

TONARI GUMI IN STEVESTON, SURREY AND ELSEWHERE!

Over the coming months you may notice that Tonari Gumi is offering various programs in Steveston together with the Steveston Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre; in Surrey together with Minna no Tsudo; at the Royal Arch Masonic Seniors Residence in the Champlain Heights area in South Vancouver; and in other areas outside of our traditional base in the Mount Pleasant area of Vancouver. This is all part of Tonari Gumi's "Reaching Out Initiative", to bring Tonari Gumi's programs and services closer to where the people needing those services live. Supported by generous donors, included a large contribution from Ken & Junko Shinozaki, together with a new grant from the federal New Horizons for Seniors program, Tonari Gumi is making some of its popular programs more accessible to Japanese Canadians who might find it difficult to come to Tonari Gumi's centre in Vancouver.

Among the first of these new programs is Tonari Gumi's renewed weekly activity program starting in April at the Royal Arch Masonic Seniors Residence. Then, in early July, the Tonari Gumi Genki Wellness Program will be held every Monday at the Steveston Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. This program will be very similar to Tonari Gumi's popular Monday Lighthouse program held in Vancouver where seniors will be able to enjoy exercises, socialization and a light snack. Although based on the innovative Iki Iki program already taking place on Thursdays, the Monday "Genki Wellness Program" will be shorter, only some 2 hours, and not include a full Japanese lunch, but rather a tasty Japanese snack. This program is intended for seniors who find the regular Iki Iki programs a little too long and or find the Monday time slot more convenient. The twice monthly program in Surrey starting in June will be very similar to the Steveston program but will be adapted to the needs of the participants in Surrey. Keiko Funahashi will be the coordinator for these various "Reaching Out" programs and will work together with Masako Arima and Michi Wong who will be delivering the activities with the various local groups and the local volunteers. Anyone interested in participating or volunteering in these programs should contact Masako at services@tonarigumi.ca.

Tonari Gumi is also working on starting a similar program in the tri-cities area of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody or in Maple Ridge. Further details will be provided as soon as they become available. We look forward to be working together with the Japanese Canadian communities in each of these various areas in the Lower Mainland to provide meaningful and exciting programs and services for the communities.

COMMUNITY SURVEY SHOWS STRONG SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS IN ENGLISH

By: Martin Kobayakawa

Since its inception, Tonari Gumi has been providing programs and services both in Japanese and English. In light of the growing interest in community among JC's and changing community demographics, such as the Sansei generation entering or well into retirement, we thought it was timely to develop a survey to assess the level of interest in providing more programs in English.

Surveys were posted online on the TG website, the Japanese-Canadian Facebook page and were distributed to community members throughout Metro Vancouver. The survey was open from January to February 2019. Thank you to all who completed the survey.

In total, there were 64 respondents to the survey. 50% of respondents were Sanseis, 23% Niseis, 9% Yonseis and 6% Isseis. 80% of respondents spoke English at home as their first language.

The survey results showed a strong interest and support for programs in English, with 88% of respondents saying they would take programs at Tonari Gumi if they were offered in English.



The most popular program areas were: Japanese cooking (80% interested), Japanese-Canadian history and social issues (69%), Japanese language classes (69%) interest-specific workshops (e.g. gardening, family roots) (66%) and Asian-Canadian arts, culture and literature (61%).

It is notable that there was a strong demand for providing programs on weekends by all respondents and on weekdays during the daytime by those 55 and over.

The survey also revealed that meeting and connecting with other Japanese-Canadians was a key consideration for people becoming involved in the community.

The survey findings will be used to inform the development of new programs at Tonari Gumi. One such program, our new "An Afternoon at TG" program which started In January 2019 has been well-received by JC attendees. More programs like this, designed to address the needs of Japanese-Canadians, will be considered in the future by Tonari Gumi.



