

For immediate release

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### **Future coders tackle gender bias in AI at Hackergal Hackathon**

**Comox Valley, B.C.** – In early May, approximately 35 brilliant girls from six different elementary schools in the Comox Valley came together at the school board office to participate in the annual Hackergal Hackathon. These young innovators were all members of individual Hackergal clubs led by Comox Valley Schools' phenomenal Teacher Librarians. They united for a full day of computer programming using a program called Scratch and the energy was electric, filled with creativity, collaboration, and coding,

The theme of this year's Hackathon was both timely and powerful: "Hacking Gender Bias in AI." With determination and heart, the girls dove into their projects, designing interactive games that not only entertained but educated. Their goal? To raise awareness about the risks of gender bias in artificial intelligence and to empower players with knowledge to challenge and change it.

From the moment the event kicked off, the enthusiasm was contagious. One coder exclaimed, *"This is the best school day ever!"* while another beamed, *"We get to code all day!"* Their excitement was matched by their focus and drive as they worked through the stages of game development—breaking down complex problems, creating algorithms, and applying critical thinking to bring their visions to life.

"This wasn't just a day of fun—it was a full-on STEM experience. Through coding, the girls developed essential skills in logic, problem-solving, and digital literacy," said Kara Dawson, District Information Technology Support Teacher. "They weren't just learning how to code; they were learning how to think like engineers, designers, and changemakers."

The Hackergal Hackathon, a national initiative that introduces girls across Canada to the world of coding, provided the perfect platform for these students to shine. It's more than just a coding event—it's a movement to close the gender gap in tech and inspire the next generation of female leaders in STEM. This year over 500 girls, and those who identify as girls, joined online across Canada to share the excitement of the Hackergal Hackathon. Comox Valley Schools was honoured this year to be joined by Lucy Ho the founder of Hackergal and Helen Chen, a Hackergal Program Coordinator both from Toronto.

As the screens dimmed and the projects wrapped up, one thing was clear: the future of tech is bright—and it's powered by girls.

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## Media Contact

Craig Sorochan

Manager of Communications

Comox Valley Schools (School District 71)

Pictures below for use courtesy of Comox Valley Schools:

