

Healthy Aging

Year in Review

April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021



United Way
British Columbia

Working with communities in BC's
Interior, Lower Mainland, Central
& Northern Vancouver Island



Contents

A message from Michael McKnight	1
A message from Kahir Lalji	2
A message from Marcy Cohen & Annwen Loverin	3
2020/21 Highlights	4
Healthy Aging Programs	5
Community Engagement	7
Working Groups	7
Regional Consultations	7
Healthy Aging CORE B.C.	8
2020/21 Highlights	9
Total Community Programming by Region.....	9
Sector Strengthening	10
Project Impact Healthy Aging	10
Project Impact Fraser Valley.....	10
Public Policy Institute	10
Leadership Fellows.....	11
Knowledge Mobilization	12
Rising to the Challenge: How B.C.'s Community-Based Seniors' Service Agencies Stepped Up During COVID-19.....	13
Looking Forward	14
Digital Technology Strategy	14

A message from Michael McKnight

President & CEO of United Way British Columbia

United Way British Columbia had a busy year lined up as 2020-21 began – but as we all know, nothing went according to plan last year! Like everyone, we had to adapt and respond to the emergence of COVID-19. We've been managing this uncertainty for well over a year now, but the one thing that never wavered was our commitment to strengthening vital connections and supporting people in need in local communities.

When the pandemic took hold in March 2020, the United Way Healthy Aging team was asked to take on a leadership role in the Government of B.C.'s "Safe Seniors, Strong Communities" initiative. Healthy Aging enlisted its network of some 111 community agencies – along with the support of over 42 agencies from the broader Community-Based Seniors' Services sector. Everyone pulled together to help older adults living at home stay safe and connected during the pandemic.

Healthy Aging also increased their Better at Home provincial network this past year. There are currently 81 community agencies offering this program in more than 260 communities. We'll see even more Better at Home programs start up in the coming year, and there will also be several other new programs added to the Healthy Aging portfolio as well. The work of strengthening connections and supporting seniors will continue after the COVID crisis subsides because the need for age-based services will continue.

Mobilizing support for people in need in local communities is what United Way does. Of course, we don't do it alone! We do it with our friends and partners – including government funders, community service providers, volunteers, and donors. We're looking forward to continuing our work with these partners in the coming year – through all the changes, challenges and opportunities that come our way.



Michael McKnight
President & CEO,
United Way British Columbia





A message from Kahir Lalji

Provincial Director, Government Relations and Programs

We have just been through the most extraordinary year of our lives. It hasn't been the same for everyone – we've all had our own experiences – but because COVID-19 is a global pandemic, it's happened to everyone in the world at the same time. All of humanity was caught up in it in one way or another. That is extraordinary.

As much loss and grief that COVID-19 has caused, and as difficult and devastating as this whole experience has been, it has brought us together. It's made us aware that we are part of a global community, a part of something bigger than ourselves. We are not alone, not really.

Here in B.C., United Way Healthy Aging was proud to play a role in bringing community together. On March 26, 2020, the Province of British Columbia announced an initiative called "Safe Seniors, Strong Communities", and enlisted our help. Along with our existing network of over 120 program providers, including 81 Better at Home programs, we helped coordinate a community-based emergency response that saw seniors' serving agencies from across B.C. help older adults who live at home stay safe and connected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 required British Columbians of all ages to self-isolate in their homes. This "lockdown" had a particular impact on otherwise independent seniors because their vulnerability to the virus made it impossible for them to safely carry on with basic tasks like grocery shopping or picking up their prescriptions. It also separated them from their usual network of family and friends, who are so important to their independence. "Safe Seniors, Strong Communities" was a collaborative and immediate response to this situation, designed to quickly match these seniors with volunteers who were able to run errands for them or lend a caring ear.

By spring 2021, with the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out fully underway, the fog is beginning to lift. As I write this, over 77% of British Columbians over age 12 have received at least one dose; almost 22% of all people in B.C. are fully vaccinated¹. Every indication is that the worst is behind us, and we're ready for the recovery to begin.

I'm not saying it's all over and everything will now return to normal. What I am saying – *what I believe* – is we have lived through this together and we will come back from this together.

Our 2020-2021 Healthy Aging Year in Review tells the story of this most extraordinary year – how United Way responded to the crisis, how the Community-Based Seniors' Services sector rose to the challenge, and how the lessons learned will help us move forward, *together*. I feel such gratitude and appreciation for those working in community and for the thousands of volunteers who stepped up this past year to provide ongoing support and services to people in need throughout the province.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kahir Lalji". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kahir Lalji
Provincial Director, Government Relations and Programs
United Way British Columbia

¹ <https://covid19tracker.ca/provincevac.html?p=BC>



A message from Marcy Cohen & Annwen Loverin

Co-Chairs, CBSS Leadership Council

We are better together. That is the simple but powerful idea behind the Community-Based Seniors' Services (CBSS) sector. As part of a unified sector, we can better coordinate our efforts to support seniors' resilience, social connectedness and independence.

The CBSS sector is a diverse collection of organizations that provide services and programming for older adults in local communities. It is comprised of seniors' centres, community centres, professional associations, community coalitions, ethnocultural organizations, multi-service non-profit societies, intermediary organizations, funders, municipalities and other government bodies. The CBSS Leadership Council, made up of sector representatives from across B.C., is a consultative body that provides insight and advice to United Way Healthy Aging.

We witnessed the strength of the collective power of the CBSS sector this past year, during the COVID-19 crisis, as community agencies responded en masse to the emergent needs of seniors in the midst of a global pandemic. The sector's commitment to serving people as they age, along with their ability to assess needs then respond quickly and collaboratively to those needs is detailed in a report entitled, "*Rising to the Challenge: How B.C.'s Community-Based Seniors' Service Agencies Stepped up During COVID-19*". This research project was conceptualized by the CBSS Leadership Council and sponsored by United Way Healthy Aging.

We are proud of the work the sector did to support older British Columbians during the past year. We're also proud of our association with the United Way and are eager to work shoulder-to-shoulder in the coming year. By working together, we believe we can come back stronger.

Marcy Cohen
Co-Chair,
CBSS Leadership Council

Annwen Loverin
Co-Chair,
CBSS Leadership Council



2020/21 Highlights

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to better serve seniors during the crisis, all Healthy Aging-funded agencies were asked to shift their regular funding over to support “Safe Seniors, Strong Communities” (SSSC), a coordinated, province-wide response to the pandemic that bolstered seniors supports and essential non-medical service delivery at community service agencies throughout B.C. SSSC was developed as a collaborative effort by United Way Healthy Aging, Government of B.C. (Ministry of Health), the Office of the Seniors Advocate and bc211.

Between March 27 and September 30, 2020, funding was distributed across B.C. to support agencies to deliver SSSC services and supports. As restrictions lifted, Healthy Aging programs were able to resume regular programming as intended, where safe to do so, while still prioritizing the SSSC initiative.

Below are the highlights of SSSC in 2020/21:



Healthy Aging Programs



United Way Healthy Aging administers grants and manages programs that provide quality-of-life benefits to seniors, helping them to stay *Active, Connected and Engaged!* In 2020/21, the Healthy Aging portfolio featured five different programs focused on health promotion and prevention practices, each offering seniors-centred programming that supports independence, social engagement, physical activity, and a sense of belonging.

**Better
at Home**



United Way helping seniors remain independent.



Better at Home helps seniors with non-medical, day-to-day tasks (like grocery shopping and light housekeeping, for example) so that they can continue to live independently in their own homes. Friendly visits also keep participants socially engaged and connected. Healthy Aging administers the Better at Home program throughout B.C., supporting over 80 non-profit organizations who deliver Better at Home in over 260 communities. This community-based approach ensures that local agencies are responding to local needs.

This past year, Better at Home expanded into ten new communities across various regions in the province. Each new location was selected based on criteria such as the overall proportion of seniors and Elders in the area and the number of those likely to require Better at Home services (e.g., isolated and vulnerable) among other factors.



Therapeutic Activation Programs for Seniors (TAPS) brings people together for group activities that engage the body, mind and spirit. There are 16 local agencies who offer Healthy Aging TAPS programs. Programming varies by community, but a typical session might include some light exercise, a shared learning opportunity through a workshop or webinar, and a healthy meal with some equally nourishing conversation. These simple group activities are important for people who live alone, helping them stay connected and engaged.



Family & Friend Caregiver Supports is a program for family members and friends who assist and care for the seniors in their lives. These community-based programs offer information and education resources along with other supports that help caregivers build skills and confidence. Family Caregivers of BC supports Healthy Aging’s network of 17 agencies who deliver this program in B.C.



Social Prescribing is when primary care physicians or other health practitioners refer senior patients to a community-based Social Prescribing program. Social Prescribing Program coordinators, or Community Connectors, then work with these individuals, connecting them to a range of local, non-clinical services that are available through community agencies. A “social prescription” addresses a person’s social needs as part of their overall health and wellness plan, and allows for a comprehensive approach to multiple medical issues. There are 19 community agencies in B.C. who run Healthy Aging’s Social Prescribing program.



“Safe Seniors, Strong Communities” (COVID-19 Response) is a rapid emergency COVID response initiative to help seniors across British Columbia stay safely at home during the pandemic. British Columbians 65 and older can request volunteer help with some important day-to-day tasks (grocery shopping, prepared meal delivery and prescription pick-ups) or they can ask for a check in-call and friendly visit. Seniors and volunteers can find out more by contacting their local Better at Home program provider, going online to www.bc211.ca or simply dial 2-1-1.



Community Engagement

Healthy Aging's work is informed by the community, in service to the community. Through collaboration and engagement with the Community-Based Seniors' Services (CBSS) sector, we've developed a service model that is collaborative and responsive, flexible and strong. This kind of intentional and ongoing community engagement ensures our programs remain relevant and meaningful – that they reduce seniors' isolation and enhance the quality of life for older British Columbians, their families, friends, caregivers, and allies.

CBSS Leadership Council

The CBSS Leadership Council acts as a consultative body for the United Way's sector building strategic initiatives, and advocates for increasing the capacity of the CBSS sector to meet the growing needs of BC aging population, including the identification of and remedies for systemic and emerging policy issues.

CBSS Provincial Working Groups

CBSS Provincial Working Groups focus on advancing key sector and capacity development priorities for a number of areas identified through [Raising the Profile](#) outreach, Provincial Summits on Healthy Aging, and regional consultation feedback, as well as aligned interests and efforts of various partners and stakeholders. Working Groups on Housing, Seniors Community Action Committees, Nutritional Supports, and Rural and Remote Communities were joined by two new Working Groups on Transportation and Indigenous Relations. The Inter-Faith/Inter-Cultural Working Group transitioned to an open Group on CORE, and the Information, Referral and Personal Advocacy Working Group transitioned to a community of practice.

Regional Consultations

Eight Regional Consultations and one Provincial Consultation were held virtually, due to the pandemic, with a total of over 300 staff and volunteers from CBSS organizations participating.

The Consultation programs included a CBSS Sector Update, networking, and sharing local highlights and issues, along with small group discussions on: *Keeping older British Columbians connected, engaged, and active through technology; and Creating supportive and inclusive communities for older adults.* The first few Consultations also included small focus groups for the Rising to the Challenge CBSS sector COVID study, which was also the topic of the Provincial Consultation.



Healthy Aging CORE B.C.

Resources, training, and knowledge sharing help the CBSS sector improve the lives of British Columbia's older residents and the communities they live in. Our online knowledge hub, Healthy Aging CORE B.C., grew to over 2,000 members in 2020-21 (its second year), and saw thousands of visitors each month, including many from other countries. CORE now includes over 1,000 searchable resources, numerous discussion and planning groups, and Communities of Practice in specific program and topic areas.

CORE's effectiveness in B.C. resulted in a request from Alberta early in the pandemic to replicate CORE and create CORE Alberta as a key hub for communicating and coordinating COVID-19 related information, resources, and training critical to the CBSS sector in that province.

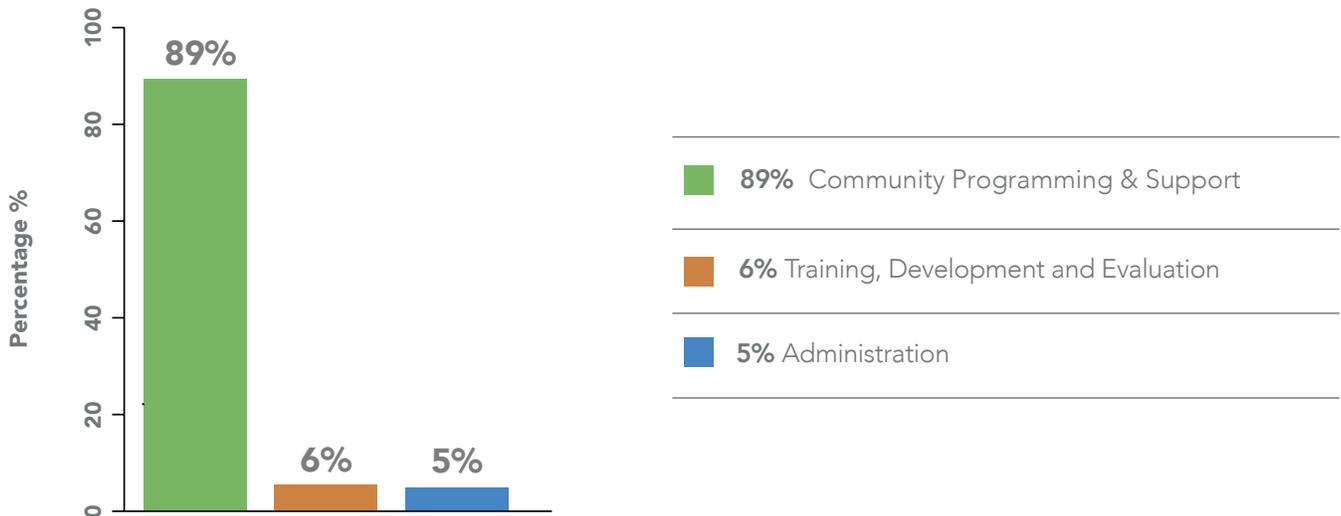
The Healthy Aging CORE B.C. newsletter, with over 1,200 subscribers, added a COVID edition to provide focused and timely pandemic-related information on alternating weeks.

CORE webinars, held once or twice monthly, have continued to provide valuable opportunities for learning and sharing sector expertise to a growing audience. 2020-21 topics included Seniors' Fraud Prevention; Addressing Stigma; Fall Prevention; Self-Care, and LGBTQ2 Seniors, as well as tech-oriented topics, such as CORE 101, Zoom 101, and Building Communities Increasing Online Engagement and Awareness. Other webinars were developed and delivered by CBSS Housing, Transportation, Inter-Faith/Inter-Cultural, and Seniors Community Action Committees Provincial Working Groups. All CORE webinars are recorded and can be accessed in CORE's Resource section.

For more information on Healthy Aging CORE, visit: <https://bc.healthyagingcore.ca/>.

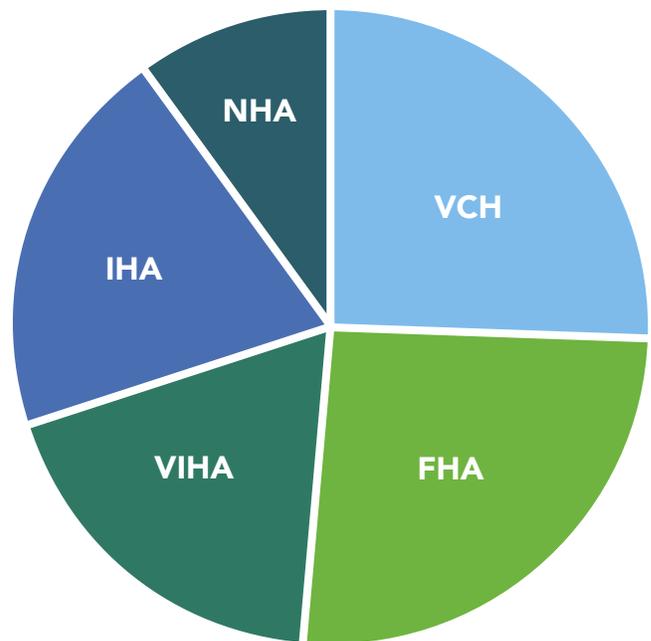


2020/21 Highlights



Total Community Programming by Region

Fraser Health Authority (FHA)	25.75%
Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	25.67%
Interior Health Authority (IHA)	20.20%
Island Health (VIHA)	18.66%
Northern Health Authority (NHA)	9.73%



Total includes the following streams: Better at Home, Social Prescribing, Therapeutic Activation Programs for Seniors (TAPS), Family & Friend Caregiver Supports and "Safe Seniors, Strong Communities" programs.

Sector Strengthening

Leadership Fellows

Leadership Fellows, offered in collaboration with Dialogues in Action, provides non-formal, graduate-level development leadership training for senior leaders in the non-profit sector in British Columbia.

The 2020 cohort consisted of 17 non-profit leaders, including nine Executive Directors. Despite the pandemic, this group completed their program in late 2020, and a new cohort started the program virtually in January 2021.

Since its inception in 2016, 71 non-profit leaders have participated in Leadership Fellows.

Project Impact Healthy Aging

Project Impact Healthy Aging (Project Impact) is a developmental evaluation course that helps agencies in the CBSS sector in B.C. to develop the ability to do credible self-studies of their impact, and to see and communicate the effects of the programs on the people they are designed to serve. This is achieved by taking up to nine teams of two to five from non-profits through a process of discovery about the power of evaluation.

In 2020, nine organizations participated in the course. Since it started in 2015, Project Impact has trained a total of 52 organizations on how to prove and improve the impact of their work with older adults. Project Impact Healthy Aging is offered through Dialogues in Action and is funded by the Province of B.C.

Project Impact Fraser Valley

This program parallels Project Impact Healthy Aging; however, with a requirement to accept organizations within the Eastern Fraser Valley. This offering showcased nine not-for-profit agencies and was titled Project Impact Fraser Valley as it had a regional focus.





Public Policy Institute

The Public Policy Institute (PPI) is a leadership training program characterized by innovative small group training, and access to a faculty of professionals who have real-life public policy experience. This six-month program is designed to help leaders – from the broader not-for-profit sector – to increase their knowledge of the public policy process and their capacity to influence it.



PPI has successfully trained 228 individuals over the last decade. This success has been possible thanks to the collaboration and support and of its faculty, which this year includes former premier of British Columbia Mike Harcourt, Jim Rutkowski, Dr. Liz Whynot, Dana Hayden, and Ruth Wittenberg.

Due to unforeseen circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, PPI experienced a pause in its regular program in 2020 as it considered safer options to continue the program. After deciding to continue via an entirely virtual learning platform, students were

able to complete the program at a later date in November 2020 (as opposed to June of that year). A new cohort of students started in January 2021, this time, completely virtual.

Also new in 2020, PPI honoured long-time faculty member, Ida Goodreau, who passed away in December 2019 with the Ida Goodreau Alumni Award. The award recognizes PPI graduates who embody Ida’s legacy as a leader and mentor in the non-profit sector in B.C. The first-ever award was given to Jennifer Breakspear, a Class of 2013 alum and the current Executive Director at SARA for Women Society.

Knowledge Mobilization

Knowledge mobilization (KMb) refers to moving available knowledge (often from formal research) into active use. More than just “bridging the gap”, KMb seeks to make connections between research/expertise and policy/practice in order to improve outcomes. KMb involves knowledge sharing between research producers (e.g. university researchers) and research users – in our case the Community-Based Seniors’ Services (CBSS) sector.



United Way Healthy Aging works with our partners in community and the robust network of older adults throughout the Province in research projects locally, provincially, nationally and globally bringing the voice of older British Columbians to the table.

We do this by sharing information and knowledge gleaned from our Community Engagement forums with academic institutions and researchers. Most commonly this is done by participating on Advisory Committees, recruiting older adult participants through our online platform CORE and connecting researchers to our partners in the community. We are guided by the notion ‘nothing for me without me’ in designing products, services and policies for older British Columbian.

The projects (and their affiliated institutions) we are involved in:

- BC Centre for Palliative Care: *Mobilizing and Equipping Community-Based Organizations to Promote Awareness and Support for Person-Centred Care for People Living with Dementia and Their Family Caregivers*. Project link: <https://bc-cpc.ca/about-us/activities/new-projects/dementia-community-investment-project/>
- Social Innovation Hackathon in collaboration with SFU Gerontology Department: *Gero hacks*
- Simon Fraser University: *Precision Mental Health: A Stakeholder-Informed, Big Data Approach to Psychological Wellbeing*. Project link: <https://forum.agewell-nce.ca/index.php/AWCRP-2020-03:Main>
- Simon Fraser University: *COVID-19 Community Wellbeing and Socioeconomic Deprivation in BC: Environmental Scan Towards Neighbourhood Social Capital*
- University of Victoria: *KISSS-2 Knowledge Implementation for Scale-up, Spread and Sustainability of Assistive Technology*. Project link: <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/kissat/>
- University of Victoria: *Tracking the Prevalence and Incidence of Modifiable Suicide Risk Factors During the COVID-19 Pandemic to Inform Targeted Suicide Prevention*. Project link: <https://www.msfhr.org/1/award/tracking-prevalence-and-incidence-modifiable-suicide-risk-factors-during-covid-19-pandemic-inform>
- University of Victoria: *Planning for Seniors Housing in Changing Cities: A Cross-National Exchange*
- University of Victoria (CanAssist): *CanStay Home, CanConnect and Caregiver Intercom*. Project Link: <https://www.canassist.ca/EN/main/programs/our-technologies/current-technologies.html>

Rising to the Challenge: How B.C.'s Community-Based Seniors' Service Agencies Stepped Up During COVID-19



Commissioned by United Way Healthy Aging in partnership with the Community-Based Seniors' Services Leadership Council, *Rising to the Challenge: How B.C.'s Community-Based Seniors' Service Agencies Stepped Up During COVID-19* was undertaken by Dialogues in Action who gathered data to measure the effectiveness and responsiveness of the province-wide, community-led response to support seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report

highlights how a network of community agencies across the province pulled together to keep older adults safe at home.

The research study included individual and group interviews with over 100 staff, volunteers, and partner organizations, eight focus groups and a survey. It features case studies about successful partnerships and stories from seniors themselves, some of whom talk about the heartbreak they encountered. Despite the difficulties, the report clearly illustrates that community agencies that provide non-medical services to seniors are such an important part of the continuum of care.

Rising to the Challenge identifies challenges and opportunities, as well as a way forward:

1. A system-wide strategy is needed to identify and connect with the most vulnerable seniors, who are facing multiple barriers.
2. The pandemic has shone a spotlight on the digital divide. Many agencies quickly mobilized and got devices in the hands of users and created training, but there will continue to be a demand for digital learning for those seniors who are uncomfortable with technology.
3. Volunteers are essential to the work of the CBSS sector. Many volunteers are themselves, seniors, so we saw an uptake in the number of middle-aged and younger adults who stepped in during the early days of the pandemic. Going forward, agencies will need to find and retain a more diversified cohort of volunteers and staff to undertake the work of training and supporting them.
4. Partnerships and collaborations played a critical role in the sector's successful response to the pandemic. But partnerships don't just appear out of nowhere, they must be built and nurtured. Time and resources are needed to develop new and innovative partnerships.

Our KMB work also includes sharing and presenting at conferences and learning venues through B.C., Canada and globally. While COVID-19 forced many of these events to be cancelled or conducted virtually through 2019-2022, we look forward to continually sharing the richness of the CBSS sector.

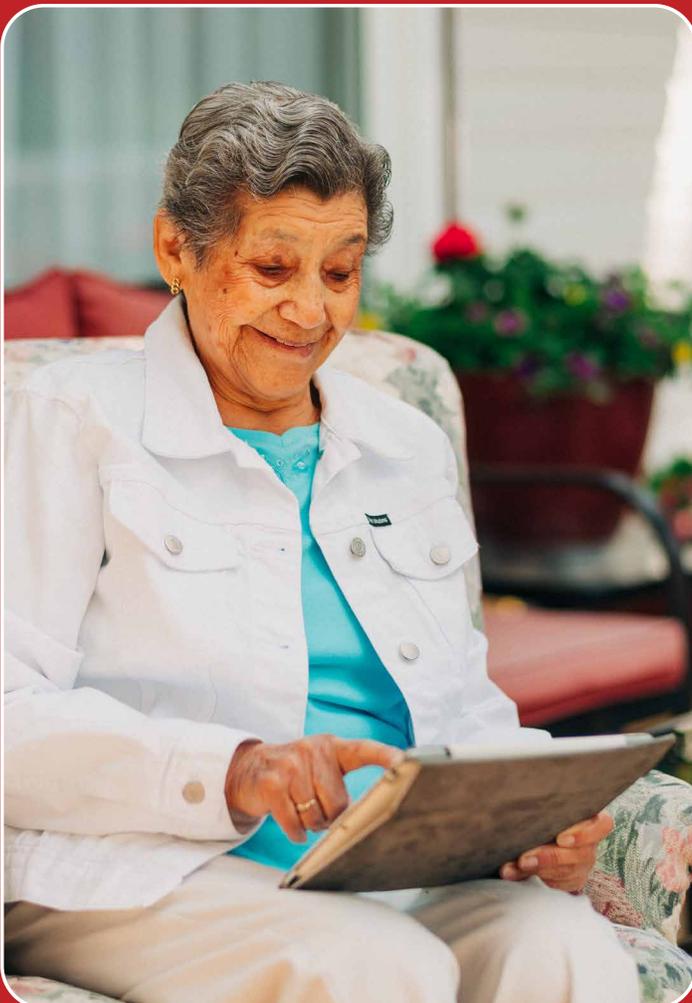
Looking Forward

2020 was a year unlike any other. Full of challenges and disruptions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community-Based Seniors' Services (CBSS) sector in British Columbia quickly and collectively pivoted programming attention to supporting seniors during this unprecedented year. Through effective collaboration, we saw how quick and effective the sector is in responding to an evolving environment.

In 2021/22, many developments from Healthy Aging are inspired by events from this past year. From our new program grants, our Digital Technology Strategy, to the launch of Healthy Aging CORE Canada, and to our Provincial Summit on Aging, activities in 2021/22 will be significantly shaped by the lessons learned from the past year.

Digital Technology Strategy

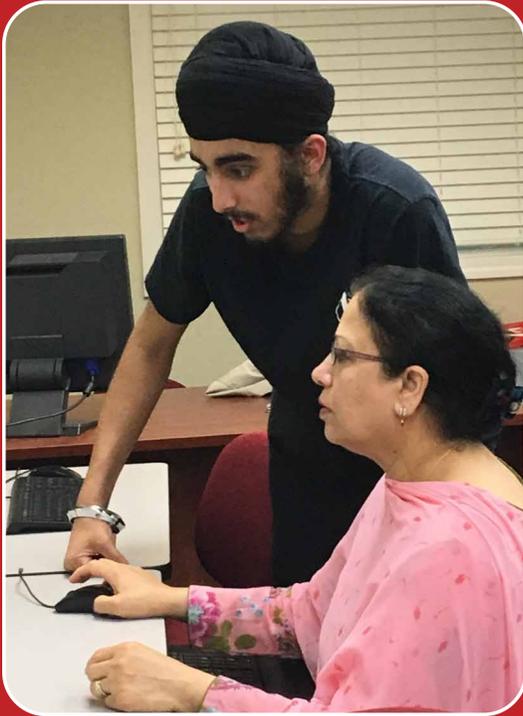
Recognizing the power of technology in connecting seniors and older adults, Healthy Aging through consultation and sharing with our CBSS network, developed a strategy to explore keeping older Canadians connected, engaged and active with digital technology in our sector. This strategy consists of four areas:



- 1) The establishment of the *Technology Partnership Committee* that guides and advises us using their cross-sector expertise.
- 2) *Digital Literacy* - our role in the journey of supporting older adults in the community with devices, data, and education as they embark on their individual journeys;
- 3) Exploring and deploying *Supportive Assistive Technology* in the sector.
- 4) *Digital Learning Pilot Project* - the creation and call into community for 49 different projects to create access, education and support for older adults with an interest in using technology to stay connected, active and independent.

New for 2021: Healthy Aging Program Grants

In 2021/22, United Way Health Aging continues to expand, adding more grant streams to its existing portfolio. The below grant streams are designed specifically to meet the emerging needs of older adults and Elders in community – providing more programming to help seniors in British Columbia continue to be active, connected and engaged.



Navigation and Peer Support (NPS) is a program that helps seniors navigate and locate information about government and community services. Incorporating a peer-to-peer model, volunteers work closely with older adults to help them overcome multiple barriers and access the particular supports and services they need to maintain their independence. Healthy Aging's Navigation and Peer Support programs will be delivered province-wide by 13 CBSS organizations, whose program staff have access to supports and training from 411 Seniors Centre Society.

Digital Learning Pilot Project (Active Aging Plus & ITech) is a supported learning program that provides seniors with the knowledge, skills and confidence to use computers, smartphones and tablets. With devices in hand, seniors will learn how to access digital services like online banking or shopping, follow the news on social media and enjoy virtual visits with their family and friends. They can also use their devices to participate, virtually, in seniors centre programming.

Men's Sheds are community-based groups open to all, providing safe, friendly, inclusive environments to gather and participate in group activities. The purpose of a Men's Shed is to advance the health and well-being of members and foster positive engagement within their community, for the benefit of the community. Healthy Aging will be launching an initiative in 2021 to help strengthen, expand, and sustain the Men's Shed movement in Canada by providing start-up grants to new Men's Sheds and project grants to existing Sheds. UWHA and MSABC will be working collaboratively to support the development of Men's Sheds in B.C.



Healthy Aging CORE National Expansion

In 2021, Healthy Aging will expand its CORE (Collaborative Online Resources and Education) online knowledge platform with the launch of Healthy Aging CORE Canada nationwide.

Healthy Aging received \$250,000 in funding from the Government in Canada to support the launch of Healthy Aging CORE Canada. CORE Canada aims to help organizations across Canada access resources, communicate, coordinate, collaborate and learn from one another so they can better serve seniors and older adults.



Returning in 2022: Provincial Summit on Aging

After a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the biennial Provincial Summit on Aging will be making a return in 2022. To be held in Richmond, B.C. on April 28 and 29, the Summit will bring over 350 delegates from CBSS organizations, older adults, family and friend caregivers, academic and government representatives to discuss and collaborate on current issues and innovations in healthy aging. The theme of the 2022 Provincial Summit on Aging is "Better Together" which is inspired by the CBSS sector's collectiveness and collaboration in responding to the needs of seniors and older adults in B.C during the COVID-19 pandemic.





Activity, connection, and engagement are keys to seniors' health and wellness. We help older adults stay independent in their homes and in their communities.

**Thank you to the Province of B.C., our donors, volunteers
and partners for investing in the health and well-being of older adults
in British Columbia.**

More about Healthy Aging by United Way

<https://www.uwlm.ca/healthyaging/>

**Visit Healthy Aging CORE B.C. to access resources,
training, webinar information, and more:**

<https://bc.healthyagingcore.ca/>

**Sign up for the Healthy Aging CORE B.C. newsletter to learn about sector
initiatives and updates, new resources, and events and training opportunities:**

<https://bc.healthyagingcore.ca/newsletter-signup>

**Visit Better at Home for more information on
non-medical home supports for British Columbia's older adults.**

<http://www.betterathome.ca>



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United Way
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