

# SUPPORTING YOUTH, SHAPING TOMORROW

## ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



BGC Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Edmonton & Area







## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we operate on Treaty 6 Territory which is the traditional meeting grounds, gathering places and travelling route of the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Metis, Dene and Nakota Sioux. We honour and respect the Elders, the history and languages, ceremonies and cultures of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands, past, present and future. As a child and youth-serving organization, we understand it's critical to decolonize our mindset and our practices.

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## ANTI-RACISM STATEMENT

BGCBigs is dedicated to supporting the thousands of children and youth across all the communities we serve. Many of the young people we serve, and the volunteers we support, represent communities that are, and have been, affected by racism. We're committed to ending the societal and systemic racism that has been built upon years of complacency and acceptance of the status quo. Racism cannot be tolerated in any form, in any way.

Three of our core values: Belonging, Respect and Speaking Out, are central to our approach to inclusion across our organization. We must work hard to take responsibility to lead and to help demolish the inequities that racism has created.

Our goal at BGCBigs is to ensure that our children, youth and families are supported and that they have access to opportunities. Our youth have the right to be full participants in society and to walk without fear of racism.

We cannot stand by. We will have the difficult conversations and open dialogue that are necessary to move forward and to build a just society for all.

BGCBigs is committed to being an active part of the solution.

## MESSAGE FROM: BOARD PRESIDENT & CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

This past year marked a defining moment for BGCBigS.

With the transition to a Co-Executive Director model and the support of a dedicated Board, staff and community, we opened a new chapter of listening, learning and leading—side by side with the children, youth and families we serve.

Across our work, one truth stood out: The needs of young people are evolving. And we must evolve with them.

### OUR CHALLENGES

The landscape for children and youth is growing more complex. We saw a rise in mental health challenges, increased exposure to violence and a greater need for social-emotional support. These realities required deeper training, time and care from our staff and mentors, and demanded new approaches to how we respond.

At the same time, demand for our programs continued to grow, particularly among newcomer and economically vulnerable families. We proudly served more young people than the year before, but the resources to do so have not kept pace. Volunteer recruitment remained inconsistent, with approximately half of all volunteers withdrawing their applications prior to being matched, and funding across the non-profit sector became increasingly competitive.

Mentoring also became more complex, with fewer volunteers to match to young people; finding the right match required creativity and flexibility. In response, we re-evaluated our models, developed new supports for volunteers and remained focused on providing safe, consistent relationships for young people navigating a world of change.

Despite these challenges, our mission never wavered. In fact, it grew stronger.

### OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We are proud of how our team met this year with courage, clarity and care. We strengthened services for older youth by launching Change Through Challenge and deepening partnerships with organizations like YMCA and Kickstand to support those aged 14 and up. These efforts reflected our belief that programming must evolve in tandem with the people it serves.

Young people didn't just participate in our programs—they shaped them. We created more opportunities for youth leadership, voice and influence across the organization. These youth-led insights and experiences are now integral to how we design, deliver and evaluate our work.

We also made strategic strides in volunteer engagement. Through partnerships with Volunteer Alberta, Alberta Mentoring Partnership and other community partners, we're learning what today's volunteers need and how to support their involvement better. As such, we successfully matched hundreds of children and youth with caring mentors. We also examined our systems and made changes to provide alternative options for mentoring to occur and to reopen our community-based mentoring application to the public.

Our corporate mentoring programs also grew, and we secured dedicated (multi-year) funding for initiatives like the Students Mentoring Students Bursary program, helping us to invest in the future of mentorship.

Internally, as we shifted to a Co-Executive Director model we emphasized the care required to usher in these changes seamlessly.

For our staff, we focused on investing in their wellness and leadership development.



MESSAGE FROM:  
BOARD PRESIDENT & CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

We want staff to feel equipped to thrive in a dynamic environment.

Last but not least, we revisited our strategic plan with intention by engaging our team and rooting our next steps in innovation, equity and shared purpose.

We acknowledge that all of our accomplishments could not be done without the incredible support of our funders, donors and partners. Incredible individuals, businesses and community members who continue to rise up every day, contributing to what makes BGCBigs the place it is for children, youth and families

LOOKING FORWARD

We step into the next year energized and aligned. Our focus is on expanding high-quality programming that meets young people where they are and walks with them toward what's next.

We will increase opportunities for youth-led initiatives, reopen public access to community-based mentoring with intentional scope and continue investing in volunteer supports that make long-term involvement sustainable.

Internally, we're building from within.

Our team will benefit from expanded training, leadership development and wellness resources to meet the demands of an ever-changing world.

Alongside our Board, we are also deepening our reconciliation journey. With a thoughtful action plan and framework, we will ensure our support for Indigenous young people is co-created, respectful and meaningful.

We're enhancing systems and infrastructure, from IT upgrades to better data tools, that will allow us to work smarter and measure our impact more effectively so we can adapt swiftly to the evolving needs of the children and families we serve.

And we're doubling down on collaboration. We know that big change doesn't happen alone. That's why we're committed to strengthening partnerships across sectors, from funders and schools to governments and fellow youth-serving agencies.

The year ahead holds both promise and responsibility. But we are ready.

**Supporting youth to dream bigger.**  
**Supporting youth to unlock their potential.**  
**Supporting youth to shape their future.**

With gratitude,



**Phillip Peters**  
Board President



**Kerry Woodland**  
Co-Executive Director



**Kim Collister**  
Co-Executive Director

## WHO WE ARE

BGC Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area\* (BGCBigS) is a community-supported organization committed to the healthy development of children, youth and their families.



**145**  
Staff



**2,219**  
Volunteers<sup>†</sup>

## WHO WE SERVE

We deliver impactful mentoring, out-of-school programming and youth engagement initiatives for children and youth ages 6–24, by creating meaningful opportunities that empower young people to thrive.



**4,550**  
Children &  
Youth Served<sup>†</sup>

\*Surrounding areas include: Leduc/Devon & Area, Parkland County, St. Albert/Morinville & Area, Strathcona County and Lac La Biche  
†Unique volunteers and children & youth served.





# BGCBIGS PROGRAMS

BGCBigs’ programs fall under three main umbrellas:

- Community Clubs & Out-of-School-Time (OST)
- Mentoring
- Youth Engagement

From April 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025, these programs were delivered to 4,550 children and youth across Edmonton & surrounding areas with the help of 2,219 volunteers.

## LEGEND

 Community Clubs/OST

 Mentoring

 Youth Engagement

## DESCRIPTION

### COMMUNITY CLUBS/OST

Safe places and fun spaces for kids to go after school and during the summer to connect with positive role models and peers, enjoy a healthy meal and explore core program areas.

### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

A spectrum of program options, that engage and support youth, giving them opportunities and the ability to build skills and enhance their young lives. These programs focus on youth leadership, volunteering and job readiness, and programs like DiversionFIRST (a partnered effort) steer youth away from crime and/or connect them to community resources; while a new program called Change Through Challenge, aims to reduce the chance of young people engaging in risky behaviours.

### MENTORING

One-to-one and/or mentoring in a group setting where a young person is matched with a caring adult who will spend time with them in a variety of ways, from simply getting to know one another, to sharing hobbies and/or providing academic support.





						
COMMUNITY-BASED	SCHOOL-BASED	SITE-BASED	CLUBS	OST	YOUTH EMPLOYMENT	YOUTH SUPPORT
Big Brothers	In-School Mentor (Adult)	Game Changers	Duggan	Delton	Teen Takeover	DiversionFIRST
Big Sisters	In-School Mentor (Teen)		Kinsmen	Eastglen	This Way Onward	Circle Supports
Big Siblings	Supervised Teen Mentor		Londonderry	John A MacDougall	Next Gen	Change Through Challenge
Mentoring Youth & Young Adults from Care	Corporate Mentoring		McCauley	Spruce Ave Jr. High		
Youth in Care	Students Mentoring Students Bursary		Rundle	St. Alphonsus Elementary		
PRISM	Group Mentoring		Tweddle			
	Tutoring		West			



EVERY PROGRAM. EVERY YOUNG PERSON. REAL OUTCOMES

BGCBIGS IN ACTION

At BGCBigS we report **real outcomes** that encourage **real change** through a variety of program areas. Here's a brief snapshot of what that looks like...

CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVED BY PROGRAM AREA



VOLUNTEERS BY PROGRAM AREA



MEASURED MOMENTS. REAL RESULTS.  
OUR SUPPORT LOOKS LIKE..



\*Results are from the reporting period of April 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025.

# EVERY PROGRAM. EVERY YOUNG PERSON. REAL OUTCOMES RESULTS\*

We recognize that change occurs over time and we have designed outcomes to reflect this process through BGCBigs' Theory of Change'. We first hope to see **positive reactions** from young people who participate in our programs, followed by **shifts in their attitudes** and mindsets, ultimately leading to **positive behaviour change**.

Each year, BGCBigs relies on our program surveys as a crucial evaluation tool to inform our work. These surveys help us to understand the impact our programs are having on those we serve. This allows us to ensure our programs continue to align with our vision: **All young people discover and achieve their full potential.**

## AT BGCBIGS, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE...

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEMSELVES & OTHERS	
96%	Feel a sense of belonging through the program they participate in.
94%	Have an enhanced sense of self-identity and self-worth, feel more confident and optimistic, and practice growth mindset.
91%	Establish, engage in, and maintain positive relationships while preventing, managing and resolving interpersonal conflict.
LEARNING AND GROWING	
95%	Feel empowered to participate in learning and have increased awareness of education, career, and personal interests.
93%	Have positive attitudes regarding learning and they feel ready to set goals towards their education, career and personal interests.
90%	Are engaged at school, set and monitor progress towards education, career, and personal goals, and have a positive influence on others.
GAINING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE	
94%	Can take the perspective of and empathize with others as well as appreciate individual and group similarities and differences.
91%	Feel supported in assessing their feelings, interest, values and strengths.
89%	Can appropriately express and regulate their emotions, utilize available resources and demonstrate appropriate decision making.

*\*Survey results are from the reporting period of April 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025.  
[Click here to view BGCBigs' Outcomes Definitions & Methodology.](#)  
BGCBigs' Theory of Change can be found on our website.*



We want to extend special thanks to the dedicated individuals who make up our Board, committees and advisory teams. Without your time, expertise and passion for the work, we couldn't achieve the same promising results that we do, toward helping more young people reach their full potential.

BOARD MEMBERS

**Philip Peters**  
President/Chair of Board

**Rick Zasada**  
Past President

**Catherine Swindlehurst**  
Director at Large

**Deborah Fisher**  
Director at Large

**Doug Ingersoll\***  
Director at Large

**Elizabeth Tkachuk**  
Treasurer

**Leanne McFee\***  
Director at Large

**Marnie Pearce**  
Director at Large

**Maryann Everett**  
Director at Large

**Michelle Millard**  
Director at Large

**Mike Morrison**  
Vice President

**Nancy Reynolds**  
Director at Large

**Omolara Oladipo**  
Director at Large

**Pamela Sparklingeyes**  
Director at Large

**Selvi Sinnadurai**  
Director at Large

**Susan Makale\***  
Director at Large

**Thomas Woodburn**  
Director at Large

*\*Retired from the Board as of September 2024.*

FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Elizabeth Tkachuk (Chair)**

**Blake Shewchuk**

**Chris Franssen**

**David Buist**

**Johnathan Whitmore**

**Philip Peters**

**Valerie Kham**

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Rick Zasada (Chair)**

**Deborah Fisher**

**Catherine Swindlehurst**

**Karen Ceasar**

**Maryann Everett**

**Susan Rockwood**

GOLF ADVISORY TEAM

**Heather McLeod (Chair)**

**A.J. Keller**

**Elia Katz**

**Matt Zakresky**

**Rick Zasada**

LAC LA BICHE ADVISORY TEAM

**James Couse**

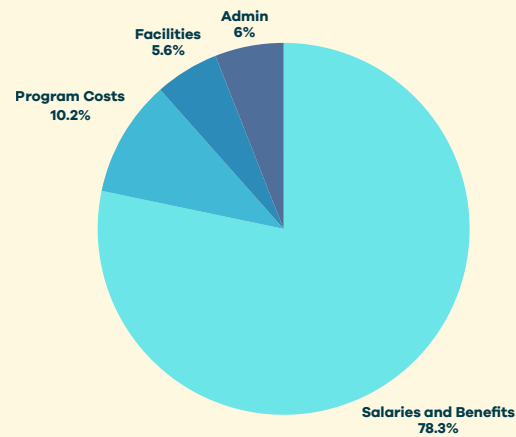
**Kristen Shewchukk**

**Lauren Kamke**

**Roger Thorson**

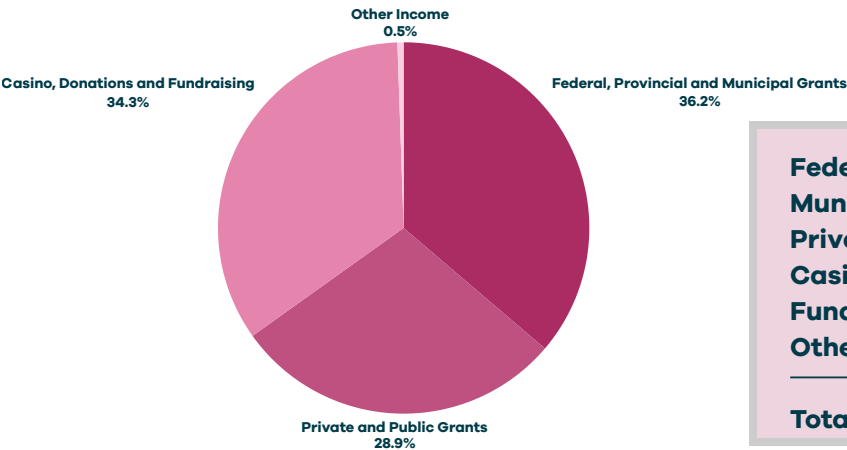
**Shelley Bertschi**

EXPENSES



Salaries & Benefits	\$7,220,592
Program Costs	\$938,213
Facilities	\$514,624
Admin	\$551,068
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Total:	\$9,224,497

REVENUE



Federal, Provincial & Municipal Grants	\$3,23,900
Private & Public Grants	\$2,587,767
Casinos, Donations & Fundraising	\$3,064,662
Other Income	\$48,013
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Total:	\$8,926,342



\*Expenses are from the reporting period of April 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025.  
Our detailed Audited Financial Statements are available on our website [BGCBig.ca](http://BGCBig.ca)



## GRATITUDE REPORT

Thank you to the individuals and organizations who help BGCBigs pave the way forward for young people. Your gifts help us grow, adapt and deliver programs that meet the ever-changing needs of future generations. Whether building the way with visionary support, helping us explore new approaches, or championing consistent, reliable impact, your generosity makes it possible.

Your continued support drives change and we're deeply grateful.

### BUILDERS OF POTENTIAL (\$350,000+)

With their extraordinary generosity, our Builders of Potential create lasting opportunities for children and youth. Their vision helps lay the foundation for brighter futures and stronger communities.

- City of Edmonton, Family & Community Support Services
- Government of Alberta
- Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- United Way of the Alberta Capital Region

### SUPPORTERS OF GROWTH (\$200,000 - \$349,000)

Supporters of Growth ensure young people have the resources and encouragement they need to learn, thrive, and reach new heights. Their commitment nurtures steady progress and meaningful impact.

- BGC Canada
- Edmonton Community Foundation

### CHAMPIONS FOR YOUTH (\$199,000 & UNDER)

Champions for Youth are the hundreds of donors, companies and partners who have provided donations to the Agency this past year. Champions for Youth stand proudly beside children and families, showing that every contribution makes a difference. Their support demonstrates the power of community in helping youth succeed.

Together, we're changing the lives of children and youth with one conversation, one experience, one donation or gift at a time.



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

BGCBigs is proud to recognize a couple of outstanding donors whose remarkable generosity and commitment stood out this year. These organizations went above and beyond to help advance our mission to reach more young people. Their support exemplifies the spirit of leadership, forward-thinking and community investment. We are honoured to shine a spotlight on their impact.

### ROBBINS FOUNDATION CANADA

The Robbins Foundation Canada has been a transformative philanthropic partner. Now in the second year of a three-year commitment totaling \$150,000, The Robbins Foundation continues to demonstrate its deep, ongoing dedication to helping young people thrive. Since 2020, the Foundation has played a pivotal role in sustaining and evolving our Educational Supports program. Designed in response to learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this program offers free, high-quality after-school tutoring in both one-to-one and small group settings, helping children close academic gaps and build confidence in their learning. The Robbins Foundation's investment in both immediate program delivery and long-term organizational capacity continues to create meaningful, measurable impact for the children and youth we serve.

### IMMIGRATION REFUGEE & CITIZENSHIP CANADA

For more than 15 years, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has been a steadfast partner in supporting the work of our Agency. Through IRCC's ongoing investment, BGCBigs has been able to deliver responsive, culturally safe programming that supports newcomer children and youth as they adapt to life in Canada. From after-school programs to summer camps and mentoring relationships, these initiatives help young people strengthen their English language skills, build confidence and develop meaningful connections within their schools and communities. At its core, this partnership ensures that newcomer youth feel a sense of belonging in their new environment, laying the foundation for long-term success in education, employment and civic life.



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

This year, we're proud to shine a spotlight on a few outstanding partners whose dedication and collaboration have strengthened our work in meaningful ways. Through their expertise, network and commitment to community, they've helped amplify our message and extend our reach. Their contributions reflect the power of partnership in creating opportunities for young people. We're grateful for their shared vision and unwavering support.

### ALVES DEVELOPMENT

For nearly a decade, BGCBigs has been proud to partner with Alves Development, who support our Big Brothers Big Sisters Dream Home & Win50 Lottery. This valuable partnership began with Dream Home 37, and since then, Alves Development has continued to design and build stunning, high-quality Dream Homes that inspire excitement and possibility. For Alves Development, this work is more than construction—it's a meaningful way to give back. Their commitment to social consciousness and our community shines through each Dream Home they build, turning every project into a symbol of hope and generosity. By supporting our largest annual fundraiser, Alves Development helps us ensure children and youth across our community have the opportunities they deserve, making a lasting difference far beyond the walls of each home.

### BENT ARROW

BGCBigs has shared a strong relationship with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society for more than 20 years. In 2020, we formally strengthened this connection with a Memorandum of Understanding, marked by a memorable Pipe Ceremony that set the tone for the years ahead. Guided by Bent Arrow's Practise as Ceremony model, this partnership has focused on sharing Indigenous knowledge, cultural teachings, and staff coaching. From blanket exercises and kinship teachings to medicine teachings, land-based learning, Elder support, and land acknowledgement training, their guidance has enriched our team and deepened our understanding. This relationship continues to shape our commitment to reconciliation, grounding our work in ceremony, respect, and the power of shared traditions.

### TOY MOUNTAIN

For six years, BGCBigs has been honoured to partner with Toy Mountain, a campaign that brings joy and generosity to families across our community. Each holiday season, Toy Mountain collects and donates thousands of toys and gift cards, ensuring children, youth, and families feel the magic of the season. In 2024, more than 2,000 toys and gift cards were distributed through BGCBigs programs—from holiday parties in Clubs and after-school programs, to toy rooms at mentoring events, and direct deliveries for families unable to attend. Beyond BGCBigs, Toy Mountain extends its reach through local partners like Terra Centre, YMCA, and Creating Hope Society. This partnership supports not just youth, but entire families, with gifts that carry hope and connection.



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Here, we'd like to highlight remarkable volunteers whose combined time, effort and dedication to being positive role models have made a lasting impact. Their commitment to showing up, supporting our programs and building trusted relationships with children and youth has undoubtedly helped more young people reach their full potential. Volunteers like this remind us that meaningful change often starts with small, consistent actions. We're deeply grateful for their service and spirit.

### EPCOR

EPCOR is an extraordinary mentoring partner. They show unwavering commitment to empowering their employees to be volunteer mentors with our Corporate Mentoring program. Each EPCOR employee who volunteers brings genuine care and energy to their role as mentors. And EPCOR supports and celebrates this involvement every step of the way by providing additional resources, such as weekly snacks, organizing special events and even gifting both mentees and mentors at program end. We appreciate the positive, strength-based approach EPCOR mentors take with their mentees, showing up not only as role models but as reliable friends. EPCOR's famous bucket truck tours and visits to EPCOR Tower open young eyes to the world of engineering, operations and career possibilities. In a world where classroom resources are stretched thin, EPCOR's involvement brings vital individual support and meaningful connection, showing students they are valued.

### LINDSAY BOHAICHUK, MENTOR

For ten years, Lindsay and Ella's match has been a shining example of the power of our community-based mentoring program. What began as a connection between a reserved young girl and her mentor has grown into a lifelong bond rooted in trust, laughter, and shared experiences.

Lindsay reflects: "A decade of watching my Little Sister grow from a quiet, adventurous girl into a beautiful, smart and caring young woman has been the greatest blessing. She reminds me that simple things and time spent with one another is all that matters!" Ella adds, "Having a Big Sister has introduced me to new experiences and opened the door to opportunities I wouldn't have on my own." Together, they show how mentoring creates lasting meaning.



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

This year, we're honoured to spotlight staff whose dedication and leadership have shaped BGCBigs in remarkable ways. Whether guiding the Agency through milestones, mentoring peers, or using their voices to advocate for young people, these individuals reflect the passion and purpose at the heart of our mission. We're proud to celebrate their achievements and the lasting impact they've made on our community.

### LIZ O'NEILL

Liz O'Neill recently retired after spending 45 years as the Executive Director of BGCBigs and throughout her time here, Liz guided the Agency through many significant milestones and successes. In 1990, Liz oversaw the merger of Big Sisters Society of Edmonton with Big Brothers of Edmonton. And then, in 2011, Liz led yet another significant merger, this time with Boys & Girls Clubs of Edmonton. This merger succeeded in tripling the number of children served. By the time Liz retired in August of 2024, she had helped grow BGCBigs to the Agency it is today. Liz's passion for people and for doing good extends well beyond BGCBigs. She has been a steadfast mentor and guiding light to so many peers, colleagues and community partners, as well as our staff, volunteers and to countless young people. To say Liz has left an extraordinary legacy is an understatement.



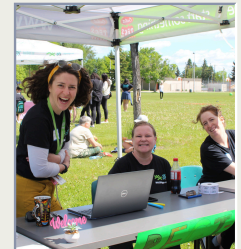
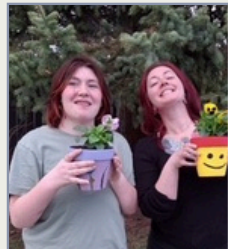
### Yael Witvoet

Yaël Witvoet has been a part of BGCBigs for more than 10 years, joining us as a youth at BGC Wolf Creek and now as a staff member. In 2024, Yaël was one of just six youth chosen from across Canada to be awarded BGC Canada's Youth of the Year. This award recognizes the outstanding leadership, service and achievements that young people demonstrate within their communities, and we are overcome with pride that one of our very own young people has received this award. In March, Yaël was recognized yet again for her outstanding achievements when she was awarded one of just 30,000 King Charles III Coronation Medals. As an active advocate for young people, on both a local and national scale, Yaël is using her voice and influence to help amplify those who might otherwise not be heard.






# GUIDED BY LEGACY. GROWING WITH HEART.



**BGCBigs.ca**

     /bgcbigs

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