



BETTER
AT
HOME

PORT HARDY & REGION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

February 2013 | Tracy Smyth & Julie Rushton

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Acknowledgements

We want to express our sincere gratitude to the seniors, family members and service providers who shared their stories, passion and commitment with us throughout our discovery process. Your commitment to community and to one another is outstanding.

Community development is a journey of curiosity to uncover needs and concerns, explore options and learn from one another. The information we are providing on the following pages is a brief glimpse of the tremendous dedication and community capacity that the North Island holds to support innovative programs such as the Better at Home Program for seniors.

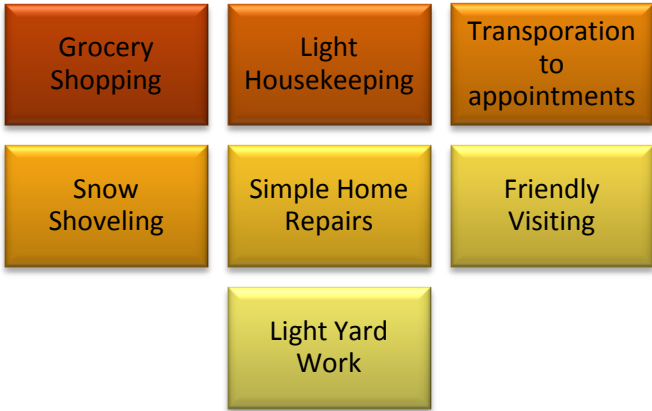
A round of applause to the United Way for setting a new standard in what we hope will be a new method of funding allocation. Adding an authentic community development approach in the selection and distribution of Better at Home Program funds creates a systemic method of ensuring that program participants play an active role in program development and implementation.

Thank you to the United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island as well as the Provincial support team at the United Way of the Lower Mainland.

Julie Rushton & Tracy Smyth

Better at Home Program Introduction

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 the Lower Mainland, with services delivered by a local non-profit organization. The Better at Home program is designed to address the specific needs of local seniors, allowing communities to choose from the following basket of services:



Port Hardy has been identified as a potential Better at Home site. Tracy Smyth and Julie Rushton were contracted as community developers to assess community readiness, identify seniors’ assets, needs and priorities in regards to the basket of services, and help identify a potential lead organization best suited in the community to deliver the Better at Home program.

This report reflects the findings of the community developers and will be used by the lead organization to design an appropriate local Better at Home program that meets community needs.

“Seniors are an important and growing part of our communities, and their active involvement enriches everyone’s lives. To ensure that seniors continue to play an active role in our communities, they often need support to live independently in their own homes, surrounded by family, friends, and neighbours. United Way of the Lower Mainland supports seniors to age with dignity and with funding provided by the BC government, will manage the Better at Home program in up to 60 communities across BC. Better at Home is designed to assist seniors with simple day-to-day tasks, thereby helping seniors maintain their independence and stay connected with their community. Better at Home is designed to be adaptable to the characteristics of a community and will address the specific needs of local seniors.”

Better at Home, United Way of the Lower Mainland

Local Community Development Approach & Findings

Communities are full of assets; skills, knowledge, historical context, connections, financial resources and other gifts among citizens. A process to rediscover and mobilize these assets towards building a community that supports its local residents is known as asset-based community development.

“Abundancy is everywhere and change is made by a citizen having the power to have vision and to work with others to make the vision come true.”
John McKnight

In Port Hardy, the community developers were external from the community; however, one had previously been a resident of the area. The team took an approach as learners, seeking out and hearing the story of the region in order to identify the local assets that would support a successful implementation of the Better at Home Program. The fusion of facts and stories set the stage for consensus-based decisions about the lead agency for the program and how the program might look unique for Northern Vancouver Island residents. The community development activities included:

- Documentary analysis of reports, project materials and information provided by stakeholder groups;
 - Best of Care Report: Getting it Right For Seniors in British Columbia by the Office of the Ombudsperson, 2012
 - Local Health Area Profile for Vancouver Island North (85) prepared by Vancouver Island Health Authority, July 2011
 - Statistics Canada, Census Reports
 - Making Meaningful Connections: A Profile of Social Isolation Among Older Adults in Small Town & Small City, British Columbia, 2006
 - United Way of the Lower Mainland Seniors Vulnerability Report, 2011
 - The latest Official Community Plans of Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Alice and Alert Bay
 - Mount Waddington Health Network information
- Nine interviews with seniors and service providers across the community. The list of interviewees emerged based on recommendations by local stakeholders as well as a targeted approach to include a range of voices and perspectives.
- Two focus groups; one with local service providers and one with the North Island Seniors/Elders Better Living Advisory Committee
- A Community Forum with a total attendance of 73 people, including both seniors and service providers

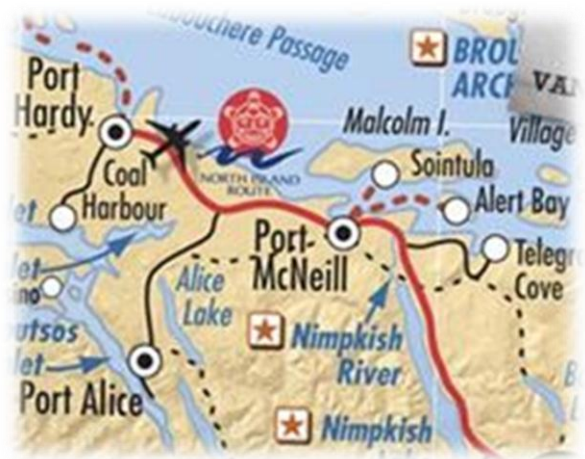
- A focused stakeholders meeting to confirm the lead agency and program partners that had 5 attendees.

In total, the process linked approximately 15 community agencies and 90 seniors to the Better at Home process. An important principle of the Community Development process was the prominence on gathering information directly from seniors themselves, emphasizing that seniors' care should be self-determined as much as possible.

Community Profile

Description of the local seniors' population

During the community development process, it immediately became apparent that while Port Hardy has been identified as the potential site for the Better at Home Program, Port Hardy, along with the neighbouring communities of Port McNeill, Port Alice, Sointula and Alert Bay view themselves as part of the "Northern Vancouver Island" area making up the Regional District of Mount Waddington. Both residents and service organizations expressed strong feelings that the Better at Home program be of service to the entire area and not limited to Port Hardy residents. The four largest municipalities and village of Sointula, each with its own history and character, share camaraderie with their neighbouring villages and First Nation communities.



The Regional of Mount Waddington maintains an informative and inclusive website that provides a snapshot of the area (<http://www.rdmw.bc.ca/>)

First Nation

It needs to be acknowledged that communities of aboriginal people have lived on these lands for over 8000 years. There are many First Nation traditional territories and communities that are within this region. The area celebrates the oldest known site of human habitation on Vancouver Island (circa 5850 BCE) at Beaver Cove. First contact with Europeans also occurred here in 1836 when the steamship S.S. Beaver was sent on an exploratory trip by the Hudson Bay Company. Today, the Regional District of Mount Waddington and the `Namgis First Nation participates in a protocol agreement that recognizes historical and aboriginal rights and speaks to the need for communities to work together to find success in common needs and the unique opportunities provided by diversity.

Port Hardy: Population 4008 (2011)

The Hudson's Bay Company established a trading post at Beaver Harbour in 1848. The trading post was named "Fort Rupert" after the company's governor, Prince Rupert, Duke of Bavaria. Other Europeans started to settle in the area in the early 1900's. The current location of Port Hardy was settled at the turn of the century when a store and post office was established on the east side of Hardy Bay in 1904.

Port McNeill: Population 2505 (2011)

Strongly rooted within the forestry industry, the Town of Port McNeill began as Pioneer Timber's Logging Camp which was floated from Malcolm Island in 1937. By 1959, a logging road linked Port McNeill to the Port Hardy airport which saw an expansion in population. The town was incorporated in 1966.

Port Alice: Population 805 (2011)

Port Alice is located on the east side of Neroutsos Inlet, halfway between the West Coast and the East Coast of Vancouver Island within the traditional territory of the Quatsino First Nation. European settlement started with the construction of a pulp mill and accommodation for millworkers in 1917. By the 1930s the population of the community, clustered near the mill, reached approximately 1,500 people. Because of concerns about the chemicals and sulphuric acid emissions at the mill site, the community was re-established five kilometres north on the inlet at Rumble Beach. The new Village of Port Alice became the first "instant municipality" incorporated in B.C. in 1965.

Sointula: Population 594 (2011)

The name Sointula means a place of harmony. This unincorporated community in the Regional District of Mount Waddington can be found on Malcom Island. It was settled by immigrants from Finland at the turn of the century. Sointula Co-operative Store Association was formed in 1909 making it BC's oldest running cooperative.

Alert Bay: Population 445 (2011)

Alert Bay is on Cormorant Island which is a mere 4km by 1km. The Village of Alert Bay and the 'Namgis First Nation signed a unique document in 1999 under which they agreed to mutual support in civic and cultural matters affecting both jurisdictions given that they both shared space on this small island. The Historic Alert Bay Accord is a landmark document, the first of its kind in Canada between a municipality and a First Nation band.

The Regional District of Mount Waddington has a total population of 11,995, 8.1% of which are seniors. Within this aging population, 24% of seniors live alone and 5.4% are considered to be living below the poverty line. Interestingly, the total population in the area is expected to shrink 9.8% by 2030, while the population 75+ years is expected to grow 263% by 2030 (from 357 (2010) to 1294 (2030)). These statistics and the following tables highlight that the target population for the Better at Home program certainly exists in this area.

Table 1 – Population and Age Demographics in the Mount Waddington Regional District

	Total Population	Men (as % age of population)	Women (as % age of population)
Total	11,505	52%	48%
65-69 years	600	56%	44%
70-74 years	335	57%	43%
75-79 years	200	55%	45%
80-84 years	135	59%	41%
85 years and older	65	31%	69%

Statistics Canada, 2011

VIHA Local Health Area Profile, 2011

It should be noted that Statistics Canada data does not provide a good reflection of information about the local First Nation populations. There are ten First Nation communities in the geographic area including First Nations that are member Nations of Kwakiutl District council and Musgamagw Tsawataneuk Tribal Council.

Alongside the “numbers story,” the interview and focus group data revealed that the historical trend to leave the community upon retirement has abated. Instead, many seniors are staying in Northern Vancouver Island communities permanently.

Summary of Community Assets

What services are currently **working well** to support seniors living independently?

The answer to this question did not turn out to be straight forward due to the fact that services are inconsistent from community to community across the North Island. People interviewed described this as both a challenge and a reflection of strong community development. Inconsistent services mean that gaps and limited access to supports and services exist. At the same time, there is evidence that communities come together and build and tailor services to match their local need in an organic way.

“Community assets include both stakeholders (a person, group, and organizations with investments in senior’s health and wellbeing) and services (non-medical and medical support services and programs available for seniors that help them live longer in their own homes and remain engaged in the community).”

*Better at Home,
United Way of the Lower Mainland*



Better at Home Community Forum, Port Hardy, Feb. 2013

Table 2 is a compilation of the services and organizations that were specifically noted as helpful in supporting seniors to live independently. Regional assets are indicated with a brown outline. Assets with a green outline are available in one or several communities but not all.

Table 2 – Community Assets

Health Centres	Service Clubs eg. Lions Club	Community Centres	Senior's Drop-In Centres	Thrift Shops
Hospice	* VIHA Home & Community Care	Local Physicians	* NI Crisis & Counselling Centre	* FAFS (forms assistance for seniors) NICCCS
Churches	* North Island Community Services	Volunteer Transportation Network (NICSS)	* Mount Waddington Health Network	Wheels for Wellness
Social Groups eg. Happy Gang, craft groups & choir	Vancouver Island Public Library	Seniors Dinners	Community Response Network	Mental Health Counsellors
RCMP	* We Care Foot Care	* Community Gardens	On reserve Home Support	Connection with Youth
Community Gardens	Red Cross Loan Cupboard	Meals on Wheels	Dial-a-Dietitian	First Nations Elders
	Swimming Pool	Bath Support (via extended care)	North Island College Elder College	

Supports and services marked with an asterisk (*) may require some additional explanation as follows;

- * Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) Home and Community Care
 - Health care and personal support services provided to eligible people served by VIHA. These services may be provided on a short or long term basis and may change as client needs change. Eligibility is based on assessment.
- * North Island Crisis and Counselling Centre Society (www.nicccs.org)
 - While physically located in Port Hardy, NICCCS staff travels to nearby communities and outlying areas to provide a broad range of counselling options and programs.
- * FAFS - Forms Assistance For Seniors
 - A volunteer forms assistance program that supports seniors to complete Service Canada forms. This need was identified by a local literacy group. It is available for seniors across the Mount Waddington area.
- * North Island Community Services (www.nicomunityservices.com)
 - Multi-service agency located in Port McNeill that provides a full range of family supports and operates a much valued local transportation options.
- * Mount Waddington Health Network (www.mountwaddingtonhealthnetwork.com)
 - The Network, an initiative supported by the regional health authority, exists to participate in decisions related to and impacting on health. It is an open mechanism to provide community input and action to improve the health of local citizens.
- * We Care Home Health Services
 - Private foot care and other fee for services covering all North Island communities.
- * Community Gardens
 - Active community gardens exist in Alert Bay, Sointula and Port McNeill. The Mount Waddington Health Network is hosting a meeting to support and develop these community gardens (March 12, 2013) in an effort to further promote sustainability.

The following are three, local case studies that provide a lens of lived experience to the factors of vulnerability.

A senior in her 70's relocated from the main land to live alongside her daughter's family. Her daughter subsequent divorce saw her move away, leaving her with minimal contacts, supports and no transportation. The situation prevents this senior from accessing the services she requires to be healthy in her community.

A couple in their 70's... she is the primary caregiver of her husband and has mobility issues. She requires consistent therapy for her arthritis as does her husband. The morning of the community forum, a light bulb burnt out and the couple had no one to come over to change it. One fall from a step stool or tripping in the dark could mean hospitalization leaving no-one to care for her husband.

A senior's daughter is worried about her Mother keeping her fridge clean of expired, unsafe foods. The daughter struggles with her Mother over this issue and wishes her Mother had a peer that could discuss these issues within a friendly visit context.

Factors of Vulnerability

The analysis of interview, focus group and community forum feedback suggests two significant themes of vulnerability for seniors in the North Island—social isolation and safety, both of which are validated by both provincial and national research on aging (Cloutier-Fisher et. al.; 2006; United Way, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2006).

Social Isolation

There are many factors that contribute to social isolation among seniors including physical environment, distance from family and friends, problems negotiating transportation and living alone (Cloutier_Fisher et. al.) People participating in the Better at Home community development process identified the most common barrier to independent living in the North Island is transportation difficulties. While huge progress on the issue of accessible transportation has occurred since the development of the Mount Waddington Health Network, stories were shared about ongoing transportation barriers, particularly for individuals living on small islands. The nature of the geography of the region reduces the ability to access a wider variety of programs and services.

Safety

The concern for safety was a common thread through many stories shared during the Better at Home process. Safety included both physical safety issues such as falls but also personal safety such as financial abuse.

Local needs from the Better at Home's basket of services

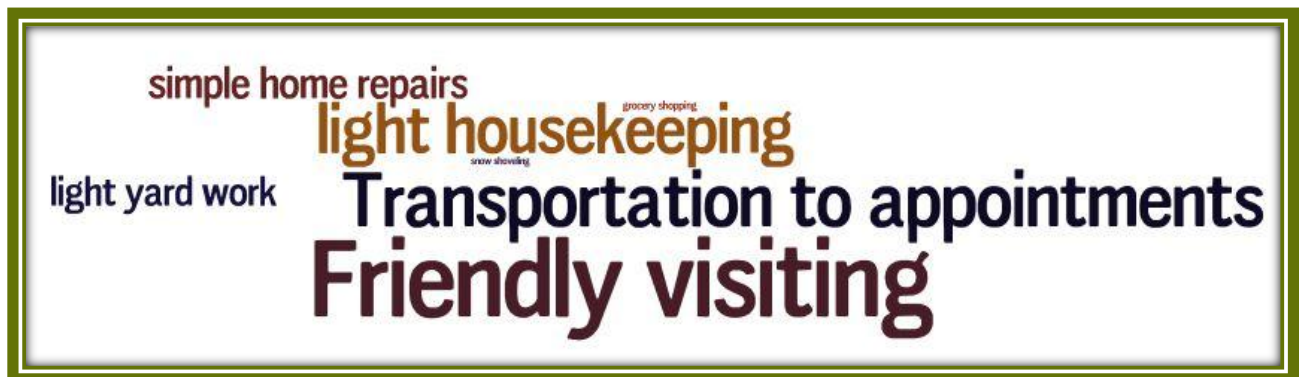
"Better at Home is designed to assist seniors with simple day-to-day tasks, thereby helping seniors maintain their independence and stay connected with their community... Better at Home is designed to be adaptable to the characteristics of a community and will address specific needs of local seniors. Services will be chosen from the basket of services."

Better at Home, United Way of the Lower Mainland

What **non-medical** home supports from the Better at Home basket of services are needed in this community?

This was a consistent question asked across interviews, surveys and focus groups. The responses sparked conversation that connected each basket of services with specific local need. Figure 1 shows a rough representation of the priority given to each basket of service. The large font represents the service area that more people indicated was needed in the community. The smallest fonts suggest that these services are less in demand.

Figure 1



More specifically, under these broad categories, seniors and senior serving organizations described the following services which, currently, local needs are not well met:

1. Friendly visiting
 - Visiting, social, in-person check-ins
 - Build relationship between volunteer and senior
 - Offering tools and skills to aid in seniors' ability to look after themselves
 - Reduce isolation and depression of seniors living alone (it was noted that there was a concerning number of senior men living alone who were vulnerable)
 - Ability for volunteers to observe living conditions on a friendly visit

2. Transportation to appointments
 - Support and build on current Volunteer Transportation Network and Wheels for Wellness services
 - Meet gap that exists for seniors who have to catch a ferry
 - Picking up groceries and prescriptions.
3. Light Housekeeping
 - Connected with friendly visit
 - Laundry, vacuuming, cleaning bathtub
 - Recycling support
 - Pet care (walking, cleaning, vet visits)
4. Simple Home Repairs
 - Changing a light bulb (safety issues with task and with darkness)
 - Reducing tripping hazards
 - Moving furniture
 - Simple car maintenance (no garage in some communities)
5. Light Yard Work & Snow Removal
 - Because snow fall is infrequent, it was often considered part of Light Yard Work
6. Grocery Shopping
 - Focus on lifting and carrying groceries; from car into home, putting items away
 - May require transportation support as local stores do not deliver
7. Other
 - Meal planning and meal prep (outside the scope of Better at Home)
 - Advocacy for more senior's services which may be outside the scope of the Better at Home Program including:
 - Increased Meals on Wheels services
 - Lifeline
 - Local grocery stores to deliver orders
 - Transportation for things other than appointments
 - Non-medical trips to airport in Comox (less expensive than flying out of Port Hardy)
 - Christmas Shopping
 - Getting out to social events
 - Cultural awareness education – community members indicated that racism issues exist
 - Promoting and supporting the increased use of tele-health for specialist appointments

Community Readiness

Explanation of community readiness that reflects community consultations and meetings

Information obtained through the Community Development process demonstrated that Port Hardy, and more specifically, the North Island area is well positioned to begin delivery of the Better at Home basket of services.

Potential risks going forward

1. Volunteer safety was considered an integral part of program development. It was suggested to incorporate strong volunteer engagement, development and support strategies.
2. A local First Nations Elder Case Manager participated in the Better at Home community process with informed suggestions of support needs on the three local reserves. To discover how to best support aboriginal seniors effectively and respectfully with the Better at Home Program, First Nations Council leaders require an opportunity to lend their voice in determining what this may look like.
3. The increasing demographic projections suggest that service needs will continue to grow as the population grows and ages. At the same time, the commitment to expand the service boundary beyond Port Hardy to include the entire area of Mount Waddington Regional District increases program implementation costs due to geography and size of target population, ultimately limiting impact.



Local Better at Home Program Details

Preferred Services and Preferred Service Approach

In summary, the suggestion that emerged from the Community Forum was that the Better at Home Program in Northern Vancouver Island communities be delivered as a comprehensive and individualized service tailored to the participating senior and their need. The delivery of the Better at Home basket of services should revolve around “friendly visiting” – a relationship based model of support that may include other services such as light housekeeping, transportation to appointments, simple home repairs, light yard work, and grocery shopping as required. The program should be allied with VIHA Home and Community Care to be a part of a holistic approach to aging and delivered by well-trained and supported volunteers.

Selection Process

At the time of the scheduled Community Forum, a single lead agency came forward with an expression of interest in pursuing the role of lead agency for the Better at Home Program; North Island Crisis and Counselling Centre Society (NICCCS). The Executive Director of NICCCS went through a process of requesting a formal motion of board support. Having done so, the organization feels well prepared to express an interest in the opportunity. The organization expressed their willingness to reflect on the qualities and criteria identified by the consultation process to ensure that they were indeed the best fit for the program within the North Island area.

Proposed Lead Agency

The North Island Crisis & Counselling Centre, established in 1981, has a long history of working collaboratively with other service providers and local communities. In the early 90’s the NICCCS was instrumental in the development of the first Infant Development Program Society, giving leadership in organizing and forming the society. Several years later the agency provided the infrastructure necessary for the Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre to get established in the community. They continue to support many initiatives and believe strongly in increasing community capacity.

Over this past year the agency has, at the request of The Seniors Elders Better Living Advisory Committee of the Mount Waddington Health Network, taken the lead in designing and guiding the “Forms Assistance for Seniors” volunteer program. This arose out of a Seniors Financial Literacy workshop held in the North Island in which concerns that many seniors were both vulnerable to abuse and did not know how to apply for benefits were brought forward.

In addition, they have recently taken on the responsibility for developing a North Island Volunteer Hospice program.

The Society currently offers;

- 24 hr. local Crisis Line
- FASD Keyworker
- Child & Youth counselling
- Sexual Abuse Intervention Program
- Family Counselling
- SAFE Shelter for women and children fleeing violence
- Specialized Women's counselling and outreach services
- Infant and Supported Child Development
- Children Who Witness Abuse Programs
- Forms Assistance for Seniors Program

NICCCS envisions working with the United Way to develop the implementation of the Better at Home Program by leveraging existing connections in most of the North Island communities. They would like to strengthen those connections and ensure that there are no barriers to non-medical supports for seniors across all North Island communities. With the support of the Seniors Elders Better Living Advisory Committee, they look forward to building partnerships and assisting seniors in the region to live independently and with dignity in their own communities.

Mission – Empowering People.

We believe in empowering people to deal with the stresses and problems in their lives. Our focus is on prevention as well as intervention.

NICCCS, the community forum participants agreed, has the infrastructure and experience to take on the implementation of the Better at Home Program. One Councillor from the City of Port Hardy, in fact, publically shared that he, personally, and the entire council (likely) fully supports NICCCS proceeding with the application on behalf of the community.

Key Qualities for Lead Agency Selection (agreed upon at community forum)

While the NICCCS strongly demonstrates meeting the key qualities listed below, this section serves as a reminder of the values and expectations of the Better at Home lead agency as described by seniors and local senior serving organizations.



Suggested opportunities for service integration/coordination

Seamless services that provide greater continuity for seniors are possible through enhanced collaborations between organizations.

“An intentional network is a network of people and organizations that are working on the same issue or vision, together with structures that have been created to mobilize the energy of these organizations.”

June Holley, Network Weaver Handbook, 2012

A partnership currently exists between NICCCS and VIHA Home and Community Care. This relationship is important as seniors needs often require both medical and non-medical supports.

In addition to fostering the key partnership with VIHA, other potential partnerships were revealed in the community development process;

- Volunteer Transportation Network and other services at NICSS
- Grocery stores (regarding grocery delivery services)
- Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre and First Nations
- Vancouver Island North Women’s Resource Society (regarding elder abuse)
- Elder college (partner for related education)
- Mobilized volunteers of the Forms Assistance For Seniors Program
- Mobilized Crisis Line volunteers
- Coastal Community Credit Unions (actively looking for volunteer opportunities for staff)
- Service clubs (currently providing non-medical supports informally)
- Youth organizations (brownies, guides, rangers, scouts)

A final suggestion to enhance service integration and coordination is to make use of and leverage the North Island Seniors/Elders Better Living Advisory Committee as an advisory body for the Better at Home Program. This group is already highly connected to both senior citizens and service organizations across the Mount Waddington region.

Recommendations for Next Steps

1. North Island Crisis and Counselling Centre Society to submit funding application to United Way.
2. Integrate the following advice given by community forum participants to build an effective program implementation plan;
 - a. Develop an effective communications plan that is simple, clear and easy to access
 - b. Use marketing techniques to get the word out in all the communities including social networking (eg. facebook and local community television channel)
 - c. Recruit both seniors and younger people as volunteers
 - d. Allow the program to offer “after hours” services
 - e. Emphasize confidentiality and non-judgemental approaches with volunteers
 - f. Bring the Better at Home Program forward to the local First Nations bands via Circle meetings or through other direct access relationships
3. Engage the North Island Seniors/Elders Better Living Advisory Committee to explore the possibility of acting in an advisory capacity to the Better at Home Program.

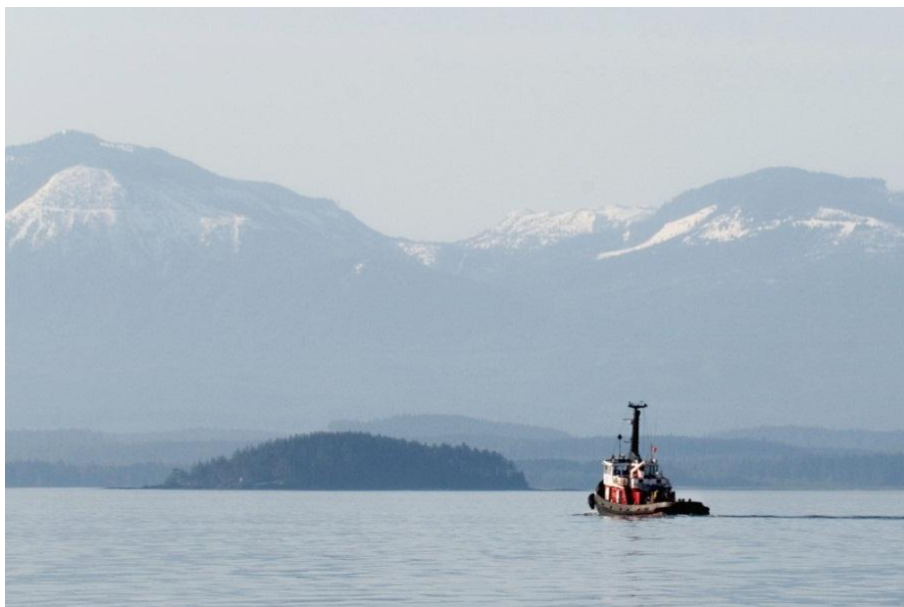


Photo by A. Davey

Appendix

Met or consulted with representatives from the following agencies, organizations and businesses:

- Crisis Response network
- Faith organisations
- Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw –also known as Tsulquate
- Kwakiutl Band
- Mt Waddington Health network
- Multiple Sclerosis Society
- Namgis First Nation
- NI assessment and referral service society
- North Island Community Services Society
- North Island Crisis and Counselling Centre Society
- North Island Seniors Better Living Advisory Committee
- Port Hardy City Council
- Port McNeill Happy Gang
- Quatsino Band
- Red Cross
- Regional District
- Seniors Centre, Port Hardy
- Seniors Centre, Port McNeill
- Tlatlasikwala First Nation
- Vancouver Island Health Authority
- Whe-La-La-U Area Council

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