Mentorship Program Overview

Scope

This mentorship program will connect Indigenous youth in grades 7-12 in rural communities to students and Faculty members in post-secondary institutions. The goal of the program is to spark interest in post-secondary education by exposing youth to the opportunities available to them at the post-secondary level. There will be specific emphasis on STEM, with the goal of inspiring students to explore grade 11 and 12 sciences.

Eligible Individuals & Responsibilities

Mentors

Mentors will be selected from interested post-secondary students and Faculty members. Preference will be given to individuals who are Indigenous, specialize in STEM, and are members of the University of British Columbia. Individuals of all ages are welcome to apply. All mentors must undergo a criminal record check.

Responsibilities:
- Having a conversation with mentee at least once a week
- Providing insight to the post-secondary education experience and/or personal experience in STEM fields
- Being transparent, open, and honest with mentee
- Maintaining a healthy relationship for the agreed-upon duration of the mentorship arrangement
- Communicating concerns regarding the safety of any or all participant(s) to Geering Up personnel when appropriate

Note that exact time commitments and responsibilities to mentees, including if/when in-person visits will occur, will be determined by the community.

Mentees

Students are eligible to enter the program if they:
- Meet at least one of the following:
  - Self identify as Indigenous, First Nations, Metis, or Inuit
  - Have Indigenous Status
- And have completed, at minimum, grade 7 and, at maximum, the first 4 months of grade 12

Preference is given to students in remote communities where other mentorship programs do not exist.

Responsibilities
- Have a conversation with mentor at least once a week
- Communicating concerns regarding the safety of any or all participant(s) to community contact when appropriate

Any additional responsibilities or requirements will be determined by the mentee's community contact.

Community Members

Communities in which high school aged students are participating in the mentorship program are required to provide at least one point of contact. This contact person should have a relationship with the mentee(s). Examples of community points of contact include principles, teachers, family/community support workers, elders, etc.

Responsibilities
- Ensure that Geering Up advertising is effectively delivered
- Encourage potential mentees to apply for the program
- Communicate any issues in the mentorship program to Geering Up

Geering Up

Geering Up's InSTEM Outreach Team will provide resources, training, and support for mentors, mentees and community points of contact. Beyond this, Geering Up will also be responsible for:
- Advertising the program to mentors and communities
- Recruiting mentors
- Matching mentors and mentees

- Providing community members with necessary information for mentees to succeed
- Checking in with mentors & community members on a regular basis
- Offering support for mentors

Specific information can be found in the Supports section.

Mentor/Mentee Relationships

Mentees should see themselves in their mentors. Relationships should inspire mentees and allow them to see that they could be in the shoes of their mentor if they choose. Mentees/mentors are encouraged to have conversations about STEM, including STEM careers and STEM degrees. However, conversations do not have to be limited to STEM topics and can reflect topics of mutual interest.

Overall, relationships will vary depending on the community and mentors. Geering Up will work with the Community Contact to create the best mentor/mentee relationships. Note that conversations may be monitored if requested by the community contact.

One-on-One Mentorship:

In one-on-one relationships, mentors are paired with one mentee. Mentors and mentees determine regular times each week to talk over the phone or video call. The mentee and/or their community contact may provide a list of topics, if desired, that they would like the mentor to discuss during the sessions.

Group Mentorship:

In a group relationship, a small group of mentees meets with their mentor at a specified time each week. In this case, video calls are encouraged. Mentees and/or their community contact may provide a list of topics, if desired, that they would like the mentor to discuss during the sessions.

Classroom Mentorship:

In classroom mentorship relationships, mentors will call in via video call or phone call during class time. This provides an opportunity for mentors to reach a large group of students at once. Discussion topics may be decided up by the community contact, mentees, and/or classroom teacher. For this type of mentorship, weekly contact is not mandatory. A schedule will be determined by all parties involved to ensure the best outcome of the relationship.

Onboarding Steps

Mentor Onboarding

Steps to becoming a mentor:
- Candidates apply
- Selected candidates are interviewed
  - During this process, candidates are given the option to mentor 1 or more youth, or be a general classroom mentor
- Mentors are trained (see training section below)
- Mentors are paired with mentee(s)!
- If possible, mentors and mentees are brought to a community event and have an opportunity to meet face to face

Training:

Trainings for mentors includes:
- Geering Up Policy
- Mental Health Literacy
- Indigeneity & STEM (InSTEM)
- Working with youth & Relationship Development
- Child Welfare
- Mentorship Ethics
- History of Colonialism in BC and Canada
- Blackboard Collaborate/Zoom Use
- Community-specific training (where possible)

Mentee Onboarding

Steps to becoming a mentee:
- Mentees are told what to expect from program
  - A mentor, advisor, friend, and/or role model to talk with on a regular basis
  - Someone to talk to about school, including advice on what courses to take if they want to explore various pathways after high school
  - Someone to talk to about everyday occurrences, upcoming life events, personal struggles
  - An Indigenous person from outside of their community to answer questions about:
    - living outside of their community
    - Pursuing post-secondary education
  - STEM and InSTEM activities that they may not have access to otherwise
    - (If they want to do STEM outside of the classroom)

- Mentees either apply or are selected by their community contact
  - This step is determined by each individual community
- Mentees are given a choice of
  - A classroom mentor
  - A personal mentor (individual)
  - A personal mentor (group)
- Mentees who want a personal mentor will rank the age/profession of mentor that they would prefer
- Mentees are matched with a mentor

New Community Onboarding

When Geering Up approaches a community regarding implementing a mentorship program, the following steps will be taken:
- Determine if the community would like to implement the program, and, if so, what supports they need in advertising
- Determine, with the current community contact, who the community contact for the mentorship program will be. The community contact for this program should be someone who is in contact with the prospective mentees regularly
- Together, read through materials regarding types of mentor/mentee relationships, contact time, etc so that the community has a solid grasp on the way the program can be tailored to best fit their students
- Determine, alongside community contact and others who may hold a stake in this, such as classroom teachers:
  - Type of mentorship relationship(s) desired (personal or classroom)
  - Approve mentor criteria
  - How they would like to advertise (use an application, recommendation from teacher/community contact, etc)
  - Any other considerations that are relevant for the program to run smoothly in the community
- Collect information on the community, with consent and aid of the community contact, that can be used to educate mentors on any challenges, available resources, and relevant lifestyles or traditions that affect students in the community
  - In addition, ask community contacts if there are any trainings we do not currently offer mentors that they would like to see implemented
- Determine who to contact in the case of a disclosure of suicidal thoughts, abuse, or risk of harm to self or others.
- Discuss and solidify timeline for implementation of mentorship program
- Implement mentorship program as discussed

Support

To mentors, Geering Up will provide:
- Trainings mentioned in the above training section
- Examples of discussion topics
- STEM activities to run with mentees (tailored to either class or one-on-one sessions)
- In-depth information about the community they will be mentoring in
- Resources on:
    - Potential discussion topics
    - Mental health
    - Creating InSTEM (Indigenous STEM) content
    - Team- and relationship-building activities
    - How to Have Tough Conversations
    - How to plan activities and where to access GU resources

To mentees, Geering Up will provide:
- A mentor
- Resources and advice for:
    - Mental Health
    - University entry requirements for select BC institutions
    - Applying to university as an Indigenous student
    - Conversation topics with their mentor
    - Using Zoom
    - Tips for succeeding in STEM

To community contacts, Geering Up will provide:
- Any information desired on the mentors
- A clear overview of how the program operates and what to expect
- A point of contact in the case of any concerns
- The option of creating a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Geering Up to solidify expectations regarding the program