



# Learning & Impacts: Therapeutic Activation Program For Seniors (TAPS) Programs

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**2024/25**



# Land Acknowledgement



*Elder Glida Morgan and her daughter Jade from the Tla'amin First Nation, welcoming guests to the United Way BC Project Impact Healthy Aging Showcase in Vancouver.*

## We recognize the communities in which we work

At United Way BC, we dedicate ourselves to fostering understanding, respect, and an acknowledgment of the rich history of the lands and waterways we traverse. Our mission guides us across vast and diverse territories, each with its unique tapestry of languages, governance systems, traditions, and cultural heritage. The relationship with these lands and waterways has been stewarded by Indigenous communities since time immemorial, long before the establishment of contemporary boundaries, and we humbly recognize that many of these territories remain unceded.

We also acknowledge that our list of Nations is a work in progress, a testament to our ongoing process of improving our learning and understanding. Our commitment is to honor the cultural distinctiveness of each community as we continue to pursue improved and lasting partnerships built on the foundations of respect, humility, and open dialogue.

View the communities in which we work here:

## Territorial Acknowledgement



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# Looking Back: Reflecting on a Year of Connection, Learning, & Impact

This past year has been one of meaningful progress for the Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors (TAPS) across British Columbia (BC). Together, we have continued to enhance the quality of life and well-being of older adults, ensuring that they have opportunities to stay active, engaged, and connected in their communities. Guided by a person-centered approach, TAPS programs adapted their supports locally, offering programming that reflected the unique interests, cultures, and needs of seniors in each community.

Through our annual co-creation session, we gathered voices from TAPS programs across BC to share lived experiences, celebrate successes, and reflect on the challenges we still face. We heard inspiring stories of innovation, such as programs adapting transportation services to reach isolated seniors, creating culturally safe and inclusive spaces, and building strong partnerships to expand capacity. We also heard candid reflections on barriers such as staffing turnover, limited space, and transportation gaps, as well as the creative ways programs worked to overcome them.

In 2024/25, more than 2,300 seniors were reached by TAPS programs, including over 700 new participants. Behind these numbers are countless moments of joy and connection for senior participants - learning to navigate public transit for the first time, newcomers finding belonging through shared meals, and new social connections through art, exercise, and community events. These stories remind us why this work matters: the power of relationships, the resilience of our communities, and the impact of working together.

We know there is still more to do. We are committed to updating relevant tools and resources, strengthening collaboration, and expanding access so that more older adults can receive the support they deserve. Our path forward will be shaped by the voices of seniors, staff, volunteers, and community partners—guided by shared learning and united by a vision where every older adult can stay healthy, resilient, and connected in the communities they call home.

Thank you to the program staff, volunteers, partners, and, most importantly, the seniors who have welcomed us into their lives. Your trust, stories, and participation are what drive this work forward. Together, we will continue to strengthen our collective impact to ensure seniors are better supported.

Thank you for your dedication to this work. We look forward to all we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

Sincerely,



Bobbi Symes  
Director, Healthy Aging

United Way BC



# What We Learned: TAPS Co-Creation Session

## Background

Facilitating co-creation sessions has become an annual activity for Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors. These sessions create a dedicated space for shared reflection, learning, and forward planning. They also align with our Healthy Aging guiding principles, particularly our ongoing commitment to community-driven work and supported by a 'learning systems approach'.

- **Community Development:** Our work is driven by the community and dedicated to serving it. Our programs are grounded in real-world evidence of specific strategies and approaches that have proven to be effective in communities across BC. Ongoing learning from communities enables our work to shift and adapt over time.
- **Learning, Growth & Accountability:** Our programs are supported by 'learning systems approach'. The main intention with this approach is to create a safe space where identifying and addressing areas of needed improvement is not seen as a failure or something to hide, but as a learning opportunity. In a learning system, data, evidence, and experience are continuously collected and integrated into practice to support agencies to improve their programming.

## Session Overview

In February 2025, all TAPS programs were invited to participate in a co-creation session facilitated by United Way BC's Healthy Aging team.

**Purpose:** To connect with TAPS programs, reflect on progress, learn about on-the-ground implementation, and identify opportunities for support and adaptation moving forward.

**Objectives:** By the end of the co-creation session, we:

- Learned about real-world successes and challenges implementing TAPS programming.
- Fostered connection and opportunities for peer exchange and relationship building.
- Reflected on interim program reach, including strategies and barriers in serving priority populations.
- Determined use of the TAPS Intake Form and Program Handbook.
- Explored opportunities for program growth and expansion.
- Identified key areas where United Way BC's Healthy Aging team can provide additional support.

## Participants

- 25 staff representatives from TAPS programs
- 10 Healthy Aging staff and leaders





# Key Learnings

## Priority populations are being reached, but barriers remain

Most programs are successfully reaching the [priority populations](#) by using effective strategies:

- Providing snacks to help attract participants.
- Partnering with health care, community organizations, and businesses serving priority populations.
- Leveraging support from Community Connectors.
- Expanding transportation (e.g., purchasing a vehicle).
- Providing snacks or meals to encourage participation.
- Offering culturally-specific TAPS programming (e.g., TAPS offered in Punjabi).

Barriers in reaching priority populations persist:

- Transportation limitations in urban and rural settings, as well as resistance among some seniors to accept rides.
- Language barriers, lack of phone access, and accessibility challenges for priority populations.
- Participants prefer in-person programming, yet face mobility and/or accessibility challenges

## Core program elements are largely in place, but should be adjusted

Most programs deliver all core program elements, with adaptations in delivery approaches (e.g., “drop-in”).

Challenges in delivering TAPS core program elements exist:

- General: Unclear expectations regarding what constitutes delivery of each core element; limited staff time/capacity; difficulties securing adequate space; challenges meeting diverse cultural and linguistic needs.
- One-to-One Check-Ins: Capacity constraints prevent daily check-ins; some programs view this element as unnecessary for all participants.
- Transportation: Barriers in both urban and rural areas, with unique challenges for participants with disabilities or dementia.

Suggested adjustments to core program elements:

- Provide flexibility in core element definitions to allow for local adaptation.
- Modify One-to-One Check-Ins to remove the requirement for daily contact with all participants.
- Remove physical activity as a core element in urban areas where it is already widely available through partners.
- Exclude transportation as a core requirement for urban programs, but include transportation to medical appointments as an eligible activity.

## Program tools & resources need updates

The majority (83%) are using the standardized TAPS Intake Form and 65% have read the TAPS Program Handbook, but updates to such tools are needed:

- Intake Form modifications needed (e.g., income, deeper social isolation assessment, deeper mental health assessment, use of mobility aids, etc.).
- All programs need the latest Intake Form (some using outdated versions).
- Ensure alignment between the Intake Form and Quarterly/Annual Report templates.



## Ensuring Success

To set TAPS programs up for success:

- Orient new programs with core TAPS model, resources, and reporting templates.
- Connect them with TAPS program mentors, site visits, and key contacts.
- Secure adequate, accessible, and well-equipped space.
- Engage seniors, volunteers, and local partners for support and collaboration.
- Define clear staff roles, training, and capacity needs.
- Promote participation through targeted outreach and creative marketing.
- Encourage flexibility to adapt programming to local needs.

## Innovative Funding and Collaboration

With increased funding and collaboration, programs could:

- Expand staffing and volunteer capacity.
- Increase program reach and access (e.g., improved transportation, additional days of service, address waitlists, offer satellite locations).
- Diversify programming with new activities and supports (e.g., caregiver respite, technology lending initiatives, social enterprises, etc.).
- Offer more flexible and inclusive service options (e.g., evening and weekend sessions, targeted offerings for priority populations).





# Supports Needed from United Way BC

TAPS programs shared several suggestions for how the Healthy Aging team can strengthen support and build collective capacity.



## 1. Enhance Community of Practice (COP) Structure

Shift COP meetings to a quarterly schedule, with optional regional COPs, and focus content on problem-solving, skills building, and detailed logistics for delivering core program elements.



## 2. Clarify Program Expectations and Roles

Provide clear, consistent guidance on the TAPS program model, definitions of core elements, reporting requirements, and the role of Community Connectors.



## 3. Improve Data & Reporting Support

Ensure alignment between Salesforce and programs' existing systems to avoid double reporting, provide more instructions on how to properly report.



## 4. Build Staff and Volunteer Capacity

Increase access to targeted training opportunities (e.g., cultural competency, dementia care, mobility assistance, first aid, mental health assessment) and share templates and operational tools (e.g., job descriptions and wage grids).



## 5. Support Collaboration with Health Authorities and Community Partners

Help secure health authority participation in Community Collaboratives, strengthen information sharing, and provide ongoing funding to sustain collaborative efforts.



## 6. Address Staff Well-Being and Retention

Advocate for TAPS coordinator work-life balance and staff retention by setting appropriate expectations with agencies.



## 7. Maintain and Update Program Resources

Regularly update the TAPS Handbook, share quick-reference guides (e.g., vehicle accessibility upgrades, licensing information), and provide updated marketing materials.



## 8. Continue and Expand In-Person Co-Creation Sessions

Sustain annual in-person co-creation sessions, ideally scheduled outside of peak reporting and grant-writing periods, to support relationship building and knowledge exchange.





# What's Next

The Healthy Aging team sincerely appreciates the insights and reflections shared by TAPS programs during the co-creation session. We clearly heard the areas where additional support and clarity can strengthen program delivery and our collective impact. This valuable feedback will directly inform our next steps as we work to improve resources, enhance communication, and better support the important work being done across the province to support seniors.

Based on the key learnings from the TAPS session, here is a list of our key next steps:



## 1. Reframing the TAPS Model Together

The TAPS core program elements and Handbook will be refreshed to support shared understanding and evolving needs, while maintaining program flexibility.



## 2. Refreshing the Intake Form

The TAPS Intake Form will be updated to reflect program feedback, with clearer language around income and supports, deeper mental health assessment, optional fields to capture participant needs, and a simple guide to explain the intent of each section.



## 3. Developing a TAPS Toolkit or Compendium of Resources

A practical toolkit will be created, including sample job descriptions, onboarding materials, budget templates, checklists, and examples contributed by programs across the province.



## 4. Shifting the Community of Practice (COP)

Provincial TAPS CoPs will move from monthly to quarterly to allow for deeper, more focused discussions. Orientation sessions will be offered for new programs, and regional CoPs will be piloted in areas where there is limited collaboration. CoPs will also continue to include brief "program highlights," where Coordinators share how programming is adapted to meet the needs of their local senior populations.



## 5. Encouraging Access to Learning Opportunities

Training opportunities and learning resources will continue to be highlighted through COPs, CORE BC, and peer connections, with a focus on sharing tools, experiences, and strategies already working well in the field.



## 6. Improving the TAPS Space on Healthy Aging CORE BC

The TAPS section on CORE BC will be reorganized for easier navigation, clearer resource categorization, and improved access to tools, templates, and shared materials from other programs.



## 7. Strengthening Communication

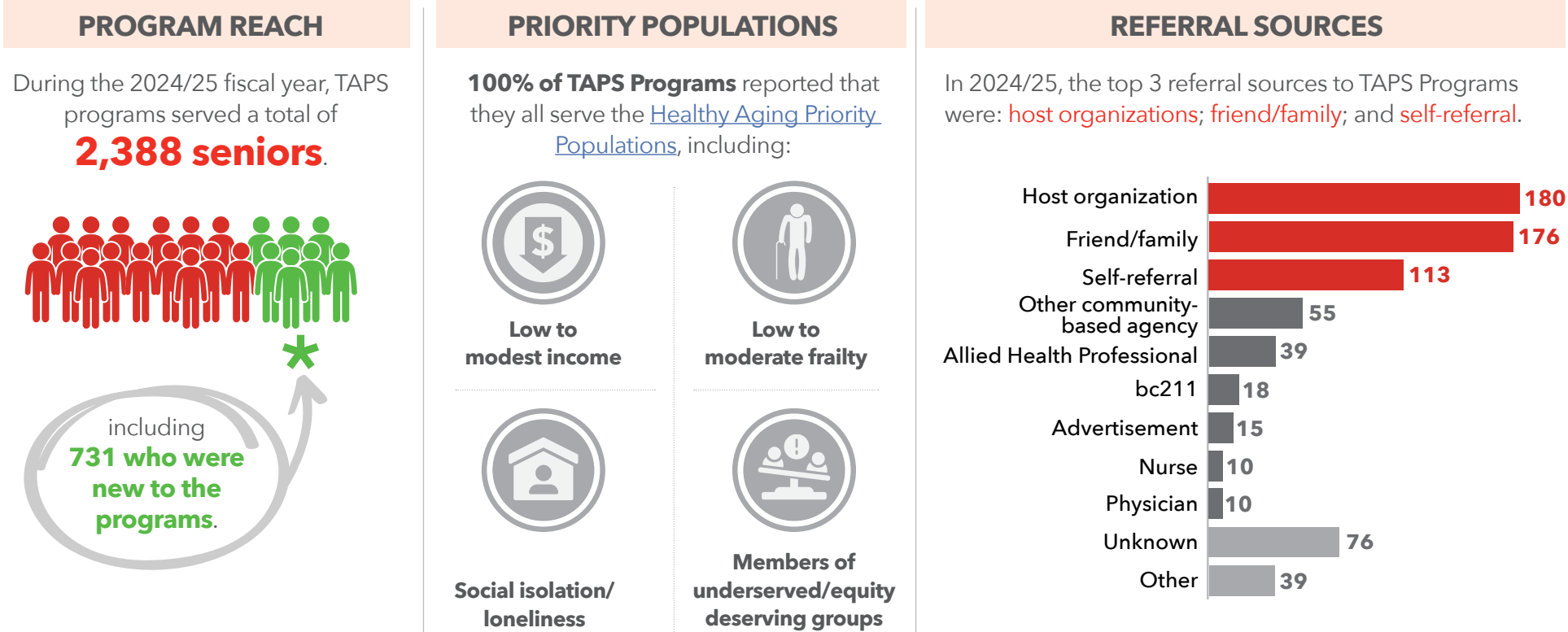
Updates will continue to be shared through both CORE BC and direct email, with a focus on making communications clearer, more consistent, and easier to use for planning ahead.





# What We Accomplished: Key Findings from TAPS Reporting

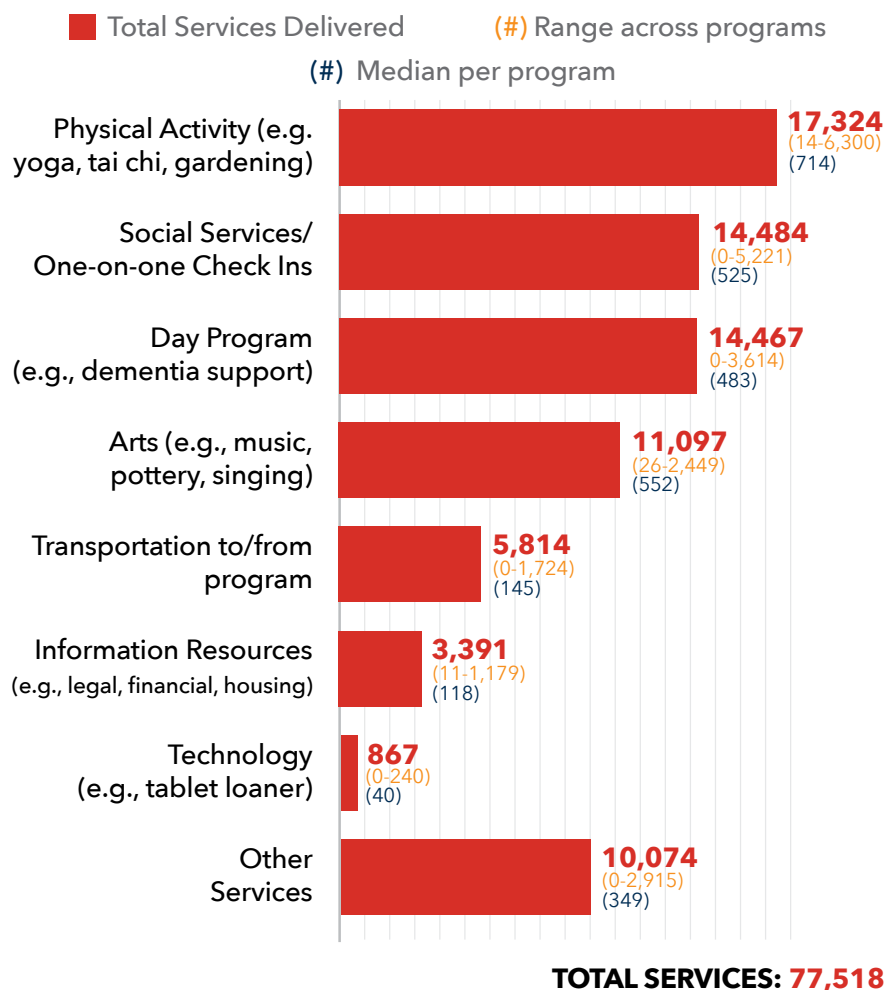
This section provides a brief summary of key findings from the 2024/25 TAPS Quarterly and Annual Reports. We encourage programs to reflect on these results, both to recognize our collective achievements and to situate your respective contributions to the broader provincial picture. Together, let’s celebrate the meaningful impact we have made for seniors in BC.





## SCOPE OF SERVICE DELIVERY

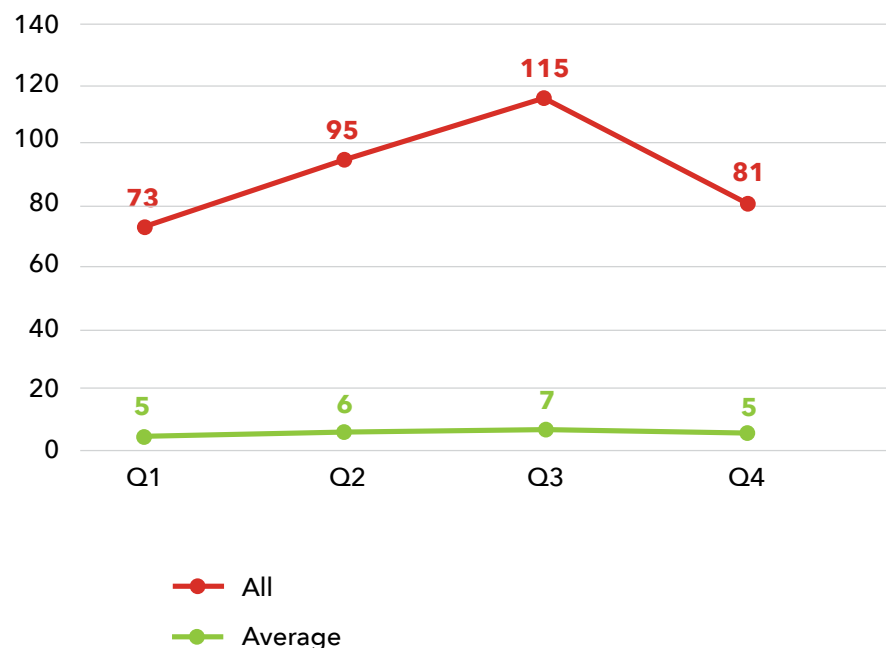
A total of **77,518 services** were delivered to seniors by TAPS Programs. The most common services included (i) **physical activity** (22%; N = 17,324); (ii) **social services/one-on-one check-ins** (19%; N = 14,484; and (iii) **Day Programs**, such as dementia support (19%; N = 14,467).



## WAITLIST DATA

Over the 2024/25 fiscal year, the total number of seniors on the TAPS program waitlist rose steadily from 73 in Q1 to a peak of 115 in Q3, before declining to 81 by March 2025. While this represents an overall increase compared to the start of the year, the year-end decrease suggests some progress in moving seniors into active support or a slowdown in new referrals. Waitlist numbers varied substantially across TAPS programs, ranging from 0 to 28 seniors. On average, individual programs maintained relatively consistent waitlists throughout the year, ranging from 5 to 7 seniors.

The **waitlist to attend TAPS programs increased steadily** over the first three quarters of 2024/25 before declining in Q4.





# Overall Successes & Challenges

## Program Successes

Across the province, TAPS programs expanded reach, improved accessibility, and strengthened community connection. Many sites introduced new program locations, diversified offerings, and adapted activities to meet the needs of specific cultural groups. Increased participation, volunteer engagement, and peer leadership were consistently cited as drivers of success. Efforts also focused on building trust, fostering friendships, and reducing barriers related to mobility, transportation, and language.



### Program Expansion & Access

Added new program sites (e.g., BC Housing, Osoyoos, Okanagan Falls, Chimo Terrace); removed waitlists; increased frequency and range of activities such as afternoon Chair Yoga.



### Increased Participation

Substantial growth in attendance, welcomed many new participants, including previously isolated seniors.



### Diverse & Culturally Responsive Programming

Offered bilingual/culturally relevant services for Japanese, South Asian, and Indigenous seniors; included traditional crafts, language use, and culturally specific wellness practices.



### Volunteer Engagement & Peer Leadership

Volunteers planned and led activities, shared skills (gardening, art, music), and assisted with meals and set-up; older adult volunteers helped staff better understand senior needs.



### Social Connection & Community-Building

Created spaces for cross-group interaction (e.g., bowling team and Men's Breakfast); strengthened peer networks that provide support beyond program hours.



### Organizational Systems & Coordination

Improved communication through monthly calendars; maintained service continuity during location moves; built stronger referral pathways with partners.



### Wellness & Quality of Life

Increased access to exercise, nutritious meals, and mental health tools; improved participants' confidence, independence, and emotional well-being.





## Program Challenges & Solutions

TAPS programs faced a range of on-the-ground challenges in the last year but implemented practical strategies in response, demonstrating adaptability and resilience across the sector.



### Staff Turnover & Capacity Gaps

Managed transitions through strong management support, effective onboarding, mentorship, targeted training, and creative recruitment from local networks, universities, and volunteer organizations. Existing staff and volunteers stepped into interim roles to maintain service continuity.



### Transportation Barriers

Provided rides through program vans, volunteers, and partnerships with other departments or community services; adapted programming to accessible locations; offered wellness calls and outreach for homebound seniors; and provided travel training to increase seniors' comfort with public transit.



### Limited Program Space

Partnered with community organizations, churches, and rented larger venues to accommodate growing attendance; scheduled overflow participation in partner programs.



### Participant Isolation & Reluctance to Engage

Conducted outreach calls and home visits, recruited peer support volunteers, created culturally familiar and low-barrier programs, and provided interpretation to build trust and encourage participation at seniors' own pace.



### Cultural & Language Barriers

Hired bilingual and culturally reflective staff, offered interpretation, and provided culturally relevant programming to promote inclusivity.



### Health Decline of Participants

Maintained contact through home and hospital visits, wellness calls, and delivery of care packages to keep participants connected despite declining mobility or health.



### Program Funding Constraints

Sought new funding, leveraged partnerships, and prioritized services to maintain core activities without compromising program quality.





## Impact Stories

### ALICE'S STORY



#### FINDING COURAGE, COMMUNITY, AND COMFORT | GORDON HOUSE

At 96, Alice was hesitant to join the TAPS program at Gordon House. Traveling by HandyDART and taking the elevator to the lunchroom felt daunting. Living alone in a subsidized seniors' building, she received daily home visits and rarely ventured out. With gentle encouragement from her daughter and the TAPS team, she decided to try, gradually gaining the confidence to use the elevator independently.

Now, she looks forward to Thursday lunches, often staying for the movie and popcorn afterward. What began as a reluctant step outside her comfort zone has grown into a cherished routine that provides friendship, nourishment, and renewed independence.

### ROSE'S STORY



#### FINDING FRIENDSHIP AND PURPOSE | BURNABY NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

Rose (pseudonym), a 90-year-old senior who is blind and lives alone, was initially reluctant to join TAPS due to mobility and vision challenges. Encouraged by her family, she began attending Thursday sessions and soon experienced a remarkable transformation—building new friendships, gaining a sense of belonging, and finding joy in activities like games, arts, and crafts

adapted to her needs. With volunteers and staff ensuring she felt welcomed and included, Rose began looking forward to the program each week. "I never imagined I'd make so many new friends at my age. I feel so much better now, both in my heart and in my body," she shared. Her story shows how TAPS helps seniors reduce isolation, rediscover purpose, and experience renewed joy in life.





## HOW BREAKFAST BUILT A COMMUNITY | AUTUMN SERVICES CENTRE

When Danny, a retired senior living in isolation, began receiving meals from the TAPS program, no one expected his casual complaint about “three long days” without food over a long weekend to spark something bigger. Staff invited him in for toast and coffee, and that simple act inspired a new breakfast program in Fraser Lake. What started as a solution for one man’s hunger grew into a thriving

weekday gathering serving thousands of breakfasts, where locals of all backgrounds—retired naval officers, teachers, mill workers, and more—now share meals, swap stories, check on each other, and enjoy games and health talks. Thanks to Danny’s need for a simple breakfast, TAPS created not just a meal service, but a place for camaraderie, connection, and community support.



## STAYING INDEPENDENT WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORT | TONARI GUMI

Mrs. K, a 96-year-old long-time member of Tonari Gumi, lives alone in Burnaby and speaks no English. Despite her age and increasing frailty, she has remained independent thanks to community programs, weekly visits to the Genki Gumi seniors’ day program, and the dedication of staff and volunteers who assist with transportation, communication, and meals. When a health

emergency arose during one of these visits, Tonari Gumi staff accompanied her to the hospital, providing translation and keeping her daughter in Ontario informed. Through Tonari Gumi’s Japanese Home Support Services, staff continued to check in, deliver meals, and connect her to the telephone wellness program, ensuring she felt safe and supported.




## REBUILDING STRENGTH, FINDING PURPOSE | KIWASSA NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

When Linda first joined Kiwassa’s TAPS programs, she was recovering from a back injury that had left her homebound for years. Just as she began regaining strength, the COVID-19 pandemic struck, heightening her isolation. Determined to reconnect, she joined activities like Line Dance, Walking Club, Morning Exercise & Qi Gong, Painting, Arts & Crafts, and community lunches.

Over the past year and a half, Linda has not only improved her physical health but rediscovered joy, creativity, and a renewed sense of purpose. She has built meaningful friendships, feels happier and more connected than she has in years, and now gives back by leading Bingo, helping with activities, and supporting her peers—becoming a valued part of the very community that helped her heal.



# Looking Ahead: Our Path For the Future



As we look to the year ahead, United Way BC remains deeply committed to supporting TAPS programs across the province. This next chapter will be shaped by the voices of seniors, guided by on-the-ground insights, and responsive to local needs. Building on a strong foundation, we will continue to evolve the program in collaboration with our partners. Together, we can amplify our collective impact by strengthening existing programs and extending our reach to new communities. Our shared efforts will support more seniors to stay healthy, resilient, and connected—living rich, fulfilling lives in the communities they call home.

**Thank you for your continued partnership. We look forward to all we will accomplish together in the year ahead.**



# Appendices

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## Detailed Notes from the TAPS Co-Creation Session

Please see detailed notes [here on CORE BC](#).



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