," he says. Part of his positivity grows from the network he's built through participation in the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon's Cantonese-language social and fitness programs, Coffee & Chat and Minds in Motion®, which he attends with his wife.

"It is definitely the best time of my life, ever!" Simon says. "I found a great place of belonging with people who have the same cultural background. The activities provide many uplifting benefits, both physical and mental."

Rebel with a cause (continued)

Simon has long found belonging in the art world — not only as a creator, but as a teacher and mentor. His work has been exhibited internationally, including in Beijing, and one of his pieces was selected for permanent display at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Over the years, he has shared his talents generously, serving in leadership roles with the S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Foundation and the Community Arts Council of Vancouver, and teaching art and photography through community organizations.

Simon continues to grow and push artistic boundaries through his experience with dementia. He's also using it as an opportunity to educate in a new way, encouraging anyone facing a diagnosis to reach out for support, commit to a

healthy lifestyle and remember all they're capable of.

"It is time to rebel with a purposeful cause," he says. "Be the person you always wanted to be. March along with us! Meet the challenges and continue to enjoy life at its fullest on each occasion and every day, waltzing with Alzheimer's disease 'til the cows come home."

Walk with Simon

Simon Yam is being honoured at this year's *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto, in Burnaby on May 31. To learn more about a *Walk* in your community, visit WalkForAlzheimers.ca.

Walk with us!

You're invited to join the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's* in your community on May 31.

WalkForAlzheimers.ca



Alzheimer Society
BC & YUKON

Presenting sponsor



New report: Exploring lived experience 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 address 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, 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.

Last year, we hosted seven virtual focus groups to hear directly from people affected by dementia about their attitudes and perceptions of these therapies. 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. These concerns were especially strong among participants living in rural and remote areas.

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. Across all focus groups, participants agreed that decisions about the therapies would ultimately be a shared process, involving willingness to manage 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

New report: Continued

source of information to help navigate their dementia experience, including emerging treatments.

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.

Therapies as a source of hope and progress

Many described the therapies as an opportunity to regain a sense of agency in the face of a difficult diagnosis. The promise of innovation provided reassurance, but a possibly longer wait 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 should be informed by people with lived experience, that will allow families to make informed choices and equitably access the benefits of new therapies.

Get the whole story

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

Filling time, by Mike Wood

Filling time the days are fine.

Making memories in my mind.

No way to know how long it'll be before my memories betray me.

Simple things take me home to all the times and memories warm.

No way to know how long it'll be before my memories fade on me.

My world grows smaller the familiar shrinks each passing day I lose a piece.

Hold on hold on don't let them leave my memories determined but no reprieve.

A slow fade to grey they wash away... my sweet memories please stay with me.

When the days churn round and I'm feeling down... your face familiar but your name not found.

But deep inside my heart still knows something familiar in my soul.

When you become a stranger gone, please sit with me a while and share a smile. I will not know you, but I'll understand your warmth and caring, your gentle hand.

Memories now gone from me all I see is a stranger next to me. I'll rest now knowing that you will hold all my memories for us both.

I don't remember you but always please, remember me.

My memories long gone now you must carry them for me.

Subscribe

If you've enjoyed this issue of *Insight* and would like to receive it regularly, please subscribe. Help us reduce our costs by choosing to receive *Insight* by email.

- Subscribe online at alzbc.org/insight-newsletter
- Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free 1-800-667-3742

Contribute

We welcome contributions, such as personal stories, photography or original poems, from people living with dementia. Please provide your name, mailing address, phone number and/or email address if you would like to be contacted. All submissions will be considered based on theme and space.

- Email insight@alzheimerbc.org
- Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free 1-800-667-3742
- Mail to the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon, care of *Insight*:
300-828 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E2

Call the First Link® Dementia Helpline

A confidential, province-wide support and information service for anyone with questions about dementia. Our Helpline is available from Monday to Friday.

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

Email info.helpline@alzheimerbc.org

Are you a caregiver?

Connections is a quarterly print and digital publication produced by the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon.

To subscribe:

- Visit our website at alzbc.org/connections-newsletter
- Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free 1-800-667-3742



Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon
300-828 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E2

Phone: **604-681-6530**

Toll-free: **1-800-667-3742**

Fax: **604-669-6907**

Email: info@alzheimerbc.org

Web: www.alzheimerbc.org

Insight is produced by the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon. Articles cannot be reproduced without written permission.