

JUNE 2024

TRANSFORMING STUDENTS' LIVES

[THECMOLIKFOUNDATION.COM](https://thecmolikfoundation.com)

INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S THINKERS & LEADERS



 **scmolik
foundation**



INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S THINKERS AND LEADERS

Rooted in a profound belief in the power of education to transform and empower young people, we support students in becoming responsible, contributing members of our community.





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OUR FOUNDER'S STORY

I grew up in Kelowna, a small town in the interior of BC, eldest of six kids in a family of modest means. I was recruited by a local accounting firm in 1967 of which Ritchie Bros (RBA) was a client. Throughout my five years of achieving my CPA designation more and more of my time was spent on the RBA account, including plenty of auctions and travelling with Dave Ritchie as he negotiated deals. The very day I received my final CPA exam marks Dave was on the phone recruiting me to move the head office to Vancouver and look after all things financial, and then some; which I did on March 1, 1973.

I retired as President and COO in 2002, and remained on the Board of Directors until 2008, some forty years after my first auction.

In 2008, we endowed The Cmolik Foundation with RB stock aiming to provide opportunities for youth who have experienced adversity in their lives. **Rooted in a profound belief in the power of education to transform and empower**, we sponsor field trips and summer camps for elementary students, support undergraduate and graduate education, and provide mentorship to ensure the healthy development of British Columbia youth to become responsible, contributing members of our community.

We have 100 students perpetually in undergraduate university programs of their own choice (including annually an RBA designate), each awarded a \$45,000 scholarship paid over five years. As well, we award three \$30,000 scholarships each year to our alumni pursuing a Masters or PHD.

We are immensely grateful for the unwavering support and generosity of our community, whose dedication has been instrumental in nurturing and empowering each of our scholars throughout their educational journeys. Together, we continue to uplift and inspire the next generation of leaders, fostering a community where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and make meaningful contributions.



C. Russell Cmolik

CO-FOUNDER, BOARD CHAIR

DRIVEN BY A COMMON PURPOSE

The Cmolik Foundation's mission to empower students on their educational journeys is made possible by our dedicated board of directors, staff members, and volunteers, who run our programs, serve on committees, and act as mentors to our Cmolik Scholars. Made up of accomplished professionals, our team believes in giving others the opportunity to achieve their goals.



TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Experience the power of education that transcends boundaries, unlocking the potential of every scholar.



100

CMOLIK SCHOLARSHIPS
CURRENTLY FUNDED

\$1,000,000

IN SCHOLARSHIPS
GRANTED IN 2024

A COMMITMENT TO THE NEXT GENERATION

In 2008, The Cmolik Foundation was created with the aim of providing opportunities for youth who have experienced adversity in their lives. Rooted in a profound belief in the power of education to transform and empower, we sponsor field trips and summer camps for elementary students, support undergraduate and graduate education, and provide mentorship to ensure the healthy development of our youth to become responsible, contributing members of our community.

\$8,000,000

IN SCHOLARSHIPS TOTAL



FUNDING EDUCATION

By awarding BC graduating students with scholarships, we make a post-secondary education possible for more promising young people. This commitment to education starts early: students in Grades 5 to 7 who participate in our summer camps with SFU receive tuition passports, which can be redeemed upon entry to post-secondary.



STRENGTHENING SKILLS

Students from inner-city elementary schools benefit from a diverse range of field trips and summer camps that introduce them to interesting career paths in STEM, build confidence and important life skills, and inspire them to continue to work hard for themselves and their communities.



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Beyond the financial support, the social support and “family” atmosphere with the scholarship is by far the best part about this whole experience.

- Sydney Westby



UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

While a post-secondary education can be life-changing, it's a goal that's out of reach for many students. We're trying to change that. Every year, we award up to 20 scholarships, each one a maximum of \$45,000 paid over five years of study, to students graduating from BC high schools. Scholarship recipients have faced adversity but have responded with positivity and tenacity, achieving academic and social goals. With hard work and support, their post-secondary dreams can become a reality.

GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

Recipients of the Cmolik Foundation's undergraduate scholarship are invited to apply for our graduate scholarship, which consists of three \$30,000 awards. This funding is designed to support students as they continue their studies, make contributions to their field, and pave the way for a successful career. Moreover, it's aimed at helping our most promising students reach new heights and make their own unique and significant impact on the world.

OUR PROGRAMS

EDUCATION & INSPIRATION

Our programs are designed to provide elementary students with memorable, interactive experiences that will spark curiosity, build confidence, and inspire lifelong dreams. By joining our field trips and summer camps, students become part of the Cmolik community, and garner financial support for their post-secondary futures.



EXPANDING HORIZONS

TUITION PASSPORTS

Students who attend our summer camps are eligible for Tuition Passports, mini-scholarships that are redeemable upon graduation from high school and entry into post-secondary. Students with perfect attendance over three years of camp can earn a total of \$1000, earning \$200 in Grade 5, \$300 in Grade 6, and \$500 in Grade 7.



SUMMER CAMPS

We partner with Simon Fraser University's Surrey campus to provide summer day camps for students in Grades 5 to 7, where they can have fun, develop skills, and experience a university campus first-hand.



FIELD TRIPS

This enriching program invites students from an inner-city elementary school in Surrey on extraordinary field trips every year. Expanding Horizons provides valuable career development and hands-on learning to students in Grades 5 to 7, shaping their aspirations for the future.





OUR STUDENTS



MY STRENGTH: DYSLEXIA

In high school, my career goal was to become an architect; however, my real dream was to go to university and learn as much as I possibly could about our planet and things like climate change, weather patterns, and hydrological processes. I loved to learn and found most topics very interesting. As a teenager, I hoped that I would be able to attend a university and further my education after high school, so I worked hard to try and get good grades. But deep down, I never thought it would be possible for me, for a multitude of reasons. I wanted to be seen as an individual who could succeed and even thrive in an academic setting. I worked hard to prove that I could do anything and that my learning disability was not a hindrance, and it wouldn't hold me back from achieving my dreams.

Throughout high school, I encountered numerous challenges. One of the toughest battles was learning to navigate and transform my learning disability, dyslexia, into a strength. However, it wasn't just dyslexia; it came with a host of other struggles, including anxiety, self-doubt, and being misunderstood by both teachers and peers. People would often underestimate my abilities when it came to school and because of that they would try and steer me in the "right" direction for a person like me with a learning disability. An example of a teacher trying to push me in the "right" direction (e.g. not University) was in grade 10.

In my planning class, I chose to research the architecture program at UBC, and I was so excited about this opportunity. But my teacher took me aside and told me that since I have a learning disability, I couldn't go to university, and wasn't worth my time to investigate UBC. So, I wasn't allowed to research this school for my assignment, and instead, I had to investigate different trades programs. This assignment was a big one that we worked on for many weeks. I felt very disappointed I wasn't allowed to explore my program of interest and that I wasn't good enough to even consider attending university.

Besides this assignment, this teacher throughout the year continued to make mean comments about how I was not good enough for university and how I needed to limit my dreams, and so on. This is just one of many stories. It hurt my confidence, but it also fueled my determination to prove her wrong. So, I never gave up and would just keep working through everything that was tossed my way.



Dance made the biggest difference for me during high school. It gave me a community where I could be myself and let go of all the negative feelings that would build up at school. I would use dance as an outlet to channel all my feelings and frustrations. After, I would be able to approach my schoolwork with an open mind and not just anger and frustration. Another thing that helped me a lot is just the fact that I am very stubborn, thus I would often ignore all the negative comments about how I can't do this or that because of my disability but instead treated them as a challenge. This method could only go so far as repeated doubt and negative comments do stay with you no matter how hard you try to just shrug them off.

A few key people in my life constantly encouraged and inspired me. My mom is one of the main reasons I was able to get this far. She believed in me when no one else did and she fought to make sure that I was given the support I needed in school to succeed. She saw in grade 3 that I was very far behind my peers, which was causing me, at 9 years old, to want to give up and that I had lost my confidence in myself. What she did to help me was amazing. She decided to homeschool me one day every week so that I could learn things I was interested in, things that I could actually do, and it was a game changer. She said I could pick anything I

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*“One of the toughest battles
 was learning to navigate and
 transform my learning disability,
 dyslexia, into a strength.”*

wanted to learn about. So, I chose to learn how to sew and then how to sell my products at farmers markets and other events held on Gabriola. I learned how to make teddies and heating pads that could be warmed up in the microwave or put in the freezer to help people with injuries. And I loved every second of it. Still to this day, I love to sew, and recently I have been learning how to make my own clothes from recycled materials, using all the skills my mom taught me when I was 9 years old. My mom worked hard to pay for tutors and summer school designed to help people like me so that I could catch up to my peers.

My tutor I had in high school, Debbie Cook, helped show me that my learning disability isn't only a disability but can also help me be good at some things. She helped me understand how my brain works and different methods I could use to minimize my struggles in school. My boyfriend of six years, David McGowan, helped me figure out my strengths. He recognized that my dyslexia would be an advantage for computer programming and would help me succeed because of the different way my brain works. He talked me into trying a programming class, and I fell in love with it. He also helped me find the Geomatics program at UVic that would help strengthen both my strengths and weaknesses while studying subjects that I am very passionate about. He has pushed me to do my best in school and has believed in me every step of the way.

University has felt like a roller coaster with so many ups and downs. Some days, I feel amazing, like nothing can stop me from completing my assignments, projects, or degree. But on other days, it feels like it is impossible to achieve anything. Despite the downs, I try to focus on one step at a time, so everything doesn't seem so daunting. I have accomplished more than I ever thought I could. I have learned how to code in a handful of different languages, and how to create everything from a well-designed website from scratch to complex algorithms to solve many kinds of problems. Learning how to code has not only given me skills that will be vital for my career but has also taught me how to think outside of the box when it comes to problem-solving.

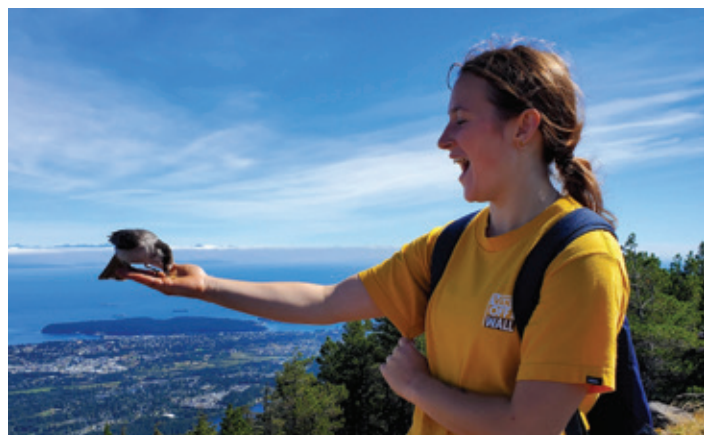
I am so happy I transferred into the geomatics (computer science and geography) program at UVic. Delving into

programming and gaining insights into our planet's workings from a physical geography perspective has profoundly shifted my worldview for the better. It's been an extraordinary journey, discovering the intricate connections between our planet and technology. From forecasting earthquakes and landslides to analyzing algae blooms in water bodies through satellite imagery, and even projecting droughts and sea level rise, I've been fascinated by the endless possibility's technology offers in addressing diverse challenges.

In my future, I aspire to use the intersection of my geography and computer science expertise gained through my degree to contribute to pressing global issues such as climate change. My goal is to harness remote sensing imagery to deepen our understanding of Earth, empowering us to devise innovative solutions for mitigating the impact of climate change on different ecosystems and biodiversity.

The Cmolik Foundation changed my life. They gave me the chance to achieve my dream of going to university and helped me believe more in myself, as they believed in me enough to fund my schooling. I feel I can't put into words how big of a difference the Cmolik Foundation made for me. I am so grateful and feel so lucky that I got the chance to meet all the amazing people at the Cmolik Foundation.

Frankie Pothier is a Cmolik Scholar currently attending the University of Victoria who loves to upcycle old clothes into amazing new garments.



FULL CIRCLE: GIVING BACK

My journey with the Foundation started when I was in the fifth grade, during the Expanding Horizons Program. This program early in my life allowed me to get insight into university and potential careers. The field trips and camps in the three years at Lena Shaw Elementary impacted me way more than I knew at the time. Looking back at this experience now, I realize how important this was in my growth as a person. It was as little as learning how to behave at a restaurant or even just eating at a restaurant such as the “Salmon House” was such a core memory that both me and my mom share (she attended the field trip when I was in fifth grade). Many students, including me, had never experienced flying in a helicopter, listening to an orchestra or eating at an upscale restaurant. This is something that I most likely would have experienced until much later in life, but because of The Foundation, I was exposed at such a young age.

Throughout high school, I knew that the scholarship from The Cmolik Foundation was one that I was definitely going to apply to. It was a goal I had. When it came time for the interview, I was very nervous. I spoke to others who were interviewed before me and they all said, “don’t worry, it’s like having a conversation” and when it came time to be interviewed, it really was like a conversation. It reminded me of how inviting the Foundation really is. There are so many support systems within the Foundation of who I could reach out to throughout my post-secondary education. Support systems that are so close in reach to me. My peers do not have this opportunity. I do not have to worry about paying for my classes or watch my parents worry about this. It is such a relief knowing that these costs are paid for.

I have such an amazing support system both at home and school who I will forever be indebted to. I would have never come so far if it wasn’t for the constant words of encouragement from my family and friends and that has continued into my university career. There was a point in high school where I heavily relied on my teachers and that is something I am grateful for. Wendy Nielsen and Brent



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The Foundation has emphasized the importance of giving back when the opportunity arises

Schieve changed my life in so many ways. From what they taught me in class and the way they supported me by constantly checking in when I wasn't doing well; they were such a significant part of my support system and one of the reasons I was able to get this scholarship. My coaches also played a huge role in who I am today, they taught me consistency and self-discipline which I now can apply to various aspects in my life. The Foundation has also provided me with my mentor, Mahara Sinclair, who has played such a large role in my university learning experience. She always reassures and guides me in times of uncertainty.

One summer, I had the opportunity to volunteer for the Foundation for the very summer camps I attended when I was younger. Seeing the smiles on all the students' faces made me so happy. I saw myself in some of the students. So eager to learn and create. It was a full circle moment for me, being on the other side of those camps. It truly was an amazing feeling.

I recently commenced coaching track and field at my high school as a way of giving back and passing on the skills that the sport and school imparted to me. I aspire to positively impact others' lives, much like The Cmolik Foundation has done for me. The Foundation has emphasized the importance of giving back when the opportunity arises, and I hope to do so at the earliest opportunity.

I would like to thank the Foundation on behalf of my parents, grandmother and brother who have the utmost gratitude towards this Foundation. Thank you for everything you have given me so far. I cannot wait for the memories I will continue to make with everyone in this foundation.

Ria Laura is a Cmolik Scholar studying Business Administration at Simon Fraser University who has yet to declare her major. We enjoyed having her volunteer at the SFU Lena Shaw Summer Camp!



OUR ALUMNI

SCALE NEW HEIGHTS

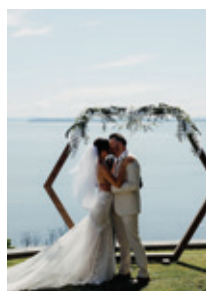
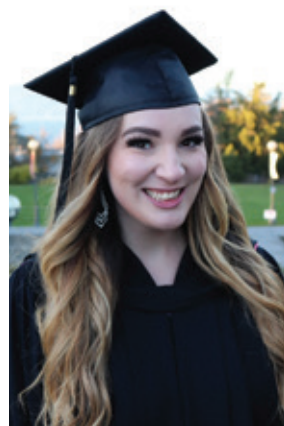


CHADNI KHONDOKER

Chadni has completed her Doctor of Medicine at the University of British Columbia Vancouver-Fraser Program. She has enjoyed connecting with and caring for members of her community. She has created many beautiful memories with her wonderful friends and family during medical school and is excited for all that is to come in her next chapter. She looks forward to starting her pediatric residency in July at the University of British Columbia and continuing to serve her home community.

KAYLA LAJEUNESSE

Kayla completed her Masters of Social Work Degree with a Specialization in healthcare at the University of British Columbia in May of 2023. A piece of wisdom she would like to share to those pursuing graduate studies is: “as you embark on this remarkable journey, remember that the mere act of daring to dream is a victory. You’ve defied the odds, overcome doubts, and embraced the unknown with unwavering courage. In every lecture, every assignment, and every late-night study session, you’re not just pursuing a degree – you’re rewriting your story, proving to yourself and the world that nothing is beyond your reach. In the face of challenges, remember the strength that lies within you. You are capable of greatness beyond measure. Your journey may be filled with twists and turns, but each obstacle is an opportunity to grow stronger, wiser, and more resilient. Embrace the moments of doubt as catalysts for transformation, and let perseverance be your guiding light.”



MADELINE LAUENER

Madeline will be completing her PhD in Medicine at the University of British Columbia in June 2024, where she studied medical sciences and research in cancer immunology and cellular therapy. Through her degree, Madeline was honored as a Vanier Scholar in recognition of her significant academic, leadership, and research achievement in the medical field. Madeline’s favourite memories of her graduate school experience include having the opportunity to travel and present her research at medical conferences across Canada and the US, along with fellow students and friends made throughout her time in the program. She has recently been notified of her acceptance to her top choice postdoctoral program, where she will pursue a translational and clinical research joint fellowship in haematology/oncology and cellular therapeutics at UCLA and Stanford. Having been a cancer patient who received a clinical trial drug for relapsed lymphoma, Madeline is proud and excited that she has been given the opportunity by the Cmolik Foundation to pursue her dream to develop novel therapies for cancer patients, and provide others with the hope and health that she was given. Thank you Cmolik Foundation!



PAUL STEWARDSON

Paul Stewardson (Cmolik class of 2013) completed his doctorate in cancer biology this year, and was at his convocation at the University of Calgary earlier today! In his PhD research, he created and validated Canada's first molecular diagnostic test for thyroid cancer called ThyroSPEC, which has been used to diagnose over 1,300 patients in Alberta thus far. During the last few years of his degree, Paul also passed three finance exams and took on a full-time job in equity research where he analyzes publicly traded healthcare companies for institutional investors. Paul is also passionate about his faith, and was featured in a podcast called Between Sundays where he spoke on bridging the gap between religion and science. Having completed his education, he recently moved to New York City to pursue his equity research career alongside the best in the business.



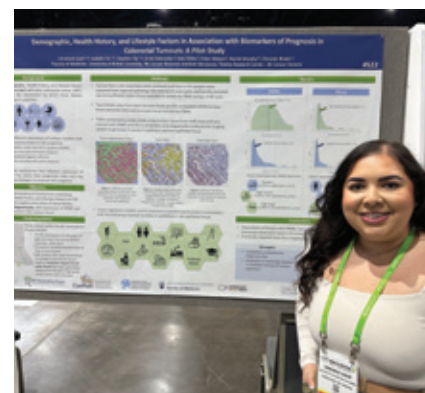
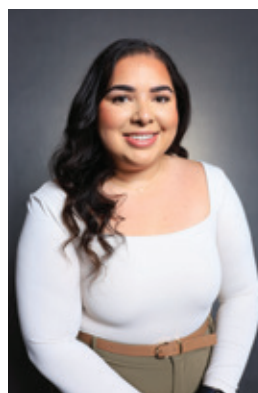
SARAH GRAHAM

Sarah completed her Master of Social Work program at UVic. She found that her graduate studies were an amazing opportunity to be mentored closely, and some highlights included starting an art's therapy group at a local hospital's detox unit as well as completing thesis research about preventing youth from experiencing sexualized violence.



RACHEL MCLELLAN-CARICH

Rachel will be graduating with a Master of Science in Anesthesiology, Pharmacology & Therapeutics from The University of British Columbia. Her favorite moment was attending a Djavad Mowafaghian Centre for Brain Health event as a Matrix Junior Scholar, where she realized she was sitting across from and conversing with many professors she had admired and taken courses under 10 years ago. Rachel is incredibly thankful for the opportunity to pursue her passion for helping vulnerable populations and is eager for the next chapter to strive to be the change she wants to see in the world.



UMAIMAH ZANIF

Umaimah has completed her Master of Science degree in Interdisciplinary Oncology from the Faculty of Medicine at UBC Vancouver.

Her master's thesis project was investigating demographic, health history, and lifestyle factors in association with biomarkers of prognosis in colorectal tumours. She looked at the expression of colorectal biomarkers SPARC and PD-L1 in association with pre-diagnostically assessed lifestyle factors.

Some of Umaimah's favourite moments and highlights were presenting her research at the AACR conference in San Diego, being a graduate TA for three courses, her oncology 502 class where she had an epiphany; she loves clinical research and specifically the clinical aspect to the medical field. Another highlight was presenting at an international webinar and creating T cells in her clinical rotation!

TRADING GOALS: HOW I TRANSITIONED FROM ASPIRING SOCCER STAR TO FINANCE LEADER

My plan was to become a professional soccer player. Now this was definitely a pipe dream, but I was delusional enough to think if I worked hard, I could at least get a scholarship that would pay for my education, and once I'm in college, I could potentially get scouted and make it to the big leagues. So, in high school, the game plan was a professional soccer player.

The realization hit me hard during my first year of university: I had to acknowledge that I wasn't the best player in the league or even on the team. I turned my focus towards finding a new path to financial success. I left the University of Windsor and forfeited my soccer scholarship to pursue career opportunities. I weighed my options and calculated that a job in finance could potentially offer higher earnings. It was Dennis Spence, who sponsored my schooling through The Molik Foundation, and his advisor, who opened my eyes to the world of finance as a viable path to success. I started applying for jobs in finance. It wasn't an easy journey, but eventually, I secured a position and began my transition into the finance industry.

I currently run my own wealth management firm called White Coat Financial. My firm specializes in working with dentists and physicians across Canada, helping them with all their financial needs, such as insurances, investments, mortgages, tax planning, financial planning, and more. I've been lucky enough to be named in the top 40 under 40 list for advisors in Canada for 2022 and named the top advisor in Canada under 40 for 2023. Sure, I'm doing well in my profession, my business is growing, and I've won some awards and accolades for the work I've done in this field. And it all feels great, but I find myself wanting more, much more. I think I have more to give. If I can grow my business and take better care of my clients, and employ more people, I can then give back to society in a bigger way. So, all in all, I'm just getting started. Maybe I should be proud, but I think I'm still trying to impress the delusional 15-year-old inside of me who thought he would be a professional soccer player.

Every year sitting at The Molik Awards Gala, I find myself being grateful for the "problems" I had growing up. While it was rough growing up in a house where my mom was the only one around and she was disabled, she did an amazing job of being both my mom and dad. Sure, money was tight,



and there were a ton of other issues going on that I'd rather not discuss, but I always had food on the table, a roof over my head, and a parent who loved me. I think that alone puts me in the top 10% of Earth's population in terms of resources and privilege. I find that the challenges were more mental. Keeping out of trouble, trying to feel worthy, having the pressure of taking care of your family, trying to build wealth as quickly as possible; those were the kinds of pressures I was dealing with that I wanted to work through. And I think if anything, they didn't hold me back; they only propelled me further. If my mom wasn't a single mom and she wasn't disabled, I wonder if I would have worked as hard. I think growing up the way I did also made me realize that everyone has a story you know nothing about, because we can all put a smile on our face at school and work, but behind closed doors, we can really be struggling or needing help. And I think that made me very empathetic to others' struggles. So all in all, I feel my "challenges" only made me a better man, and I wouldn't trade them.

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I feel my “challenges” only made me a better man, and I wouldn’t trade them.

The key to overcoming the challenges was seeing my mom struggle and wanting to give her a better life. That was my number one motivation; that’s what made me do the things I did. It’s largely still my number one driving factor. I just now have a wife who also is my motivation as well now. But a big help in my journey was getting The Cmolik Foundation scholarship and being introduced to my sponsor Dennis and mentor Rob. Speaking with them, gaining access to their contacts, visiting Russ’ house, all these things opened my eyes to a world that I didn’t know existed. Or at least I knew it existed, but I never felt I was worthy of it or capable of achieving those things. But hearing that I have all the tools, smarts, energy, and drive to go and achieve the same from people like Russ, Dennis, Rob, and more made me feel confident that success was for me too and I could achieve it if I just worked hard.

My hope for the future is to expand my business and to take better care of my community and my own health. I want to expand the work that I do in my nonprofit Seva Financial, I want to hire more employees at my company, all while making sure I take care of myself both physically and mentally. I just want to be the best version that I can be and give that to the world. If everyone did their best and everyone was trying to be the best person they can be, what kind of world would we live in? I’d like to think we’d live in an amazing place if everyone acted that way.

Gurtej Varn is a Cmolik alumni who won the Ellen Cmolik Award for overcoming adversity. He has graciously volunteered and given back to The Cmolik Foundation as both a mentor and a guest adjudicator for our Student Selection Committee.



NOT JUST ONE MAGIC MOMENT



When I was in high school, I always knew I wanted to have a career that focused on helping others. During those years, I decided I wanted to be a nurse after a few close encounters with the healthcare system. I knew from firsthand experience the kind of difference that a caring nurse could make, and knew it was something I could picture myself doing.

As a teen, I was dealing with depression and anxiety, and coming to terms with the abuse my father had put my family through. As a child of divorced parents, I began working at a young age to begin saving for school and other essentials, but I knew that if I ever wanted to attend post-secondary school, I was going to need a lot of student loans to make that happen. I was struggling with my own self-worth and didn't truly feel like I deserved to go to school, or that I could ever be smart enough to accomplish the things I wanted to.

I wish there was one magic moment I could point to that helped me overcome those hurdles, but the truth is, my current success is the result of a lot of little things. Although, one of the biggest things that made a difference for me personally was having a group of people I trusted who whole-heartedly believed in me - The Cmolik Foundation. Once I was surrounded by so many supportive people, who all were cheering me on, it felt easier to have confidence in myself. Becoming a Cmolik student changed my life in so many ways, but most importantly, it showed me that I am truly capable of whatever I set my mind to. As I studied my way through school, I tried to keep my eyes on my end goal and focused on taking one day at a time to get there. I knew that although the path to my education would not be easy, it would be worth it.

It feels so surreal to look back on how I was in high school, compared to who I am and what I do now. I accomplished my dream of becoming a nurse and completed my perinatal specialty certificate recently (a fancy way of saying I now work as a labour and delivery nurse). I have also successfully run my own wedding photography business for the last four years. I'm so happy that I've managed to hold onto two passions of mine, and incorporate them both into my

life; photography and nursing. I guess you could say that between delivering babies and photographing weddings, I have a knack for supporting people through important moments in their lives!

I have met so many wonderfully supportive people in my lifetime, many of whom have truly made a difference and helped me to achieve the things I have today. My high school teachers were who originally helped me put my Cmolik Scholarship application together, and they cheered me on as I prepared for the interview process. My mentor, Kari Walker, gave me so much support throughout my first years of school - she was always there to lend an ear to listen! In recent years, I have found myself continually inspired and motivated by my fellow Cmolik Alumni. I love hearing about the things they're accomplishing in their fields of study, in their communities, and of course, within the foundation. I feel so lucky to be surrounded by such an amazing group of people!

Although I've experienced many moments that I would not wish on anyone, I wouldn't change a thing about my story. Every decision I've made has led me to this point and made me who I am today. I would do it all over again, exactly the same way.

I hope my future is filled with time spent connecting with others and building meaningful relationships. Above all else, I'm spending time on the things that make me happiest, and one of those things is learning. I hope that at some point, I go back to school again, and continue in an area of work that contributes to the lives of others. I hope that I always have time to travel, and take the long way, to stop at the viewpoints, and look at how far I've come. I hope one day I can inspire and support young people much in the same way that others did for me.

Sydney Westby is a labour and delivery nurse in Langley and also runs her own wedding photography business. We are delighted that she is giving back to the Foundation as a volunteer on the Awards Celebration Committee!



“ One of the biggest things that made a difference for me personally was having a group of people I trusted who whole-heartedly believed in me ”
- The Cmolik Foundation.

A MARATHON

When it came time to apply for postsecondary education, I opted for a Bachelor of Science as my first choice and a Bachelor of Commerce as my second. Ultimately, I got in the Science program at UBC, but I remained torn between health sciences and business throughout my first year. However, after my first physiology course in my second year of university and a volunteer shift in the pediatric emergency department at B.C. Children's Hospital, I realized that medicine would ultimately be the career I wanted to pursue.

I was excited for the future, and I knew I wanted a career that allowed me to lead and help others but I had no idea where to start or how to start. I was very fortunate to find great mentors and also have wonderful educators who helped me maneuver through my journey of entering post-secondary and ultimately into medical school. In high school, one of the biggest challenges I faced was navigating the path towards achieving those dreams.

The key to overcoming these challenges was that I learned that it can be uncomfortable to reach out for help or to ask for an opportunity I am interested in, but it is so worth it. The worst that can happen is they say no or don't respond, and you just move on to the next one. I also learned that it is okay for the outcome to not go as you plan and that rejection and failure are normal, healthy parts of the journey! It is totally okay for things to not work out sometimes, and the more comfortable I got with this, the more I was able to feel comfortable taking risks and challenging myself (this is also a work in progress!).

So much time has passed since those days, so to reflect on what I have accomplished puts a smile on my face, not because of any specific outcome or accolade but more so for my perseverance, resilience, and the way I have maneuvered through my young adult life thus far. I have learned to have a deep appreciation and gratitude for the life I have and I try my best to dive deep into the opportunities that come my way. I had my fair share of disappointments and rejections/redirections, but I always got back up and tried again and reflected on what I could learn and do differently next time. I had a rough time figuring out my first year of university as many students do, but ultimately, I graduated with my Bachelors of Science in Integrated Sciences with distinction.

I found out I got into medical school in 2019 on my birthday, and it was truly such a special gift. I was fortunate enough to be accepted into the University of British Columbia (UBC) Vancouver-Fraser program and spent the past 4 years learning and serving members of the community that I grew up in. I am now so fortunate to have the opportunity



to continue my journey here in the lower mainland to pursue my residency in pediatrics at UBC.

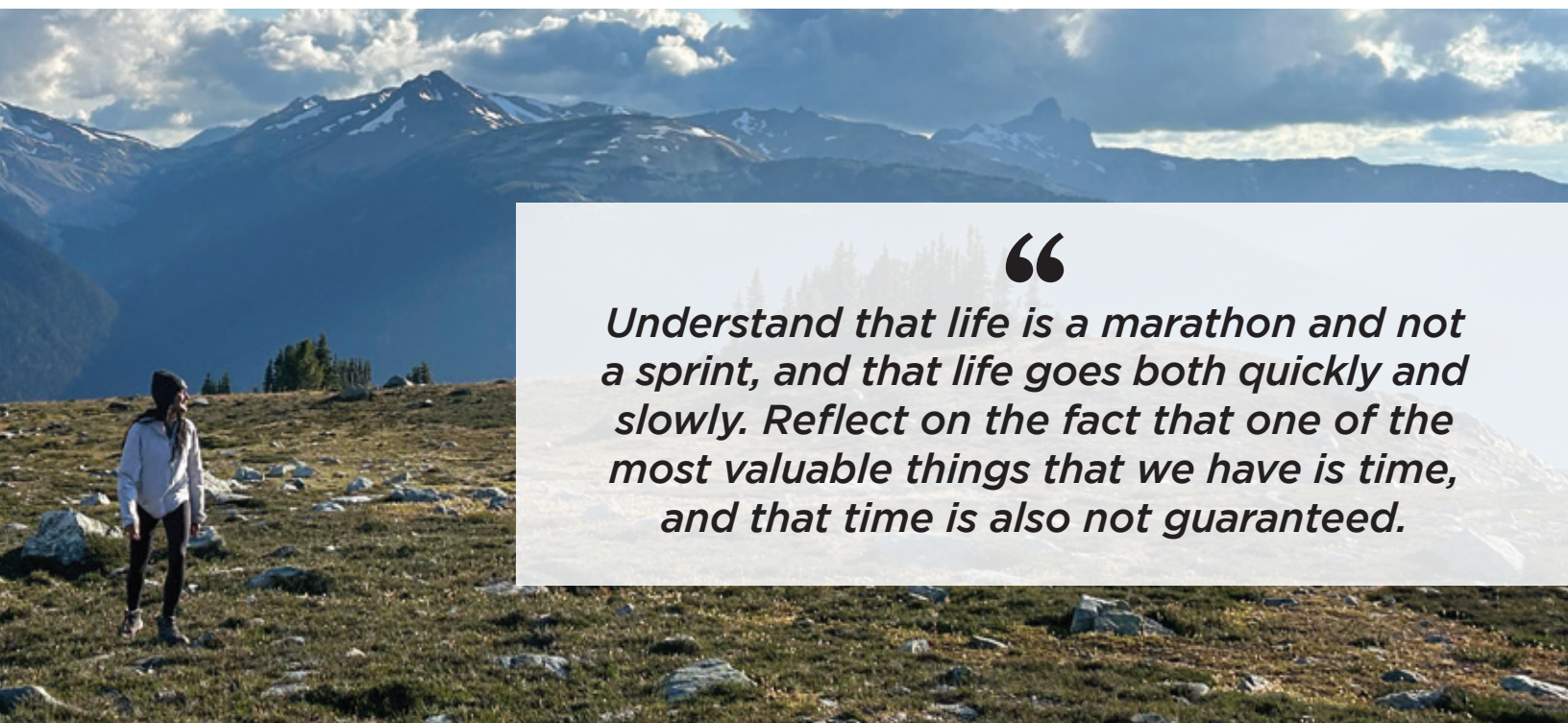
There are so many people that encouraged and supported me along the way, and I would not be who I am today without the support of so many people; the list goes on and on. I am eternally grateful for everyone who has and continues to support me in this life, so thank you to everyone, truly. It means so much to me. I must give a special thank you to my wonderful parents who have been my pillar of support throughout my life. There are no words that would do justice to describe how grateful I am for them and how much they have helped me grow into the human I am today. They always helped in any way they could, whether it was gluing down construction paper for my projects in elementary school, making me delicious meals all throughout university, or just listening to me go on and on about whatever I may be worried about throughout medical school. They always provided me with the space to be exactly as I was and encouraged me to work hard, dream big, and to get back up when things got tough.

I believe that every decision and every experience has led me to where I am today and has contributed to the development of the person that I am today. I am so grateful and happy to be in this phase of life and to have the opportunity to continue to live and experience and grow as a person. Life isn't always sunshine and rainbows, but I truly believe that you need to experience challenges and difficult times to embrace the wonderful times.

My hope for the future is that I can continue to experience new things, continue to learn and grow as a person, but ultimately, I just want to be healthy and happy. Working in healthcare has really highlighted to me that the most important thing we have in life is our health and happiness. From a professional perspective, I am currently embarking on my residency in Pediatrics at the University of British Columbia. I hope to complete residency and work as a pediatrician, caring for children and their families in the lower mainland, my home.

Advice that I would pass along to our new Cmolik students and graduates would be to reflect on what their values are often and allow these values to help guide their decisions. Understand that life is a marathon and not a sprint, and that life goes both quickly and slowly. Reflect on the fact that one of the most valuable things that we have is time, and that time is also not guaranteed. Work hard and try your best; when things don't turn out the way that you hope, pause, take a deep breath, and have grace with yourself. Remember, it will always be okay in the end; at the very least, just give it time.

Chadni Khondoker is pacing herself through her own marathon as she begins her residency in pediatrics at UBC. She is grateful to her former principal, Gloria Sarmiento, for supporting her and nominating her for The Cmolik Scholarship.



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Mentoring, at its core, guarantees young people that there is someone who cares about them, assures them they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges, and makes them feel like they matter.

-The National Mentoring Partnership





MENTORS



EMPOWERING STUDENTS: THE REWARDING ROLE OF A MENTOR

When I learned about the Foundation's goals to help high-achieving students without the financial means to pursue post-secondary education, it resonated with me deeply. That was my story when I graduated from high school. Despite a 4.0 GPA and serving as VP of the student council, I had no means to continue my education. My dad passed away in a car accident when my twin sister and I were seven, and I grew up in a low-income household with a single parent. Life was very challenging. After graduating from Guildford Park Secondary in Surrey with only my passport to education, I decided to work to save money while covering my living expenses.

If I can support a Foundation that helps students like me, eager to succeed but facing many obstacles, it aligns perfectly with my values. Removing financial barriers through scholarships is crucial in helping people reach their full potential.



“ Helping students realize their potential by removing financial barriers is not just meaningful— it’s life-changing. ”

One experience that inspired me to become a mentor was drifting away from school for a few years before returning to post-secondary at twenty-three. As a “mature” student, it was tough to reapply myself to studies. My mom recalls me crying when I started at BCIT, thinking I couldn’t handle school anymore. It was hard balancing work to pay my bills and schooling. If I had a scholarship and mentor like those offered by the Cmolik Foundation, I wouldn’t have struggled as much. I hope other ambitious kids don’t have to face these challenges. Helping with this is meaningful to me.

The most valuable lesson I’ve learned and hope Cmolik students understand is the power of networking. The most significant benefit the Foundation offers isn’t just the scholarship, but the network available to students. My hope is that students realize how well-connected they are within this organization and utilize the network for jobs, school projects, internships, or career advice. Mentors can connect students with the right people, who are eager to help. I hope students take advantage of this opportunity.

Life is full of challenges, and overcoming them builds character, strength, and the understanding that you can handle anything. Challenges make your life story a hero’s

journey. None of us would be here without facing challenges. Find someone you trust to help you navigate tough times. People love to help and will be glad you reached out.

Being a mentor is personally rewarding. You see a student grow from a high schooler to a seasoned adult. New mentors are essential for continuing to award scholarships to deserving students. It’s not a huge time commitment. After forming a relationship, it’s about regular communication, whether by phone or in person. You’ll be glad you made the decision. Plus, you’ll join a network of amazing mentors, making new friends along the way.

I appreciate the personal connections from The Cmolik Foundation. It’s full of high-achieving, successful, and generous individuals—from students to mentors, committees, staff, board, and founders. Who wouldn’t want to be part of such an organization?

Opal Hurteau is a mentor and serves on the Mentor Committee, where she helps recruit new mentors. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, let Opal know or contact the Foundation office directly.

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



C. RUSSELL CMOLIK
CO-FOUNDER, BOARD CHAIR

Russ is Board Chair of TCF, a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA, CA), and former Partner, President, and Director of Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers (NYSE: RBA). Russ brings a wealth of knowledge, drive, enthusiasm, and contacts to the foundation. In his free time, Russ is an avid traveler and a helicopter enthusiast with a commercial helicopter pilot's license.



ROBERT (BOB) COVENTRY
TRUSTEE

Bob Coventry worked as an educator in the Surrey School district for 35 years before retiring in 2010. He has held the positions of Secondary Teacher, Vice-Principal, Principal, Director of Instruction, and Assistant Superintendent. Bob is married to Debbie, a retired elementary school teacher, and they have two young adult children. Bob's hobbies include hunting, fishing, camping, and travel. He volunteers with TCF and with Bayside Rugby as an executive board member.



KIRSTEN EVANISH
TRUSTEE

Kirsten attended both Langara College (Property Management) and Simon Fraser University (SFU) Burnaby campus. She is married to Mitch and is a busy mother of two young men. Kirsten is an avid runner and cyclist who loves to spend time outdoors. Kirsten currently volunteers on the TCF Student Selection Committee and mentors several of our students.

F. ROGER M. PRYKE

TRUSTEE

Roger is a retired commercial lawyer, having graduated from UBC Law School in 1971. He and his wife, Sylvia, have two adult sons and five grandchildren.



NICHOLAS A. C. SAKLAS

TRUSTEE

Nick has an accounting and corporate finance background. He is a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA, CA), a Chartered Business Valuator (CBV), and a University of Victoria graduate (B.COMM). He was Vice President of Corporate Finance at KPMG Vancouver, where he articulated and worked for ten years. After KPMG, Nick joined the hospitality sector, becoming General Manager of Abigail's Hotel, a boutique, luxury heritage hotel in Victoria, which he sold in 2014. Nick, who is married with two children, is an aviation and technology enthusiast.



KARI L. WALKER

TRUSTEE

Kari is a Registered Massage Therapist (RMT) who graduated from the Okanagan Valley College of Massage Therapy in 2001. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in history and anthropology from UBC and is currently completing her Master's at University College in Durham, England. An award-winning romance novelist, Kari is married to Todd Walker and has two boys. Kari's hobbies include softball, gardening, painting, quilting, and studying the Civil War.





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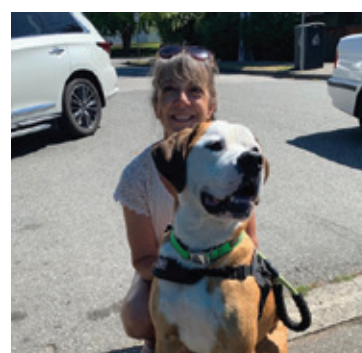
ELISA M. S. CARLSON, ED. D
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With almost thirty years in public education, Elisa was the former Director of Instruction with the largest school district in the province. She has a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and brings a wealth of leadership expertise to the Foundation. Elisa lives in Langley and has four boys.



TINA BULKA
PROGRAM MANAGER

Tina has worked for the Foundation for over seven years and plays a central role in coordinating the Student Scholarship Program. As a mother of five children, three that have currently completed post-secondary degrees and two more to go, she has first-hand experience in supporting young people through the challenges of university.



DEBORAH MCEWAN
OFFICE ASSISTANT

Deborah knows how to tame our paperwork, keep us organized and understands the challenges young people face navigating post-secondary. As a devoted single mother of three, Deborah has encouraged her own children as they grappled with challenging university programs and navigated student loans. She is an avid dahlia enthusiast and dedicated gardener.

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