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# Introduction

BC Technology for Learning Society is a registered charity, non-profit organization operating in the Province of British Columbia. Our mission is *to provide job training for youth and access to refurbished technology for British Columbians*. Our vision is a BC where everyone has equal access to technology, and to tools to facilitate learning.

BC Tech distributes equipment through a variety of programs:

- Industry Canada's (ISED) **Computers for Schools Plus Program & Connecting Families Initiative**;
- Government of Canada's **Computers for Schools Intern Program**;
- TELUS' for **Internet for Good**;
- Computers for Students.

We accept donations of used computers from a variety of government, corporate and individual donors. Youth refurbish the equipment as part of their work experience training, before they are distributed to schools, non-profit organizations, Indigenous communities, public libraries, or low-income families.

This was a year like no other. We ended the 2019/20 at the beginning of a global pandemic and closed our workshop for a few weeks. The early weeks of April were busy with outreach from non-profit organizations and schools desperately seeking computer equipment for families struggling to support children with their school work at home. Our work was considered an essential service and the workshop was re-opened in mid-April to address the expressed technology needs.

The early months of the fiscal year were stressful as anxieties were mitigated and new CFS interns were on-boarded. At the same time, incoming equipment from corporate and federal donors all but disappeared between April and December. Individuals heard our pleas and donated their old equipment, however it was not always fit for redistribution.

We faced many challenges throughout the year and rose to meet each one, ending with our third highest distribution level in the past 10 years.

#### **Highlights from the year include:**

- 6201 computers distributed;
- 10,413 computers donated;
- 15 interns hired.

BC Tech has delivered over **182,000** computers since our inception in 1993.

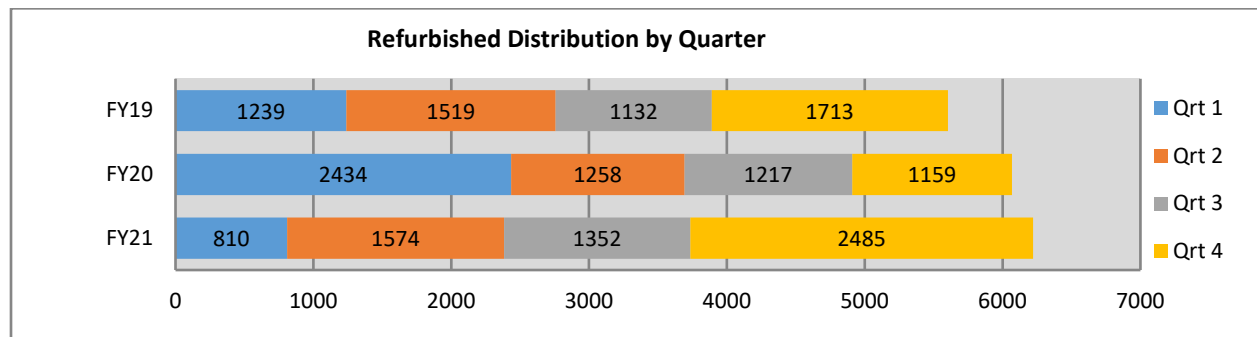
## Computer Distribution

One of the many things COVID changed is where and how people use technology. Students in particular were sent home to learn in the spring of 2020 as computer labs, libraries and non-profit centres closed due to potential virus transmission. Not everyone had a computer at home waiting for them.

In May 2020 Education Minister Rob Fleming noted that 22,000 computers were on loan by school districts to students engaged in remote learning as schools were closed. This number is the best barometer to know the scale of need presented by families across BC. The calls for computers was great throughout the Spring as non-profit organizations worked to secure equipment for their client families. However, with incoming donations down, it was challenging to meet the need, especially for laptops.

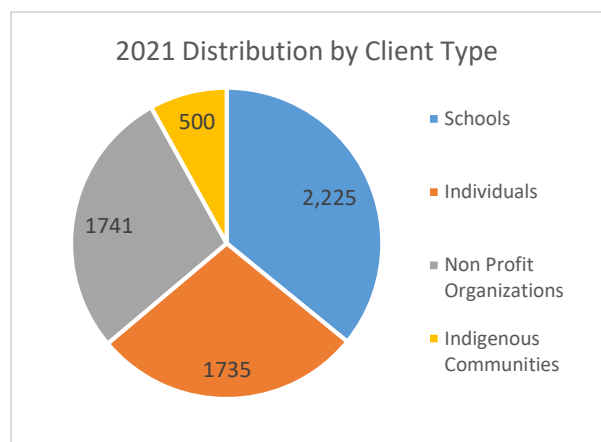
We were fortunate to secure \$100,000 additional funding from the federal government to purchase cameras, speakers, and USB wifi cards to make desktop computers more “Zoom compatible”, which helped increase the uptake of computers and their usage by families instead of waiting for laptops.

By year end we surpassed the previous two years of distribution, and *Connecting Families* certainly causes a bump when it is delivered! Had more laptops had been available, the distribution would have been even higher.

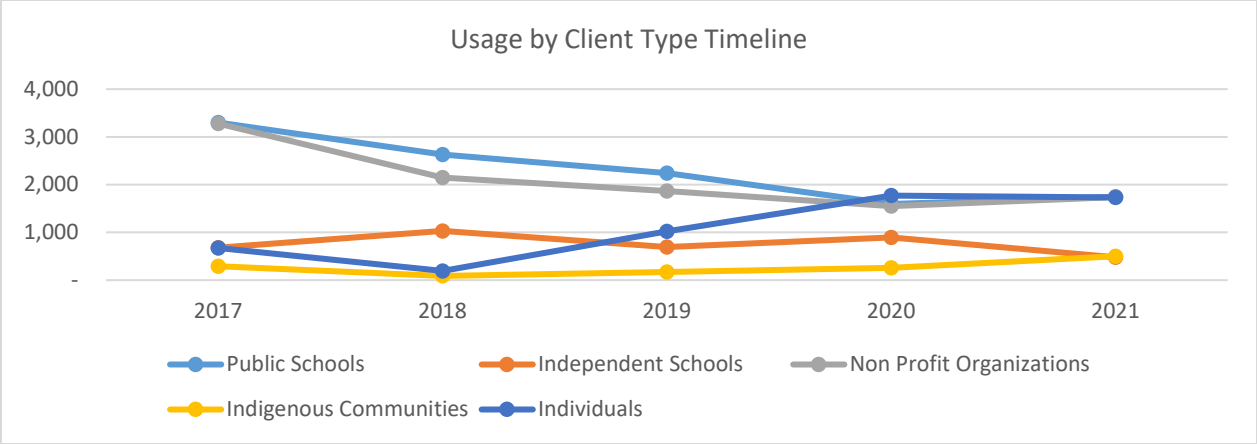


BC Tech provides refurbished equipment to four broad recipient groups: Schools (public and independent), non-profit organizations, Indigenous communities, and low-income Individuals.

Realistically, much of the equipment distributed to schools, non profits and Indigenous communities is in turn being reallocated to students/families. This is an excellent way for equipment to get into the hands of people who need it, and is also a significant change in where equipment is used, compared to how the original *Computers for Schools* program was intended.



Tracking year-over-year usage across the client groups reveals an interesting trend by which 56% of equipment is being used in the home, rather than in a shared community space (school or library) where multiple people had access to the same computer. The chart below demonstrates how initiatives supporting individuals have performed, bringing their distribution on par with historic public school usage.



**Schools**

Public schools have decreased their usage of the CFS program over the past 5 years. This is the first reporting year where public and independent schools have their distribution amalgamated.

The Bulkely Valley and Cowichan Valley school districts remain committed users of the CFS+ Program for in-school, whereas other districts, such as Vancouver, Surrey and Chilliwack used equipment to distribute to students.

Independent school use dropped this year to 488 computers. ‘Bring your own device’ certainly became a reality for many more students this year as public access to shared technology was removed to reduce touch points.

**Non-Profit Organization**

A consortium of Burnaby based non profit organizations was organized through the Primary Care Network and we were able to play an instrumental role in supplying partnering organizations with equipment. This was an excellent means to not only distribute computers but to build better dialogue around what our constraints were, and what families needed. Burnaby Neighbourhood House, Burnaby ISS of BC and Mosaic chapters had representation on the committee, with others such as Burnaby Seniors Society who were thrilled to learn they too could use our equipment for distribution to their clients. Although 1791 computers went to non-profits only a handful would be kept for administration purposes within organizations.

## Indigenous Communities

500 computers were provided to 29 Indigenous communities or associated agencies during the year, a record number for us to this client group. We were supported by new partners at *Youth Leadership Society of BC* (YLSBC). Each month we fill 2 orders of 25 computers each. Here you can see members of the Yale First Nation receiving their equipment complete with the 'Zoom compatible' parts!



## Individuals

BC Tech is delivering computers to low-income individuals through three initiatives: Connecting Families, TELUS' Internet for Good, and Computers for Students. **Connecting Families** is a federal initiative working with ISP's to deliver \$10 per month internet to qualifying families across Canada with an option for some to receive a free computer. **TELUS' Internet for Good** achieves the same ends through more localized administration and distribution in BC and Alberta.

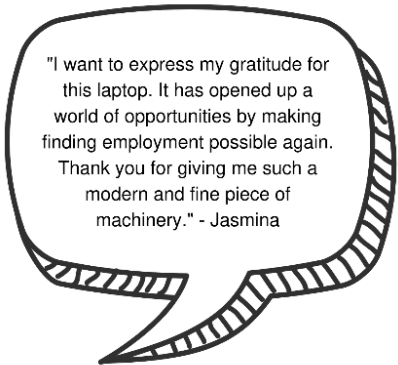
BC's five-year target goal for **Connecting Families** is 6600 computers by March 2022. This was the third iteration of the initiative with a target goal of 1400 computers. Letters from the CRA went out in January 2021 targeting past recipients who had not utilized the program. Pre-prepping equipment and securing an excellent donation of 19" LCD monitors from the Saanich School District helped to make this a success. Our target was met on time, and the sound of the tape guns each morning was quite distracting as the boxes were sealed and made ready for delivery!

Connecting Families is the reason behind the leap in Q4 computer distribution and remains an excellent means for us to support families accessing first computers, as well as moving our inventory.

Across Canada, 1.2 million families have received a letter, and 29% of those applied to the initiative (completed the portal application). Of those 367K families, 32% contacted an ISP for \$10/month internet. 17% of these families indicated they did not have internet access prior to the initiative.

Telus' **Internet for Good** initiative distributed 54 computers and 133 laptops (23 of those went to families in Alberta). A lack of available laptops reduced distribution through this program. Families wanted laptops and were willing to wait, or found one elsewhere. Many families also took up the offer of \$10/month internet and TELUS was very generous in expanding the initiative by offering access to seniors and persons with disabilities.

BC Tech's **Computers for Students** program delivered 38 computers and 150 laptops, a massive uptake from FY20's 15 computers! Similar to the *Internet for Good* results, families wanted laptops over computers, and with a greater supply we would have distributed more. Regardless, the demand faced



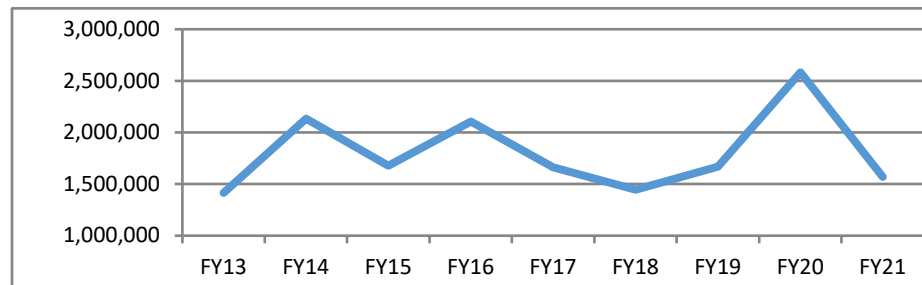
"I want to express my gratitude for this laptop. It has opened up a world of opportunities by making finding employment possible again. Thank you for giving me such a modern and fine piece of machinery." - Jasmina

by people without equipment in the home was never more acute and we're glad to have been able to support them.

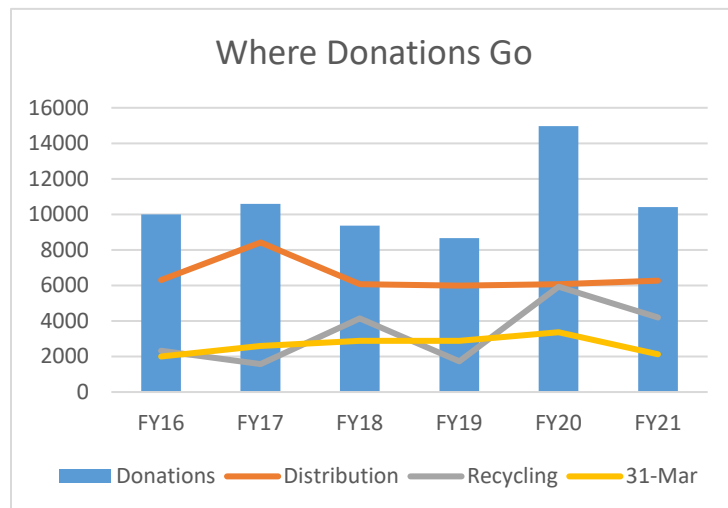
## Incoming Computer Donations

Fiscal year 2019/20 was the banner year for donations. In many respects we could have expected a decrease in current year donations even if a pandemic had not arrived. COVID-19 constraints aside, this year's donation level was still moderately higher than FY18.

The amount of donated inventory remained consistent throughout the year with Q3 being the strongest period at 3082 computers donated.

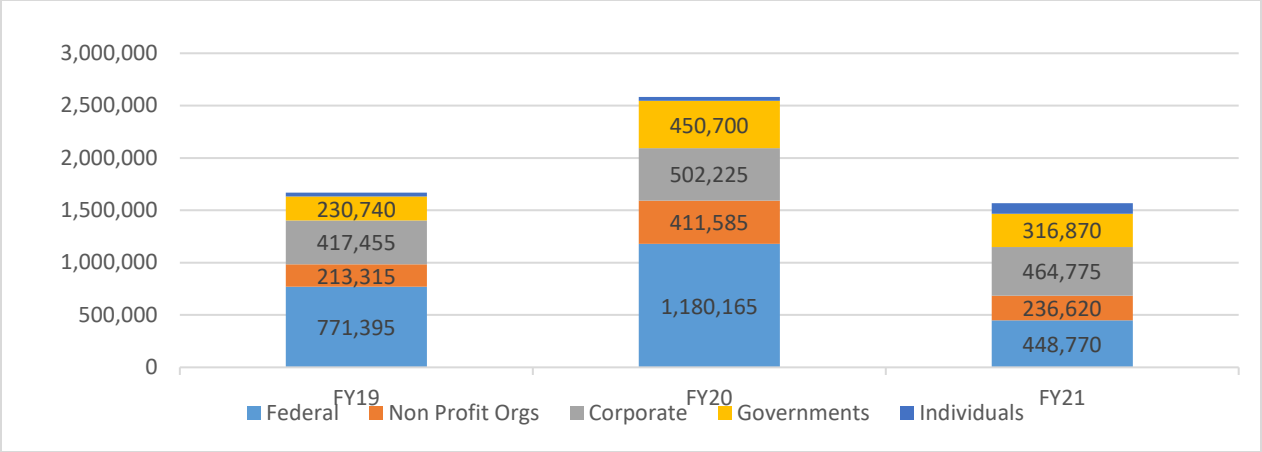


Equipment will be in one of three places after donation: distributed to client groups, sent for recycling, or held as inventory. Here we can see computer distribution since FY18 remains flat, regardless of fluctuations in donations levels.



The grey recycling line denotes not all donations are the same. The spike in FY20 is largely attributed to one donor with ~3000 HP 6005 desktops deemed a fire hazard. Those machines were sent for recycling after the ram and other useful parts were harvested. Recycling levels remained high this year with a dramatic increase of individual donations valued at \$109K instead of the usual levels valued at ~30K. The yellow "March 31" line denotes the inventory on the warehouse floor at year end.

Below is a chart depicting the levels of support from each donor group: The Federal government, Non-Profit Organizations (primarily the National Technology Centre in Gatineau), local corporations, governments (municipal and post secondary institutions), and individuals.



We were concerned about donation levels throughout the year and tailored marketing messages around **#DonationsMatter**. London Drugs was a fantastic partner on two fronts. First, they allowed us to purchase the Zoom compatible parts at cost, saving us \$140K. Second, they hosted a technology drive for Computers for Schools affiliates in the western provinces where retail stores operate. The tech drive was additionally supported by their marketing team securing interviews with CTV Breakfast TV and CKNW’s Lynda Steele Show, enabling us to highlight the need and make the pitch for donations. This raised awareness and the individual donations poured in. In total we received 144 computers/laptops once the London Drugs team culled the below standard equipment.

A news article in Kelowna increased interest in local individual donations. Cooper Media agreed to house the computers until there was sufficient number to palletize and ship to the BC Tech warehouse.

Our top 10 donors for the year are listed below; their combined donations totalled over \$1 million.

Top 10 Donors					
Government of Canada	\$	448,770	Kwantlen Polytechnic University	\$	41,990
TELUS Communications	\$	187,970	Shaw Communications	\$	40,625
Saanich School District #63	\$	89,745	Capilano University	\$	36,385
Surrey School District #36	\$	67,765	City of Burnaby	\$	32,775
Hootsuite	\$	45,920	Metro Vancouver	\$	26,580

Top 10 donors continue to be recognized on our website and are featured on the ‘shipping sheets’ sent to clients. We also highlight donations in the monthly blog and via social media shout outs. This is intended as both a thank you and call to action for other organizations to donate.

A donations request was made to BC’s largest school donations in May 2020 asking for their 19” LCD monitors if a refresh was to be done. These monitors were needed to bolster our inventory for Connecting Families. The Saanich School District provided 1200 monitors, almost the full allocation needed! Surrey District donated some computers which were refurbished and reallocated back to schools for students to use for their blended learning modules.

It was a shame we were unable to host a Recognition Event Due to COVID-19 and Public Health Orders when the previous year was a bumper year for donations. Although donations were considerably reduced during FY21 we formed excellent partnerships and more than ever appreciate our stalwart donors in the Top 10 list. We very much look forward to hosting an event in the Fall of 2021 as health restrictions are removed. Donors and partners like London Drugs must be celebrated!

## Human Resources

### Computers for Schools Interns

The CFS Interns program allows us to hire youth as hardware technicians for 6 – 8-month internships. Funding for this program is provided through the Government of Canada’s *Youth Employment Strategy*.

We employed 19 interns during the fiscal year:

- 6 had their work terms carry over into FY22;
- 5 returned to school;
- 2 found employment;
- 6 post-CFS are looking for work.

This was a challenging year as we learned how to come to work in an COVID safe environment. Happily, everyone remained healthy and infection-free, and we did not have to temporarily close doors.

The workplace remains diverse with the hire of three female interns, nine visible minorities and 4 neuro-diverse persons.

Our partnership with Focus Professional Services, a non-profit supporting neuro-diverse individuals, continues and remains beneficial to BC Tech and the youth who appreciate the opportunity to further their skills in the workplace.

In January, a new marketing campaign “Where Are They Now?” was created and feature previous CFS+ interns sharing what their current job is now, how the internship impacted their future, and a favourite memory. Three videos in a row featured a Matt!



### External Interns

BC Tech received an additional \$200K in youth funding to support host organizations in hiring interns to work at their locations. The positions were to enhance the skills and employability of interns, and provide benefit to the organization through web/database development or IT skills training for community members.

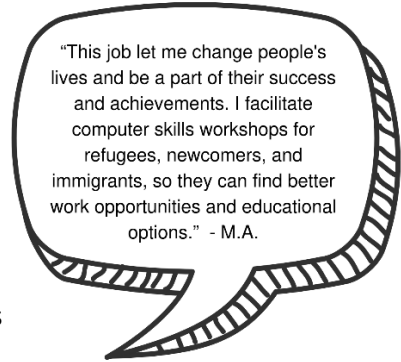
In total eight organizations participated, as listed below, with two organizations hiring two interns.

BCEd Access (Victoria)  
Burnaby Neighbourhood House  
Cowichan Intercultural Society  
Inter Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

Kamloops Immigrant Services  
NEAT (Fort St. John)  
Options (Surrey)  
Purpose Society (New Westminster)



Outreach to CFS+ clients was the lever used to identify organizations who could hire youth. Many organizations were contacted, and in the end only eight succeeded in the hiring process. Those that hired interns were thrilled with the results, many keeping the youth employed into the new fiscal year although the funding envelope expired.



## Students

In a typical year, we support ~35 high school and two practicum students each year with work placements. Given COVID restrictions we did not on-board students until February to keep the number of persons in the workshop at a minimum.

Twenty-three high school students participated in the work experience placement, contributing a combined total of 510 hours of work, and an average of 22 hours per week. This is a sharp decrease from the previous year of 34 students volunteering 1433 hours, averaging 40 hours per week. Unlike previous years where students would start in the warehouse with inventory work and move to refurbishment in the workshop, this year students were retained in the warehouse. This helped to keep physical spacing between the youth better, but did not develop refurbishing skills. We were incredibly busy in February and March as we processed the Connecting Families orders and prepared for the year end inventory count, so the students did play a very important role in supporting these projects.

We did not host any practicum students this year.

## Volunteers

Peter and Goodwin continue their Wednesday volunteer days and contributed 433 hours, or 19 hours per month. We did not accept new volunteers this year.

## 2020/21 Board of Directors

We welcomed 5 new directors in 2020, bringing in a broader skill set across government relations, project management and community engagement.

Deena Simon (2017) – Chair

Nancy Grenier – Vice Chair (2020)

Nolan Clark (2017) – Secretary/ Treasurer

Harvinder Aujula (2020)

Doug Kinsey (2020)

Larina Lopez (2020)

Rene Ragetli (2020)

Sandy Sigmund (2017)

Mark Taylor (2018)

Peter Vogel (2017)

## Conclusion

The COVID pandemic exposed many gaps in our collective systems when the world seemed to turn upside down. Immediately apparent was the profound gap some people faced without access to technology and internet when meetings, school work, and collaborations all moved online.

We needed resiliency, flexibility, and partnerships to find our successes throughout the year, starting with a return to work in April amidst so many unknowns.

Help came from the federal government with additional funding, and working with London Drugs enabled us to purchase web cameras, wifi USB sticks and other parts to help make desktop computers 'Zoom compatible'. This encouraged higher uptake of desktops in the face of a laptop shortage. We proactively responded to needs, and though demand for equipment was high we exceeded previous years' distribution levels in the face of declining federal and corporate donations.

Working with the Youth Leadership Society of BC and the Burnaby Primary Care Network broadened our exposure to many Indigenous communities and non-profit organization, increasing the distribution of equipment to individuals left behind in the digital divide. Burnaby libraries set up mobile wifi vans and would drive to local parks for residents without internet at home to be able to connect. The need is still great but a recent survey of Burnaby non-profits showed no family was looking for a home computer anymore!

Social media and direct communications to prospective donors built awareness of our work. We continue this engagement using **#DonationsMatter** and expect some solid results in 2021/22.

In March 2021, a partnership agreement with the Province of BC was signed to procure and distribute 9,200 laptops over 18 months to workers in job re-training through the new *Access to Technology* initiative. The work aligns with our vision to see all British Columbians with access to technology, although the equipment will be new and not refurbished. It presents an exciting opportunity to support another segment of society and solidify a relationship with the Province.

There are so many ways in which BC Technology for Learning Society continues to make a positive and profound impact on people each and every year. I'm so proud of our team, that we rallied together to come to work each day, keep each other safe and healthy, and deliver refurbished equipment across BC. We truly made a difference.



Mary-Em Waddington  
Executive Director