

The Impact of Boys & Girls Clubs

A pilot evaluation project



Boys & Girls Clubs
of Calgary



Okanagan
Boys & Girls Clubs



Boys & Girls Clubs
of South Coast BC



Boys & Girls Club
of Wetaskiwin

dia*

rethinking the development of people

About Dialogues in Action

Dialogues in Action has been a leading firm in the field of evaluation for thirteen years. We have designed and led some of North America's most compelling capacity-building projects in evaluation for nonprofits and social service agencies. Over the past decade, we have come alongside nearly 500 organizations in the United States, Canada, and Europe to develop organizational skill and capacity for doing credible self-studies of impact.

Among the projects we have led is one of North America's largest qualitative impact projects with the YMCA of the USA and 30 of their largest associations, involving hundreds of staff and thousands of in-depth interviews, a national evaluation project in the U.S. on Parent Leadership, a subsector cohort of organizations working on healthy aging in British Columbia, a domestic violence cohort in Oregon, multiple AmeriCorps grantee cohorts in California, Oregon, Iowa, Nevada, Washington, and Utah, and numerous multi-disciplinary cohorts involving organizations with a wide range of missions and causes in places like Edmonton, San Diego, Vancouver, Calgary, Portland, and various rural contexts.

Our specialty is in building capacity of organizations to design and implement self-studies of their impact. We have developed a process that has resulted in hundreds of teams being able to evaluate the difference they are making and respond to the insights. We have also developed a unique and innovative approach to doing qualitative evaluation at scale. This has allowed us to be able to bring together large groups of human-centered organizations to define their intention, inquire into their impact, and respond to the data for improvements. In addition, we have led third-party evaluations for organizations like the European Leadership Forum, Willamette River Initiative, Nonprofit Labour Market Partnership of British Columbia, and the Immigrant Employment Council, among others.

The founder of Dialogues in Action, Steve Patty, Ph.D., completed his doctoral dissertation in instrument design in 1993. He taught for 13 years as a university professor, focusing the last three years his tenure on teaching research methodology to doctoral students. In the academic context, he served most recently as the associate director of doctoral programs at the International University of Monaco. He is a published author and a frequent conference speaker. He presents on evaluation of impact at numerous conferences throughout North America every year, having presented his key insights for thousands of leaders over the past decade.



The Lead-in to Learning and Impact

For more than a decade, Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC has been measuring the outcomes of our work in a variety of ways, including by working in partnership with United Way Lower Mainland, City of Vancouver, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, to develop and/or align with logic models for reporting. Clubs have used surveys, aligned with both UWLM and City of Vancouver expectations, and have now mapped those back to the BGC Canada Model for Success (in plain language).

UWLM's Project Impact offered BGC the opportunity to work with Dr. Steve Patty and Dialogues in Action and other UWLM agency partners over a 6 month period to evolve our outcome measurement beyond behaviours to include enduring change in those we serve and employ, as a result of their involvement with Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC. During that project, we trialed Dr. Patty's approach with 15 year old Club participants, with very promising results. In summary, this trial highlighted that, as a result of their involvement with BGC, participants were experiencing positive development in our four high level outcomes under four high level outcomes: relationships skills, healthy living behaviours, school finishing/lifelong learning, and leadership. Further, the trial revealed that these positive outcomes for participants link with three key factors: (1) our model of "experiential" learning ("hidden" or soft supervision) and exposure to a broad range of activities/opportunities; (2) the quality of the relationships they develop with BGC leaders, that feels safe and accepting; and (3) their tenure with BGC (over the course of multiple years).

Accelerating our Progress

In late 2016, a funder agreed to support us in accelerating the development of this measurement approach at Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC. In April 2017 we develop the evaluation framework, quantitative surveys, and qualitative protocols, with a specific focus on Clubs, Camp, Counselling, and HR. In November 2017, we realized there was potential for this measurement and reporting to improve our ability to advocate for, and inspire new funding (both from government and private sources).

In 2018, it became clear that it may be possible and worthwhile to work with Okanagan BGC and BGC Calgary and ultimately, BGC Wetaskiwin, and BGC Canada, as a way of advancing our common goals for measurement across BGC's in Canada.

The opportunity to lead and develop capacity within Boys and Girls Clubs across Canada in measuring and reporting impact with this innovative approach has strong potential to help us to advance the Model of Success into both plain language and a more universally subscribed to evaluation framework, build evaluation capacity using the train the trainer model and shared measurement building between and across Club, as well as enhance the evidence of our impact to accelerate all of our efforts to generate increased financial resources.

A collaborative approach could mitigate the risk that multiple and potentially competing efforts (and duplication of efforts and resources) would be taken to develop evaluation framework and tools that do not ultimately align. Currently, our Operating Standards and Peer Review processes offer a successful framework/model, timeline, and approach that could be replicated for shared evaluation.

Core Principals & Foundational Elements

Core Principals and Foundational Elements:

- Builds on BGCC Membership Agreement, Operating Standards, and Peer Review
- Based on core outcomes of Model for Success
 - Next evolution, delivers tools to “prove and improve”
 - Shared measurement, both quantitative and qualitative
 - Quantitative: replaces existing draft annual survey already required
 - Qualitative: could be a smaller group of Club organizations (and/or rotating rather than it being an annual membership requirement)
- Provides both shared and individual organizational data/results
- Measures what BGC’s share in common (Clubs, HR), with optional ability to build customized tools (Peer review/best practices sharing) for specialized/custom programs
- Initial investment has already been made
- Demonstrated ability to scale across BGC’s (of different sizes and capacity)
- Common database: two leads (National firms, existing relationships); key elements:
 - Simple
 - Ability to provide shared and individual data
 - Affordable
 - Scalable

Rules of Engagement

The following commitments were agreed to by all participants of the pilot:

- The approach and tools would align with BGC Canada Model for Success
- CEO’s/Executive Directors must actively participate to ensure buy-in to the project
- Tools and approaches would be developed collaboratively, under the direction of Dialogues in Action (DIA), to ensure integrity of the methodology and data/results
- BGC South Coast BC secured the core funding (for DIA)
- Each organization committed time, resources, and travel costs to participate

What we have to show for it

1. Collaboration and Project Development
2. Training – individual organizations one on one with Dr. Patty and group meetings
3. Key Tools Developed:
 - Quantitative Surveys
 - Club Participants:
 - 8-12 year olds
 - 13+
 - Staff
 - Qualitative Surveys and Protocols
 - Club Participants (stratified sampling of 10-12 year olds and 13+)
 - Staff (stratified sampling across employee groups including program areas, length of service, minimum of 1 year service)
4. Reports – Developed for Clubs and Staff, including a shared synthesis and individual reports

Introduction to the Project

The aim of Project Impact is to develop in nonprofits the ability to do credible self-studies of their impact.¹ As such, this is a capacity-building project. The reports in this compendium are written by teams from four Boys and Girls Clubs, and represent the findings from their data collection and analysis, as well as a shared summary. This project follows the traditions of participatory evaluation. In a participatory evaluation approach, those who are doing the work also become the evaluators of the effects of the work. This requires capacity-building for the teams, for a self-study form of evaluation requires the development of skills, theoretical understanding, practice in the techniques, and attention to fidelity of implementation in order to ensure the proper level of rigor.

The development of evaluation capacity takes time and iteration. It requires both instruction and practice – training in some of the leading techniques of research accompanied by ongoing applications and practice. This project recognizes the power of partnership, the enrichment of cross-pollination of ideas among like-minded organizations, the durable impact of a learning community, and the potential inspiration for a sector when exemplars are developed and elevated. Project Impact takes teams of leaders from nonprofits through a process of discovery about the power of evaluation. The idea is to develop the ability to see and communicate the effects of the programs on the people they are designed to serve. There are three primary movements to the project: (1) Intended impact, (2) Inquiry, and (3) Implication.

Project Design

The project begins with a focus on the work of identifying and clarifying the intended impact of each of the participating programs. Once the ideas have been developed and indicators identified, the teams then design a questionnaire to collect data about quantitative measures and a qualitative interview protocol to collect qualitative data. These data are analyzed. Themes are identified and then translated into findings. From the findings, the teams develop program responses and communiques of their impact. The fundamental elements of the Project Impact follow an arc of evaluation design:

Part 1 - Intended Impact

This project begins with the identification and clarification of what effects are intended through the work of each of the projects. Each team develops an articulation of intended impact to include the components necessary for evaluation design.

¹ This project is primarily focused on developing the ability of staff teams to implement self-studies about the effects of their programs. It is not designed to provide an experimental or quasi-experimental version of impact evaluation. Instead, it is an effort to upgrade the existing capability of each organization and give them the tools to gather data on the attributed impact both qualitatively and quantitatively from the subjects they serve.

A. Main Ideas of Impact

Each team identifies and crafts ideas of impact to frame the intention of direct impact for the program. In some cases, these ideas are mapped in relation to the secondary and tertiary impacts of the program to gain clarity about the fundamental notions of desired effect as a direct consequence of the program or service rendered.

B. “What We Mean”

From these primary ideas, the teams then develop a brief explication of the meaning of their ideas of impact. This translates ideas that are occasionally technical and into messages accessible to all.

C. Quantitative Indicators

Teams then identify Quantitative indicators for each of the ideas. The aim is to generate five or six of the most critical indicators for each idea, paying attention to the data power, proxy power, and communication power of each of the key ideas. As well, the intent in this step is to identify a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral indicators that can be measured through metrics.

D. Qualitative Indicators

Teams also identify qualitative indicators in this stage. These indicators are articulations of the structural and qualitative elements of growth and development that signal progress toward key ideas of impact. The qualitative indicators become the basis for the protocol construction to inform the in-depth interviews in the inquiry phase.

E. Principles of Change

Recognizing that an underlying logic exists for each program, the teams articulate the rationale for their intervention. This step connects what they do (action) to what will result from what they do (outcome). Each team builds a set of principles that explain why they do what they do in the way they do it. In so doing, the underlying philosophy of logic is exposed and can then be examined through the data from the evaluation. This section of the project leads each team to develop a clear theory of change, including the outcomes, indicators, and principles embedded in the particular approach that is implemented by each team.

Part 2 – Inquiry

In the inquiry stage of the project, each team designs and implements a strategy for data gathering. These take two forms: a questionnaire to collect quantitative data and an indepth interview to gather qualitative data.

A. Quantitative Data and Analysis

For each of the quantitative indicators, teams construct items for a questionnaire. Since these projects are not intended to provide experimental or quasi-experimental inquiry, the attribution of effect is built into the questionnaire items. The questionnaire is deployed, in most cases, to the entire population of recipients the program reaches. Data are analyzed mostly

using measures of central tendency. The teams then design displays of the data and narrative for their report.

B. Qualitative Data and Analysis

The development of a qualitative design encompasses a number of steps, including the following:

- 1. Protocol Design.** Each team designs an in-depth interview protocol that uses the Heart Triangle™ method of question design. These produces a protocol of about nine sequences of questions (18 questions in total) to be used as a guide for seeking data about the awareness and reflection of subjects' structural shifts and developments of growth and progress.
- 2. Sample.** Each team identifies a sample of subjects using a purposeful stratified technique to identify a selection representing of the population being served.
- 3. Data Collection.** Interviews a convened, most lasting between 45 minutes and 1 hour in length. Data are collected via notes during the interview, and then augmented immediately following the interview to provide a substantive rendering of the interview.
- 4. Data Analysis.** Team members apply a four-step model of analysis to each of the interviews. This process provides them with an accessible version of analysis and interpretation to illuminate the primary themes from each interview. While the process is accessible, working through the data from each interview four times using different lenses of analysis each time provides a rigor to the analytical process that yields insight far beyond what is overt and obvious in the data.
- 5. Thematics.** Through a guided and facilitative process, the entire data corpus is then examined. Themes are mapped through meta-analysis of the emerging insights.
- 6. Findings.** The teams then examine each of the themes to discover and communicate the findings. These are rendered with explanation, illustration from the raw data, and significance.

Part 3 – Implication

The intent of the project is not to leave teams simply with a report about their program's effects, but rather to use the insights from the evaluation to guide the further development of the program. This takes two forms:

A. Program Adjustments

The team then takes each of the findings from the evaluation and considers possible program adjustments informed by the discoveries of the evaluation. This keeps the evaluation relevant for program application and improvement.

B. Program Experiments

In addition, the teams work to identify potential design experiments that they might run as an implication of the insights gained through the evaluation. In this stage, the teams also begin to develop a report of the evaluation findings as well as other possible communiques of their discoveries to staff, stakeholders, funders, and other members of the community.

The Reports

The reports from the organizations in this cohort are included in the following compendium. These include highlights from the three movements of Project Impact. For each participating organization, there is an explication of the primary findings from the evaluation accompanied by the programmatic responses of strategy and design. Since each organization has unique strategy and ethos, each report exhibits unique character and personality. Each report also includes both “prove” findings (evidence of impacts being achieved) and “improve” findings (areas for attention and further development). These reports are windows into the effects of the work of these organizations in the lives of the people they serve. The Executive Summaries capture the shared results.

Boys & Girls Clubs

EVALUATION PILOT

Calgary, Okanagan, South Coast, Wetaskiwin

As Canada's largest child and youth-serving organization, Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada is committed to its mission of providing safe, supportive places where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

The Club experience is designed to impact participants in at least four areas of their development:

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS	HEALTHY LIVING	LIFELONG LEARNING	LEADERSHIP
Interpersonal Skills Connection to community Belonging Self-acceptance Acceptance of others	Healthy choices Nutrition habits Physically active Positive outlook Resilience	Educational success Exploration/curiosity Creative expression Challenging self Goal attainment	Leadership identity Positive influence Confidence Self-initiative Self-regulation Cooperation

The data show evidence of significant impact in all four areas of focus. These are common themes from among the four pilot organizations. As a result of Club, youth...

Established positive relationships with adults.

Strengthened belonging and acceptance.

Developed interpersonal skills.

Grew in the ability to direct their lives.

Developed more active and healthy habits.

Forged strength and resilience in the face of adversity.

Discovered a more positive personal identity.

Built confidence through trying new things and experiencing successes.

Developed more hope for the future.

Practiced new skills of leadership.

Experienced having a positive influence on others.

Grew in care and empathy for others.

"My friend group has changed since I've been at the Club, and so has the way I see people. I'm open to people now, and it's really cool."

"One time, I felt really sad. I came to the Club and talked to the staff, and I felt safe. I knew that I had other people in my life who cared about me."

"I've learned that no matter what, you should always take care of yourself. If you help yourself, you can help others and make the world a better place."

"Being part of the Club has taught me how to act in certain situations and how to deal with the problem. [It has helped me] be calmer in a situation."

"I get to do everything I want at the Club, and I feel more confident to do things outside the Club."

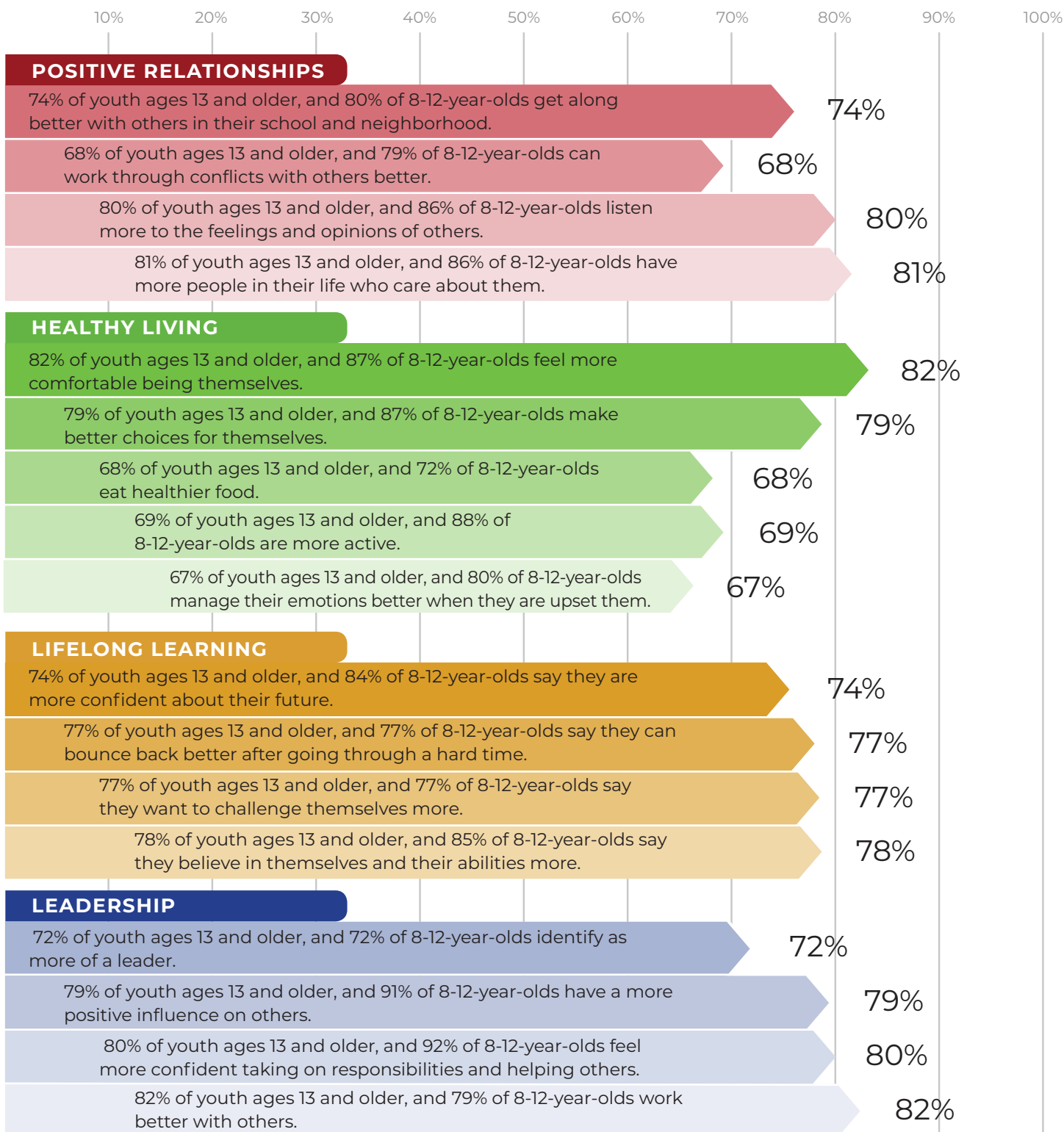
"Because of the Club, I can do anything now, like playing hockey. I am more patient with my friends, and I am a good sharer."

"There are other people out there that have really tough times...they may push people away, but they do want somebody to help them, and they do want somebody to care for them. And I'm hoping that I can do that for somebody one day."

Boys & Girls Clubs

By the Numbers

A close look at the numbers* from our outcomes surveys reveal the following:



*The visual representation of the data are from the 13+ surveys. The response rate for the 8-12 year olds was 642, and the 13+ was 120. The percentages reflect the aggregate of the top three scores on a five-point scale for 13+ (Some, Quite a bit, and A lot) and the top two scores on a three-point scale for the 8-12 (Kind of and A lot).

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada

Executive Summary - Clubs

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary, Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin,
Boys & Girls Clubs of South Coast BC, Okanagan Boys & Girls Clubs**

Evaluation Approach

As a pilot evaluation, four local Boys and Girls Club organizations convened a self-study evaluation of impact. The project was guided by Dialogues in Action.

The project team worked through three movements of evaluation: (1) Intention: What is the difference we are intending to make? What are indicators of progress? What are the principles underlying our theory of change? (2) Inquiry: What insights are revealed from qualitative data? What insights are revealed in quantitative data? (3) Implication: How should we respond to what we have discovered? What proves our impact? What should we do to improve our impact?

Two primary questions guided the evaluation:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having?
2. What is causing or contributing to the impact?

The team designed and implemented a mixed-method approach to data collection. For the qualitative inquiry, the team designed an interview protocol, identified a sample of interviewees using purposeful stratified sampling technique, convened 79 in-depth interviews with Club Members, lasting typically between 45-60 minutes, analyzed the data from the interviews, and developed themes from the entire data corpus. For the quantitative inquiry, the team designed a survey that was deployed to Club Members in two different age groups, 8-12 and 13-18-year-olds. The survey yielded data on Boys & Girls Club outcomes from 642 respondents in the 8-12-year-old group and 120 respondents in the 13-18-year-old group.

Key Evaluation Findings

Areas of Impact

The evaluation demonstrates the significant impact of Boys and Girls Clubs in the work of youth development across Canada.

Positive Relationships: Young people will have enhanced connection to community, interpersonal skills, sense of belonging, and acceptance of self and others.

1. **Established positive relationships with adults.** The data reveal that the adult staff at Boys and Girls Clubs have a tremendous impact on the lives of kids in their roles as models and mentors. Through these relationships with staff, kids come to believe that they matter and are important. One youth said, "One time, I felt really sad. I came to the Club and talked to the staff, and I felt safe. I knew that I had other people in my life who cared about me." Through the positive

support of adults at the Club, kids have more positive relationships with their families, friends, and teachers. In the survey of youth ages 13 and older, 74% of respondents reported getting along better with others in their school and neighbourhood because of their participation in Club.

- 2. Strengthened of belonging and acceptance.** Boys and Girls Clubs expose young people to a diverse population and bring together people of all ages and from all backgrounds in an environment that lets everyone be who they are. This exposure helps youth expand their understanding, empathy, and compassion for others. One interviewee said, "Every year there are different people, but we talk about the same concepts or insecurities. We are all different, but we all have it. It doesn't matter colour or race; we can learn things to help our friends." Another shared, "My friend group has changed since I've been at the Club, and so has the way I see people. I'm open to people now, and it's really cool." Kids feel accepted for who they are while at the Club. In the survey for youth ages 13 and older, 82% reported feeling more comfortable being themselves as a result of Club. They see Club as a safe space where they can be themselves and thrive. One youth said, "I just feel I'm part of a community."

In some cases, the data indicated that this strong sense of belonging could lead to youth leaning on their Club community for support over external systems such as their outside friends and family. Seeking opportunities to integrate 'natural' and 'chosen' families may prove beneficial in helping young people transition to a natural support system over-reliance on a professional one.

- 3. Developed interpersonal skills.** Young people reported feeling better equipped to navigate their social world as a result of their experiences in Clubs. Through opportunities to build relationships and practice relationship skills, they have developed stronger communication and listening skills, feel more confident working in groups, are better at working through conflict, and are more resilient. In the quantitative survey, 80% of youth 13 and older reported increased listening skills because of Club, and 82% said they work with others better. One youth said, "Club has helped with social skills. The more people I interact with, the more different people I experience, which helps me know how to associate with different people." Another said, "It's made my relationship with my girlfriend easier because I'm able to express my thoughts clearly."

Healthy Living: Young people will make healthy choices, including choices about nutrition and physical activity, and have increased positive outlook and resilience.

- 1. Grew in the ability to direct their lives.** Members are taking more control and ownership over their lives and striving to make healthy choices for themselves. They are thinking about the food they are eating, substances they are ingesting, how they are spending their time, and with whom that time is spent. With the development of these healthy decision-making skills, young people are experiencing increased confidence in themselves and a growing belief that they are capable individuals. Interviewees talked about speaking up for themselves and not making choices that were not right or harmful to them. In the survey of youth ages 13 and older, 79% of respondents reported making better choices for themselves because of Club. They are developing better self-control and an awareness of where to invest their emotions.
- 2. Developed more active and healthy habits.** At Clubs, youth cook, eat healthy snacks, take part in physical activities, and discuss health issues with peers and staff. They are actively involved in

learning and practicing healthy living. In many cases, these opportunities lead to youth to have healthier lives and making healthier choices for themselves. One interviewee said, "I've learned that no matter what, you should always take care of yourself. If you help yourself, you can help others and make the world a better place." Another said, "Being healthy gives me a positive idea about the future me." In the survey of youth age 13 and older, 68% reported choosing to eat healthier food because of Club and 69% are more active.

In some cases, though, youth struggled to articulate what health and wellbeing mean to them and identify specific examples of healthy choices they are making, particularly related to nutrition. Youth often mentioned making healthy choices for themselves socially but rarely mentioned other aspects of their health or wellbeing such as nutrition and exercise. This may indicate that the skills youth are practicing through health and nutrition activities are not always being applied in their life outside of Club.

- 3. Forged strength and resilience in the face of adversity.** Young people are developing the courage and capacity to move productively through challenges. Some youth talked about trying new things and not being successful, but keeping with it until they saw progress. 77% of surveyed youth ages 13 and older reported being better able to bounce back after going through a hard time. One club member shared during her interview that through guidance from staff, she, fortunately, "did not hit rock bottom but was close enough to know [she] needed to change." Another said, "Being part of the Club has taught me how to act in certain situations and how to deal with the problem. [It has helped me] be calmer in a situation...I would have been much more emotional before."

Lifelong Learning: Young people will experience educational success, develop curiosity and creative expression, and learn how to challenge themselves and achieve goals.

- 1. Discovered a more positive personal identity.** When staff create and implement new programs and opportunities for Club Members, and encouraged them to try, it inspires them to embrace new learning and discover themselves. 79% of surveyed youth 13 and older reported that they like trying new things more because of Club. One youth said, "I am now interested in baseball, I used to think it was silly, but now it's my favourite thing to do. I talk a lot about baseball and encourage others to try it, especially those who were scared like me." Self-discovery for young people in our Clubs occurs through seeing strengths and weaknesses, experiencing a sense of belonging, seeing positive role modelling, and receiving confirmation of self-worth.
- 2. Built confidence through trying new things and experiencing successes.** When confidence is initiated through achieving success in new experiences, it increases the likelihood that children and youth will engage more frequently in learning experiences, building on and amplifying their confidence. The healthy decision-making skills that Club Members are learning lead to increased confidence in themselves and a growing belief that they are capable individuals. Once they experience a growth in confidence, they extend themselves to trying new things on their own. One youth said, "I get to do everything I want at the Club, and I feel more confident to do things outside the Club."

Young people routinely referenced 'aha moments' of learning, marking changes in their lives since they entered the Club, such as making a friend for the first time or developing an

understanding of their own strengths and capabilities through experiential learning opportunities. One interviewee shared:

The Club has changed my perspective on things. When I was in grade three, I thought everything will always be this way, and I will always feel this way. But it does change. My mind changed. Because of the Club, I can do anything now, like playing hockey. I am more patient with my friends, and I am a good sharer.

- 3. Developed more hope for the future.** Youth in Clubs are experiencing a broadening awareness of possibilities for their future. When one youth was asked how his perspective on the next 5-10 years has changed as a result of his time at Club, he said, "Well, I think I will be alive for it now." Another youth stated in his interview, "Before coming to Club, I didn't think I would make it to twenty." He is now 22. Some respondents reported developing career goals, such as having an engineering career as a result of being exposed to science experiments in the Club.

In some interviews, when youth articulated thoughts about their future, they tended to be vague and focus on what they would do, rather than who they would become. Results from the quantitative survey showed 74% of youth 13 and older responding that they feel more confident about their future because of Club. Youth are feeling optimistic about their futures, but there is some evidence to suggest they don't yet know exactly where that optimism will lead them.

Leadership: Young people will learn how to be leaders and have a positive influence on others, building skills for cooperation, self-regulation, confidence, and taking initiative.

- 1. Practiced new skills of leadership.** Clubs are places where positive leaders emerge. Leadership is a very difficult competency to acquire, and even more challenging is the acquisition of character traits that make a leader the type that makes the world better as they lead. One interviewee said, "Being a leader is being responsible and being kind and nice to people at the same time." Through Club activities, youth are learning to stand up for their friends, help others, role model positive behavior, work as a team, and take initiative. 80% of youth 13 and older who responded to the survey reported feeling more confident taking on responsibilities because of Club. Another said, "When leading others, you need to have confidence to do it right. When following you need to trust your leader will do what is best for the group."
- 2. Experienced having a positive influence on others.** Young people are developing empathy and a desire to help their peers and contribute to something meaningful. In the survey for youth ages 13 and older, 79% of respondents said they have a more positive influence on others because of Club. One youth said, "There are other people out there that have really tough times...they may push people away, but they do want somebody to help them, and they do want somebody to care for them. And I'm hoping that I can do that for somebody one day."
- 3. Lack of self-awareness of leadership aptitude.** Many of the youth interviewed reported having the characteristics of a leader, including standing up for their friends, helping others, protecting other youth, or role modeling safe behaviors and lifestyles. However, these characteristics were often discovered through questions about healthy living and positive relationships rather than questions about leadership. In many cases, youth struggled to identify and define their leadership identity and capability. The findings show that youth know what leadership is and show it regularly through their actions but aren't always able to identify and/or embrace

themselves as leaders. In one interview, for example, a young person commented that they learned leadership, teamwork, communication through the Club, and yet moments later, when asked if they are a leader, said, “I’m not good at that.”

Causal Factors

The evaluation revealed four critical causal factors attributed to Boys & Girls Club work by the interviewees.

1. **Providing a safe and supportive environment.** The data show that when young people have a safe space for self-expression and self-discovery, they build confidence and feel more comfortable being themselves.

“I always feel welcome and supported here. I can always talk to the staff. I feel better about myself because staff are welcoming, here for us and I can always tell them what’s going on.”

2. **Opportunities for discovery.** The data show that through new experiences, young people are discovering strengths and weaknesses, growing their confidence, and seeing possibilities for the future.

“[I have grown] to be a guy that is sure of himself, can think for himself. Being around other people and learning the types of stuff that I did at the Club, it helped me find who I want to be and figure out who I am.”

3. **Building healthy relationships.** Providing opportunities for young people to interact with others and practice their interpersonal skills leads to strengthened communication skills, a sense of belonging, and resilience.

"Club has helped with social skills. The more people I interact with, the more different people I experience, which helps me know how to associate with different people."

4. **Strong mentors and role models.** The data reveal that through the relationships young people build with staff and older peers in Club, they experience a sense of belonging, are motivated to learn, and believe that they matter.

“Being around so many different children of differing ages allows me to learn by watching. You just don't get that by just being stuck with your own age. I get to learn this way.”

By the Numbers

A close look at the numbers* from our outcomes surveys reveal the following:

Positive Relationships

- 74% of youth ages 13 and older, and 80% of 8-12-year-olds get along better with others in their school and neighborhood.
- 68% of youth ages 13 and older, and 79% of 8-12-year-olds can work through conflicts with others better.
- 80% of youth ages 13 and older, and 86% of 8-12-year-olds listen more to the feelings and opinions of others.
- 81% of youth ages 13 and older, and 86% of 8-12-year-olds have more people in their life who care about them.

Healthy Living

- 82% of youth ages 13 and older, and 87% of 8-12-year-olds feel more comfortable being themselves.
- 79% of youth ages 13 and older, and 87% of 8-12-year-olds make better choices for themselves.
- 68% of youth ages 13 and older, and 72% of 8-12-year-olds eat healthier food.
- 69% of youth ages 13 and older, and 88% of 8-12-year-olds are more active.
- 67% of youth ages 13 and older, and 80% of 8-12-year-olds manage their emotions better when they are upset.

Lifelong Learning

- 74% of youth ages 13 and older, and 84% of 8-12-year-olds say they are more confident about their future.
- 77% of youth ages 13 and older, and 77% of 8-12-year-olds say they can bounce back better after going through a hard time.
- 77% of youth ages 13 and older, and 77% of 8-12-year-olds say they want to challenge themselves more.
- 78% of youth ages 13 and older, and 85% of 8-12-year-olds say they believe in themselves and their abilities more.

Leadership

- 72% of youth ages 13 and older, and 72% of 8-12-year-olds identify as more of a leader.
- 79% of youth ages 13 and older, and 91% of 8-12-year-olds have a more positive influence on others.
- 80% of youth ages 13 and older, and 92% of 8-12-year-olds feel more confident taking on responsibilities and helping others.
- 82% of youth ages 13 and older, and 79% of 8-12-year-olds work better with others.

* These percentages reflect the aggregate of the top three scores on a five-point scale for 13+ (Some, Quite a bit, and A lot) and the top two scores on a three-point scale for the 8-12 (Kind of and A lot).

Responses for the Future

To respond to the discoveries of the evaluation, Boys and Girls Clubs will work on the following:

1. Club Staff Recruitment and Training

- Develop and integrate training specifically to support youth with self-confidence, acceptance, and relationships to further the effects of building resiliency.
- Provide ongoing "relationship-focused" training opportunities.
- Broaden diversity training.
- Ensure that the diversity of the youth we serve is matched within staff diversity.
- Consider hiring more Club graduates as employees.

2. Programming

- Continue to ensure that a wide variety of experiential learning opportunities can abundantly be provided as part of Club programming.
- Design more intentional and creative ways to develop decision-making ability among children and youth.
- Create programs to teach youth how to advocate for themselves and each other in positive ways.

- Continue to expand youth physical wellness programs.
- Make health promotion more explicit and integrated into all programming.
- Create more community volunteer opportunities as a means of further developing social skills and empathy.
- Expand peer mentoring and one-to-one programs to help youth build resiliency.

3. Next Level / Future Work

- Develop a program that defines and teaches youth what leadership skills are and how they can develop these skills inside and outside of Club.
- Develop more opportunities for youth to be the leaders and facilitators.
- Build strategies to help children and youth envision and plan for their futures

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada

Executive Summary - Staff

Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary, Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin,
Boys & Girls Clubs of South Coast BC, Okanagan Boys & Girls Clubs

Evaluation Approach

Four Boys and Girls Clubs in western Canada convened a pilot self-study to evaluate their impact in staff. The project team worked through three movements of evaluation: (1) Intention: What is the difference we are intending to make? What are indicators of progress? What are the principles underlying our theory of change? (2) Inquiry: What insights are revealed from qualitative data? What insights are revealed in quantitative data? (3) Implication: How should we respond to what we have discovered? What proves our impact? What should we do to improve our impact?

Two primary questions guided the evaluation:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having?
2. What is causing or contributing to the impact?

The team designed and implemented a qualitative approach to data collection. For the qualitative inquiry, the team designed an interview protocol, identified a sample of interviewees using purposeful stratified sampling technique, convened 55 in-depth interviews with employees, lasting typically between 45-60 minutes, analyzed the data from the interviews, and developed themes from the entire data corpus.

Key Evaluation Findings

Areas of Impact

This evaluation demonstrates the significance of impact Boys and Girls Clubs are having among staff in four areas of impact: positive relationships, healthy living, lifelong learning, and leadership capability.

Positive Relationships: Staff demonstrate emotional intelligence, intentionality in relationship-building, teamwork, a greater sense of belonging, and inclusivity.

1. **Advanced interpersonal skills.** Staff realize the power of relationships in their day-to-day work with children and youth. Interviewees spoke about experiencing the relationship-building that happens at Boys and Girls Club, and explained how it helps them learn to connect with others in healthy ways. Relationships are seen as a key factor in job satisfaction. Staff are learning that relationships are the most successful means for achieving solutions. Staff feel strongly supported and encouraged by Club values and their supervisors to emphasize relationship-building in their work. In some cases, the data revealed challenges around connecting across the organization, and relationships were siloed into program areas.

Many staff described having strong relationships with coworkers and commented on how those relationships are extending outside of work. One employee said, "The friendships and relationships I have made working here have pulled me through hard times." The interpersonal skills staff are developing at work are also carrying over into their personal lives. Several interviewees spoke about how their experience working at the Club has influenced their personal relationships and their ability to address and resolve conflicts. It has helped them to be better parents and partners. One staff member shared, "I have become a better partner, son, and brother through working for the club."

2. **Relational adaptability and inclusivity.** Through their experience working at Boys and Girls Clubs, staff are developing relationships with diverse populations. There is a recognition that everyone has something to bring and that differences are not only welcome but enriching. One staff said, "BGC is good at diversity, and that's what makes us more vibrant as an agency." Staff realize how important it is for them to get to know the stories of the children, youth, and families and how this builds empathy and compassion. As they got to know kids through their work, staff began recognizing the biases and misperceptions they were carrying. One staff member said, "This is where I really learned what that phrase 'you can't judge a book by its cover' really means." Another said, "Everyone has a story, so you can't judge." The acumen staff are building in their ability to relate to diverse populations and appreciate differences in people is opening new possibilities for relating to the world outside of the context of Clubs. Staff are seeing the value of this kind of relational aptitude for all aspects of their lives and futures.
3. **Growth in authenticity.** Through the experience of working at Clubs, staff recognize the shared experience of all people, that all people have challenges and needs regardless of background, circumstance, or presentation. One interviewee said, "I learned what it means to meet people where they are at." Accepting others for who they are and encouraging Club kids to accept themselves helps staff embrace their own authentic selves. The experience of acceptance they are creating for kids ends up being a powerful experience for their own development. By supporting children and youth on their journey, whatever journey that might be, staff are empowered to explore their own identity and embrace their authentic selves. This is producing a unique and compelling sense of personal maturity among the staff of Boys and Girls Club.

Healthy Living: Staff demonstrate role modeling, positive character qualities, worthiness to self and others, a sense of purpose for their life, and balance when relating to others.

1. **Embracing personal growth.** Through their work at Boys and Girls Clubs, staff are becoming more eager and able to grow and develop personally. Data show that staff become more committed to growth and development as a result of their work. They also come to recognize that personal progress is an ongoing process throughout their careers. One interviewee said, "[Being here] allowed me to open up to who I am [and discover] this is who you are meant to be." Their work at Clubs reinforces their own growth. Supporting youth in their development supports their own commitment to developing. One staff member said, "Our clients inspire us as much as we inspire them." The data show that staff feel supported in their efforts for self-discovery and growth. One interviewee said, "There's that spirit with the Boys and Girls Club of continuing to develop and to have that quality improvement. I feel like that's a really good approach for myself and my own skills."

2. **Modelling healthy behaviour.** The data reveal that when staff gave attention to modeling behaviour for youth, it developed healthy habits for themselves. In interviews, staff shared that as a result of being a part of the Boys and Girls Clubs, they make better life choices to model positive behaviour for the youth in their Clubs. Their role as a mentor heightened an awareness of their own habits and behaviours. One staff person spoke about the moment she realized that if she was encouraging kids to make healthy food choices every day, she needed to model healthy choices and not show up with a cheeseburger and fries for lunch. Another said, "When eating lunch with the kids, I want to show them that healthy eating is cool."
3. **Struggling with work-life balance.** Staff realize the importance of having healthy boundaries and practicing self-care in order to be the best version of themselves. In some cases, staff feel supported by the organization in these efforts. Staff heard messages that they should prioritize self-care and balance at work. They also acknowledged their individual responsibility to take advantage of the resources available and prioritize their own well-being. One staff member shared:

I'm making sure that I'm doing things that make me healthy as a person here at work and at home. This has always been important to me, but this message has not always been at places that I've worked in the past. At the Club, the message that I get loud and clear is that if I don't take care of myself, I can't be the best version of myself. I appreciate that.

Being able to bring the best versions of oneself to work, however, is challenging for many. Despite recognizing their importance of personal health, it can prove challenging to put into practice for many staff. One interviewee shared, "I see all of the possibilities and ways we can accommodate people, and that can get in the way. I need to learn how to set boundaries. It can't work out for everyone, every single time."

Lifelong Learning: Staff demonstrate perseverance and grit, motivation to grow, willingness to challenge themselves, goal setting and follow-through, and adaptability.

1. **New strengths discovered.** The experiences of staff at Clubs help them discover, clarify, and confirm who they are and what they want to do in their lives. In interviews, staff members shared about how they were able to discover strengths they did not yet know about themselves. They described Boys and Girls Club as a place where new skills are developed and strengths are confirmed, reinforced, and put to use. Staff expressed how they felt empowered and encouraged to try new things through their work in Clubs, which led to increased confidence. One staff said, "You don't know you can do it until you do." Another shared, "I think it's been exciting to have the opportunity to practice skills here at work and develop myself, but it has also led to increased confidence and assertiveness in my personal life."
2. **Leaning into challenges.** Staff are challenged to step out of their comfort zone and provide opportunities to develop new skills and build confidence. The data show that staff are leaning into productive discomfort and embracing new challenges, such as initiating difficult conversations, taking on public speaking, and dealing with conflict. These experiences led to staff discovering their personal strengths and developing the ability to use their strength to face challenges and difficulties. Staff gained new insights into who they are and what they can

accomplish. One interviewee said, "I've improved my ability to work under pressure and help people problem solve. Where before I was more reserved. Now I'm either challenged or will challenge myself more to help people problem-solve." Another said, "The growth was painful, but I knew I needed to challenge myself and do it." And another said, "I was so much outside my comfort zone. I was thrown in, and then I did it."

- 3. Persevering in the face of setbacks and mistakes.** Boys and Girls Clubs foster a work culture that embraces mistakes as positive learning opportunities rather than failures. Through the Clubs, staff develop the ability to face setbacks with courage and resourcefulness. One staff member said, "It's been communicated to me clearly that when individuals first start as leaders, they struggle. And so, I appreciate the mentorship, and [the recognition] that it's ok if I'm not perfect and I can learn and grow from that." However, in some interviews staff struggled to identify any mistakes they had made. This may not always be healthy aspect of staff culture. In one sense, it reflects an environment where the focus is placed on learning and growing rather than on individual mistakes. This invites further consideration about how to help staff develop a healthy approach to learning through mistakes.

Leadership: Staff demonstrate influence in their role as mentors, cooperative leadership, positivity, initiative, and a strong sense of their own identity as a leader.

- 1. Finding voice.** The data reveal that staff are developing increased confidence which leads to an ability to speak openly and honestly. They feel they have a seat at the table of influence and leadership, are more comfortable collaborating in teams, and are advocating better for the children and families that are being served. Staff report feeling heard and consulted within the workplace. They have the opportunity to offer ideas and to see those ideas implemented. One staff said, "Just knowing that I'm supported in professional development at the Club and I can make suggestions of things I would like to learn more about. I feel empowered to make suggestions and grow as an individual." This increase in confidence and feeling of empowerment is helping some staff see themselves as leaders. One interviewee said, "I see myself as a leader; somebody who's able to take charge if need be."

However, in some cases, while staff acknowledged leadership skills they use in their work, they struggled to embrace a leadership identity. Some front-line staff, typically serving in part-time, non-supervisory roles, had difficulty answering questions related to leadership. For these staff, this finding reveals the need for developing greater acuity in leadership reflection and identity.

- 2. Expanding possibilities.** The development of leadership skills in staff often leads to increased confidence and optimism for the future. One interviewee said, "I can dream more and see what else is possible." Many staff reported that prior to their work at Boys and Girls Club, serving in leadership had never occurred to them. After experiencing the Club, leading became a real possibility for their careers. Staff experienced increased self-worth and self-esteem as a result of their experience in leadership. Since they see they have can have an impact in another's life, they can envision a future of influence and service for others. One staff said, "I had no idea I had leadership skills until I worked here."

The data show that having a mentor or coach through the Club is important to staff. Having a mentor or coach supports staff to develop skills and build confidence. Staff are also recognizing their own ability to be positive role models and teach others, embracing leadership

opportunities with each other. One said, “I love to see the growth in them, coaching staff.” Another said, “BGC gives me purpose in life, making the sky the limit and anything possible. I can be a leader to young people and empower them.”

Causal Factors

The evaluation revealed four critical causal factors attributed to Boys & Girls Club work by the interviewees.

1. **Celebrating and acknowledging unique contribution.** Staff are encouraged to be themselves and have the opportunity to meet unique, dynamic individuals. This leads to the development of empathy and compassion and the building of authentic relationships.
2. **Growth mindset** – Creating a safe workspace where staff are encouraged to try new things, where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities instead of failures, leads to increased confidence, resilience, and a willingness to embrace challenges.
3. **Coaching and mentoring** – Through formal and informal systems, staff can turn to supervisors and peers for support, guidance, and feedback which allows for individual growth and the development of their own leadership identity.
4. **Healthy work culture** – Fostering an environment where staff are encouraged to focus on self-care helps them stay refreshed and balanced, both professionally and personally, which can reduce compassion fatigue and improve employee retention.

Responses for the Future

To respond to the discoveries of the evaluation, Boys and Girls Clubs will work on the following:

1. **Healthy Workplace Culture**
 - Continue to discuss, train, and practice the vision, mission, and core values regularly at team meetings.
 - More clearly and intentionally articulate and focus on self-discovery in orientation and training.
 - Continue to encourage staff to try and fail productively.
 - Embed the philosophy of occupational resilience throughout the agency so that it is not just a one-time training, but something that is embedded within the culture.
 - Provide ongoing, relationship-focused training opportunities.
 - Conduct regular meetings with employees and yearly trainings to build relationships as a team and bring people together from different locations and programs.
 - Create staff health initiatives or wellness programs (collective walking around the world, positive affirmations, strong together initiative).
 - Continue to offer training to supervisors in order to provide them with the necessary tools to support employees with their mental health and well-being.
 - Formalize communication and training tools that focus on the cycle of growth and healthy role modelling.
 - Continue training for employees regarding trauma-Informed practices.

2. Leadership Development

- Continue to provide training to all employees regarding leadership and coaching.
- Communicate and provide opportunities for staff to lead others, using consistent leadership terminology.
- Better capture the leadership skills front-line staff believe they are learning to more formally leverage and cultivate them.
- Develop or continue to promote “emerging leaders” programs to all employees.

3. Professional Development and Growth

- Continue to expose our employees to different opportunities and positions.
- Establish a more formal buddy or mentorship system for new staff.
- Expand the coaching program to others within the organization.
- Explore opportunities for more competency-based, peer to peer training and support.
- Provide training on difficult conversations and conflict resolution for all employees.
- Include staff input into training opportunities.
- Provide more “tools” (tip sheets) and formal opportunities for check-ins and discussions.
- Review performance review process. The process should focus on coaching and mentoring.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary *Clubs*

Caitlin MacDonald, Program Coordinator

Chhaya Kant, Executive Administrator - Coordinator

Julianne Knopp, Manager of Program Supports

Organization Overview

For 80 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary (BGCC) has carried on a tradition of helping young people to discover, develop, and achieve their full potential as adults, citizens, and leaders. BGCC is committed to transforming the lives of vulnerable children, youth, and their families by providing safe places and offering services and programs designed to meet the evolving needs of our communities. Our organization works hard to counter community issues such as youth homelessness, child sexual exploitation, poverty, youth unemployment, literacy, discrimination, and intergenerational trauma. We help young people build a positive sense of self through supportive developmental relationships and engaging activities that promote health and wellbeing, social and emotional competencies, a sense of belonging, and skills for life.

MISSION Our mission is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

VISION All young people have the relationships they need to grow up well and thrive.

CORE VALUES Our core values guide our long-term strategic direction, as well as our day-to-day operations and interactions.

- **Belonging:** We welcome everyone in a safe, accepting environment based on belonging and positive relationships.
- **Respect:** We ensure that everyone – children, youth, families, volunteers, and staff – is heard, respected, valued, and treated fairly.
- **Encouragement and Support:** We encourage and support every child and youth to play, learn, and grow to achieve their dreams.
- **Working Together:** We work together with young people, families, volunteers, our communities, and government.
- **Speaking Out:** We speak out with children, youth, and families so that we can make our world better.

Our Programs

We operate over 35 programs through five streams of services: Community Clubs, Education and Employment, Indigenous Initiatives, Community-Based Care, and Youth Housing and Shelters. In 2018, we supported over 4,500 vulnerable young people throughout the city of Calgary.

Community Clubs: Our programs mobilize communities in support of children and youth through child, youth and family-focused programs, community space and diverse support systems, volunteer and mentorship opportunities, enhanced arts, sports and recreation activities. We operate seven OST programs which focus on building life skills, positive relationships, and social and emotional competencies.

Education & Employment: By providing a wide variety of programs, activities, and creative supports, our innovative programs increase opportunities for children and youth to engage and succeed in educational and vocational settings. We achieve this by offering skill development programs, academic, vocational, and therapeutic supports, leadership opportunities, cultural awareness, and self-expression activities.

Indigenous Initiatives: We have a long history of working closely with the Indigenous community in providing specific and culturally appropriate programming for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth, families, and the broader community. Our Indigenous programs provide hands-on cultural experiences, elder involvement, health and wellness activities, traditional arts programs, and youth mentorship.

Community-Based Care & Support: Our community-based residential care programs are for children and youth who have Child Intervention Status and cannot safely live at home. We provide foster care homes, group homes, and two specialized residential programs for youth at risk of, or involved in, sexual exploitation. These programs work to promote safety, healthy attachments and relationships, developmental functioning and capacities, a positive sense of self and positive community connections.

Youth Housing and Shelters: With the goal of helping homeless youth gain the skills to return to their families or to live independently in the community, our programs offer a comprehensive support system to help youth permanently end their experience of homelessness. We work to prevent youth homelessness through specific initiatives in support of vulnerable young people and their families, including specialized housing programs for Indigenous and LGBTQ2S youth.

Community Clubs Program Overview

As a prevention strategy, the work of Community Clubs is to reduce and/or prevent risk factors as well as promote protective factors to ensure the well-being of children and families. Our Community Clubs offer affordable, accessible, and quality programs to children, youth, and families in targeted communities to enhance positive child and youth development during the critical hours after school and in the evenings. Members participate in a variety of programming opportunities that promote learning and discovery, health and wellbeing, physical literacy, creative expression, leadership development, positive connections to community, and social and emotional competencies. Our services are grounded

in the theories of resilience and positive youth development with an emphasis on approaches that are holistic, relational, youth-centered, developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, culturally competent, and strengths-based.

Our Clubs serve economically disadvantaged children and youth ages 6-18 in all quadrants of the city of Calgary. We define economically disadvantaged as falling below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) in that a family spends at least 20% more than the average Canadian household on the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. Our Club programs are strategically located in Calgary communities deemed vulnerable due to the presence of poverty, unemployment, crime, gangs, drugs, and a lack of safe play areas for children.

Participation in OST programs has been shown to increase engagement in school, improve academic performance, improve social skills and behaviour, and reduce the likelihood that children will become involved in risky behaviours in schools and the community.¹ The research also indicates that at-risk and high-risk children have the most to gain from OST programs in terms of developmental outcomes.² By addressing risk factors associated with poverty and enhancing protective factors, Clubs are supporting children in becoming more resilient. Resiliency can be defined as “the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress that is inherent in today's world³ Research has shown that the attributes of resilient children include social-emotional competence, positive self-concept, and a sense of hope and purpose for the future.⁴

Program Outcomes

Our Community Clubs operate under a Theory of Change and use a Logic Model to guide outcome evaluation. Healthy positive development is promoted when young people have a combination of positive experiences, positive relationships, and positive environments. We use this philosophy to guide our work and liken a youth's pathway through our program as a long-distance journey in a car. The car provides youth with a place of safety, support, and positive relationships. The journey in this car provides youth with experiences that promote learning, health and wellbeing, leadership development, positive community connections, and family support. The end goal of this journey is to support youth to achieve what we call core outcomes which include a positive identity, as well as social and emotional competencies. With these assets, we believe youth will have the skills, confidence, and positive attitudes to create great futures and achieve adult self-sufficiency.

Intended Impact

For this study, we determined four intended impacts to measure, which includes:

- **Positive Relationships:** Young people will have enhanced connection to community, interpersonal skills, sense of belonging, and acceptance of self and others.

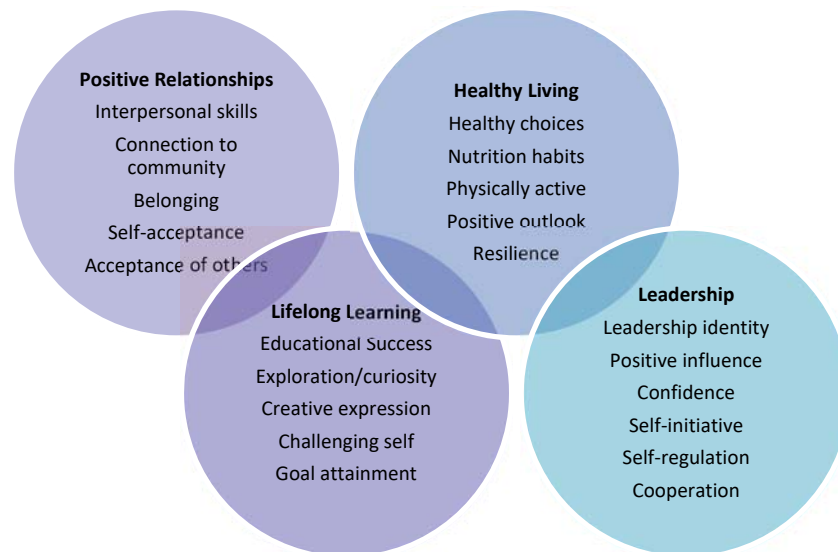
¹ OST Alliance 2014

² Gardner et al. 2009, Lee 2001

³ Henderson 2007, p. 4

⁴ Bernard 1997, Simpson 2013, Miller 2005, McWhirter 2013

- **Healthy Living:** Young people will make healthy choices, including choices about nutrition and physical activity, and have increased positive outlook and resilience.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Young people will experience educational success, develop curiosity and creative expression, and learn how to challenge themselves and achieve goals.
- **Leadership:** Young people will learn how to be leaders and have a positive influence on others, building skills for cooperation, self-regulation, confidence, and taking initiative.



Evaluation Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation was to measure what kind and quality of impact our Community Clubs are having on economically disadvantaged children and youth aged 6 to 18 years within Calgary. To achieve this, we explored two broad evaluation questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on economically disadvantaged children and youth between the ages of 8 and 18 years?
2. What aspects of our program are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented a mixed-methods outcome evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified themes and findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for program improvement and innovation.

This project began by identifying and clarifying the intended impact of Community Clubs. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact on the mental, behavioral, and emotional changes in young people living in vulnerable neighbourhoods. We used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol and a quantitative questionnaire to evaluate progress toward achieving our intended impact.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from our program. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population we serve. The number of

program participants was approximately 132. The sample size was 22, drawn from the following strata of our population:

- Young people aged 13-18
- Included both new and long-term members
- Included both highly engaged and marginally engaged youth
- Sampling from four different Club locations and a housing program

Our interview team consisted of Caitlin MacDonald, Program Coordinator; Chhaya Kant, Executive Administrator – Coordinator; and Julianne Knopp, Manager of Program Supports. We convened one-on-one interviews lasting approximately 30 minutes in length and collected interview data.

We then analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Each interviewer implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying themes) for each interview. Together, we developed common themes from the entire data corpus identifying the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined the dynamics among the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

Quantitative Data and Analysis

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, we designed a questionnaire to collect data on our quantitative indicators of impact. We administered this instrument to two different groups of young people, as outlined below. For group A (8 to 12-year-olds) we had 150 responses, and for group B (13 to 18-year-olds) we had 43 responses.

Group A: Young people aged 8 to 12

- Included both new and long-term members
- Sampling from five different Community Clubs

Group B: Young people aged 13 to 18

- Included both new and long-term members
- Included both highly engaged and marginally engaged youth
- Sampling from five different Community Clubs and a Housing program

The data were analyzed primarily using measures of central tendency. We identified key insights, patterns, and gaps within the data and incorporated these discoveries into the related findings. The most significant insights from the quantitative data are described in the following narrative.

Findings

Finding 1: It's not what you do; it's who you do it with.

Key insight: More than tangible opportunities (traveling, bike trips, programs), youth identified that the most meaningful opportunities are the relationships formed between peers and leaders.

While opportunity exists in many forms, one of the most interesting findings was specific to the question, "what opportunities have you had at the Club that you would not have anywhere else?" In response to this question, the majority of youth talked about their opportunities to develop and maintain friendships. Even when these youth had participated in activities such as bike trips in Montreal, National Youth Conferences, work experience programs, or other specific BGCC programming, they would still refer to the friendships they had formed with peers and staff members. When these experiences were referenced, it was often in the context of friends made during the experience.

This finding was substantiated in the quantitative surveys where 79% of respondents aged 13 to 18 indicated "some," "quite a bit," or "a lot" for the statement "I have more people in my life who care about me" (see Figure 2). In our quantitative surveys for young people aged 8 to 12 years old, 91% responded "kind of" or "a lot" when asked the same question (see Figure 1). One youth we interviewed commented:

I am so grateful that I have the club to come to because the club helped me getting out of a toxic relationship in which I was drowning and stopped trusting people. I am now able to trust people again, and my anxiety has gone down.

It is clear that gaining meaningful relationships in their lives is one of the biggest impacts that youth are experiencing in our Calgary Clubs.

Figure 1. I have more people in my life who care about me.

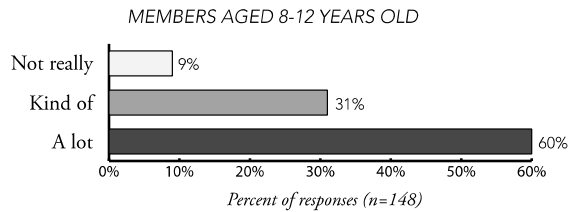
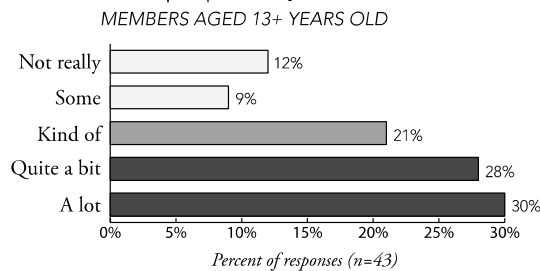


Figure 2. I have more people in my life who care about me.



SIGNIFICANCE

This finding is incredibly significant for us as we have been having serious conversations about the impact of relationships with young people since we began our Club program redesign in 2014. As part of the design process, we asked ourselves hard questions such as:

- We say we are relationship-based – but how do we know if we really are?
- Do our staff already know how to build relationships?
- How do we know when staff are good at relationship building, and how do we supervise it?
- How are we training staff in good relationship building/what is the skill set for relationship building?
- How intentionally are we attending to relationship building in Clubs - Are our activities getting in the way of building relationships?

The quality of relationships with staff significantly affects positive outcomes for children and youth. To ensure that our relationships are intentional and have the capacity to promote positive developmental outcomes, in 2018, we adopted the Developmental Relationships Framework designed by the Search Institute. The Developmental Relationships Framework focuses on five key elements of relationships that contribute to a young person's optimal development: expressing care, challenging growth, providing support, sharing power, and expanding possibilities. “Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people develop the character strengths to discover who they are, gain the ability to shape their own lives, and learn how to interact with and contribute to others” (www.search-institute.org). These character strengths that the Framework promotes are based on the social and emotional competencies outlined by CASEL. Recent studies have shown that developmental relationships contribute 42% to the development of social and emotional competencies in children and

youth. Because developmental relationships are less common for low-income families, we believe it is essential for our staff to work from this framework to build protective factors in disadvantaged children.

We believe relationships are the catalyst to change. To further emphasize this, we released our new agency vision statement in 2019 as "Every child has the relationships they need to grow up well and thrive." This finding confirms that our work in the area of intentional relationship building is working and having a positive impact on young people in our Clubs.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- To date, only about half of our agency staff are trained in the Developmental Relationships framework, so one response would be to continue to train all staff in our five streams of programming. Future training will also include our executive team so that the philosophy is embedded at every level in the organization.
- Developmental Relationships Framework– implement the principles into program planning. For example, does the program promote challenging growth and sharing power with young people? The Search Institute has identified that sharing power has the greatest impact on the development of character strengths in young people, so we could ensure we are addressing this practice in all programming.
- Reviewing program attendance for engagement and if there is a connection to which programs provide more opportunity for relationship building.
- Some of the barriers to relationship building that staff have identified are time and high ratios. It's difficult to find time for one on one interaction when staff are responsible for twelve young people in one program. We need to take advantage of other opportunities such as transition times for more one to one connection with individual children and youth.

Finding 2: Social & Emotional Intelligence – Building Relationship Muscles

Key Insight: Young people recognize that building social and emotional skills is impacting their overall wellbeing and the quality of relationships in their lives.

When youth spoke about the importance of relationships in their lives, they also discussed the importance of developing social and emotional skills. Some examples of what we heard in interviews include:

"Club has helped with social skills. The more people I interact with, the more different people I experience, which helps me know how to associate with different people."

"I am better at communicating with people and making my voice heard."

"Club helped me learn that people can be trusted."

Our interview analysis revealed that youth are able to evaluate friendships that are good or bad for their mental health. One of our youth said, "I like to feel positive all the time and not let the worse get to me, so I choose my friends wisely and stay away from toxic people."

The quantitative data reveals that because of the Club, young people are better able to manage their emotions well, manage conflict with others better, follow through on goals, and get along better with others in their communities and schools.

SIGNIFICANCE

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes of developing social and emotional competencies in children and youth. These competencies enable young people to understand and manage their emotions, set and achieve goals, have empathy for others, build and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. The field of SEL, which evolved from research on prevention and resilience, has demonstrated the benefits of SEL in the areas of school, employment, relationships, and overall life. Risky behaviours such as drug use, violence, aggression, bullying, early sexual activity, and dropping out of high school can be prevented or reduced when young people are provided with effective instruction in developing these competencies.

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), effective SEL programming begins in preschool and continues through high school. Studies have shown that kindergarteners with stronger social and emotional skills are more likely to graduate from high school and college and have stable, full-time employment while being less likely to commit crimes, be on public assistance, have substance use problems, and mental health issues. SEL has also been linked to improved mental health. Although SEL is not a cure for mental illness, it can be a universal mental health promotion strategy that builds protective factors in all children. Other benefits from SEL include enhanced self-efficacy, positive self-image, confidence, empathy, persistence, connection to others, pro-social behaviours, and coping skills.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

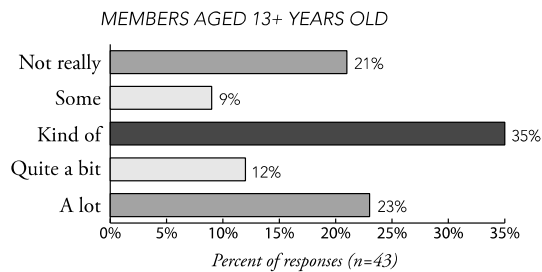
- Continue to teach SEL explicitly in our Clubs using the Second Step curriculum.
- Seek out opportunities for young people to connect with, and possibly volunteer with, seniors in the community, as a means of further developing social skills and empathy.
- Provide opportunities for youth to introduce and bring friends to the Club – this not only broadens impact but allows youth to build and practice healthy relationship skills with friends that they associate with outside of the Club.

Finding 3: Wellbeing...What is That?

Key Insight: Youth do not understand the concept of wellbeing and are not practicing healthy behaviours as much as we believe they are.

Our findings related to wellbeing have generated more questions than answers. In the quantitative survey, when asked about making healthy food choices, 70% of youth 13 and older responded that they make healthier food choices because of their club experience (see Figure 3). From the interviews, the data reveal that youth often mention making healthy choices for themselves socially, by associating with positive peer groups and mentally by "not bottling things up" for example, but findings suggest that they rarely make mention of the other aspects of their health or wellbeing such as nutrition and exercise. Youth interviewed struggled to articulate what health and wellbeing means to them.

Figure 3. Because of Club, I choose to eat food that is healthier.



SIGNIFICANCE

At BGCC we brand ourselves as an agency that provides programming to promote healthy eating and physical literacy, but if the data is not indicating that we are impacting children and youth in this way, do we need to re-look at how wellbeing and healthy choices, across all domains of health, are being modelled and taught to young people? This finding may indicate that while we offer programming intended to promote healthy behaviour and skills for young people, those skills are not being transferred to their lives outside of Club. We may need to be more explicit in teaching youth about choices and behaviour that promote health and wellbeing.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Further explore this with youth in future surveys/interviews.
- Look at family substructure and how we can possibly support the wellness of children through supporting the family. With this though, do we need to consider our scope? Can Clubs do everything?
- Have guest speakers come into Club to teach about wellbeing to make it more engaging.
- Make health promotion more explicit and integrated into all programming (like SEL is operating now).

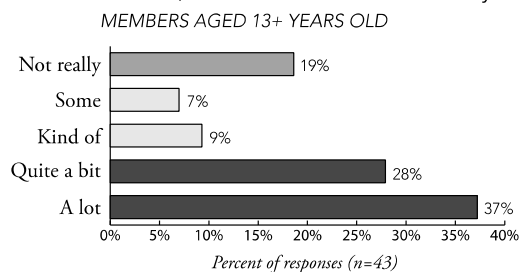
Finding 4: Foggy Futures – How Do We Get Kids to Look Up?

Key Insight: Youth are not necessarily thinking past the present moment and into the future.

In our interviews, youth had difficulty articulating dreams for their futures, specifically in relation to the question, “How do you hope your life is different 5-10 years from now?” When youth articulated thoughts about their future, they tended to be vague and focus on what they would do rather than who they would become. For example, when asked about future goals, a common response was “get a good job” or “go to Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.”

In the quantitative study, however, 74% of youth 13 and older reported feeling more confident about their futures (see Figure 4). The quantitative data tell us that youth are feeling optimistic about their futures, but the qualitative data highlight that we don’t know what they are feeling optimistic about.

Figure 4. Because of Club, I feel more confident about my future.



SIGNIFICANCE

There is power in people being able to think about their future. Thinking optimistically about the future for young people has been linked to better health and wellbeing, school completion, and greater resilience during challenging times. Therefore, it was surprising to discover in our interviews with youth that they had difficulty articulating hopes for their futures. The data tell us that there might be a potential gap in our programming or conversations with youth. If our vision is to see young people grow up well and thrive, then dreaming big and planning about the future is essential. This is worth a closer look by continuing to talk to youth about this topic and exploring whether we are having an impact on their ability to see greater possibilities for their futures.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Find ways to be intentional around encouraging youth to think about their future and who they want to be; helping them see possibilities beyond their current life circumstances, especially if they are from disadvantaged homes.
- Following up on how the question was answered in qualitative vs. quantitative surveys to clarify our understanding of their responses.
- More intentional implementation of the “expand possibilities” principle of the Developmental Relationships Framework in our programming. Expanding possibilities involves three actions in the framework:
 - Broaden horizons—Expose young people to new ideas, experiences, and places.
 - Inspire—Inspire young people to see possibilities for the future.
 - Connect—Introduce young people to people who can help them grow.

Finding 5: Different is beautiful, and This is Me

Key Insight: Young people are learning about, and celebrating, diversity in clubs.

Diversity was a topic that was highlighted during our interviews with youth. In their interviews, many youth expressed feeling accepted, not despite their differences, but because of their differences. This seems to have resulted in greater levels of appreciation for diversity and feelings of acceptance towards alternate perspectives as a whole. One youth interviewed stated, “When you talk to different people and network, that makes you understand the world.”

This feedback in the interviews was confirmed in our quantitative surveys as well. In the survey, 79% of youth aged 13 and older reported that because of Club they feel more comfortable being themselves (see Figure 5). Similarly, the quantitative data supported the idea that youth were more open to those around them. In response to a question about listening to others, 86% of youth aged 13 and older reported growth due to their participation in Club (see Figure 6).

Figure 5. Because of Club, I feel more comfortable being myself.

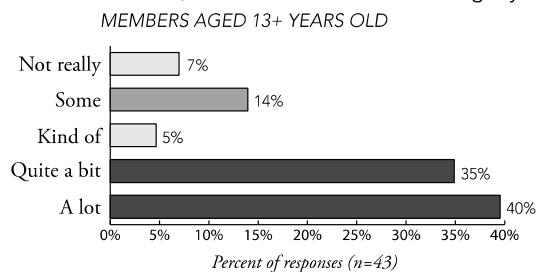
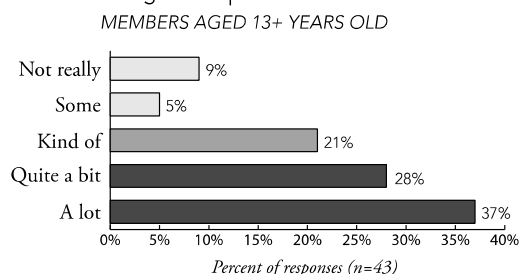


Figure 6. Because of Club, I listen more carefully to the feelings and opinions of others.



SIGNIFICANCE

To us, this indicates that by learning to celebrate diversity, young people are becoming more confident and comfortable in their own skin. With all of the polarization that we are seeing in our world today, it is quite remarkable and inspiring that youth in our Clubs are actually open and receptive towards embracing diverse perspectives. If young people are exposed to environments where they are safe to be themselves, not only is this a huge protective factor in their lives, but it also builds them up to be strong leaders in the future.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Ensure that the diversity of the youth we serve is matched within staff diversity.
- Create space for and encourage respectful debate.
- Continue expanding World Congress programming, where youth work together to create and govern their own countries.
- Look at expanding or bringing back the Roots Program at BYC.
- Take a "census" of where all of our youth come from and educate ourselves about the different cultural practices from those regions/countries. Implement these cultural pieces into programming while providing opportunities for youth to share about their background.

Finding 6: Becoming Naturally – An Implicit Learning Environment

Key Insight: We discovered that the learning environment is implicit, not explicit.

What we saw was a very natural context to the learning environment, one where kids are learning life-long skills without recognizing a syllabus or program frame. Young people could identify some very tangible new competencies (such as leadership, self-awareness, emotional intelligence) and character qualities (confidence, empathy, kindness) without recognizing that they are in a learning environment. It is almost as if once they enter the Club, they begin supernaturally transforming in ways that are wholly natural. This evidence came forward in the interview process, where young people routinely referenced ‘aha moments’ of learning, marking changes in their lives since they entered the club, such as making a friend for the first time or developing an understanding of their own strengths and capabilities through experiential learning opportunities. Evidence of those changes is astonishing.

The quantitative survey shows young people now being more capable of better relationships, conflict resolution, and an appreciation of self. Young people stated over and over again in our interviews that they feel better equipped to navigate their social world as a result of their experiences in Clubs. One youth said:

If you add too much milk to the cake mix, the cake won’t cook properly – same is life I guess – the choices you make for yourself, the people you choose to be friends and have relationships with shapes your future.

SIGNIFICANCE

We have long known Clubs to be different than other out of school contexts where kids achieve badges, or check boxes, or fill in charts to reflect the explicit goals for development for which they are striving. In Clubs, the changes are more implicit and remarkable, less directive but of greater substance.

Undoubtedly a young person could learn how to sink a 3-point shot within a Club, but they will absolutely slam dunk their relationship abilities one day at a time. Upon reflection, these changes in the lives of Club kids will make our neighbourhoods better, as our kids participate in their communities long after they have left us. One young person noted that her Club experience had led her to believe that "I am a big-hearted spirit, and I have a lot to give to this world." Another youth reported that "I used to view myself as isolated. Now I feel I have a benefit to society."

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Create opportunities for older program participants to mentor younger participants on a regular basis.
- Continue to ensure that a wide variety of experiential learning opportunities can abundantly be provided as part of Club programming.
- Connect young people to pertinent resources within their home community and seek out opportunities for collaboration between the Clubs and these other programs.

Finding 7: A Greenhouse for Leaders

Key Insight: We discovered that leaders are being cultivated in our Clubs.

Clubs have often been known as safe places for kids to grow up well and thrive, but we could not have anticipated just how much leadership formation occurs within our clubs. One interviewee said, "When leading others you need to have the confidence to do it right. When following you need to trust your leader will do what is best for the group." Another shared, "To be a leader, you need to be respectful. You can't boss people around and expect them to follow."

In the quantitative survey, 81% of youth 13 and older (see Figure 8), and 83% of 8-12-year-olds (see Figure 7) said that they had become more of a leader because of the Club. In a world that longs for leaders, our Clubs are forming them in advance of them becoming adolescents and long before they can vote.

Figure 7. Because of Club, I feel more like a leader.

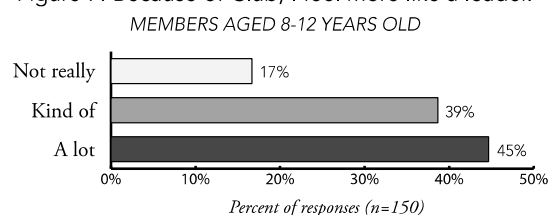
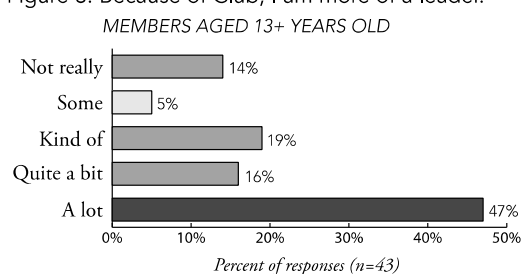


Figure 8. Because of Club, I am more of a leader.



SIGNIFICANCE

Leadership is a highly regarded currency in our society, and we are influencing the functional leaders of the future. Not only are our Clubs places where leaders emerge, but the quality of those leaders are of deep character. The survey data shows they get along a lot better with others, can navigate conflicts with others, manage their emotions, and can listen better. These leaders are forming into strong individuals as well, learning to express and challenge themselves, take on more responsibility, and both believe in and be themselves. Leadership is a very difficult competency to acquire, and even more challenging is the acquisition of character traits that make a leader the type that makes the world better

as they lead. Our club members are growing in both respects, and our world and our clubs will be better for it.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Provide more leadership opportunities in clubs.
- Consider hiring more Club graduates as employees.
- Form a leadership committee that works with the CEO.
- Engaging older youth in more leadership roles.

Conclusion

The qualitative data in each impact area (positive relationships, healthy living, lifelong learning, and leadership skills), largely confirmed that we are achieving our intended impact in the community while revealing some specific areas for improvement. Through their experiences at Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, young people are building positive relationships with staff and peers and have regular opportunities to practice interpersonal skills. They are becoming more confident and comfortable with themselves and are celebrating diversity. Youth are experiencing new things for the first time, developing new skills, and building life-long positive habits and qualities. They are growing into strong and positive leaders.

Youth reported making healthier social-emotional choices, but the data revealed a lack of significant improvement in nutrition and physical activity-related choices due to participation in Club. Interviewees exhibited optimism for the future but struggled to articulate a vision for who they will become, focusing instead on the more tangible details regarding what they will do. These are areas where the Club can grow by examining ways to more intentionally focus on them in programs and staff trainings.

The quantitative data scores in each impact area were consistently higher for the younger members (Group A) than the youth in Group B. This may be partially due to the difference in sample size $n=150$ versus $n=43$. An interesting result is that both Groups tied for their top two impacts – Positive Relationships and Leadership Skills, which could mean that we are consistently delivering services geared towards those outcomes across all age groups. Youth in Group B scored the lowest average for the impact category of Healthy Living, which could be a reflection of the growing influence of peers, social media, and cultural messaging as youth age. The younger members in Group A averaged the lowest score for the impact category of Lifelong Learning, which could reflect the cognitive development of children who grow up in impoverished homes.

Okanagan Boys & Girls Clubs *Clubs*

**Jeremy Welder, Rachelle Bowie, Tammy Wong,
Cheyenne Brooks, Teresa Murray**

Organization and Program Overview

At Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs, we are rooted in our belief that all children and youth can discover and achieve their dreams and grow up to be healthy, successful, and active participants in society. Realizing that vision takes a community of caring people and organizations who genuinely want to make a difference in the lives of children and youth.

That's why at Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs, we focus on providing safe, supportive places where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life. Our Clubs are safe, supportive places for children and youth to play, laugh, discover, and learn. Kids participate in life-changing programs that promote positive outcomes in education, active living, nutrition, and mental health. Our employees and volunteers are caring adults who develop relationships that foster belonging, personal empowerment, achievement, and self-confidence.

You will see our fantastic team of employees and volunteers, working hard to help children and youth navigate through the challenges that they may face in their daily lives. By providing safe places, where kids feel that they belong, we are able to figure out a way; a way to help kids build their confidence, a way to work with kids who have been struggling, a way to work with families who have limited resources, a way to work with youth who think they have run out of options.

We are an organization who believes that we truly are stronger together. We are grounded in the power of collaboration and cooperation to achieve a common purpose. Our community development work is integral to who we are. We believe that strong communities are comprised of people, organizations, and businesses who can work together to make the Okanagan a great place for children and youth to grow up well.

OUR VISION

All children and youth discover and achieve their dreams and grow up to be healthy, successful, and active participants in society.

OUR MISSION

To provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

OUR CORE VALUES

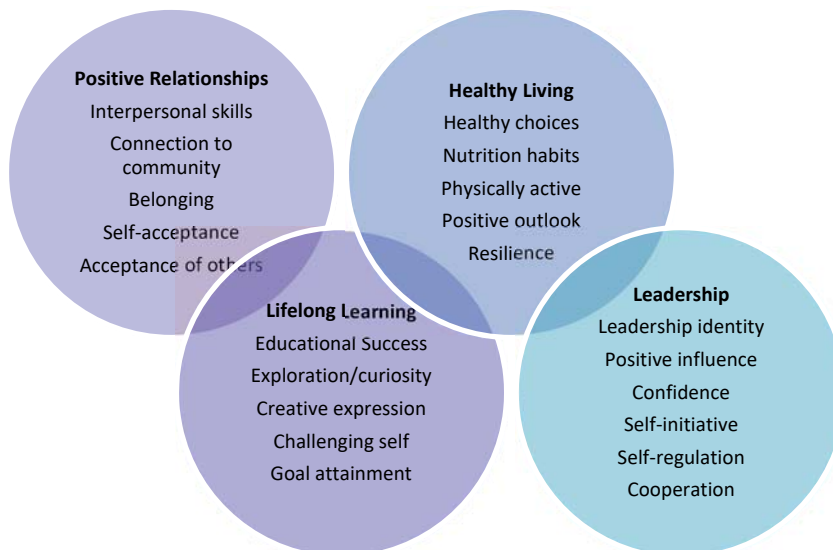
In our work with children, youth, families, and communities, all Boys and Girls Clubs are guided by the following Core Values.

- **Belonging:** We welcome everyone in a safe, accepting environment based on belonging and positive relationships.
- **Respect:** We ensure that everyone – children, youth, families, volunteers, and employees – are heard, respected, valued, and treated fairly.
- **Encouragement and Support:** We encourage and support every child and youth to play, learn, and grow to achieve their dreams.
- **Working Together:** We work together with young people, families, volunteers, our communities, and government.
- **Speaking Out:** We speak out with children, youth, and families so that we can make our world better.

Intended Impact

For this study, we determined four intended impacts to measure, which includes:

- **Positive Relationships:** Young people will have enhanced connection to community, interpersonal skills, sense of belonging, and acceptance of self and others.
- **Healthy Living:** Young people will make healthy choices, including choices about nutrition and physical activity, and have increased positive outlook and resilience.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Young people will experience educational success, develop curiosity and creative expression, and learn how to challenge themselves and achieve goals.
- **Leadership:** Young people will learn how to be leaders and have a positive influence on others, building skills for cooperation, self-regulation, confidence, and taking initiative.



Evaluation Methodology

The aim of our evaluation was to see what kind and quality of impact Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs is having on our participants. To understand this, we explored two broad evaluation questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on our participants?
2. What aspects of Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented a mixed-methods outcome evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified themes and findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for program improvement and innovation.

This project began by identifying and clarifying the intended impact of Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact on the mental, behavioral, and emotional changes in our participants. We used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol and a quantitative questionnaire to evaluate progress toward achieving our intended impact.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample.

The number of program participants was 261. Our sample size was 21, drawn from the following locations within our organization:

- Teen Junction in Vernon
- Raise the Grade program in Rutland
- Downtown Youth Centre Drop-in in Kelowna
- Westside Youth Centre Drop-in in West Kelowna

Our interview team consisted of Rachelle Bowie, Jeremy Welder, Tammy Wong, Teresa Murray, and Cheyenne Brooks. We convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour in length and collected interview data.

We then analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Each interviewer implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data and identifying themes) for each interview. Together, we developed common themes from the entire data corpus identifying the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined the dynamics among the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

Quantitative Data and Analysis

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, we designed a questionnaire to collect data on our quantitative indicators of impact. We administered this instrument to two different groups of young people. We had 199 participants between the ages of 8-12, and 17 participants 13 years or older

complete the survey. The data were analyzed primarily using measures of central tendency. We identified key insights, patterns, and gaps within the data and incorporated these discoveries into the related findings. The most significant insights from the quantitative data are described in the following narrative.

Findings

Finding 1: The Power of Bouncing back

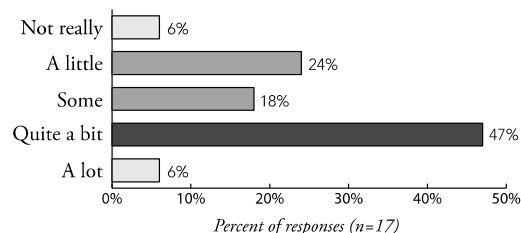
Key Insight: Youth participants build a sense of resiliency through their relationships with others at Club. Through Club, they have been exposed to all walks of life and feel that they can be accepted for who they are.

The qualitative and quantitative data demonstrate that the Club experience has fostered resilience in youth. Youth report that resilience is being developed through experiencing positive relationships with others, becoming more confident through their Club experience, and being accepted by others at Club. The interviewers had initially hypothesized that basic needs and specific life skills would be most instrumental in building resiliency in the youth we serve. The data show that these basic needs and life skills are essential, but the key factor in building resilience appeared through relationships with others. It was through relationships that youth began to see themselves in a different, more positive light. The strength they gained through relationships was then translated to their ability to bounce back from difficulty and hardship.

Although youth did not use the term "resiliency" as the impact of their experience at OBGC, the data show that youth are generally developing a positive outlook on their future, despite having gone through negative experiences. A sense of resiliency was also fostered through learning to accept themselves for who they are and by recognizing and celebrating that every individual has their own life journey. Club members identified that they feel welcome and supported to be themselves in Club while noting that employees offer emotional support and assist them through tough times.

Our survey data show that 53% of youth 13 and older answered "quite a bit" or "a lot" to the statement, "Because of Club, I can bounce back better after going through a hard time" (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Because of Club, I can bounce back better after going through a hard time.
MEMBERS AGED 13+ YEARS OLD



One Club member shared during her interview that through guidance from employees, she, fortunately, "did not hit rock bottom but was close enough to know [she] needed to change." She is also hopeful to

"improve her addiction" and now realizes how much potential she has. When one youth was asked how his perspective on the next 5-10 years has changed as a result of his time at Club, he said, "Well, I think I will be alive for it now."

SIGNIFICANCE

It is evident that building positive relationships with other youth and employees has supported youth in getting through tough times and having more hope for the future. Furthermore, youth participants are developing resiliency through their Club experience without taking part in programming or teachings from employees focused directly on this topic. It is reassuring and encouraging that as an organization, we are still making an impact on youth regardless of what adverse childhood experiences they may be facing in their personal lives. It was also reassuring to discover that youth did not mention negative peer influences but rather are learning from each other's experiences and feel safe to share their stories.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Develop and integrate training specifically to support youth with self-confidence, acceptance, and relationships to further the effects of building resiliency.
- Invite current and past participants to share their experiences if they are comfortable doing so.
- Continue to work on fostering resiliency through promoting basic needs, life skills, and knowledge with youth participants.

Finding 2: The Unknown Leader Within

Key Insight: Many youth see themselves as leaders, but struggle to define their leadership skills or attribute the development of those skills to their participation in Club.

Many of the youth we interviewed reported they had not developed leadership skills while at Club. Some youth reported they do not define themselves as leaders, while others stated that although they define themselves as leaders, they learned their leadership skills from sports and other activities outside of Club. Examples of statements we heard include:

"I don't really think I was leading; I am more of a lone wolf."

"Personally, I haven't [developed leadership skills]."

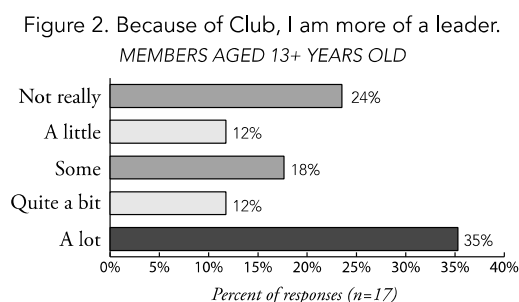
"I am not a natural leader."

Although youth struggled to define their own leadership skills, interviewers noted many demonstrations of youth being leaders throughout the conversations. However, many of these examples were found when youth were not asked directly about being a leader. For example, when asked "What leadership skills have you picked up at Club?" a youth replied she had not picked up any skills then continued to state "I can now take charge at work, I try to be supportive to [other] youth and try to steer them in the right direction." Although this youth did not consider herself to have leadership skills, she was able to list multiple actions she had completed that are attributes of a leader.

Many other youth similarly reported having characteristics of a leader, including standing up for their friends, helping others, protecting other youth, or role modeling safe behaviors and lifestyles. These

characteristics were discovered through questions about healthy living and positive relationships rather than questions about leadership skills.

Contrasting the qualitative data above, the quantitative data demonstrated a high percentage of youth reporting that they are leaders. When asked the survey question, “Because of Club, I am more of a leader,” 35% of youth 13 and older reported “a lot” (see Figure 2). Overall, the survey showed a much higher level of leadership identity than found in the interviews.



SIGNIFICANCE

The findings show that youth are more willing to identify themselves as leaders when not asked in person and are able to share leadership qualities about themselves when not asked directly about their leadership skills.

In future programming, more attention can be drawn to help youth determine who they define as leaders in their lives, and what particular skills these people have that makes them a leader. Having the youth define what being a leader means to them can help to link the above examples of standing up for each other and role modeling safe behaviour to their own abilities as a leader.

Once these leadership skills are established by the youth, they will then be able to assess what qualities they share with these individuals who they classify as leaders. Youth can look at their strengths, as well as figure out which skills they still need to establish further. OBGC can create individualized programs to help youth build the particular leadership skills they lack, rather than creating leadership programs around how staff define the characteristics of a leader.

If the above approach is taken, youth may be more willing to identify themselves as a leader both in person as well as on a survey, as they will be able to clearly list the leadership skills they have recently developed.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Develop a program that defines and teaches youth what leadership skills are, and how they are able to develop these skills inside and outside of Club.
- Through existing programs, find out who youth identify as leaders in various aspects of life, and determine why the youth define these people as leaders (i.e., society, social media, peers, Club employees).

- Relook at current practices of leadership programs. Creating more diverse programs to meet youth where they are at and develop programs from there. Look at individual interests (i.e., sports – coaching experiences). Current practices for leadership focus on Youth Counsel.
- Create programs to teach youth how to advocate for themselves and each other in positive ways (i.e., speaking up for each other rather than involving fists).

Finding 3: Best Version of Me

Key insight: The goal of OBCG youth is to feel good about who they are and the life they are living.

We discovered that youth are striving to make good choices in terms of what they put in their bodies. They are thinking about the food they are eating and the substances they are ingesting, and how they are spending their time. They are thinking about what activities they are choosing and with whom they are spending time.

The youth discussed a wide variety of topics in the interviews that encompassed healthy living, such as mental health, relationships, school success, cooking meals, physical activity, abstinence from alcohol and other substance use. This was connected to references of strategies and skills they had learned at Club, which allowed them to make good choices when faced with peer pressure, hard times, and anger.

Nutrition was less recognized than we expected, which was surprising since that is an organizational focus for OBGC. Youth did not make the connection that having access to healthy foods and being exposed to education around this topic has an impact on healthy living. We did, however, observe evidence of this behavior as youth were eating fruits and vegetables and preparing healthy meals in the Clubs. One youth told us, "I learned how to bake and how to bake other things, like when we don't have other ingredients. I didn't know you could use apple sauce as a substitute for other things".

The survey results confirmed our findings above. When asked, "Because of Club, I make better choices for myself," 41% of youth 13 and older answered "quite a bit" or "a lot." Similar evidence of this was found when youth responded to the statement "Because of Club, I am more active," with 35% of youth 13 and older responding "quite a bit" or "a lot."

Relationships with staff were identified as a source of encouragement for being healthy. One interviewee shared, "They will support my change. Staff introduced me to my counselor, which has been a good change. I have quit smoking eight times since I've been here. I realized that my drinking is unhealthy, but also how I deal with my emotions."

SIGNIFICANCE

By continuing to provide opportunities for youth in a Club setting, we can increase their healthy choices. The more positive choices available, the more youth see themselves as healthy and continue to make these choices outside of Club. One youth shared about wanting to stay clean, saying, "I didn't expect to live to 20. I want to be clean and improve my mental health." These opportunities are limitless when we utilize employees, programming, and facility resources to provide healthy experiences and skill-building activities.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Continue partnerships with Canadian Tire Jumpstart and Elevation Outdoor for active living options.
- Continue strong relationships with MCFD, RCMP, and Mental Health workers to help youth make choices for a healthy, happy life.

Finding 4: Knowing Me

Key Insight: Youth have a strong sense of self, including managing emotions and understanding their strengths and weaknesses.

Youth reported understanding their individual strengths as well as an understanding of their weaknesses and deficits. They further reported having better self-control, and that helping others increased their sense of self. Youth are also aware of where to invest their emotions.

The quantitative data collected through the surveys show that youth report being more comfortable being themselves. In the survey for youth 13 and older, 59% of youth responded either “quite a bit” or “a lot” when asked if they feel more comfortable being themselves as a result of Club (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Because of Club, I feel more comfortable being myself.

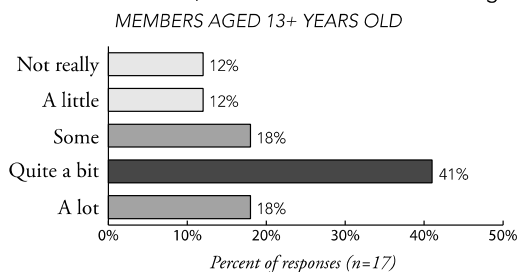
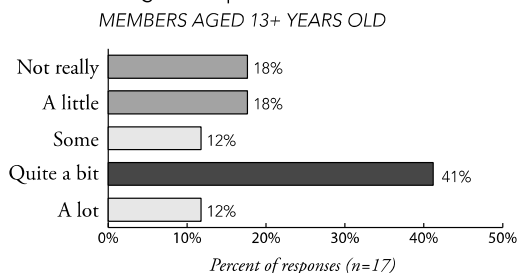


Figure 4. Because of Club, I listen more carefully to the feelings and opinions of others.



The survey results also show that youth are more concerned about the feelings of their peers. Fifty-three percent of youth 13 and older responded either “quite a bit” or “a lot” when asked if they listen more carefully to the feelings and opinions of others (see Figure 4).

SIGNIFICANCE

This finding is very encouraging as it shows that youth are gaining skills to better understand themselves as well as becoming comfortable with who they are. This shows that the work that we are doing in our programs is giving youth confidence in themselves.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Develop programming to ensure self-discovery.
- Broaden diversity training with staff.

Finding 5: Chosen Family

Key insight: Youth participants form close bonds with other people at Club, such as other youth and employees, offering them a sense of family.

In interviews, youth talked about experiencing positive relationships with others at Club, such as staff and other youth participants. Notably, youth were unable to elaborate on how Club has impacted their relationships with their own families. Instead, Club members view the Club as a sense of home and think of others at Club as their family.

A large number of youth interviewed mentioned that they were introduced to the Club through their friends. They acknowledge that they continue to access services as it is a “hang out place” for youth to come together with their friends and trusted adults. Youth have identified giving and receiving guidance from their peers and employees.

Youth feel as though they belong and have permission to be themselves, as they feel that differences are welcomed and supported. One youth even stated in discussion about his peers that “we take care of each other here.” Quantitative data supports this finding, as the majority (59%) of participants 13 and older who responded agreed that they have more people in their lives that care about them because of Club.

The Club also mimics a family structure for some youth. The older youth often act as role models for the younger ones. In their interviews, multiple youth mentioned that they speak up and correct other youth when they are doing something they should not be doing. Youth are also exposed to programming and opportunities that they said they would not otherwise have had the chance to take part in.

SIGNIFICANCE

As an organization, we have been making the shift towards a natural supports framework in which we empower a youth’s natural support system rather than assuming professional support is the best support. Our findings do not challenge this notion. However, they do show that youth sometimes turn to the Club over their families. Based on these findings, it would be beneficial to include youth’s families and other natural supports as much as possible. Rather than battling the ‘chosen family’ at Club with the youth’s natural family, it would be beneficial to find more opportunities for the two families to spend time together and support one another. Also, despite changes in employees, it is reassuring to know that youth still feel connected to the organization and the Club as a whole. They understand that they can access Club to meet needs that may not be met in their family home.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- In our current programming, help youth find more ways to take control of their lives to help them continue building confidence.
- Create programs that teach youth competence. Helping them gain confidence by doing things on their own but sharing the expectations with them.

- Create programs to teach youth how to advocate for themselves and each other in positive ways.

Finding 6: Free to Be Me

Key Insight: An increase in confidence plays an impactful role in the development of other positive outcomes in youths' lives.

The qualitative data shows various youth reporting a higher level of confidence due to being at Club. We heard statements such as:

"I love myself more, and I can be more confident."

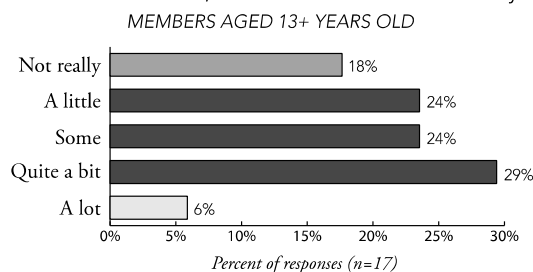
"Now I have grown to love who I am."

"I am a lot more confident in my ability to do things."

These are proof of growth in self-love and confidence. Youth reported that viewing themselves in a more positive light has helped them "become more motivated now." Youth claim that having motivation has resulted in many of them reaching their healthy living and lifestyle goals. Youth reported they had quit drinking/doing drugs, they got jobs, they found safe places to live, and they learned to cook, all due to becoming more motivated by self-confidence.

These newly formed habits link to the quantitative data which shows only 18% of youth 13 and older stated they did not feel more confident about their futures, while the rest of youth showed at least "a little" growth (see Figure 5). Although not many youth reported "a lot" to this question, even a small amount of confidence for the future can lead up to a much larger success for youth. For example, one youth stated in his interview, "Before coming to Club, I didn't think I would make it to twenty." He is now 22. This quote shows that even a small development of confidence has created incredible outcomes in other parts of life, including life itself.

Figure 5. Because of Club, I feel more confident about my future.



Interviewers also noted the youth had gained new personality traits due to an increase in confidence. Traits include becoming more outgoing, independent, willing to try new things, willing to speak up and support others, and having a better work ethic. When asked in the quantitative study, "Because of Club I believe in myself and my abilities more," 59% of youth 13 and older reported "quite a bit" or "a lot."

SIGNIFICANCE

The focus OBGC puts on building confidence in youth is apparent and helps youth become more successful in other aspects of life. Confidence has helped youth become more motivated and develop a variety of personality traits that will help them achieve their goals. The development of confidence in youth resulted in small and large outcomes for youth's lives.

Overall, the large number of youth who felt more comfortable and confident with themselves because of Club was surprising. Although OBGC strives to build confidence and skills for life, having youth identify being more confident can sometimes be difficult. Interviewers did take into consideration that some youth may have reported higher self-confidence as a safety net from their peers. Interviewers wonder if youth are used to putting shields up to push people away in order to keep themselves safe.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- In our current programming, help youth find more ways to take control of their lives to help them continue building confidence.
- Create programs that teach youth competence. Helping them gain confidence by doing things on their own but sharing the expectations with them.
- Create programs to teach youth how to advocate for themselves and each other in positive ways.

Finding 7: Sense of Belonging

Key Insight: We show up with our flaws and messy lives!

When asked to describe their Club experience, we heard phrases from youth such as "being with family," "permission to be myself," "nobody judges me," and a "safe place." Youth can be their "real" self at Club, with both employees and other Club members. As noted in Finding 4, 59% of surveyed youth 13 and older answered that because of Club, they feel more comfortable being themselves.

One youth explained that she learned about acceptance of others, their situations, and where people can end up, saying, "It's nice to have this place. I see people talk bad about people who use places like this, but I realized we are just all human." Club peer relationships are important when fostering a sense of belonging. Another youth explained that:

I have a lot more friends than before coming here. I'm good at helping people and listening to the little things. I respect myself a lot more, and I value myself. I am wanted here, not just needed.

A Club experience and positive relationships have created a sense of belonging for many youth searching for a safe place to be their authentic selves.

SIGNIFICANCE

Research demonstrates that youth attend Club programs and services frequently and often for long periods of time, several times a week, over many weeks and sometimes for years. Many youth have grown up inside Club walls and have built long term relationships. When one youth we interviewed was

asked about how long he attended Club and his favorite part, he said, “I have been coming since grade 8, so 5-6 years. My favorite part is that you can be yourself, whoever you want to be. It’s a safe place.”

There is a strong link between feeling a sense of belonging, building positive relationships with employees, and long-term, meaningful friendships with youth. A sense of belonging doesn't just happen; it's something we need to create by how our employees treat members and the culture and expectations in Club environments. Employees' positive interactions and ability to listen and give advice contribute to a youth's sense of belonging. One youth explains, "I always feel welcome and supported here. I can always talk to the staff. I feel better about myself because staff are welcoming, here for us and I can always tell them what's going on."

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Continue to offer training to employees on the Model for Success. The Model for Success focuses on common features of Club, specifically relationship building and respect, and inclusive environments.
- Provide opportunities for employees to build relationships within a program setting or activity.
- Build an awareness that youth describe a sense of belonging without the use of the term "belonging." As an organization, we can ask youth to participate in defining what sense of belonging means to them and what do they need to feel a sense of belonging.

Finding 8: U before I

Key insight: Youth have immense compassion and empathy for their peers.

Respondents reported incidents of helping their peers both in and out of Club. One youth told a story of supporting a friend in another community that was dealing with family issues and spoke to how they have been providing support by phone to this friend. In the survey that was deployed to youth 13 and older, 59% of respondents answered, “quite a bit” or “a lot” to the question “Because of Club, I have more people in my life who care about me” (see Figure 6). Similarly, 53% of respondents 13 and older selected the same answers to the question “Because of Club, I have a more positive influence on others” (see Figure 7).

Figure 6. Because of Club, I have more people in my life who care about me.

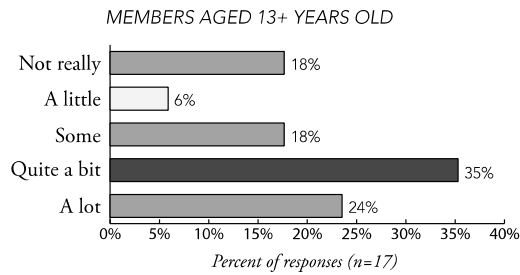
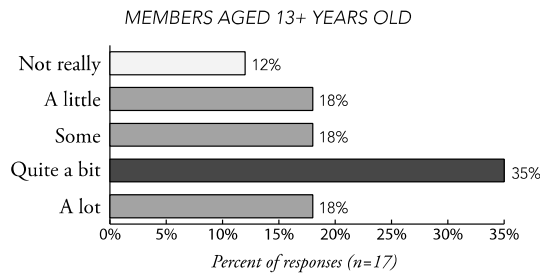


Figure 7. Because of Club, I have a more positive influence on others.



This data further illustrates that youth feel cared for by and influential toward their peers. Youth talked about having better self-control and an awareness of where to invest their emotions. They reported that helping others increased their sense of self.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is an incredibly encouraging result as our programs put such significant energy on building empathy and compassion in our youth. These results show that our work is helping our youth build empathy skills toward their peers and not pass judgement on others regardless of the circumstances that they may be dealing with in their lives. The data collected also shows the importance of peer relationships and that the opportunities that they get to interact with their peers in our programs are extremely important.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Connect the youth with and help them gain exposure to others that “help” them in the community.
- More community volunteer opportunities (i.e., senior homes); find areas, place of interest.
- Random acts of kindness.

Conclusion

The pilot project impact team is going to meet to look at the different findings and review the report. We will then be able to draw conclusions, create steps forward, and discuss future opportunities.

Boys & Girls Clubs of South Coast BC *Clubs*

Jason Lee, Letah Addison, Natalie Lutz, Lee McIsaac

Organization and Program Overview

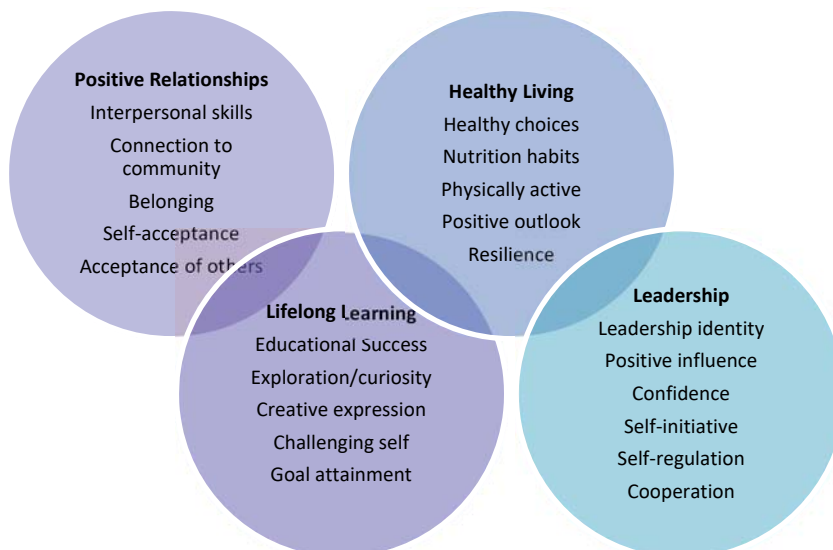
Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC (BGC) has been giving kids a place to belong in their neighbourhoods across the Lower Mainland since 1936. We're now serving well over 10,000 children, youth, and families through our Clubs, Camp Potlatch, Counselling, and Employment programs.

Through our Clubs and Camp, we're providing nearly 6,000 children and youth a place to be when they aren't at home or at school, that helps them develop relationship skills, healthy living behaviours, leadership skills, and to finish school.

Intended Impact

For this study, we determined four intended impacts to measure, which includes:

- **Positive Relationships:** Young people will have enhanced connection to community, interpersonal skills, sense of belonging, and acceptance of self and others.
- **Healthy Living:** Young people will make healthy choices, including choices about nutrition and physical activity, and have increased positive outlook and resilience.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Young people will experience educational success, develop curiosity and creative expression, and learn how to challenge themselves and achieve goals.
- **Leadership:** Young people will learn how to be leaders and have a positive influence on others, building skills for cooperation, self-regulation, confidence, and taking initiative.



Evaluation Methodology

We know that BGC is impacting the lives of thousands of young people. This project is designed to develop our ability to evaluate the impact we are having in the lives of our Club Members (participants). To understand this, we explored two broad evaluation questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on our participants?
2. What aspects of our program are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented a mixed-methods outcome evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified themes and findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for program improvement and innovation.

This project began by identifying and clarifying the intended impact of BGC. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact on the mental, behavioral, and emotional changes in our Club Members. We used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol and a quantitative questionnaire to evaluate progress toward achieving our intended impact.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from our program. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population we serve. The number of program participants was approximately 3,060. Our sample size was 24, drawn from the following strata of our population:

- Length of time as a Club Member
- Age
- Club location

Our interview team consisted of our three Club Managers. We convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour in length and collected interview data.

We then analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Each interviewer implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying themes) for each interview. Together, we developed common themes from the entire data corpus identifying the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined the dynamics among the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

Quantitative Data and Analysis

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, we designed a questionnaire to collect data on our quantitative indicators of impact. We had 247 participants between the ages of 8-12 complete the survey, and 48 participants 13 years or older complete the survey. The data were analyzed primarily using measures of central tendency. We identified key insights, patterns, and gaps within the data and incorporated these discoveries into the related findings. The most significant insights from the quantitative data are described in the following narrative.

Findings

Finding #1 – No More Generation Gap

KEY INSIGHT: The positive and supportive adult relationships that Club Members experience with BGC staff grow the strength of the other adult relationships they have in their lives and in turn, widens their support network to help them thrive.

During qualitative interviews, children and youth consistently identified that the staff is their favourite part of the Club. The data reveal that the adult staff in our clubs have a tremendous impact on the lives of kids. They act as role models and mentors. Through these relationships, kids come to believe that they matter and are important. A common theme in the interviews was that these relationships helped guide decision making, learning, and personal growth in children and youth.

Interviewees shared that staff are a source of inspiration and encouragement. One 14-year-old said, “One time, I felt really sad. I came to the Club and talked to the staff, and I felt safe. I knew that I had other people in my life who cared about me.” Our quantitative data reveal that 85% of children 8-12 years old and 87.5 % of youth 13 and older identify more people in their lives that care about them since coming to Club (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. I have more people in my life who care about me.

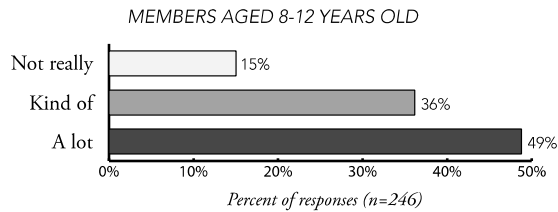
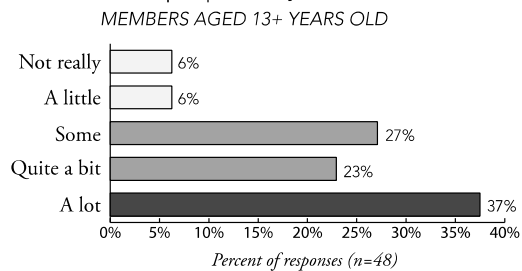


Figure 2. I have more people in my life who care about me.



Club Members come to trust the staff at the Club and seek their support in times of need. In addition, the evaluation shows that with the support of positive adults at the Club, kids have a more positive relationship with their families, and more specifically, their guardians.

SIGNIFICANCE

The staff at our Club hold a unique position in the lives of our Club Members. They are not a parent/guardian, nor are they an educator in the school system. They are another positive adult role model that the Club Members learn to trust. Research from the field indicates that the more adults a child can identify who care about them, the more likely they are to thrive. Our findings definitely support this research. Almost all of our Club Members identified Club staff who care about them. And almost all report a positive impact of these relationships on their lives.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

BGC has always believed that relationships are core to our work. We need to look at enhancing our ability to recruit, retain, and train young adults who can be positive mentors to our Club Members. This could include:

- Enhance staff training to include more in-depth pieces on the role and impact of positive role-modeling and mentoring.
- Increase the diversity in our staff team so that our staff always reflect the children and youth they serve.
- Explore adding more staff members to Club to increase the number of adults our Club Members can connect with and provide more opportunities for one-to-one interaction.

Finding #2 - Face to Face: Positive Peer Relationships

KEY INSIGHT: Exposing kids to a diverse group of peers expands their social circle and enables them to make new friends.

The data from interviews and surveys reveal that the Club enables its Members to expand their friendship circles. The Club exposes children and youth to a diverse population and brings together people of all ages and from all backgrounds in an environment that lets everyone be who they are. This exposure gives children an opportunity to learn about those who are different than themselves. It helps them expand their understanding, empathy, and compassion for people. The data also reveal that children are learning appropriate interpersonal skills at the Club, and so they are better able to get along with others. For example, one 16-year-old said, "I make less enemies; I make better friends."

At the Club, children and youth are able to practice putting themselves out there to others and making friends with those they normally wouldn't have socialized with. The data tells us that kids have the opportunity to learn from their peers and value the experience of meeting new people. Members develop specific skills that help them interact with each other in a more positive way – listening to others, getting along better with others, and working through conflicts. One 13-year-old said, "My friend group has changed since I've been at the Club, and so has the way I see people. I'm open to people now, and it's really cool."

Our interviews also revealed that kids feel accepted for who they are while at the Club. Children and youth do not feel judged and are able to be themselves in ways that they are not able to outside of the Club. They have identified the Club as a safe space, where they have learned empathy and compassion for others.

SIGNIFICANCE

In an online world driven by social media and the internet, we are giving kids the chance to interact with others and practice their interpersonal skills. Kids are feeling more connected with each other and are increasing the strength and diversity of their social networks. Our Club members are less lonely and are able to build positive relationships with peers.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Programs are structured to create opportunities for diverse Club Members to connect with others. Specific programs have been implemented at each Club, such as a "buddy" system for new Club Members, peer mentoring programs, and Welcome Committees. We can explore how to implement these programs at every Club and also strengthen these and other activities through the training and integration of a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework in the Clubs.

Finding #3 – Living Life: Club Members are active participants in their own lives.

KEY INSIGHT: Club Members are recognizing and understanding their journey and have become more engaged in their everyday lives.

The data reveal that through experiences at the Club, Members are taking more control and ownership over their lives and are becoming active participants in the here and now. They understand that they have decision-making capabilities and responsibilities in their lives presently, and this sense of agency and self-authoring sets them up for the future. Even at a young age, kids are identifying what it is they are getting from the Club, and what they need from the Club to pursue the kind of life they want.

Members are making decisions about their current lives and bringing their own decision-making power to the forefront. These decisions might be about what food they are eating or what program they will participate in. But they are also about what kind of friends they want to hang around with and what behaviours they want to exhibit. Our quantitative data reveal that 85% of kids ages 8-12, and 81% of teens are making better choices for themselves now, due to their participation at the Club (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Because of Club, I make better choices for myself.

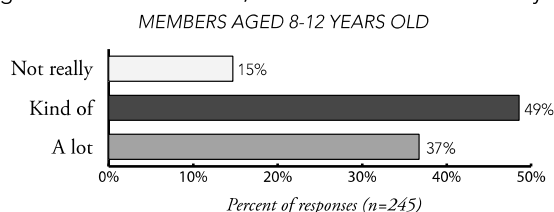
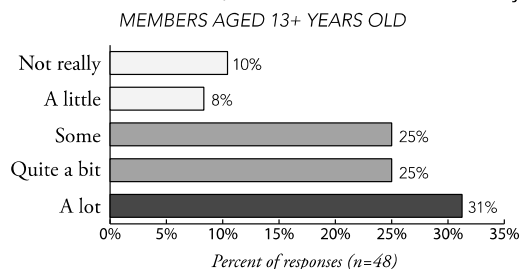


Figure 4. Because of Club, I make better choices for myself.



SIGNIFICANCE

Due to the healthy decision-making skills that our Club Members are learning at the Club, they have increased confidence in themselves and a growing belief that they are capable individuals. They also believe that they have purpose and the ability to contribute something meaningful to others. As a result, they view themselves as valuable members of their family, Club, and greater community.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Whether being able to choose programs they are in or working with kids to understand the consequences of actions, fostering decision-making is a key part of BGC programs and the way in which staff work with Club Members. This way of working with kids could be solidified further through increased staff training focused on engagement and incorporating more decision-making into Club

activities. Staff could also develop new programs that expose Club Members to a wider range of experiences to try in order to strengthen their decision-making.

Finding #4 - Inside Out: Active living leads to personal growth.

KEY INSIGHT: Healthy lifestyle choices offered in the Clubs resulted in Club Members having an awareness of, and taking actions towards, healthier choices in their personal lives.

Healthy eating and physical activities are a common thread in our programs. Through the interviews and surveys, we discovered children and youth are making healthier choices not just in nutrition and physical activities, but also growing their confidence, shedding their insecurities, and setting goals for themselves.

For example, one 12-year-old said, "I am more physically active now, not like a sloth anymore. I am happy mentally because being active, I have new friends." Another 12-year-old said, "I get exposed to new things like sports I had no interest in but now I know I can enjoy them if I just try. I get others to try new things now because I understand what blocked me." One 15-year-old said, "Being healthy gives me a positive idea about the future me."

Our quantitative survey showed that 89% of 8-12-year-old children and 77% of teens said they were more active because of Club (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5. Because of Club, I am more active.

MEMBERS AGED 8-12 YEARS OLD

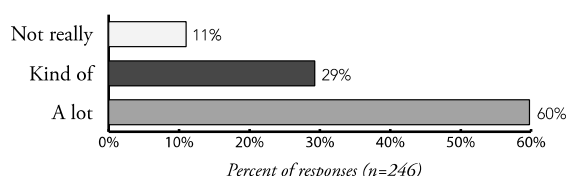
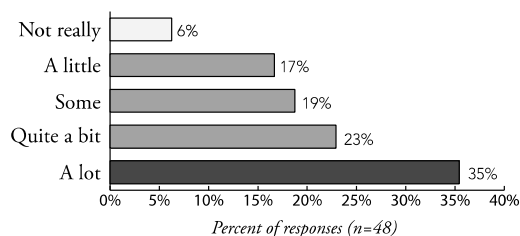


Figure 6. Because of Club, I am more active.

MEMBERS AGED 13+ YEARS OLD



In an interview, one young person said, "I used to lay in bed on weekends, but now I get up and am ready to go, I do more stuff when I feel healthy." Club Members also reported being more conscious about what they put into their bodies as a result of Club. Sixty-nine percent of 8 to 12-year-old children and 72% of teens answered they eat healthier since joining Club. These positive choices, and feeling

better about oneself because of the positive choices, lead them to make more positive choices for their lives.

SIGNIFICANCE

As a result of being more active and eating healthier at the Club, children and youth are feeling better about themselves. This is strengthening their desire to try more positive activities and make more healthy choices. We are seeing more positive momentum in their lives as a result of their time at the Club.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Knowing that the promotion of healthy options in the Club has an impact beyond physical health, we can explore expanding programs such as Dunk for Diabetes and hosting external groups and speakers in our clubs to further emphasize healthy choices.

Finding #5 – Stepping Out: Opportunities to try new things and learn from new experiences.

KEY INSIGHT: Being exposed to new things and activities at the Clubs, in a supportive and multi-age environment, inspires Club Members to try new things and learn from new experiences.

In our interviews, many children and youth spoke about things they had learned at the Club that were new and that they had not been previously exposed to. They also spoke about the role of the Club experience in guiding them to try new activities. Some expressed the significant role that watching older kids had on their interest in exploring and learning new skills for themselves. They attribute this progress to the modeling of others, peer and staff efforts to include them in activities, having a large variety of choices, and feeling safe. This improved their willingness to step out of their comfort zone and pursue new and positive experiences.

Gaining the interest and courage for pushing oneself into new skills was a significant benefit of the Club experience. One said, “Being around so many different children of differing ages allows me to learn by watching. You just don't get that by just being stuck with your own age. I get to learn this way.” Another said,

I am now interested in baseball, I used to think it was silly, but now it's my favourite thing to do. I talk a lot about baseball and encourage others to try it, especially those who were scared like me.

The people at the Club and the environment provided by the Club have a significant impact on the willingness of children and youth to step out and try new activities. From our survey data, 89% of respondents 8-12-years old and 83% of those 13 and older report that they try new things more because of the Club (see Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7. Because of Club, I like trying new things more.

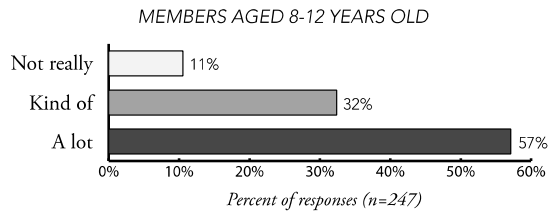
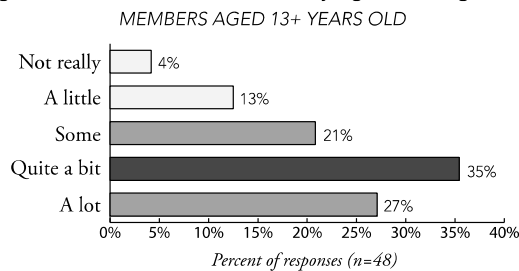


Figure 8. Because of Club, I like trying new things more.



In our interviews, most children and youth identified that when they were exposed to new experiences and challenges through the Club that were appropriate to their developmental stage, their confidence increased. The data reveal that when staff created and implemented new programs and opportunities for Club Members, and encouraged them to try these, it inspired them to embrace new learning. In almost every interview, interviewees talked about the encouragement they received from staff to stretch themselves and grow. One of the key insights from the data is that when confidence was initiated through achieving success in new experiences, it increased the likelihood that children and youth would engage more frequently in learning experiences, building on and amplifying their confidence. Once they experienced a growth in confidence, they reported that they would extend themselves to try new things on their own. One said, "I am less shy now and more talkative, and I have way more friends." Another 12-year-old said, "I get to do everything I want at the Club, and I feel more confident to do things outside the Club."

SIGNIFICANCE

It is not just providing opportunities to experience new activities that encourage our Club Members to explore; it is also the environment in which it is done. Mixing ages and experience levels of children and youth provides opportunities for mentorship and peer learning. While we often concentrate on ages and stages as a guide to our programming, it is important not to overlook the benefits of mixed-age programming and its potential for positive impacts.

In addition, as we have previously recognized in Finding #1, the staff at our Club hold unique positions in the lives of our Club Members as they are not a parent or guardian, nor are they an educator in the school system. They are another positive adult role model that the Club Members learn to trust. Research indicates that when a child can identify more adults who care about them, they are more likely

to thrive. Our findings definitely support this research, and almost all of our Club Members identified Club staff who care about them.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

We can explore more opportunities across the Clubs for peer mentoring, as well as having the Club Members themselves have greater roles in the promotion and planning of activities for their peers. In addition to providing more opportunities for staff to share innovative program activities with one another, staff training could be reviewed to emphasize more on techniques for building self-esteem and confidence with the program activities.

Finding #6 - Discovery of Self: Understanding who they are.

KEY INSIGHT: As Club Members learned more about who they are, they experienced a sense of belonging and comfort in their own skin which leads to improved interactions with others.

In our interviews, we discovered that Club Members feel that the Club has supported them in knowing and recognizing their own self-worth by providing a safe place of belonging. The data reveal that children and youth, even at a young age, are starting to discover themselves. This discovery happens through a wide range of interactions, not just one. Self-discovery occurs through seeing strengths and weaknesses, experiencing a sense of belonging, seeing positive role modelling, and receiving confirmation of self-worth. These are being revealed through the interviews as coming from the Club experience. Our questionnaire shows that 86% of children aged 8-12 years, and 88% of teens feel more comfortable being themselves because of the Club (see Figures 9 and 10).

Figure 9. Because of Club, I feel more comfortable being myself.

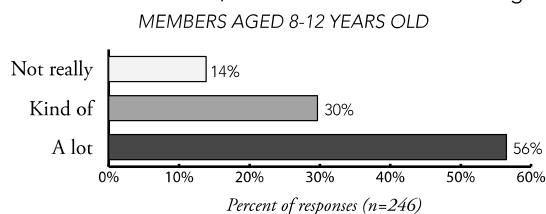
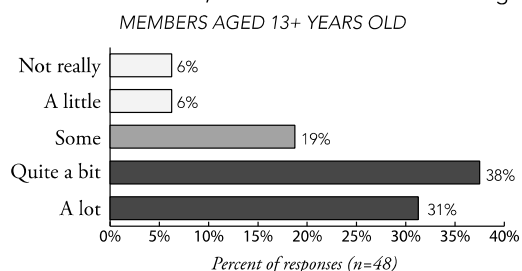


Figure 10. Because of Club, I feel more comfortable being myself.



Our interviews yielded many comments illustrating this finding. One 13-year-old said, “I can be myself in a safe environment.” Another 13-year-old said:

The Club has changed my perspective on things. When I was in grade three, I thought everything will always be this way, and I will always feel this way. But it does change. My mind changed. Because of the Club, I can do anything now, like playing hockey. I am more patient with my friends, and I am a good sharer.

One 15-year-old interviewee spoke about the ways Club had changed her relationship. She said that it helped her to be “speaking [my] mind and being true to [myself]. Following my heart and not following others is what’s right.”

SIGNIFICANCE

Given the current shift of popular youth culture to online interactions, the Club gives kids the chance to interact face-to-face and meaningfully with others in a way that is true to themselves. It affords them the opportunity to practice their interpersonal skills. Kids are feeling more connected with each other in an authentic way and are increasing their face-to-face social and interpersonal skills.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

The discovery of self is a life-long process. We can explore ways in which this connection to our Club Members can be maintained and strengthened as they age into the late teen years across all our sites.

Finding #7 - Future Me: Creating confidence in where they are going.

KEY INSIGHT: Being part of the Club creates a sense of possibility for what young people can do and who they can be.

The data reveal that the Club experience helped Members have a vision and expectation for positive possibilities for themselves in the future. As we discovered from an earlier finding, most interviewees talked about the new things that they tried and how that changed them. An additional implication of this insight is increased confidence about the future. For example, one youth interviewee said that he used to be “awkward,” but through the Club, he had the opportunity to visit a different province, learn the skills of public speaking, and spend time volunteering. For him, this created the opportunity to identify future goals and desires, such as doing more to help others, engaging with others more to develop new friendships, and wanting to help younger kids more.

A common theme from all the interviews was a desire to do more and grow. Some respondents reported developing career goals, such as having an engineering career as a result of being exposed to science experiments in the Club. From the survey data, 83% of respondents from both age groups said that they feel more confident about their future because of the Club (see Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11. Because of Club, I feel more confident that good things are going to happen to me.

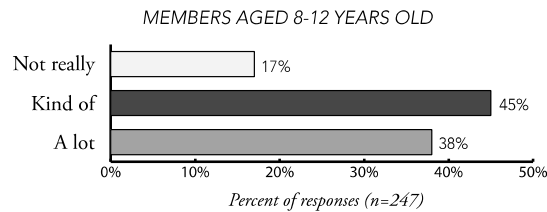
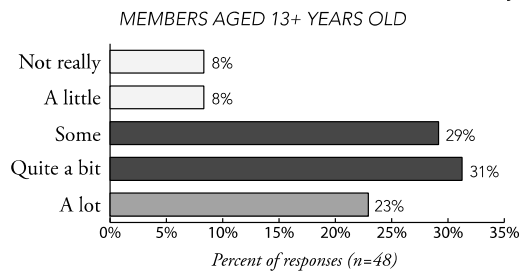


Figure 12. Because of Club, I feel more confident about my future.



SIGNIFICANCE

Through Club, young people aren't just discovering things about themselves. They are shaping a vision for who they want to become and the possibilities available to them. This discovery provides an opportunity to support and facilitate this growth and goal-setting process with Members. Duration, frequency, and intensity of Club Members interactions and relationship to Clubs are major determinants to the growth of Club Members. By placing an intentional focus on helping people grow into the person they want to be, we can better set our Members up for success.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

How duration, frequency, and intensity of Club Members can be strengthened will be explored as we review our Club programs.

Finding #8 - I'm tougher than you think: Bouncing back from adversity.

KEY INSIGHT: Children and youth are developing resiliency through the Club.

The interviews show a common theme about the development of courage and capacity to move productively through challenges. Some talked about trying new things and not being successful but keeping with it until they saw progress. Others talked about speaking up for themselves and not making choices that were not right or harmful to them. In each interview, there was evidence of a strengthening and developing ability to continue on when things got tough.

In the quantitative data, 77% of 8 to 12-year-old children, and 94% of teens reported they could bounce back better when things are hard for them because of Club (see Figures 13 and 14). While children and

youth might not call it resiliency, it's the best word to describe the perseverance described by the Club Members.

Figure 13. Because of Club, I can bounce back better when things are hard for me.

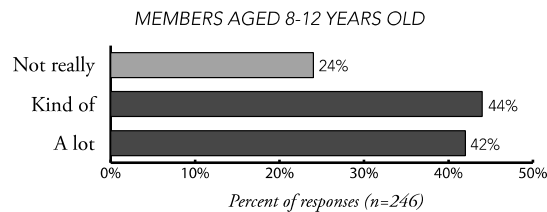
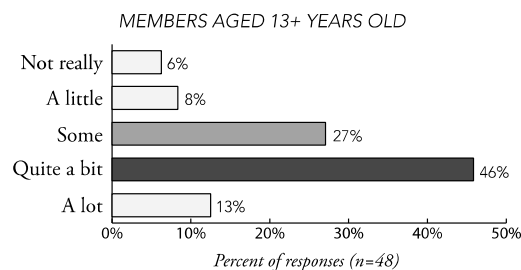


Figure 14. Because of Club, I can bounce back better after going through a hard time.



SIGNIFICANCE

Children and youth face many challenges, and encouragement and guidance are important to overcoming them. By helping Members grow their confidence and experience success, we can help them develop the skills necessary for navigating challenges when they arise. Examining which aspects of our programs are best supporting this skill development, will allow us to more intentionally facilitate this growth moving forward.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

We will look at how to expand peer mentoring programs and one-to-one workers across Clubs.

Conclusion

In response to the findings, we will be putting into action the following strategies:

1. Club Staff Recruitment and Training
 - Recruit and invest in staff development (Finding 1)
2. Programming
 - Increase our strategies for exposing children and youth to new and appropriate experiences (Finding 5)
 - Develop better strategies to improve the experience of peer relationships (Finding 2)
 - Design more intentional and creative ways to develop decision-making ability among children and youth (Finding 3)

- Continue to provide healthy activities (Finding 4)
 - Design strategies that continue to stretch children and youth to grow (Finding 6)
 - Expand peer mentoring and one-to-one programs to help youth build resiliency (Finding 8).
3. Next Level / Future Work
- Build strategies to help children and youth envision and plan for their futures (Finding 7)

Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin *Clubs*

Dana Badke, Kathryn Robertson, Justin Wieclaw

Organization and Program Overview

The Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin, founded in 1988, is a leading provider of programs to children, youth, and their families. Our agency is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and operated by a professional staff team comprised of an Executive Director, Program Directors, program delivery staff, volunteers, and practicum students.

Over 1000 children, youth, and families access our programs each year in six service locations, located in three municipalities: City of Wetaskiwin, Town of Millet, and Town of Drayton Valley. In addition, our Intervention Programs service area aligns with the Children Service's service area, including the communities of Maskwacis, Camrose, Ponoka, and Rimbey.

Our continuum of services from prevention to crisis intervention support participant's healthy physical, educational, and social development. Dedicated, trained, and certified staff take an individualized and strengths-based approach with every child. The Agency creates safe, supportive environments where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

Vision, Mission, and Values

VISION

All children and youth discover and achieve their dreams and grow up to be healthy, successful, and active participants in society.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

VALUES

- **Belonging:** We welcome everyone in a safe, accepting environment based on belonging and positive relationships.
- **Respect:** We ensure that everyone – children, youth, families, volunteers, and employees – are heard, respected, valued, and treated fairly.
- **Encouragement and Support:** We encourage and support every child and youth to play, learn, and grow to achieve their dreams.
- **Working Together:** We work together with young people, families, volunteers, our communities, and government.

- **Speaking Out:** We speak out with children, youth, and families so that we can make our world better.

Programs Overview

Enrichment Program is a free, personalized, solution-focused counselling program that supports youth and parents in building life skills and connections to the community. We also promote the development of strategies specific to individual needs. The Thrive Youth Group is a fun, interactive group that is focused on activity-based learning of social-emotional skills for youth.

We strive to create an environment where participants can experience successes, feel safe and respected, realize strengths, feel empowered, and feel connected. We can offer support for parenting skills, conflict resolution, anger management, home management/routines, self-esteem and self-confidence, friends/family/school concerns, etc.

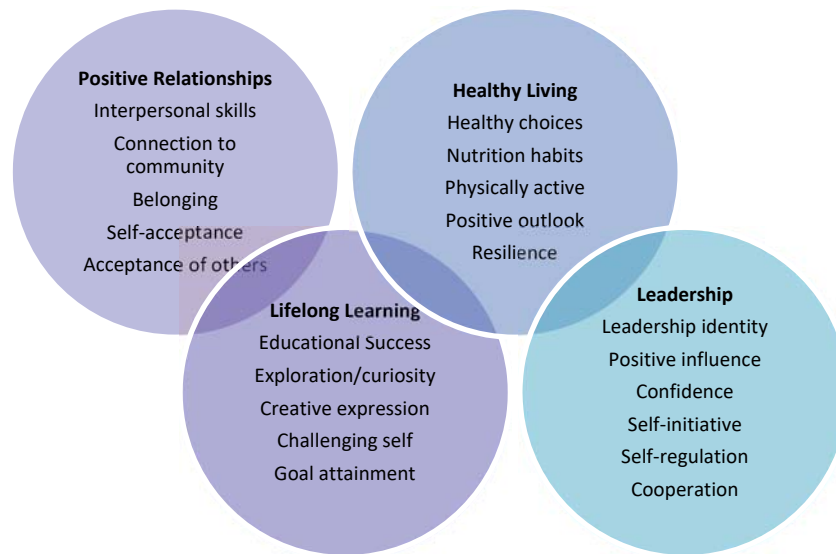
RBC Raise the Grade, supported by RBC Future Launch, is a program designed to provide skills, mentors, and supports to high school students. RBC Raise the Grade helps these students through academic support and career discovery at Boys and Girls Clubs. Through hands-on learning opportunities, a specific focus on personal interests and goals, and supportive relationships with mentors and volunteers, young people are given the skills and tools they need to be successful in school, work, and life.

Keystone Leadership Club focuses on six core elements: service to club and community, teamwork, healthy choices, leadership, learning for life, youth democracy, and civic engagement. Personal awareness and self-confidence will be developed in a supportive team environment through activities and projects at the club and community.

Intended Impact

For this study, we determined four intended impacts to measure, which includes:

- **Positive Relationships:** Young people will have enhanced connection to community, interpersonal skills, sense of belonging, and acceptance of self and others.
- **Healthy Living:** Young people will make healthy choices, including choices about nutrition and physical activity, and have increased positive outlook and resilience.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Young people will experience educational success, develop curiosity and creative expression, and learn how to challenge themselves and achieve goals.
- **Leadership:** Young people will learn how to be leaders and have a positive influence on others, building skills for cooperation, self-regulation, confidence, and taking initiative.



Evaluation Methodology

The aim of our evaluation was to see what kind and quality of impact our Enrichment, Raise the Grade, and Keystone Leadership Programs are having on the youth we are serving. To understand this, we explored two broad evaluation questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on our participants?
2. What aspects of our program are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented a mixed-methods outcome evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified themes and findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for program improvement and innovation.

This project began by identifying and clarifying the intended impact of our programs. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact on the mental, behavioural, and emotional changes in our participants. We used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol and a quantitative questionnaire to evaluate progress toward achieving our intended impact.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from our program. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population we serve. The number of program participants was 218. Our sample size was 12, drawn from the following strata of our population:

- Youth 12 years of age and older.

- Representing a cross-section of youth programs.
- Attended programs for a minimum of 6 months.

Our interview team consisted of Kathryn Robertson and Justin Wieclaw. We convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour in length and collected interview data.

We then analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Each interviewer implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying themes) for each interview. Together, we developed common themes from the entire data corpus identifying the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined the dynamics among the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

Quantitative Data and Analysis

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, we designed a questionnaire to collect data on our quantitative indicators of impact. The instrument was administered to 96 participants. We had 45 participants between the ages of 8-12 and 12 participants 13 years or older complete the survey, a 60% response rate. The data were analyzed primarily using measures of central tendency. We identified key insights, patterns, and gaps within the data and incorporated these discoveries into the related findings. The most significant insights from the quantitative data are described in the following narrative.

Findings

Finding 1 – Accept, then progress.

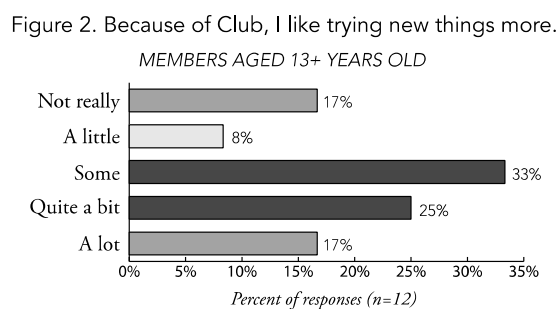
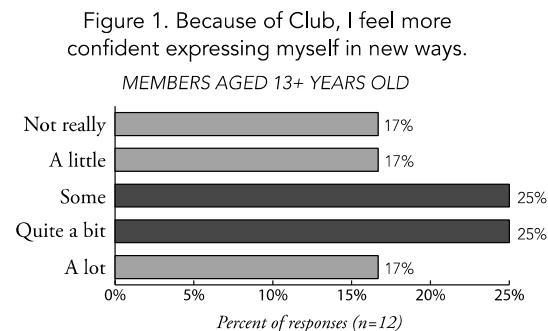
KEY INSIGHT: Youth engaged in programs gain self-acceptance, build confidence, and develop the courage to try new things.

Youth attending the club and participating in interviews discussed feeling like they do not fit in other environments, but that the Club is a safe space where they feel accepted and can be confident being themselves. One said, "I would say the Club is a great place to learn and it helps you feel accepted somewhere...you can bring your opinion and ideas to people, and they will actually listen to you."

Many interviewees identified that they were shy, did not have many friends, and did not communicate with others prior to coming to the Club. Through their involvement, they developed the ability to understand who they are, express themselves, and find their voice. The data suggest that once this occurs, individuals are surer of themselves, know their strengths, and can identify priorities in life. "I can do anything," stated one young person who was more of a follower. He continues:

[I have grown] to be a guy that is sure of himself, can think for himself. Being around other people and learning the types of stuff that I did at the club, it helped me find who I want to be and figure out who I am.

The quantitative data corroborates this finding. In the quantitative survey, 83% of youth who are 13 and older reported feeling more confident expressing themselves in new ways (see Figure 1). Eighty-three percent also like trying new things more since being in Club (see Figure 2).



One youth said in their interview:

I am able to express my thoughts...to others. It's easier to make friends, easier to find what you have in common with others. You could say I was sort of a rock brain back in the day...I was a person that would always do the same thing...but nowadays, I'm not really a rock brain. If someone said, "Do you want to come over here?" I'd say, "Sure. I'll join up. Lets' do this."

The acceptance that youth feel at the club provides opportunities to find their strengths, practice new skills, and experience opportunities for growth. For example, one said, "The Club has taught me to be more caring, to find the importance in things that you may not have considered." Youth experience a broadening of their awareness of possibilities for their future, including career possibilities. Our findings suggest that youth feel strongly that they have a future and can contribute to their community.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Supporting youth to be successful and independent relies on critical foundational youth years to find who they are, which establishes confidence to try new things and find future opportunities and careers.
- Boys and Girls Club provides a safe and supportive environment to develop self-acceptance.
- Youth try new things and are comfortable being vulnerable.
- Youth need more opportunities to express themselves and connect with others.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Create a youth drop-in space.
- Create a youth brag wall.
- Develop programming and marketing platforms to increase the diversity and scope of youth attending programs.
- Conduct youth exit interviews (touch base with youth at closing, 1, 3, 6-month intervals to determine maintenance of progress).
- Recruit previous participants and/or alumni supporting programs.

Finding 2 – Safe spaces, happy faces.

KEY INSIGHT: Youth attending the Boys and Girls Club experience a safe, non-judgmental environment where they are accepted for who they are.

The environment at the Boys and Girls Club allows youth to be themselves and thrive where they are accepted by peers and staff alike. Interviewed youth have described the Club as a welcoming place, with fun and enthusiastic staff. One said, "People here are a bit crazier, more energetic, like to make jokes...which is a pretty fun environment...it's all connected." Survey data confirms that 67% of youth ages 13 and older who responded feel comfortable being themselves at the Club.

The data demonstrate that youth not only feel safe to be themselves but are encouraged to be themselves by their peers and staff. This builds confidence and a mosaic of diverse personalities at the Club. One young person said, "I have a place where I know I am accepted. I can talk to people without being judged like I am at school by other people."

The data further demonstrate that youth come to the Club to connect with other youth, forming new friendships with individuals who understand and celebrate them. For example, one youth said:

Every year there are different people, but we talk about the same concepts or insecurities. We are all different, but we all have it. It doesn't matter colour or race; we can learn things to help our friends.

This non-judgmental environment encourages youth to express themselves and connect with peers for support. The interview data confirm that youth are supporting their peers with issues they face while also receiving support from staff. Survey data corroborates this finding as 67% of youth who responded for each age range report that they can bounce back better after going through a hard time because of Club.

Interviewees also confirm that they attend the Club not only for support but also for fun and positive experiences and report that "the Club is focused positivity." Youth also report that this is a place that they can attend to be treated well, experience different activities to help them be more social, and be encouraged to continue to find themselves and connect with others.

SIGNIFICANCE

- The Club is a welcoming and accepting environment.
- Youth create connections to staff and peers.
- Youth help perpetuate a welcoming, safe environment, cautious not to create "cliques."

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Develop programming and marketing platforms to increase the diversity and scope of youth attending programs.
- Deliver programs at different times and in different locations.
- Adjust program delivery structure through drop-ins and transportation.
- Create a sub-brand for youth programs, ensure inclusiveness (culture, LGBTQ+, etc.).

Finding 3 – Live to Give

KEY INSIGHT: Youth value the opportunity to help others in their community and recognize they are building life-long skills.

Youth may not initially jump at the chance to volunteer, but given the opportunity, youth at the Boys and Girls Club report that helping others provides them with a sense of pride, aids in learning new skills, develops responsibility, and generates new career paths. The youth reported that volunteering at childcare centers, in senior homes, or at fundraising events offers them a chance to try new things, helps them to see others from different perspectives, and feel valued and accepted.

Survey data further shows that 67% of youth ages 13 and older who responded feel they have had a more positive influence on others. Similarly, 75% are more confident in taking on responsibilities. Interviews confirm that youth are developing empathy, empowerment, accountability, and social skills through volunteering with the Club.

Beyond the club, volunteering supports the youth's evolution. One youth said, "I don't want to live here [in this city], but I do want to live where there is a Club." The development doesn't stop there. Youth indicated that they learned about new career interests through the Club and could add volunteer opportunities to their resumes. Youth were given the opportunity to show initiative without a monetary incentive or recognition. This activity connects the youth to concepts they might not have considered previously. One said, "I volunteer with a program at a senior's home. My mom works in a group home as a nurse. I now understand the responsibility she has."

The findings also paint a broader picture of youth serving the community. Through the interviews, youth described opportunities they have been exposed to. One said, "I have always been a caring person, but I know that I can donate clothing that is too small to the Salvation Army, give food to the food bank, give support to anywhere that will help families." The skills and experiences gained by helping others through Club activities nurture the youth's existing desire to make a difference and to take this giving spirit into the future. One said, "Wherever I am, I can make a positive community whether I am in BC, Montreal, Ottawa, or somewhere else."

SIGNIFICANCE

- Builds a sense of a broader community and ownership.
- Builds future opportunities and skills.
- Benefits mental wellness.
- Develops positive intergenerational relationships.
- Develops social and empathy skills.
- Creates a ripple effect of doing good for others.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

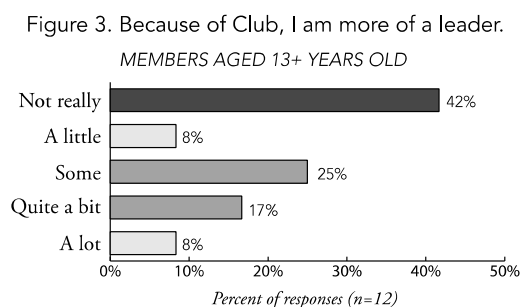
- Expose youth to a variety of community volunteer opportunities that meet their interests.
- Look for continuous volunteer opportunities that build on-going relationships and skills.
- Tie youth opportunities into the Club's social enterprise initiatives.
- Look for ways to integrate more mentors in programs.

Finding 4 – Leader, what's in a name?

KEY INSIGHT: Youth report practicing strong leadership skills; however, they do not define themselves as a leader among their peers or believe in their abilities.

Youth at the Boys and Girls Club state that they want to share their voice and make the world a positive place. One young person said, "If you see a negative situation... you can change it to a positive and help others know what to do to prevent it from happening again." The findings show that being inspirational, comforting, open to other people's ideas or opinions, and being a team player are all leadership skills the youth learn and practice regularly at the club. Another young person said, "Being a leader is being responsible and being kind and nice to people at the same time."

Even though the youth can categorize learning and show leadership skills, they have difficulty identifying themselves as a leader. Only 58% of youth 13 and older who responded to the survey said they are more of a leader since coming to the club (see Figure 3).



In one interview, for example, a young person commented that they learned leadership, teamwork, and communication through the Club, and yet moments later, when asked if they are a leader, said, "I'm not good at that."

The findings show that youth know what leadership is and show it regularly through their actions. But now they need to be able to identify themselves and embrace themselves as leaders. One young person said, “There are other people out there that have really tough times...they may push people away, but they do want somebody to help them, and they do want somebody to care for them. And I’m hoping that I can do that for somebody one day.”

SIGNIFICANCE

- Youth identify being a leader at times. However, there is a risk and responsibility that is involved in acting as a leader that is holding them back.
- Youth are cautious to lead at times due to the social expectation of being humble and not boastful.
- Youth don’t want to make decisions for others.
- Youth develop leadership skills.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Develop more opportunities for youth to be the leaders, such as facilitators.
- Develop youth-led projects that can be done in other programs (i.e., crafts or games in OSC).
- Facilitate a community youth leadership workshop inviting community leaders.
- Create a youth leaders list, including interests and skills.
- Develop a social media leadership activity where youth can identify who they view as a leader.

Finding 5 – Live-Laugh-Love

KEY INSIGHT: Through participation in Boys and Girls Club programs, youth have learned and implemented healthy living skills that contribute to a healthier life.

Youth shared that programs at the Boys and Girls Club teach them to make healthy choices, both physically and emotionally. Through Club activities, youth learn how to be healthy, like choosing to eat a salad instead of chips, how to set goals, or keep their emotions in check. One young person said, “I’ve learned that no matter what, you should always take care of yourself. If you help yourself, you can help others and make the world a better place.”

Being at Club offered new possibilities for youth. One young person said, “I used to sit at home and didn’t want to go anywhere or do anything. Now I want to finish school, go to university, and have a steady job.” Youth share that at the club they cook, eat healthy snacks, take part in physical activities, or discuss health issues with peers and staff. They are actively involved in learning and practicing healthy living. They also noted progress in their resilience and ability to keep their emotions in check. One said:

Being part of the club has taught me how to act in certain situations and how to deal with the problem. [It has helped me] be calmer in a situation...I would have been much more emotional before.

Surveys show that 77% of 8-12-year-olds who responded choose to eat food that is healthier and 78% are more active. In survey responses from youth ages 13 and older, 75% responded that they choose to eat food that is healthier because of Club. Responses trend down, however, for Club having an effect on

youth's level of activity as they age. Only 58% of youth 13 and older reported being more active because of Club (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. Because of Club, I choose to eat food that is healthier.

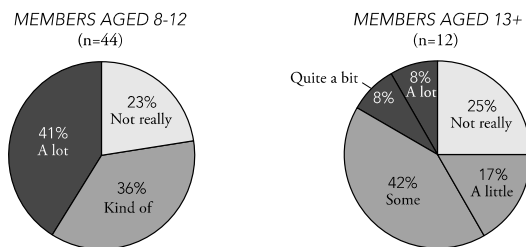
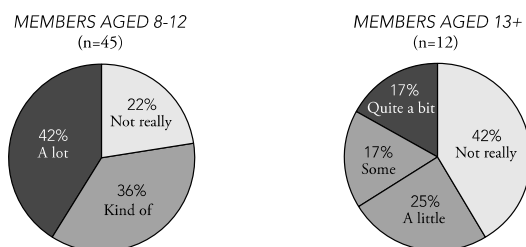


Figure 5. Because of Club, I am more active.



Overall, the Club helps youth build a strong foundation for their long-term wellness and supports them to make healthy physical and mental choices. Reflecting on the Club experience, one interviewee said:

To have good mental health, stay positive. If you want to do a diet or exercise, then do it. If you want to eat food, just eat it. If you want to call a friend, call them. Don't wait for them to call you or ask you first. That's dumb. You should always be the one to call first, or you will miss out.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Be creative in how we deliver the healthy lifestyle skills embedded in program delivery.
- Youth are learning healthy lifestyle choices at the Club.
- Social-Emotional Learning is important as a framework for youth program delivery.
- Youth are resilient.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Host family and youth food events.
- Develop a youth physical wellness program – a Cool Moves for Teens.
- Develop a youth cooking program.
- Expand ways to learn healthy habits:
 - Hands-on; experiments
 - Exploring; field trips
- Develop peer support and mentoring (older to younger youth).

Finding 6 – It's all about connections.

KEY INSIGHT: The Boys and Girls Club provides a place where youth form connections and develop the skills to build strong, respectful relationships with peers, staff, their families, and the community.

Youth report that they feel connected to each other at the Club. They have stronger relationships with family, friends, and teachers in the community as a result of their Club experiences. The data confirm that youth have more and better conversations with parents and teachers. With this improved communication, they report that they have a clearer voice, can express themselves better, and receive help at school because they can articulate better what they need. Youth who were interviewed also say that they are making time for family and finding balance in relationships. One participant stated, "I can have a conversation with my dad, and just be his daughter now."

The data suggest that youth feel connected to other youth, as well as staff, and are provided with opportunities to learn and practice relationship skills. Youth continue to attend the Club year after year because they feel so connected to those around them. One said, "I just feel I'm part of a community." Youth report that they are more expressive in their relationships and experience positive impacts in their sense of belonging as a result. One shared, "It's made my relationship with my girlfriend easier because I'm able to express my thoughts clearly."

Interviews with youth confirmed improvement in relationship skills through the Club. They report that they feel more confident working with people and working in a group. One said, "I wasn't really good at making friends when I was a kid. Now I talk to people and am making friends. I made like four or five friends." Youth are increasing their awareness of their progress on developing social skills in the present moment but can also recognize the importance of relationship skills in their future. One said, "I'd like to be more social because being kind of antisocial won't get me anywhere."

The data suggest that they have practiced and developed stronger relationships. As reported in survey results, 82% of 8-12-year-olds who responded reported having more people in their life who care about them because of Club and 62% reported getting along better with others at school (see Figures 6 and 7). However, the survey data for youth 13 and older are not as clearly positive. Only 67% reported that they have more people in their life who care about them, and 58% get along better with others in school or their neighbourhood (see Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 6. Because of Club, I have more people in my life who care about me.

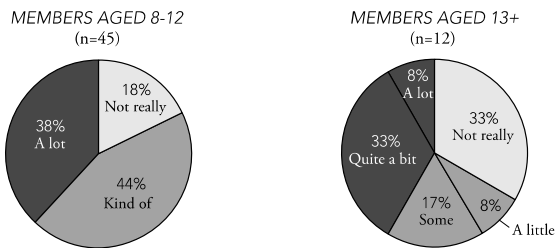
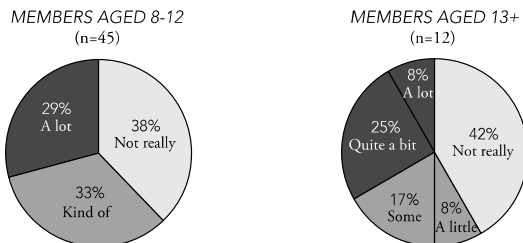


Figure 7. Because of Club, I get along better with others in my school (and neighbourhood*).



*Only members aged 13+ were asked about their neighbourhood.

This inconsistency may be due to the limited sample size for the survey. It might also be a result of how youth define relationships and whether or not they are considering a connection to staff or peers when answering questions.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Youth spoke a lot about connection/relationship/social skills.
- Disconnect on quantitative survey and qualitative interviews about the quality of relationships and relationship skills.
- Importance of healthy relationships to moving forward in life.
- Better relationships with parents, teachers through youth involvement with Club.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Create youth drop-in space and program time for peer connections.
- Deliver Respect to Connect to support learning about healthy relationship skills.
- Provide counselling support to youth during drop-in time to support SEL learning and mediating relationships.
- Have a question on the quantitative survey about forming relationships with staff separate from forming relationships with peers to better understand this dynamic.

Conclusion

Insights into Impact

Through Project Impact interviews, youth have revealed that the Boys and Girls Club of Wetaskiwin is a welcoming, accepting, and positive place to participate. A passion and desire for youth to be at the Club is apparent. This passion also appears to broaden deeper into the community with a strong belief in the importance of community collaboration.

Youth have identified positive relationships as being a significant piece of their overall involvement and successes through the Club. Relationship skills have been developed, and positive connections have been made between youth (friendships), as well as between staff and participants. Interviewees have identified learning relational skills, as well as opportunities to practice and develop these through positive connections. Through involvement with the Club, youth have an increased desire for more opportunities to connect and express. The Club acknowledges that youth with healthy relationships and skills are more likely to develop resiliency and during our interviews, youth identified as being resilient.

Findings show that self-care and healthy lifestyles are promoted across the Club through education, programming, and an overall positive atmosphere for youth to learn and develop individually. This appears to have assisted youth in developing an overall sense of importance for self-care and healthy living which has also transferred into their personal lives.

Youth have identified the opportunity to develop a variety of skills through training opportunities and utilizing these through programming and connections at the Boys and Girls Club, which in turn increases confidence. Many youth can identify opportunities to be leaders. However, this is also an area the club sees the ability to grow through opportunities and common language.

Steps Forward

- Develop programming and marketing platforms to increase the diversity and scope of youth attending programs.
- Create youth drop-in space and program time for peer connections.
- Create a sub-brand for youth programs, ensure inclusiveness (culture, LGBTQ+, etc.).
- Develop a youth physical wellness program.
- Develop more opportunities for youth to be the leaders and facilitators.
- Expose youth to a variety of community volunteer opportunities that meet their interests.
- Provide ongoing "relationship-focused" training opportunities.

Areas for Future Evaluation

- Prepare and administer quantitative program surveys with program participants 8 years of age and older annually.
- Conduct qualitative interviews with participants 12 years of age and older every three years.
- Draft survey and interview protocols for adult participants.
- Update ShareVision data collection to support survey compilation.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary

Staff

Justin Bergeron, Director of People Services
Kat Main, Director of Evaluation and Research

Organization Overview

For 80 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary (BGCC) has carried on a tradition of helping young people to discover, develop, and achieve their full potential as adults, citizens, and leaders. BGCC is committed to transforming the lives of vulnerable children, youth, and their families by providing safe places and offering services and programs designed to meet the evolving needs of our communities. Our organization works hard to counter community issues such as youth homelessness, child sexual exploitation, poverty, youth unemployment, literacy, discrimination, and intergenerational trauma. We help young people build a positive sense of self through supportive developmental relationships and engaging activities that promote health and wellbeing, social and emotional competencies, a sense of belonging, and skills for life.

MISSION Our mission is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

VISION All young people have the relationships they need to grow up well and thrive.

CORE VALUES Our core values guide our long-term strategic direction, as well as our day-to-day operations and interactions.

- **Belonging:** We welcome everyone in a safe, accepting environment based on belonging and positive relationships.
- **Respect:** We ensure that everyone – children, youth, families, volunteers, and staff – is heard, respected, valued, and treated fairly.
- **Encouragement and Support:** We encourage and support every child and youth to play, learn, and grow to achieve their dreams.
- **Working Together:** We work together with young people, families, volunteers, our communities, and government.
- **Speaking Out:** We speak out with children, youth, and families so that we can make our world better.

BGCC Staffing Overview

The success of any child and youth-serving organization is dependent on the quality of its staff. To successfully meet the unique and diverse needs of children, youth, and families in Calgary, BGCC

employs a culturally and professionally diverse staff team including individuals who are Indigenous, from the LGBTQ2S+ community, and those who are Newcomers to Canada. To date, we employ approximately 250 staff which includes both full and part-time employees.

Our Values

As part of our 2019-2022 strategic plan, “Dream Big,” we have articulated four key cultural values that guide our daily work in the organization.

We favor inspiration over contentment. We choose what’s transformational over what’s easy.

We favor leadership over solitude. We can’t achieve greatness alone.

We favor direction over clinging to the past. We anticipate change and embrace it.

We favor impact over adequacy. Good enough isn’t good enough.

Our Training

Working with vulnerable populations requires a highly-skilled, dedicated, and well-trained staff team. The following list includes the key trainings and requirements for an employee to work with children, youth, and families at BGCC. Most of these trainings are provided in-house by certified trainers on our leadership team.

- Child Welfare Intervention Record Check
- Criminal Record Check
- Vulnerable Sector Check
- Agency Orientation
- FOIP online training
- Crisis Intervention and De-escalation training
- Universal Precautions and Medication Administration
- Indigenous, Diversity, Cultural Competency and LGBTQ2S+ training
- Standard First Aid and CPR
- Suicide Prevention training
- First Aid Mental Health
- Non-Suicidal Self-Injury training
- Trauma-Informed Care using the Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) Framework
- Training on the impact of trauma and brain science
- Developmental Relationships
- Natural Supports Approach
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Social Work Compliance with ACSW
- Compliance training for accreditation (CARF)
- Child Sexual Exploitation and PSECA legislation in Alberta

Additional trainings required for specialized services in some programs include:

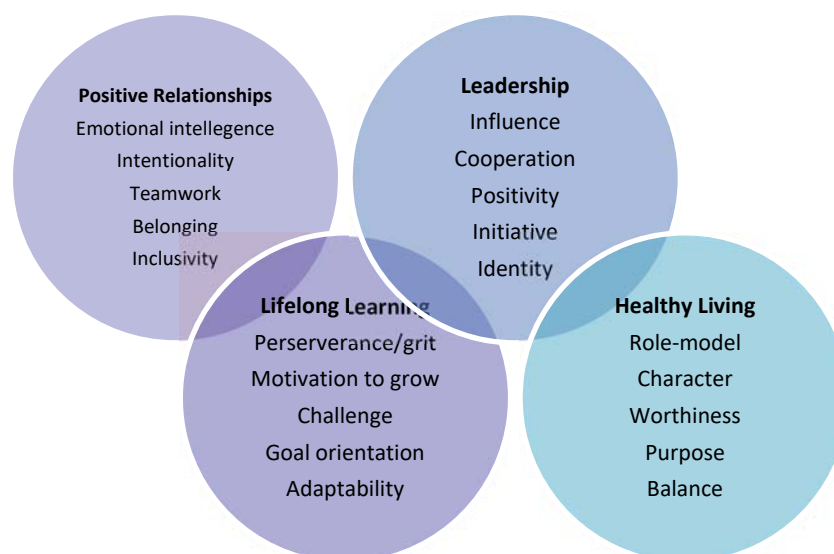
- Harm Reduction Approach
- Motivational Interviewing
- High 5 and SAFE training
- Food Safety Training
- Tattered Teddies, Preventing Suicide in Children
- Skills for Optimizing Approaches and Responses (SOAR)
- Housing First approach
- Strengthening Families Framework

The most important element of our services is the supportive relationships between staff, young people, and their families. Our staff use a developmental relationships approach to promote social and emotional learning and positive developmental outcomes for children and youth.

Intended Impact

For this study, we determined four intended impacts for staff to measure, which includes:

- **Positive Relationships:** Staff will have enhanced insight into their perception of people, increased care and compassion towards others, and increased capacity to build authentic and trusting relationships with others that matter.
- **Healthy Living:** Staff will have increased clarity about their values and make positive choices in their personal lives.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Staff will have increased capacity for growth and development and increased commitment to lifelong learning through self-discovery.
- **Leadership:** Staff will gain insight about their skills and strengths and have increased commitment to reach their full potential as leaders.



Evaluation Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation was to measure what kind of impact our organization is having on our team of employees. To achieve this, we explored two broad evaluation questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on employees across the organization?
2. What aspects of our organization are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented an outcome evaluation using qualitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified themes and findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for employee engagement and impact.

This project began by identifying and clarifying the intended impact of our organization on employees. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative indicators of impact. We used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol and questionnaire to evaluate progress toward achieving our intended impact.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

For the qualitative indicators of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from our organization. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the employees we serve. The number of employee participants interviewed was 15 drawn from the following strata of our population:

- Included staff who had been employed with the organization for a minimum of one year.
- Included staff who were front-line, program coordinators, and managers (senior leadership and the executive team were not interviewed).
- Included employees from across the organization: business operations (fund development, finance, facilities, communications, people services, and general administration), housing and shelter stream, education and employment stream, Indigenous initiatives stream, community-based care stream, and our community clubs stream.

Our interview team consisted of Justin Bergeron, Director of People Services and Kat Main, Director of Evaluation and Research. We convened one-on-one interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes in length and collected interview data.

We then analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Each interviewer implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying themes) for each interview. Together, we developed common themes from the entire data corpus identifying the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined the dynamics among the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were

revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

Findings

Finding 1: Relationships, The Be All & End All

KEY INSIGHT: Staff are impacted both professionally and personally by their relationships at BGCC and truly believe relationships are the conduit to positive change and wellbeing.

Staff described relationships, the vehicle to building resilience in children and families, as the key factor in job satisfaction, long-term staff retention, and as the most successful means to achieve solutions. Staff spoke about realizing the power of relationships in their day to day work with children and youth. For example, one staff admitted that their natural inclination is to focus on the task at hand, such as completing a registration form but have realized through working at BGCC that the most important thing is to put the relationship first. Even though creating small talk was not their strength, this staff realized the difference it made when they “paused from the task to first ask mom how she was doing and create a connection before moving on to filling out the intake form.”

By creating space for connection and authenticity, staff saw that relationships opened up opportunities for more meaningful work. When children and families trust the relationship with staff, they are more likely to ask for the real help they need without fear of shame or being stigmatized. Several staff also mentioned that many of the young people and families they work with lack a support system and more importantly lack someone in their lives who believe in their potential. Consequently, our staff saw this as an important role in their work — to be someone who was a cheerleader in the lives of our young people and their families.

When staff were asked about the long-term impact they want their work to have at BGCC, they spoke about their hope that young people will remember they have someone who cares about and believes in them. They also hope that young people will remember some nuggets of wisdom from staff which will positively impact their lives in the future.

The data showed that through their relationships with young people and families, staff gain increased capacity for compassion. As young staff, often in their first job, many reported feeling intimidated by some of our more complex children and youth who are dealing with challenges such as homelessness, addiction, and trauma. As they got to know them through their work, staff reported realizing their own biases and misperceptions they were carrying. They talked about the relationships helping them to see past individual circumstances and used phrases like “you can’t judge a book by its cover” and “everyone has a story, so you can’t judge.” Staff spoke passionately during the interviews about sharing these insights with people in their personal circles and even challenging others in public when they observed biases or discrimination.

Staff also described their coworkers as their closest friendships they spend time with outside of work and even referred to their coworkers as family. Staff spoke about their experience of relationships in the agency as having the feeling of “family” and “a sense of home.” Interestingly, our youth and families have also reported that they feel like BGCC is a “second home” and that staff are like “extended family” in their lives.

Although staff were quick to talk about the close bonds they formed with their coworkers and children and families in their programs, there was a distinct line from there. Unless they made a conscious effort, these close relationships didn't extend beyond their individual programs. We have often talked about the challenges we see in our programs being siloed, and this is another example of the barrier that siloes are creating. Staff talked about how much they value collaboration and teamwork but felt that there was often little opportunity outside of their immediate programs, and even in their own stream to build relationships that would facilitate this.

SIGNIFICANCE

We have long made the assumption that our staff believe relationships are the conduit to positive change and understand the impact that healthy relationships have on positive child and youth development. The qualitative interviews gave us a chance to put this assumption to the test, and it turns out that relationships are truly the be-all and end-all at BGCC.

If relationships have such a significant impact on staff retention and job satisfaction, it is critical that we think strategically about how we can leverage this to better achieve our strategic goal of being the best place to work. Gallup's research shows a concrete link between having a best friend at work and high employee engagement. For example, one study showed that “women who strongly agree they have a best friend at work are more than twice as likely to be engaged (63%) compared with the women who say otherwise (29%).”¹ When employees have a best friend at work, they are more likely to be productive at work, more likely to take risks that lead to innovation, less likely to experience stress at work and less likely to be actively looking for other job opportunities.² We now live in an age where employees are looking for more than just a paycheck from their job. The best employers recognize that people want to build meaningful connections and will stay long term with an organization that has an exceptional workplace culture. According to Gallup, these cultures are often characterized by feelings of trust, belongingness, and inclusion.

A significant challenge of breaking down siloes is geography and capacity. Our programs are located in multiple locations across the city. Additionally, the capacity for more teambuilding with other program staff is limited by time. We have a new opportunity to leverage relationship building in our culture through our new Renfrew Hub model. Our Renfrew building was recently renovated to co-locate services for children and youth between the ages of 0 and 24 years. For the first time, we will have multiple stream teams operating out of the same location using a purposeful hub service delivery

¹ <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236213/why-need-best-friends-work.aspx>

² <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236213/why-need-best-friends-work.aspx>

model. The original goal was to provide integrated services for young people, but this integration may also serve to enhance job satisfaction and employee retention. We should consider how well staff are using “collision spaces” like the kitchen and the open concept hoteling to build connections and relationships. During the opening of our new Renfrew building, the staff who will be co-located there were asked the question, “What ideas do you have to create social connection in the new space?” Some of the top answers included team building, games, food, potlucks, celebration, lunchtime activities, and staff appreciation activities. When asked the question, “What will you need from others in this space to be your best self?” high numbers of staff reported collaboration, connection, inclusiveness, cooperation, teamwork and trust as their top answers. We will need to be mindful about continuing to contribute to a relationship-building culture once full programming begins in the fall and not lose the opportunity this new hub model presents.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- As we learn from our Renfrew Hub experience, we can replicate this model in other locations throughout the city.
- To date, only about half of our agency staff are trained in the Developmental Relationships framework, so one response would be to continue to train all staff in the agency, including those in business operations. Developmental relationships are bi-directional, and when we use the five elements from the framework (express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities), we continue to build capacity for emotional intelligence in our staff. Recently, our executive team was trained in the framework so that the philosophy is embedded at every level in our organization.
- Explore how we can better use technology to break down barriers to collaboration and communication when working in different physical locations.
- Human service organizations typically struggle with high staff turnover rates. We can consider how we might use relationships as a selling point for staff recruitment.
- Continue to be aware of the trickle-down effect of relationships in the agency – how staff experience relationships with each other will affect how our kids experience relationships with staff.
- In 2018, we contracted CultureSmith to increase employee engagement and emotional intelligence across our organization. These findings reinforce that this has been and will continue to be a good investment in our staff in the future.

Finding 2: No Pain, No Gain. Leaning into Discomfort.

KEY INSIGHT: Staff identified that leaning into uncomfortable and challenging situations is the key to their personal and professional growth.

A surprising finding from the data was how intentional and aware staff were of leaning into discomfort and new challenges for the purpose of personal growth and leadership development. All the staff spoke of gaining self-confidence as a big impact from working at BGCC. Gaining this confidence came through experiences on the job that forced them out of their comfort zones such as dealing with the complex challenges of vulnerable children and families, having difficult conversations with their peers, youth, and families, public speaking to promote the agency in the community at presentations, and dealing with

conflict. Through these experiences, they slowly gained confidence and were able to recognize that the growth came from leaning into difficult or uncomfortable situations. Many of them did not feel prepared for the challenges they would meet on the job when they first started but did feel supported as they struggled through this experience.

SIGNIFICANCE

It is interesting to note that as an organization, we have been going through significant change under new leadership since we gained a new CEO in 2017. This change has been further amplified by the changing economic and political climate in Calgary over recent years. As a communication strategy, our new CEO has used the analogy that to grow strong, we need to build new muscles. This requires causing microtears in the muscles as we stretch and challenge them to grow. It is interesting to note that this analogy may have been internalized with our front-line staff and their reflection about their own personal growth. One interviewee talked about, “leaving my comfort zone.” Another said, “The growth was painful, but I knew I needed to challenge myself and do it.”

This discomfort often led staff to new insights on who they are and what they can accomplish. Staff also discussed feeling that the agency grants them the freedom to make mistakes, which allows them to experience the learning in a positive way as growth, rather than as failure when they struggled. Staff reported feeling that they have permission from the agency to fail or make mistakes which gives them reassurance during the times they lean into discomfort. When feeling supported, staff are more willing to take risks and be creative and innovative, which improves us as an agency overall. This may be an encouraging insight for us to continue talking about growth as a slow and challenging experience.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- We work with very challenging populations who have complex needs. For many of our staff, this is their first career experience. We could be more intentional about discussing the challenges of this work in our recruitment and onboarding practices to better prepare staff for what the work will really be like and its challenges. For example, we have begun talking to new applicants about the reality that sometimes our youth will make bad decisions that may cost them their life in some of our programs and how are they might be prepared to handle that.
- We could also consider establishing more formal buddy or mentorship systems for new staff.
- Continue to encourage staff to try and fail.

Finding 3: Hear me roar!

KEY INSIGHT: Staff identified that the impact of finding their voice was the foundation of many of their successes within the agency. Increased confidence, leadership, and advocacy were all impacted by this area of growth.

Almost every person we spoke with used the phrase “finding my voice” to relate the importance of this growth to their success within the agency. The impact on staff confidence, their ability to advocate for clients, and the development of leadership skills were commonly named as a result of this growth. The

data revealed that there is a strong correlation between increased confidence and the ability to speak openly and honestly. Staff discussed how finding their voice enabled them to speak up when they had an idea or concern. They feel they have a seat at the table and are more comfortable collaborating with other teams and sometimes other programs.

Along with their growing confidence through discomfort, another highlight of the findings was the number of staff who spoke about finding their voice and feeling empowered to speak out for themselves, the agency, and our children, youth and families. One staff described a particularly difficult situation when they were participating in a case conference for one youth, and they ended up publicly challenging another professional from the community whose behaviour was very unprofessional during the meeting. The staff shared that she felt she would never have had the confidence or felt she had the permission to speak out if she hadn't been part of BGCC.

SIGNIFICANCE

This finding is significant because we have a younger staff team, and it was very encouraging to hear them speak about discovering this increased confidence to speak up when they had a concern to advocate for their clients. As we strive to be a world-class service provider, having staff that are strong, confident, and articulate will be a critical element to our shared success. The challenge for the agency will be responding to these voices in a timely and meaningful way. By encouraging our teams to use their voices, we can identify areas that need focus sooner, offer stronger support to our clients, and create a better work experience for our staff.

Part of our new strategic plan includes Articulate Voice as a pillar, and this is an example of staff speaking out on behalf of our clients' needs. It may be helpful to explore how much of this strategic priority is filtering down to staff or if this is something that is happening at an organic level with front-line staff.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Continue to empower staff to speak out on behalf of our children, youth, and families.
- Further define what it means to have an articulate voice and how this is messaged throughout the agency so that all staff are contributing and this work is not just happening at the executive level with our External Relations team. What are the key messages that we can empower staff to deliver?

Finding 4: Authenticity — Be Real or Be Gone

KEY INSIGHT: Staff identified authenticity as a crucial part of their ability to build strong bonds with both their peers and their clients and felt that authenticity is a “requirement” to work at BGCC.

The data revealed that there is an organic phenomenon happening across various program streams where staff are leaning into the idea of allowing their true authentic selves to be present at work. Overwhelmingly, staff-related examples of authenticity, enabling them to form strong social bonds with their peers and the clients we serve. These bonds further cement the idea that staff are welcome as they are.

Staff identified that they learned a lot by working with vulnerable populations. These experiences reinforced the importance of being authentic in all of their interactions with others. This impacted their ability to have crucial conversations with peers, clients, and in many examples, their own families. It was noted that increased advocacy on behalf of their clients fostered increased confidence, and this new confidence in their abilities makes it easier for them to lean into authenticity. In many interviews, staff noted that being vulnerable was a critical component to being authentic and that if staff “couldn’t be real” then maybe “they were not a fit to work at BGCC.”

Trust that the agency supported staff to be themselves also enabled their “true selves” to rise to the surface. Feeling welcome to be who they are and allowing space for that discovery to emerge creates a supportive environment for internal growth. The data suggested that there is a loop in place between feeling authentic, self-discovery, a sense of belonging, and the impact of the relationships that have been built.

SIGNIFICANCE

This finding is important because it tells us that our efforts to be inclusive and honour authenticity are happening. We see our role as fostering an environment and culture that allows this authentic exploration of self to grow, which then enables more meaningful interactions and relationships to develop between staff. These natural bonds that are being formed within staff teams offer a much stronger natural support than the artificial supports we might typically invest in (EAP). The opportunity to empower staff to support each other could offer a deeper and more meaningful form of resilience to our teams. We were surprised at these findings and the vehemence with which staff discussed the ability to be vulnerable and authentic as a critical quality to work at BGCC.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Further explore where this attitude and experience is coming from, so we can leverage it better. Is it a result of using our trauma-informed lens, emphasis on emotional intelligence, a trickle-down effect from our new strategic pillars, or is this a current popular buzz term that millennial staff are latching onto?
- Further explore how we continue to foster this.
- We could explore more experiments through leadership and training – to learn about EQ, authenticity, vulnerability, self-reflection, and awareness.

Finding 5: Diversity & Self-Discovery

KEY INSIGHT: Staff identify the celebration of diversity as a key strength of the agency, which also contributed to their own self-discovery.

A significant highlight of the data was in relation to diversity. Every staff interviewed mentioned diversity as a significant part of their experience at the agency. The agency was acknowledged for its welcoming and accepting environment, and that it valued diversity as a strength that would enable the organization to flourish. As one staff reported, "BGCC is good at diversity, and that's what makes us more vibrant as an agency." A couple of staff even reported that they felt that the agency allowed them

the space and support to explore their own identity in relation to gender. As a result, these staff felt empowered to support children and youth in their own journeys and to be a role model.

Through the interview process, the idea of self-discovery rose to the surface for many of our staff. They described the process of learning about themselves through various means. Through the relationships they had built with clients, many staff learned about who they really are. By being pushed and pulled into challenging situations and experiences, they experienced personal growth. The acceptance and celebration of diversity at the agency level was often noted as permission to experiment with both identity and expression of self by many staff. Being exposed to so many unique staff and clients further encouraged this experimentation.

Relationships underpin the key findings in the data around self-discovery. Staff detailed how working with clients and watching them learn about themselves encouraged a similar process within them. The relationships they developed with peers also reinforced the notion of self-discovery, as they were able to see their peers grow as well.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this finding is the link between celebrating the diversity of the group from an organizational level and the personal self-discovery that many staff identified. As staff feel supported by the agency to be themselves, many staff are discovering a deeper sense of who they truly are. These new experiments in self-discovery encouraged staff to develop stronger bonds and to look for more opportunities to support the growth and diversity of staff teams. This continues to foster the celebration of diversity that makes the agency feel special. And then these experiences and attitudes leak down to the children, youth, and families that we serve.

It is interesting to note that in our interviews with youth, many discussed how welcome they feel at programs and affirmations they receive for being themselves. This finding highlights that self-discovery is happening primarily through the influences of engaging with different social groups. As one staff reported, “Our clients inspire us as much as we inspire them.” This self-discovery in both clients and staff leads to enhanced clarity for self, identity, career choices, and healthy personal relationships.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Realizing that self-discovery is the internal journey. Authenticity is the external - how you present and interact.
- Reflect on how we honour, validate, and offer opportunities for more growth through the agency.
- Consider making coaching more available as a tool and pilot building a coaching culture across the agency.

Finding 6: Work-Life Balance – We Mean What We Say

KEY INSIGHT: Staff feel supported and encouraged by BGCC to take care of themselves and to strive for work-life balance in their lives.

Staff identified that the agency was doing a good job of promoting the importance of a work-life balance and providing staff with the resources to do this. They feel that they hear consistent messaging from all levels of the organization, and in particular from senior leadership, that they should prioritize self-care and balance at work. Many staff identified self-care as one of their ongoing personal goals and acknowledged that the agency gives them the freedom and resources to do what they need to do for themselves. They owned that the onus is on them to create the space and time for self-care. Resources that staff referred to included wellness days, EAP, and access to grief counselors during times of loss. Staff are keenly aware that they have a responsibility to take advantage of these resources and prioritize their own wellbeing.

SIGNIFICANCE

Working with vulnerable populations can lead to compassion fatigue, burn out, and vicarious trauma. While we recognize this and have been working hard to promote occupational resilience in the agency, we were unaware that staff were experiencing our efforts to such a successful degree. Over the last year, the agency experienced the sudden loss of two longtime staff. This was an unprecedented experience that impacted multiple staff across all six of our streams of service. This finding is encouraging in that the efforts we are making towards recognizing the importance of work/life balance may be being experienced by front line staff. We recognize that we still have a lot of work to do to truly understand how to build occupational resiliency.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Create an Occupational Resiliency working group that includes members from all levels and across all streams to represent staff.
- Explore further our key actions that are making a difference.
- Embed the philosophy of occupational resilience throughout the agency so that it is not just a one-time training, but something that is embedded within our culture.

Finding 7: Organic Leadership

KEY INSIGHT: Leadership was determined to be an important area of growth for staff. The unique element is that they were identifying leadership qualities and opportunities organically.

Through our meetings with staff, the data revealed an interesting finding around leadership. While leadership is often important, what stood out in our findings was how front-line staff were identifying both leadership qualities within themselves and looking for opportunities to lead informally on their own. There was not as much of a distinction between formal and informal leadership.

Staff identified that they were often using leadership skills to support clients. These skills were identified as crucial to performing the duties required of them but had not been traditionally labeled as leadership. Staff are organically beginning to see how these skills could be used in other kinds of situations, and how collaboration with other staff or teams become an opportunity to lead. These skills were often tied to increased confidence and more optimism about their possibilities in the future. Staff related that leadership had never occurred to them before working at BGCC, but now it was a real possibility they saw in their careers.

The word potential was often used in relation to leadership and what was interesting is that staff were taking it upon themselves to grow these skills. They identified the support of the agency in taking advantage of any opportunities to grow in this area.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this finding is that leadership is growing naturally and in ways that we did not necessarily predict. The organic interest our staff are demonstrating in showing and growing leadership, primarily through informal means, offers the agency the opportunity to grow these leaders very early on. The pool of potential leaders we have to work with is growing naturally and will support the growth of both the agency and the teams within. Focusing a little more of our efforts on the development of our emerging leaders could offer big results for the agency in the future.

One of the pillars of our 2019-2022 Strategic Plan is Outstanding Leadership. To achieve this, we have designed a leadership development plan for emerging leaders, supervisors, managers, and directors. While we have been doing this work in a formal and intentional process, we were unaware that leadership was growing organically at the front-line level.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Better capture the skills front-line staff believe they are learning that contribute to leadership to more formally leverage and cultivate.
- Explore how this can help us improve staff retention and what else we can be offering front-line staff in their professional development (i.e., TedTalks, delegate more committees and opportunities for front line staff to participate).
- Facilitate opportunities for staff to mentor new employees to develop skills.

Okanagan Boys & Girls Clubs

Staff

Diane Entwistle, Bailey Van Os, Shasta Scott

Organization and Program Overview

At Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs, we are rooted in our belief that all children and youth can discover and achieve their dreams and grow up to be healthy, successful, and active participants in society. Realizing that vision takes a community of caring people and organizations who genuinely want to make a difference in the lives of children and youth.

That's why at Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs, we focus on providing safe, supportive places where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life. Our clubs are safe, supportive places for children and youth to play, laugh, discover, and learn. Kids participate in life-changing programs that promote positive outcomes in education, active living, nutrition, and mental health. Our employees and volunteers are caring adults who develop relationships that foster belonging, personal empowerment, achievement, and self-confidence.

You will see our fantastic team of employees and volunteers working hard to help children and youth navigate through the challenges that they may face in their daily lives. By providing safe places where kids feel that they belong, we are able to figure out a way to help kids build their confidence, a way to work with kids who have been struggling, a way to work with families who have limited resources, a way to work with youth who think they have run out of options.

We are an organization that believes we truly are stronger together. We are grounded in the power of collaboration and cooperation to achieve a common purpose. Our community development work is integral to who we are. We believe that strong communities are comprised of people, organizations, and businesses that can work together to make the Okanagan a great place for children and youth to grow up well.

OUR VISION

All children and youth discover and achieve their dreams and grow up to be healthy, successful, and active participants in society.

OUR MISSION

To provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

OUR CORE VALUES

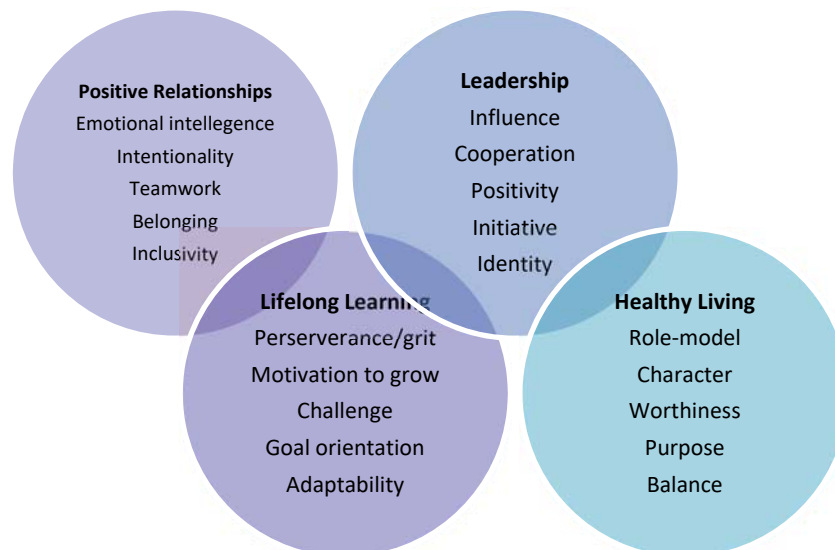
In our work with children, youth, families, and communities, all Boys and Girls Clubs are guided by the following Core Values.

- **Belonging:** We welcome everyone in a safe, accepting environment based on belonging and positive relationships.
- **Respect:** We ensure that everyone – children, youth, families, volunteers, and employees – are heard, respected, valued, and treated fairly.
- **Encouragement and Support:** We encourage and support every child and youth to play, learn, and grow to achieve their dreams.
- **Working Together:** We work together with young people, families, volunteers, our communities, and government.
- **Speaking Out:** We speak out with children, youth, and families so that we can make our world better.

Intended Impact

For this study, we determined four intended impacts to measure:

- **Positive Relationships:** Staff demonstrate emotional intelligence, intentionality in relationship-building, teamwork, a greater sense of belonging, and inclusivity.
- **Leadership:** Staff demonstrate influence in their role as mentors, cooperative leadership, positivity, initiative, and a strong sense of their own identity as a leader.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Staff demonstrate perseverance and grit, motivation to grow, willingness to challenge themselves, goal setting and follow-through, and adaptability.
- **Healthy Living:** Staff demonstrate role modeling, positive character qualities, worthiness to self and others, a sense of purpose for their life, and balance when relating to others.



Evaluation Methodology

The aim of our staff evaluation was to see what kind and quality of impact Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs are having on our employees. To understand this, we explored two broad evaluation questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on our employees?
2. What aspects of Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented an outcome evaluation using qualitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified themes and findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for organization improvement and innovation.

This project began by identifying and clarifying the intended impact of Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact on the mental, behavioral, and emotional changes in our employees. We used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol to evaluate progress toward achieving our intended impact.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

We designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes in staff resulting from their tenure at Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample.

The number of employees was 214. Our sample size was 17, drawn from the following strata of our population:

- Years of Service: We chose employees who have worked with us for one year or longer.
- Full time and part-time employees: We did not include relief employees in our sample.
- Leadership positions vs. front-line positions: We wanted to ensure we had a 30/70 split between interviewing employees in a leadership position vs. a front-line position.
- Geography: We wanted to ensure we had a mixture of employees from the South, North, and Central Okanagan.

We utilized a random number generator to help select which employees from the spreadsheet would be asked to participate in the interview.

Our interview team consisted of Diane Entwistle, Bailey Van Os, and Shasta Scott. We convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour in length and collected interview data.

We then analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Each interviewer implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data and identifying themes) for each interview. Together, we developed common themes from the entire data corpus identifying the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined the dynamics among the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

We did not conduct a quantitative evaluation for employees, as we conduct an Employee Engagement Survey every two years. Our employee engagement survey provides our employees with the opportunity to provide feedback, influence change, and improve our organization.

Findings

Finding 1: Living our Core Values

KEY INSIGHT: Through our findings, we discovered that employee personal values align directly with our organization's core values. Although employees didn't explicitly mention the organization's core values in any of the interviews, they were woven through the employee's responses in many indirect ways:

- **Belonging:** The data revealed the importance of our employees wanting to feel like they belong, as well as wanting our children and youth to feel like they belong.
- **Respect:** Employees spoke about how important it is to feel respected in the workplace and how it is important to role model respect to others.
- **Encouragement and Support:** Employees identified that they feel supported in the workplace. One employee commented, "Outside work is not great right now, but I know that when I come to work, everything is okay."
- **Working Together:** Employees recognized that teamwork and working with community partners was important to the work they do to do. One employee said, "I now fully understand when they say it takes a village to raise a child."
- **Speaking Out:** Advocacy for our children and families was a common theme when employees spoke. They also reported that they feel heard in the workplace and are comfortable speaking up and speaking out in a non-judgmental environment.

In addition, employees identified that family values, trust, commitment, and feeling valued as an employee were important. They take comfort knowing that they can live these values in the workplace. When the employees were asked about values in the interviews, a common answer was "I value the work I do" and "I want to feel valued in the work I do."

SIGNIFICANCE

Throughout the data, it is evident that employees are living our organizational core values outside of the workplace and in their personal lives. This strengthens our understanding of the impact working for the organization is having on our employees.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Continue to discuss, train, and practice our Vision, Mission, and Core Values regularly at team meetings.
- Ensure employees are feeling valued through recognition awards and service awards.
- Implement a formal recognition program for employees.

Finding 2: Planting Seeds

KEY INSIGHT: A culture of learning and personal growth contributes to the development of leaders.

Our interviews revealed that training and knowledge sharing is a key contributor to employee learning and development. Our data support the introduction of the coaching program and demonstrates that

coaching relationships assist with personal growth. Interviewees involved in mentoring relationships identified how important those were in their personal development. Interviews reveal that the emerging leaders program and other leadership development initiatives are making a difference in personal development. Our data tells us that employees are growing and developing in the organization, often by being in multiple roles, and they are building a career with us.

Through our interviews, we learned that self-reflection is an important aspect of personal development and learning to lead. One employee said, "I had no idea I had leadership skills until I worked here." Another said, "When I stepped up and took the leadership role, I was so much out of my comfort zone." Our interviews revealed that when employees identify strengths, they become much clearer about their personal development goals. We observed that when people are clear, life purpose can be found, and the commitment to the organization increases. The data reveals that younger employees describe their personal development as "adulting" and the first time they have felt like leaders. One interviewee said, "You don't know you can do it until you do."

Others spoke about experiencing a similar kind of impact on their personal growth and development. One said, "[Being here] allowed me to open up to who I am [and discover] this is who you are meant to be." Another said that the Boys and Girls Clubs had been a "space to grow and be myself." A few staff members expressed how working with Clubs helped them discover and clarify what they wanted to do with their lives. One said, "Through self-awareness, and learning to like myself more, [I have] developed strengths and understand the value I bring." Another talked about how working for Clubs gave them "space to grow and be myself."

SIGNIFICANCE

This finding was very encouraging and supports our commitment to, and investment in, personal and leadership development. Integration of more opportunities for self-reflection may be helpful in the future. We were surprised about the comments about adulting, and the impact that this first career job has on our team and their journey towards independence and assuming the responsibilities of adulthood.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Continue to promote the Emerging Leaders program to all employees.
- Expand the individual coaching program.
- Provide supervisory training to all supervisors.

Finding 3: Strong Foundations = Strong Teams

KEY INSIGHT: The foundation of a healthy lifestyle is stability, structure, and safety.

Throughout the qualitative data analysis, many employees reported they have struggled with mental health throughout their lives. The struggles with mental health were different for each employee. However, many shared they have struggled with anxiety. During the interviews, employees also reported that being healthy is the key foundation to confidence, growth, development, and leadership, which translates to all aspects of life.

Employees identified that OBGC has helped with their mental health. Coming to work every day has created a sense of belonging and given employees the structure and routine needed to be healthy. One employee shared that, "OBGC has been the most consistent thing for me in 8 years, and I value consistency and comfort in that." Another employee said, "OBGC helped me get over my social anxiety and my fear and insecurities of low self-worth and low self-esteem." In addition, the interviews revealed that OBGC's culture of flexibility and work-life balance has given employees the necessary time to focus on their mental health.

Employees also reported the importance of being healthy in order to be role models to the children, youth, and families we serve. An employee said, "OBGC gives me purpose in life, making the sky the limit and anything possible. I can be a leader to young people and empower them." When employees are feeling healthy and confident, that spreads to those we serve.

In many interviews, employees spoke about 'adulting' and the responsibilities that come with growing up and becoming an adult. Many of these responsibilities and tasks that come with adulting can be tough and contribute to poor mental health. Employees reported that OBGC has helped them recognize that they are more responsible than they think and that adulting isn't as bad as it seems.

SIGNIFICANCE

Throughout the data, it is evident that having stability, structure, and safety is the key foundation to a healthy lifestyle and contributes to the overall mental health of our employees. OBGC has created a sense of belonging, structure, and stability that has helped our employees overcome mental health struggles such as anxiety. In addition, it has helped our employees tackle the responsibilities that come with being an adult.

The data shows that as an organization, it is important that we continue to promote flexibility and work-life balance to our employees. Furthermore, we should continue to increase awareness and offer training to supervisors and employees in regard to mental health and well-being.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Continue to increase awareness by giving employees access to education and resources.
- Continue to offer training to supervisors in order to provide them with the necessary tools to support employees with their mental health and well-being.
- Provide employees with five wellness days throughout the year.
- Develop and implement a wellness program.

Finding 4: Relationships that Matter

KEY INSIGHT: Relationships in the workplace and outside the workplace matter to our employees.

When asked, "What have you learned about people through working at Okanagan Boys & Girls Club?" a common theme was how important it was for them to get to know the stories of the children, youth, and families we serve. Knowing our members' stories has built empathy and compassion in the employees interviewed. One employee said, "I plant a seed and grow a relationship."

Employees have identified that the relational skills they are gaining and practicing in the workplace are carrying over into their personal lives. One employee said, "I have become a better partner, son, and brother through working for the club." The interviews also revealed the friendships that were built while working at OBGC have turned into friendships outside of work. One employee stated, "I have built many friendships with my coworkers; some lifelong friendships." Another said, "The friendships and relationships I have made working here have pulled me through hard times."

The data shows that employees have an understanding of community relationships and how they impact the quality of care and support we can give to our families. Multiple interviewees commented that if we build relationships and have an understanding of what other programs and organizations do, we, in turn, can direct our families to the right supports they need.

SIGNIFICANCE

The evidence reveals that relationships truly matter to our employees. The overlap from the workplace to employee's personal lives was evident throughout the interviews. What stood out was the employees recognizing that they have become a better friend, partner, family member, and parent through working in this environment.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Continue training for employees in regard to Trauma-Informed practices and the importance of getting to know the population we serve.
- Build a community and program guide for employees to know where to direct families when we do not have the expertise to serve them best.
- Regular meetings with employees and continued yearly trainings to build relationships as a team and bring people together from different locations and programs.

Finding 5: The Power of Believing in Yourself

KEY INSIGHT: When employees believe in themselves, and think about what's possible, anything can happen.

Our interviews confirmed the importance of confidence, and that employees build confidence when they know they matter and feel heard. We heard a lot about comfort zones and how employees are able to grow when they step out of their comfort zone. One employee said, "I was so much outside of my comfort zone. I was thrown in, and then I did it." Another said, "I have the confidence to innovate and collaborate." Another employee reported, "I now know I'm capable."

Interviewees reported that they have increased self-worth and self-esteem, and as a result, are asking what is possible. One employee shared, "I don't feel small here. I have things to offer." Another said, "I can dream more and see what else is possible." And yet another said, "[Working here] changed my idea of what I'm capable of."

Our data tells us that employees are finding their voice, which in turn makes it more comfortable to advocate for both the children, youth, and families we serve, and themselves. Through our interviews, we heard that having difficult conversations is easier when you increase your confidence, and when

employees feel capable, they are able to do more and see what is possible. One employee shared, “I’ve grown differently working here and learned things I didn’t even realize I could do.”

SIGNIFICANCE

Confidence and comfort zones were key themes. Many of the interviewees talked about being anxious about new situations and roles and then trying them and building their confidence as a result. This helps us support employees to take on stretch assignments, with the right supports. Finding your voice and speaking up were other important themes. We will work to find more opportunities to help people find their voice.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Provide training on difficult conversations for all employees.
- Provide training on conflict resolution for all employees.
- Continuing to expose our employees to different opportunities and positions.

Finding 6: Everyday Heroes

KEY INSIGHT: Employees recognize the importance of having a role model in their lives, and the importance of being role models to those we serve.

Everyone needs someone to look up to. Employees shared that having a mentor or coach was important to them as they provide support, help build confidence, and are invested in their personal growth and development. Also, many employees reported that the Emerging Leaders program, which includes a mentorship program, has provided leadership development and the opportunity to receive mentoring from other leaders within the organization. In addition, many employees stated that the individual coaching program has been another great leadership resource.

Employees who did not have a formal mentor or coach and are not currently involved in the Emerging Leaders program shared that they receive support and guidance from their supervisor. Employees shared that they feel their supervisors are genuinely invested in their personal growth and development. They feel they are able to approach their supervisors for guidance and feedback when needed.

In addition, employees who have recently moved into a formal leadership role shared that they not only receive support from their supervisor but also from others within the organization. One employee who recently moved into a formal leadership role shared that they have learnt the importance of influencing people, rather than trying to change people.

With the support and guidance provided by those in our organization, our employees have the opportunity to be happy. One employee stated, "Because of OBGC, I have the life I have now, and I never thought I could achieve this much happiness."

On many different occasions, employees shared the importance of having a role model in their lives, but employees also shared the importance of those we serve having a role as well. Employees reported that they are trying to be the role models that our participants need. They shared that they make better life

choices, such as healthy eating, in order to model positive behaviour. An employee shared that, “When eating lunch with the kids, I want to show them that healthy eating is cool.”

SIGNIFICANCE

The research illuminates the importance of having positive role models that provide support, guidance, and help build confidence. The significance of this finding highlights the importance of OBGC connecting employees and children with a positive role model. It is important for our employees to see themselves as role models as the research shows they make better life choices to model positive behaviour. In addition, we are giving kids the opportunity to have a positive role model in their lives that may not have that outside of Club.

Over the past two years, OBGC has worked to develop a culture of leadership development and growth. As mentioned above, programs such as Emerging Leaders, formal mentorship, and coaching have played a huge role in the development of this culture. As an organization, it is important for us to continue to focus and put resources into those programs as we are developing the next generation of leaders with our organization as well as in the community.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Expand the coaching program to others within the organization.
- Conduct our third intake for the Emerging Leaders program.
- Review performance review process. The process should focus on coaching and mentoring.
- Continue to provide training to all employees regarding leadership and coaching.

Conclusion

The pilot project impact team is going to meet to look at the different findings and review the report. We will then be able to draw conclusions, create steps forward, and discuss future opportunities.

Boys & Girls Clubs of South Coast BC *Staff*

Carolyn Tuckwell, Mandy McLean

Organization Overview

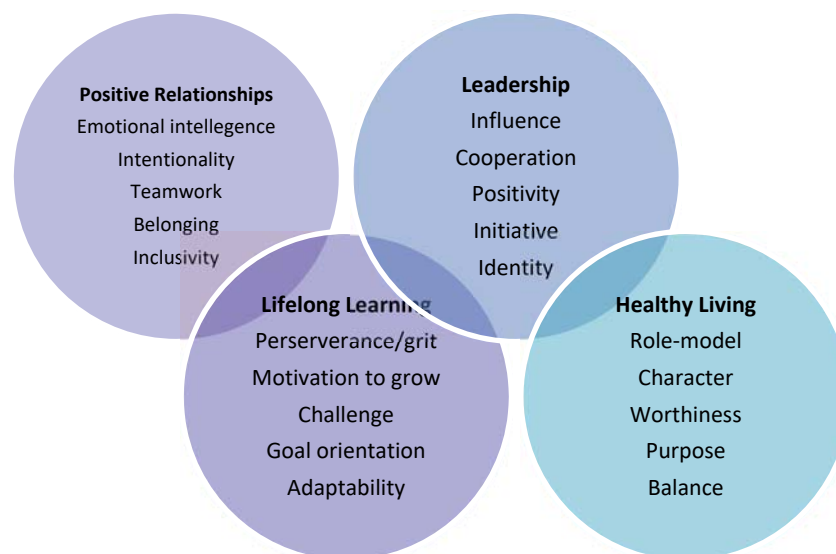
Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC (BGC) has been giving kids a place to belong in their neighbourhoods across the Lower Mainland since 1936. We're now serving well over 10,000 children, youth and families through our Clubs, Camp Potlatch, Counselling and Employment programs.

Through our Clubs and Camp, we're providing nearly 6,000 children and youth a place to be when they aren't at home or at school, that helps them develop relationship skills, healthy living behaviours, leadership skills, and to finish school.

Intended Impact

For this study, we determined four intended impacts to measure:

- **Positive Relationships:** Staff demonstrate emotional intelligence, intentionality in relationship-building, teamwork, a greater sense of belonging, and inclusivity.
- **Leadership:** Staff demonstrate influence in their role as mentors, cooperative leadership, positivity, initiative, and a strong sense of their own identity as a leader.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Staff demonstrate perseverance and grit, motivation to grow, willingness to challenge themselves, goal setting and follow-through, and adaptability.
- **Healthy Living:** Staff demonstrate role modeling, positive character qualities, worthiness to self and others, a sense of purpose for their life, and balance when relating to others.



Evaluation Methodology

We know that BGC is impacting the lives of thousands of young people. This project was designed to develop our ability to evaluate and communicate the impact we are having in the lives of our staff. The primary focus of this report is on staff members serving in various parts of the organization. Staff not only deliver the interventions of the organization but are recipients of the life-shaping and trajectory-setting experienced at BGC.

The aim of our evaluation was to see what kind and quality of impact Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC is having on our staff. To understand this, we explored two broad evaluation questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on our staff?
2. What aspects of our organization are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented an outcome evaluation using qualitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified themes and findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for organization improvement and innovation.

This project began by identifying and clarifying the intended impact of BGC. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative indicators of impact on the mental, behavioral, and emotional changes in our staff. We used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol to evaluate progress toward achieving our intended impact.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from our organization. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population we serve. The number of staff was 110. Our sample size was 11, drawn from the following strata of our population:

- Tenure
- Age
- Streams / Program Area

Our interview team consisted of two staff from our Leadership Team. We convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour in length and collected interview data.

We then analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Each interviewer implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying themes) for each interview. Together, we developed common themes from the entire data corpus identifying the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined the dynamics among the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were

revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

Findings

Finding #1 - Working at BGC: You're Welcome!

KEY INSIGHT: BGC work is self-reinforcing in terms of development.

We found that there is a circular nature to the impact of being an employee of Boys and Girls Clubs, where supporting others (staff, participants, the organization) to advance towards the development of our four core outcomes (relationship skills, healthy living behaviours, lifelong learning, leadership skills) contributed to people's own personal development in those areas. This then further amplified their confidence, skills, and abilities for helping others.

During qualitative interviews, Club staff consistently cited that the responsibility of being a role model heightened their awareness of their own habits and behaviours. One staff person spoke about the moment she realized that if we were encouraging kids to make healthy food choices every day, she had better not show up with a cheeseburger and fries for lunch. More specifically, staff talked about encouraging Club kids to accept themselves by digging deep to find the best, admirable, and likeable features of the most challenging kids. They then described the realization that this played an important role in helping them to become more accepting of themselves. This was further reinforced by the experience of having a supervisor see the best in them personally.

SIGNIFICANCE

The practice of accepting and not judging others actually helps us to accept ourselves.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Formalize communication and training tools that focus on this finding.
- Incorporated in recruiting tools/information, etc.
- Explore whether staff have come to this realization themselves and understand how that might be showing up.

Finding #2 - We are ALL alright / Discover yourself here

KEY INSIGHT: Staff are developing a greater acceptance of self and others.

We learned that through the development of authentic relationships with others – both staff, and participants – staff are realizing that everyone has a story, challenges, the same basic needs, and in fact, that we're actually not all that different. One interviewee noted, "This is where I really learned what that phrase 'you can't judge a book by its cover' really means." Another said, "I learned what it means to meet people where they are at." These learnings yielded an acceptance of both self and others and illustrate that these are more than just values; they are a part of the culture at BGC.

Staff interviewed told us that their experience at BGC helps them discover, clarify, and confirm who they are and what they want to do in their lives, often more deeply or to a greater degree than they realized

or thought possible. Many interviewees referred to the fact that while they were inclined towards care and compassion for others, and were drawn to BGC because of it, the work and its impact reinforces their passion for making a contribution and a difference in the world. One employee said, “Working here has made me more selfless, and has made me want to do more, give more.”

BGC is a place where strengths are confirmed, reinforced, and put to use, and new skills are discovered and developed. Employees spoke about how they were able to discover things they didn’t know about themselves, learning about their authentic self. Further reinforcing the impact, supervisors routinely see and acknowledge employee strengths, demonstrating that they believe in them.

SIGNIFICANCE

Acceptance is often thought of as something that is a part of someone’s nature or a characteristic of their personality. It appears to also be, in fact, an effective tool to achieve the highly personal and developmental impacts we seek through our work. There is a self-fulfilling cycle that occurs when our staff help others to accept themselves or those around them, where the staff also start to accept themselves and others around them more. Self-discovery, because of their work, seemed to be a happy, and welcome surprise to staff who were interviewed.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Explore ways to understand this cycle better and find ways to reinforce, sustain, and amplify the impact.
- More clearly and intentionally articulate and focus on this in orientation and training.
- Use staff interviews speaking about this impact in recruitment videos.

Finding #3 - Boundaries: Not just for roadmaps

KEY INSIGHT: Self-care and boundary setting are understood by staff to be critical for both personal and professional development, but mastering these skills remains elusive.

As described in the previous finding, our interviews showed that acceptance of self and others and supporting others to develop reinforces staff personal development. However, the data revealed that other key skills such as self-care, setting appropriate boundaries, and making one’s own voice heard are challenging for staff at BGC. One staff member said, “I see all of the possibilities and ways we can accommodate people, and that can get in the way. I need to learn how to set boundaries. It can’t work out for everyone, every single time.” Another said:

It’s a challenge to understand my limits in my position. I’m not a counsellor. I know I can only do so much, and that I can’t help everyone fully. So, I do as much as I can and then help them find other resources. This can be very difficult.

SIGNIFICANCE

Awareness is great, but it doesn't guarantee action or mastery. We recognize that further investigation and exploration of this challenge could assist us in understanding whether further strategies or training may assist staff and whether those who enter the "helping sector" are particularly vulnerable to this challenge.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Explore opportunities for more competency-based, peer to peer training and support.
- More “tools” (tip sheets) and formal opportunities for check-ins, discussions, etc.

Finding #4 - I Didn't Do It! It wasn't me!

KEY INSIGHT: Staff struggled to name and articulate the mistakes they had made at work.

During interviews, it was noticeable and surprising that staff lacked the ability to answer the question about the biggest mistakes they'd made in their work. For some, they were able to reframe the conversation around "things they were still working on," "it was no big deal because...", or how the approach of learning from every experience allows them to focus on what to do next time rather than focus on the mistake itself.

SIGNIFICANCE

Creating a safe culture is a core commitment of BGC and essential to running our organization with the rigor and high standards that we hold. This includes the understanding that making mistakes is ok, as long as we learn from them. Regardless, we see this as an area for further investigation and consideration, because of the potential intersection of “pervasive acceptance of all” and “lowering standards” organizationally.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Convene a focus group or conducting a further survey of staff on this topic.
- Explore including this topic and phenomenon in ongoing training and annual performance management processes.

Finding #5 - Room to Bloom

KEY INSIGHT: Staff are not only passionately committed and open to growth and change but also recognize that people need space to grow and change.

During the interviews, staff shared that they know there is a culture of growing and developing at BGC. As a result of working at BGC, they have come to believe that everyone has this potential. They identified that BGC is a safe space where they can seek new opportunities for growth. Staff are open to changing their ways, and most expressed with enthusiasm the awareness that a person can always learn from just about anything. They also spoke about recognizing how they have learned to moderate or make room for more/different growth. The joy and eagerness for personal growth and development were notable in all interviews as was an awareness that this will be an ongoing process throughout their careers. From newer staff to staff who have been with the organization for decades, the commitment to evolving at work was clear.

Staff also identified that they need to be aware of not being the catalyst or driver for change in others; that it is important for the change to come from the individual. They recognized the intentional act of giving space for people to grow. In BGC's work of service delivery, it can be easy to want to help, save, or give the “right” answer to someone instead of allowing them to explore it themselves. The data show

that staff are committed to letting participants (youth, children, families) have the space they need to identify for themselves what change is needed.

SIGNIFICANCE

As referenced in other findings, we are curious about whether the role of encouraging learning and growth in others, specifically program participants, plays a role in recognizing the value and importance of that same concept in one's own life and work. Are BGC staff inspired by, and therefore developing, the same feelings of growth and change that they strive to foster in the kids and families they serve? It is also possible that the excitement staff feel around their own growth is influencing staff responses to making mistakes and challenges, as described in Finding #4. This will be an area for us to explore further.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Make this concept of “giving space and responsibility for change to others” more intentional in team meetings and supervision.
- Give language to staff to use in communications with kids/families.
- Is this an untapped area? Excitement – what can we do with this?
- How do we sustain and build?
- Can we use this strategically with recruitment and retention?
- Social enterprise building around culture.

Finding #6 - We're all in it together.

KEY INSIGHT: Leadership shows up in many ways.

During the interviews, it was clear that staff understood the importance of leadership, but more than that, they were committed to it. Leadership as a theme was described in different ways. Staff expressed how they trusted the leadership at BGC, and that they believed it was to be respected. The theme of shared leadership came up throughout the interviews, along with the idea that leadership can be shared at different levels of the organization. Staff also discussed the importance of knowing when to lead and when to follow.

Staff shared examples of leadership showing up in different ways and then modeling those examples for their own leadership styles. Several interviewees also acknowledged understanding the importance of leading themselves first. They talked about the fact that leadership is about giving and taking; it's not always about getting your way. Embracing feedback and the value of it was also a common theme. Staff talked about both overcoming fear and developing their skill sets around giving and receiving feedback.

SIGNIFICANCE

Talking specifically about leadership, staff expressed that at BGC, they see that every role is important, and everybody has a part to play. They understand that leadership isn't hierarchical but rather collective, humble, and shared. Interviewees reflected a trust in the fact that this is happening as a result of the organization's intentional focus on these leadership values.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Continue to emphasize during staff meetings and in all communication:

- The importance of shared leadership and what it looks like.
- That shared leadership is something we are all responsible for.

Finding #7 - You. Me. Us.

KEY INSIGHT: Relationships (strong, authentic relationships and the skills to build and maintain them), are at the foundation of our work.

Our data confirm that participants and staff develop strong relationships with each other, learn to care for others, and experience others caring for them. Staff spoke about experiencing the relationship building that happens at BGC and how it helps them learn to connect with others in healthy ways. The BGC experience helps build strong, enduring relationships that can be game-changing. Several interviewees spoke about how this experience has influenced their personal relationships, their ability to address and resolve conflicts, and helped them to be better parents and partners.

SIGNIFICANCE

Given that relationship-building is a core, desired impact for our participants, it is not surprising that it is showing up for our staff as well. Gaining a better understanding of how this is experienced and builds for employees will be helpful for orientation, training, and ongoing monitoring.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Seek to gain a better understanding of how this is experienced and builds for employees.
- Find ways to incorporate discoveries into orientation, training, and ongoing monitoring.

Finding #8 - You. Belong. Here.

KEY INSIGHT: BGC: where you bring your best self to your work.

Staff are encouraged to be authentic at BGC, and the data tell us that self-discovery is happening. There is a recognition that everyone has something to bring and that differences are not only welcome but enriching. Once again, a growing or enhanced sense of acceptance of others seems to have a self-reinforcing/circular effect. Accepting others for who they are, helps staff to accept and embrace their own authentic selves. Being seen and heard as an employee supports that.

The self-reflection and awareness that is valued and promoted amongst the staff then serve as a model for the participants. Participants learn to value themselves and experience a culture where everyone is seen as having something valuable to contribute.

SIGNIFICANCE

The intersection of shared leadership, leading self, acceptance of self and others, and a strength-based approach were reported consistently by the staff, who expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discover and embrace their own “best selves” and to learn to show up authentically. At BGC there is an appreciation for each and every one of our people for who they really are.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Consider whether peer to peer, and competency-based training can be developed.

Conclusion

In our discovery, finding 4 (“It wasn’t me. I didn’t do it”) was surprising, and something we are committed to learning more about. Creating a culture where people aren’t afraid to make mistakes is critical, and of course, a required element of an organization committed to a strengths-based approach! BGC cannot ignore the possibility that this finding may not be representative, or may be masking another reality. Further exploration is required to delve deeper, to understand whether people are, in fact, hiding the fact that they ARE afraid to make mistakes, or the possibility that our deep commitment to accepting people for who they are and for their true abilities could lower BGC’s standards such that mistakes aren’t even recognized. We will explore the use of focus groups, surveys, or other mechanisms for encouraging staff discussion on this topic to help us to understand this finding better and develop the appropriate action plan.

Also, findings 1, 2, 5, and 6 shared the self-reinforcing and circular nature of how the act of teaching a skill-concept approach has a strong influence on one’s own development. Whether it was accepting others, leadership, relationship building, or growing and learning, the act of intentional teaching is powerful for personal change. Using this combination of findings to expand and enhance our orientation, training, performance management, and communications is an important step toward sustaining our impact and embedding it in the organization’s HR practices.

Finding 3 (Boundaries: Not Just for Roadmaps) identifies an area of improvement for our staff development. Helping staff to develop strong skills around self-care and boundaries is critical to retaining staff who are best suited for and have the capacity to do the important work of BGC. Finding training that can be incorporated into both individual and team development will help us to move forward.

BGC South Coast BC is excited to advance our understanding of how we are creating impacts, embedding practices that will sustain impacts, and find better ways to support our staff, especially in the area of self-care and boundary setting.

Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin

Staff

Kathy Hodges, Cal Zimmer, Dana Badke

Organization and Program Overview

The Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin, founded in 1988, is a leading provider of programs to children, youth, and their families. Our agency is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and operated by a professional staff team comprised of an Executive Director, Program Directors, program delivery staff, volunteers, and practicum students.

Over 1000 children, youth, and families access our programs each year in six service locations, located in three municipalities: City of Wetaskiwin, Town of Millet, and Town of Drayton Valley. In addition, our Intervention Programs service area aligns with the Children Service's service area, including the communities of Maskwacis, Camrose, Ponoka, and Rimbey.

Our continuum of services from prevention to crisis intervention support participant's healthy physical, educational, and social development. Dedicated, trained, and certified staff take an individualized and strengths-based approach with every child. The Agency creates safe, supportive environments where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

Vision, Mission, and Values

VISION

All children and youth discover and achieve their dreams and grow up to be healthy, successful, and active participants in society.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life.

VALUES

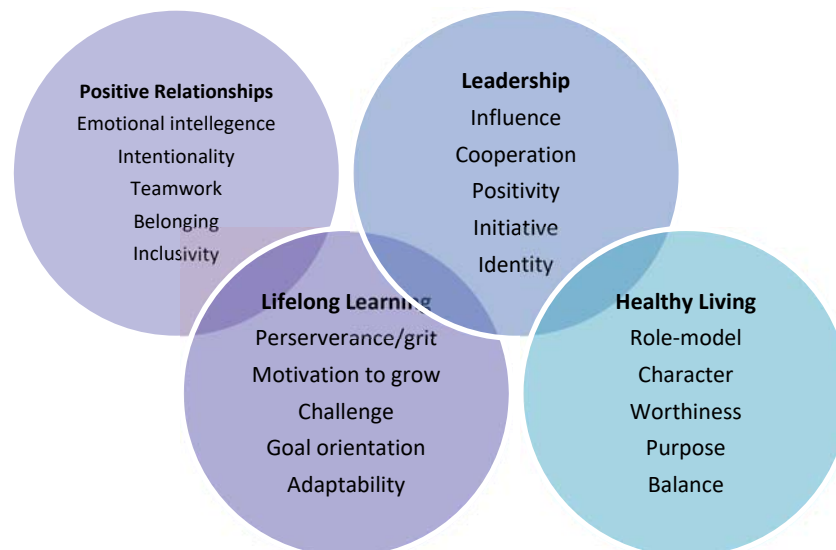
- **Belonging:** We welcome everyone in a safe, accepting environment based on belonging and positive relationships.
- **Respect:** We ensure that everyone – children, youth, families, volunteers, and employees – are heard, respected, valued, and treated fairly.
- **Encouragement and Support:** We encourage and support every child and youth to play, learn, and grow to achieve their dreams.
- **Working Together:** We work together with young people, families, volunteers, our communities, and government.

- **Speaking Out:** We speak out with children, youth, and families so that we can make our world better.

Intended Impact

For this study, we determined four intended impacts to measure:

- **Positive Relationships:** Staff demonstrate emotional intelligence, intentionality in relationship-building, teamwork, a greater sense of belonging, and inclusivity.
- **Leadership:** Staff demonstrate influence in their role as mentors, cooperative leadership, positivity, initiative, and a strong sense of their own identity as a leader.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Staff demonstrate perseverance and grit, motivation to grow, willingness to challenge themselves, goal setting and follow-through, and adaptability.
- **Healthy Living:** Staff demonstrate role modeling, positive character qualities, worthiness to self and others, a sense of purpose for their life, and balance when relating to others.



Evaluation Methodology

The aim of our evaluation was to see what kind and quality of impact Wetaskiwin Boys and Girls Club is having on our employees. To understand this, we explored two broad evaluation questions:

1. What kind and quality of impact are we having on our employees?
2. What aspects of our organization are causing this impact?

Over the course of the project, we (a) developed and refined our ideas of intended impact and indicators, (b) designed and implemented an outcome evaluation using qualitative means to collect and analyze data, (c) identified themes and findings, and (d) considered the implications to those findings for organization improvement and innovation.

This project began by identifying and clarifying the intended impact of our programs. Once the ideas of impact had been developed, we used the Heart Triangle™ model to identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact on the mental, behavioural, and emotional changes in our participants. We used these indicators to design a qualitative interview protocol to evaluate progress toward achieving our intended impact.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

For the qualitative portion of the evaluation, we designed an in-depth interview protocol to gain data about the structural, qualitative changes resulting from our organization. We used a purposeful stratified sampling technique to select a representative sample from the population we serve. The number of employees was 63. Our sample size was 12, drawn from the following strata of our population:

- Years of Service: We chose employees who have worked with us for one year or longer.
- Program Streams: We chose employees across our three program areas (Early Learning & Child Care Centre, Intervention Programs, and Out of School Programs).
- Diversity: We chose employees to represent a cross-section of staff diversity.
- Employment type: We chose employees from both our full time and part-time pools.

Our interview team consisted of Kathy Hodges and Cal Zimmer. We convened one-on-one interviews lasting from between 45 minutes and one hour in length and collected interview data.

We then analyzed the data inductively using a modified version of thematic analysis. Each interviewer implemented the first three phases of thematic analysis (becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying themes) for each interview. Together, we developed common themes from the entire data corpus identifying the overarching and inter-interview themes that emerged from the full scope of our data analysis to illuminate the collective insights and discoveries. We mapped these themes visually and examined the dynamics among the themes, causes and catalysts of the themes, new or surprising insights related to the themes, and relationships between the themes that were revealed in the data. We then determined the most significant and meaningful discoveries and brought them forward as findings to be described in the final phase of thematic analysis, this report.

Findings

Finding 1– It’s awesome to blossom with us.

KEY INSIGHT: Working with Boys and Girls Club has helped staff learn and apply new skills to their professional and personal lives.

Data reveal that staff have learned new skills such as patience, assertiveness, professionalism, positive child development skills, and communication that they apply to their daily work and their personal lives. Staff report that they were often faced with new challenges in their work at the Club and had opportunities which allowed them to practice learned skills at work with a variety of people who had different personalities. In turn, these experiences increased confidence in staff’s abilities. One said, “I’ve

improved my ability to work under pressure and help people problem solve. Where before I was more reserved and now, I'm either challenged or will challenge myself more to help people problem-solve."

Staff also identified that they have learned the importance of finding children's individualized interests and planning around them to ensure child-centered programming, which results in stronger overall programming.

Staff reported that they have been challenged to step out of their comfort zone to develop new skills and gain confidence by trying new things and succeeding. Staff identified that learning and applying skills in their work environment and transferring them to their personal lives and families has improved their appreciation for their own family. They have a practice of reflecting on challenging moments to discover their personal strengths and willingness to persevere. An interviewee identified taking courses recently, which has piqued her interest in taking more and continuing to learn and grow in her position, as well as personally. She shared, "I think it's been exciting to have the opportunity to practice skills here at work and develop myself, but it has also led to increased confidence and assertiveness in my personal life."

SIGNIFICANCE

- Staff are able to identify specific skills that they have learned and how they have implemented them both professionally and personally.
- Staff that have well-developed skills are more confident.
- Skilled staff deliver stronger programs.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Ask staff to identify needs or interest in new skill development.
- Ensure skill development opportunities are available to address program delivery weaknesses.
- Facilitate training or mentoring opportunities within our Club and with neighboring Clubs to enhance skills.
- Continue to challenge staff to increase skills.

Finding 2 - Reach for the stars.

KEY INSIGHT: Staff who work with Boys and Girls Club feel heard, valued, respected, and supported.

Staff expressed that they feel empowered at the Club. The data reveals that staff who are encouraged and supported to try new things in their work experience an increase in confidence and are connected to the Club's values. An interviewee spoke of the support they felt while working at the club, saying:

It's been communicated to me clearly that when individuals first start as leaders, they struggle and so I appreciate the mentorship, and that it's ok if I'm not perfect and I can learn and grow from that.

Staff reported that they are consulted with, have the opportunity to offer their ideas, and see their ideas/solutions implemented. Staff feel supported by their supervisors to try new or different approaches when dealing with participants. Staff recognize that being knowledgeable, informed, and

guided by strong policies as well as developing skills in communication, delegating, and management creates confidence and a sense of empowerment. They described being part of a team that works hard to offer exceptional experiences to participants. An interviewee reported that they had been given opportunities at the club to advance and take on more responsibilities. "I feel more confident in myself than I have in the past because of the new role I received."

SIGNIFICANCE

- Staff can describe in detail how they feel empowered in their role.
- Staff are connected, can share their ideas, feel heard, and their ideas are implemented.
- Staff who feel empowered, develop confidence.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Create an Empowerment Event to tell the stories (e.g., annual staff appreciation event).
- Create opportunities for staff to introduce/brainstorm ideas for programming.

Finding 3 - Community-minded collaboration.

KEY INSIGHT: Through working at the Boys and Girls Club staff value and feel a responsibility to contribute to their community through initiatives, collaborations, working groups, and volunteering.

Staff revealed that since working at the Club, they understand the importance of and value in giving back to their community. They reported being community-minded and willing to get involved. One interviewee said, "I am part of a community here, and it makes me want to be part of the whole community and give back." The initiatives that they get involved with enhance their lives and the lives of their children.

Staff reported appreciating the diversity in their community and the ability to share, experience, and learn through their work with diverse populations. One interviewee stated that working with a client base that has diverse backgrounds has helped her see a need for volunteers within her community. She said, "I volunteer a lot more in my home community, I think because I see the need for kids needing people like me in their life, and my position allows me to be able to do that."

Staff stated that they feel part of a micro-community at the Boys and Girls Club, and as a result, they have a strong desire to collaborate with businesses, agencies, and schools to be part of a larger community. Staff identified that they have a lot of opportunities through working at the Club to try new opportunities, put learned skills into programming, and be part of new programming. An interviewee stated that he has opportunities for his family to be involved in the club, and that being part of the club has allowed him to be more community-minded and give back, which was an inherent value within his family unity when he was growing up. He shared that by giving back to his community, he is "following in his parents' footsteps," and that it is "very heartwarming" to know this.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Staff recognize the importance of community collaboration that is mutually beneficial.
- By staying up to date on community issues, staff can respond with relevant program delivery.
- Staff see value in contributing to the community.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Ensure informative reporting on community collaborations to create a deeper understanding for all staff.
- Increase knowledge of community volunteer opportunities (e.g., posting volunteer opportunities on a message board).
- Ensure staff meeting agendas include an opportunity to share about community collaboration.

Finding 4 - Relationships matter.

KEY INSIGHT: Staff understand the importance of building strong, healthy relationships in order to create a positive, productive work environment and effectively support the healthy development of participants.

The data show that an important first step in working with others is to form a positive, healthy relationship. Interviewees reported that trusting relationships are crucial in order to support people. In order to build a strong relationship, you must build rapport, understand who the person is, be genuine in your approach, open to sharing ideas, and allow participants to make choices without judgement. Several staff mentioned that they feel strongly supported and encouraged by Club values and their supervisors to place an emphasis on relationship-building when first meeting people.

Staff identified that through their employment with the Boys and Girls Club, they have had the opportunity to meet unique, dynamic individuals that they may not have had the opportunity to connect with in their past. This has resulted in developing relationships with diverse populations. Due to developing relationships within the Boys and Girls Club, staff find that parents of participants and co-workers seek advice, strategies, and best practices which makes staff feel valued. An interviewee stated, "I enjoy guiding or being a voice of reason, being someone that is available, open to my clients, and who they can come to when they have questions or thoughts."

SIGNIFICANCE

- Staff are provided with the skills to build relationships, and they are acting on this.
- Staff value and recognize the importance of strong relationships at work.
- Work environments with positive relationships lead to quality programming.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Add a statement regarding the "importance of developing positive relationships" to job descriptions.
- Provide opportunities for staff to participate in shared learnings.
- Build goals into OSC/CCC Accreditation QEP's in section #1 & #2.
- Provide ongoing relationship-focused training opportunities.

Finding 5 - Untapped Potential

KEY INSIGHT: There is a division in the ability of staff to identify their role in leadership at the Boys and Girls Club.

The data showed that some front-line staff, typically in part-time, non-supervisory roles, had difficulty answering questions related to leadership. Some interviewees reported that they lack confidence in their leadership abilities. Some also displayed in their answers that they have not thought much about themselves being a leader in their positions or couldn't identify leadership skills that they have learned at the Club. Said one, "With more confidence, I'd be more willing to try new things and know when to challenge others or stand my ground."

Other staff identify as true leaders and state that they have developed additional skills due to training, programing, and opportunities provided. An interviewee identified that he has strength as a leader and has developed this over the past four or five years in a supervisory role. "I see myself as a leader, somebody who's able to take charge if need be."

Staff also identify opportunities in leadership by mentoring co-workers to support their development. Staff recognize that they are positive role models and teach others, and this has made an impact on their lives. One interviewee said, "I love to see the growth in them, coaching staff."

SIGNIFICANCE

- Strong leadership at all levels leads to quality programming.
- Staff had difficulty recognizing how they currently demonstrate leadership skills.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Develop an Emerging Leaders Program.
- Encourage and provide the means for all staff to take leadership training.
- Communicate and provide opportunities for staff to lead others, using consistent leadership terminology.

Finding 6 - Grow with Us.

KEY INSIGHT: Staff value and appreciate expanding their knowledge through the variety of professional development opportunities that are offered through employment at the Boys and Girls Club.

The data shows that interviewees were able to expand their knowledge, incorporate best practices, and share acquired knowledge with others as a result of professional development opportunities. Staff feel that the Club focuses on continual quality improvement. One interviewee pointed out, "There's also that spirit with the Boys and Girls Club of continuing to develop and to have that quality improvement. I feel like that's a really good approach for myself and my own skills."

Several staff indicated that they feel supported by the Club to further their professional development and seek out on-going or new opportunities. One interviewee articulated a common staff theme by

stating, “Just knowing that I’m supported in professional development at the Club and I can make suggestions of things I would like to learn more about. I feel empowered to make suggestions and grow as an individual.” Staff are able to research and pursue relevant training activities and apply learnings into their work.

Interviewees identified cultural training opportunities as having a significant impact on both their work practices and personal knowledge. One staff gave the example of participating in several Indigenous trainings and then being able to bring that information home to share with her spouse (who is Indigenous) which resulted in him learning new things about his culture as well.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Staff appreciate the value of training opportunities.
- Professional development increases the confidence of staff in their skills.
- Staff apply acquired knowledge to enhance their personal lives.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Collaborate with other organizations around training opportunities.
- Ensure administration staff have opportunities for professional development.
- Include staff input into training opportunities.
- Ensure the Club is providing diversity (culture, gender, ethnicity) training annually.

Finding 7 - A better you means a better us.

KEY INSIGHT: Self-care is important to being a valuable, effective team member and maintaining a healthy personal life.

With the support of the Boys and Girls Club, staff recognize the importance of taking an active role in their well-being and happiness through intentional self-care. One interviewee stated, “We always promote making healthy/good choices with participants, and that’s encouraged me to do the same.”

Staff recognize that the Club values work-life balance, including family time, personal time, friendships, and effective self-care practices. They realize it is important to have healthy boundaries in order to be the best version of themselves. One interviewee spoke about learning more about herself through courses she took at the Boys and Girls Club to help others. She said it was exciting and hard to learn about herself but that she likes the development and learning how to apply it to both herself and the kids.

Interviewees indicated that focusing on self-care helps them stay refreshed and balanced, both professionally and personally. The data shows that interviewees are implementing reflective practices on a consistent basis. Several interviewees referred to the “family-like atmosphere” at the Boys and Girls Club where they feel supported to spend time with their families and in the community (volunteering), in addition to completing work responsibilities. An interviewee stated that she has learned to say no and have boundaries with work and people so that she can put her family first. She shared:

I'm making sure that I'm doing things that make me healthy as a person here at work and at home. This has always been important to me, but this message has not always been at places that I've worked in the past. At the club, the message that I get loud and clear is that if I don't take care of myself, I can't be the best version of myself. I appreciate that.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Staff value self-care.
- The Club promotes self-care practices for all staff.
- The awareness and practice of self-care directly lead to good attendance at work.
- Healthy staff deliver superior programming to children, youth, and families.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Encourage self-care activities across the Club.
- Create a Wellness Day.
- Create staff health initiatives (collective walking around the world, positive affirmations, strong together initiative).

Finding 8 - In it to Win it.

KEY INSIGHT: Staff report they are passionate about the participants they work with, the programs, and the new opportunities that they experience at the Boys and Girls Club.

The data show that the values of interviewees align with those of the Boys and Girls Club. People state that they enjoy what they do and are invested in their work. Staff speak of being in a work environment with co-workers, participants, and opportunities that allow them to feel like they are making a difference, which energizes them. One interviewee said, "Realizing the passion that I have for people. I've always wanted to be in a helping field, and the Club is a great place that has fostered that attitude. I am where I want to be."

One interviewee discovered that she truly has a passion for affecting real change in others and influencing the systems in place that support programs. She said, "I truly have a passion and a desire to not just cope and deal with the status quo and how things are but, I'm developing the knowledge moving into the future to be able to actually affect change and make a difference."

Staff indicated that they feel supported in their work and, as a result, this builds confidence in them and the abilities they have. An interviewee stated that the Club is in a small community, and she gets to build relationships and see kids grow. Current and past participants recognize her in the community and run to her with hugs and greetings. She said, "These are the true gifts of the job." This adds to her enjoyment every day as she enters the Club, as well as when she is in the community and sees children and parents who are excited to see her.

Staff interviewed spoke with a fondness of the Club, and they want others to know about it and attend programming. Said one interviewee, "I promote the Boys and Girls Club to people I know and tell them there's an out of school care, daycare, and other programs."

Interviewees spoke of the impact that working at the Club has had on them by working in a team environment with supportive co-workers, developing confidence and skills they may not have had in the past, being part of participants' lives, and making a difference. One Interviewee stated that by working at the Club and developing skills, he has internally blossomed. He shared, "I am a better parent, husband, brother, son, and cousin from working at the Boys and Girls Club."

SIGNIFICANCE

- Staff expressed a passion for and investment in their job and have strong value alignment with the Club.
- Staff work in a positive, close-knit, team environment.
- Staff feel supported professionally and personally.
- Staff have opportunities to grow and develop.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Share staff-highlighted stories within the club & community.
- Ensure the Club continue to listen to and provide opportunities to implement staff's initiatives.
- Provide large and small group team-building opportunities.
- Opportunities to share best practices and collaborate across programs.

Conclusion

Insights into Impact

Through Project Impact interviews, staff have revealed that the Boys and Girls Club of Wetaskiwin is a welcoming, accepting, and positive place to work. A passion and desire for staff to be at the Club is apparent. This passion also appears to broaden deeper into the community with a strong belief of the importance of community collaboration.

Staff have identified positive relationships as being a significant piece of their overall involvement and successes through the Club. Relationship skills have been developed, and positive connections have been made between coworkers, as well as between staff and participants. Interviewees have identified learning relational skills, as well as opportunities to practice and develop these through positive connections.

Findings show that self-care and healthy lifestyles are promoted across the Club through education, programming, and an overall positive atmosphere for staff to learn and develop individually. This appears to have assisted staff in developing an overall sense of importance for self-care and healthy living which has also transferred into their personal lives.

Staff have identified the opportunity to develop a variety of skills through training opportunities and utilizing these through programming and connections at the Boys and Girls Club, which in turn increases confidence at work and personally. Many staff can identify opportunities to be leaders. However, this is also an area the club sees the ability to grow through opportunities and common language.

Steps Forward

- Ensure the Club continues to listen to and provide opportunities to implement staff initiatives.
- Communicate and provide opportunities for staff to lead others, using consistent leadership terminology.
- Include staff input into training opportunities.
- Create staff health initiatives (collective walking around the world, positive affirmations, strong together initiative).
- Ensure skill development opportunities are available to address program delivery weaknesses.
- Facilitate training or mentoring opportunities within our Club and with neighboring Clubs to enhance skills.
- Ensure informative reporting on community collaborations to create a deeper understanding for all staff.
- Provide ongoing "relationship-focused" training opportunities.