

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aboriginal and Inner City Youth Break Through Barriers and Become Mentors to Local Kids Facing Similar Challenges



Aboriginal and Inner City Youth from Killarney Secondary School and Spectrum Alternative School celebrate the completion of their 10-week leadership training with Program Mentoring Coordinator Ryan Cadamia and Red Fox Youth Workers at Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver's office in East Vancouver.

VANCOUVER, April 6, 2016 – Next month local high school students will complete *Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver (BBGV)* and *Red Fox Healthy Living Society (RFHLS)*'s Youth Leadership and In-School Mentoring Program, an innovative partnership in employment, leadership and mentorship training for Aboriginal and Inner City youth in Greater Vancouver.

The [BC Ministry of Education's latest data](#) reports that the high school completion rate for Aboriginal students is 20% lower than the overall rate, while [data from BC Stats](#) shows that in 2012 nearly twice as many Aboriginal youth were unemployed when compared to non-Aboriginal youth. The *BBGV/RFHLS* joint program is focused on helping youth and children to overcome the challenges they face.

A group of Aboriginal and Inner City youth from Killarney Secondary School and Spectrum Alternative School will soon complete their first practicum in the *BBGV/RFHLS* school-based mentoring program, which includes leading children's recreation programs at Champlain Heights Elementary School in South Vancouver. The group recently completed a 10-week leadership training program.

"I see a huge amount of increased confidence and potential in our youth leaders, but 95% of them face two or more barriers to success," says Emma Sutherland, Executive Director of *Red Fox Healthy Living*

Society. “The leadership program empowers them to break through these barriers and become successful role models for children and other youth facing similar life challenges.”

“At Big Brothers, we recognized that we needed to reach out to the Aboriginal community in a way that built trust and allowed the concept of mentoring to embody the community’s values. A partnership with Red Fox was the best way to understand the community’s needs and to tailor our programming accordingly,” says Valerie Lambert, *Executive Director of Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver*.

The impact goes far beyond today. The skills and confidence instilled in both the youth and children help them thrive throughout their lives. A study on school-based mentoring conducted by *Taylor Newberry* for *Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada* show that children who are mentored feel more valued and empowered, experience higher self-confidence and have more positive attitudes toward school.

The Youth Leadership Program was developed to empower Aboriginal and Inner City youth to become leaders and engaged members of society. The 10-week training program focuses on leadership, mentoring, and skills training, while providing youth with work experience in leading children’s recreation programs. Upon completion of the Youth Leadership training, each youth is matched with two elementary school-aged children, who they mentor for one hour each week after-school for seven to eight months in a school-based program practicum.

The Youth Leadership Program and corresponding In-School Mentoring program are funded by the Ministry of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Canada Post Community Foundation, TELUS and Great West Life. For more information on how you can donate to this program and programs like these, visit bigbrothersvancouver.com or redfoxsociety.org.

About Red Fox Healthy Living Society

Red Fox Healthy Living Society is a registered non-profit Society and Charity that serves Aboriginal and inner-city children, youth and families. Their recreation, food and cultural programs foster healthy, active living, leadership and employment training. www.redfoxsociety.org.

About Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver

Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver (BBGV) is a registered charity and community-based organization, that has been supporting child and youth development through essential volunteer-led mentoring programs since 1978. <http://www.bigbrothersvancouver.com>

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