

Principals: Leveraging Relationships through Mentoring

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Long-time Principal Shelley Brett is no stranger to The Cmolik Foundation. As a nearby neighbour to Russ Cmolik, she was familiar with his family's philanthropic endeavours.

In conversation about the program, Russ didn't ask her for money but simply stated, "No, I want your time. I want you to be a Mentor."

Shelley decided to offer her time to a student. "I've been to university. It would have been really wonderful to have someone when I was going through school, and I just want to be there for her if she needs support or guidance. I want to be her cheerleader, so she is able to stay the course, and when things get tough I want to help her breathe and get through it."

The Foundation is clear that when they provide scholarships to at-risk students, they need to reduce the risk for these students as they enter post-secondary. Their scholarship requires each student to be engaged with a Mentor, so they have a caring relationship with at least one adult. As well, with the help of their alumni, the Foundation has also created a social support system around the students.

As part of the training, volunteer Mentors learn about what it means to be a Mentor and the Foundation's expectations. Mentors understand their effectiveness depends on three key aspects: championing the student's dreams (goal/growth focus); creating time for the relationship (listen, engage and empathize); and providing personal support (encouragement, hope-building, and referral to appropriate resources when needed).

Shelley has found the training really helpful in understanding the expectations of her role. "The Cmolik Foundation has done a wonderful job of putting together a Mentorship package for all of us so there is a training program, and you don't feel like you don't know what you are doing. They

hold your hand and guide you through the process. They have prepared me well: in the events they plan, how they bring you together, and they put a lot of supports in place to help that relationship be built."

Allan Buggie is a former secondary school Principal and Member-at-Large for the BC Retired Principals and Vice-Principals' Association, and a firm believer in the importance of Mentorship. Professionally, he's been on both the giving and receiving end of it. Allan understands the power of listening and providing support to others. Many of the students from his former secondary school won Cmolik scholarships, "so it felt like a very good fit to give back to an organization that was doing very good work." Over the course of the last four years, Allan is so enthusiastic he has had as many as three Mentees at one time.



Retired Secondary Principal Allan Buggie and retired Assistant Superintendent Pat Horstead



Mentee Amy Mebesius with Mentor Principal Shelley Brett

The Foundation has more than eighty Mentor volunteers paired with their students. Many of those are teachers, counsellors, administrators and former senior educational leaders from across the province, from former Assistant Superintendents Pat Horstead, Judy Chapman and Bob Coventry to current and former Principals such as Wendy Briggs, David Price, and Lois Wilkinson, to Victoria Island University's Dean Dr. David Paterson. The list of teachers and counsellors is even longer.

Kevin Reimer, Executive Director for the BCPVPA, is a great advocate for the Foundation and "appreciates the opportunity to support a student through their post-secondary experience." From his school experience working with vulnerable children, he has seen firsthand, "the benefits of a close relationship with an adult," and, "this is an opportunity to support someone who needed a little more guidance. Having a connection outside of your family really helps students to be a little more vulnerable and open with their challenges. For me, it is important for my Mentee to know he has someone in his corner."

Educators make great mentors. By virtue of their profession, they know how to navigate the education system. Not only that, they know students flourish when someone cares about them. The Foundation is fortunate to have so many educators commit to

building a quality relationship with the Foundation's scholarship students. These educators continue to make a difference in helping students achieve their dreams.

Shelley Brett's Mentee, Cmolik Scholar Amy Mebesius, is thrilled with the Foundation's program. A graduate of Chilliwack Secondary School, she is now studying Biochemistry at UBC. "It becomes like a family: you have your Mentor, you have all the people behind the scenes, you have this endless supply of support around you, always. It's a dream."

Special thanks to Dr. Rhea L. Owens, Dr. Thomas C Motl, and the UBC Shine team for reviewing current research, facilitating focus groups and preparing materials for our *Mentoring Handbook: Promoting Postsecondary Student Success*.



The Cmolik Foundation (TCF) is committed to investing in BC's youth through education.

Established in 2008, TCF has awarded over 5.3 million in scholarships to secondary school graduates. Each Scholarship is worth \$40,000 over five years of post-secondary study. More than just a cheque, the scholarship recipients are partnered with a volunteer Mentor for one-to-one support, are surrounded by a community of peers, and have access to career coaching.

TCF also sponsors an inner-city elementary school through their Expanding Horizons Program, providing high impact learning experiences to broaden the educational aspirations of young people; these same students attend STEM focused summer camp on real post-secondary campuses as a way to remove barriers to access.

The Cmolik Foundation is all this and so much more. To find out more, nominate a scholarship student or become a Mentor, visit www.thecmolikfoundation.com