

UNITY

UNITY PARTNERS ANNUAL REPORT

LATEST STORIES

LOOKING FOR
A CAREER
CHANGE?

MEET YWCA
WOMAN OF
DISTINCTION:
LAUREN
SIMPSON

MADISON VANOENE

UNITY BOARD MEMBER

2022/23

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REPORT INTRODUCTION

Land Acknowledgement

UNITI respectfully acknowledges that we do our work on the traditional and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, and Katzie First Nations and the treaty territory of the Tsawwassen First Nations. We are grateful for the use of their land.



SEMIAHMOO
FIRST NATION



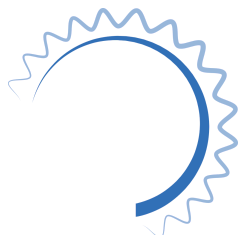
UNITI is the Partnership of 3 Organizations



Semiahmoo House Society (SHS) provides quality services and supports to people with disabilities and their families in Surrey and White Rock.



Peninsula Estates Housing Society (PEHS) provides affordable and inclusive housing that reflects the diversity of our community.



The Semiahmoo Foundation (TSF) ensures that UNITI has the recognition, relationships, and resources to support an inclusive community.

MESSAGES FROM UNITI BOARD CHAIRS

Bea Hadikin, Chair of SHS



UNITI Ends (mission) are all about supporting people with disabilities to live their best lives, lives where there is abundant choice, opportunity, and full inclusion in society. Not surprisingly, when we make the world more user-friendly for people with disabilities, we actually enhance life for everyone. From accessible homes and workplaces to adapted educational opportunities to improved and supported recreation and more, life can be more enriching and purposeful for all, including seniors, families, and typically marginalized groups. We are building community in a deliberate and meaningful way. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you staff of UNITI for your inspired leadership and strong commitment to our Ends. There is great power in inclusion.

Marie Sabine, Chair of TSF



This past year, The Semiahmoo Foundation produced the documentary *Lauren's Story**, which tells the story of a young housing activist. I'm happy to share that there will be a *Lauren's Story Pt.2*. TSF supported our local community through inclusive events such as Dancing at the Pier, a Halloween Zombie Walk, and a youth partnership with Alex Neighbourhood House. My daughter has an intellectual disability so I see, first hand, the difference UNITI programs and services supported by donations received by TSF make in her life and the lives of others. The impact of your donations makes a world of difference in the lives of many. I am honoured to serve on the UNITI Boards and as The Semiahmoo Foundation Chair. (*You can watch *Lauren's Story* on YouTube.)

Ian Jarvis, Chair of PEHS



What a year! Despite Surrey City Council's rejection of the Harmony project, that had overwhelming community support, the UNITI organization brought it back to life through dogged determination and clear messaging of the positive impact that this project will have on our community that so desperately needs affordable rental housing. The project was brought before Surrey City Council again in the fall of 2022 and was given unanimous support for the project to proceed. Now the hard work to finish the detailed planning and construction begins. Creating the conditions for success resulted from the efforts of our committed management team and supportive Board. I thank them for their continued efforts to create great places to live.

Alexander Magnussen



Catherine Ferguson



David Ure



Katie Crocker



MESSAGE FROM UNITI CEO

Doug Tennant



UNITI exists so that people with disabilities live lives of their choosing with the same opportunities for employment, housing, recreation, and belonging as any other British Columbian. We do this through the services we develop and run; by partnerships and advocacy; and, most importantly, by ensuring people with disabilities are the leaders of both their own lives and the projects that involve them.

We do this through our programs by developing services and courses that match what the people we support tell us they want and need, and we do this in the community by passionately defending the right of people with disabilities to be fully included in their community. And, most importantly, UNITI supports disabled people to be advocates and leaders in the issues that most impact them.

In 2022/23, UNITI showed resilience and strength with a successful campaign that resulted in Surrey Council approving Harmony Apartments a year and a half after it was unjustly rejected. The community strongly supported the project and this was demonstrated in the “We Belong Surrey” partnership of business and community organizations formed to fight for a city where all people are valued and belong and in the overwhelming support Harmony received at the November 28, 2022, Public Hearing.

The Harmony Campaign would not have succeeded without the voice of people with disabilities, including tenants who currently live in Chorus Apartments and Lauren Simpson, the young housing advocate whose documentary, *Lauren’s Story*, spoke for the many people in need of safe and affordable housing in their community. Lauren was recognized for her courageous leadership by being selected the 2022 YWCA Women of Distinction Community Champion.

“ *The **advocacy and leadership** of people with disabilities is the reason that Harmony will be built. And I am proud that UNITI and the community supported this to happen.* ”

Bonita Thompson



Madison VanOene



Nicole Russell

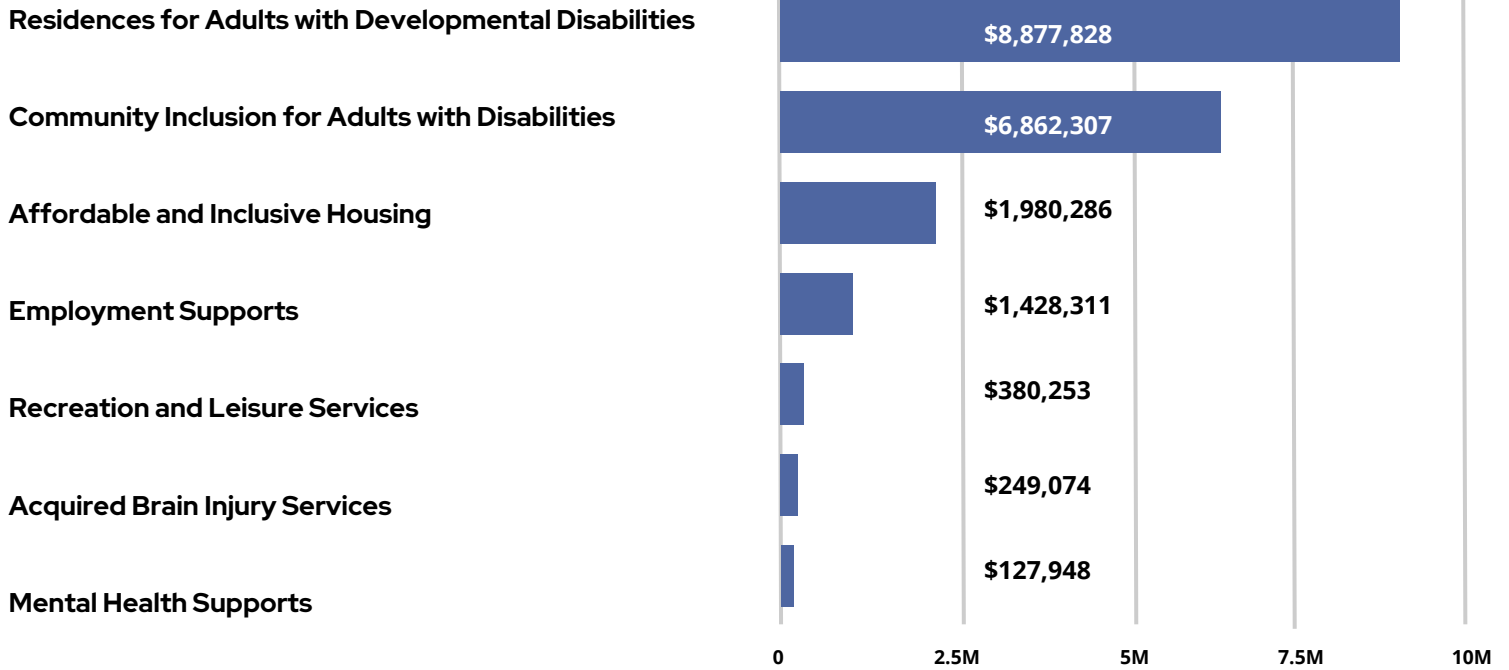


Teresita Aristizabal



UNITI FINANCES

Funding for UNITI Programs and Services



**Total revenue
for all activities
is \$20,294,745**



LOOKING IN: Hearing from Donors Randy & Kaleigh

Meet Randy & Kaleigh

“ Randy Tingskou and Kaleigh MacAlpine contributes to the communities they're a part of and support their staff with the positive leadership they believe in.

Randy believes in helping others , as he himself received support through his health journey. Having seen first hand what impacts people and the impact non-profits can have, Randy has committed 2% of their profits to local charities in each community they host a location of their business. As a family, you can see them in the community volunteering at local homeless shelters, collecting food donations, and cleaning up White Rock beach.



"We believe in dedication to community enrichment and that is why we feel so passionate about UNITI."

**-Randy Tingskou,
Owner**

*UNITI has conversations with potential donors to see if **their values and mission match what we want to do in the community**... so it was really good to hear and find out the support A Little Bud has given to the Elks & Rotary Clubs and just their commitment in our neighbourhood. That to me tells me they're a group that is committed to building an inclusive community.*

-Doug Tennant, UNITI CEO

REFLECTIONS FROM NORTH CAMPUS



How has North Campus made more leadership opportunities ?

“At North Campus, people are leading the Hot Lunch Program.”

Barbara-Anne



What is something good that's happening at North Campus?

“A new bathroom. They have a button to open now. Also the nice staff at North Campus.” *Logan helped on the grant that funded the bathroom upgrades!

Logan



What have you learned at North Campus?

“I learned that I like to do things independently. I take HandyDART and transit, and I like it.”

Justin



What do you like about North Campus?

“I love being at North Campus and talking to my friends. I like dancing and singing, and going bowling because that’s my favorite thing to do!”

Allie

**Interview conducted by:
Lauren Simpson, Alexa Lehwald, and Natalie Raven with the Community Development Committee**

HOW UNITI IS GETTING BETTER

What Has UNITI Focused on This Year?

While much has happened within UNITI, the organization centered Performance and Quality Improvement on three areas:

Reducing Risk

UNITI improved the process for reviewing immediate and ongoing risks for people we support and employees. Key improvements include: ensuring quarterly review periods, implementing random sampling, decreasing bias by ensuring reviewers are not directly involved in the area being reviewed, and updating resource documents and forms for tracking the data.



Implementing Ends Recommendations

UNITI developed a process to follow up with Ends recommendations each year. Key pieces of the process include: meeting twice a year with the Self-Advocates of Semiahmoo's Ends Recommendation and Review Committee; and incorporating 2-3 Ends Recommendations in all programs and services Short Term Plans.



Enhancing Digital Equity

UNITI collaborated with SAS and support professionals to identify technology needs for those we assist. UNITI secured grants for computers, accessibility tools, and devices. As well, UNITI enabled some support staff in using technology. UNITI facilitated Cybersecurity Training for 8 people and guided 25 people through Digital Literacy Training by Immigrant Services Society of BC.

LOOKING IN: Lauren Simpson



WOMEN *of* DISTINCTION
AWARDS

Meet Lauren

Lauren is a Self-Advocate. She advocated for the inclusive and affordable Harmony Apartments project with Lauren's Story, a documentary in which she led and starred, which then influenced the approval of Harmony Apartments after it was rejected by Surrey Council.

Lauren attends many conferences, housing forums and has been part of events and projects such as the BCNPHA Housing Central Conference, SBOT Surrey Development Industry Forum, and Human Library Project. In 2021, Lauren took the City of Surrey's Housing Needs survey and translated it into plain language so it would be accessible to all. Recently, Lauren won the **2023 YWCA Women of Distinction Award in the Community Champion category**. Lauren's contributions have benefited people with mental illness, disability, a part of the senior community, women's issues, and living with poverty. Thank you Lauren!



LOOKING IN: InclusionBC Conference



Everybody Belongs! 44th Inclusion BC Conference

At the conference, UNITI and SAS presented on a number of topics:

- Tara Wall, UNITI Community Support Worker, and Alexa Lehwald, Self-Advocate and Community Development Committee Member, presented “How to Empower Elementary School Students” based on the Equally Empowered Program they led with the Gr. 7 Leadership Group at HT Thrift.
- UNITI WISE Employment Solutions hosted a panel with employees.
- The local Mental Health Network presentation included UNITI’s Nolda Ware, Shabnam Khan, as well as Surrey SHARES facilitator, Jessika Houston.
- The Self-Advocates of Semiahmoo shared the story of their SPEAKtaacular ToastMasters Club and took the crowd through skill and confidence building speaking exercises.
- Keynote: Moderators Jillian Glennie and Kara Anderson were joined by Self Advocate Leadership Network co-founder Michael McLellan, as well as UNITI’s Nolda Ware and Doug Tennant to discuss leadership in the disability movement in, “Why Aren’t People with Disabilities Leading Their Movement?”
- The premiere of *Lauren’s Story*, a documentary about the need for affordable and inclusive housing in Surrey and the difficulties UNITI has faced trying to create more housing solutions for our community.

Who is Inclusion BC?

Inclusion BC is an organization working with partners to build accessible communities and to enhance the lives of children, youth, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and their families. They do this by building awareness, inspiring action and advancing rights, responsibilities and social justice.

What is the Inclusion BC Conference?

Every year, over 600 people gather to learn, celebrate, network, and share real stories for disability inclusion. This includes self-advocates, family members, community inclusion workers and community leaders, education and therapeutic professionals, and expert advisors. In 2022, UNITI and the Self-Advocates of Semiahmoo (SAS) cohosted the event in Surrey. SAS was the first self-advocacy organization to have this honour, a testament to the organization!

Information gathered from www.inclusionbc.org.

Surrey Intercultural Seniors Social Inclusion Partnership Network

We at Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) are pleased to partner with UNITI for the SISSIP Network Project and commend them for their efforts in reducing social isolation amongst seniors through their Surrey SHARES project. Their guidance and support have empowered seniors to share their voices.

- Satbir Cheema, PICS CEO



Surrey Intercultural Seniors **SOCIAL INCLUSION** Partnership (SISSIP) Network

Working together to create greater awareness, appreciation & acceptance of different cultures to make Surrey an intercultural & socially inclusive community for seniors 55+

Funded in part by the
Government of Canada's
New Horizons for Seniors Program



What is the SISSIP Network?

The Surrey Intercultural Seniors Social Inclusion Partnership (SISSIP) Network Project is a Collective Impact Initiative that **aims to address barriers to social inclusion and engagement for seniors 55+**, to make Surrey a more interculturally inclusive and engaged community. The project is an initiative between Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS) the backbone organization and five collaborating partners: City of Surrey, UNITI, Brella Community Services Society, SOURCES, and FRAFCA.

The SISSIP Network Project has been able to build meaningful relationships with seniors and has developed diverse initiatives to support social inclusion and interculturalism.

UNITI & SISSIP

UNITI was selected as a partner for having unique strengths, experiences, and skill sets the organization could bring to the table. As part of the five year initiative, UNITI has accessed over \$400,000 to support seniors in Surrey. Starting as a storytelling program paired with life coaching, UNITI has expanded their initiative to partner with Surrey recreation and leisure services, as well as participating in an exhibit at the Surrey Museum. There is also a Surrey SHARES book coming fall 2023 which incorporates 26 stories from the program.

ZOMBIE WALK



The Zombie Walk was the spookiest walk you could have been apart of in October. UNITI saw 100s of people from all over the lower mainland come out to participate. There were professional zombies, a singer, makeup artists, food vendors, family stations, and prizes! This event was about creating meaningful connections with friends, family, and community.

Created in collaboration between UNITI and Crystal Smith, local event organizer, the event welcomed Mayor Darryl Walker and volunteer police among some of the very special guests.

UNITI was also incredibly fortunate to offer prizes donated from local businesses.

“ **Super Fun Community Event!** ”



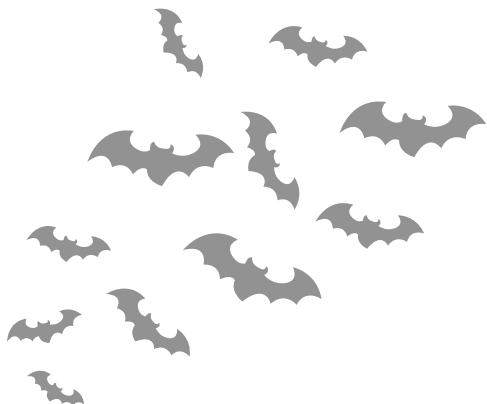
“ **Great event!** ”



“ **The make-up was cool!** ”



“ **Thanks for the super fun day!** ”



DANCING AT THE PIER



UNITI is proud to have hosted the 2022 and 2023 season of Dancing at the Pier. As an organization, UNITI focuses on supporting a healthy and inclusive community for all. We were thrilled to welcome 1,000's of people this year to the Latin dance party. People danced the night away with friends, family, and community. UNITI extends a big thank you to Catherine Ferguson, UNITI board member and former White Rock Mayor as well as Nora Hutt, community member and dancer for creating such a memorable event.

"I'm from Ocean Park, Surrey. This is awesome. A real treat to do something like this at the Pier."

"Fantastic venue. Love the dancing."



LOOKING IN: Frances Morris



Meet Frances

Frances Morris is a talented and certified dance fitness instructor. She is also a Yoga teacher. Frances has facilitated the UNITI Fitness and Yoga classes within Recreation and Leisure Programs for over ten years; where she has successfully built relationships, helped people achieve their fitness goals and provided adapted programming suitable to the abilities of many different people.

DID YOU KNOW?

Frances is an inclusive fitness instructor through the City of White Rock's & City of Surrey's Recreation Services? There she teaches classes that build stamina, endurance, and flexibility. All abilities welcome!



*"Frances has been a long time dedicated trainer supporting UNITI. She puts time into ensuring that people are **working at their comfort level while also encouraging people to try new things.** She is invaluable to our community."*

-Brianna L. Hopaluk, Associate Director of Community Services

CHORUS APARTMENTS

Learn more about
Chorus Apartments
Scan this QR code!



UNITI believes that housing is a human right and people should have access to live in inclusive and affordable housing that reflects the diversity of their community.



Since moving into Chorus, it has been amazing! I have made lots of friends and by doing things on my own and living by myself, my independence has grown.

– Weston, Chorus Apartment Resident



In 2016, UNITI completed the award-winning Chorus Apartments. This 71-rental home apartment building provides quality affordable housing for the residents of South Surrey and was selected as one of the top three Canadian models of inclusive housing by Inclusion Canada.



UNITI developed Chorus, the first purpose-built rental apartment in Surrey in over 30 years, in 2016. Chorus is a 71-unit inclusive apartment and is home to people with disabilities, families, seniors, essential workers, and students. The inclusive nature of Chorus means that the tenant mix reflects the community and includes those who are being priced out of their neighborhood or who have historically not been included, such as people who have intellectual disabilities. Chorus has proven a great success in the seven years it has existed and the community is healthier and stronger because of its presence.

UNITI values inclusion, accessibility and diversity.

HARMONY APARTMENTS

DEVELOPING A BETTER FUTURE FOR SOUTH SURREY

With more than 7,000 engagements through petitions, correspondence, and calls into public hearing, UNITI values everyone for their overwhelming support of UNITI's Harmony Apartments. Our organization recognizes that your voice to council in 2022 helped immensely to ensure the approval for the 91-rental homes in South Surrey.

Thank You

"Harmony is an important project for the community. Harmony reflects the fabric of our community as it's woven together. Having people of all colours and backgrounds; that's a community. That's Surrey."

**-Ralph Kison,
President Kison Inc.**



Harmony is a new 91 rental home, 6-storey inclusive building, in South Surrey, set to be developed for 2025.

There is clear agreement on the value and importance of the Harmony project to the communities of Surrey and White Rock.

UNITI will strive to ensure open and meaningful communication as we work through the development of Harmony.



For questions regarding UNITI's housing and the development of Harmony, please contact Lise Boughen, l.boughen@uniti4all.com

Since the approval of the project back in November 2022, UNITI has been working hard to get the project back up and running! We wanted to let you know things are moving along smoothly, with much of the work going on behind the scene working with the City of Surrey and BC Housing to get things ready for development.

DID YOU KNOW?

The 5.5 acre property where Harmony will be built has been owned and stewarded by UNITI since 1983.



Want to know more about UNITI's Housing right now? Scan this QR code.



LOOKING IN: SELF-ADVOCATES OF SEMIAHMOO



The Self-Advocates of Semiahmoo (SAS) focused on accessibility this year, with projects aimed at improving access across Surrey and British Columbia. SAS made trick or treating accessible by canvassing neighborhoods, connected with school districts and volunteered to make Halloween accessible for all children in collaboration with Treat Accessibly. SAS hosted an accessible partnership with Halloween village, RE/MAX, Canadian Tire, and Kinder.

Self-Advocates also worked in partnership with TransLink on their 'Transit is for Everyone' video, highlighting the importance of accessible transit and encouraging respect and kindness. SAS developed this project from start to finish in collaboration with Sea to Sky Media and TransLink.

Self-Advocates hosted the Surrey Access Walk and Roll this year with 250 people attending, to highlight accessible spaces locally, celebrate people with disabilities, and inspire people to think about how to be a better, more accessible and more inclusive community.



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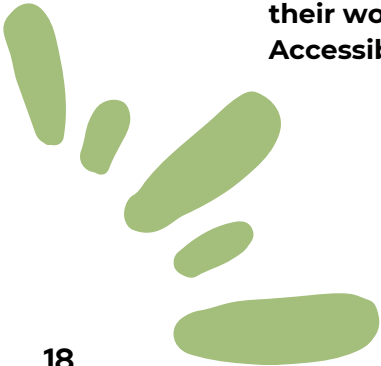
"I'm proud of the accessibility advocacy we've done this year. The Transit video was the project I enjoyed most. I ride the bus quite a bit and am passionate about bus accessibility. I'm looking forward to the clothing sale and new leadership opportunities next year."

-Danielle Burns, Self-Advocates Co-Chair

”

DID YOU KNOW?

SAS has been federally recognized for their work on the Canadian Accessibility Act.



INCLUSIVE HIRING



Why Hire Inclusive?

UNITI's WISE Employment Services are all about working collaboratively and **creating inclusive and dynamic workplaces** through innovative solutions.

Supporting and empowering job seekers to discover their potential, passions and unique skills, this service helps connect employers to a huge and diverse but untapped labour pool.

The Impact

Having a job is an extremely important factor in many people's lives. According to UNITI's research, roughly **79% of businesses want to offer more opportunities** to people with disabilities. Roger's Aquatic & Pet Supplies is one inclusive employer with UNITI. They make sure that everyone has the same equal opportunities to employment who are seeking jobs.

**If you are interested in learning about the advantages of hiring into this untapped labor pool of people with diversabilities - we are here to help!
Contact wisejobs@uniti4all.com.**

Did you know...

More than **5.3 million** Canadians live with some form of disability.



People with a disability are employed at a rate of 48.4% compared to 70.2% for those without disability.

People with disabilities are **underemployed**, but, want to **work**.



www.vancity.com, empowernl.ca, easterseals.ca

UNITI PARTNER SHS 2022/23 ENDS 2 CONSULTATION

What are the Ends?

The Ends are what UNITI exists to achieve. They are created through comprehensive consultations with our community. The Ends consultations are one way that UNITI holds itself accountable. We celebrate what we are successfully achieving and strive to do better in areas where we fall short.

What are the Ends Consultations?

UNITI partner, Semiahmoo House Society checks in to see how they are doing to help people live good lives. The consultation is focused on the whole organization and all services provided to people with developmental disabilities.

The 2022-2023 consultations were about Ends 2:
People decide how they live their lives, and make informed choices.

Questions explored this year while thinking about Ends 2:

1. What seems to be going well?
2. What is not going so well?
3. What could be different or paid more attention to?
4. What are people's hopes for the future?

The Ends Consultation Committee and UNITI had conversations with 109 people to ask, listen and learn.

People answer: What are your hopes for the future?

To have more friends.

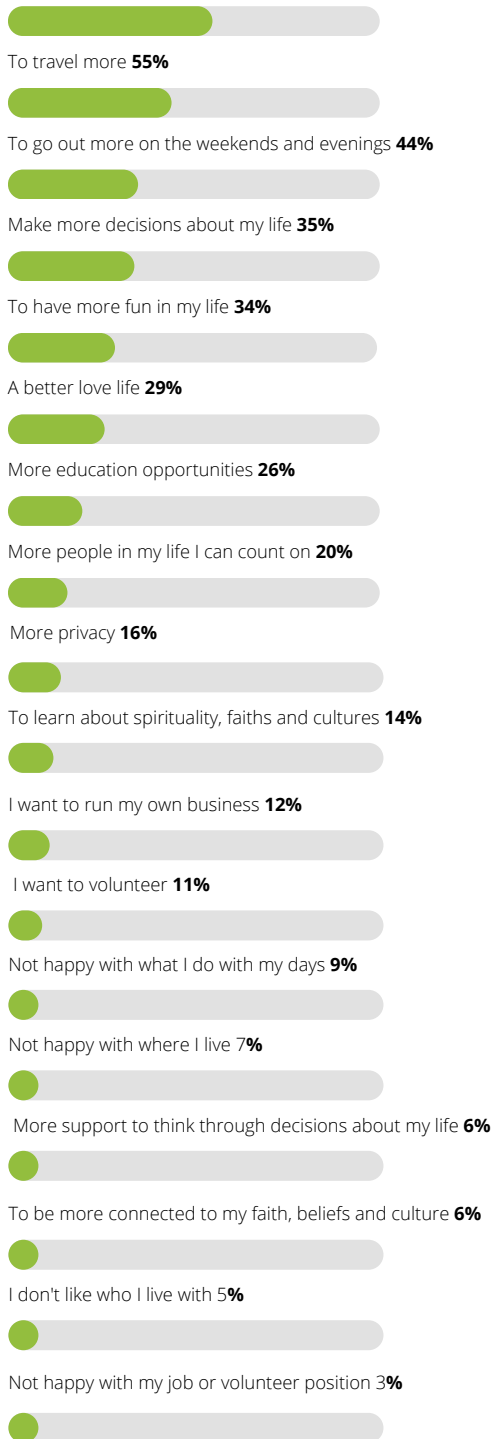
To have a successful career.

Move into my own place.

To have a balanced life.



What are your main concerns about life in relation to Ends 2? (92 participants chose their top 5.)



What are some recommendations for UNITI?



Increase opportunities for people to build confidence and learn about informed decision making.



Support to expand their personal support networks.



Address barriers to support people to have a life of love and romance and more close friends.



Regularly check in with people and ask if they are happy about where they live and who they live with.



Continue to advocate for affordable, accessible and inclusive housing.



Increase a variety of education and learning opportunities.



Address barriers to support people to have a good social life and increase opportunities for people to have fun in the evenings and on weekends.



Continue to support people to find a job and increase volunteer opportunities that people are passionate about.



Increase supports and services for people who are older. Support people and families to be better prepared for what life might be like when older.



Ask people if they want help to explore their spirituality, culture and provide the support they need.

JOIN OUR TEAM



Are you interested in working for UNITI?

UNITI is a growing organization, working to achieve a healthier and more inclusive community for all people. We are hiring **Community Support Workers, Residential Support Workers** and other positions throughout the organization.

To see current job openings visit our website: uniti4all.com

What are we looking for?

We are seeking people who enjoy being part of a team, care about inclusion of all people in our community, and want to move the disability movement forward. Having relatable education and or experience along with a valid BC Driver's license helps meet the needs of the people using UNITI's services.

INSIDER TIP!

Before submitting your resume and cover letter to recruit@uniti4all.com familiarize yourself with our website.

Check out our current
job postings!

Scan this QR code!



REPORT CONCLUSION



Getting Involved

Community involvement is an important part of who UNITI is. Over the past year, UNITI has been involved in multiple large scale community events. We've hosted dance parties at the pier, seasonal get togethers bringing zombies uptown, and supported holiday functions. UNITI continues to partner with multiple community organizations, by continuing to support accessibility and inclusion. UNITI is excited to see you at future events. Please make sure to stop by when you see us and say "hi".



Using Our Voices!

UNITI believes in a nothing about us without us approach. This means people with lived experience are able to contribute at every step in our process.



A Place To Call Home

UNITI is a place where people call home. For over 40 years, UNITI has had a place in community as an affordable, inclusive housing provider. This continues as the future build, Harmony, is coming closer to breaking ground. UNITI is excited for the future development to bring more inclusive living opportunities to our community.

FOLLOW US



@uniti4all

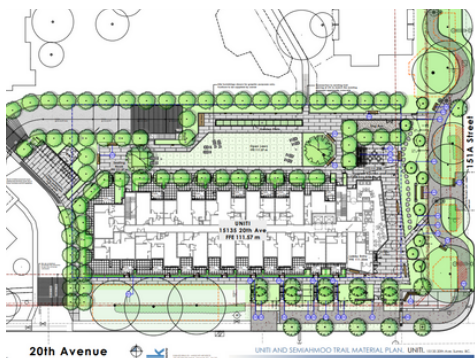


WHAT'S NEXT

Together
We're Stronger

12 DAYS OF UNITI

Make sure to stay tuned for our next launch of the 12 Days of UNITI and see where you can have the biggest impact. We can't wait for you to see what the UNITI Community is up to!



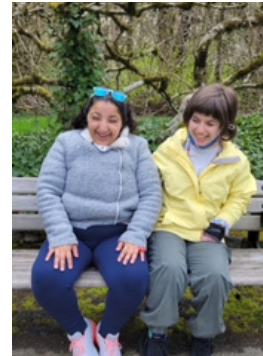
HOMESHARE PROVIDER OPPORTUNITIES

HomeShare Providers give opportunities to people UNITI supports to live with a family, couple or roommate in a home and environment of their choice. Email csn@uniti4all.com to learn more.



HARMONY

UNITI strives to ensure open and meaningful communication as we work through the development of Harmony. Email uniti@uniti4all.com for information.



FINANCIAL LITERACY

UNITI is collaborating with RBC to develop and deliver Financial Literacy at UNITI. The knowledge and skills to earn, spend and save are crucial to empowerment and independence. It also contributes towards well-being and stability. We look forward to rolling out our first cohort in early 2024. Email Seema Tripathi, Director of Employment & Innovation Services: s.tripathi@uniti4all.com for more information.

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