

FAR APARTIES

Physically distanced gatherings with neighbours

As Canadians we tend to cocoon over the winter and once the weather gets sunny many of us cannot wait to get out and socialize with our friends and neighbours. With the onset of COVID-19 this feeling is even more widely and intensely felt after weeks of being physically cut off from each other, especially when connections with our neighbours are so important for well-being and community resilience. Normally spring and summer herald plans and excitement for block parties and neighbourhood get-togethers. With the restrictions of physical distancing many people are wondering: **How can our gatherings with our neighbours still happen? What might they look like? How can we be physically distanced but still socially connected?**

As a “Pandemic Addendum” to our [“Resilient Streets Toolkit”](#), here are some reasons connecting with your neighbours are important and some ideas and inspiration on how you can do it while remaining safe and healthy.

Public Health guidelines are different in every community and are constantly evolving. If you live in British Columbia get the latest information from the BC Centre for Disease control: <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Coronavirus-FAQ-English.pdf>.

Please check with your local health authorities to ensure you are following local safety protocols before you plan or attend your Far Aparties.



Photo by submitted: Diane Strandberg, Tri-City News

5 Reasons Far Aparties are important right now:

- 1 They connect us with each other, filling one of our basic human needs, nourishing our souls and making us feel truly alive;
- 2 They can provide fun, music, dancing, laughing – often the perfect antidote to dealing with uncertainty and anxiety;
- 3 They provide us with the opportunity to check in with neighbours to see how they are doing and how we might support each other;
- 4 They give us the opportunity to meet new neighbours and friends;
- 5 They provide us with an increased sense of belonging to our community.

Presented by:



HEY NEIGHBOUR!
Collective



Ideas for Far Aparties



Organize a Driveway or Block Far Aparty

Adapt the traditional block or building party and organize an outdoor driveway or parking lot party, or some variation of it, depending on your physical space. This is a brilliant and easy way to eat together and socialize at a safe distance in the outdoor air. Neighbours only need to bring out their own tables, chairs, food and drinks. It can also be a great way to combine the pot banging to support essential service workers that we all have been doing at 7:00 with a “bring your own food” dinner party afterwards. And adding take-out from local restaurants and drink companies helps support the local economy.

See an example of a driveway party from Coquitlam, BC:



Get involved in “Neighbour’s Day”

Cities across Canada including Kitchener, Thunder Bay, Kelowna and Calgary, and the world celebrate Neighbours’ Day at different times of the year encouraging people to meet their neighbours and get to know each other. COVID-19 has altered how this day is traditionally celebrated. People are being creative about how to continue to connect with their neighbours while physically distancing, keeping the spirit of this day alive. Some examples of things that neighbours can do include: car rallies, community bingo, virtual treasure hunts to name a few.



Click or scan here for more info & ideas



Click or scan here for some inspiring stories from residents in Kelowna, BC about neighbourliness during the pandemic:



Jeff Stevenson entertains neighbours along the Gorge Waterway (Eric Lloyd CTV VI)

Throw a mini-concert! And seek them out in your neighbourhood.

There is musical talent being honed now like never before, seeking a willing audience. What better way to spend time than listening to talented musicians (sometimes hidden!) right in your neighbourhood? People are meeting new neighbours and connecting with old ones over music. Get comfy on your folding chair, close your eyes and transport yourself to a music festival of the past.

Here are some great examples of these outdoor neighbour mini-concerts:

SAANICH: A singer out of work entertains his neighbours nightly along Victoria’s Gorge waterway coinciding with the 7 pm celebration of health care workers.



VICTORIA: In the neighbourhood of Fairfield in Victoria, neighbours are entertained by a neighbour with tributes to John Prine and many other classics while physically distancing.

OAK BAY: A local singer entertains with “Lawncerts” around Oak Bay bringing joy to the community around the 7pm pot banging for health care workers.





Oak Bay singer Stephanie Greaves (Oak Bay News: Travis Paterson)

VANCOUVER: A drama teacher connects community nightly through her singing performances and pays tribute to the front line workers.



CALGARY/NATIONAL: Curbside Concerts, A Calgary musician out of work finds success in his curbside music delivery business, travelling around Calgary entertaining paying customers. Curbside concerts are such a hit that he is expanding it throughout the province and across Canada. This is a win-win for both out of work musicians and people hungry for live entertainment where they can be physically distanced and safe.



Organize a neighbourhood sing-along

A neighbourhood in Victoria has taken the opportunity to add a sing along every night after the nightly pot banging for health care workers, complete with musical instruments.



And then added a promenade and dance party...



If you live in a multi-unit building, here are some ideas to try:

Floor connector parties

It may be extra challenging to connect with your neighbours if you live in a multi-unit residential building and all the common areas are closed down. One option is a physically distanced “floor connector party”. Organize with the neighbours on your floor to have a drink or dinner in the doorway of your unit. It is a great way to connect and meet your immediate neighbours on your floor. It is often those living closest to us that are helpful or that we can offer support to during trying times or emergencies.

If you have units with outdoor space in your apartment building meet up with neighbours outside at a safe distance. Or, alternatively, meet up at a nearby outdoor public space such as a park or beach. Bring your own food and drinks, or consider take out from a local restaurant as these women are doing.



“Balcony Bash”

This initiative started in Calgary combines food, music, a balcony dance party, support for the health care professionals and local restaurateurs.



Organize a sing along from your balcony, or entertain your neighbours while you sing. The health benefits of singing are well documented and singing together enhances our sense of empathy, social connection and trust of others.



10 Tips to consider with Far Aparties:

1 BE SAFE: Follow all the health authorities' suggestions on keeping safe while socializing to stay healthy (please check your local guidelines). Distribute guidelines when inviting your neighbours and let them know what they can expect. Some of these suggestions include:

- Prioritize gathering outdoors as a safer option, and be flexible postponing gatherings if the weather becomes inclement and making accommodations for changing weather including bringing extra clothing layers, blankets, umbrellas, tarps, sunscreen etc.;
- Keep 6 feet apart, setting up chairs and tables this same distance or greater;
- Make it a "Bring Your Own (BYO)" everything party – bring your own food, drinks, dishes, and other items such as children's toys;
- Provide hand sanitizer at key points;
- Be mindful if people are drinking alcohol as it tends to loosen people up and they can get forgetful about physical distancing.

2 START SMALL (and maybe keep it small for now): Think carefully about group size and your ability to ensure safe physical distancing for everyone in relation to your gathering space. If you live on a single residential street, you might organize neighbours in small "pods" on your immediate block and experiment before branching out beyond your block (or when pandemic restrictions are lifted); if you live in a multi-unit residential building you might consider involving the immediate neighbours on your floor. You can always expand out if it feels right down the road.

3 DEVELOP CREATIVE WAYS TO ENGAGE CHILDREN:

Depending on their age, children can be difficult to physically distance from one another. Ensure parents are all in agreement on how to ensure they keep safely distanced with fun activities that don't involve close contact. For example, kicking a soccer ball may be okay as there is typically no skin contact, unlike playing a game like basketball. Brainstorm creative ideas such as sidewalk chalk art projects with inspiring messages; and using walkie talkies that allow children to roam and talk to each other at safe distances. Make sure there are plenty of opportunities to hand wash/sanitize.

4 INTEGRATE A "PARTY WITH A PURPOSE" INTO YOUR FAR APARTY. Some ideas include:

A bulletin board with "Asks and Offers" for support (grocery shopping or errands for the elderly and vulnerable, dog walking for people who are sick, music concerts, etc.);

- Start a vegetable or fruit seed or seedling exchange;
- Have a produce exchange if you have an excess of produce like rhubarb and zucchini;
- Transform your little book box to a pantry box for people who don't want to go into a store or are feeling economically impacted by the pandemic—ask residents to each bring a pantry item;
- Discuss sharing in bulk food buying from local farmers.

5 CREATE A SMALL ORGANIZING GROUP with a

few neighbours: It is always more fun and less work to coordinate a party with other neighbours. Brainstorm ideas of what physical distancing will look like to stay safe and divide up tasks.

6 CREATE SIMPLE INVITATIONS

for door delivery (or email if you have a list): include the "5Ws" (who, what, when, where, why) and any safety guidelines including the importance of physical distancing and providing your own food, drinks, etc.

7 CONSIDER COMBINING WITH 7 PM POT BANGING:

People are scheduled these days to come outdoors to celebrate health care workers at this time, so why not extend this merry making with a Far Aparty at the same time?

8 NOT EVERYONE WILL WANT TO PARTICIPATE:

These are trying times for many people and not everyone will want to participate. Be sensitive to different people's comfort level with socializing and their potential feelings of vulnerability.

9 EXPERIMENT WITH NEW IDEAS keeping in mind physical distancing and safety;

10 PHYSICAL DISTANCING DOES NOT HAVE TO MEAN SOCIAL ISOLATION!!

Now, more than ever, most of us need community and connection.

For more general ideas and tools on organizing Neighbour Gatherings and Celebrations that are not specific to the pandemic, please check out the Resilient Streets Toolkit:

