



YOUTH IN CARE AND MENTORING

A Photovoice Project

Youth in Care and Mentoring: A Photovoice Project

In 2019, members of the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring Advisory Committee sought to begin a photovoice project with the aim of more fully understanding the experiences of children and youth in care and their mentors. To this end, a partnership was formed between the Advisory Committee and Dr. Melissa Tremblay from the University of Alberta. Eight matches from Red Deer, Edmonton, and Calgary took part in this photovoice project. Matches captured photos that represented their mentoring experiences, and participated in group discussions and interviews. This photobook includes photos captured by mentees and mentors to represent their mentoring experiences. Quotes from our group discussions and interviews are dispersed throughout the book. Our findings provide insight into the shared, new experiences of mentors and mentees and the joy that matches took in spending time together; mentoring relationships characterized by equality, strong bonds, genuine interest, positive regard, trust, and commitment; and growth stemming from mentoring.



"We can't always see the end of the road. Our mentoring relationship keeps building and changing. But we know we're on a good path...a journey leading to good things."

~ Mentee



"These pottery bowls are like our relationship. You leave it one way. Then when you pick it up it's a bit changed. When we meet, it's like, 'what's new? And then we pick up where we left off."

~ Mentee

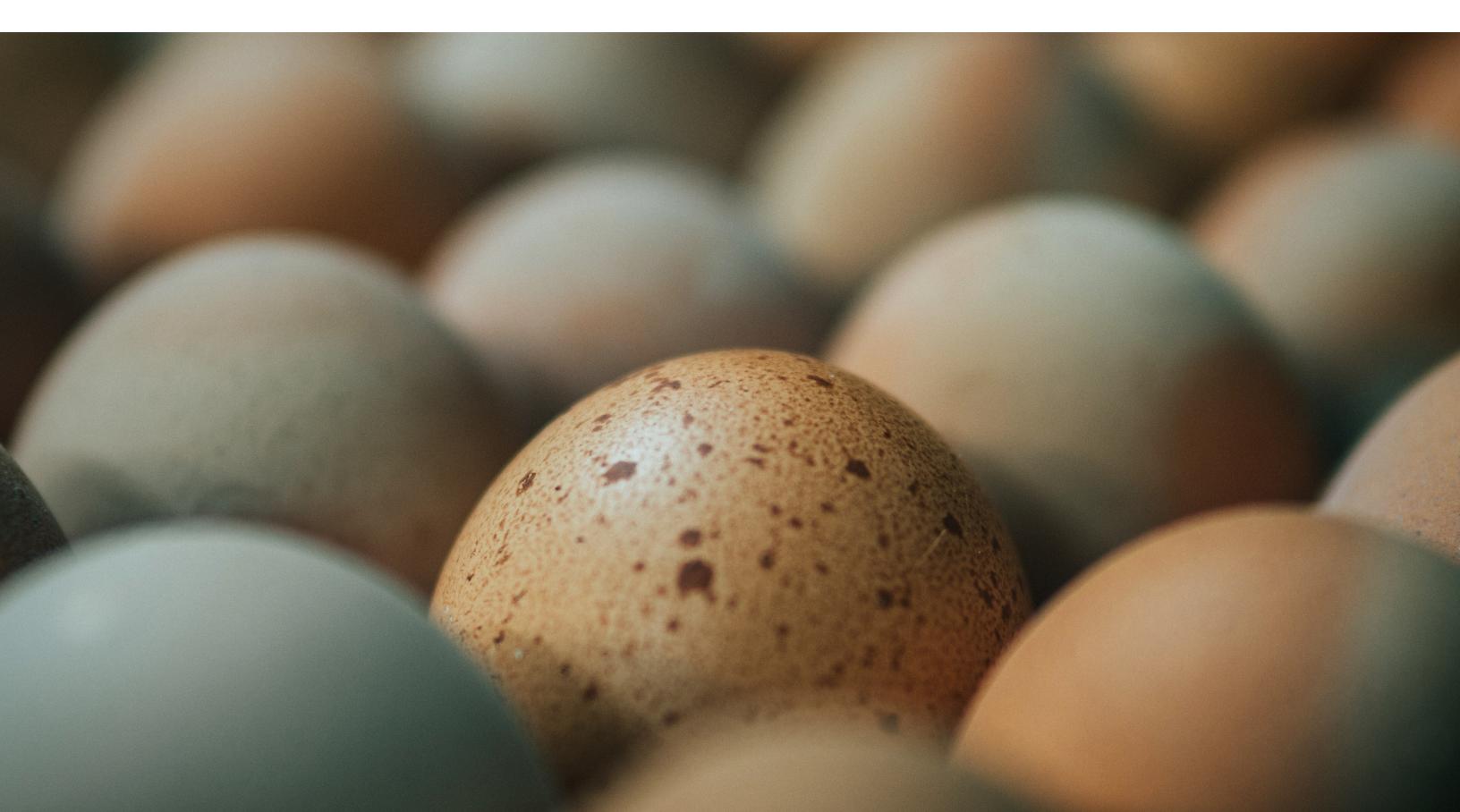
"Sometimes people feel like they 'should' volunteer. But you should only be a mentor if there's a part of you that feels connected to the cause and if you're able to lean into your relationship with your mentee. You can't just do it to check a box. There has to be meaning and intentionality."

~ Mentor



**"Sometimes
mentors have to
break their
mentees' shells."**

~ Mentee

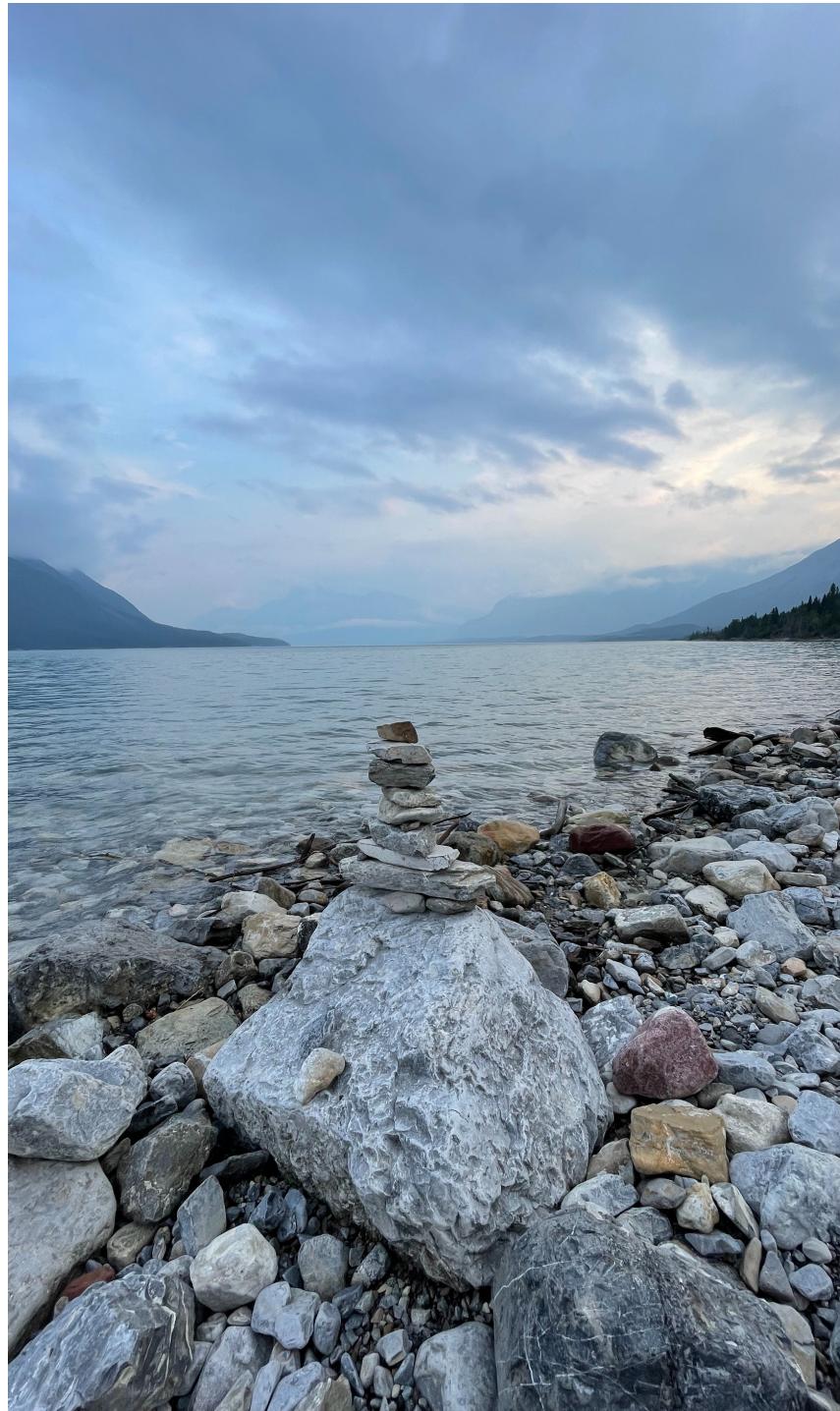


**"With my mentee, I like to
reinforce the idea that you can
stick out amongst the crowd and
those differences can be
celebrated."**

~ Mentor

"You just want your mentee to experience as much as possible, expand their world."

~ Mentor





"This is a unified ecosystem. The stuff beneath the surface allows for thriving. It's not just me and my mentee meeting every Friday, but the other roles and supports in his life that also allow for thriving."

~ Mentee



"Mentoring is about raising someone up."

~ Mentee



**"We're all equipped with different tools.
Sometimes to reach our potential, we have
to borrow others' tools and we need to be
willing to lend a hand."**

~ Mentor



**“Symbols can
tell the story of
a relationship.”**

~ Mentee

**"We get lost
together in
whatever we're
doing."**

~ Mentee



"We can have two different cultures that come together and know how to live in a society together, work well together and just grow and love each other together."

~ Mentor





"Without my mentor, I'd be pretty lonely."

~ Mentee

"We click together like puzzle pieces."

~ Mentee





**"Mentoring can
be for learning
about yourself
and who you
want to be."**

~ Mentee



**"It's the laughs
that we share,
the times when
he's cracking
jokes and I'm
laughing. That's
like heaven to
me. That's like
the greatest
awesome."**

~ Mentor

"We have a responsibility as mentors to introduce new experiences into our matches' lives...to help them figure out what they like, what they don't like, how to make better choices from better experiences."

~ Mentor





"My life would be dramatically different without mentoring because the relationship I have with my mentee goes beyond just having a little brother. If I didn't have this relationship, I wouldn't have that part of my heart that's attached to someone in that way. My mentee has given me a glimpse of what it would be like to have a son. I don't know how to articulate how profound that is to me."

~ Mentor

"I wanted to help kids get some support that I didn't have when I was growing up. So I joined Big Brothers with more of a serious mindset. But what I've got out of mentoring that has surprised me...is the amount of fun it would be, even if it's not doing an activity... sometimes we're running errands just talking. All those moments are gold."

~Mentor





"There's been so many things that my mentee and I have done together that I have never done before by myself... And so it was a perfect excuse to have all these great experiences."

~ Mentor

"Before, I couldn't even order food, because I was so nervous as a guy. But now, I feel like I'm a different person. I don't think I'd be the same if I didn't take this program."

~ Mentee



**"I think the
good stuff
comes from the
simple
moments."**

~ Mentor





"I love that our time together is a consistent point of joy for me in the week."

~ Mentor

"Whatever we're doing together, we're having fun and that's our big focus."

~ Mentor





"Even though we had some challenges of meeting up together that we were both willing and committed to the relationship and partnership to still show up for each other and make the best of whatever we were handed."

~ Mentor



“The closeness of it...Like when I go grocery shopping, I now make sure to get ginger ale, which I would never do before. I'm like, okay, like, this is what [my mentee] likes to drink. So just always have in the pantry.”

~ Mentor

"Our Thursday nights are just for each other and it's a very sacred time, and it's another person in your corner, another person to have your back and you are really excited to share with them."

~ Mentor





"I think mentorship gives children an edge that they otherwise might not have. It makes goals clearer; it gives them more resources than they had before and it kind of pushes them a bit more. I think before we met, my mentee was pretty shy. And I really pushed her so in grade nine, she felt confident because we practiced to try out for these teams. And now that she's at the high school...This is massive that she went today and tried out. It's massive."

~ Mentor



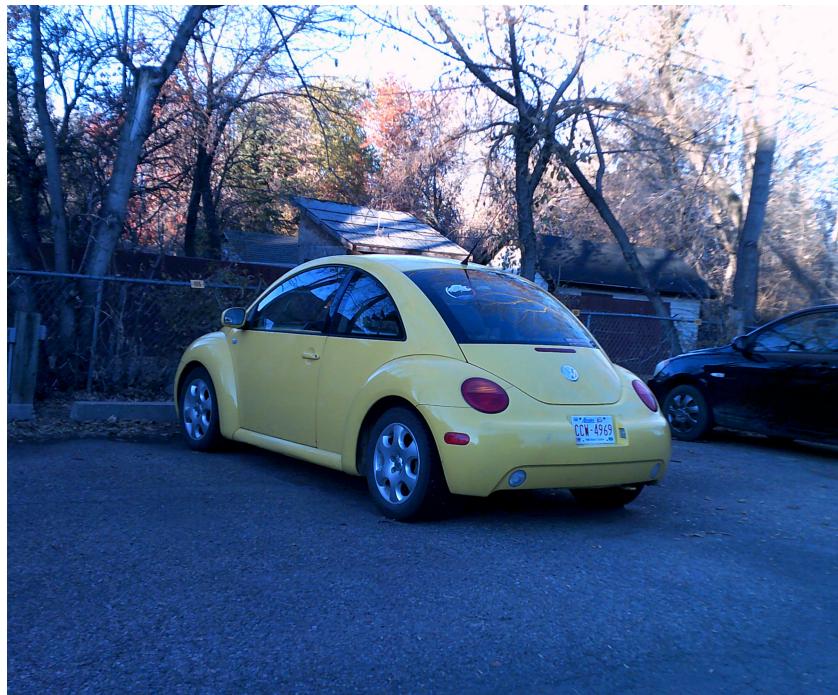
"It's about building up those life skills for my mentee so she feels autonomy in her life and capable...planting those little seeds of autonomy along the way."

~ Mentor



"Like family, you want to include them in the big moments and the little moments."

~ Mentor



**"People will
keep showing
up for you."**

~ Mentor

"My favorite thing about our mentoring relationship is how diametrically different we both are to each other. And yet, we get along beautifully. it helps you develop those skills of learning how to be with different people from different schools of life."

~ Mentor





"Without mentoring, I think I'd have a smaller view of the world. You learn a lot about yourself, a lot about them, and a lot about growing and developing and persevering. And that's just been hugely rewarding."

~ Mentor

Youth in Care and Mentoring Photovoice Project

We are deeply grateful to each of the matches who took the time to participate in this project and to share their experiences with openness and enthusiasm.

For more information about this photovoice project, contact Melissa Tremblay at mkd@ualberta.ca

This photobook draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada