



Independent Long-Term Care
Councils Association of BC

Spotlight



Northern Association of Family
Councils (NAFC)

Bringing Joy, Connection and Community to Long-Term Care

Northern Association of Family Councils Shows the Power of Coming Together

Sometimes, the simplest ideas can make the biggest difference.

For the [Northern Association of Family Councils](#) (NAFC), a regional initiative to support live social events in long-term care homes became an opportunity to bring residents, families, friends and care teams together—and to demonstrate the incredible impact that Family Councils can have in their communities.

Reta, a long-standing Family Council volunteer and Co-Chair of the Northern Association of Family Councils, shared with the provincial association of family councils ([ILTCCABC](#)) about the initiative and what she has seen firsthand.

Reta brings experience at several levels of the Family Council movement. She is a legacy member of the Family Council at Gateway Long-Term Care, Co-Chair of Health Authority Regional Resident and Family Council Network (RRFCN), and a representative at the ILTCCABC. That experience helped her see how a regional initiative could translate into meaningful experiences at the individual care-home level.

Turning an Idea into Action

NAFC supports **11 Family Councils** across its region. Reta took the challenge of creating opportunities for residents and families to connect and secured **more than \$6,500**, allowing each participating Family Council to receive **\$600** to organize its own live social event.

The result was a wonderful demonstration of the creativity and individuality of Family Councils.



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Each care home chose an event that reflected its own residents and community. Ideas included:

- Barbecues and social gatherings
- Gift certificates
- Flower planting
- Themed decorations and signs
- Antique car shows
- Visits from hobby farm animals
- Live music and entertainment

Rather than creating one event for everyone, Family Councils were empowered to decide what would bring the most enjoyment and connection to the people in their own care home.

Music, Memories and Meaningful Connections

Two events at **Gateway Long-Term Care** and **Fraser Lodge** stood out for their tremendous response: live performances featuring *The Legends* and an Elvis impersonator.



Gateway Complex Care – Reta Herrick

“We had a live impersonator concert by The Legends. Elvis, Marilyn and Elton John gave an awesome performance. The large room was so packed that we opened the doors to the garden to seat family outside. We gave family members magnetic business cards to attach to their fridge as reminders of Family Council meetings. We have had only one FC meeting since, and it brought in a new family member; we expect more new members to come in September.”



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But it was more than entertainment.

Reta observed that music created an experience that was accessible to everyone. Residents did not have to remember every word or actively participate to be part of the moment. They could tap their hands, hum along or simply enjoy the music.

The performers also made a point of connecting directly with residents—walking over to them, holding their hands and making eye contact. Those small moments created genuine human connection.

Kitimat - Debbie Fossi

“We decorated the entrance with a family council board for changing to all seasons – all our meeting announcements and information pertaining to council will be posted here. This made the area very pleasing and added beauty to the entrance”



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Dunrovin - Debra Milward

"I had about a dozen new families. It felt very successful. The manager did all the cooking, and the person in charge of the nurses and aides did a lot of the serving. They were thrilled with the outcome. I'm so glad about the funds that enabled us to do this. The residents enjoyed being outdoors and eating. We had nonalcoholic beer and coolers, and they went like hotcakes with the residents. Lol"





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Simon Fraser Lodge: Colleen Rushton.

"We had a live Elvis impersonator concert. His interactions with residents were wonderful; he is from Chilliwack. We had information cards printed and gave them out to family members. We were not permitted to take pictures of residents but did get this with the Staff with Elvis. "



Acropolis Manor, Prince Rupert Cheryl Costa

Our event was a BBQ in the evening from 6-8 pm.

"We had hamburgers, hot dogs and veggie burgers, and all the extras. My husband David ran the BBQ and played some fun summer music. It was a relaxed atmosphere, and everyone enjoyed the food. We had about 13 in attendance. While having dessert, we all introduced ourselves and talked a little about ourselves and our resident family members. Neetu, the Recreational Therapist, spoke about what the family council represents. We currently have no chairs, so she went over the minutes from the last meeting to give everyone an idea of what the council does. There was a draw at the end for a 100\$ gift card.

*Our hope for the event was to enlighten the families and hopefully encourage more people to take part. Those in attendance were very engaged, and we hope to see more families participate in the fall once we start the meetings again with or without a chair. More funding for materials and events to promote our council would be greatly appreciated. **The more visible we are, the more people we will reach over time.** "*



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The Pines, Vera Nichols

“Some pics after the flowers and vegetables were planted. The residents water and weed throughout the summer. The greenhouse has zucchini, tomatoes, and cucumbers, which they enjoy with snacks. The strawberries are a treat, and the potatoes are cooked for dinner. There were 8 family members who attended, and the residents were joining in and giving a lot of directions. “





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The Ripple Effect of a Family Council Event

The benefits went beyond the event itself.

Reta noticed that these gatherings also created opportunities to introduce people to **Family Councils**. Families and community members asked questions about what Family Councils do, and on at least one occasion, someone joined a Family Council right at the event.

The experience also reinforced the value of reaching families and community members where they already are—including through local social media groups.

For Reta, the lesson is clear: **when Family Councils create opportunities for people to come together, they can strengthen relationships, build community and create new connections that continue long after the event is over.**

A Regional Success Story

Perhaps the most impressive result is that **10 of NAFC's 11 Family Councils successfully planned, organized and hosted their own live social event.**

That is a remarkable achievement—and one that demonstrates what can happen when Family Councils are supported, trusted and given the opportunity to lead.



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These events were not simply about entertainment. They were about **quality of life, belonging, family connection and creating moments of joy for people living in long-term care.**

And that is at the heart of what Family Councils can do.

What Could Your Family Council Do?

Every long-term care home is different. Every resident community is different. And every Family Council has its own ideas, strengths and possibilities.

The NAFC experience reminds us that creating positive changes does not always require a major project. Sometimes it starts with a conversation:

What would bring joy to the residents and families in our care home?

A barbecue.
A garden.
A musical performance.
A special visitor.
A community gathering.
Or simply an opportunity to spend time together.

Family Councils can turn ideas into action—and in doing so, help make long-term care feel more like home.

ILTCCABC thanks Reta, the Northern Association of Family Councils, and all the participating Family Councils for sharing this wonderful example of Family Council leadership, creativity and community building.

Do you have a Family Council story to share?

ILTCCABC wants to hear from Family Councils across British Columbia. Your experience may inspire another council to try something new.

Send us your Family Council SPOTLIGHT story, photos or video at:
communications.iltccabc@gmail.com