

AN EASY HOW TO GUIDE TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY

Compiled by: *Community Services Department*



NEIGHBOURHOOD **BLOCK** PARTY KIT

"BUILDING COMMUNITIES
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A neighbourhood block party is the opportunity for neighbours to get together, meet each other, have fun and maybe work together on a common activity

TOP 10 REASONS TO HAVE A BLOCK PARTY

- To have fun – no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate.
- To provide an opportunity to know your neighbours and where they live.
- To establish friendships.
- To increase that sense of belonging to a community.
- To meet neighbours on your block that might be able to help you with a gardening problem, or lend you that needed ingredient for your recipe.
- To encourage neighbours to look after the neighbourhood.
- To help with safety/crime prevention by knowing who lives where and who does not.
- To learn a little about each other and know who might need a little extra help from time to time.
- To increase security by knowing each other's schedules.
- To develop an opportunity to meet some of the old time neighbours and learn about your community history.

As friendships grow, so do opportunities for borrowing and sharing of tools, sugar, information etc.

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PLANNING YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN ORGANIZING YOUR EVENT.

1. GETTING STARTED

- The idea of a neighbourhood block party is to bring neighbours together. It's a good idea to find 1 or 2 neighbours to help you with the event.
- One can take the "Lone Ranger" approach, and it can be a great event. However, it may make it more difficult to find someone else to organize it next year.
- The first step is to create an organizing committee. It is important to include everyone in the decisions about the event.
- If this is the first time you may want to send out a flyer to explain what a Block Party is, encourage attendance, perhaps share some of the benefits, get opinions on how to handle the food, and possible dates and times to have the event.
- Enlist as many neighbours as you can to help out. Someone can type the flyer; someone else can collect them. You may want to ask some kids to drop the flyers in the mailboxes.

Refer to Tools and Templates Section

2. TYPES OF BLOCK PARTIES

WHICH TYPE OF BLOCK PARTY WILL WORK BEST IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

- barbecues — organizers purchase all that is needed and neighbours provide the money; everyone brings his or her own meat;
- picnics — everyone brings their own meal;
- pot luck — everyone brings one dish;
- catered — everyone shares the cost and the food is purchased.

Try not to go overboard, it can make people feel the event is too much work. Keep it simple!

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3. HOW BIG TO MAKE IT

- Start off with a smaller event rather than a large one. It can always grow, but it is hard to shrink it.
- In selecting who to invite, use natural neighbourhood boundaries where possible (i.e. end of the block). If you are planning a street or cul-de-sac party, you need to invite everyone from that area.
- Decide early and make it clear in your flyer if this will be a block party restricted to those on the street/block or whether people can invite friends/relatives (if yes how many).

4. LOCATION

- Alley*
- Street*
- Park*

**Because these locations are on public lands, a permit is required (see permit information on page 5). Safety needs to be an important factor in planning!*

Other Options:

- A neighbour's backyard
- House
- Garage (rainout)
- Common room in a condo unit

It is recommended to use a public space, if at all possible. This will increase the likelihood of shared responsibility for the event.

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5. CITY OF EDMONTON PERMITS

IF THE PARTY WILL BE AT A LOCATION WHERE THERE IS TRAFFIC (STREET, BACK ALLEY OR CUL-DE-SAC)...

- A block party permit is required from the **Transportation Department**.
- A block party permit can be found online at www.edmonton.ca
- Signatures from all your neighbours in the party zone are required on the permit to show support for the event, whether or not they plan to attend.
- The permit must be submitted at least 2 weeks before the event. The cost for the permit (which includes road barriers and their pick up and delivery) is on the City's website www.edmonton.ca, as well as shown on the Block Party permit application or call **311**.
- **Alcohol consumption is not permitted on city roads or public property.**

IF THE PARTY WILL BE ON PARKLAND...

- A parkland permit is required.
- **Parkland Permits** are available from your Community Recreation Coordinator (CRC) at no cost.
- Contact a CRC in your Service Area (Southeast, Southwest, Northeast or Northwest) at **311**.
- Bylaw 2202 allows dogs on unimproved and improved trails in parks, but not on sportsfields or playgrounds.
- Bylaw 2202 prohibits the consumption of alcohol and no selling of food, drink or merchandise on **parkland**.
- No vehicles are permitted on the park site.
- Remember that at the end of the function, the site needs to be clean.
- **Liability Insurance** is required for parties on city parkland. Check with your Community League about this. If your event is a sponsored Community League event, their insurance may cover you. If not, you may wish to check with your home insurance.

Don't let obstacles stand in your way. In organizing the event, be creative!

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6. THE TIMING TO GET THE EVENT PLANNED

- For a first time block party, distribute the first flyer requesting feedback 4 to 5 weeks before the event.
- Adjustments may need to be made if a neighbour already has an event of their own planned.
- Once the Committee has looked at all the suggestions, the final flyer with date, time and what to bring should go out 3 weeks before the event.
- Mid-May to end of August is a good time.
- A weekend date or holiday is often the best times for the event.
- Have an alternate rainout day planned, just in case.
- Keep in mind who lives in the neighbourhood when setting the hours for the party. If young children or seniors are living near the party area plan to finish by 9:00pm.

7. GETTING THE WORD OUT

It is important to keep neighbours informed. Here are some ideas:

- Flyers can be used with a request to drop back their suggestions for the event in your mailbox.
- Information can be gathered from your neighbours by going door-to-door. This adds a personal touch and people often offer to help.
- A casual approach can be used to inform neighbours as you see them out doing their lawns.
- Neighbours can be called on the phone. (If you don't know your neighbours, a reverse directory telephone book can be used. They are available at libraries.)
- Make an extra effort to get your new Canadian neighbours out to the event (refer to tools and templates section).
- To reach neighbours in townhouses, apartments and condos, it is best to approach the manager. They will let you know how to get in touch with the residents.

Take every opportunity to talk it up in the neighbourhood as often as possible prior to the event.

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8. ROLE OF THE ORGANIZERS

- Make decisions about the set up.
- Act as a greeter at the event.
- Introduce new neighbours and help them make connections.
- Make sure the clean up is done.
(You may wish to inspire clean up by rewarding the children with a prize)

9. SET UP

- Set up a **sign-in book** for records for the next year, and it can help develop a contact list for the neighbourhood.
- **Name tags** are important.
Decide what you want neighbours to write on their name tags (e.g. first and last names, house numbers).
- Line up tables for the food and have a few **garbage cans** available.
Decide whether you will coordinate or
- everyone will bring their own **tables, chairs, plates, cutlery, cups and beverages**.
-

- If using **barbecues**, who will bring them?
- Institute a bathroom policy "everyone to use his or her own", so that home security is maintained.
- Decide if **pets** are allowed.
- Be ready to oversee the **clean up** after the event.
- You may wish to do an **evaluation** at the end of the event to collect any new ideas. (See sample in the tools and template section).

10. ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

What should we do during the event?

- Visit and eat. Over the centuries, food has always had a very social component in societies.
- Games for kids (some organized, some they can plan themselves).
- Take time to introduce one another and point to one's house. This can be done in a game format.
- Encourage the talent in your neighbourhood to come forward such as musicians or magicians.

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FIRE PITS

Especially during September neighbours have asked if a fire pit is allowed.

- There are no specific fire permits required on streets; however a fire permit is required on parkland.
- If your block party will be held on parkland ask your CRC to add a fire permit to your application. Refer back to Section 5.
- If your block party is held on the street then neighbours are asked to follow the same guidelines that are set by the Open Air Fire Bylaw (a brochure is available at any Fire Hall Station).
- For further information call the Edmonton Emergency Response Department at **311**.

OTHER WAYS TO GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

- Perennial exchange
- Garden tour party
- Group garage sale

Allow the majority to determine the event.

FINAL REMINDERS

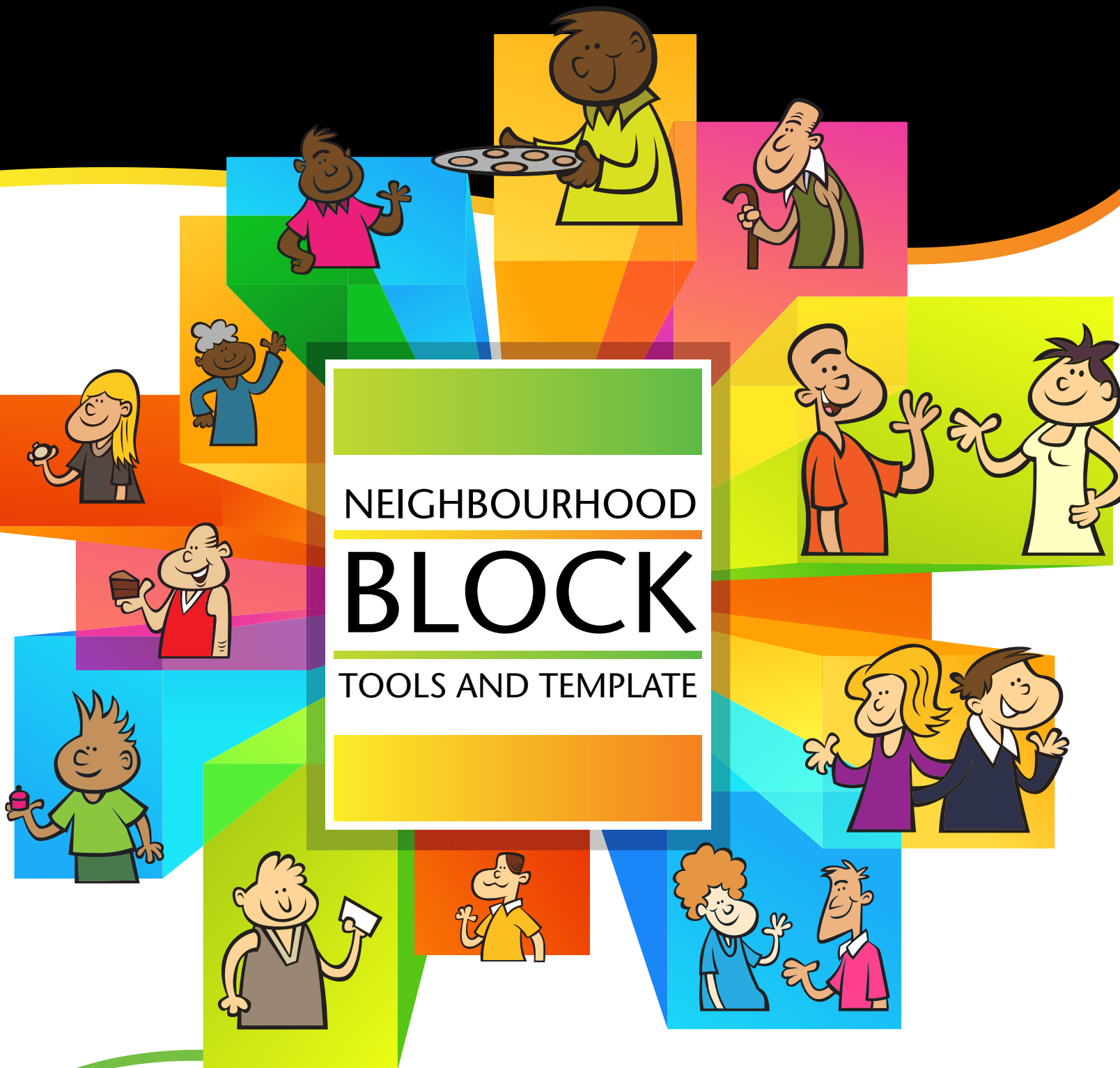
- Neighbours should observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment in sight.
- Loud music is prohibited.
- Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need access.
- You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove cars for the street closure.

QUESTIONS

If you wish to discuss your event or if you have questions please call a Community Recreation Coordinator in your area: Southeast, Southwest, Northeast, or Northwest at 311.

RESOURCES IN THE TOOLS AND TEMPLATE SECTION

- ☐ Planning check list
- ☐ Sample block party questionnaire
- ☐ Sample of an invitation
- ☐ How to welcome your new Canadian neighbour to the block party
- ☐ Sample block party sign-in sheet
- ☐ Suggested activities to learn about your neighbours
- ☐ Ice breaker game – Bingo
- ☐ Sample evaluation form



NEIGHBOURHOOD
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TOOLS AND TEMPLATE

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BLOCK PARTY PLANNING CHECK LIST

A successful block party is not hard to have – it just takes a little motivation, a lot of cooperation, and a willingness to enjoy time with your neighbours.

2 MONTHS PRIOR

- ☐ Locate a couple of neighbours to help design the survey (if first time event)
- ☐ Talk/deliver survey to neighbours to gauge interest
- ☐ Once results are in, invite those interested to a planning meeting and have the Block Party Kit available
- ☐ Planning Meeting Date _____ Time _____ Where _____
- ☐ Planning Meeting Decisions:
 - Party Date & time: _____
 - Rain-out Alternatives: _____
 - Scope of Party (how big will it be – cul-de-sac, neighbours sharing one block, neighbours sharing alleyway) _____
 - Location of Party (on street/alley, in backyard/carport, at a park) _____
 - Type or Theme of Party (BBQ, Potluck, Canada Day) _____
 - Budget (how will costs of permit, any supplies be covered?) _____

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TO DO LIST (for planning committee)

RESPONSIBILITY	WHO	ADDRESS & PHONE
Chair/Main Contact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • send out invitations • answer questions • organize planning meetings (if needed) • get nametags 		
Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include games/activities for all ages, icebreakers • decide whether to offer prizes • get kids & teens involved in planning & supervising 		
Food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrange tables for food, BBQ's, coolers • collect money for any group food supplies (if needed) 		
Permits* Blocking off a street or alley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation Dept. requires you have a permit • submit at least 2 weeks prior to event • collect signatures from all residents in party zone • determine how cost will be covered On City Parkland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a permit is required if using neighbourhood park area • Permits are available at no cost from your Community Services CRC * Refer to Section 5 of the Kit		
Clean-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • obtain garbage cans and replacement bags • take down any signs that may have been put up 		

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1 month prior

- ☐ Follow-up planning meeting to discuss:
 - what's been done
 - what still needs to be accomplished
- ☐ Send out invitations
- ☐ Obtain permit

1 week prior

- ☐ Publicize party and include reminder that street will be closed
- ☐ Confirm arrangements for traffic barricades

Party Day

- ☐ Set-up
 - Designate areas for food, seating, music, & activities
 - Place garbage cans in strategic places
- ☐ Arrival
 - Assign greeters who can introduce neighbours to each other
 - Have sign in sheet and nametags
- ☐ Party Schedule
 - After everyone has arrived, announce the days events & any special announcements
- ☐ Clean-up
 - Get everyone to help clean up area before leaving
 - Take down barriers

Have a great party!

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NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY QUESTIONNAIRE

A few neighbours have been talking and we thought it would be fun to get together and have a "meet-on-street event". It would be an opportunity to meet each other and to have some fun! To get this event underway, we will like to know what you think!

Are you **interested** in participating in a neighbourhood party? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what is the best **time** of day and the best date?

Date	Day	Time	Indicate your choice
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Which of the following **suggestions** would suit your family the best?

- Each family bring their own hamburger, buns and refreshments, plus a dessert or a salad to share.
- The hamburgers & buns are supplied and everyone contributes money to pay for them. Each family brings their own refreshments plus an appetizer, salad or dessert to share.
- Each family brings their own picnic meal and a dessert to share.
- Everyone brings one dish to share (casserole, salad, or dessert – to be assigned) and their own refreshments.

☐ 1st Choice ☐ 2nd Choice

If you have other **ideas** please jot them down!

If you would like to help organize, let use know. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please return this questionnaire by _____ to _____ at _____
Date Name Address

We will send out a second notice to let everyone know the outcome of the survey.
Please remember to give us your name and address so we can contact you directly.

Name Address Email

Thanks Neighbour!

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YOU ARE INVITED TO A BLOCK PARTY

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

We are asking each family to bring:

- ☐ chairs to sit on
- ☐ meat or vegetarian food to barbecue for your family
- ☐ 1 salad and 1 dessert to share (make enough for 6 people)
- ☐ beverages for your family (coffee and tea will be provided)
- ☐ non-breakable plates, cups and cutlery for your family
- ☐ other _____

In addition, do you have the following that could be used?

☐ a barbecue ☐ tables ☐ coolers

Do you have a talent that you would like to share with us? Any suggestions for activities you could organize? _____

Are you able to help with some of the "behind the scenes" work? _____

Please return the bottom half of this flyer to:

_____ at _____ OR _____ at _____

Your Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

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How To Welcome Your New Canadian Neighbour to the Block Party

Many new Canadians want to meet their neighbours and make friends. Some are shy because they speak little or no English. Others may not know how to participate or are worried about the intentions of their neighbours. It is important to make everyone feel at ease and to communicate clearly the purpose of a Block Party.

Here are some suggestions that may help neighbours feel welcome:

- If possible knock on the door of a new Canadian with someone who speaks the language.
- Be specific about what the expectations are.
- Remember words like barbecue, face painting or pot luck may need to be explained.
- If you are blocking the street for the day explain about street parking changes.
- It may take more than one invitation for a new Canadian to fully understand what a Block Party is. One idea is to follow up in the weeks leading up to the party.
- Assign a designated host to new families (long time Canadians or new Canadians) to make sure that neighbours meet and participate in the activities.
- Make activities accessible to those with limited English language skills.
- Ask about special cultural/religious diet or activity constraints.

Safety is a big concern for many new Canadians because of past experiences. Fear is often caused by not knowing the language. Do your best to make everyone feel comfortable!



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NEIGHBOUR BLOCK PARTY SIGN IN SHEET

[illegible]

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Suggested Activities To Learn About Your Neighbours

Canada Day

- Who can trace their Canadian family origins back the furthest?
- Who is the newest Canadian?
- Canadian quiz (from newspaper, library, internet, etc.)
- Canadian heroes charades
- A cake decorated with the maple leaf
- Canadian music

Neighbourhood History

- Research the history of your neighbourhood through the library or the City of Edmonton archives
- Identify special people that lived in your area such as a politician, artist, eccentric, hero, etc.
- Have neighbours guess the neighbourhood history by playing charades (who, what, where and when questions)

Cultural Connections

- Have everyone bring their favorite family dish
- Teach everyone how to say 3 things in another language
- Use a world map to indicate where everyone originally came from
- Record the story of how everyone came to live in the neighbourhood and what they like best about the neighbourhood; give a copy to the city archives and the Mayor

Neighbourhood Action

- Discuss what issues or concerns neighbours may have and establish teams to explore how to resolve them. **Note:** keep this part of the party to a set time; remember a block party should be fun!
- Have a clean up time, build a bench, plant a garden, paint street numbers etc. as part of the block party activities

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MEET ON THE STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTY BINGO

YOUR NAME _____

- **Find someone who fits the description and have THEM write their name in the square!**
- You will have 12 minutes to complete the task. All those with completed forms get their form put into a box for a draw.

Speaks a second language	Born in the 1930's	Has freckles	Travelled outside of Canada in 2004	Likes to exercise
Wearing sandals	Has a great smile	Likes to play golf	Wears glasses	Did not see the 3 rd movie "Lord of the Rings"
Has brown eyes	Wearing jeans	Plays a musical instrument	Planted a garden	Plays soccer
Has a sister	Born in another country	Is a football fan	Wearing black socks	Born in another province

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IT'S A BLOCK PARTY EVALUATION FORM

To help plan our future block parties, Your feedback is appreciated.

What were the 3 best things about the block party?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What 3 things would you recommend for the next party?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How would you like to maintain the neighbourhood connection that was started at the block party during the rest of the year?

Are you willing to help with the planning of a future neighbourhood event?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please leave your name, phone # and email _____

Return this form to _____ by _____.

Thanks neighbour!