

**Rural eMentoring BC**

**Strategic Plan and  
Organizational Summary**

**Prepared April 2025**

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# About Rural eMentoring BC

## Mission

ReMBC's mission is to support and inspire the next generation of rural healthcare practitioners. The program was created in response to shortages of rural healthcare professionals in BC. Studies have shown that rural students are more likely to practice rurally than their urban counterparts, but are underrepresented in health professions education programs. Moreover, rural students experience barriers to accessing information and opportunities about healthcare careers and training. ReMBC addresses these challenges by providing information, resources and supports to ease high school and pre-health students' transition to health professions education programs.

## Program History and Leadership

ReMBC has its origins back in 2009, when Dr. Sandra Jarvis-Selinger at UBC founded Aboriginal eMentoring BC to address the underrepresentation of Indigenous students in medicine. Though wildly successful, this program concluded in 2014 when its CIHR grant ended. Dr. Jarvis-Selinger and program manager Dr. Katherine Wisener looked for other sources of funding and met Dr. Blair Stanley, associate director of the Rural Education Action Plan (REAP). Together, they developed a proposal to become an initiative of REAP's, aimed to support rural high school students to pursue medical careers. The proposal was successful, and in 2015 began hiring staff and developing the program.

Today, Drs. Jarvis-Selinger, Wisener and Stanley serve as the program's senior leadership. The program is managed by Juliet Oshiro (hired 2019), along with senior administrative coordinator Parvaneh Rahbar (hired 2017). In 2023, ReMBC was approved to add an Indigenous initiatives manager role to the team and hired Angela Nash, who had been with the program for various leave replacements since 2019.

## Organizational Status

ReMBC is an initiative of the Rural Education Action Plan (REAP), which is funded by the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC). The Joint Standing committee on Rural Issues disburses funding received from Doctors of BC to worthy programs that support, recruit and retain rural physicians.

ReMBC started out in 2015 as a 5-year funded project. After the 5-year funding was exhausted in 2023, ReMBC became an ongoing REAP program. ReMBC provides quarterly reports for inclusion in REAP's reporting to the JSC, and submits an annual budget to be approved by the JSC each year.

ReMBC is housed at UBC's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences as part of Dr. Jarvis-Selinger's research portfolio. Though the program is not an initiative of the Faculty, the program utilizes its finance and human resources departments, as well as building amenities including office space. Because ReMBC was developed and designed at UBC it is considered a UBC program, despite not being funded by UBC.

## **Rural eMentoring BC's Initiatives**

[High School eMentoring Program](#)

[Mentor Virtual Visits](#)

[High School Strategy – Pathways to Healthcare Presentation](#)

[Rural Pre-Health eMentoring Program](#)

[Supports for Rural Students](#)

[Indigenous Initiatives](#)

## High School eMentoring Program

**Background:** Rural high school students face systemic barriers to pursuing post-secondary education. One inequality they experience is that colleges and universities are often very involved with their local communities, which are usually urban; this ease of access and connection gives urban students an advantage when applying and transitioning to post-secondary education. Rural eMentoring BC aims to disrupt this inequality by virtually bringing post-secondary connections to rural students. Through mentorship, rural students are connected to information, support and resources needed to achieve their educational goals.

### Intended Impacts

- Support students to think about their futures, especially their educational and career goals.
- Encourage career exploration, especially in the healthcare field.
- Encourage and support students to attend post-secondary.
- Highlight different paths to post-secondary and educational options.
- Promote self-efficacy in finding help, information and resources that support their educational goals.
- Highlight the value of living and working rurally, but also support students who must complete their education in an urban environment.

### Description

The high school stream of ReMBC's eMentoring program matches high school students with volunteer mentors who are post-secondary students.

- High school student mentees:
  - Can participate through their school, either as part of their class or by working with a teacher or counsellor, or on their own.
  - Parental consent must be obtained (ReMBC has a consent form, schools can use their own if they prefer).
  - Mentees must be located/from an [RSA community](#) or interested in rural healthcare to be eligible.
- Post-secondary student mentors:
  - College or university student or recent post-secondary graduate in or from BC.
  - All areas of study, rural and urban backgrounds accepted.
  - Must complete application that asks about applicant's intentions, experience, and background.
  - Must complete training and background check. Applicants are able to receive a free vulnerable sector check (children) through ReMBC's account with BC's Criminal Record Check program.
  - ReMBC maintains a yearly pool of mentors who are ready to be matched to a mentee at any time. Mentors are recruited at the beginning of each school year, until the staff determines there are enough mentors to meet demand for the year. Mentors must participate until the end of the high school year and are rematched if their mentee's class ends before then, or if their relationship(s) conclude early.
- Connection logistics:
  - Mentors and mentees are hand matched by the staff based on shared interests and experiences, and preferences, as detailed in a profile they create. The ReMBC staff determines the profile fields based on best mentoring practices.
  - Pairs are connected through the MentorCity platform where they exchange messages asynchronously. Program tutorials and supports are provided.

- Upon request and with parental consent and staff supervision, pairs can communicate via other means.
- Semi-structured curriculum is provided, but use is optional.
- Pairs can connect for as long as they would like. Mentees who participate as part of a class have the option of continuing after their class is over.
- [Safety, privacy and security, we well as user policies are described here.](#)

## Strategic Plan

### Goal 1: Expand the program's reach within British Columbia

- Strategy
  - Increase the number of rural high schools participating.
  - Increase the number of mentees participating voluntarily who are interested in healthcare.
  - Diversify mentor pool.
- Actions
  - Create promotional and informational materials
    - Maintain a website with all the information about the program, for high school mentees, mentors, and schools.
    - Branded "swag" and t-shirts to be given out at recruitment events, as prizes for participants.
    - Informational post-card for prospective mentees, informational packet for teachers, mentee recruitment flyer to post in schools and other youth-spaces, mentor recruitment flyer to post in post-secondary spaces.
    - Promote on social media.
  - Cold call high schools
    - Database of all schools in RSA communities with principals, vice-principals, counsellors, careers teachers, district level career educators, Indigenous education.
    - Managed by email marketing software Cyberimpact (FIPPA and UBC policy compliant).
    - Follow up with schools that respond.
  - Engage through Newsletter
    - Anyone can subscribe through ReMBC's website. Anyone who expresses interest is automatically subscribed.
    - Distributed through Cyberimpact, opt out available.
    - Includes information about our offerings and how to join, partner offerings, relevant information/opportunities for rural students/educators.
  - Connect with high school educators through organizations
    - Exhibit or present at educator conferences.
    - Advertise in organization newsletters, magazines, etc.
  - Partner with other organizations that reach rural youth
    - Health professions outreach programs.
    - Healthcare career, post-secondary education recruitment initiatives.
    - Organizations that provide support services to rural youth.
    - They share our info, we share theirs.
    - ReMBC sends representatives on each of the Healthcare Travelling Roadshows for a yearly recruitment drive.
  - Target specific post-secondary programs for mentor recruitment
    - Ask previous mentors to return; prioritize veteran mentors.

- Post on job boards at BC schools, attend career fairs at BC schools for general mentor recruitment.
- Cold call program deans, department heads, administrators based on areas of need after seeing which mentors return and who applies to the general call. ReMBC maintains a database of BC schools and programs.

Goal 2: Provide an exceptional user experience to ensure long-term participation.

- Strategy
  - Ensure content and structure of activities align with participants' needs.
  - Support mentors so that they feel prepared for everything that happens in their mentoring relationships.
- Actions
  - Evaluate participant reactions to program and address identified problems
    - Yearly evaluation of participant feedback ([see Evaluation](#)), with subsequent changes each summer.
  - Incorporate the latest advances in education, mentoring pedagogy and MentorCity capabilities.
    - Regularly assess user-interface and update yearly (as needed).
    - Regularly review content of activities: ReMBC partners with UBC Education's Community Field Experience program to host teacher candidates to refresh activity content.
    - Regularly review program structure: teacher candidates also provide advice on how students can best learn and demonstrate what they have learned within the program.
    - Check-in with MentorCity each year to hear about new features.
  - Provide mentor training that aligns with participant needs
    - Program training: help mentors understand how the program works, its goals, and how to guide their mentees through it.
    - Mentor training: mentoring techniques, handling difficult and emergency situations, and effective & appropriate online communication with youth.
    - Rural cultural humility training: help mentors understand privilege, barriers experienced by rural communities, and best practices for working with underserved youth.
    - Indigenous cultural safety training: help mentors understand the impact of colonization on youth, and provide information about Truth and Reconciliation in a mentoring context.
    - Provide ongoing training based on identified needs of participants.
    - Provide resources for mentors to access in specific situations, including pedagogical supports for each activity, how to handle common challenges, training for working with specific groups.
    - Regularly assess and update training each year based on participant feedback ([see Evaluation](#))

Goal 3: Ensure the initiative is meeting its intended impacts

- Strategy
  - Align activities with intended impacts.
  - Align mentor training with intended impacts.
- Actions
  - Evaluate program impacts yearly ([see Evaluation](#)), update/change content accordingly.

## Mentor Virtual Visits

**Background:** This initiative started in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic when a high school teacher, who had not previously connected with us, requested a mentor Zoom into their class and talk about their experiences in university. The session went well, so ReMBC decided to gauge interest among other rural teachers, and found that there was enough demand to include mentor virtual visits as one of its offerings.

### Intended Impacts

In contrast to one-on-one mentoring, which is usually done through asynchronous text-messaging, virtual mentor visits help give post-secondary students a face, showing rural high school students that post-secondary students are “just like them”. This is needed because high school students in urban areas are easily able to interact with the college and university students that attend school there, but, given that most rural communities do not have a college or university nearby, rural high school students lack this exposure. The exposure that mentor virtual visits provide is intended to help rural students feel less intimidated by post-secondary education, and be a gateway to educational and career exploration that can then be supported by the one on-one mentoring program.

### Description

Teachers invite mentors to join virtual sessions with their students.

- Schools must be located in an RSA community
- Mentors are chosen from the mentor pool for the one-on-one program.
- Teachers choose:
  - Date and time of visit
  - Which mentor to invite: the staff provides mentor bios for the mentors who are available or who meet the teacher’s criteria.
  - Format of visit: teacher’s choice. Ideas include panel, Q&A, presentation-style, in small groups or with the whole class, or anything else the teacher wants.
  - Virtual platform: teacher’s choice (Zoom, Teams, etc.)
- ReMBC staff attends to help with tech support, logistics, and other support requested.

### Strategic plan

Goal 1: Expand the program’s reach within British Columbia

- See Goal 1 for the High School eMentoring Program

Goal 2: Ensure the initiative is meeting its intended impacts

- Promote the one-on-one mentoring program during the visit in order to increase the number of mentees participating voluntarily.
  - Encourage mentors to share their mentoring stories during the visit.
  - Provide information about ReMBC’s one-on-one mentoring program.
- Lessen the intimidation factor of post-secondary education
  - Support the mentors to embody this ideal: Mentors receive training on engaging speaking, verbal communication, being relatable and personable, professionalism, and inclusive language.
  - Encourage mentors to share their experiences as a post-secondary student to demystify college/university student life.
  - Encourage the high school students to ask questions, make note of which questions are often asked and incorporate into future visits.



## High School Strategy – Pathways to Healthcare Presentation

**Background:** The Pathways to Healthcare Presentation was conceived of and developed by motivated medical and pharmacy students based on their own experiences as rural students. They hoped to address both the challenges they faced in high school when searching for information about schooling and careers, and the need for deeper connections to their placement communities when on rural rotation. The initiative they developed supports medical and pharmacy students on rural rotation to speak to students at their local high schools about educational options and careers in rural medicine or pharmacy.

The program began in medicine, with the medical students organizing the initiative themselves and the Rural Education Action Plan (REAP) supporting, but due to lack of continuity of leadership from the medical student partners, REAP asked ReMBC to take over the initiative in 2021. ReMBC hosted two student partners to refresh the presentation and its content, and began delivering presentations in 2023. In the 2022-2023 school year, a pharmacy student, and high school program mentor, asked to adapt the presentation to pharmacy careers.

### Intended Impacts

- Create a deeper connection between medical/pharmacy students on rural rotations and their placement communities. Exposure to different aspects of rural life could help inform their decision about whether or not to practice rurally.
- Inspire rural high school students to pursue medical or pharmacy careers in rural communities.
- Inform high school students about the eMentoring program.

### Description

Pharmacy or medical students present in-person (occasionally virtually) at a rural high school.

- Presentation includes slides created and updated regularly by medical and pharmacy students.
- ReMBC recruits student organizers each year who make changes to the presentation as needed, recruit presenters, organize presentations, and give presentations themselves.
  - Medicine: This is a project offered through UBC Medicine's FLEX program for second years.
  - Pharmacy: This is a project offered through directed studies at UBC Pharmaceutical Sciences in collaboration with their Office of Student Services.
- Schools must be located in an RSA community. Presenters reach out to the schools in their community, or teachers can request a presentation.
- ReMBC provides guidance, funding and materials as needed, and connections to schools.

### Strategic plan

Goal 1: Expand the program's reach within British Columbia

- Advertise to rural teachers: See Goal 1 for the High School eMentoring Program
- Advertise to medical and pharmacy students
  - Call for presenters advertised in medical and pharmacy student spaces.
  - Student organizers promote within their student networks.

Goal 2: Ensure the initiative is meeting its intended impacts

- Presenters and high school students are surveyed after the presentation; survey takers are asked about impacts listed above. Student organizers and eMentoring staff evaluate surveys and make changes as necessary.
- Understand and address barriers that deter rural high school students from pursuing medicine or pharmacy, including:
  - Present different career options in medicine and pharmacy. Students might discover an option that suits their goals and lifestyle that they were previously unaware of.
  - Present the practical aspects of pursuing and practicing medicine or pharmacy through a rural lens, including:
    - Options for educational pathways as a rural student.
    - Finances: cost of education, ways to pay for school, projected salaries.
    - Student life, transitioning from rural to urban for school.
    - Challenges and advantages of being a physician or pharmacist, and practicing rurally.
  - Debunk common myths about all of the above points. Increase the number of rural high schools participating.
  - Debrief with student organizers and presenters about barriers that students and teachers mention during the presentation. Update presentation as necessary.
- Encourage and facilitate presenters to share their mentorship stories. Slide with information about eMentoring program is included in the presentation. Some presenters bring eMentoring swag, postcards, and teacher packets.

# Rural Pre-Health eMentoring Program

**Background:** Originally called Rural Medicine eMentoring BC, this initiative was started in 2018 by a UBC medical student who saw the need for a program like this for the students in the Rural Pre-Medicine Program at Selkirk College (RPM). She rallied RPM program faculty Takaia Larsen, students in UBC's Rural Medicine Interest Group, and the Rural eMentoring BC team to come together and collaboratively create every aspect of this program. The program ran exclusively at Selkirk College, with Takaia Larsen at the helm, until 2022 when ReMBC was asked to take over. ReMBC expanded the program to all pre-health students across BC.

## Intended Impacts

- Promote career exploration and interprofessional learning.
- Support rural students transitioning to post-secondary education.
- Support rural intending students to become competitive applicants for their desired health professions training programs.
- Help students understand what to expect in their desired health professions training program and help them prepare for the transition.

## Description

Matches high school graduates interested in rural healthcare with volunteer mentors who are students in their desired health professions program.

- Mentees:
  - Undergraduates or non-students taking gap years or hoping to return to school after working.
  - Must be interested in rural healthcare or from a rural background.
- Mentors:
  - Students or recent grads from health professions training programs in/from BC.
  - ReMBC maintains a yearly pool of mentors who are ready to be matched to a mentee at any time. Mentors are recruited at the beginning of each school year, until the staff determines there are enough mentors to meet demand for the year.
- Connection logistics:
  - Mentors and mentees are hand matched by the staff based on shared interests and experiences, and preferences, as detailed in a profile they create. Profile fields are determined by ReMBC staff based on mentoring best-practices.
    - Mentees can choose to be matched to one mentor or a team of interprofessional mentors from the fields of their choosing.
  - Pairs are connected through the MentorCity platform where they exchange messages asynchronously. They can then move to the communication method of their choice.
  - Conversation Sparkers are provided, but use is optional.
  - Pairs can connect for as long as they would like.

## Strategic Plan

Goal 1: Expand the program's reach within British Columbia

- Strategy
  - Increase the number of mentees participating.
  - Diversify mentor pool.
- Actions
  - Create promotional and informational materials

- Informational post-card for prospective mentees.
  - [See also high school program](#)
- Cold call health professions, pre-health programs
  - Database of all health professions programs in BC. Managed through Cyberimpact.
- Engage through Newsletter - [See high school program.](#)
- Partner with other organizations that reach health professions students
  - Health professions outreach programs.
  - Healthcare career, health professions education recruitment initiatives.
  - They share our info, we share theirs.
  - Often advertise alongside high school mentor opportunity.
- Target specific post-secondary programs for mentor recruitment
  - Ask previous mentors to return. Prioritize previous mentors.
  - Cold call program deans, department heads, administrators based on areas of need after seeing which mentors return. ReMBC maintains a database of most BC schools and programs.

Goal 2: Provide an exceptional user experience to ensure long-term participation.

- Strategy
  - Ensure content and structure of activities align with participants' needs.
  - Support mentors so that they feel prepared for everything that happens in their mentoring relationships.
- Actions
  - Evaluate participant reactions to program and address identified problems
    - Yearly evaluation of participant feedback ([see Evaluation](#)), with subsequent changes each summer.
  - Incorporate the latest advances in education, mentoring pedagogy and MentorCity capabilities.
    - Regularly assess user-interface and update yearly (as needed).
    - Regularly review content of activities: ReMBC partners with UBC health professions students to refresh activity content.
    - Check-in with MentorCity each year to hear about new features.
  - Provide mentor training that aligns with participant needs
    - Program training: help mentors understand how the program works, its goals, and how to guide their mentees through it.
    - Training on mentoring techniques, what to do in difficult and emergency situations, and how to effectively and appropriately communicate online.
    - Provide resources for mentors to access in specific situations, including pedagogical supports for each activity, how to handle common challenges, training for working with specific groups.
    - Regularly assess and update training each year based on participant feedback ([see Evaluation](#))

Goal 3: Ensure the initiative is meeting its intended impacts

- Strategy
  - Align activities with intended impacts.
  - Align mentor training with intended impacts.
- Actions
  - Evaluate program impacts yearly, update/change content accordingly ([see Evaluation](#)).

## Supports for Rural Students

**Background:** A quality mentoring program provides community supports and opportunities for its members to as a way to help them build social capital, which is especially important for rural youth who face systemic barriers to accessing supports and opportunities on their own. In 2023 ReMBC undertook a multi-part project to find ways to connect its participants with these supports and opportunities.

### Intended Impacts

- Rural students who engage with us become aware of the career and educational opportunities available to them.
- Rural students who engage with us become aware of the supports within their own communities, and where they can find support during their educational journeys.
- Rural students gain a better understanding of where to find information about transitioning to post-secondary education and pursuing rural healthcare careers.

### Strategic Plan and Initiative Description

Goal 1: Create a one-stop hub of supports for rural students pursuing post secondary education and rural healthcare careers in BC.

- Showcase supports and opportunities within participants' communities.
- Showcase supports and opportunities in BC post-secondary spaces.
- Showcase supports and opportunities in rural healthcare.

### Strategy

- Newsletter to participants: all program participants receive monthly (high school) or bimonthly (rural pre-health) program updates with upcoming events and opportunities and highlighting different resources.
- Website:
  - Equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigeneity page
  - Partners and programs page: list of relevant programs for rural students
  - Content corner: articles, blog posts, graphics with information for rural students
- Social media: posting the information from the website and newsletter
- Create strategic partnerships with organizations that share our goals so that we can share what they offer to our participants.

Goal 2: Going Rural – Opportunities in Rural Healthcare: Yearly online event, hosted in partnership with UBC Health.

- Panel Session – Rural Rotations and Careers: Rural students share about working in healthcare settings in rural communities. Participants learn about what different health professionals do day-to-day, how different professions work collaboratively, and what to expect when going on a rural rotation.
- Virtual booths and exhibitors: Participants can visit virtual booths hosted by a variety of schools and programs from across BC to learn about degree options, admission pathways, and other opportunities.
- Panel Session – Going to school for a healthcare career: Participants hear from current students in health professions programs who are from rural communities. Participants learn about the different educational pathways to different degrees, what school is like, and how these students made the transition from rural to urban.

## Indigenous Initiatives

**Background:** Both Rural eMentoring BC and its progenitor Aboriginal eMentoring BC were created to bolster representation of underserved students in healthcare fields. ReMBC's Indigenous initiatives portfolio was created to target the intersection of these two groups, as Indigenous healthcare professionals are especially needed in rural communities.

### Intended impacts on participants:

- Ensure that the impacts listed for the other initiatives are also observed in the Indigenous students who engage with us.
- Non-Indigenous participants, partners and anyone else who engages with us should understand how to be an ally and how to uphold Truth and Reconciliation principles.

### Strategic Plan:

Our strategic plan revolves around increasing Indigenous student engagement with ReMBC by creating program offerings that meet the needs of Indigenous interests. This process involves continually gathering input from Indigenous voices, and promoting allyship and Truth and Reconciliation among non-Indigenous participants, staff, and partners.

#### Goal 1: Initiative(s) development and internal work

In the fall of 2023 ReMBC received start up funding to lay the foundations for this work from UBC's Indigenous Strategic Initiatives fund. The funding's goal was to transform the program's offerings in the following ways, which we will hope will lay the groundwork for engaging, and better serving, more Indigenous participants:

- Decolonize and Indigenize organizational operations and practices: Perform our work in a way that honours the land and the Indigenous people who once resided here, incorporates Two-Eyed Seeing and the 4-Rs, and reduces the usage of colonial systems and ways of knowing and acting.
  - Sharing and participating in learning opportunities: Team exercises on Truth and Reconciliation, Indigenous values and ways of working at team meetings and constantly sharing Indigenous learning opportunities among staff.
  - Promoting land acknowledgements among staff and participants: Team exercise to create company and personal land acknowledgements. Creation of educational materials on land acknowledgement for participants.
  - Ensure all materials and program outputs are safe and reflect Indigenous values: Review all public facing materials for appropriate language, and provide staff education on Two-Eyed Seeing approaches to knowledge translation, evaluation, and project management.
- Provide support to Indigenous students transitioning to university/UBC: Connect Indigenous students to support, services, and opportunities that help remove structural and systemic barriers to pursuing and attending post-secondary education.
  - [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion page on our website](#): Database of resources and supports for students, highlights Truth and Reconciliation efforts by other organizations, provides learning opportunities on EDI.I topics.
  - [Indigenous supports section on website](#): Researched and curated database of supports and resources for Indigenous students.

- Indigenous opportunities section of monthly user updates: monthly updates of events, scholarships, learning opportunities, etc.
  - Increase the number of Indigenous mentors in our programs by reaching out to Indigenous units at UBC and other post-secondary institutions.
- Provide education on Truth and Reconciliation and advance the rights of Indigenous people: Be a resource for information on Truth and Reconciliation for our participants, promote events, opportunities and resources on Truth and Reconciliation among our participants, program staff, and other leaders.
  - Sharing resources among staff, participants, partners and other leaders: EDI.I page of website and resource portal for participants. Indigenous learning opportunities section in newsletter. Truth and Reconciliation unit within curriculum, partner with other organizations to highlight the need for TRC actions.
- Decolonize and Indigenize curriculum and mentor training: Ensure curriculum and mentor training is representative and safe for Indigenous participants.
  - Curriculum: Increase Indigenous representation, review curriculum as a whole, including verbiage and structure, through lens of Two-Eyed Seeing and 4-Rs, add Truth and Reconciliation content.
  - Mentor training: Update/refresh our Indigenous cultural safety training, as well as add additional resources and supplements to our existing training.
- Input from Indigenous interests: Hear from rural Indigenous interests about how they envision a program like ours addressing structural and systemic barriers to accessing post-secondary education. Understand and incorporate Indigenous views on mentoring. Hear and incorporate ideas for how rural Indigenous youth would like to utilize a connection to a post-secondary student as a way to reach their career and educational goals.
  - Offer community partnership opportunities: Communities can partner with ReMBC to share their input and co-create a community-tailored version of our offerings. Create webpage and promotional materials explaining this opportunity.
  - Gather input and feedback from current participants: Create survey questions, offer incentives for participants to “take the survey” in any way they wish (online survey, interview, anything else).
  - Interview other Indigenous interests: Create “interview” questions to ask Indigenous managers/directors at UBC Faculties of Medicine and PharmSci, Health Authorities, other youth outreach programs.
  - Form relationships and seek advice from others doing this work: this includes online educators, other mentoring programs, other outreach programs.

## Goal 2: Increase Indigenous student participation and engagement

We use the same recruitment and expansion strategy as for the other initiatives, with the following additions:

- Recruiting communities:
  - Create database of Indigenous contacts in community for email campaign.
  - Ask our current network for contacts and follow up via email and phone.
  - Offer partnership opportunity (see above).
- Connect with Indigenous interests through relevant organizations:
  - For example, different Métis Nation, FNEESC, First Nations Health Authority, other outreach programs, etc.
  - Attend, present at, and exhibit at Indigenous education events.

# Research and Knowledge Translation Portfolio

## Research interest areas:

In spring and summer 2020, the research team met to identify the following research areas of interest:

- Area 1: Program impact on health professions recruitment/retention, especially rural.
- Area 2: Mentoring relationship development.

## Strategic plan

Area 1: Program impact on health professions recruitment/retention, especially rural.

- Area 1a: Determine short-term impact on participants' interest in healthcare careers, post-secondary, practicing rurally, as well as self-efficacy in finding and utilizing resources to support their goals.
  - Purpose: Determine whether online mentoring is an effective way to connect rural students to information about post-secondary and healthcare careers, and determine whether students become interested in pursuing rural healthcare careers after participating.
  - Data collection:
    - Survey participants after the program: ask about how the program has impacted each of these areas.
    - Survey mentors and teachers after the program: ask about how the program has impacted their mentees/students in these areas.
  - Dissemination: Publish in journals and present at conferences that focus on healthcare professions recruitment/retention and education, and rural and remote issues.
- Area 1b: Lessons learned about outreach to underserved communities
  - Purpose: Identify the strategies ReMBC uses to successfully engage in outreach and mentoring with rural communities, and suggest how these strategies can translate to other underserved communities.
  - Data collection: staff experiences
  - Dissemination:
    - Publish in journals and present at conferences that focus on healthcare professions recruitment, retention and education. Showcase how our model for outreach can be applied within this sector.
    - Publish in journals and present at conferences that focus on engaging youth in career education, educational achievement, and online education. Showcase how online mentoring can supplement existing resources in secondary education.
- Area 1c: Long-term impact on participants' interest in healthcare careers, post-secondary, practicing rurally, as well as self-efficacy in finding and utilizing resources to support their goals.
  - Purpose: Identify whether program participants actually pursue post-secondary or health professions education, and rural healthcare careers.
  - Data collection: survey former participants, ask whether they are pursuing post-secondary education and in what field, ask about career plans.
  - Dissemination: Publish in journals and present at conferences that focus on healthcare professions recruitment/retention and education, and rural and remote issues.



- Area 2: Mentoring relationship development:
  - Purpose: Determine what factors make a relationship successful or unsuccessful.
  - Data collection: De-identified messages exchanged by mentors and mentees. Machine learning algorithm reads messages to determine conversation topics and sentiment of messages. Research team looks for patterns in conversation topics and sentiment of messages among successful and unsuccessful mentors and mentees.
  - Dissemination: Publish in journals and present at conferences with a focus on mentoring.

# Evaluation

**Background and Goals:** ReMBC is constantly evaluating whether its initiatives are having their intended impacts, which include:

- Determining how well the program is conveying information, resources and opportunities, and whether participants are becoming interested in post-secondary education and rural healthcare careers.
- Determining if participants are pursuing and achieving post-secondary education and rural healthcare careers.
- Determining how well the program measures up against industry standards and incorporates innovations and advances in the outreach, education, and mentoring fields.
- Determine how well the program meets the needs of its intended audience.

## Strategic plan:

Goal 1: Determine how well the program is conveying information, resources and opportunities, and whether participants are becoming interested in post-secondary education and rural healthcare careers.

### Strategy:

- Ask current participants about their experiences with our offerings, and about their career and educational intentions. ([See also Research and Knowledge Translation, Areas 1A,C](#))
  - Surveys for mentees (high school and rural pre-health), which ask about:
    - Educational, rural practice, and healthcare career intentions (before/after)
    - Attitudes toward mentoring
    - What they learned/gained: after each curriculum unit (high school program), and post-program
    - Feedback about the program and its offerings
    - How the program could better serve Indigenous mentees
    - How the program could better promote allyship and Truth and Reconciliation for non-Indigenous mentees
  - Surveys for mentors (high school and rural pre-health), which ask about:
    - Professional/personal impact
    - Impacts on mentee
    - Feedback about the program and its offerings
  - Surveys for teachers (high school program), which ask about:
    - Impacts on students
    - Intentions for program
    - Feedback about the program
  - Surveys for Pathways to Medicine presentation
    - High school students: educational and career interests, what they learned/gained, feedback about presentation
    - Presenters: impacts on presenters and students, feedback about presentation.
  - Though we use the word “survey” above, participants can provide feedback in the method of their choosing (online survey, zoom calls, etc.).
- Analyze surveys. Identify:
  - Participant challenges in program, including barriers to participation and engagement.

- Where intended impacts are not being met.
- Actioning change: Action items can be implemented as part of yearly changes, or as a longer-term priority project.
  - Add user supports based on areas of need, including accessibility resources, tutorials, tools for teachers, and training materials.
  - Refresh, add or change program content and delivery based on areas of need. To ensure that participant voices are part of this process, much of this work is done by teacher candidates (from UBC Faculty of Education's Community Field Experience program), and medical and pharmacy students (through UBCs' Faculty of Medicine's FLEX program, and Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences Directed Studies).
  - Work with MentorCity to address user interface challenges.
  - Promote/find different ways of promoting underutilized resources and offerings.
- Disseminate findings in [Yearly program evaluation](#)

Goal 2: Determine if participants are pursuing and achieving post-secondary education and rural healthcare careers.

Strategy:

- Pilot study:
  - Prepare a [Preliminary impact evaluation](#) to determine what kind of data we can capture and create a plan based on what we learn.
  - Based on preliminary report, create targeted questions to ask previous participants (mentors and mentees) in larger study.
- Survey former participants
  - Participants can provide feedback in the method of their choosing (online survey, zoom calls, etc.).
  - Contact previous participants via email, newsletter, social media. To be completed when we have a large enough database of previous participants' contact info. This is challenging when working with students because many of them use their school emails when participating. We will keep previous participants engaged by:
    - Creating ways and reasons for previous participants to stay engaged with us: i.e., rural student resource hub on website, sharing resources on social media/newsletter.
    - Encouraging mentees to be a mentor in the future.
    - Current participants can opt in to being contacted in the future.
- Analyze surveys. Identify:
  - The systemic barriers to accessing post-secondary education and rural healthcare careers.
  - Common misconceptions or other reasons rural students choose not to pursue post-secondary or healthcare careers.
  - The reasons rural students do not take advantage of the full suite of ReMBC's offerings and resources.
- Actioning change: Action items are either implemented with yearly changes/updates, or identified as a longer-term project.
  - Add or modify program supports and content to address identified barriers and misconceptions.
  - Modify delivery and outreach of offerings.

- Prepare impact evaluation report.

Goal 3: Ensure offerings measure up against industry standards and incorporate innovations and advances in the outreach, education, and mentoring fields, including:

- Incorporate new ways for participants to learn and show what they have learned.
- Incorporate strategies to foster deeper mentoring relationships.
- Incorporate strategies for respectful community engagement.
- Improve program management and operations.
- Incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, and improve equity, diversity, and inclusion within the program.

Strategy:

- Continually seek out and attend events, workshops and other learning opportunities in these fields, stay abreast of relevant literature.
  - Education: Utilize resources provided to K-12 educators (e.g., attend education conferences), utilize UBC's resources (e.g., UBC Centres for Teaching and Learning, Indigenous initiatives, and Accessibility).
  - Mentoring: Utilize resources from MENTOR and MentorCanada, and their conferences and literature.
  - Outreach: UBC Community Engagement Office, Vantage Point, non-profit conferences.
- Learn from other organizations doing similar work: interview and form partnerships with other leaders and educators in the spaces listed above.
- Utilize existing resources for measuring program quality: For example, UBC's Indigenous Strategic Initiatives Self-Assessment Toolkit, MentorCanada's Quality Mentoring System.
- Implement program changes on a yearly basis.

Goal 4: Determine how well the program meets the needs of its intended audience.

Strategy: Ask current participants and relevant interests about the systemic barriers that rural students experience when pursuing post-secondary education and rural healthcare careers, and how a program like ours can disrupt these barriers.

- Gather feedback:
  - Ask current participants during exit survey.
  - Identify and interview interests involved in rural secondary education, rural healthcare, and healthcare professions education programs.
- Analyze feedback:
  - Identify the common barriers and misconceptions.
  - Compile suggestions and feedback.
- Actioning change: Action items are either implemented with yearly changes/updates, or identified as a longer-term project.
  - Add or modify program supports and content to address identified barriers or misconceptions.
  - Reassess/modify program delivery and/or outreach to address barriers to accessing or engaging with ReMBC.

# Challenges and Risks

Offering a program of this scale does not come without risks and challenges. Rural eMentoring BC is constantly working to minimize these risks and overcome the challenges it faces in order to provide the best user experience. We feel the weight of our responsibility to the rural communities we serve, and understand that must attune to each community's vulnerabilities and strengths. In the interest of transparency, we briefly list and describe the ongoing risks and challenges that programs like ours face, and how we are addressing each item.

## Outreach and uptake

- Schools and communities: educators and advocates are inundated with emails and requests, so it is easy to get lost in the mix. We are constantly testing new marketing and communications techniques, and we promote the program at educator conferences and through other avenues.
  - Educators in particular love the idea of the program, but often do not have the capacity to implement it.
    - We attempt to make our offerings self-contained, as easy to implement as possible, and shift most of the burden to the eMentoring staff.
    - We have developed materials that share different ideas for how to implement the program, many of which are from educators who have used the program in the past.
- Mentees: students have a lot of things competing for their attention, and often cite lack of free time as a reason they do not join.
  - We try to make the program as useful as possible by gathering feedback and input from students.
  - We try to make the program as low barrier and low commitment as possible, and embed it into activities they are already doing.
  - We have created resources that show students the value of mentoring.
- Mentors: post-secondary students are busy and a weekly commitment for an entire school year can be a large commitment. We are also mindful that volunteer opportunities can disadvantage students who are unable spend their time volunteering.
  - We offer tangible rewards like letters of recommendation, references, and verification upon request.
  - Being a mentor provides transferrable skills that can be beneficial in future educational and career settings. We provide training on how to develop these skills, and share professional development opportunities with our mentors.
  - We try to make the program as low barrier and low commitment as possible.
- Capacity:
  - Staff bandwidth: Operating these initiatives takes time and energy and the staff must keep up with demand.
    - We regularly plan our activities ahead so that we are not overwhelmed on any particular day or time of year.
    - The program staff are all willing and able to support each other, take on projects, and each staff person is familiar with how to do many of the required tasks.

- Given that the program operates out of UBC, we are able to harness the power of its students, as well as our mentors. Many of our mentors are looking for extra opportunities, so they often assist us with various projects. We also participate in many UBC programs to support student projects that offer credit (e.g., FLEX, CFE, Directed Studies).
  - If additional support is needed, we carefully consider what role is needed and weigh our options for filling that role. Our funders have been supportive of hiring students, contractors, and new staff, given that we make a convincing argument.
- Finances: Though we are an ongoing, permanently funded program, we must prove to our funders that we are fiscally responsible and meeting our mandates.
  - Our yearly budget proposals carefully consider all the expenses required for our activities, and accounts for growth. Our funders have been supportive of budget additions and expansions, provided we explain our reasoning.
  - We review expenditures monthly to ensure we are spending responsibly.
  - We regularly evaluate all our offerings to ensure the desired impacts are being met.

**Privacy, safety, and security:** At Rural eMentoring BC, we take the safety of our participants, and the security of their data, very seriously.

- Privacy and data security:
  - All data is collected and stored in compliance with FIPPA. We do not share our users' data without their permission. Data collection and dissemination for our research activities were approved UBC's Behavioural Research Ethics Boards (H18-02940).
  - We collect personal information like first and last names, email address, school, grade, and whether the participant is Indigenous or not. This information is only shared internally among the eMentoring staff for purposes of supporting the participant in the program, and program evaluation.
  - As with any program that stores data virtually, there is a risk of being hacked. We minimize this risk by only accessing these data on UBC computers and by using UBC approved software and cloud storage.
- Confidentiality: Users are assured that their conversations can only be seen by their match, the eMentoring staff, and their teacher (if applicable). Matches agree to ensure all conversations remain confidential. To minimize the risk of confidential information being disclosed outside a relationship, we ask mentees, mentors, and teachers to agree to a confidentiality clause in our user agreement.
- User safety: we do the following to ensure participants stay anonymous to each other (if that is what they wish) and that all communications are appropriate.
  - Anonymity: All matches are initially made through MentorCity, where pairs can exchange messages without sharing contact information, or personal information like last names. Pairs can only communicate with each other, and cannot contact other participants. Participants in the rural pre-health program are allowed to communicate however they wish after this initial connection, while participants in the high school program must receive parental consent to communicate outside MentorCity.

- Mentor vetting: all mentors are vetted via a program application reviewed individually by the staff and must complete a vulnerable sector check (for working with minors) through BC's Criminal Records Review Program. See the sections on the individual programs for information about training.
- Monitoring: In the high school program, the eMentoring staff views all messages sent by each pair 2-3 times per week, and has access to all participant accounts. Teachers have access to all the messages sent and received by their students and have access to all their students' accounts. MentorCity has an auto-filter that requires staff approval for messages containing anything it recognizes as contact information, personal information, or inappropriate words/phrases. We can also contact MentorCity to delete messages already sent.
- Disclosures: If a mentee discloses a safety issue (drugs, alcohol, bodily harm, etc.) the mentor is required to report it to the eMentoring staff. The staff will follow up with the mentee's point of contact. If it is an emergency, mentors are trained to phone appropriate contact (either the eMentoring staff or the teacher, who will then phone the mentee's point of contact), or, if it is an immediate emergency, call 911.
- User agreement: all users agree to [these terms of conduct](#) during the program, and will be removed if they violate these policies.
  - Parent/guardian consent must be obtained for participants in the high school program. Teachers can either use [ReMBC's consent form](#) or obtain consent on their own, as long as they relay the information in our consent form.

## **Program delivery**

- Accessibility: we provide easy to access resources, information and tutorials to support participants that struggle with reading, writing, literacy and technology.
- Online program delivery: Platform navigation and user engagement are common challenges faced by the online education community when delivering programming asynchronously online. We are addressing these challenges by:
  - Monitoring user issues with the platform, and regularly asking for feedback on the platform that we then address in yearly user-interface updates.
  - Including platform tutorials.
  - Integrating content to motivate participants throughout the program.
  - Staying informed about the latest advances in online education engagement, and regularly implementing what we learn.
  - Asking for feedback from our participants about motivation and engagement.
  - Following up with participants who are not actively engaging.
- Access to technology: We ensure that all students participating as part of a class are given class time to access the program. For students participating on their own, we ensure they have access to the appropriate technology, and if they do not, help them find a solution.

## **Mentoring relationship issues**

- Lack of mentee engagement: The eMentoring staff follows up with the mentee, or their teacher to gauge their interest. If it is clear that this mentee will have ongoing low engagement, we offer to match the mentor to a second mentee.

- Lack of mentor engagement: Mentors have 3 days to respond to their mentee, and each time they take longer to do so, receive a “strike” and a warning email. After 3 strikes, they are removed from the program and the mentee is rematched.
- Mentor/mentee incompatibility: Mentors and mentees can ask to be rematched at any time. If it is not mutual, the eMentoring staff intervenes and gently informs the party who did not ask to be rematched.
- Disclosures of difficult issues: Mentors are not obligated to support mentees who make disclosures of difficult issues, like issues with stress, mental health, social problems, etc. (that are not safety concerns); however, we do provide training for this if they choose to do so.
- Conflict: Pairs are allowed to disagree and debate, as long as they are being respectful. The eMentoring staff will intervene if pairs are not respecting each other’s opinions and views, and in extreme cases will end the match.



# Operations

## Staff roles

### Senior Leadership: ReMBC's Principal Investigators

#### Role Description:

- Founding members of Rural eMentoring BC.
- Provide strategic advice and direction for the program.
- Represent institutional and funding interests.

#### Team members:

- Dr. Sandra Jarvis-Selinger: Dr. Jarvis-Selinger founded Aboriginal eMentoring and led its transition to Rural eMentoring BC. She is ReMBC's founding Principal Investigator at UBC, and the program is a part of her portfolio of research activities as a faculty member in the University's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences.
- Dr. Katherine Wisener: Dr. Wisener was the program manager for Aboriginal eMentoring, and helped secure funding and transition the program to Rural eMentoring BC. Dr. Wisener serves as Principal Investigator on a volunteer basis; she is currently Associate Director for Faculty Development at UBC's Faculty of Medicine.
- Dr. Blair Stanley: Associate Director of the Rural Education Action Plan (REAP), Dr. Stanley led the effort to bring Rural eMentoring BC into the REAP portfolio of initiatives and secure its funding from the Joint Standing Committee for Rural Issues (JSC). Dr. Stanley acts as the program's liaison to REAP and the JSC, and is also a rural family physician.

### ReMBC's Program Staff

All positions are full-time and ongoing, and staff are UBC employees.

#### Senior Administrative Coordinator

- Role Description: Coordinates, oversees, and reports on all participants' mentoring activities within the program. Resolves issues, serves as point of contact and is the first line of support for both current and prospective participants. Assists with evaluation and reporting, outreach and marketing, event coordination, and oversees other administrative tasks.
- Team member: Parvaneh Rahbar

#### Marketing and Communications Assistant

- Role Description: Responsible for promoting and marketing ReMBC and its offerings, with the goal of widening the program's exposure and recruiting new participants. Supports the internal communications needs of the program, including assisting with reporting and communications to participants.
- Team member: to be hired in October 2025

#### Indigenous Initiatives Manager

- Role Description: Leads the administration and coordination of ReMBC's Indigenous initiatives portfolio, and oversees Indigenous engagement. Leads outreach to and program implementation in Indigenous communities, and coordinates knowledge

dissemination to Indigenous communities and interests. Oversees projects and manages staff and students hired to move initiatives forward. Ensures ReMBC operates with Indigenous cultural safety and respect, and with Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous ways of being in mind.

- Team member: Angela Nash

#### Program manager

- Role Description: Leads the development and implementation of ReMBC's strategic plan. Responsible for strategic partnerships, reporting, and for preparing and managing ReMBC's budget. Manages the program staff as well as other staff and students involved with the program.
- Team member: Juliet Oshiro

## Finances

### **Funding from the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues**

ReMBC's fiscal year runs from April through March. Its yearly budget is submitted in November for JSC approval. The program's cost changes each year depending on its needs and the cost of goods and services; expenses are categorized as such:

#### Outreach and Engagement

- Recruitment activities (mentee, mentor, educators): costs incurred to exhibit or present at conferences, events, and career fairs, including travel and registration.
- Implementation: provides funding to partner schools to implement the program; for example, supplies, technology, compensation for evaluation activities. Also includes funding for program improvement activities.
- High School Strategy and Healthcare Travelling Roadshow: Funding for events and activities that promote healthcare careers to high school students. Includes Pathways to Healthcare Presentation, REAP's contribution to the Healthcare Travelling Roadshow, ReMBC's recruitment drive with the Healthcare Travelling Roadshow, Going Rural Event, REAP's contribution to the Rural CPR Initiative.
- Advertisement/Promotion: Expenses associated with branding, swag, software for marketing and graphics, printing, etc.
- Student support: Funding to support ReMBC participants who meet certain criteria to attend health professions events or programs. This is a fixed amount each year, not be exceeded; once the fixed amount is exhausted, no more students are supported. Students who would otherwise not be able to access these opportunities due to financial hardship are prioritized.

#### Research and Knowledge Translation

- Conferences: costs associated with travel and registration for conferences.
- Miscellaneous research expenses: article publishing fees, software, temporary personnel (i.e., hiring students, contract staff), etc.

#### Operations

- Staff salaries and benefits: Communications and Marketing Assistant, Senior administrative coordinator, Indigenous Initiatives Manager, Program Manager.
- Administrative expenses: technology, software, annual general meeting expenses, office supplies, etc.

- MentorCity fees: monthly subscription plus costs for custom work.

## **UBC Indigenous Initiatives Funding**

One-time, 3-year funding at \$249,350, beginning September 2023, with possibility for multiple extensions. This award funds the following activities:

- Gathering community feedback: includes compensating those who provide feedback and input, and travel to communities and events.
- Evaluation: includes compensating those who provide feedback on completed initiatives, and travel to communities and events.
- Marketing and promotion: registration and travel to exhibit, attend, or present at events/conferences. Printing, swag, etc. This includes school, mentee, partner, and mentor recruitment.
- Content creation and educational materials development: Funding to hire temporary contract staff and students.
- Professional development activities: funding for travel and registration for staff and participants to attend Indigenous education opportunities, and for Indigenous staff and participants to access supports.

## **General meetings and reporting**

### **Meetings**

The ReMBC Team, which includes Senior Leadership and Program Staff, meet twice a year:

- Approximately June/July: Annual General Meeting, a full day, in person, dedicated to strategic planning.
- Approximately January/February: All-hands virtual meeting, 2-hours to discuss updates and challenges in implementing strategic plan

Meetings are schedule in between as needed.

The Program Staff meet weekly on Zoom to check-in and discuss tasks.

### **Reporting**

- Monthly updates to REAP at REAP team meetings: report on progress, bring forward challenges.
- Quarterly report:
  - Prepared for REAP/JSC: reports on ReMBC's activities
  - Prepared for ReMBC Senior Leadership: reports on ReMBC's activities, progress on projects, and challenges.
- Annual report:
  - REAP Annual Report to the JSC: submitted to JSC in May, reports on ReMBC's activities for the previous fiscal year.
  - ReMBC Annual Report: prepared each summer/fall, reports on ReMBC's activities and program evaluation for the previous school year, which runs from July to June.