

Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon



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FEBRUARY IS PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION MONTH

Happy Birthday

Happy Anniversary

Upcoming Speakers:

Feb. 10	Feb. 17	Feb. 24 Tim Watkins from MHWP Law Some interesting estate cases
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LAST WEEK'S MEETING

President **Alex Pope** presided.

Guests (apart from speakers)

Kris Harrison (her third visit)

Lawrence Mok - is the MLA for Maple Ridge East and the Official Opposition Critic for Skills Training and International Credentials. He was first elected in 2024. Lawrence, his wife, and two children, have lived in Maple Ridge for over 30 years.

Program

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Fraser Valley - Katarina Bell and Rachel Tan

Katarina (Katt) Bell, is the Program Manager for **Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Fraser Valley**, and **Rachel Tan** is the Mentoring Coordinator for Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.



Katt Bell



Rachel Tan

Rachel opened the presentation by explaining that Big Brothers Big Sisters operates locally under Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Fraser Valley, serving Chilliwack, Abbotsford, Mission, Ridge Meadows, Pitt Meadows, and more recently Hope and Agassiz.

While the organization is part of a Canada-wide network with international reach, the focus of the presentation was on programs and needs within the Fraser Valley.

Katarina began her involvement with Big Brothers Big Sisters as a volunteer. She highlighted that she recently graduated a five-and-a-half-year match as a Big Sister, which shaped her commitment to mentorship and her career path. Big Brothers Big Sisters' mission is to enable life-changing mentoring relationships that ignite the power and potential of young people. The organization works to match children and youth—particularly those facing vulnerability—with caring, consistent adult mentors. These relationships provide emotional support, guidance, and exposure to new opportunities, often becoming long-lasting connections that extend well beyond the formal match period.

The need for mentorship in the community is significant. One in five young people report having no developmental relationship in their lives, and only about 20 percent report having even one such relationship. Developmental relationships are intentional, supportive connections with caring adults that help young people grow, build confidence, and navigate challenges. Big Brothers Big Sisters aims to ensure every young person has a trusted adult "champion in their corner."

Many children served by the organization have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), including abuse, neglect, loss of a family member, exposure to substance use, or mental health challenges in the home. Research demonstrates a clear connection between high ACE scores and increased risk of poor physical and mental health outcomes later in life. Protective factors—especially strong, stable relationships—can significantly reduce these long-term risks, which is why the organization focuses on early, preventative intervention.

Across the Fraser Valley, approximately 70 children and youth are currently waiting to be matched with a mentor, with some waiting as long as two to three years. In Ridge Meadows alone, there are approximately 15 to 17 children on the waitlist, most between the

ages of eight and twelve. A persistent challenge is the shortage of male-identifying mentors. Many boys request positive male role models, yet most volunteers who come forward are women, reflecting broader trends in care giving professions.

Mentorship has been shown through extensive research to be one of the most powerful protective factors in a young person's life. A single healthy relationship can mitigate the effects of adversity, strengthen resilience, and improve long-term outcomes. Big Brothers Big Sisters emphasizes that mentors are not parents, teachers, or counsellors, but trusted adults who intentionally support, encourage, and challenge young people as they grow. All mentors are trained using a developmental relationship framework built around 5 core elements: showing care, providing support, challenging growth, sharing power, and expanding possibilities. These elements help move youth from merely surviving to thriving. While many of these behaviours are familiar in everyday relationships, mentoring is distinct because of its intentional focus on the young person's development and wellbeing.

The organization's flagship offering is the Community-Based Mentoring Program. In this program, a screened adult mentor is matched one-on-one with a child or youth. Matches meet for two to three hours per week with a minimum one-year commitment, though many relationships last far longer. Across the Fraser Valley, there are nearly one hundred active matches, with approximately fifteen in Ridge Meadows. Female mentors outnumber male mentors by roughly two to one.

Big Brothers Big Sisters also operates an In-School Mentoring Program. In this model, high school students or adult volunteers are matched with elementary students and meet weekly during school hours. Activities include crafts, games, reading, sports, science experiments, and baking. These matches often improve school attendance and engagement, as children are motivated to attend school to see their mentors. High school mentors also benefit through leadership development, volunteer hours, and reference letters.

In addition to one-to-one mentoring, the organization offers group programs. The Human Service Career Enrichment Program, based at Chilliwack Secondary School, supports students in grades 10 through 12 who are interested in helping professions. Participants learn about communication, compassion fatigue, burnout prevention, and career pathways while connecting with professionals from a range of disciplines. Another program, Explorations, funded by the Canucks for Kids Fund, runs for approximately eight weeks and offers mentorship in a group setting with a lower time commitment.

All Big Brothers Big Sisters programs are provided free of charge. The organization believes that mentorship should never be limited by financial barriers. Mentorship also benefits volunteers, who frequently report increased fulfillment, personal growth, and a sense of connection. Coordinators provide ongoing support to mentors through training, regular check-ins, and guidance for navigating challenges.

Child safety is central to the organization's work. Big Brothers Big Sisters maintains a rigorous screening and intake process that includes applications, interviews, criminal record checks, driver's abstracts, multiple references, independent file reviews, and mandatory child safety training. Matches are carefully monitored through regular check-ins with mentors, children, parents, and schools. Children must consent to participation and may withdraw at any time.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Fraser Valley is a non-government-funded organization. It relies on private donors, grants, fundraising events, and community partnerships. Monthly donors provide crucial sustainable funding, while partnerships such as Value Village generate significant revenue through donated goods. Fundraising events, including a golf tournament and a fall "Sip and Social," also support program delivery. The presentation concluded with a call to action, encouraging attendees to support Big Brothers Big Sisters through volunteering, spreading awareness, donating, or sponsoring events. Even small commitments of time or resources can create meaningful, lasting change in a young person's life.

Club Business and Announcements

The Haney Rotary Club is now having its meetings back at the Meadow Gardens Golf Club, on the first and third Thursday of each month. A few Rotarians from our club will be attending their meeting on February 5 at 6:30 pm - Our members are encouraged to attend.

February 14 – Valentine fellowship at Mark and Pauline Forster's home – cost to be announced.

Sharon Kyle advised that a young man living in Maple Ridge (currently involved in the YAIL program) will be attending RYLA on May 28 – 31, following which he will come to our club and talk to us about it.

President's Closing Quote

I have been told that using a smaller plate will help me lose weight, but it took me three plates to fit my dinner on last night. I'm not sure how this helps.



Weighty Puns

1. I'm on a seafood diet. I see food and I eat it.
2. It's hard to diet when your favourite exercise is chewing.
3. I know it's 3 meals a day, but how many should I eat at night?
4. Dieting isn't a piece of cake.
5. A successful diet is the triumph of mind over platter.

Submitted by Laurie Anderson