



Big Brothers
Big Sisters
OF THE COWICHAN VALLEY

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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WHO WE ARE

At Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Cowichan Valley, we create, support, and empower life-changing relationships for children and youth facing adversity. With the support of our professional staff, mentors advise and challenge these young people, act as their champions, provide greater consistency in their lives, and connect them to broader experiences, opportunities, and networks. By providing a range of one-to-one mentoring programs in the community and in school, and also group mentoring programs, our agency serves hundreds of children and youth annually in the Cowichan Valley become resilient young people who are able to overcome life's adversities and achieve more.



VISION

All young people realize their full potential.



MISSION

Enable life-changing mentoring relationships to ignite the power and potential of young people.



STRUCTURE

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada is a Federation servicing more than 1,100 communities across the country.



ISSUE

Many children and youth in Canada struggle with societal barriers and face adversities in their lives.



IMPACT

Facing prolonged adversity creates toxic stress in the brain that can negatively impact development.



SOLUTION

With the support of a mentor, these risks can be reduced or even avoided, and youth can reach their full potential.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It was an unprecedented year...2020. First and foremost, we would like to recognize our volunteers, both mentors and Board of Directors, for your support during a time of unknown and upheaval. We have immense gratitude for your dedication to stand by, support, and continue being great members of our community who responded in a fashion that allowed Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Cowichan Valley to continue services in the most needed time.

As COVID-19 and its impacts hit our region and the world, we learned that flexibility, patience, and pivoting skills were the key components that were necessary to continue providing vital services. Moving to a hybrid model that allowed for safe in-person contact as well as virtual mentoring services was imperative in order to keep mentors matched to children and youth. This hybrid model of mentoring allowed us to be responsive to both volunteer comfort level and provincial health regulations.

Amid the constant changes the pandemic brought, our agency also made a location change when we outgrew our office space at 60 Ingram Street as our staff team had grown in 2019. Pre-pandemic, we had committed to this move and soon after we were faced with having to make the decision to stay or move. We decided make the leap, however this was no small feat. The new space required significant renovation (new flooring, major patching, and painting), and we are thankful for the Board of Directors & volunteers who came together to make this happen.

Our new office space located at 217-80 Station Street has been a perfect fit for us. Staff now each have an office to conduct their work as well as expansion space for future staff positions, space for volunteer training, and space for families to meet with Mentoring Coordinators. We look forward to restrictions easing so that we can welcome families, mentors, and community to see our new space.

With our annual fundraisers (Bowl For Kids Sake and WestJet Raffle) being cancelled, it was a welcome relief to see emergency funding support the agency in this time of need. As we move into recovery we have much work ahead of us in order to regain our path as we return to normal. We may see challenging times ahead but we will continue to keep our heads down and continue to strengthen our organization so we can come out on the other side stronger than ever.

Thank you to our dedicated staff team who took on the challenges one by one so that our agency could continue the important work of igniting potential in children and youth. We hope for all, better days are ahead!

Nira Hopewell
Board Chair



Erin Generous
Executive Director



THEORY OF CHANGE

WHO DO WE SERVE?



Young people who face adversity and are in need of an additional consistent and supportive Developmental Relationship.

HOW DO WE IGNITE POTENTIAL?



- By intentionally recruiting based on the needs of a community's young people
- By matching young people with a professionally screened volunteer mentor
- By monitoring and supporting that match with a professional caseworker
- By training and supporting the mentor, the mentee and the family
- By building a Developmental Relationship between the mentor and the mentee that:
Expresses Care; Challenges Growth; Provides Support; Shares Power; and Expands Possibilities
- By graduating the match relationship towards natural support

HOW DO WE IGNITE POTENTIAL?



YOUNG PEOPLE GRADUATE OUR PROGRAMS WITH MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

Relationship skills
Social awareness
Responsible decision-making
Self-management
Self-awareness

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Positive Identity
Mental wellness
Social inclusion & empowerment

EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT READINESS

School connectedness
Commitment to learning
Enhanced constructive use of time

Search Institute® has identified five elements that make relationships powerful in young people's lives. We refer to this as the **developmental relationships framework**.

EXPRESS
CARE

CHALLENGE
GROWTH

SHARE
POWER

PROVIDE
SUPPORT

EXPAND
POSSIBILITIES

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

BBBSCV was able to develop a virtual mentoring service as an alternative and/or supplement to in-person meetings. This new online mentoring option helps vulnerable youth remain socially connected to caring mentors and peers despite physical distance protocols – providing an important “lifeline” for children facing additional adversity because of the pandemic (e.g. increased stress/disruption at home, isolation and mental health challenges, the loss of support networks through school/sports/hobbies/extended family/etc.). Virtual mentoring was developed in the spring of 2020 in collaboration with Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada, other BBBS agencies across Canada, partnering schools, and local youth/families. Virtual mentoring was piloted in the summer of 2020 and then integrated into regular programming by the fall of 2020.

Virtual mentoring allows mentors and mentees to meet in the following formats:

- 1) Home-to-Home – mentor and mentee meet online from their respective homes (each participant using their own technology).
- 2) School-Supported – the mentee accesses the meeting from a partnering school during the school day (using school or BBBSCV technology and assisted by school staff).
- 3) Agency-Supported – either mentee OR mentor access the meeting from the BBBSCV office, during office hours and following COVID-19 safety protocols (using BBBSCV technology and assisted by BBBSCV staff). Through agency-supported mentoring, participants/families without technology can also borrow equipment (e.g. laptops) for home use. In addition, training classes and on-site “tech support” services are provided for participants who are less familiar/comfortable with the technology and platforms – this has been especially beneficial for senior mentors who also gain the skills and confidence to use this technology outside of virtual mentoring and stay connected to their families/social networks during the pandemic.

As the restrictions of the pandemic fluctuate, virtual mentoring has provided mentors and mentees with the flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances (e.g. school closures, restrictions on in-person gatherings) and continue their developmental relationships despite these shifting rules/protocols. Moreover, virtual mentoring has also provided a convenient solution to some of the barriers that precluded program participation before the pandemic – namely transportation limitations for teen and senior mentors and a lack of free time among many working-age mentors. Virtual mentoring offers an efficient way for matches to stay connected despite geographical distance and busy work/family schedules. BBBSCV has transitioned all programming to a “hybrid” model through which all match types (community, school-based, and group) can utilize both in-person and/or virtual meeting options. This model will remain in place for the foreseeable future – ultimately helping us to respond more effectively to future calls for physical distancing, and match even more vulnerable youth with caring mentors under “normal” circumstances.

IN-SCHOOL MENTORING

PARTNERING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

Alexander Elementary
Khowhemun Elementary
Tansor Elementary
Alex Aiken Elementary
George Bonner
Elementary
Discovery Elementary
Palsson Elementary
Lake Cowichan School
Chemainus Elementary
Crofton Elementary

IN-SCHOOL MENTORING MAKES A DIFFERENCE:

90% of mentors saw
a positive change in
the child they were
mentoring*

88% of students
showed improved
literacy skills*

64% had developed
higher levels of self-
esteem

The In-School mentoring program provides youth with a role model and a friend to talk to and share the experiences of growing up within school grounds. For one hour a week, mentors meet with their mentee and engage in activities such as board games, crafts or just hang out on school grounds.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Cowichan Valley developed a virtual mentoring component to our program that has served as an alternative and/or supplement to in-person meetings. This new online option helps vulnerable youth remain socially connected to caring mentors and peers despite physical distancing protocols, providing an important “lifeline” for children facing additional adversity as a result of the pandemic.

BBBSCV’s Mentoring Program facilitates important developmental relationships between children and caring mentors, which research has shown to provide myriad positive mental and physical health benefits and serve as an important “protective factor” for vulnerable children.

The In-School mentoring program requires a weekly visit of one hour for the duration of the school year. Matches do not meet over the summer break or during other school holidays.

Within the In-School mentoring structure, we also offer the Teen Mentoring and Seniors for Kids programs:

TEEN MENTORING

Students in grades 10, 11, 12 attending Queen Margaret School, Cowichan Secondary, Chemainus Secondary, or Frances Kelsey Secondary could be eligible for this program. Teen Mentors may be students who want to gain leadership skills or skills in working with children, or are required to complete compulsory volunteer hours as a part of their school curriculum. Some simply enjoy spending time with kids. Teen Mentors also benefit from skill assets for resume building and scholarship applications. The Teen Mentor program is a magical program. We have seen increased self-esteem in Teen Mentors when they realize they are making a difference.

SENIORS FOR KIDS

There is no doubt that volunteering contributes to the health and well-being of our communities. Seniors make up some of our most active and engaged volunteers, playing a critical role in strengthening their local communities. However, not only does it make a difference in the lives of recipients, it also benefits volunteers mentally, socially and even physically. For seniors, volunteering promotes active aging, which can actually enhance quality of life in one’s later years. Programs that bring people of different generations together are mutually beneficial for both seniors and younger people. They prevent social isolation and provide an opportunity for seniors to share their experiences, wisdom and life skills with youth, as well as learn new things from younger people.

GROUP PROGRAMS

Go Girls! and Game On! are group mentoring program for youth ages 11-14 that focuses on physical activity, balanced eating and self-esteem. The single, most important goal of the program is to positively shape the lives of youth by helping them build a positive self-image – setting them on a path to reach their full potential in life.

Group programs consists of seven-ten weekly curriculum-based mentoring sessions, held within school facilities. Each 1.5-2 hour-long session is loosely structured around four themes: physical activity, healthy eating, self-esteem, and communication skills. Groups are facilitated by 2 adult mentors and group size is limited to 6-10 youth.

The program strives to do the following:

- create appreciation for the benefits of an active, healthy lifestyle
- build understanding of what constitutes healthy eating habits and the risks associated with eating disorders
- promote the importance of positive mental activity and regular physical exercise
- encourage awareness of core values, personal interests, strengths and attributes
- support the development of leadership and life skills
- offer guidance in establishing and maintaining friendships
- instill respect for socio-economic, ethno-cultural and racial diversity
- encourage leadership skills and independent thinking

COMMUNITY MENTORING

The Community mentoring program provides children and with a role model to talk to and share the experiences of growing up with. Through regular outings, a relationship is developed between the mentor and the mentee, which is built on trust and common interests, and is supported by our experienced Mentoring Coordinators. The result is a life-changing experience for both the mentor and the mentee.

Community mentoring consists of Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Couples For Kids. Couples mentoring allows partners to spend time together while going out and learning to be a kid again. Couples have the flexibility to mentor one on one, if one member is not available.

The Community mentoring program usually requires two to four scheduled outings a month of several hours each and a minimum of a one year commitment.



AGENCY UPDATE

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the major changes in 2020 was our move to a new office location. In June of 2020, BBBSCV relocated to #217-80 Station Street – a site that remains centrally located (downtown Duncan) but affords BBBSCV much more space. This additional square footage has been very important for pandemic modifications and has allowed BBBSCV to continue COVID-appropriate participant intake, volunteer training, and agency-supported virtual mentoring services.

In 2020, our staff took Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) training courses and BBBSCV is actively working to implement and uphold a GBA+ framework within all facets of our operations/programming. Other professional development education undertaken by BBBSCV staff included “Struggle to Juggle” (a webinar on managing stress by the Psychology Foundation of Canada), a workshop by the Vancouver Island University’s Nursing Program on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and “Rest in a Restless World” (a webinar by Tamara Strijack on helping children with anxiety).

BBBSCV staff also completed a “Train the Trainer” program through the Search Institute on “developmental relationships.” The developmental relationships framework is the core of Big Brothers Big Sisters new Theory of Change (ToC) which centers on using “developmental relationships” (matches between youth impacted by adversity and caring adults/older youth) to promote “developmental assets” among participating youth (developmental assets are the critical supports and strengths kids need to thrive).

The new ToC describes how BBBSCV supports and facilitates the developmental relationships that help children facing adversity (such as Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs) to

- a) build and utilize their developmental assets so that they are able to
- b) overcome past and future hardships (resiliency) and
- c) develop social and emotional competencies (e.g. relationship skills, self-management, responsible decision-making); have better mental health and wellbeing (e.g. positive identity, feeling included and empowered); and be more educationally engaged and prepared for employment (e.g. feeling connected to school and committed to learning, able to manage time constructively, etc.).

This year, BBBSCV continued to provide mandatory cultural safety training for all staff and volunteers and ongoing reconciliation/decolonization training for staff and volunteers (via Indigenous-led workshops with Vancouver Island University Elder in Residence Marlene Rice). BBBSCV also incorporated new culturally appropriate supports within BBBSCV programming – this was achieved through ongoing consultation with School District 79 Aboriginal Support workers and community Elders and the provision of regular classes/activities led by cultural facilitators within group mentoring.

SENIORS FOR KIDS STEERING COMMITTEE

BBBSCV’s “Seniors for Kids” steering committee is a steering group led by seniors that helps BBBSCV support the intergenerational relationships made possible by our Seniors for Kids (SFK) initiative (a component of our school-based, one-on-one mentoring involving a senior mentor and a mentee in grade 2-7). This year, the committee was instrumental in helping BBBSCV to reach and recruit new SFK participants through targeted advertising/outreach and continued to monitor/evaluate service delivery to ensure the full and active participation of senior mentors. Most recently, the SFK committee helped BBBSCV make a new promotional video for the SFK service.



“My Big Sister is like a REAL big sister. She’s so much fun!”
-Community Program Little

PARTNERSHIPS

In 2020, BBBSCV worked with the Canadian Mental Health Association Cowichan Valley Branch’s Youth Outreach team to integrate a “Mindful Wellness” session within our “Go Girls!” group mentoring curriculum. Mindful Wellness is a stress-reduction workshop that was developed in consultation with Indigenous Elders and based on the Medicine Wheel.

This year, BBBSCV also initiated a partnership with Literacy Now Cowichan (a charitable organization that helps Cowichan Valley residents overcome literacy barriers) to provide “technology 101” classes for seniors taking part in our Seniors for Kids mentoring service. This collaboration will help senior mentors develop their proficiency and comfort with the equipment and platforms required to communicate virtually (e.g. tablets/iPads, email, Zoom, etc.) which will both help seniors take part in virtual mentoring and improve their capacity to stay connected virtually (a tremendous benefit during the pandemic).

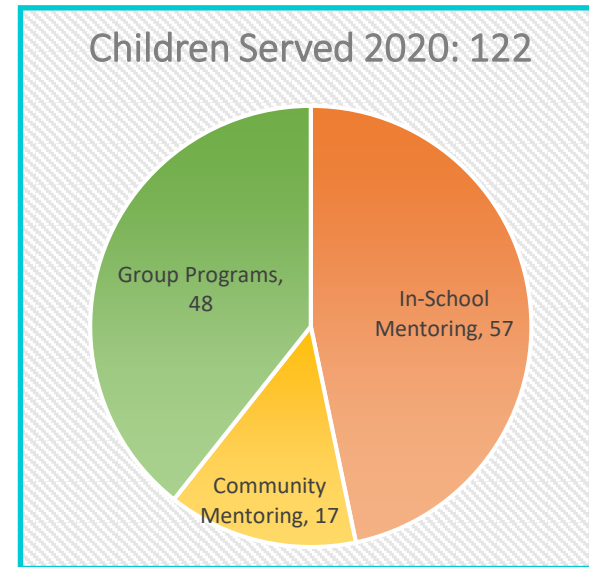
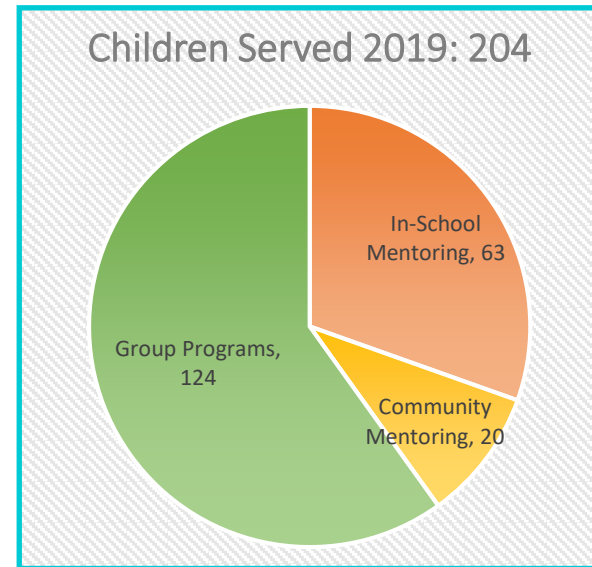
Despite the challenges of school closures and the resumption of in-school education, BBBSCV developed partnerships with three new schools in the Cowichan Valley in 2020 – Discovery Elementary, Alex Aitken Elementary, and Duncan Christian School (Preschool-G12). These schools will be collaborating to deliver BBBSCV’s school-based (one-on-one) mentoring services.

In 2020 BBBSCV also signed up to be a “Project Ignitor” with Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada – meaning that BBBSCV will be one of 70 BBBS agencies across Canada to implement and test “Project Ignite” in 2021. Project Ignite is the deployment of BBBS’ new Theory of Change (ToC) and will help participating agencies implement a new service framework intended to provide better structure and support to the developmental relationships facilitated by BBBS branches. Project Ignite will ultimately help BBBSCV to:

- develop new match frameworks based on an enriched risk assessment criteria (including ACEs – adverse childhood experiences),
- build new community partnerships in order to provide wraparound support to families,
- improve mentor training to enhance the beneficial impact of BBBSCV-supported mentorships, and generate locally-sourced data as evidence of program efficacy.

Project Ignite represents an important evolution for BBBSCV. While 2020 was a year of behind-the-scenes development (e.g. staff training on ACEs, developmental assets, and developmental relationships) on this initiative, this work was necessary to lay the foundation for the exciting changes to service delivery assets to come in 2021. BBBSCV is honoured to be a Project Ignitor and looks forward to the next phase of this journey.

YEAR AT A GLANCE



"I like going hiking to places like Stoney Hill and Skutz Falls. I like spending time with him because he is nice and likes to strike conversations."
-Community Program Little

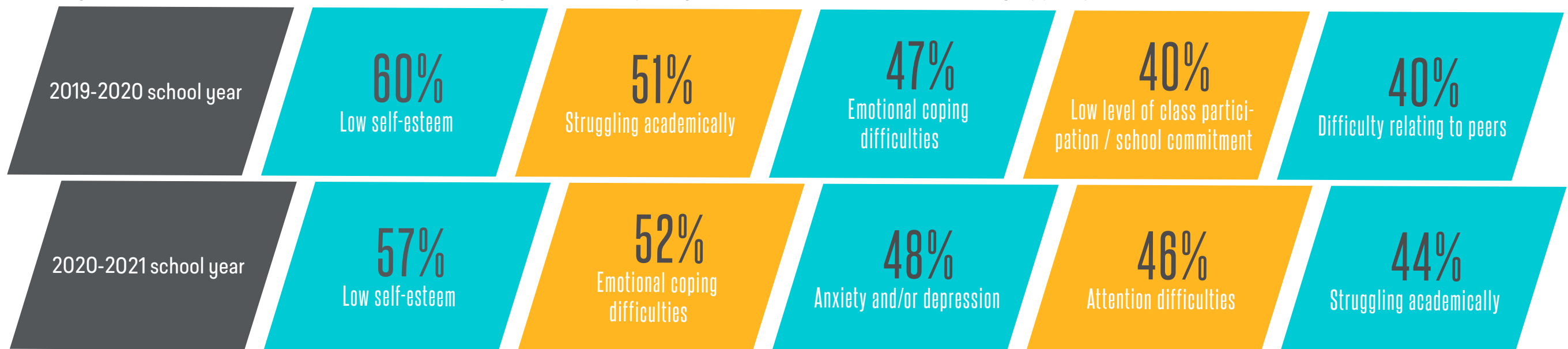


"My mentor makes me feel.... could say so many things! I think she cares for me and I feel included because other people at school leave me out."
-In-School Mentoring Program Little



TOP FIVE CHILDHOOD ADVERSITIES:

*Percentages based on # of children for whom adversities were disclosed by their school and/or parent/guardian



SITE-BASED PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

*In-School mentees and group participants



VOLUNTEERS

In 2020, 77 individuals gave their time to mentor a child in need. BBBSCV's programming was also supported by an additional 30 volunteers who helped out on the board, with fundraising events, in the office, and in many other ways (including helping us to renovate and move into our new office space!). These generous people contributed over 278 hours in 2020 and exemplified the spirit of working together during a time when we all had to stay apart. We also had an anonymous youth contribute almost 60 hours of service to help us reorganize and restock our Buddy Box and Go Girl bins for COVID compliance.

The mandated school closures and physical distancing of the pandemic response temporarily disrupted all BBBSCV services until our virtual mentoring alternative could be developed and deployed across all partner schools. As a consequence, BBBSCV's match numbers dropped dramatically in 2020. In 2019, BBBSCV matched 204 children and facilitated 2310 hours of mentoring. In 2020, BBBSCV matched 116 children and facilitated 798 hours of mentoring. These numbers are anticipated to rebound to and increase above 2019 levels in 2021, thanks to the adoption of our hybrid service delivery model (integrating both in-person and virtual mentoring options).

IN-SCHOOL MENTORS

Heather Mitchell
Slivia Mera Dinas
Sinthu Ratnasami

Travis Peterson
Andrea Dunkley

Camille Mitchell
Katie McCloud

Shane Gill
Erin Hogstead

SENIORS FOR KIDS

Pip Woodcock
Kim Girolami
Paula Foot
Wendy Patel
Heather Miller
Lucy Sigmar
Robyn Brinkac

Brian Stott
Donald MacGregor
Dian Chang
Laura Pigott
Karen Dodds
Diane Kay

Felicia Rubright
Sheri-Lyn Goddard
Carol Heino
Jean Saville
Sheila Bateman
Linda Joe

Murray Milne
Shannon Etkin
Janet Ego
Gladys Javorsky
Patti Etkin
Catherine Brandon

TEEN MENTORS

Wren Burdge Sjolie
Catherine Yuan
Cecilia Xia
Taylor McKee
Yue Zhou

Manpreet Gill
Chenhui Jiang
Carman Mo
Teagan Kropp
Anna Staats

Katia Bannister
Yunqi Lui
Jennifer Green
Emily Swain

Jake Dorby
Taryn Neligan
Brynn Birtwistle
Jordynn Jany

GROUP FACILITATORS

Erin Hogstead
Sinthu Ratnasami

Rylee Keller

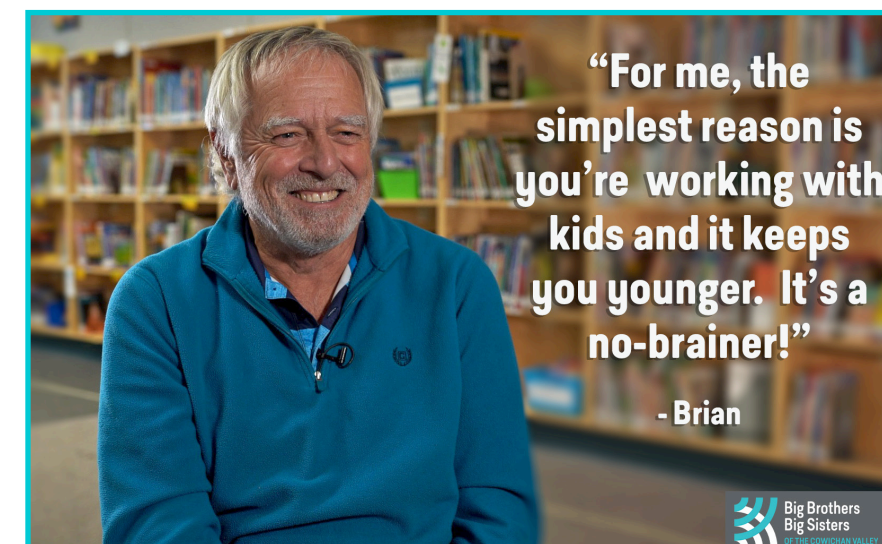
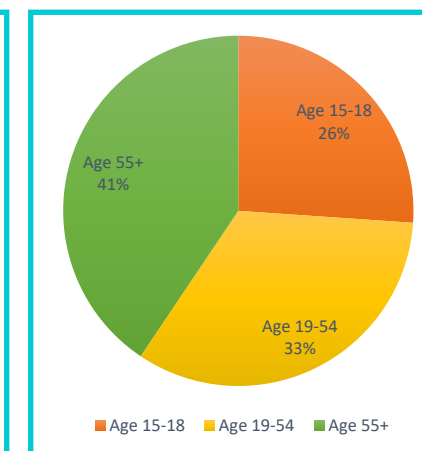
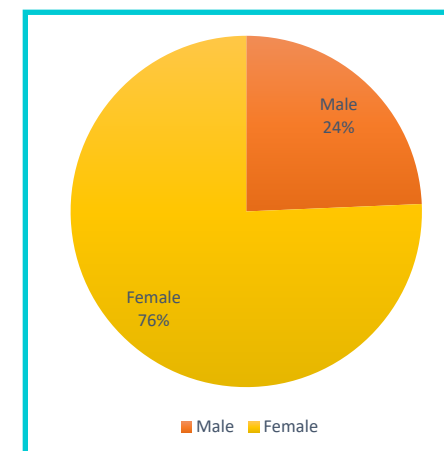
Wendy Patel

COMMUNITY MENTORS

Camilla Lockwood
Bill Hibberd
Derek Gibson
Lisa Hudson
Stepheny Cuthbert
Emily Homuth

Everett Dixon
Luke Cuthbert
Joana Hibberd
Tyler Scammell
Kevin Hossack
Braeden Nash

Cheryl Hughes
Michelle Truitt
Aaryn Bradley
Megan Rimbey
Tara Brooks
Brian Stott



PRACTICUM STUDENTS

Sinthu Ratnasami
(Vancouver Island University, Bachelor of Social Work)

Erin Hogstead
(Vancouver Island University, Child and Youth Care)

SENIORS FOR KIDS STEERING COMMITTEE

Laura Pigott
Wendy Patel
Claudia Roland
Pam Richmond
Pip Woodcock
Patti Etkin
Shannon Etkin
Donald MacGregor
Jean Saville

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

A sincere thank you to all of our funders and program partners, all of the individuals who gave so generously to support our programs, individuals who gave anonymously, and those or made their gift through another organization. We appreciate your continued support.

Civil Forfeiture



Community Gaming



"We acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia"

Vancouver Foundation

vancouver
foundation

New Horizons For Seniors
Program



This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors program.

Canadian Women's Foundation



Island Savings

IslandSavings

Victoria Foundation



United Way Central & Northern
Vancouver Island



Duncan Dabber Bingo Society



Tim Hortons



Coast Capital Savings



CKNW Kids Fund



Hamber Foundation



Island Ford



Dr. Helpard Inc

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Big Sisters**
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