

# IMPLEMENTING A MEMORY CAFÉ

## HOW-TO GUIDE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

INSPIRED BY THE ABCD PILOT PROJECT  
TABER, ALBERTA

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**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

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*For more information about the ABCD project, please contact:  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## 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. Taber's initiative will be the focus of this guide.

## ABOUT BARONS-EUREKA-WARNER FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Barons-Eureka-Warner Family and Community Support Services (BEW FCSS) is a preventive service-based regional organization supporting individuals, families, and communities in 16 rural municipalities. It is governed by a Board of 16 elected officials and funded by the County of Warner and Lethbridge County. BEW FCSS was the group that initially requested funding for more dementia-friendly services and supports for the Taber Region.

## 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 Taber, 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.



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# INTRODUCTION

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## ABOUT THE TOWN OF TABER

Known for its sunshine and corn, Taber is a growing and vibrant town located in the Municipal District of Taber in Southern Alberta (Town of Taber, n.d.). It is located on Treaty 7 territory, the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika, as well as the Tsuut'ina First Nation and the Stoney Nakoda First Nation (Holmgren, 2008). The population of Taber was estimated to be 8,988 in 2021, with 2,866 of them being over the age of 50 (Government of Alberta, 2021).

## BARONS-EUREKA-WARNER FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES (BEW FCSS) MEMORY CAFÉ

### Summary

BEW FCSS chose to encourage and support their community to become more dementia friendly by implementing a “Memory Café” initiative for those living with dementia and their care partners to encourage social gathering and support in an environment free from judgement and stigma. Memory cafés all have the same goal: to provide a welcoming and safe space for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. Some memory cafés are local cafés that create intentional spaces for those living with dementia and their caregivers to interact, receive support, and learn from others in a similar situation. Other memory cafés are more structured with a host or facilitator providing activities or games for participants. BEW FCSS chose to establish a Memory Café at the Taber Public Library, an accessible and well-known space among seniors living in the area. The Taber Public Library has a calm and quiet atmosphere in the activity room, as well as a beautiful enclosed outdoor green space.

### Why was this initiative chosen for the community?

BEW FCSS expressed that there are currently no community-based day programs or services for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers in the Municipal District of Taber. Individuals needing support must commute to Medicine Hat or Lethbridge, located over 100km and 50km away, respectively. BEW FCSS noted that this lack of community-based support and awareness can contribute to feelings of social isolation and loneliness for those living with dementia and their caregivers. To address this, they decided to establish a Memory Café, allowing individuals living with dementia and their loved ones to gather and socialize in a welcoming and judgement-free space.

## Goals of Memory Café

The intention of memory cafés is to provide a welcoming and safe space where people living with dementia and their loved ones/care partners can gather together. In doing so, they can find social interaction and emotional support from people within their communities. The goal of Taber's Memory Café is to provide a place where socialization and activities can occur allowing people to share their experiences, obtain resources from their community, and enjoy time with each other. Differing from a program providing respite time away for the caregiver, the focus of the Memory Café is to provide space for those living with dementia and their caregivers to do something together. Something not based on routine or the needs and pressures of everyday living.

# **TABER MEMORY CAFÉ: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE**

In March 2022, BEW FCSS submitted an application requesting funding from the Rural Development Network's ABCD initiative for their Memory Café. The FCSS was successful in receiving the \$5000 seed funding and the planning for their Memory Café 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 total cost of the project was projected to be around \$15,000. The intention of the seed funding was to support the initial startup costs for the selected ABCD pilot community initiatives. BEW FCSS spent the majority of the ABCD seed funding on the following items:

- Sensory games/items
- Dementia-inclusive books (The Memory Tree by Britta Teckentrup, Grandma by Jessica Shepherd)
- Refreshments
- Other resources as recommended by the Alzheimer's Society/requested by Café participants

### **Workplan**

After securing funding in April, BEW FCSS held an initial meeting to establish the goals, objectives, and budget for the Memory Café initiative. Their first priority was to connect with the key stakeholders, which included the Taber Public Library and the Alzheimer's Society, to begin planning the Memory Café. This entailed creating a schedule, developing advertisements, and recruiting participants, which was achieved by reaching out to the local media. During July and August, the FCSS purchased sensory games and other activities, based on recommendations from the Alzheimer's Society. The FCSS also hired local community contributors, such as musicians and artists, and those suggested by the Alzheimer's Society. An important piece of planning included understanding what local resources exist for older adults and those living with dementia, should participants be looking to engage with other services.

BEW FCSS staff members participated in training to ensure the program's long-term viability. Their first Memory Café took place in the summer months, hosted in the activity room of the Taber Public Library. Attendees were encouraged to share their ideas for future topics and activities to be

included in upcoming Cafes. Additional Memory Cafés took place in the following months. A part of the overall work plan included ongoing program evaluation to ensure the continued relevance of activities.

## Anticipated Timeline of Activities and Implementation

This timeline is based on the project implementation experiences of BEW FCSS.

TIMELINE	ACTIVITY
MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with key stakeholders to start planning the Memory Café</li> <li>• Create all advertising materials</li> <li>• Connect with local media to recruit participants for the project</li> </ul>
MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase sensory games and other activities</li> <li>• Book local community contributors (musicians, artists, etc.)</li> <li>• Senior Services staff cross-educate other BEW FCSS staff to ensure the sustainability of the program</li> <li>• Host first program</li> <li>• Host two additional Memory Cafés</li> </ul>
MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participated in <u>an interview</u> with The Taber Times</li> <li>• Participants complete an evaluation of the program; adjust the program based on the results</li> <li>• Senior Services staff connect participants to other FCSS programs, community organizations and resources</li> </ul>
MONTH 4 - ONGOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to host the Memory Café</li> <li>• Complete post-evaluations</li> </ul>

## STEP 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

### Recruitment/Training of Staff and Volunteers

To support their initiatives, BEW FCSS utilized their existing staff who were kept up-to-date with program updates and explored various ways to implement it in different communities within their service area.

## Community Partnerships

BEW FCSS partnered with the Taber Public Library, using their location to hold the Memory Cafés and house dementia-friendly books and resources. The location worked as a perfect place, as it is accessible and well-known among the older adults living in the area. The FCSS also partnered with the Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories, which provided education and training to FCSS facilitators, and guidance on activities to implement and raise awareness of the Memory Café.

## Communications

BEW FCSS shared information about the program and recruited members using social media, posters, and newspaper articles, as well as spread the word internally in the FCSS.

BEW FCSS also connected with the Alzheimer's Society to see if any of their existing clients who live in their service area would be interested in taking part in the Memory Café.

## STEP 3: MEASURING PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES

### Data Collection

In consultation with BEW FCSS, RDN created Pre-Memory Café Surveys and Post-Memory Café Surveys for participants to complete.

#### *Pre-Memory Café Survey Questions*

- What possible barriers would prevent you from attending a Memory Café?
- How would you rate your knowledge of dementia?
- What would you find beneficial from a Memory Café?
- What other community support would you find helpful for you or your loved one in relation to living with dementia?

#### *Post-Memory Café Survey Questions*

- What has been the most beneficial part of attending the Memory Café?
- Do you feel like you have a better understanding of what dementia is?
- Do you feel a sense of community support in connection to the Memory Café?
- Has participating in the Café increased your knowledge about potential resources within the community?
- Would you encourage others to attend the Memory Café?
- How might the Memory Café be improved?

## Findings

### *Pre-Memory Café*

Prior to the Memory Café activities taking place, participants completed the Pre-Memory Café Survey Questionnaire, expressing the following:

- Possible barriers to attending Memory Café
  - Location of the Café
  - Time of the Café
  - Scheduling (caregivers were not always able to attend)
- Knowledge about dementia
  - Knowledge varied amongst participants. On a scale from one to five, one representing limited knowledge and five representing very knowledgeable, participants placed themselves at ones, twos, fours, and fives.
- Perceived benefits of participating in a Memory Café
  - Increased knowledge about dementia
  - Learning about how to communicate and support someone living with dementia
- Other supports that you or your loved one may find helpful
  - More speakers on dementia and transitioning from living in their own home

### *Successes*

Through a survey facilitated by those leading the Memory Café, the feedback from participants was positive. Participants felt the most beneficial aspects of the Café were meeting new people, connecting with others who are experiencing a similar situation, and gaining new information. Some participants also shared that they felt welcomed and everyone was kind. One participant noted the Memory Café was a fun event to go to.

### *Challenges*

One of the challenges encountered by BEW FCSS was the limited availability of nearby organizations or alternative options to refer caregivers and individuals seeking additional support, particularly those requiring intervention-based resources. It is imperative to acknowledge that numerous rural communities currently lack support services for those living with dementia.

Another challenge was the varying levels of ability among Café participants. While some were unable to communicate verbally, others seemed to show no signs of dementia or Alzheimer's. Additionally, participants found the amount of paperwork to access the program to be a barrier (surveys, registration, etc.).

## SUSTAINABILITY

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BEW FCSS is committed to the sustainability of this program. Once the funding through RDN's ABCD project has been utilized, they plan to continue the program through internal funding. By referencing the successes of this pilot initiative, additional funding opportunities will be explored to expand the program to other communities BEW FCSS serves. Alzheimer's Society will also greatly support the sustainability of this program by providing resources and information as new research becomes available about supporting individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.

## RESOURCES

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Resources needed to run a successful Memory Café include locations, staff, food and beverages, activities, and transportation. Some locations are public and therefore free to use, such as the library.

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