

## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, September 1, 2015

#### **This World Alzheimer's Month, remember the lives and experiences of those living with dementia**

**Vancouver, B.C.** — September is World Alzheimer's Month and as part of its #RememberDementia online and social media campaign, the Alzheimer Society of B.C. is inviting all British Columbians to remember the lives and experiences of the people around them – in their families, social circles, communities – who live with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.

The Society is working with people around the province to change attitudes and encourage compassion and understanding. It will be engaging in real-world and social media conversations about stigma, language, inclusion and more.



“There are more than 70,000 people with dementia in B.C.,” says Maria Howard, Alzheimer Society of B.C. CEO. “Yet we know that stigma still exists: it may prevent those newly-diagnosed with dementia from accessing services or from sharing their news with family and friends. We also know that when people have access to education, support services and information as early as possible after diagnosis, they may be better able to cope with the situation.”

One way the Society is working to change attitudes is by delivering in-person Dementia Friends presentations, during which participants learn about the signs of dementia, the myths associated with the disease and how to communicate in an effective, respectful and appropriate manner. We can all play a role in making our communities more accessible and welcoming for people with dementia.

“One of the things we’re proudest of in our work on the Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative – and elsewhere – is the chance to engage advisory groups, both people with dementia and their care partners, to hear first-hand what is important to them. This essential feedback informs the work that we do,” says Howard.

Stay tuned to our website, [www.alzheimerbc.org](http://www.alzheimerbc.org), and social media this month as we continue to raise awareness and continue the conversation. We’ll also meet B.C. writers, such as [Jane Munro](#) and [Cathie Borrie](#), and hear about the link between their work and their experience of Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia.

## **BACKGROUNDER:**

### **How would *you* like to be remembered?**

Our memory helps us build and maintain our identity. It tells us who we are, the experiences we have lived, the friends and family we have and the knowledge we have accumulated over the years. Recently, at some of our support groups, we asked people with dementia to talk about the kind of memories they hope to create for themselves and their families. We will be thinking about this question and sharing some of their responses this month.

Memory loss is also one of the most commonly-known signs of dementia. For more information about memory loss, please refer to: <http://alzbc.org/Memory-Loss-PDF>.

### **Creating awareness through language.**

Language is our unique human gift and a powerful means of communication. Words can inform and comfort us, excite and thrill us or inspire action. Words can also rattle our nerves, discourage our initiative and chip away at our self-confidence. We can react physically and emotionally to what is said to us and about us.

Language used to describe Alzheimer's disease and other dementias has historically been largely negative, focusing on the losses experienced by the person living with dementia. While these losses are real, this negative framing has contributed to perceptions and approaches to care that focus on weakness rather than strength, illness rather than wellness and victims rather than whole persons.

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. advocates a person-centred approach to communication. This means we view people with dementia first and foremost as individuals, with unique attributes, personal values and history. For more information about person-centred language, refer to:

<http://alzbc.org/Person-Centred-Language-PDF>.

### **Fostering understanding, awareness and inclusion through Dementia Friends and dementia-friendly communities.**

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is working with municipalities, professionals, corporations and volunteers to better support people with dementia through our Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative.

Community members who are dementia friendly recognize that:

- A person with dementia is more than their diagnosis.
- Dementia can affect a person's cognition, behaviour, emotions and physical capabilities.
- Everyone has a role to play in recognizing people with dementia as a part of their community and supporting their independence, value and inclusion.

For more information about the Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative, please visit:

<http://alzbc.org/dementia-friendly-communities>

## **Events support people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias in our communities.**

Want to make a difference in the lives of people affected by dementia? Dollars raised at our events allow the Society to support the 70,000 British Columbians and their families affected by the disease. Events coming up this month are:

- Coffee Break, September 17, 2015 and for the month thereafter. For more info: [www.coffeebreakbc.ca](http://www.coffeebreakbc.ca)
- *Mt. Kilimanjaro Grouse Grind for Alzheimer's* (MKGG), September 27, 2015. For more info: [www.hikemkkg.com](http://www.hikemkkg.com)
- *Ascent for Alzheimer's*, late September, 2015. For more info: [www.ascentbc.ca](http://www.ascentbc.ca)

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Campaign hashtag: #RememberDementia

**Society leaders and other spokespeople are available for interview throughout September; look for our Q&A with writers Cathie Borrie and Jane Munro later this month. Photos are also available upon request.**

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### **About dementia**

Dementia is a term that describes a general group of brain disorders. Symptoms include the loss of memory, impaired judgment, and changes in behaviour and personality. Dementia is progressive, degenerative and eventually terminal. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia accounting for almost two-thirds of dementias in Canada today.

### **About the Alzheimer Society of B.C.**

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. provides a provincial network of support and education for families impacted by dementia and people concerned about memory loss. Communities across the province count on the Society for support services, information and education programs, advocacy to improve dementia care in B.C. and to fund research to find the causes and cures. As part of a national federation, the Society is a leading authority on the disease in Canada.



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