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# The Reading Bear Society Newsletter

Fall Edition | October 10, 2022



Joanne Roussy, PhD

RBS President and Co-founder



Dear RBS friends,

In my interactions with the RBS team, I am always inspired by the passion and commitment that each of you bring to our vision of promoting the health for children.

"Trust in what you love, continue to do it, and it will take you where you need to go."- Natalie Goldberg

"Everything is energy and that's all there is to it. Match the frequency of the reality you want and you cannot help but get that reality. It can be no other way. This is not philosophy. This is physics."- Albert Einstein.

The two quotes above best reflect our foundation at the RBS: energy and love and is the basis for health by healing in quantum physics. Our mission, driven by love and inspired by youthful energy, is a brighter future for all children. This love and energy gets directly infused into the classrooms by our team of volunteer medical students. We are delighted that we can do in-person Dr. Bear visits this fall and continue to offer virtual visits for remote areas.

As we enter our ninth season and continue to grow and strive, I am once again inspired to meet new and upcoming leaders who bring with them abundant energy to advocate for young children's well-being. It is a privilege to witness their dedication and vitality to bring more good into the world. In this newsletter, I am delighted to introduce you to an enthusiastic new leadership team from across the province in the four RBS chapters. We have new chapter chairs and volunteers who have joined us, as well as our longstanding volunteer team who remain committed to their roles. You will meet the new FLEX students and learn what they have been working on, our summer practicum student, as well as new members of the fundraising and communications teams.

With the launch of COVID-19 vaccination for young children this fall, we have compiled information on vaccinations as a one-page resource. Please take a few minutes to view our latest video, [Reducing Needle Fear](#), created by RBS FLEX student, Victoria Grandi. This is sure to bring laughter with her co-stars, five-year-old twins and their mother, and a surprise visit from Victoria's assistant.

I would especially like to thank all our former medical student graduates who continue to serve the RBS after nine years. Considering the circumstances of the pandemic that has increased demand for your work, you are the rock and foundation of the RBS and I am forever in awe of your dedication and capacity to serve. The pandemic has brought many challenges to our front-line health professionals and to all areas of society. We recognize the strain on the health of young children and families, especially those with special needs, and the amazing capacity of their parents to rise to these times.

Many of us have had additional family members to care for in the past few years, and the importance of caring for ourselves has resonated more than ever in the mindful practice we use to start our meetings. With everything we have to manage, it is more important than ever to care for ourselves, too.

Seeing the relationships that are created within the RBS are the gifts that keep us giving back.

On behalf of the board of directors, we wish you and your loved ones a Happy Fall!

Joanne Roussy, PhD



## New Vaccination Resources For Children Under 12 years old

### Why?

- The Reading Bear has compiled our bear friendly resources for young parents and children for their upcoming vaccination appointment. These resources were created by medical students at the University of British Columbia along with a team of experts. We have videos and writing materials that you may find helpful to assist you with your next appointment.
- Have fun together as you watch the panda bear twins go get their shots or learn how you can practice belly button bear breathing to settle into your appointment. For a more active approach, you can try some fun bear yoga at home before leaving for your next appointment. The complete list of resources can be found below.



### Videos

#### Reducing Needle Fear:

- Meet the panda bear twins with a surprise visit from Dr. Bear's dog!

#### Bear Belly Breathing:

- Learn the bear belly breathing technique to get you nice and calm before your appointment.

#### Bear Yoga:

- Bear yoga: Something you can do before you leave home for your appointment.

### Info Sheets

#### COVID-19 Vaccination Resources:

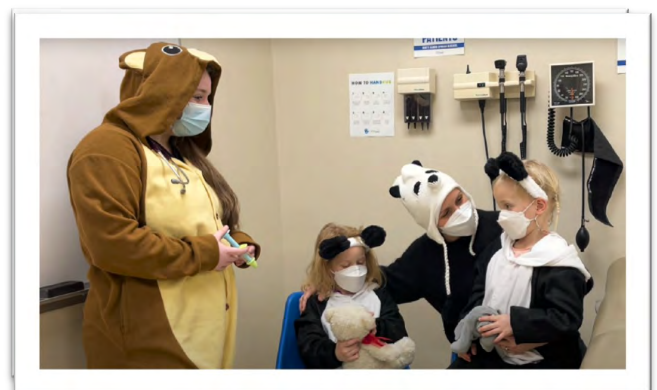
- Get access to a list of resources with the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 vaccination for children under 12 years old.

#### Reducing Needle Fear at Vaccine Appointments:

- Research-backed strategies to help overcome needle anxiety in children.

#### Bear Belly Breathing:

- Belly button breathing (BBB) is an exercise used to help children slow down their breathing and focus their attention.



Developed by Jamie Beaulieu (MSc), PhD student at University of Montreal and cultural liaison at the RBS. Revision made by Dr. Joanne Roussy. Created in October 2022.

Although the Reading Bear Society strives to provide complete and accurate information, we make no warranties, express or implied, as to the accuracy of the information in our materials and assume no liability or responsibility for any errors or omissions in our materials.

# The Reading Bear Mindfulness Practice



May everything, we do, be done with love.  
As we catch our image in the mirror, may we remember that the voice we use with *ourselves* becomes the voice we use with those around us.  
May we be respectful and kind with those we want to support, remembering that our *inner* children also need encouragement and care everyday.  
Let love become our mantra and our devotion and may our own hearts be nourished with the same love we choose to give to the world.

May everything we do, be done with mindful awareness; as we take our next breath, speak our next word and move into action, let it be with intention and thoughtfulness; knowing that there is no other moment as special as this, nor time when more is possible nor when we'll be more prepared for life's challenges.  
Let mindful awareness become our mantra and devotion and may our hearts be consoled that in each moment we have another chance to make a new choice.

May everything we do, be done with gratitude.  
As we expand our resources and energy, may we remember the gift of life's abundance.

May we share what we can with others, remembering to replenish ourselves with playfulness and quiet contemplation.  
Let gratitude become our mantra and devotion  
And may our hearts be open and receiving as we share this marvelous journey together



By: Nancy Mortiffee

# RBS FLEX Projects



## Joanne Roussy, PhD

RBS President and Co-founder

This fall we have three students who have embarked on RBS FLEX projects on the topics of healthy eating, art and common cold symptoms in children, including two students who started last spring and a returning third rotation FLEX student Anisha Bains. I would also like to thank Jamie Beaulieu, a doctoral student at McGill university for putting together our vaccination resources in a one-page information sheet and to Anisha for updating the information sheet on vaccinations in regards to Covid. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your support as, our goal is to offer a supportive environment to best support and promote medical students in their scholarly interests.



## Jannie Ko, MD 2025



Jannie is a second-year medical student at UBC's Vancouver Fraser Medical Program. For her FLEX project, she is working on an information sheet all about sugars in food including tips for more nutritious eating, resources for further information, and a book list for parents to read with their preschool-aged children. She consulted local elementary school teachers and dietetics students to gain more insight into typical snacks that children bring to school, gaps in resources currently available, and common concerns that parents may have about nutrition. She also completed a literature review using search terms such as "child, preschool (age 3-5)", "sugar", and "nutrition" which revealed that the majority of Canadian preschoolers exceed WHO free sugar guidelines, and that dietary patterns are established as young as infancy and track into childhood and beyond. This highlights the importance of education about sugar intake and encouraging a nutritious, balanced diet from a young age. This year, she is also the Vancouver Chapter Co-Chair and is excited to lead Dr. Bear visits at local elementary schools.

## Annaliese Beckman, MD 2025



Annaliese Beck-McKenzie is a second-year medical student at the Vancouver Fraser Medical Program. She is originally from Regina, Saskatchewan, where she completed her BSc Honours in Biology. Art has always been an important part of her life, and she finds joy in sharing this with others. As such, she wanted to explore how visual art can promote mental wellbeing in children, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year as a FLEX student, she reviewed the peer-reviewed literature, gray literature, and consulted with experts to explore the benefits of visual arts activities for the development, maintenance, and improvement of mental health in preschool aged children. As a result, she created a scholarly literature review and created an information pamphlet containing information and practical tips on how families can integrate visual arts activities into their children's daily lives. The information pamphlet was reviewed by a variety of experts and contains a curated list of resources for parents including videos, articles, printable guides, and links to workshops. She is excited to help with Dr. Bear visits this year and further contribute to RBS.



## Anisha Bains, MD 2023



Anisha is a 4<sup>th</sup> year medical student at the University of British Columbia. She joined the Reading Bear Society in 2020 as a FLEX student, working on the adaptation of the Visits to Dr. Bear program for preschoolers, and later creating resources on breathing exercises for young children. Prior to medical school, Anisha worked as a child and youth engagement coordinator, focusing on promoting health literacy through sports and community activities. This year, Anisha will be helping create resources for the RBS on topics such as vaccinations and common symptoms in kids such as cough and fever. She is looking forward to further promoting health literacy with the Reading Bear Society.

# RBS Victoria Chapter

**Chapter Update:** This year, the Victoria chapter executive team is extremely excited to promote early literacy and healthy living in children on Vancouver Island! The team has two new co-chairs who collectively have a diversity of experience with children in each of their backgrounds. The team has been meeting frequently and eagerly to plan their upcoming year of outreach. A major focus of their fall semester will be recruiting additional passionate members from the Island Medical Program, as well as fostering relationships within the Victoria School District in order to promote longitudinal success for the Victoria RBS Chapter. They are excited to begin scheduling and prepare for in-person Dr. Bear visits in the Winter semester. In order to establish a welcoming presence within the Victoria community, they will be organizing a book drive with proceeds donated to youth on the Island!



## Zoyva Wasylyk, MD 2025

RBS Victoria Chapter Co-chair

Zoyva grew up in Kelowna, BC where she enjoyed spending time outdoors by the beautiful Okanagan Lake. She moved to Montreal, QC to pursue a BSc degree with a double major in Microbiology and Immunology and a minor in International Development studies. After graduation, Zoyva returned to the west coast and started her medical training in Victoria, BC where she is now a second-year medical student. Throughout her journey, Zoyva has pursued her passion to work with youth through mentorship programs in roles such as youth leader, youth outreach coordinator, camp counsellor, and as a woman in science mentor. She is enthusiastic about implementing and enhancing the skills that she has developed in these past roles in her current role as IMP RBS Chapter Co-Chair.



## Alexa Tymkiw, MD 2025

RBS Victoria Chapter Co-Chair

Alexa grew up exploring the outdoors of the Okanagan Valley, then spent four years in Halifax completing an undergraduate degree in Biology and Psychology. Now, she is a second-year student at the UBC Island Medical Program and appreciating all that Victoria has to offer. She is excited for the opportunity to connect with youth in the Victoria community and foster her passion for working with children. She has diverse experience working and volunteering with families and children in academic, athletic, and healthcare capacities, and is truly looking forward to contributing the skills she gained in these experiences her role as a Victoria RBS Chapter Co-Chair.

Thank you to outgoing Victoria chapter co-chairs Marie Schulze and Margot Schmidt for their contributions to RBS! They are seen with Dr. Trevor Newton, RBS Treasurer/secretary, pictured on the right.



# RBS Prince George Chapter

**Chapter Update:** We are happy to be entering another school year here in Prince George! This past year we successfully ran two Book & Bear drives and a virtual Dr. Bear visit. Danielle has stepped down as co-chair and began third year and we brought on Crystal, a first year, as our new co-chair. Through the support of our two advisors, Gurkirat Kandola and Joanne Archer, we hope to reach out to more organizations and continue to grow our team. We are excited to visit schools in person this year and cannot wait to share some laughter and smiles with the children in our beautiful city!



**Carmen Huang, MD 2025**  
RBS Prince George Chapter Co-chair



**Crystal McLeod, MD 2026**  
RBS Prince George Chapter Co-chair

Crystal grew up in Bruce County ON, but has lived in many different places (from Moose Factory to Windsor ON). For the last decade, she has worked primarily as a bedside nurse. Crystal grew up in Bruce County ON, but has lived in many different places (from Moose Factory to Windsor ON). For the last decade, she has worked primarily as a bedside nurse. Crystal obtained her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Nipissing University ON, and her Master of Science in Nursing from Western University ON. Crystal is currently studying at the Northern Medical Program of UBC and has an interest in rural pediatric medicine. In the past, Crystal has enjoyed working with children through pageants, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Girl Guides Canada, and the Children’s Hospital of Western Ontario. Crystal is looking forward to meeting many ‘future’ healthcare professionals, and becoming better acquainted with the Prince George community through the RBS!



Carmen is welcoming the two newest Prince George Chapter members (pictured above)! Ella Wedel is an undergraduate Health Sciences student at UNBC and helped tremendously with our spring Book & Bear drive with the Prince George Elizabeth Fry Society.



The team from UHNBC Pediatric Department generously donated teddy bears to our spring Book & Bear drive (Sandra Wyatt, Child Life Specialist and Jazz, certified pediatric therapy dog are pictured to the left).



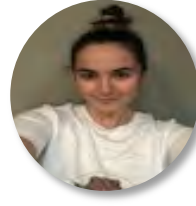
Ella and Katrina McGraw from the Prince George Elizabeth Fry Society (pictured in the right corner) are smiling with all the donations received from the drive. The donations were given to the women and children they serve in the community

# RBS Kelowna Chapter

**Chapter Update:** In Kelowna, we were able to visit about 15 classrooms to engage children in Dr. Bear Sessions. We reached exactly 350 students last school semester during our Dr. Bear Visits. We estimate that we reached about 500 students total last school year. This year, we are so excited that we will be going in-person to schools to deliver Dr. Bear visits! In addition, we are excited this year to continue working with our local community to donate teddy bears and books! In June, we were able to donate two boxes of books and one box of teddy bears to Childhood Connections Kelowna for their annual Teddy Bear picnic for families in the park.



Casey Li, MD 2025  
RBS Kelowna Chapter Co-chair



Cosette Tegtmeyer  
RBS Kelowna Chapter Fundraising Coordinator



Brayden Griffiths, MD 2026  
RBS Kelowna Chapter Co-chair

Brayden was born and raised in Langley, BC and completed his Bachelor of Science Honours degree in Biology at the University of the Fraser Valley. He has now moved to Kelowna and is a medical student at UBC. For over eight years, Brayden worked in his community as a lifeguard and water safety instructor where he taught children swimming lessons, aquatic safety, and first-aid skills. During this time, he conducted pediatric clinical research at BC Children's Hospital and helped facilitate studies with children who were visiting the emergency room. Brayden continued his work as Vice-President of Langley Pos-Abilities Society where he helped children living with disabilities. He looks forward to bringing his passion for working with children to the Reading Bear Society and to help build relationships between the children of Kelowna and the greater medical community.

Pictured to the right is Kelowna's Fundraising Coordinator, Cosette, with Childhood Connections Kelowna



# RBS Vancouver Chapter

**Chapter Update:** Sanya and Jannie are both in the UBC MD class of 2025 and stepped into their roles as the Vancouver Chapter co-chairs this past summer. They have helped recruit new volunteers for the upcoming fall in-person Dr. Bear visits, including hosting a booth at the annual Medical Undergraduate Society’s Clubs Night, where they talked to medical students about the Reading Bear Society. They also organized an orientation for both returning and new volunteers, which was hosted at UBC campus and virtually. They are excited to continue the momentum by welcoming on new RBS volunteers and organizing Dr. Bear visits with local schools for this 2022-2023 school year. Special thanks to the outgoing chairs, Alissa Zhang and Grace Kim, for their contributions to RBS and support with the transition!

## Sanya Grover, MD 2025

RBS Vancouver Chapter Co-chair

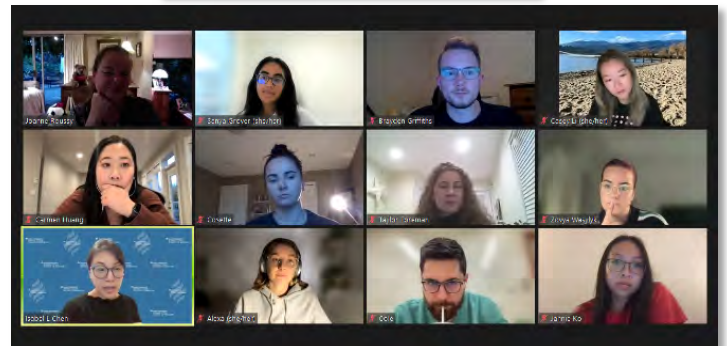
Sanya is a second year medical student at the University of British Columbia. She graduated from McMaster University from the Bachelor of Health Sciences program, where she was also a part of the Child Health Specialization. Along with her academic studies, many volunteer experiences have allowed her to grow a passion for child health and development. Whether it was being a community day camp leader with the City of Surrey, leading arts and crafts activities for pediatric patients at McMaster Children’s Hospital, or creating national smoking cessation resources for youth with the Canadian Cancer Society, Sanya has been continuously motivated to promote healthy lifestyles among children. As an avid reader and writer herself, she is excited to join the Reading Bear Society and connect with children through storytelling.

## Jannie Ko, MD 2025

RBS Vancouver Chapter Co-chair

Jannie is a second year medical student and completed her BSc in Pharmacology at the University of British Columbia. She loves to read and enjoyed teaching children in community programs and summer camps before entering medical school. Jannie is passionate about promoting a healthy lifestyle in children and families, including nutritious eating, joyful movement, and supporting mental health and is also a FLEX student with the RBS. She is looking forward to collaborating with the Reading Bear Society to provide interactive and fun learning experiences to children.

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, the Reading Bear Society held a virtual orientation for chapter chairs across the sites in the province! They were grateful to be joined by Dr. Isabel Chen, co-founder of RBS and current RBS Vice President on Zoom. Thank you, Dr. Chen, for sharing your words of wisdom and journey with us as we start this new year! The Vancouver chairs also attended the MUS Clubs night on October 5<sup>th</sup>. Training sessions continued on October 6<sup>th</sup>, where Vancouver chapter chairs Sanya and Jannie hosted an orientation for volunteers. Special thanks to Arman Singh, MD class of 2022 and RBS Flex Student Advisor for joining and sharing his experiences with RBS!





# Volunteer Profile: Casey Li, MD 2025

In each newsletter, we profile some of the many valued supporters and volunteers of the Reading Bear Society. In this edition, we are proud to feature Casey Li, MD 2025, Co-chair of the RBS Kelowna Chapter.

## Tell us about yourself.

I was born and raised near Toronto, ON. I graduated from McMaster University with a Bachelor of Health Sciences with a specialization in Child Health. I am now studying at the UBC Medical Program in Kelowna! When I'm not studying, you can find me baking, watching a Disney or Pixar movie, or going out for desserts and coffee. I also have a golden retriever named Kai and we love playing fetch along the beach and going for hikes!



## How did you become involved in the Reading Bear?

I have been around children my entire life. My brother is over seven years younger than me, so I watched him grow up and helped take care of him when he was younger. I have also volunteered a lot with children in my community in various capacities: teaching them music at a community centre, creating arts and crafts together at the hospital, programming activities at an early childhood education centre, and developing educational resources (such as cartoons and video games) for them to learn about their own diseases. As many of my classmates know, I absolutely love being around children! When my previous co-chair, Austin Pietramala, described his experience to me, I immediately knew I wanted to be involved in RBS. Introducing young children to healthy living helps them become more comfortable with being in the healthcare environment and can empower them to become advocates in the future for their own health. It also helps us medical students become more closely connected to our community.

## What is your current role with the RBS?

I am currently the co-chair of the RBS Kelowna Chapter.

Casey and the Kelowna team collecting books to donate to Mamas for Mamas.



## What is your best memory of RBS?

There are so many great memories! One of my most fulfilling memories is when we were able to give back to the community during our holiday fundraising event last year. Alongside our wonderful fundraising coordinator, Cosette Teghtmeyer, we were able to collect over 100 books and teddy bears from generous donors all across Kelowna to donate to Mamas for Mamas. The event kept my heart warm and happy during the cold snowy winter!

# RBS Communications



**Brett Collinge**

RBS Director of Communications

I am pleased to introduce this year's Communication team for the Reading Bear Society. The Communications team is responsible for the important job of connecting the Reading Bear with the communities we work with, whether that's through our website, social media posts, newsletter or our printed materials. This year, joining Carmen Huang, newsletter editor, is Sanya Grover, second year medical student and Vancouver Chapter co-chair.

Thank you for contributing your time and creativity the Reading Bear! The relationships built with our community partners could not be accomplished without your work. Christopher Wong, has joined to assist with the website management and is a student a third-year student at UBC department of computer science. Elle Fulford will be taking over from Carmen Huang as social media coordinator.

## RBS Communications Team (new members) 2022-2023



**Sanya Grover**

Newsletter Co-editor



**Christopher Wong**

Website Co-manager



**Elle Fulford**

Social Media Coordinator



Elle is a fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in Behavioural Neuroscience at the University of British Columbia. Her academic interests include women's health, concussions, and child development. Elle also serves as a volunteer research assistant at the BC Injury prevention and Research unit at BC Children's Hospital and on a multidisciplinary concussion study at UBC. Elle has worked with children of all ages as a nanny, camp counsellor and swim instructor. She is passionate about translating scientific knowledge in a way that is engaging and informative for kids. Outside of the classroom, Elle can be found at the beach, playing with her dog Marion or snowboarding at the North Shore mountains. Elle is excited to be joining the Reading Bear Society this year and is looking forward to promoting a lifetime of learning to children in BC.

## Continuing Member:



**Carmen Huang,**  
Newsletter Co-editor

## Summer Internship: **UPDATED RBS WEBSITE**



**Christopher Wong**

Website Co-manager

Click [HERE](#) to view website

Christopher is a third-year international student studying computer science at UBC. He was born and raised in Indonesia, where he realized the importance of promoting early literacy. He decided to join the Reading Bear Society (RBS) to take the opportunity to give back to the community, while also honing his interpersonal skills. His passion in web development is also another factor that intrigued him to contribute as the web manager. He is currently in a practicum at Felix Payment Systems. Other than getting exposed to university and corporate companies in Vancouver, he, also want to have the experience in doing volunteer work. While giving back to the community, doing service work also helps him thrive as he learns how to improve his interpersonal skills.



# News



The Reading Bear Society would like to congratulate Dr. Christine Voss on her recent award as the recipient of the 2022 Faculty of Medicine, Excellence in Education. Dr. Voss serves as a FLEX committee member and supports medical students with their FLEX projects.

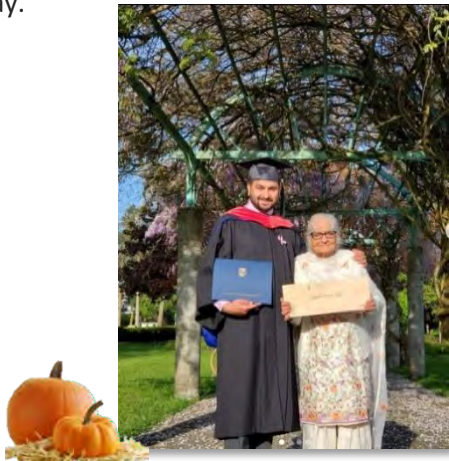


The RBS would also like to congratulate Antonia Bonni on her recent graduation from Prince of Wales high school! Antonia started her volunteer work with the RBS when it was first founded in 2013 when she was in grade 5. She is our longest and youngest volunteer to have served for eight years! Best wishes for your upcoming university studies at Rice University.



Congratulations to Ceilidh Mathews who will be attending medical school at the University of Toronto. Ceilidh served as chair of fundraising and many other roles during her eight years of service with the RBS. As a grade 10 student, she did her first buddy reading visit in December 2013 to an inner-city school to deliver books, teddy bears and read with a young child. We are so very proud of you Ceilidh. Best wishes for medical school. We are very grateful for all your years of service!

The RBS would like to congratulate medical graduates. We are so very proud of you. Arman Singh and Arjun Arora, for their outstanding service to young children and families and Rozlyn Boutin, past Vancouver Chapter chair and PhD/MD graduate. Arman will be staying on with the RBS as a FLEX student advisor. Best wishes to you three for your residency program. Pictured below: Arjun with his grandmother, Arman with his family, and Rozlyn at her PhD ceremony with thesis director, Dr. Brett Findlay.



# Thank you



The RBS would like to thank the teachers (pictured on the left) and parents at the Westside Montessori school for their yearly donation of children's books. These books go to inner-city schools to ensure that all children in Vancouver have books at home. Every child deserves books in their home to ensure early exposure to early literacy. Thank you once again to Westside Montessori school for ensuring this gift of literacy for the 5th consecutive year. A special thank you to Paola and Bettina.



The RBS family would like to thank Grace Kim, Alissa Zhang, Chiara Piccolo, Danielle Sidswoth, and Austin Pietramala (pictured on the right) for all their time, compassion, and hard work dedicated to RBS. All these wonderful third year medical students have been in their clerkship gaining direct hands-on hospital learning since June 2022. We wish them all the best in their medical training and are very proud of them!



Thank you to all the RBS Annual General Meeting attendees! We were delighted to have Vice-President Isabel Chen, Brett Collinge, Kay Fung, Joanne and Trevor Newton, and our invited guest, Denise Roussy.



# MAMAS FOR MAMAS

To The Reading Bear Society,

From our entire team at Mamas for Mamas, I wanted to pass along the biggest thank you. Over Christmas we were able to use your donations to fill hampers and stock our Kurma Market shelves. These books were gifted to children who otherwise would not have had anything to open over the holidays.

Donations like these go such a long way in ensuring that our communities are taken care of, and we would not be able to do this without your support.

In gratitude and service,

Stephanie Horman  
National Partnership Coordinator  
Mamas for Mamas

Pictured above is the Kelowna chapter with our new friends at Mamas for Mamas who support mothers in the Kelowna area. A special thank you to them for their thoughtful note!



Dear Reading Bear Society,  
Thank you for your wonderful donation of books! We are thrilled to start the year with a wonderful selection of free books!  
With appreciation,  
Thunderbird School



Pictured above is Julie Roussy Newton and Bradley Toews, principle at Thunderbird Elementary School. RBS wants to thank them for our ongoing friendship and their beautiful collage of the over 500 books donated by RBS this fall.





Our Founder Denise Roussy who inspires use all at the Reading Bear Society.



The next edition of the Reading Bear Newsletter will be sent in February 2023. Please email [rbs.coms@gmail.com](mailto:rbs.coms@gmail.com) if you have any stories or photos you would like to share with us!

In the meantime, please follow us on our social media accounts to stay up to date with all the Reading Bear activities:

[www.facebook.com/thereadingbear](https://www.facebook.com/thereadingbear)

[www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety](https://www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety)

[www.thereadingbear.ca](http://www.thereadingbear.ca)