



United Way helping seniors  
remain independent.

**United Way British Columbia's Healthy Aging Program**

**Community Consultation & Stakeholder Meeting**  
**Burns Lake, British Columbia**

**July 27, 2021 at 10:00 AM Via Zoom**

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## Overview:

*"Better at Home is a program that helps seniors with simple day-to-day tasks so that they can continue to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities. The program is funded by the Government of British Columbia and managed by the United Way of British Columbia (UWBC), with services delivered by a local non-profit organization. UWBC is collaboratively working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland and Central & Northern Vancouver Island.*

The **Burns Lake** region has been identified as potential **Better at Home** site. The United Way of British Columbia assessed community readiness, identified seniors' assets, needs and priorities in regard to the potential delivery of the **Better at Home** program.

This report reflects the Community Input and Stakeholder Meeting held on **July 26th at 10:00 AM (via Zoom)** and will be shared with invited guests and used by the lead organization to design an appropriate local **Better at Home** program that meets community needs.

The meeting attendees included members of the public and representatives from key stakeholders from the entire region. It was attended by 9 individuals including 2 representatives from the United Way British Columbia (UWBC). Invitations were sent to 23 stakeholders including the local First Nations Bands and key members of each location in preparation for the community meeting. Attendees were community members and representatives from various local organizations and businesses from the Burns Lake region and included key stakeholders and local government.

*The United Way British Columbia would like humbly acknowledge that we live, work and play as a guest on the beautiful, traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands of the Indigenous Peoples of this place we now call British Columbia. We honour the Elders for their stewardship of this place and peoples of these nations.*

## Facilitators:

**Sarrah Storey**, Regional Community Developer (RCD), Northern British Columbia, United Way British Columbia

**Cathy Holmes**, Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home, United Way British Columbia

Sarrah Storey acknowledged territorial lands of the First Nations Communities and our use of their land for this meeting. After a bit of housekeeping, we welcomed participants.

## Introduction to United Way of British Columbia's Healthy Aging program

To better support older adults to be socially connected, live healthy lifestyles, and maintain independence, United Way British Columbia's (UWBC) Healthy Aging program's strategy aims to help British Columbia's seniors stay at home and in their communities longer. Working towards a vision of a healthy, caring, inclusive community for all members. UWBC's Healthy Aging program embraces a holistic setting where older adults have unrestricted access to community programs and services so that they can age in place. Together with community agencies, local, provincial, and federal governments, and a diverse set of vested partners and donors, the Healthy Aging Team delivers programs including **Better at Home**, Active Aging, Social Prescribing, Therapeutic Activation Programs for Seniors, Family Friends and Caregivers Support, Men Shed's, Safe Seniors, Strong Communities and Community and Sector Development initiatives, such as *Healthy Aging CORE* and *Project Impact*.

This work is based on three **Healthy Aging Pillars** – priorities that were identified through extensive research, community consultations and recommendations, and learnings uncovered through 12 Better at Home Communities of Practice (COPs) facilitated across the province:

*Increase physical activity:* Physical immobility and lack of leisure activity are related to social isolation and loneliness. One of the Healthy Aging program's Strategic goals is to increase physicality to help older adults remain socially connected and active as they age.

*Reduce social isolation:* The UWBC's Healthy Aging Strategy aims to keep seniors mentally engaged in their communities, therefore reducing feelings of social isolation and social frailty.

*Maintain and enhance independence:* Through provincial investments that maintain and enhance seniors' independence, the UWBC's Healthy Aging Strategy strengthens United Way's commitment to providing home and community services that encourage self-determination.

## Raising the Profile Project (RPP)

The RPP was launched in 2016, and was created to increase support and recognition of the role of community-based seniors' services in promoting health and fostering resilience in seniors in BC.

A significant component of the RPP was the development of a provincial network, the goal of which is to understand and build on the capacity of community-based seniors' services to meet the growing needs of an aging population. The network consists of executive directors and managers from municipal and non-profit organizations around BC, seniors who are volunteer leaders in the community-based senior services sector, as well as provincial organizations and others that support the work of the sector.

While **Better at Home** was not created from the RPP project the overall needs of individuals staying in their homes for longer periods of time revealed that complex needs arise as older adults age in place. In noting these changes, **Better at Home** has been able to support, educate and even influence many strategies in the sector.

## Healthy Aging CORE

Healthy Aging Collaborative On-line Resources and Education is a platform to connect community-based senior services organizations and allied agencies and individuals in British Columbia. CORE is designed to provide up-to-date information, resources, and training opportunities and to make it easier to

communicate, coordinate, and collaborate in order to help build capacity, strengthen the network, and develop a collective and cohesive voice among volunteers, staff, and others who support healthy aging initiatives.

**Healthy Aging Core Canada** was launched in the Spring of 2021 and Programs and Initiatives profiled on *Healthy Aging CORE* provide examples of the important work being done by local, provincial, and national organizations and the value of these programs and initiatives in promoting health and well-being and fostering resilience for seniors.

The knowledge hub was created for **Community Based Seniors' Services** (CBSS) organizations and allied agencies and individuals in British Columbia. This portal features training, resources such as tool kits, guides, highlighted community programs, and CBSS Leadership Council's Provincial Working Groups discussion groups. **Better at Home** continues to be an integral part of the steering of the sector.

For more information visit and/or join Healthy Aging Core at [www.healthagingCORE.ca](http://www.healthagingCORE.ca)

## **Community-Based Seniors Services sector (CBSS)**

The key stakeholders of the province's broad and diverse CBSS sector, including seniors themselves, form an extensive network that is connected through Healthy Aging CORE (Collaborative Online Resources and Education). Besides this provincial knowledge hub, the sector shares information, knowledge, expertise, and experience through learning events, Provincial Working Groups, Regional and Provincial Consultations, Communities of Practice, and the Biannual Provincial Summit on Aging. Between September 2020 and May 2021, eight virtual Regional Consultations and one Provincial Consultation were held.

These community engagement mechanisms are guided by the CBSS Leadership Council, and play an important role in informing their work, as well as keeping the CBSS sector informed about new resources, programs, and research relevant to the sector.

Community based organizations provide seniors with access to a range of low-barrier programs in seven core areas: 1) nutritional supports, 2) health and wellness programs, 3) physical activity, 4) education, recreation, and creative arts, 5) information, referral, and personal advocacy, 6) transportation, 7) affordable housing.

## **Better at Home Expansion Sites**

Over the past few years, there has been considerable interest in expanding the **Better at Home (BH)** program to more communities in BC. Based on a reviews of community population, data and needs assessments of prospective communities, in 2021, BH will expand to serve up to six (6) new program sites in British Columbia.

**Burns Lake** was identified as a potential **Better at Home** site.

The meeting on **July 27th, 2021** could not have happened without the dedication behind the scenes of the following people from:

**Scott Zayac** from **The Link** who offer services that facilitate the advancement of families, individuals, children and youth in Burns Lake and area.

All participants were thanked for their participation and support throughout the meeting.

## **Burns Lake Community Consultation Attendees:**

**Delores Funk** - Mayor of Burns Lake

**Bernice Magee** - Board Member of Link Community Services

**Scott Zayac** - Executive Director Link Community Services

**John Barth** - Guest

**Sandra Barth** - Guest

**Heather Nooshi** - Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Elected Council

**Kay Saul** - President, Burns Lake and Area Seniors Society

**Sarrah Storey** – Regional Community Developer Northern BC – UWBC

**Cathy Holmes** – Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home Expansion

### **The intent of the community meeting on July 27th, 2021 was:**

- Support isolated areas as soon as possible in order to help support seniors in Burns Lake;
- That all seniors who need supports have access to bc211 and COVID19 emergency supports as well as **Better at Home** supports to community;
- Recommendation for **Better at Home** services in identified communities;
- Readiness in each community to pursue expansion in the region and determine community need and appetite which was confirmed by those in attendance.

The agenda for the meeting via Zoom was to come together as a community, through structured conversations, to identify senior's needs and priorities with regards to **Better at Home** services, as well as help identify a potential lead organization in the community best suited to deliver the Better at Home program.

## **Community Assets Burns Lake**

A community asset is something that has value that is part of a community. Includes skills, networks, current initiatives, programs, policies, structures, or other resources that can be leveraged to improve the community's sustainability:

**Elizabeth Fry Society Burns Lake Branch**

**Burns Lake Supportive Society**

**Burns Lake and Area Seniors Society**

**The Link**

**Village Of Burns Lake Recreation Center**

**Home and Community Care**

**Northern Health Authority**

**Burns Lake Ladies Auxiliary**

**First Nations Health Authority**

**Carrier Sekani Family Services**

**Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation (Burns Lake Band)**

**Wet'suwet'en First Nation**

**Lake Babine Nation**

**Skin Tyee Nation**

**Nee Tahí Buhn Band**

**Cheslatta Carrier Nation**

There are two First Nations reserves that are part of the town, and another four nearby, making it one of the few communities in the province that have almost equal populations of persons of native or European descent. Local nations include Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Lake Babine Nation, Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation, Skin Tyee First Nation and Nee-Tahí-Buhn Band.

*Note: These stats are not included in the below population demographics.*

## **Community Demographics Burns Lake**

- According to the 2016 Census, the population of Burns Lake **1771**
- **265** persons are 65 years and older
- **145** over the age of 85
- In 2016, **265** seniors over the age of 65 **14.9%** lived independently in their own homes
- **19.5%** lived below the poverty line in the region
- Average Cost of a home on average **\$276,000**

## **What does Better at Home do?**

The Better at Home program helps seniors live in their own homes by providing nonmedical support services delivered by local lead organizations, which may be a non-profit organization; using a mix of paid

workers, private contractors and volunteers. **Better at Home** programs are guided by local Advisory Committees and each program will have a paid Program Coordinator. In our 10<sup>th</sup> year of service delivery, we are thrilled to continue supporting existing programs, and welcome new ones, as they ensure that seniors live well, remain independent, and are active contributors to their communities.

The **Better at Home** program is designed to address the specific needs of local regions, allowing communities to choose from the following basket of services:

- friendly visiting
- transportation to appointments
- snow shoveling
- light yard work
- simple home repairs
- grocery shopping
- light housekeeping

### **Presentation and Reflections - The Link – Nourishing Family and Community - Scott Zayac – Executive Director**

The Link (LDFES) has been actively supporting educational opportunities and services for individuals, children and families in our community since 1992.

#### **Link's Mission**

To enhance the health and socio-economic well-being of individuals, children and families.

#### **Link's Vision**

To be responsive to the diverse needs of the communities of the Lakes District through an interconnected hub of services.

#### **Link's Values**

- Respectful, inclusive services that focus on improving the quality of life for all members of our communities.
- Supportive environments that are thoughtful, non-judgmental, considerate and solution-focused.
- Reflective and dynamic practices that allow services to best meet the needs of those the Society serves.
- Dignified, respectful, caring and understanding services that ensure a welcoming environment.

The Link provides a variety of poverty reduction and food security advocacy initiatives at the Provincial and local levels. These initiatives include organizing community meetings, working with local schools, and providing input into the Province's Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Link also offers training in FASD & Trauma-Informed Practice to service providers from facilitators with over 18 years of front-line experience.

The Food Centre has been serving our area for over 15 years. Our incredibly dedicated Food Centre volunteers and staff work together to provide food security for families and individuals every week. It is our pleasure to support 90 to 110 families in our community on each week. The Food Centre is supported by volunteers, donations from both individuals & businesses, and supplemented with a BC Community Gaming Grant. We are a Good Food Organization, a member of Food Banks BC, and affiliated with Food Banks Canada.

The Community Connections Program works to lessen the impacts of poverty on individuals and families. By supporting individuals through improved food security and increased access to childcare, education and training opportunities, we believe the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities will improve. Our Outreach Worker, Angeleen Anderson, works to connect people to other service providers in the community.

Funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada makes this program possible. The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) is a community-based program that provides support to pregnant women, new mothers and babies facing challenging life experiences. The goal of CPNP is to enhance services that address the needs of pregnant women, their children and families, in order to promote healthy pregnancies and improve infant outcomes. Participants receive and share information about maternal nutrition, including how to prepare a variety of healthy meals compromised of traditional foods through a weekly cooking class. The program is structured around group sessions that focus on social inclusion, increasing self-confidence, healthy prenatal development, and traditional maternal/prenatal health practices. Infant nutrition and development are a key element of the sessions, with a focus on breastfeeding, traditional practices for infant development, infant care skills, and skills necessary to encourage infant/mother attachment.

## **Feedback & Questions from Meeting Participants**

**Better at Home** would be a welcome addition to current community supports in Burns Lake and callers clearly supported the Link stating that they would work well with the available community resources and they have the experience to facilitate a strong program in the area. The Link was unanimously supported by all attendees.

Quotes and Questions:

*You noted from the slide presentation that 38% of the services were delivered by volunteers? My question is What would happen if that 38% of volunteers wasn't there?*

Sarrah: In Fraser Lake there are a couple of volunteers who do transportation and so that percentage could have been done by the two volunteers? They are given milage at .54 cents per KLM, for travel from Fraser Lake to Burns Lake or Fraser Lake to Prince George for a medical appointment for a Cancer Treatment or whatever it might be and at the end of every month they are typically given Chamber Dollars as a thank you for their service. The volunteers may be few – but, they are mighty!

Sarrah: The Men's Shed in Fraser Lake steps up to help with a variety of things. If you don't have a men's shed check out Healthy Aging Core as there is a grant coming up for that and we encourage you to apply in Burns Lake for the grant. They can be very helpful. Sarrah states: "I've seen them build ramps for seniors and help with houses when someone's house goes down, so those groups you can connect with and make partnerships with. "Another thing volunteers typically do are phone calls for events or check-ins to seniors. Volunteers can get people to the dinners or even step up to help with the dinners, and it is different for every program.

Cathy: We encourage volunteerism but that specific percentage isn't carved in stone. We know that in many communities' volunteers preform the lion's share of the work. A number of programs in the province do not use volunteers at all, but having a percentage of volunteers is valuable. For example, in friendly visiting, there is a quiet philosophy in that we don't think seniors should have to pay for a friend so to speak, so we encourage volunteers to participate where possible. Transportation and grocery shopping in urban communities is often a volunteer role.

*In the beginning, there didn't seem to be specifically the inclusion of First Nations in the Better at Home Program and New Canadians – but I think that Scott has covered that in his...so that's okay then.*

Cathy: In all programs in the Province of BC there are intimate relationships with the First Nations Communities in providing services on both Urban and on Reserve and we encourage it in every program and to new Canadians as well.

Scott: In terms of as a host, it would be essential that we work closely with the First Nations to make sure protocols are followed to identify people who might want to participate in the service. The people on the ground in the different communities all over the region would really have to work to identify folks for sure; that would be key.

Sarrah: What we typically see is Advisory Committees get together and make a decision on the area you are going to cover with the Better at Home Program because you might say 50 KLM's outside of the community is just too far, you might say you'll do a 20 KLM outside of the community because that's all the volunteers can handle or that's all the budget can sustain. We do have BH programs that are dedicated to First Nations including Gitxsan and others.

*Will there be any criteria or can any senior from say 65 to 85 be eligible for the services or is that something that is set up at the time the program is established?*

Sarrah: There is a sliding scale that changes every year about 2% that we can share later on, but that is typically how we look at the program. If you make 100,000 a year, you would typically pay for the services but we do something a little different in that our housekeepers have been vetted and this is very safe for seniors. A low-income senior may not pay for their services, or pay a small amount – they may only pay 50% or 30% or they might pay zero, so typically what I have seen is that seniors are at that GIS level and most pay zero. It is a great program that way and if you have a senior that looks at you and says: “I have this mortgage right now and my medical bills are high, I need new dentures this month, I can’t afford to pay, that is something that the Program Coordinator can look at and say – sure, don’t worry about it – here is the service.” We’ll work with the seniors. This way the funds last longer.

*Would this program, say a senior can afford to pay, would those people who are going to do the housekeeping, would they still be able to go to that senior’s home and be paid by that person or does that not work?*

Cathy: It’s a programmatic thing, Kay. For example, say Scott’s agency is chosen as the host of the program, all the invoicing would be handled by the agency. I’d like you to consider, if the person is able to pay, the dollars that are generated go back into the program to support participants who can’t.

*What I was getting at is say the Link sends that person, would that person still be eligible to go to that person’s house?*

Sarrah: Nobody is allowed to go into the senior’s house unless say, Scott, has sent them. They cannot just go there and they can’t do extra things or take money. No money is allowed to exchange hands between a volunteer or a contractor during their time with a senior, that’s part of the protocol of the program. Its only done through *the Link* for example and through the contractor, or through the volunteer in whatever capacity. We don’t want seniors taken advantage of in any way so there are protocols in place on how money changes hands. At the end of the month, they’d get an invoice. Scott would hire the housekeeper and do the security checks etc., so the senior is safe.

Cathy: And the good news about that is that it is always the same person coming into the home to do the services rather than a different person coming in and out. It is one very familiar person that comes in to do a variety of tasks.

Sarrah: And part of that housekeeping is a friendly visit as well. A lot of times, it’s helping the senior clean too, not just coming in to clean your home. Seeing the senior active. There are a lot of programs that seeing the senior active will help them and they’ll do it together so when you want to age in place the more active you are, the longer you normally live and that is part of this too.

*I was wondering, if United Way carries a liability insurance policy and how are the volunteers that go into the home protected in the event there is an incident, injury or whatnot? I just wanted to know if the United Way offered that?*

Sarrah: No, the agency has its own insurance that they need to carry. That can come out of the budget. Each charity normally has directors and liability insurance and content insurance and all of those things so you need to talk to your insurance provider. You have to look at all the ins and outs of insurance and make sure you are covering yourself, but that is always held through the agency. United Way has nothing to do with each agencies insurance and each agency has to deal with it on their own.

*The other thing I am wondering about is I sit as a Director on the Link, so do you have a set process that Scott would be able to adhere to as far as procedures, vetting of volunteers and contractors, just the whole organizational set up?*

Sarrah: So, there's a Better at Home Handbook, another update is on the way?

Cathy: Yes, and we are editing it all the time! The good news is we don't want you to reinvent the wheel. There are protocols in place. There are structures in place, but we do have enough flexibility to provide flexibility for individual programs to develop. Every organization has different intake policies, for example onboarding volunteers; your volunteer intake may require a very different process than ours, so we encourage you to follow your own protocols but to add ours and put them in place as they must be adhered to as well. You may have 3 different steps in your agency, but United Way has an additional step that must be adhered to, so yes, there are policies and procedures. The **Better at Home** handbook is a great place to start and of course, our team will follow up once the agency has been chosen. Communities of Practice and best practices are a great place to start to be able to tailor your program and community needs without having to reinvent the wheel.

Sarrah: There is also a resource called the **Healthy Aging Core**, so if you google that and you sign up for that there are resources that are in there for new programs. It's also where you find information on the grants including the Men's Shed grant, I was telling you about earlier and all of you can look at that. All of the Healthy Aging and Active Aging grants are there and that hub is where you will find all sorts of information. You can ask questions if you are a **Better at Home** coordinator and get more resources. You can find a lot of information so you are not left in the dark and you can ask questions. There is a data base that is provided and there is a lot of support available.

Cathy: When you sign up for **Core the Better at Home** group is a private group set up for BH coordinators, agency management, executive directors etc., and is exclusive to **Better at Home** peer support. If you have a question, you can post a chat and you can talk to other BH Program Coordinators and have your answers delivered as soon as possible. There is some really good opportunity to grow and to learn.

*We are dealing with an elder that lives outside of on one of our territories and the water pump broke and we have her housed at one of the hotels. I joined the call to see if there was anything that could walk in line with this or (pause) we are just living with crisis after crisis over here and there is limited load capacity and we are just trying to stay afloat so I was just wondering if that stuff would be helpful in that kind of situation.*

Cathy: That is a tough question as there isn't currently a **Better at Home** program in your area. While traditionally it would be beyond the scope of the program, I have really seen programs step up and help communities with outside of the box solutions and become navigators for finding help for programs. While we probably couldn't help with **Better at Home** in this situation, Scott, do you in your community have referrals that you might be able to support Heather with?

Scott: Finding contractors in the Burn's Lake region right now is very challenging but I'm hoping with the program, I can create a list that you can kind of have that list of go-to people. I know at the food center we have a contractor that drops everything when we ask which is really rare and really nice, but I am hoping that kind of a relationship can be built with other contractors in the area. I know personally that if I call in for contractors there is a 6-month waitlist.

Cathy: I have another thought; I don't know if you have it in your community? But the Rotary Club and some of the service clubs often do volunteer work especially for urgent situations?

Scott: We do have an active Rotary Club, and one thing I do know for sure is when a need is identified and calls go out people in the community step up. It just happens over and over again, whether it's wildfires or community tragedies we have an amazing group of community volunteers and resources that people can tap into so I'm hoping this can be one of those and speaking directly to Heather in this situation, you know I would hope that that is the type of thing that this program would address.

**That's very helpful. Thank you, guys, that's just one situation that we are dealing with at w First Nation, we do have aging elders. Three of them speak fluent Witsuwit'en and we are trying to get a program up and running for them to get them going to be more active in our community with language, culture and reconciliation. It is very hard to navigate around them with their age and also to get times for them because some days they're not feeling well and other days they are like super lonely and they like the company. They want people to see them and other days they need to be a medical appointment. And, so it is hard to navigate around their timeline because they do enjoy to do this and we did it over COVID during the winter time and it was beautiful. We had so many participants and it was over Zoom and a lot of our participants on and off reserve were able to attend the program and learn our language and our ways. So that is another avenue that we are looking to because of the loneliness that they have been feeling and it just amplified over COVID. All of our elders are vaccinated and I think that would be the next step for us because we are planning to do a culture camp in August and we want to make sure that our elders are involved in that as well.**

Cathy: I have had the good fortune of witnessing similar cultural exchanges on Vancouver Island and we would encourage these kinds of cultural connections. Sarrah, do you have any thoughts on this?

Sarrah: I was just trying to come up with solutions to help and these types of situations; they happen every day and in every one of our communities and we just try to find solutions to help the elder age in place. As for the language centre, Stallat'en built a Language Center so they could start recording the language and doing all these wonderful things and they teach the next generations by trying to bring back the language. Working with the elders is great fun and I hope you have the support in place

and the band councils are able to find the funds to do that. It's great to know what is going on and what is happening in the area. If there is anything I can help with, with my RCD hat on, I will try, and I think right now we don't actually have a peer navigation program that is predominantly for first nation communities and it's something to talk to *Kahir about (Kahir Lalji, Provincial Director, Government Relations & Programs)*. We have one in the North that we got approved for so, and I'm going off side here, it's something I'll look into and then Heather, I can reach out and talk to you about it and it's just good information to know. So, thanks for sharing that, and as for the elder that is stuck in the hotel, we are seeing that here as well. We had one gentleman that was living in a dugout here and we got him into a hotel, and now he's actually living in the hotel. I love how we do things in northern communities. Right now, the support might look like dropping off a meal in the hotel she is staying. If you would like to reach out to me, I will put my information. I know there are a few things in the area that might have some funding so just reach out.

***Mayor Delores Funk: Cathy, I just want to make a comment: I couldn't be more thrilled that the Link is actually interested in providing this program here. The Link and Lakes District Family Enhancement Society has a history of delivering really strong programming in our community and area and we are very, very fortunate to have them here, so if this program lands in their hands it couldn't be in a better place to be totally honest. And I don't think you'd find a person that would say otherwise. Just excellence across the board and we are very grateful to them for what they do and in terms of the suite of supports that Better at Home can provide, I think it's going to be challenging to narrow it down to just a few because it's, you know there is just so much need in this area for all those different supports and I'm assuming to be on a further process to determine?***

Cathy: Yes, and I think that it's important to note that the funding that we are offering right now, and I can't tell you the amount just yet as we are in negotiations with this, but it is seed money and to be aware as we go, when we get more money, our programs get more money. Over time, the amount will change and we share the wealth as best as we can, but we also really encourage people to leverage, so if you've got programs in your community that are already doing transportation, sometimes leveraging helps to support these programs and may be beneficial, or grocery programs or whatever the program pieces you choose for your community and I am curious:

**I'm going to ask perhaps, Sandra, John Kay and Heather, if you were to choose what you needed from the basket of services, what might that look like to you?**

**Kay:** Light housekeeping for one, and light gardening, anything that enables people to help to stay in their home hey?

**John and Sandra:** Transportation is really significant for many seniors. And, John and Sandra would like to take this opportunity to second all the sentiments that Delores expressed on behalf of the Link and what I hope and assume will be their application to do/be the Better at Home agency in the Lakes District

**Heather:** I think light housekeeping, and I don't know if visiting, just to make sure the elders and double check on the elders if they are okay, and yes, some of them do need transportation and sometimes

*they depend on one another, but if they're not feeling well then they're kind of hooped. Most of the people that are around where I live all work, so the two elders that live out on their own need rides and need to go out for medical appointments and I see that as an issue and I fully support Scott and the Link. I know the great services that they do provide and this as an added service, we are in full support.*

*Cathy: Scott, you have incredible support from your community.*

*Scott: Yes, thank you, very kind, thank you so much everybody!*

## **What are some important criteria for a lead organization in community?**

- Connection to service groups in all communities in the Burns Lake Region
- Track Record for managing grants and sourcing alternative funding to support programs
- The ability to distribute resources
- Able to manage the demands and expectations of the clients
- Ability to gather *In Kind* supports
- Have people “on the ground” in the region
- Possess long term sustainability
- Have the capacity and foresight for growth
- Promote Success
- Long standing in the community
- Cooperative and Collaborative
- Evolve and fluid

**Prevention oriented:** Better at Home programs are built on the primary assumption that preservation of independence, dignity and health, and the delay of functional decline are worthwhile investments.

**Seniors planning for and with seniors.** Seniors are engaged in the planning and governance of the local programs.

**Senior centered.** The local programs are designed to respond to the needs, priorities and changing circumstances of seniors.

**Community driven:** Within the Better at Home framework, local programs are built by the community for the community and will involve coordination of services from various organizations and partners.

**Evidence informed:** Local programs are built on the learning and evidence developed through the CASI evaluation, through ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning, and on the desire to seek continuous improvements through additional learning and research.

**Independence focused:** Better at Home fosters self-sufficiency and independence by: offering services that assist clients to live independently; helping to promote health literacy and support self-care; promoting social inclusion, and; enabling community connectedness.

**Simple and understandable:** Services incorporate clear and accessible information, ease of access, and the least amount of official procedure needed to maintain standards of safety, privacy and quality.

**Based on need:** Local programs respond to seniors' needs for service and ability to contribute to the cost of providing those services.

**Integrated:** Local programs are developed in partnership with seniors and other key stakeholders and will be integrated where feasible and, by design, complementary to other services and supports.

**A non-governmental program:** Better at Home is managed by UWBC and identified as a non-profit sector program funded by government, which does not replace existing governmental programs or services.

## **Better at Home Program Highlights:**

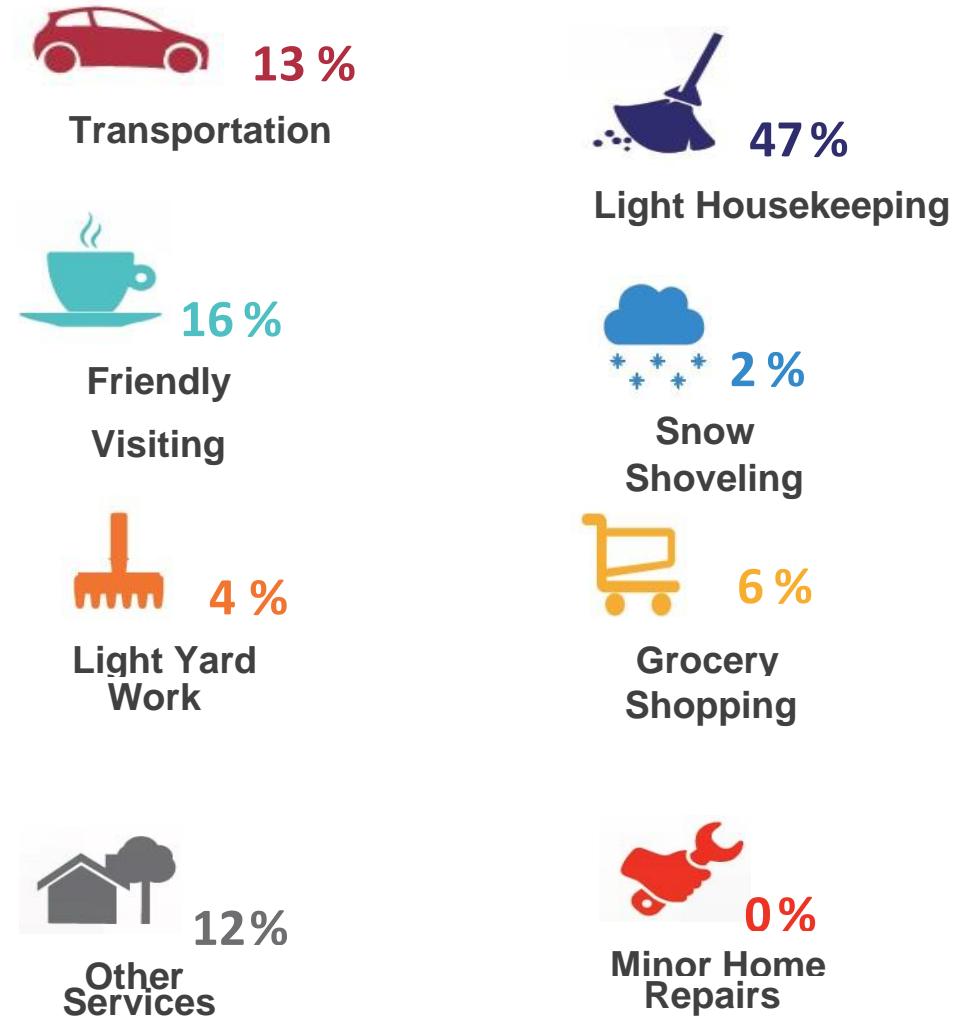
**Better at Home** is a program that helps seniors with simple day-to-day tasks so that they can continue to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities. The Government of British Columbia funds the program, United Way of British Columbia manages it, and local non-profit organizations provide the services.

Its unique 'seniors planning for seniors' approach means older adults contribute to the design, operation and evaluation of their local program.

Older adults who receive Better at Home services may pay a fee based on their income. Some services may be free. These fees-for-service are fed back into the local program in order to serve more seniors. Although each program is unique and serves based on the community, there are also commonalities among 81 **Better at Home** programs:

- Service fees are established on an income-based sliding scale which ensures that services are free for low-income seniors, and market rate for seniors with an income above the BC average.
- All volunteers providing services directly to seniors must have a criminal record check.
- Programs submit regular reports to the provincial office to monitor performance and progress.
- Program Coordinators engage in a Community of Practice which includes sharing, learning activities, discussing best practices on an online portal, and meet annually for training opportunities and participation in collective dialogue. These activities help develop the capacity of each local program to best serve and support the older adults in BC. Better at Home Across the Province.

## From April 2019 – March 2020 Service Distribution



## From April 2019 – March 2020

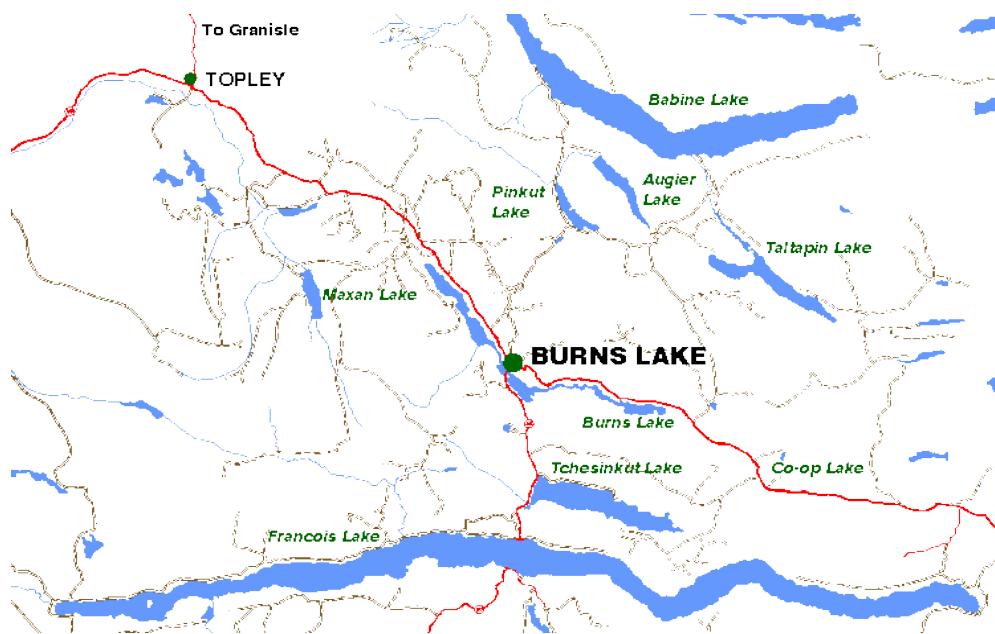
**11,935** Active Participants

**3,832** New Program Participants

**38%** of all services were delivered by Volunteers

\*69 out of 70 programs reporting

## Better at Home Northern of British Columbia



**\$1,076,068** Million dollars invested

**11** BH programs and **5** Healthy Aging programs

**1300** - Seniors received at least one BH service

**326** - New seniors enrolled

**923** - Are living alone

**937** - Are Female

**343** - Are 85+

**4445** - volunteers provided services

*\*Data provided is based on BH programs 2019-2020 reporting.*

## Better at Home Programs in Northern BC

**Better at Home** programs have been established in Northern BC since 2012 initially under the CASI project.

Currently, **Better at Home** in the North can be found in: Prince George, Fraser Lake, Gitxsan, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Granisle, Kitimat, Fort St James, Quesnel, Terrace, Houston and Smithers.

While there are 11 formal programs, there are several smaller communities served in the region. Some follow a regional model and cover more than one community with communications and supports which work together to support seniors who may reside in remote areas that have few services. Throughout the North, several First Nations communities both on and off reserve receive services. Close relationships with First Nations Health Authorities have proven invaluable. The **Better at Home** programs listed will be of tremendous support moving forward and can provide advice on program development.

Learning, reflective practice, and knowledge-sharing are central to **Better at Home**, particularly to support program development and quality improvement. Together these programs participate in on two **Community of Practice** (COP) sessions who formally meet two to three times per year serving all Northern Programs in British Columbia; however, with COVID-19 they met more regularly as the needs of community changed and evolved. Host organizations also connect via the **Better at Home Working Group** (found on Healthy Aging CORE). Several times per year agencies come together for learning opportunities and to support each other's program growth or to consult on best practices as program challenges occasionally arise. **Better at Home** Programs are constantly evolving and pivoting to meet the needs of the community.

Regional models defined include:

### Type 1:

- 1 Host Umbrella + formal agreements with 2 or more Community Based Senior Services (CBSS) agencies in different communities served.
- This may be determined by population size and distance factors, differences in services from basket desired by differing communities

### Type 2:

- 1 Host, employs several coordinators in different communities.

### Type 3:

- 1 Host Agency, 1 Coordinator responsible for a large geographic region with distinct communities with different local governments - We currently have many BH Programs of this type.

Because the program is established using a *community development approach* each program is unique to the communities it serves. **Each program must meet the basic grant criteria** and beyond that can offer some or all of the services from the basket using a mix of paid staff, contractors, and volunteers.

To get a feel for the scope of the work **Better at Home** Program Coordinators are invited to present a brief synopsis of how the program operates in their unique community and to highlight some of the wisdom learned through delivering services in their area.

Local Better at Home agencies can be of great value to new programs. It is encouraged to new programs reach out to the local representation and Regional Community Developer for guidance.

The Regional Community Developer (RCD) in the North is Sarrah Storey [sarrahs@uwbc.ca](mailto:sarrahs@uwbc.ca)

## Emergency Response

### Safe Seniors Strong Communities (SSSC) COVID-19 Response

**Emergency COVID-19 Response Plan in partnership with United Way and bc211**

**Funded by the Ministry of Health**

- Easy access to services through bc211, now province-wide
- Seniors connected to local community volunteers, friends, neighbors
- Added supports and expanded services specific to COVID-19 needs
- Expansion of United Way's Better at Home Services
- Funding of community agencies and programs through United Way

**As of the time of writing 863,651 services were delivered - SSSC services have been provided to seniors in British Columbia which may have included one or more of the following:**

Seniors (65+) No cost for Service Delivery

Urgent non-medical needs resulting from COVID-19

Living independently in community without publicly funded services and/or have no other way to get support services

Wellness checks /Virtual Friendly Visits

Grocery shopping/delivery

Meal prep (pre-made drop-offs and support in home)

Prescription pick-up/drop-off

## Better at Home - Identifying a Lead Organization

We have designed a different approach to the selection of the Lead Organization for delivering the **Better at Home** program. Instead of a competitive process where the funder selects which agency will receive the grant, each community will go through a community engagement process. In this process, stakeholders – seniors in particular – have a chance to shape the program according to local needs and help select the Lead Organization that is the best fit with the program they envision.

This approach encourages partnerships and collaboration, results in better service delivery for the seniors, and empowers communities to make their own decisions.

In order to qualify to hold the **Better at Home** program, the lead organization must:

1. Be a non-profit, charitable organization,
2. Employ a program coordinator,
3. Complete a BH application form, including the following:
  - A. Governance structures, financial statements

- B. A description of geographical boundaries for service delivery
- C. A list of Better at Home services that your program will offer

4. Provide two (2) completed budgets;

- UWBC Program Funds budget,
- and a Total Program Funds budget.

5. Provide any other documentation considered key by the community or by UWBC to support approval of the implementation plan and application.

### **BH Program Must Meet the Following Grant Criteria**

- Participants should be older residents, sometimes defined as 60 or 65 years of age or over
- Participants served must be residents of the identified service area
- A paid program coordinator
- The organization that receives and is accountable for the funds must be a non-profit and charitable organization.
- Provide in-kind support and seek additional funding as needed e.g., donated office space, equipment)
- The program must comply with evaluation requirements (data collection, reporting, participation in Community of Practice).
- That a *Better at Home Advisory Committee* be established to support, guide, and to help the integration of the program into community and be responsive to seniors for the first two years.
- Establish strategies to maximize reach / impact of the program, volunteers, and in-kind support.
- Undertake outreach, marketing and public awareness to reach older adults.
- Provide Volunteer training and support.

### **Better at Home Implementation Process**



## **Suggested Timeline for Implementation of Proposed for Burns Lake**

An ideal timeline was suggested for the **Burns Lake BH** program be:

- Early September a Lead Organization be identified for Burns Lake
- Mid September 2021 the Lead organizations to fulfill and meet all application and grant criteria
- A signed Letter of Agreement for dispersal of funds be for October 2021
- A Program Coordinator be employed in time to participate in the Provincial Better at Home Communities online COPs by December 2021
- At least one BH service be delivered to seniors no later than January 31<sup>st</sup> , 2021

The UWBC Healthy Aging program team shared their experiences with the presenters and tried to affirm concerns by sharing the current dynamics of the program throughout the province reflecting the needs of community, particularly during COVID-19 and the current landscape of successful BH Programs.

## **Recommendations from Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home**

It became very clear that the members of the **Burns Lake Community**, the Regional Community Developer and key stakeholders including the Mayor Dolores Funk unanimously supported **The Link** as the host agency for Burns Lake.

\*\*United Way of Northern BC – We were remiss to contact the local United Way and the RCD contacted them after the event. Communications followed and UWNBC supported The Link as a candidate to lead the program in Burns Lake.

### **Why The Link?**

- Solid non-profit with strong ties to the community
- History of community engagement and consultation
- Committed Board Members with a wide range of relevant experience
- Membership reflects the region's communities
- Extensive community engagement in defining regional requirements and solutions
- Providing significant input to evolving needs of seniors and close relationships with health authorities including First Nations Health Authority
- Committed to sustainable and secure operating policies
- History of accountability in reporting to funders
- Accomplished fundraisers and program developers
- Independent Board that represents the community
- Support from all corners of the region
- Strong and growing network of contacts locally and beyond
- Significant track record of service to the community

## Next Steps

Findings of this report will be reviewed and discussed and an application will be sent to the successful host agency candidate. An application will then be sent to the successful candidate and supports for the new program will commence.

The Provincial Community Planner and the Regional Community Developer will work with the perspective agency to support the application process. Once the LOA has been approved and is in place our team will work with the agency to train, support and facilitate a successful launch of the **Better at Home** program in the community.

### \*\*\* Appendix A \*\*\*

In furthering the discussion with The Link some questions came forward and therefore a Zoom meeting was held on September 20, 2021 at 1:00. **Scott Zayak**, Executive Director of The Link, **Bernice Magee**, Board President and **Cathy Holmes**, Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home Expansion met to discuss and answer any questions that were outstanding prior to proceeding further in the process. In summary, questions regarding collaborations with Northern Health, the formation of an Advisory Committee and the number of potential members, a conversation about its potential membership, discussions regarding additional insurance coverage for the host agency and overall timelines were covered. At the end of the meeting, confirmation of interest in hosting the program was requested and received shortly after the meeting.

## Thank you!

The day would not have been possible without the support of everyone who assisted in putting the meeting together. From the Zoom meeting itself to the information gathering, this dialogue was created by the community of **Burns Lake** and we are grateful for the opportunity to bring the **Better at Home Program** in your region.

Thank you **Kahir Lalji**, Provincial Director, Government Relations & Programs for your vision and encouragement to expand **Better at Home** to more communities in the Province of BC through meaningful initiatives for older adults in our communities.

Many thanks to **Sarrah Storey**, RCD Northern BC, United Way British Columbia for her co-facilitation and insight into the region. Special thanks to the team of **UWBC's** Healthy Aging Program, including **Bobbi Symes**, Assistant Director, Population Health, **Jessamine Liu**, Administrative Assistant, Population Health, **Camille J Hannah**, Provincial Coordinator, Population Health, **Jean Rikhof**, Provincial Coordinator, Grants & Data, and everyone on the Healthy Aging team who assists in the facilitation of new programs in the Province of British Columbia.

Finally, thanks to each of you for attending the day with the desire to co-create a shared future that invests in our older adults to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities. Thanks also for demonstrating humility, courage, grace and leadership to explore differences and uncover what could be the greatest asset and outcome of the session; in particular trusting the facilitation process and being supportive of working with complex challenges presented in our communities.

We look forward to the next steps.

Further feedback, comments or questions can be directed to:

**Cathy Holmes**

**Provincial Community Planner, Better at Home**

**United Way of British Columbia, Population Health**

**[cathyh@UWBC.ca](mailto:cathyh@UWBC.ca)**

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