



DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS

Engaging the Community in Dementia Inclusivity

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES
INSPIRED BY THE ABCD PILOT PROJECT
STRATHMORE, ALBERTA

APRIL 2023



Financial contribution from



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



All rights reserved. All materials in this document is, unless otherwise stated, the property of The Rural Development Network. Copyright and other intellectual property laws protect these materials. Reproduction or retransmission of the materials, in whole or in part, in any manner, without the prior written consent of the copyright holder, is a violation of copyright law.

The Rural Development Network (RDN) sincerely acknowledges that our physical office is located on the Traditional Territories of Treaty 6 and home to Métis Nation Region 4.

From coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territory of all the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people that call this land home and who have gathered on these lands for centuries.

We do this to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to improving relationships between nations and to improve our own understanding of local Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

We are all Treaty People.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AUTHORS

- Mary McGuire
- Melissa Masse
- Gwen Price

MANAGING EDITOR

- Mary McGuire

EDITORS

- Mary McGuire
- Melissa Masse
- Emika Peterson
- Gwen Price

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The implementation of this initiative was made possible by the meaningful work and dedication of the Strathmore Family and Community Support Services (FCSS).

The valuable feedback and support throughout the project from the ABCD Advisory Committee and Alzheimer's Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories further facilitated the success of the overall ABCD project.



*For more information about the ABCD project, please contact:
info@ruraldevelopment.ca*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

The Rural Development Network (RDN) collaborates with rural communities across Canada to identify and bring focus to rural issues, build local capacity, and find innovative, rural-based solutions to unique issues. A key aspect of that work is to support rural communities in the implementation of the proposed solutions by providing capacity. RDN's initiatives include:

- addressing rural homelessness;
- building affordable housing;
- addressing substance misuse;
- age-friendly rural communities;
- rural immigration;
- rural access to services including transportation, broadband, and justice;
- agri-food initiatives; and
- rural revitalization.

ABOUT ABCD INITIATIVE

In 2021, RDN developed the Awareness Builds Connection in Dementia Friendly Communities (ABCD) initiative. This project aims to support rural communities in Alberta to become more dementia-inclusive and dementia-friendly. An environmental scan was carried out to determine the best practices, challenges, and lessons regarding dementia-inclusive initiatives. Through learning from examples in existing programming, the ABCD team improved their understanding of effective dementia-inclusive programs and created a catalogue based on their findings, selecting initiatives adaptable to rural settings.

Through a call for interest, five rural communities were chosen to pilot the project, those being Taber, Sturgeon County, Spirit River, Strathmore and Drumheller. Strathmore's initiative will be the focus of this guide.

ABOUT STRATHMORE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (FCSS)

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) refers to services under a partnership between the Alberta Government and a participating municipality that benefit the social well-being of individuals and groups in communities. Strathmore FCSS's community partners identified that both professionals and residents needed to be engaged in dementia-inclusive

projects to increase community capacity in understanding and supporting those living with dementia. With that in mind, Strathmore FCSS applied for funding through RDN's ABCD initiative to support the implementation of their dementia-inclusive initiatives.

LIVING WITH DEMENTIA IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Additional challenges exist for people living with dementia and their caregivers in rural communities. These challenges are unique from the experiences of those living in an urban setting. Rural-specific challenges include the lack of transportation, difficulties accessing support and care services, failure of proper diagnoses, and privacy concerns.

Like everyone, people living with dementia and their care partners want to feel like a valued part of their community. However, in rural communities, dementia-related resources providing education, diagnosis and support can be scarce, directly impacting:

- early diagnosis;
- access to diagnosis;
- community education and understanding of dementia; and
- support for care in the home/community when living with and supporting someone with dementia.

PURPOSE OF HOW-TO-GUIDE

Informed by research and the experiences of the ABCD pilot community in Strathmore, this guide has been developed to support rural communities that are looking to improve the lives of those living with dementia by becoming more dementia-friendly. Understanding that each community is unique with its own strengths and perspectives, this guide is meant to be flexible and adaptable based on community needs and resources available.



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Strathmore/Wheatland County | 1 |
| Dementia-Friendly Connections | 1 |
| Summary | 1 |
| Why was this initiative chosen for the community? | 2 |
| Goals of Dementia Friendly Connections | 2 |
| DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE | 3 |
| STEP 1: Development of Budget, Work Plan, and Timeline | 3 |
| Budget Considerations | 3 |
| Work Plan and Timeline | 3 |
| STEP 2: Community Engagement & Communication | 4 |
| Recruitment/Training of Staff and Volunteers | 4 |
| Community Partnerships | 4 |
| Communications | 5 |
| STEP 3: Measuring Progress and Outcomes | 5 |
| Data Collection | 5 |
| Post-Speaker Series Survey Questions | 5 |
| Post-Train-the-Trainer Survey Questions | 6 |
| Findings | 6 |

Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Successes | 6 |
| Challenges | 6 |
| SUSTAINABILITY | 7 |
| RESOURCES | 7 |
| REFERENCES | 8 |

INTRODUCTION

STRATHMORE/WHEATLAND COUNTY

Strathmore is a town in southeast Alberta located in the municipal district of Wheatland County. Wheatland County is home to 9,536 people, not including Strathmore which is home to 15,189 residents (Government of Alberta, 2023). Wheatland County is located on Treaty 7 territory, the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Wheatland County, 2020). According to Strathmore's Senior Community Profile (2021), the population of those 65 years and older is projected to increase from 4,675 people to 5,937 by 2024.

DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS

Summary

Strathmore FCSS identified the importance of including both residents and professionals to decrease dementia-related stigma and increase community capacity. Named Dementia Friendly Connections, this project included three initiatives: a train-the-trainer style workshop for professionals and businesses, lendable inclusive activity kits, and a speaker series for those living with or impacted by dementia.

Strathmore FCSS hosted their Dementia-Friendly Businesses and Service Providers, Train-the-Trainer Session. The attendees included two fire departments and a variety of other social services. The Train-the-Trainer session provided education to representatives of local businesses, community organizations, support services, and emergency response teams to facilitate knowledge sharing and increase the capacity of professionals and businesses throughout Wheatland County. The session was based on the resources provided through Dementia Friendly Alberta, which includes training on: dementia facts and myths, an understanding of what a dementia-friendly community is, and how to provide helpful and friendly services to those living with Dementia.

The Speaker Series provided an opportunity for community members to learn about local resources with speakers from local supports such as Primary Care Network, Alberta Health Services, Alzheimer Society of Calgary, Bridging the Gap, and an Elder from Siksika Nation. These events were held at the local library which further supported the initiative in its goal of the Library becoming dementia-friendly. During Senior's Week, Strathmore FCSS hosted a speaker from Bridging the Gap, a program of the Growing Families Society which engages seniors with programming that

supports social participation and inclusion. Four additional speaker series took place at the Library.

The third initiative was the creation of permanent inclusive activity kits that aim to facilitate family connections and stimulating activities to support individuals and families impacted by dementia. The kits are created to accommodate varying stages of dementia and are labelled inclusive to invite people of all ages and abilities to access them. The inclusive label purposefully left out dementia, to reduce the stigma and requirement of identifying with a diagnosis of dementia. The Strathmore Municipal Library now carries these activity kits available to be signed out. The Strathmore Municipal Library also received several copies of a book "It's Going To Be Okay", written by Ben, Alex and Marie Kennedy, to be catalogued and lendable across the region. The book was written by a family in Nova Scotia to help guide families and children to a better understanding of Alzheimer's.

Why was this initiative chosen for the community?

Seniors are the fastest-growing demographic in Wheatland County, with those aged over 55 making up 28.33% of the population. In 2018, the Town of Strathmore's FCSS department completed a survey to identify the needs and concerns of seniors. They expressed a lack of transportation to be the largest concern and barrier to accessing services. As Wheatland County is a rural community, there is a demonstrated need for community-based programs to support those living with dementia and their caregivers. In 2021, members of the Seniors Advisory Committee and the Wheatland Lodge requested to pursue the Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly Community designations. It was identified that there was a lack of dementia-specific supports, services, and organizations outside of Alberta Health Services in Wheatland County.

Strathmore FCSS felt that increasing community awareness of dementia is an important first step to establishing an age-friendly and dementia-friendly community. Dementia Friendly Connections would provide an opportunity for community engagement and education for both residents and professionals, allowing for increased capacity for the successful implementation of more comprehensive community strategies.

Goals of Dementia Friendly Connections

The goals were to reduce stigma surrounding dementia by providing information, education, and support within the community, through educating various groups and businesses to better serve people with dementia, as well as the Speaker Series to give more voice to people who live with and/or are knowledgeable about dementia.

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

In March 2022, Strathmore FCSS submitted an application requesting funding from the Rural Development Network's ABCD initiative for Dementia Friendly Connections. They were successful in receiving the \$5000 seed funding and the planning for their initiative began in April 2022.

STEP 1: DEVELOPMENT OF BUDGET, WORK PLAN, AND TIMELINE

Budget Considerations

The amount of seed funding provided by RDN's ABCD Project was \$5000. The intention of the seed funding was to support the initial startup costs for the selected ABCD pilot community initiatives. Strathmore FCSS used the majority of the ABCD seed funding on the following items:

- Trainer costs
 - Training supplies
 - Resource binders
- Honorariums for speakers
- Event space
- Refreshments at events
- Caregiver & Dementia Friendly Activity/Memory Kits
- Lendable resources (books, DVDs, etc.)
- Taxi vouchers

Work Plan and Timeline

Strathmore FCSS began the logistics planning for their initiatives in April 2022. This included booking library space, arranging speakers, booking trainers for the Train-the-Trainer events, and curating dementia-friendly kits.

This timeline is based on the project implementation experiences of the Strathmore FCSS team. See the next page for the timeline table.

| TIMELINE | ACTIVITY |
|---------------|--|
| MONTH 1 | Arrange: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library space for Speaker Series • Speakers • Trainer for Train-the-Trainer session • Training space Create library resources, dementia-friendly activity kits, resource binders |
| MONTH 2 - 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan, communicated and hold the first Speaker Series event • Begin marketing library resources |
| MONTH 5 | Plan, communicated and hold second Speaker Series event |
| MONTH 6 | Plan, communicate and hold Train-the-Trainer session |
| MONTH 7 | Plan, communicate and hold Speaker Series event |
| MONTH 8 - 9 | Plan, communicate and hold fourth Speaker Series event |
| MONTH 10 - 11 | Plan, communicate and hold fifth Speaker Series event |

STEP 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Recruitment/Training of Staff and Volunteers

Strathmore FCSS utilized existing staff to support their initiatives. Additional staff support was provided by FCSS's partnering organizations, including the Strathmore Municipal Library.

Community Partnerships

Strathmore FCSS partnered with a number of groups, including the Wheatland Lodge, Wheatland FCSS, Alberta Health Services, and the

Primary Care Network. During the first Speaker Series event, Strathmore FCSS collaborated with Bridging the Gap to host *Brain Health for Seniors*. Additional partnerships to support speaker series events included the Primary Care Network, Alberta Health Services, Alzheimer Society of Calgary, and an Elder from Siksika Nation. They also partnered with the Strathmore Municipal Library as a valuable source to share information, house resources (i.e. inclusive activity kits, books), and location to host the Speaker Series events.

Communications

Strathmore FCSS shared information about all three project components through the Town of Strathmore's and the Library's social media. Event information was also shared through Bridging the Gap, which shares a weekly event list for seniors. Additionally, emails were sent out to interagency groups to reach the community's social service organizations, with a specific focus on recruiting professionals for the train-the-trainer session. There was some additional coverage of the initiatives by local news organizations. The inclusivity kits remain marketed on the Strathmore Municipal Library website.

STEP 3: MEASURING PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES

Data Collection

In consultation with Strathmore FCSS, RDN created Post-Speaker Series Surveys and Post-Train-the-Trainer Surveys for participants to complete.

Post-Speaker Series Survey Questions

- Prior to this session your knowledge about dementia could be described as?
- Did you find the information easy to understand?
- Was the speaker knowledgeable about the topic?
- Do you feel that your knowledge about dementia improved after this session?
- Please provide a quick description of how are you going to use this information to improve:
 - a) Your life
 - b) Someone you care about
 - c) Your community
- Would you attend other sessions on similar topics?

Post-Train-the-Trainer Survey Questions

On a scale of 1 to 5:

- How would you rate your business's ability to support someone living with dementia in an inclusive manner?
- How would you rate your understanding of dementia previous to this training?
- Instructor effectively used time
- Learning objectives were clear and concise
- Presentation was clear and organized
- The instructor was knowledgeable and helpful

Findings

Successes

The feedback from participants after the first Speakers Series event was positive. There were varying levels of knowledge among participants prior to the event, but most felt that their knowledge improved after the event. The majority of participants indicated that the information was easy to understand and the speaker was knowledgeable. Additionally, all participants expressed that they would attend another session on similar topics.

The feedback after the Train-the-Trainer session was also positive. As with the Speakers Series event, participants had varying levels of knowledge prior to the session. Most participants indicated that their businesses were able to support someone living with dementia in an inclusive manner. Many of the participants felt that the instructor was knowledgeable and helpful and the learning objectives were clear and concise.

Challenges

Overall, data collection was a challenge due to limited staff capacity and unexpected staffing changes.

SUSTAINABILITY

Strathmore FCSS chose and designed initiatives with sustainability in mind. The Speaker Series and the Dementia Friendly Library initiative utilized existing technology, staffing, and presentation space and engaged local speakers. Additional resources such as the inclusivity kits and lendable resources at the library are permanent additions to the community. The Train-the-Trainer session creates an awareness domino effect, where after educating local service providers on dementia and dementia-friendly practices the awareness and knowledge impact ongoing interactions with people in the community, both personally and professionally, and could potentially influence more dementia-friendly policies and supports. With initial success, the initiatives could easily be expanded to other community spaces and supports across Wheatland County.

RESOURCES

Resources needed to run a successful Train-the-Trainer session and Speakers Series events include lendable and takeable dementia-friendly resources, locations to host training sessions and speaker events, staff, and transportation.

REFERENCES

Government of Alberta. (2023). *Strathmore - population*.

<https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/strathmore/population/#/?from=2018&to=2022>

Government of Alberta. (2023). *Wheatland County - population*.

<https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/wheatland-county/population/#/?from=2018&to=2022>

Ministry of Seniors and Housing, Government of Alberta. (2021). *Seniors' Community Profile: Strathmore*.

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/dfdfbba3-90df-4a1f-8b7c-037917ba213f/resource/d389aa2d-cf44-4aa8-8730-dfc60aa5c144/download/sh-seniors-community-profile-strathmore.pdf>

Wheatland County. (2020). *Wheatland County Recognizes National Indigenous History*. Wheatland County.

<https://wheatlandcounty.ca/recognizing-indigenous-history/>