



United Way
Southern Interior BC

United Way's CODEanagan program helps youth with more than just technology skills

April 26, 2021 – Over the past two weeks, United Way Southern Interior BC (SIBC), in conjunction with community partners Accelerate Okanagan and Okanagan College, once again delivered CODEanagan bootcamps virtually to youth between 13-26 years old. This time they signed up to be introduced to the world of coding, websites, network design and cyber security...but left the workshops with a lot more.

Almost 55% of the youth participating said they “only knew the basics and were not confident with computers” prior to participation in the bootcamps. 65% said they were not previously aware there was such a booming tech industry in our region with opportunities for employment. Participants noted fun facts that really shocked them, like the fact that 3 out of 5 future tech jobs they might apply for, do not even exist yet. And 72% said their self-confidence had increased considerably through CODEanagan’s learning opportunities, mentors, and opportunities for follow up.

CODEanagan is an ongoing tech education program for local youth who may traditionally experience barriers to learning due to cost, accessibility or education format. Supported by the RBC Future Launch Foundation and Coast Capital Savings Community Investment for Youth, the program has grown beyond Kelowna since Covid forced it to go virtual. As a result, this Spring’s workshop series included youth from the North & South Okanagan, the Kootenays and Kamloops. The program also offers virtual field trips to local tech companies and ongoing mentorship to inspire them to explore career opportunities in the tech sector, our fastest growing local industry sector with growth of 15% year on year.

“At United Way, we are passionate about helping youth reach their potential & explore new possibilities,” says Jude Brunt, Manager of Events & Special Projects at United Way SIBC. *“COVID-19 has affected youth dramatically and, for many young people, making connections like this is not so easy right now. They don’t realize the scope of career opportunities available to them when they channel their video game skills and keyboard mastery in new directions. That’s where CODEanagan offers inspiration and opens doors.”*

“Crack the Code” gave the youth a taste of coding, websites and programming languages, and “Thriving in a Tech Driven World” explored computer networking and cyber security. This builds on previous CODEanagan sessions on concepts including audio engineering, 3-D printing and design, app development, and mechatronics. The instructors use a mix of live instruction via zoom, student interaction and breakout rooms to pace the learning according to individual’s needs.

The presence of volunteers like Dave, Barrett, & Scott as coaches/mentors from the tech industry, was invaluable, to answer questions in online chat and jump into breakout rooms for one-on-one support to youth. They also gave the youth a window into tech career opportunities locally, and encouraged them to explore working with tech in their passions.

“So many transferrable skills like problem solving and communication can be developed through technology jobs and often the youth don’t even realize they have them,” says Barrett Sharpe from QHR Technologies who was volunteering as a coach for his second time with CODEanagan.



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"It's inspiring to see programs like CODEanagan, even during the pandemic, where teens can experience a taste of tech in a barrier free, safe and fun environment, says coach David Emde, who works in research with Agri Food Canada, when not volunteering in the community. "Seeing local youth take this opportunity to learn new things, share ideas, and make connections is great, and I hope that I can continue to mentor some of them in the future."

All CODEanagan participants left with plenty of follow up resources and contacts to take their tech learning forward without the barrier of fee-based education and paid courses. Students all received free take out pizza generously donated by Papa John's Pizza, and all received a virtual Tim's Gift Card at the end in lieu of their usual in-person completion awards.

Dakota Bonvie, aged 19 from West Kelowna said, *"The CODEanagan bootcamps are awesome. It's cool getting to learn valuable tech skills from fun instructors and to connect with the coaches and mentors about how they got into the industry and where their tech jobs have taken them."*

The next series of CODEanagan bootcamps is planned for Fall 2021. Watch the website for full details coming soon. www.codeanagan.com

About RBC Future Launch:

RBC Future Launch is a commitment to help young Canadians prepare for a drastically changing workforce. RBC Future Launch focuses on three critical gaps: helping youth get work experience, helping youth grow their network, and helping youth gain new skills.

More info at: <https://www.rbc.com/dms/enterprise/futurelaunch/about.html>

About Coast Capital Savings:

Coast Capital Savings Community Investments for Youth aims to help youth aged 13 to 29 achieve what is important in their lives and build a strong financial future. They invest in programs like CODEanagan that help young people build the foundation that will help them navigate life, achieve the education they need, prepare for the world of work and build their financial capabilities; all with a goal of contributing to a young person's journey to becoming empowered and financially independent.

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