

*Creating Magical Moments...*



**Big Brothers Big Sisters  
of Prince George**

*Corporate Sponsorship 2008*



## **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Prince George**

**“Creating Magical Moments...”**

*Big Brothers Big Sisters believes in magic! Why? Because we have seen it over and over again! Magic is the sparkle in a child’s eyes when they succeed at something new, or the excitement that a volunteer feels when they are phoning their “little” because they want to “hang out”. Our magic is about moments and we know that by working with your company we can create those Magical Moments for even more children!*

### Table of Contents

Applicant Information	3
Our Vision	3
Our Organization	3
Programs	3
Organization Focus	4
Project Description	5
Program One: Youth Experiencing Success	5
Program Two: Traditional Program	7
Program Three: In-School Mentoring	9
The Proposed Commitment	11
Program Specific Costs	11
Reporting Period	12



## Applicant Information

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## Our Vision

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*“Every child in Prince George who needs a mentor has a mentor”*

## Our Organization

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC) is the leading child and youth service organization providing mentoring programs across the country. Since its formation in 1913 Big Brothers Big Sisters has been and will continue to provide quality mentors to Canadian children. Currently there are over 150 agencies supporting over 1000 communities across the country.

Big Brothers Big Sisters matches caring volunteers with children aged seven to eighteen who are in need of a mentor. These volunteers do not take a parental role in the child’s life but rather provide them with stability, guidance, friendship and becomes another support and role-model in the child’s life.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Prince George was established in 1979 and serves children living in the Prince George Area. The job of our agency is to provide support to the matches and children in our various programs. We currently employ five full time staff members (Executive Director, Fundraising/Events Coordinator, Two Mentoring Coordinators and Administrative Assistant) and work year round to secure funding to further develop our programs. All of our programs and services are funded through agency organized fundraisers, grants and individual and corporate giving.

## Programs

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With the guidance of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, we are continually evaluating our programs and making the necessary changes so our agency can continue to grow and serve even more children. Our agency plays a critical role in the social and emotional development of children and serve the majority of children through Traditional and In-School mentoring programs (in conjunction with School District 57) where mentoring is done on a 1:1 basis. BBBS also delivers a program within a group setting to children involved in the Y.E.S. (Youth Experiencing Success) initiative. This program works with children in permanent care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Carrier Sekani Family Services. In 2006 our agency served 132 children in our various mentoring programs and through strategic planning has set the goal of growing our programs by a minimum of ten percent each year for the next five years.

## Organizational Focus

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Big Brothers Big Sisters knows the importance of mentoring we are looking for companies who can help us strive towards our vision of ensuring that “every child who needs a mentor has a mentor”.

Why Mentoring? It is simple, **Mentoring Works!** As a preventive program, the benefits of mentoring have been well documented and have a positive effect on the community.

A study of five school-based mentoring programs conducted in 2002 by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America found that:

- 64% of the children developed a more positive attitude towards school
- 58% achieved a higher grad in social studies, languages and math
- 60% improved their relationship with adults
- 56% improved their relationship with peers
- 55% of the children were found to be better able to express their feelings
- 64% developed higher levels of self-confidence

In 2005, almost 3000 children living in British Columbia were partnered with a mentor in one of the many Big Brothers Big Sisters programs. The government in British Columbia is supportive of the work that our organization does because it is proven that mentoring works. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada has completed studies on the effects of children who have a positive mentor in their lives. They found that:

- These children are less likely to lose their tempers when they get angry
- These children are less often sad, fearful, angry, frustrated and anxious
- 46% are less likely to initiate drug and alcohol use
- 78% of “littles” who came from a social assistance background no longer rely on this form of income

However, many children in Prince George currently do not have the luxury of a mentor and it is showing in our community. Between November 2005 and November 2006, **702** youth were involved with the RCMP in some way. Once they get involved with the law, working with these kids becomes very reactive. It is our goal to engage those at risk before it is too late!

In an article published in the *Prince George Citizen* on November 5, 2004 on the topic of crime prevention, the **Superintendent of the Prince George RCMP Dahl Chambers** was quoted as saying: *“It is not just a police issue, it is not just a courts issue. If we don’t, as a local society, start mentoring our children and taking care of each other, we will continue to fill the jails and people will continue to fall under the influence of addictive substances. There are people out there who might say what goes on outside their own home is none of their business, but it is your business. The effects of crime and addiction and broken families are felt by us all.”*



## Program Description

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Our agency is looking forward to creating a partnership where we can create magical moments and endless opportunities for children living in Prince George.

The work that Big Brothers Big Sisters does can't be compared, for it is unique. It isn't something you hold in your hands, see, touch or feel - it is intangible ! It is a seed that is planted to ensure that the next generation is given an opportunity to understand that they can move mountains! It is a friendship that is built on trust and understanding . The saying is so true – “It takes a whole village to raise a child” but it is also true that one positive role model can have an everlasting effect on a child who is just looking for someone who is willing to spend time with them, guide them and BELIEVE in them.

Big Brothers Big Sisters partnership with your company will help create “magical moments” for children in our **Traditional Big Brother/Big Sister Program** (inclusive of our Couples for Kids Program), **In-School Mentoring Program** and our **Youth Experiencing Success (Y.E.S.) Group Mentoring Program**.

In the past, these programs have been funded through various grants, fundraising initiatives and our social enterprise, Big Deals Department Thrift Store. In March of this year we were forced to close our thrift store when we were unable to find a suitable location at a lease rate we could afford (the building we were in is being torn down to house the new RCMP station). Our goal is to establish partnerships with our funders over a 3 year period which will give Big Brothers Big Sisters the ability to maintain our current structure while focusing on our commitment of growth.

### Program One: Y.E.S. Group Mentoring Program

The Y.E.S program is in the middle of its third year at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Prince George. The program is based on group mentoring for children who are in the continuing care/guardianship of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Carrier Sekani Family Services. The initial pilot program was funded through the University of Northern British Columbia in 2004 and our first group activity took place in October of that year. We received funding for the 2006 fiscal year through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy which is a Federal Government program. This funding ended March 2007.

The program serves children between the ages of 8 and 13 and although the program is not exclusive to Aboriginal children, currently 100% of the children in the program are of Aboriginal descent. The referrals for the Y.E.S. Program come directly from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Carrier Sekani Family Services.

We would like to see the program increase from our current numbers of 13 children being served to 18 children over the next year and to double that over the next 3 years. The children are currently brought together once a month for a fun, interactive experience with our volunteers and a “guest” or “guests” from the community. We would like to increase the activities to twice a month as the children really thrive in this environment.

There is a very real need for Youth Mentoring from an Urban Aboriginal perspective. In Northern B.C., a high percentage of the children residing in Foster Care or Group Homes are of Aboriginal descent. The children in the Y.E.S. Program are likely to remain in the care of MCFD and CSFS until they turn 18 years of age. Since children who have been “in care” for a long period of time rarely return to reside permanently in their “home communities”, it is essential that children are given opportunities to learn about their culture and about the opportunities they have in the urban setting. Participation in community activities is a significant part of socialization and is critical in helping these children feel a sense of “belonging” and a sense of “community”. Through the Y.E.S. Program, we hope to

## **What are the objectives of this program?**

This program has been developed to achieve two objectives: Mentoring through Education and Socialization of children.

**Education:** While this program was not developed to deliver curriculum and help with school work, research has shown that children who are mentored are more likely to achieve higher grades and develop more positive attitudes towards school. We have also received feedback from Carrier Sekani that they have seen a huge improvement in school with the children currently in their care since they have become involved in the Y.E.S. Program.

**Socialization:** Socialization is a big part of the Y.E.S. Program. The children in the Y.E.S. Program are taught many social and life skills while they attend activities in our community. It is the objective of this program to teach these children through opportunities they might not otherwise have had, in addition to expanding their knowledge and understanding of resources available to them within Prince George. While they are at an Agency activity, they are just regular children. They are not a “foster child”, an “aboriginal child”, a “white child”, a “disabled child”, or anything other than, just a “child”! The program incorporates culture on many different levels, including Aboriginal culture, and provides consistent role models and friends who will provide them with support, friendship and improve their self-esteem.

## **What needs, issues, barriers or challenges will be addressed?**

The Y.E.S. program is a unique program. The children who are involved come from a world many of us will never experience. Virtually every child in the continuing care of MCFD and CSFS has been exposed to, in one form or another, violence, alcohol and drug use, poverty, loss, instability in relationships and at home and perhaps they have also struggled with learning, developmental or behavioural challenges. Everyone involved in their life is paid to be involved – except the volunteers in this program. The lives of children removed from their homes because they required “protection” can often feel chaotic and the presence of role models help aid the child in coping with the changes that life has to offer. This support network built early on in a child’s life can provide children with the support, education, self-esteem and social capacity to avoid involvement in a life of crime, drug use or exposure to sexual exploitation.

Sandra Ritchot, Supervisor/Transition Coordinator, CSFS: “Carrier Sekani supports the Y.E.S. Program as it allows socialization to occur in a safe and educational setting. This is a real need for children who have been traumatized as they can come together without any stigma. The Y.E.S. Program has benefited CSFS children with positive results. It uses positive social and peer interactions and incorporates fun as well as learning more about their own creativity. The program builds self esteem, self care and uses a strength based approach to teach children about what they can do and assists them in becoming the most capable person a child can be.”

## **Program Evaluation**

Program evaluation takes place mid-way through the program year (January) and at the end of the program year (June) when those who turn have turned 13 graduate. We currently do not run the program during July and August. Discussion with Social Workers, Foster Parents, Volunteers and the children take place to obtain qualitative data which will give us a sense of the success of the program.

## Program Two: Traditional Program

The Traditional Big Brother / Big Sister program is one of our most popular programs in the community as it is the program that most people are familiar with. This program matches caring volunteers with children aged 7-18 from a single parent household. These matches spend a couple hours a week talking, laughing, going to the movies, making cookies, hanging out, and most importantly building a relationship that is going to last a lifetime.

Having a positive mentor makes a **big** difference in a child's life but being a "big" can also make a difference in the volunteer's life. Frank Peebles, former Big Brother (matched ten years): "Our lives intertwined. Bruce (Little Brother) became the most constant person in my life outside of family. That's just the point of the organization's name - he become my brother....I know that he and I will always be on terms much deeper than friendship."

The major problem faced by the traditional program is the demand for volunteers. On a regular basis we have over **thirty** children screened and waiting patiently for a volunteer. This does not include the list of 40 children who are still waiting to be screened. The average wait for a child to be matched is two years and there is the possibility at this time that some of those children will never be matched. Our agency realizes this hurdle and would like to focus some of our limited resources into recruiting new volunteers, while at the same time we can offer quality programs to the children that we are currently serving.

### What are the objectives of this program?

**To: Enhance the capacity and resiliency of children.** Through enabling children to build relationships with caring community adult volunteers, as well as agency staff, children develop positive relationship skills and confidence. Through creating linkages to other relevant community groups (e.g. sports teams, recreational activities, camps), and advocating for additional community resources (e.g. sponsorships for sports equipment, swimming lessons, tuition for camp); BBBS expands the web of community resources and partners supporting the child.

**To: Enhance the capacity of families.** BBBS staff and volunteers build relationships with parents of children referred to their programs. In the referral process, parents themselves identify one or more family challenges, such as poverty, single parenthood, poor parenting, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, alcohol or drug addictions. As relationships are built between parents, volunteers and staff, complex, compound family needs may become apparent. The trust relationship established through mentoring enables agency staff or volunteers to encourage family action, linking families to other relevant community programs (e.g. parenting programs, suicide crisis team, and counseling) or community resources and partners supporting these families, and minimizes or prevents future crisis.

**To: Enhance the capacity of community.** Through training community mentors to become community resources for children and parents, mentoring agencies build a skilled base of volunteer resources within the community. This volunteer base extends far beyond the number of volunteers in mentoring "matches". BBBS acts as a trusted intermediary, through which corporate donors can link to families with needs, or agencies/schools serving families with needs. For example, corporate sponsors may donate money to sponsor Christmas hampers for families, gifts for children in need, or tickets to sporting events. BBBS arranges for the purchase and delivery of these goods (BBBS "Secret Santa" initiative). BBBS also builds relationships with community organizations, collaborating to identify and address emerging needs for children and families. Finally, BSBB advocates on behalf of children, families, and cultures with the communities it serves, in order to foster an environment that offers equitable opportunities for all children.

## Benefits of the Traditional Program

Mentoring plays a critical role in a comprehensive prevention agenda. By placing more children in the circle of care of a positive adult role model, we can ensure that more children embark on a path of positive growth and development. In some cases, we can break the cycle of negative outcomes and reduce the financial burden of intervention for future taxpayers. The value of prevention is enormous through the support of trained and committed volunteers. These volunteers provide a service our community could not otherwise afford.

Research statistics tell our story: <sup>1</sup>

- Little Brothers and Little Sisters were 46 percent less likely than controls to initiate drug use during the study period.
- For every 100 youth in this age group who start to use drugs, only 54 similar youth who have a Big Brother or Big Sister will start using drugs.
- Little Brothers and Little Sisters were 27 percent less likely than controls to initiate alcohol use during the study period.
- Little Brothers and Little Sisters were almost one-third less likely than controls to hit someone.
- Little Brothers and Little Sisters skipped half as many days of school as did control youth, felt more competent about doing schoolwork, skipped fewer classes and showed modest gains in their grade point averages.
- The quality of relationships with parents was better for Little Brothers and Little Sisters than for controls at the end of the study period, due primarily to a higher level of trust in the parent.
- There were improvements in Little Brothers' and Little Sisters' relationships with their peers relative to their control counterparts.

Prevention-based mentoring programs lever substantial resources to serve high numbers of children at a very low cost per child. Volunteers trained and supported by professionals, work at the front line with children. We also know intuitively that prevention programs can increase children's self-esteem and self-confidence, diverting some from more costly interventions which, at the extreme, might include incarceration or court proceedings.

- It costs approximately \$2,500 to make and maintain one Traditional Big & Little match for one year. The total value of the match is closer to \$7,000: a mentor spends approximately 50 weeks a year, four hours per week, with their Little, at a value of \$25 per hour;
- The daily cost of incarceration in BC is \$147, or just under \$54,000 per year.

## Program Evaluation

Our agency strictly adheres to the standards of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada in regards to match monitoring and reporting on the progress and success of the match. Once a match is formed our Mentoring Coordinator conducts regular match monitoring with the child, volunteer and parent. At that time each party can address any concerns that they may have, and make suggestions on how they can build on their relationship. On a regular basis our agency reviews its policies and procedures to ensure that we are being as efficient as possible. In April 2007 we received a grant from the Prince George Community Foundation to hire a contract position to work with staff to review what currently exists, complete research and author the new manual. The creation of the new manual will allow us to continue building our capacity through sustainable fund development, community engagement and internal efficiencies and quality, with a focus on growth – ensuring that we find positive adult role models for those children in need in our Community!

<sup>1</sup> Tierney, J.P. and Grossman, J.B. (2000) "Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters". Public Private Ventures

## **Program Three: In-School Mentoring Program**

In 1998, our agency was being affected by the growing trend of fewer male volunteers. We began looking to In-School Mentoring, which allows for cross-gender matching, reaching local children sooner, in a safe and comfortable atmosphere. The Vancouver Foundation provided the seed funding in a one-time-only grant.

In-School Mentoring is a community program, offered in a school setting, and matches one caring adult or "mentor" with one "at risk" child "mentee" with the goal of strengthening the self-esteem and school performance of the child who is experiencing difficulty adjusting socially, emotionally or academically. The program is a joint venture with School District 57 and children are referred by the teachers, counselors or the principals and are kids who demonstrate special social needs which can be enhanced through a relationship with a positive, caring and reliable adult role model, or "mentor".

Currently the fastest growing program at Big Brothers Big Sisters in Prince George, the program has gone from serving 6 children in 1998 to 65 YTD in 2006. The program is currently being delivered in 17 schools within the Prince George school district and is available in all 26 schools. Another benefit of the program is that children who have been waiting on the waitlist for a "Big" are also given the option of going into the In-school program where there is a more immediate match with a mentor.

### **The Program:**

A mentor who volunteers for the In-School Mentoring Program commits to meeting with his or her child, or "mentee" for at least one full school year, September to June. Often however, these matches last year after year. The match meetings take place at the school at a time that is chosen by the teacher as the most appropriate for the child and are approximately one hour in length. The school provides a room for the meetings, as well as the gym, school kitchen, library or computer lab, if available. Activity boxes are currently available at the Big Brothers Big Sisters office, offering games, crafts or other activity suggestions to be used during the meeting.

The goals of activities are to:

- Get to know each other; to relate, to talk, to communicate
- To relax together
- To have fun together
- To help the Mentee feel positive about his/her value

Occasionally, In-School Mentor matches may be invited to a Big Brothers Big Sisters group activity. These group activities, such as our annual Christmas Dinner and Bowl for Kids Sake give In-School mentoring matches the opportunity to meet with other Traditional matches, which can also help in the social development of our kids.

Throughout the year we work very closely with School District 57 to this program. Once a year we have a formal meeting with School District Administration, Principals and Councilors who are involved with the Program to improve the overall direction. Brian Pepper, Superintendent of Schools, School District 57: "Administrators tell me that this is a very valuable program especially for the schools with a high percentage of vulnerable, at risk children. The Big Brothers, Big Sisters Organization in an excellent source of support for families and children in need."

## Benefits of the In-School Mentoring Program:

The In-School Mentoring Program provides children with many of the same benefits of the Traditional Program as we are matching children in need with a positive mentor. This program allows us to serve more children who are in need as we are able to cross-gender match and mentors are able to take a second child if they feel that they have the time to commit. The In-School Mentoring Program is a much easier program to recruit volunteers for due to the reduced time commitment. Therefore, the In-School Mentoring Program is much more cost effective to the agency while still offering a 1:1 mentoring relationship to a child in need.

This program provides school staff and the community with the opportunity to work directly and collaboratively together in the support of healthy and successful children. The community understanding and tolerance is enhanced, as individual volunteers gain a more sophisticated understanding of challenges faced by families with children “at risk”. These challenges often exceed the academic challenges that can be addressed by the schools. The program identifies a clear role for the community to support schools in addressing these broader issues. The In-School Mentoring program also enhances the communities social responsibility through the engagement of individual private citizens and corporate citizens as mentors. Through mentorship roles, citizens see the tangible impact on their enhanced responsibility.

Jackie, a teacher involved with the program in Prince George: “Thank-you so much for your help this year with matching Matthew and Brett. From my point of view, there were very, very many positive outcomes for Matthew. He was a happier little boy this year during the time when Brett was his mentor. I would certainly recommend that the match continue next year if at all possible. Matthew needs a good male role model in his life, and Brett provided the very best example of sincerity, reliability and kindness”.

The long-term benefits to the community are far reaching and perhaps not immediately understood. In September, 2006, **Honorable Shirley Bond**, MLA Prince George Mount Robson, Minister for Education and Minister responsible for Early Learning and Literacy and Deputy Premier spoke at the Big Brothers Big Sisters annual BC/Alberta Fall Conference. Her words echoed the importance of mentoring: **“Mentors and the pairings of Bigs and Littles are making a difference in children’s lives and I’m not even sure the system can figure out how to achieve that kind of result. Sixty-four per cent develop higher levels of self-esteem. Why do you think children get involved in things that really we wish they didn’t? Because their self-esteem simply doesn’t allow them to have the courage and the confidence of a child mentored. Those are the kinds of things that make a difference”.**

- Mentored youth learn how to lead meaningful, successful lives and exhibit increased self-esteem and attitude.
- Volunteers become a compass in a young person’s life, guiding them into adulthood and through the process become forever changed by the experience.
- The trust relationship established through mentoring enables agency staff or volunteers to encourage family action, linking them to other relevant community programs.
- Schools see a difference in children who are mentored through better attendance rates; behavior in class; and improved interaction with peers.

## Program Evaluation

Like the Traditional Program the In-School adheres to the standards of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada in regards to match monitoring and reporting on the progress and success of the match. At the beginning of the school year the Mentoring Coordinator visits the school to open the match and discuss the match. Throughout the year we remain in contact with the match to ensure that there are not any concerns. Each match has a closure face-to-face interview that talks about the success of the match.