

## **Happipad: Project to Match Empty-Nesters with Empty Bedrooms with Those in Need of Shared Accommodation – University of British Columbia-Kelowna**

The CDP Solutions Lab team has been in touch with the Happipad team on the issue of datasets to calculate numbers of empty bedrooms in homes occupied by seniors and potentially available for sharing in neighbourhoods across Canada.

Here's more about this project!

### **A Place to Call Home – Happipad**

Welcome to [Happipad](#), an online service that matches compatible people as housing companions.

“Think of it as a blend of AirBnB and Match.com,” explains UBCO alumnus and Happipad cofounder and CEO Cailan Libby.



Cailan Libby (bottom row, second from left) and members of the Happipad team.

Back in 2015, when Libby worked as a summer researcher in Chau’s lab, both men were motivated by a mutual drive to address large-scale issues. However, they agreed to first tackle a local challenge: the low vacancy rate for rental properties in Kelowna, BC.

“At one point, Kelowna had one of the lowest vacancy rates in Canada,” says Libby, who was personally searching for an apartment at the time. “I like solving difficult problems and was motivated to find a solution.” Rather than turning to the traditional solution of building new spaces, Libby and Chau explored the unconventional approach of how to better use existing homes.

“Did you know that about 30 per cent of existing real estate is unoccupied?” asks Libby. This statistic initially surprised him, and when he dug further he discovered that many houses in Kelowna had vacant bedrooms, mostly emptied by grown-up children. He and Chau landed on the proposal of matching empty-nesters with individuals looking for accommodation...

One of the main barriers they faced was trust: “People have a hard time opening their homes to strangers,” explains Libby. “Happipad’s role is to build confidence in individuals who have extra space, and make them comfortable listing their homes and inviting someone in.” ... For him, Happipad is about more than just a rental transaction; rather, it provides an opportunity for connection through housing companionship.

So far, Libby’s idea is working. More than 115 housing companion matches have been made, with satisfied parties on both sides and virtually no conflict. In addition, 5,000 home-seekers and 600 hosts have registered across BC and Alberta.

And Happipad is scaling-up. Libby happily reports that the company is moving towards a model that allows community organizations to run their own regional companion housing programs powered by the Happipad framework. The first of these programs was initialized in the city of Revelstoke, and six more are slated to start this year in BC and Alberta.

“This model enhances the community impact of Happipad,” says Libby. “It will allow each partner organization to run their own regional companion housing program, which will be self-sustaining. So far, 12 community partners are collaborating with the team on the development and distribution of this program. ...

He suggests that the Happipad companion housing program may be an ideal solution to help vulnerable adults. “Housing companions can help each other with shopping, limiting exposure risk, while also providing social companionship to address the mental health challenges related to isolation,” he says.

Libby adds that Happipad has received encouragement from seniors’ organizations, many of which have seen an increased need for solutions to help address the challenges seniors face being isolated at home. ...

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