

Prairie harvest week

Prairie (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) · Fall programming



For recreation therapists and activity aides in Canadian long-term care and personal care homes. Print what you need. Leave the rest.

Large type. Short steps. Dementia-safe language. Canadian spelling. One click PDF. No login required for this preview.

Pictures for this week

Use these on a screen or print one page for the program table. They are calm on purpose.



Stooking wheat in Saskatchewan, early 1900s. Open-use photo from Wikimedia Commons (Agnes Deans Cameron).
Use for gentle farm talk.



Grain elevator in Rouleau, Saskatchewan. Wikimedia Commons, John Kaminski, CC BY-SA 4.0. A far landmark, not a close danger.



Apples in a basket. Wikimedia Commons, Oxfordian Kissuth, CC BY-SA 3.0. Good for the harvest table.

Prairie harvest week

Welcome to Prairie harvest week. This pack is for you on Monday morning.

You have all you need here. Keep it simple. Keep it kind. Follow the residents. Harvest is about good work, good food, and good neighbours.

Use Canadian spelling in all signs. Print large. Speak slow. Offer choices.

Staff briefing

Good morning team. Thank you for being here.

This week is about harvest home. Think kitchen tables. Think grain elevators on the horizon. Think church suppers and rink coffee. Think garden rows and harvest crews coming in for lunch.

Many residents grew up on farms. Some grew up in town. Both stories matter. Invite both. Grief may come up. Harvest can remind folks of busy houses that are now quiet. Empty nests can feel tender in fall. That is normal. You do not need to fix it. Sit with them. Offer tea. Say, I am glad you told me that.

A few ground rules for the week:

- Offer choices. Say, would you like wheat to hold or photos to look at. Do not test memory.
- Let folks watch. Watching is taking part.
- Keep groups small. Six to eight is plenty.
- Keep noise low. One voice at a time.
- Keep scents light. No strong perfume or smoke scents.
- Ask before touch. Say, may I place this in your hands.
- Hydrate often. Water, juice, decaf tea.
- Note who eats well at food programs. Share with dietary as needed.

Time tip: Set up 15 minutes early. Pack down slow. Residents like to help fold cloths and sort cards.

Seven-day gentle calendar (Mon-Sun) with 2-3 options each day

Pick one morning and one afternoon option. Evenings are restful. You do not need to do it all.

Monday: Welcome the harvest home

1. Morning circle: Harvest show and share table. Pass wheat stems, small oats bag, clean canola seed in a jar with lid. Invite touch and smell.
2. Afternoon: Kitchen table card making. Thank you cards for housekeeping, kitchen, and maintenance. Stickers, large markers, fall colours.
3. Evening rest: Soft fiddle or country gospel playlist, low volume. Colouring pages of barns and sunflowers.

Tuesday: Bread and soup day

1. Morning: Bread dough sensory. Warm rolls to hold. Talk about toast with butter and jam. No tricky questions. Just chat.
2. Afternoon: Soup tasting, small cups. Harvest vegetable or borscht if your kitchen can help. Offer plain broth as a choice too.

3. Evening rest: Poetry reading. Two short harvest poems. Pause often.

Wednesday: Barns, tools, and rail

1. Morning: Men's group, see below. Women welcome too. Tool sorting and barn photos.
2. Afternoon: Model train table or rail photos. Watch a slow prairie rail video with sound low. Point out elevators far off.
3. Evening rest: Puzzle table. Large piece barn puzzle. No rush to finish.

Thursday: Garden and fair day

1. Morning: Garden close up. Pot mums or sort seed packets. Smell mint and dill if you have them.
2. Afternoon: Mini fall fair in the lounge. Ring toss, bean bag toss to a harvest basket. Small ribbons for all who join.
3. Evening rest: Fair photo chat. Ferris wheel photos. Corn dogs on a stick for supper side if diet allows.

Friday: Church supper and music

1. Morning: Set tables with gingham cloths. Fold napkins. Arrange centre pieces of wheat and silk sunflowers.
2. Afternoon: Supper social with perogies, cabbage rolls, or Saskatoon berry crisp if kitchen can help. Live music if you can. Or recorded hymns and old country favourites.
3. Evening rest: Quiet visiting. Hot decaf. Warm blankets.

Saturday: Family and rink day

1. Morning: Rink coffee cart. Hot chocolate and coffee. Talk hockey sign ups and outdoor rinks. Keep it light and fun.
2. Afternoon: Family visit lounge. Harvest photo wall. Grandkid friendly colour sheets. Extra chairs out.
3. Evening rest: Classic western film or harvest documentary, gentle ones only. Lights half up.

Sunday: Rest and thanks

1. Morning: Short service or quiet reflection. Harvest thanks list. Invite one word if folks wish. Silence is fine.
2. Afternoon: Room visits with wheat bundles and thank you cards from Monday. Gentle one to one chats.
3. Evening rest: Early lights down. Soft piano. Hand lotion offers on the unit.

Group script: Prairie harvest circle (15 min) with supplies and steps

Use this for Monday morning or any day. Six to eight residents. Wheelchair friendly circle.

Supplies:

- Small tablecloth, gold or red gingham if you have it
- Tray with: tied wheat bundle, small sealed jar of wheat kernels, small sealed jar of canola seed, clean garden glove, wooden spoon
- Laminated photos: grain elevator far off, combine in field far off, kitchen table with pie, fall fair Ferris wheel

- Battery tea lights, two
- Song sheet in large print: You Are My Sunshine and Harvest Thanks chorus
- Water pitcher and cups
- Extra blankets

Steps:

1. Welcome, 2 minutes. Say: Good morning everyone. I am glad you are here. We are talking harvest home today. You are welcome to hold things, look, or just listen. Place the wheat bundle where all can see it.
1. Pass and chat, 6 minutes. Offer the wheat bundle first. Say: Would you like to hold this for a bit or just look. Pass one item at a time. Name it simply. Say: This is wheat. It feels light and dry. Offer the glove next. Say: This glove is soft from work. No memory quiz. If someone shares a story, thank them. If someone is quiet, smile and move on gently.
1. Photos and music, 5 minutes. Hold up one photo at a time. Say: Here is an elevator far down the road. Say: Here is pie cooling on a table. Sing one verse together if folks wish. Or hum. Keep volume soft. Light the tea lights for a calm centre.
1. Close, 2 minutes. Say: Thank you for coming. You helped make this warm. Would you like water before we go. Offer hand on shoulder only if welcome. Note mood and intake for charting.

Tips: If talk turns to loss, stay steady. Say: That sounds like a full house. It makes sense to miss that. Offer a next step. Say: Would you like tea in the lounge or quiet time in your room.

Three room-bound one-to-one cards (4 steps max, large-print friendly)

Print these on single pages. Use font size 18 or larger. Leave white space.

Card 1: Wheat Bundle Visit

1. Knock. Say hello. Offer choice. Say: I brought wheat to see. Would you like to hold it.
2. Place wheat in their hands. Say: It is dry and light. No rush.
3. Chat soft. Say: Harvest tables were busy. I like warm kitchens too.
4. Close kind. Say: Thank you for your time. Would you like water. Leave a thank you card.

Card 2: Berry and Tea Rest

1. Knock. Say hello. Offer choice. Say: I have berry tea. Would you like a sip or just the smell.
2. Share small sealed bag of dried Saskatoon berries to look at. Do not serve loose berries unless diet says yes.
3. Read two short lines. Say: The garden is put to bed. We rest now too.
4. Close kind. Say: I will sit a bit if you wish. Or I can come back later.

Card 3: Barn Photo Slow Look

1. Knock. Say hello. Offer choice. Say: I have barn photos. Would you like red barn or grey barn first.
2. Hold photo steady at eye level. Give time. Say: Big sky. Flat field. Calm day.
3. Invite touch of wood block or cloth if you brought one. Keep it simple.
4. Close kind. Say: Thanks for looking with me. I will leave this photo if you like.

All cards: Watch for tiredness. Stop early if needed. Tell nurse of low mood, cough, or poor fluids.

Men's group: tools, barns, rail, and fields

Time: 45 minutes max. Cap at eight men. Women welcome if they wish. Coffee ready.

Set up like a shop corner, not a test. Keep tools safe and clean. No sharp edges. No blades. No fuel or chemicals.

Good items: large wooden wrench, clean work gloves, tape measure with big numbers, level, short coiled rope, smooth rail spike for weight only, barn photos, elevator photos, toy combine, toy train engine.

Flow:

Start with coffee. Say: Morning gents. Glad you came. Grab a seat where you see best.

Show one tool at a time. Say: Here is a level. It helped keep things straight. Would you like to hold it or pass it on. Let hands do the talking.

Talk barns and fields plain. Say: Lots of red barns near Red Deer. Lots of tall elevators near Ogema. Say: Wheat and canola both came in heavy this year in talk. Keep it present, not quiz.

Rail chat: Say: Rail kept towns fed. Would you like train photos or elevator photos today. Point out elevators as landmarks far off. Calm and distant. Not loud. Not close.

Close with jobs well done. Say: Thanks for good work over the years. Farms, shops, rail, roads. It all kept folks going. Hand out shop tickets that say Thanks For Coming. Invite help to pack up light items.

Note: Some men do not like groups. Offer a one to one shop visit later with one tool and coffee. That counts.

Safety: Count items in and out. Lock away after. No small parts for folks who mouth items. Watch for heavy lifting. Keep walkways clear.

Provincial flavour notes (AB vs SK vs MB place names, fairs, CFL teams, crops: wheat, canola, perogies, Saskatoon berries)

Make it local. Swap names to fit your home. Residents light up at home towns.

Alberta:

- Place names to use: Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Camrose, Grande Prairie, High River.
- Fairs: Calgary Stampede, Edmonton KDays, Medicine Hat Exhibition, Camrose Big Valley Jamboree for music chat.
- CFL team: Calgary Stampeders and Edmonton Elks. Use team colours on table cloths. Keep chat kind even in rivalry week.
- Crops and food: wheat, canola, barley, beef, honey, Saskatoon berry pie. Talk irrigation near Lethbridge. Talk garden corn in Taber.
- Say: Canola fields bright yellow in July. Wheat gold in August. Short lines like that land well.

Saskatchewan:

- Place names to use: Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Yorkton, Swift Current, North Battleford, Ogema.
- Fairs: Saskatoon Ex, Queen City Ex in Regina, Ag in Motion near Langham for shop talk.
- CFL team: Saskatchewan Roughriders. Green is loved here. Bring green napkins. Rider chat is strong medicine.
- Crops and food: wheat, canola, lentils, Saskatoon berries. Berry picking near the river hills. Bannock and jam chat welcome.
- Say: Elevators still stand proud in small towns. Use elevator photos from your area if you can.

Manitoba:

- Place names to use: Brandon, Dauphin, Morden, Steinbach, Portage la Prairie, Flin Flon.
- Fairs: Red River Ex in Winnipeg, Brandon Royal Winter Fair, Dauphin Countryfest for music chat.
- CFL team: Winnipeg Blue Bombers. Blue and gold table touches go far.
- Crops and food: wheat, canola, sunflowers, perogies, cabbage rolls, borscht. Mennonite soup and farmer sausage chat if kitchen allows. Sunflower fields are a favourite photo.
- Say: Church suppers with perogies and good visiting. Many folks know that table well.

All provinces: Wheat and canola suit all three. Perogies suit all three, with Manitoba leading. Saskatoon berries suit all three, with Saskatchewan leading. Use real food only with diet okay. Small tastes. Label allergens clear.

Language care: Do not stage or invent Indigenous ceremony, songs, or rites. If residents wish to share their own family customs, listen with respect. Invite cultural staff or family to lead if they offer. Keep to food, music, and land you know.

Dementia-safe notes

We keep all activities failure free. No one is put on the spot.

Do this:

- Offer two clear choices. Say: red barn or grey barn. Say: tea or water.
- Use short steps. One idea per sentence.
- Show, then say, then pass. Hands learn first.
- Keep light soft. Keep sound low. Face the person.
- Allow exit and re entry. Say: Come and go as you wish.
- Pair words with touch items. Wheat plus photo of wheat field.
- End early if tired. Rest is success.

Avoid this:

- No quiz talk. Avoid do you remember, what year, name three, or tell us all about.
- No scary talk. No war, crime, storms up close, sirens, or jump scares.
- No loud starts. No sudden music. Fade in slow.
- No small loose seeds for tasting unless diet and nurse approve. Choking risk is real.
- No hot lights, open flame, or sharp tools. Battery lights only.
- No strong scents. Light dill or fresh bread is enough.

Grief tip: Fall can bring thoughts of kids moved away. Or a spouse now gone. Or a farm sold. Say: It is a lot of change. You cared well. Offer present comfort. Warm blanket. Hand to hold if welcome. Next meal together.

Chart tip: Note mood, join level, fluids, and food interest. Note who lit up at music or wheat. That helps next shift plan well.

Indoor weather backup (blizzard / smoke / extreme cold)

Prairie weather turns fast. Keep this back up ready from October to April, and for smoke days in summer.

If wind howls or smoke drifts in, say it plain: We are inside today where it is warm and clear. No scary detail. No news loop.

Plan B for the lounge:

- Harvest film hour with curtains closed. Gentle combine far off. Sound low. Lights half up.
- Window bird count. Suet out if you have a safe feeder view. Tally on big paper.
- Baking smell without baking. Warm cinnamon sticks in hot water, lid off for short whiffs. Then lid on.
- Hall walk parade with harvest hats. Short loop. Chairs along the way.
- Letter writing to family. Large cards. One line each is plenty.

Air care on smoke days: Doors shut. Filters on. No outdoor strolls. Offer extra water. Watch coughs. Tell nurse of wheeze or headache.

Cold care: Blankets warmed in dryer if allowed. Warm socks box. No outdoor transfers unless care plan says yes. Check hands and noses on return.

Staff care: Keep your own coat and boots by the door. Drink water. Debrief after hard shifts. You matter too.

Print list (what to print, page estimate)

Print on white or cream card where you can. Large print. One sided for easy hold.

- Staff briefing one pager, 1 page. Print 8 copies for aides, nurses, house.
- Seven day calendar poster, 1 large page. Print 3 for lounge, elevator lobby, family board.
- Harvest circle song sheet, 1 page. Print 12. Font 20.
- Barn and elevator photos, 4 pages colour. Print 2 sets. Laminate if you can.
- Room visit cards, 3 pages. Print 6 sets. Font 18 minimum.
- Thank you cards outline, 1 page. Print 20 for Monday craft.
- Mini fair tickets and ribbons labels, 1 page. Print 10.
- Allergy and diet sign, 1 page. Print 4 for food days.
- Window bird tally sheet, 1 page. Print 10 for backup days.

Page estimate: About 13 master pages. About 60 to 75 printed sheets for a 30 bed home. Adjust up for larger homes.

You are set for Monday. Start small. Smile lots. Thank each person by name. Harvest home is people, not perfect crafts.

With thanks for your good care.

How to use this PDF

Print the cover in colour if you can. Print the rest in black and white. Leave room cards at the bedside. You do not need to run every program.