

IMPACT REPORT



2021
EDITION



connections



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Like so many other community agencies, Connections found itself continuing to adapt to the realities of the pandemic during 2020 and early 2021. With children back in school, our before and after school program were available. Enrollment was low as many parents chose to keep their children at home. This was also true of our Summer, Winter and Spring break camps. Our other programming that supports seniors, offers our youth volunteers and leadership training, and provides Indigenous programming in the community, all had to continue online.

One of the highlights of our year was the incredible support we received from the Children's Aid Foundation. We applied for and received emergency funding for youth and families experiencing hardships due to the pandemic. We paid rent, purchased groceries, paid electric bills, bought eyeglasses and bus passes. We have included a lovely letter we received from a young person we helped which you will find further along in this report. Being able to offer this kind of help was such a light during a dark time. We are tremendously grateful for such a dedicated partner.

Daylene Jones
Executive Director





CONNECTION KIDS CLUB

Connections continues to run four busy before and after school programs known as Connections Kids Clubs during 2020/2021. One program is located in West Vancouver at Caulfield School, and three others are located in Richmond: at Blundell Elementary, Cook Elementary and Tait Elementary. Like most things, the pandemic had a significant effect on the program and the staff as they were largely on the front line throughout the pandemic. Despite a number of exposures in some of the schools, they continued to show up and do a great job. The children and their families were very grateful.

As we expected, we had fewer children this year, but we have many parents interested in starting their children or returning their children to the programs. It can be unpredictable though as our situation continues to evolve. Financially, our program experienced challenges but we do have many students coming in September and it appears that all of the programs will be close to full capacity.



BLUNDELL ELEMENTARY

MIKKI HO | TEAM LEAD

With the continuation of the COVID pandemic, only 14 children were enrolled in the program. The children were offered a wide range of activities such as nature walks, crafts, science experiments, games, outdoor play, and free play. Nutritious snacks were offered daily, and every month, staff and children's birthdays were celebrated with cakes and mini parties. Currently, the program is staffed by one full time and three part-time employees.



BLUNDELL KIDS' STORY

Over the holidays, the children from Blundell donated gift boxes to Operation Christmas for the Samaritan's Purse. Two of our girls came up with the idea to sell stickers in the neighborhood. That sparked more ideas about what was needed in the pandemic. The children decided to make mask lanyards with beads and sold them to our friends, neighbours, and teachers – and sold them all in only 2 weeks! Over \$300 was raised and off we went to the dollar store to buy hygiene products, toys, school supplies, crafts, and stationery. We learned about paying it forward and being grateful that we have food on the table, toys to play with and a place to live.



COOK ELEMENTARY

TAMMY MCCOMB | TEAM LEAD

Connections Kids Club at Cook experienced a drop in registrants from 24 to 13.

Unfortunately, many parents either lost their jobs or were reduced to part time and able to work around school hours. Key protocols were implemented like frequent wipe downs and once a day air dry sanitizing spray on surfaces. Of course, the children washed frequently: when they arrived, before snack and after snack, after playing outside and any time they touched their faces.

Staff worked hard to support the children as social anxiety seemed to significantly increase this year. With parents no longer permitted in the daycare, artwork was hung in the windows for them and emails were sent more frequently. It is hopeful that the registrations will increase back to 20 next school year.



COOK'S STORY

Everyday we sit our small group of children down to say our "licks and kicks". Licks are good, like a lick of an ice cream cone and kicks are bad, like a kick in the butt. It was a chance to check in with

Everyone on a daily basis, a chance to see what was on their minds. The licks are lovely, simple, and usually play based.

Fortunately, the kicks are generally small too, and many days the children struggle to find a kick in their day. Sometimes it's a fall in the mud or a friend said unkind words but mostly they struggle to think of one, so our default kick is COVID. In a world that is messed but beyond belief the innocence of children is maintained and that is awesome.



CAULFEILD ELEMENTARY

VIVIAN ZHANG, TEAM LEAD

Caulfeild Elementary served over 20 families last year despite the Covid-19 pandemic. The program was closed after spring break in 2020 but staff stayed connected to the children and their families via zoom and through emails. In June the program reopened to front line workers. September's registration was low with only 11 new children but has since grown to 20 children in recent months. Toys are not shared, and activity groups are small with only 3 or 4 children together at one time.



Outdoor playtime offers social and physical development. Distanced games, like tennis handball and basketball, are favourites. Staff offers significant amounts of praise and support to remind the children that maintaining your distance from others demonstrates that you care about them.



GENERATION CONNECT CAMPS

In addition to our before and after school program, Connections also runs full day programming during school breaks as well as summer camps. July and August of 2020 were a much different experience than previous years. It had a much lower attendance, but the program was able to provide a great two months for those who did attend. Options for outings and activities were limited but staff did a great job improvising. Although the number was around 9 children, there were considerable inclusive outdoor activities, such as biking from school to the Terra Nova and back to school.

Our theme days also worked out very well. We hosted Carnival Day, Tie-Dye shirt day, Planet Laser Day, Neon Day, Swimming at South Arm and of course, water fight day! Camp in December 2020 only saw fewer attendees with 7 children at Cook and 11 at Blundell. Spring Break Camp in March 2021 saw a decline in attendance as well, with Blundell hosting 12 children and Cook just 8 children. Typically, each program can support 20-23 students.





GENERATIONS CONNECT

DANIEL SUEN – COORDINATOR

Generations Connect Program provides opportunities for youth to volunteer and by doing so, improve their leadership skills and develop community awareness. The goal is to have youth volunteers support vulnerable children and seniors by increasing their community connections, helping to reduce isolation, and making positive impact on others' lives.

GENERATIONS HOMEWORK CLUBS

Homework Clubs originally take place in person at the Richmond Public Library and Connection's offices with an average of 25 students and 25 youth tutors/mentors. In 2020/21 the two clubs were transferred into virtual classrooms. Approximately half of students were unable to continue. On average, there were about 16 students able to stay with the Monday and Saturday program using virtual learning.

SENIORS SUPPORT

With the onset of the pandemic and their reluctance to use Zoom, our Basic Technology Program Seniors were split into two social media groups – WeChat and WhatsApp. The seniors who were comfortable used these platforms to send questions and concerns to the youth in the Technology group and the youth provided answers accordingly. To support seniors who were not familiar with social media platforms, a pilot project was launched to pair youth with seniors for weekly check-ins through various communication channels such as phone, online messages or personal meetings in an outdoor setting implementing COVIDs protocols.



In June, Connections received special COVID-19 funding from the Federal government to offer extra supports to seniors in the community. Tai-Chi classes – one outdoor and one indoor – were hosted in partnership with CLF Kung Fu Club and Wujitang Martial Arts. In addition, Connections held a series of free online workshops - “Healthy Living for Seniors”. There were guest speakers for each workshop from organizations like the Chinese Community Policing Centre, Gaia Community Care and Wellness Society, and Libra Nutrition.



STAY-IN-SCHOOL AWARDS

Connections presented a total of 17 awards and certificates to nominees in 2020. More than half of the nominees received \$400 towards their future education. Unfortunately, 2020 was the final year of the program despite being very well received.



VOLUNTEER AND LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT

In 2020, there were 99 volunteers that contributed their time and efforts to the Generations Connect Program, with 48 being new. Five volunteer training and orientations were delivered to the new volunteers last year. Volunteers provided support in different areas: Homework Club, Super Seniors Support Group, Basic Technology for Seniors, Workshop Series, and Administration.

SHARING OUR VOICE

Hosted on CHMB AM1320, Connections Youth Talk Show aired 48 episodes last year. Various guest speakers joined the show, including youth, parents, a Kung Fu master, volunteers, and staff from the Before and After School Program and Youth Works Program. AM 1320 is broadcast locally and is live streamed through social media and therefore, accessed globally as well.

Clients served	480
New clients	380
Volunteers	99
Volunteer hours	13,068
Number of sessions	130
Outings and workshops	91
Community partners	14

YOUTHWORKS MICHELLE ZHOU – TEAM LEAD

2020/21 was a particularly challenging time for clients of the Youthworks program. We moved out in-person program online and worked hard to maintain good connections with our clients. Despite these challenges, youths who were employment ready continued to receive assistance with their job search, resume and cover letter building, interview skills training and connections to potential employers and other community resources. Other youths in the program were supported in finding occupational training. The program helped youths in high school with their education planning and colleges application process. We utilized funding to provide youth with devices for online learning and funded tutoring sessions for those who were having difficulties catching up with schoolwork.

Emergency COVID funding from Children's Aid Foundation enabled us to reach more youths who were struggling financially, and we were able to support them with rent, groceries, baby supplies and medical bills.



YOUTHWORKS

MICHELLE ZHOU – TEAM LEAD

Our counsellor regularly checked in with them and made sure their urgent needs were met. We sent out well-being giftpacks to our clients over the holidays to offer extra support. Now with the expansion of our counsellor team, we will be able to support more youth in the coming year.

Unfortunately, the pandemic also impacted the available positions for young people. Ask layoffs occurred, youth were competing with applicants with more experience and credentials for entry level jobs. Like many people, youth were anxious to take the risk associated with entry level positions. It was a difficult year but the program team did all it could to offer support and hope to their clients.

We paired her with a peer youth in care so they could learn from each other and build a connection. It was wonderful to see how they were able support each other in a way that a counsellor could not.

We provided support to her weekly for over half year. We encouraged her to take training such as Foodsafe and Serving It Right. Now she is working as a youth navigator and kitchen helper in a youth resource center and supporting a youth in care. I have no doubt that with her experiences and skills, she will make a positive impact on her peers' lives. She recently texted saying "I am in a better place than I was when I first started in the program, and I have you to thank in all honesty. Thank you for all the help you have given me over the year."



A CLIENT'S STORY

A client came to us that was suffering from some mental health issues. She was also having difficulties catching up with schoolwork and was lacking in pre-employment skills. She had a difficult relationship with her family was in and out of shelters. We referred her to a counselling service, which helped mitigate her depression and stabilize her situation. We provided a laptop and sponsored tutoring sessions to help her catch up with schoolwork. She also joined our employment workshops which improved her employment and communication skills.

Clients served	73
Clients Employed	14
New Clients	56
Number of sessions	188
Number of workshops	10/16

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CONNECT PROGRAM

NING HUANG – TEAM LEAD

It has been a particularly challenging time for our clients and the program since COVID struck in the early part of 2020. Within weeks, we made changes and launched an adapted online learning program. We constantly upgrade the learning material to be youth-centered and reflective of the current labor market information. We also received additional help from the Youth Works Program staff when a youth is eligible to take part in both programs. Everyone adapted well even though there are many changes in the past year (staff change, new platforms (online instead of in-person), recording system (one drive), cloud and payment system, etc.) We worked very closely as a team to support each other and clients in the past year and proudly reached the target and helped 70 clients.

We moved all the individual and group employment counseling sessions and workshops online due to COVID in a short amount of time. We updated our materials and workshops to a format that is suitable for virtual learning while keeping clients as engaging as we can. There are also changes made to the system on how we track records and upload homework. The whole team worked closely together to overcome challenges (we even utilized a flexible position model and staff will move between 2 employment programs base on the demand/needs).

The team also took training such as psychological first aid, trauma-informed practices, compassion fatigue workshops to better serve our clients.

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Clients served	70
Clients Employed and in school	44
Volunteer/Guest	3
Number of sessions	547
Number of Outings Workshops	196
Number on Waitlist	12

INDIGENOUS SUPPORT PROGRAM

Having been thrust into a global pandemic like our colleagues, our team was forced to adapt to the new and ever-changing needs of our indigenous communities. Our focus shifted from the physical delivery of programs to primarily frontline outreach and support. It was a steep learning curve for the first couple of months, but when we got up to speed, we were able to move mountains for those we had the privilege to serve and support. We successfully served over 320 clients and their families from our indigenous communities.

Our team adapted to delivering programs via online service platforms like Zoom, Anchor, Facebook, and Spotify. To be well prepared to provide this new type of support, our team was trained in Trauma Informed Practice,

Motivational Interviewing, Indigenous Family Systems, Indigenous Substance Use and Harm Reduction, Indigenous Worldviews, Indigenous Cultural Safety, Progressive Aboriginal Relations, and Indigenous Cultural Protocols & Practices.

The sudden death of Musqueam cultural adviser and Indigenous support worker, Terry Point had a tremendous impact on our team and community. Despite social distancing, we drew much closer together in spirit and were able to support one another, his family and the community through this difficult time.



INDIGENOUS SUPPORT PROGRAM



♥ INDIGENOUS SUPPORT PROGRAM STORY

Early into the pandemic we were challenged with finding a suitable living arrangement for a 70+ year old Elder. She was being forced to move due to the Covid crisis. We teamed up with another Indigenous service support agency that specialized in locating housing and worked harmoniously together to not only deliver a high level of support, but also to have our client placed.

Our collaboration with the other agency has blossomed into a fantastic working relationship in which we have cooperated to support many other clients.



DONORS



As the pandemic tightened its grip on Canadians in June last year, one of Canada's leading Children's charities took a large step forward to provide direct support to youth and families in need. The Children's Aid Foundation of Canada put out a call for expressions of interest for funding to help alleviate the stress and financial pressures experienced by both youth and families at risk during this unprecedented time. The funding was straightforward. Families and youth who were struggling were offered support in the form of rent payments, utility payments, health care needs like glasses or dentistry and food cards from local grocery stores. It could not have been more timely or more meaningful to folks.

being accepted for funding...It has been my experience that many organizations and agencies are well prepared to talk about support but are unwilling to contribute any action on their promises. Because of this, it is important to me that I express my gratitude and appreciation for your organization and the program and how accessible the process was...the professionalism, integrity and respect that I was met with has left me with an overwhelming sense of community care, compassion and hope.

Sincerely. J.



Here is what one youth had to say:

“ I want to extend my gratitude to **Connections Community Services** and, in particular, the program that funds current and former youth in care expenses, I applied for funding and received both post-secondary start-up funds, as well as finances for new prescription glasses. When I took the application from my supervisor, I was unenthusiastic about my chances of

IN THE SPIRIT OF J'S NOTE, WE OFFER OUR SINCERE THANKS TO CHILDREN'S AID FOUNDATION OF CANADA AND THEIR DONORS FOR THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WAS NEEDED AT THIS TIME. WE KNOW THAT FUNDING LIKE THIS MADE A UNIQUE DIFFERENCE IN LIVES OF THOSE WE HELPED.

PARTNERS

The following governments, organizations and companies have provided invaluable support to our many programs and services. We are grateful for their vision and commitment.



2020/2021 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Like so many agencies in BC, Connections works to balance both the bottom line and service to the community. We work hard to ensure that we manage costs and maximize revenues. The following is our Statement of Operations for the previous fiscal year.

	2021	2020
REVENUES		
Service Canada	\$ 416,814	\$ 233,723
Children's Aid Foundation	340,193	108,165
Ministry of Children and Family Development	300,523	187,943
Before and After School	165,600	330,290
Interest and other contributions	134,609	102,032
School District No. 38	97,827	129,910
Vancouver Coastal Health Authority	46,191	38,563
Donations	37,793	8,548
Gaming grant	28,003	53,494
United Way	18,000	24,907
Rental	5,333	19,950
Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada	-	12,855
City of Richmond	-	16,389
	1,590,886	1,266,769
EXPENSES		
Salaries and wages	1,437,495	919,850
Office	215,379	75,008
Rental	133,070	147,644
Programs	95,181	111,226
Professional fees	60,842	45,873
Telephone and utilities	14,845	14,440
Repairs and maintenance	14,422	15,593
Bank charges and interest	6,161	5,099
Travel	5,251	6,903
Bad debts	4,055	3,427
Insurance	3,020	2,932
Advertising and promotion	660	4,115
Amortization	-	4,927
	1,990,381	1,357,037
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES FROM OPERATIONS	(399,495)	(90,268)
OTHER REVENUES		
Government assistance (Note 9)	567,918	25,469
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ 168,423	\$ (64,799)





*Thank!
You!*

