



THE FOURTH R

ABORIGINAL PEER MENTORING PROGRAM

The peer mentoring program is a way to meet friends and adjust to a new school. The Fourth R Peer Mentoring program allows Grade 9 students to connect with Aboriginal Peer Mentors from Grade 10, 11, and 12. The students in this program meet once a week during lunch and receive a free lunch. A community mentor attends once a month to offer support and share traditional knowledge. This time allows the students to interact with each other and also meet and learn from their community mentor.



WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring Programs focus on developing strong relationships between mentors and mentees. The program includes opportunities to spend time one-on-one with a mentor, to engage in group activities, and to work with an adult community mentor. Sessions topics include *harmony and diversity, school experiences, interests, relationships, future goals, help-seeking, and skills for effective relationships*. Some goals of the program are listed below.

- Develop positive relationships with others
- Help with the transition to high school
- Model effective communication and conflict resolution skills
- Help students become involved in and connected to their schools
- Provide positive leadership
- Create a smooth transition from elementary to secondary school
- Connect youth with similar interests and background





WHO IS INVOLVED?

In a successful peer mentoring program, a number of people are involved.

MENTEES: Grade 9 students who would benefit from having a positive relationship with another student at their school.

MENTORS: Grade 10, 11 or 12 students committed to building a positive relationship with another student at their school. Mentors are selected because they are kind, have good attitudes and show that they can manage their coursework.

FIRST NATIONS COUNSELLORS and/or TEACHERS: Adults who oversee the program in the school. These individuals are available to peer mentors and mentees to discuss the peer mentoring relationship.

COMMUNITY MENTORS:

Community Mentors are First Nations adults from the community that attend peer mentoring sessions once a month. They offer support and guidance, and share traditional knowledge and customs with students.

THOUGHTS FROM A PROGRAM FACILITATOR:

“The Peer Mentoring Program is an amazing opportunity to see students’ development of self-esteem, tools for expression, and methods for handling conflict. Encouragement to achieve goals in high school is important for all Grade 9 students, especially for First Nations students, who face stereotypes daily. Stereotypes and negativity are easier to deal with when the students have a strong sense of cultural pride and the knowledge of cultural teachings, which the Peer Mentoring Program helps to provide.”



“Mentoring is not a one-way activity -- both mentors and mentees gain valuable experience and skills in the process...”

Peer mentees commented on their experience:

“We get along great and like to just hang out and we talk about all sorts of different stuff.”

“Its fun to eat our lunch together and talk about school.”

“We have these things where we understand each other and we talk about school and other important things.”



WHY PARTICIPATE?

Youth experience many benefits from participating in a mentoring program.

Peer mentoring programs can:

- Ease fears about high school
- Help develop time management skills
- Improve self-confidence

Students in mentoring programs:

- Make new friends
- Build healthy relationships
- Stay in school
- Attend classes
- Achieve and aspire to better grades
- Go on to college
- Are less likely to begin using alcohol and illegal drugs
- Are less likely to engage in violent behaviours
- Have higher goals and expectations



Benefits of Mentoring

Youth benefit significantly from the mentoring experience.

MENTEES

Through connecting with a strong youth role-model, **mentees** benefit because they...



- Have someone with whom they can discuss future plans, worries, and celebrate successes.
- Work with another peer to make good choices
- Feel connected to their school and community

MENTORS

Youth who make the commitment to become peer **mentors** benefit from:

- Receiving valuable volunteer experience
- Developing relationship building skills
- Helping younger students feel more connected to their schools
- Helping students identify and develop interests at school and in the community
- Participating in a training session for peer mentors
- Making new friends with mentees and other mentors



(Crooks, C.V., Chiodo, D., Thomas, D., & Hughes, R. (2009). Strengths-based Programming for First nations Youth in Schools: Building Engagement Through Healthy Relationships and Leadership Skills. Int Jnl of Mental Health & Addiction)

ACHIEVEMENTS OF FORMER PEER MENTEES:

Mentees in High School went on to be valedictorians, athletes, club presidents, and graduates. They were on student governments, achieved honour roll and received awards. **In College or University**, former mentees received awards, were athletes and graduates.



REFLECTIONS

Youth who were part of the mentoring program share their stories of the power of a positive and healthy relationship.

Peer Mentoring Reflection:

I've been going to Beal for three years now and each year I've participated in the Peer Mentoring Program. It's been great ever since I was a mentee in Grade 9. I am now in Grade 11, but when I was a younger student, it was a great inspiration for me to see the older students who were the mentors and see how they thrived in school and were involved in a lot of activities and sports within and outside of Beal. Peer Mentoring let me get to know other Native students like me that were new to Beal and also older students that I could look up to. Now that I'm in Grade 11, I feel like I've grown into that role of being a mentor to the younger, new students at Beal. The training to become a mentor has definitely helped my leadership skills and my confidence has grown throughout my experiences.



I would encourage any new students to the school to be involved with Peer Mentoring because it's a great opportunity to meet people that are like you. It's a good place to just take a break from the day and work with an older mentor and just talk about your day. Since I've become more involved with peer mentoring and have become a mentor it had led to other things, like being on the First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) Student Advisory Council, which I heard of from Peer Mentoring, where we as a council try to raise awareness of FNMI students throughout the Thames Valley District School Board. Peer Mentoring has made me achieve success because it boosted my confidence in wanting to try new things. Older mentors inspired me to try out for teams and join clubs which I have done and it's made me feel like I'm a real part of Beal.

Written by Diane Hill, member of Oneida Nation of the Thames, Grade 11 student, H. B. Beal Secondary School in London, ON



Mentors commented on what they learned and what they would tell future mentors:

"I learned a lot of leadership skills when being in this program. It motivates me more when coming to school and facing problems. I earned to respect others more because you never know what is on their mind. To think about what I'm doing because there is always someone watching."

"I would recommend this program to everyone. It teaches you to be a mentor so you can show leadership skills every day."

"I would tell future mentors that in order to make this fun, you can't be shy or always sitting in a corner. You have to speak what you want to say, show your feelings and talk to everyone."

"Treat this very seriously, even if the person you're mentoring is your friend."

"Being a role model to the younger youth is fun because they look up to you and expect you to be their guide when they need you."

"You must do everything you can and teach what you think would be helpful. It's their future that you're helping. Don't think it's a joke because it won't have good results in the end."

