

# Helping and protecting children and youth

Today's young people face challenges that simply did not exist for earlier generations. Bell partners with a wide range of youth-oriented organizations such as **Kids Help Phone**, the **Canadian Centre for Child Protection** and **MediaSmarts**, as well as programs like Backpacks for Kids, **RE\*Generation** and **Computers for Schools (CFS)**. Northwestel also creates lasting partnerships with youth initiatives in the North. These organizations and programs have helped Canadian children and families cope with the impacts of COVID-19, overcome difficulties, build self-esteem, play, learn and grow in new ways.

## Mental health support for kids

Bell is a founding partner of Kids Help Phone, supporting the mental health and well-being of young people. Bell's partnership with Kids Help Phone enables innovative technology initiatives including online counselling through Live Chat, Resources Around Me and Crisis Text Line, which launched in 2018 with support from Bell Let's Talk. Team members also continue to help organize and participate in Kids Help Phone's annual fundraising event and volunteer as Crisis Responders for Crisis Text Line.

In March 2020, as part of a \$5 million increase in funding in response to COVID-19, Bell Let's Talk donated \$1.25 million to help sustain increased capacity for crisis texting, professional counselling services and online resources offered by Kids Help Phone during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. The new funding helped ensure young people had 24/7 access to mental health support as Kids Help Phone experienced an unprecedented surge in demand for its services, including a 58% overall increase and a 62% jump in text support in the initial months of the crisis.

In 2020, more than 150 team members from Bell Canada, Bell Media and The Source in 28 communities secured pledges and participated virtually in the first ever Kids Help Phone Never Dance Alone-a-Thon, raising more than \$75,000. Since 2002, Bell team members have raised more than \$11.3 million for Kids Help Phone. Bell Media was also proud to

Kids Help Phone 



Bell Team Member Erin Lomax volunteers as a Crisis Responder with Kids Help Phone

support the virtual fundraiser, providing in-kind support through television and radio public service announcements, as well as digital ad support.

In 2020, Bell also supported **Fondation Jasmin Roy** in the development of a new virtual toolbox to help school staff, parents and their children maintain their well-being and mental health during COVID-19. Developed by mental health experts, organizations and research chairs, the toolbox helps foster children's resilience, addressing the topics of emotional management, anxiety, stress, mourning, motivational difficulties and sleep disturbance. The toolbox is available in English and French and can be tailored to teachers, parents and school children of all ages.

## Montréal Children's Hospital Foundation Caring for Kids Radiothon and COVID-19 support

Since 2004, Astral/Bell Media Montréal has supported the annual **Montréal Children's Hospital Foundation** Caring for Kids Radiothon and played a vital role in helping to raise more than \$25 million dollars by providing free airtime on CJAD 800, Virgin 95.9 and CHOM 97.7. In 2020, the annual event raised more than \$1.2 million to help sick children and their parents during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Bell also partnered with the Montréal Children's Hospital Foundation to help launch the "Become a Children's Superhero" campaign to purchase 100,000 free reusable masks to help protect sick children and their families at the hospital. A contribution of \$25,000 helped kick start the campaign.



## Protection of minors

Bell and Bell MTS contribute approximately \$267,000 annually in funding and services to support the operations of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, including [Cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca), a national tipline for Canadians to report their concerns about online sexual exploitation of children and to raise awareness of the issue so that we can protect children better when they use the Internet.

Since its creation in 2002, [Cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca) has processed more than 4.7 million reports related to child sexual exploitation, and in 2020 alone, processed more than 1.4 million reports due to the operation of Project Arachnid, an automated web crawler and platform that helps reduce the online availability of child sexual abuse material around the world. Bell's support has also helped fund important prevention material such as the Canadian Centre's Self/Peer Exploitation guides, which were developed in response to increased reports to the tipline regarding sexting incidents. Bell's renewed commitment to the development of these guides resulted in close to 4,000 copies being distributed in 2020 to families, schools and law enforcement agencies across the country ensuring Canadians were armed with knowledge on how to prevent and adequately respond to this issue.

Additionally, Bell also supports [needhelpnow.ca](https://www.needhelpnow.ca), an important website for youth to help them stop the spread of sexual pictures/videos and receive support along the way. In 2020, the site received over 56,000 visits and over 4,000 downloads of material for both youth and parents.

Bell is also proud of its role as a founder of the [Canadian Coalition Against Internet Child Exploitation](https://www.ccaic.ca) and its [Cleanfeed Canada](https://www.cleanfeed.ca) initiative (operated by [Cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca)). This was developed to reduce Canadians' exposure to child abuse images and create a disincentive for those who access and distribute child pornography.



## Digital and Media Literacy

MediaSmarts is a Canadian, bilingual not-for-profit centre for digital and media literacy. Its vision is to ensure all Canadians have the critical thinking skills to engage with media as active and informed digital citizens. Working closely with academics, broadcasters, telecommunications service providers and internet-based organizations, MediaSmarts develops educational materials and programs such as online resources to assist parents with strategies for the digital generation, workshops and lesson plans for teachers, and an annual Media Literacy Week to build public awareness of the importance of digital consumers developing critical-thinking skills. Bell is a founding supporter of MediaSmarts. In 2020, Bell donated \$50,000 to help improve media and digital literacy for young people and their families and supported Media Literacy Week as a gold sponsor. Media Literacy Week activities in 2020 resulted in more than 85 million impressions on Twitter using #medialitwk. The [BreaktheFake.ca](https://www.breakthefake.ca) page has received over 91,000 visits since 2019.

Bell and MediaSmarts developed 2 workshops to promote a positive online experience for teens and pre-teens using social media: 1) Respecting Yourself and Others Online and 2) The Parent Network: Social Media and Your Kids. The workshops have received over 38,821 page views since launching. Using the content from the workshops, MediaSmarts also created a 4-part video series to further promote positive experiences online for young people. The videos, which are hosted on MediaSmarts' website, YouTube channel and Facebook page, have received widespread promotion through MediaSmarts partners and social media, resulting in over 459,965 views between the three platforms.



## Backpacks for Kids

Bell's annual Backpacks for Kids program supports students in communities across Canada, helping them start the school year strong. Since the program began, Bell team members have filled more than 100,000 backpacks with supplies for elementary school students. As filling backpacks was not possible in 2020 due to COVID-19, Bell donated \$90,000 towards the cost of school supplies as well as more than 3,800 backpacks to community partners around the country. Bell team members across Canada also made personal donations to local organizations through the company's employee giving program.



Backpacks for Kids community partners

## Virgin Mobile RE\*Generation

Virgin Mobile Members help at-risk and homeless youth change their lives for good through the RE\*Generation initiative.

Donations from Virgin Mobile Members and Canadians support job skills training programs for youth facing barriers to employment. For many youth, challenges like poverty, homelessness, foster care or mental health issues prevent them from gaining the education, work experience and professional networks to keep up with peers who have had more advantages.<sup>1</sup> More than 775,000 young Canadians are not in school or working according to Statistics Canada. The unemployment rate of youth living with mental health challenges can be as high as 30%, as compared to the national youth unemployment rate of 10%.<sup>2</sup>



In 2020, Virgin Mobile RE\*Generation supported more than 1,604 youth in gaining job skills, work experience, mentoring opportunities, and job search support through charitable partners NPower Canada in Toronto and Calgary and Threshold School of Business in Hamilton, Ontario.

Virgin Mobile Canada staff also helped youth change their lives for good by participating in networking and mentoring events with youth, providing information and guidance on starting a career and building professional networks.

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<sup>1</sup> To learn more about Youth in the labour market click [here](#)

<sup>2</sup> To learn more about Unemployment, Mental Health and Substance Use click [here](#).

## Supporting youth in the North

Northwestel is committed to supporting young people in the North. In 2020, Northwestel initiated new areas of focus in Nunavut. The Northwestel Learn to Speed Skate program is offered by the Nunavut Speed Skating Club in Iqaluit and teaches the fundamentals of short track speed skating, with focus on safety and proper body technique for new skaters. More than 50 youth took part in the program in 2020. In the Kivalliq region, the Northwestel Rankin Rock Hockey Camp is an annual hockey school designed for children aged 3 – 18. In 2020, camp instructors worked with 200 kids, building them into “better people - not just better players” through a combination of intensive hockey skills training and off-ice education, goal setting and personal development.



Northwestel Learn to Speed Skate participant

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