

TIELINES

The Newsletter of the Canadian YMCA Alumni



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

October 2024

After a very lovely extended late summer, fall is finally making its presence felt here in the Prairies. It seems like overnight the leaves have turned to all sorts of glorious shades of gold and are now starting to cover my lawn. I'm not sure why it is, but every fall seems to come abruptly and our return to the usual hustle and bustle of everyday life always catches me by surprise.

I'm happy to report that your Executive Team here at the Alumni is already at work finalizing fall plans and getting ready for 2025. This fall, the Member Engagement Committee will be following up with trends that we heard during our check-in conversations over the summer, as well as presenting two different Alumni Virtual Gatherings.

As always in the fall, we're looking for nominations of Alumni members for special recognition at our December virtual event. Please consider a member whom you think is worthy of recognition.

Also, we're looking for a few more members to support the work of your Executive. Areas that we'd welcome some assistance with are membership recruitment, planning and organizing virtual gatherings and/or local hubs, fundraising for Secours Speciaux and, lastly, helping with our TieLines newsletter. None of these positions are onerous and we are a great group of people to work with (if we do say so ourselves)! If you think you might be interested in getting more involved, please give me a shout.

In September, a number of Alumni members and former YMCA staff and volunteers celebrating the Fellowship of Honour investiture in Ottawa on September 25. Twelve individuals, including myself, were recognized for their leadership and impact in strengthening the YMCA in their communities. This was my first time attending a Fellowship of Honour event. It was a very humbling experience to receive this honour. I had heard how special these events were from past attendees, and I must say it certainly met my expectations. It was a GREAT time, connecting with so many YMCA staff and volunteers and YMCA Alumni members that I hadn't seen (other than in little ZOOM boxes) for many years. It felt like a great homecoming event. I smiled when I heard several of the recipients talk about making sure the YMCA "secret sauce" is passed on to future YMCA leaders and that we shouldn't dismiss how important that sauce is to the future of the YMCA. Those comments reinforced for me that our strategy with our history project is very important.

Currently, we are getting ready to recognize Truth and Reconciliation efforts across the country. I admit that for most of my life I have been ignorant of government policies and actions and how those policies severely impacted the abilities of Indigenous peoples to thrive throughout the centuries. This summer, on my quest to educate myself, I read a book that was very eye-opening and educating. *Valley of the Birdtail*, written by Andrew Stobo Sniderman and Douglass Sanderson (Amo Binashii), is the story of two Manitoba communities — Waywayseecappo Indian reserve and the town of Rosburn. These communities were and continue to be separated by much more than just a valley. The story centers around two families over several generations and describes the impact of government policies and actions on their lives and futures. During a recent interview with the authors, they talked about how long they had worked on the book and how the families named in the book came to want their stories to be told. It may be a difficult read in places — but it is worth it if we are going to move forward together in Canada. It will give you much to think about as we travel on this journey towards reconciliation.

Until next time,

Janet Giles
janet.giles@shaw.ca

Canadian YMCA Alumni News

Celebrating Birthdays!

Happy Birthday to:

September

Gilda Evelyn, Ed Fox, Tom Hirst, Sol Kasimer,
Amelie Koloska, Heather Patterson,
Patricia Pelton, Ron Watson.

October

Susan Fortino, Lee Fraser, Agnes Lamb,
Barrie MacGregor.

Welcome, New Members

A warm welcome to Barry Morrison from Saint Andrews, NB!

About TieLines

TieLines is the newsletter of the Canadian YMCA Alumni published bi-monthly at the end of February, April, June, August, October, and mid-December. Please forward articles for inclusion, any corrections/comments to Diana Deakin-Thomas indicating TieLines in the subject line at dianadeakinthomas@gmail.com. Don't want to receive TieLines anymore? You can unsubscribe by emailing editor.cdnyalumni@gmail.com. To find back issues of TieLines, [click here!](#)

Who are our members?

The Canadian YMCA Alumni is a fellowship of former YMCA or YMCA-YWCA staff, volunteers and/or their partners. We stay connected through TieLines and various ZOOM events. If you know someone who might be interested in joining the Alumni, please share this issue and connect them with Mimi Price, our Membership Chair, at mimi.price@hotmail.com.

2024 Secours Speciaux Campaign Time

Greetings, fellow Y Alumni. Everyone should have received their request to support World YMCA's Secours Speciaux, which is the Annual Campaign of the Canadian Y Alumni.

Secours Speciaux (translated—Special Aid) is an emergency relief fund founded in the early 1980s by Anna Limbert, the spouse of the World YMCA National General Secretary.

Anna started an aid program based on her personal commitment to assist YMCA people who were in dire need — at that time, YMCA staff and families in Eastern Europe who were being displaced by the government regimes of the day.

Secours Speciaux has evolved over the years and, currently, this volunteer-led initiative continues to assist YMCA people and their families who are in dire need — the majority are fellow Y retirees.

Recently, Kohei Ymamada, Chair, World YMCA Fellowship of Retirees, has commended the Canadian Y retirees as being among the top Secours donor groups and an example to others.

Thank you to the over 20 individuals who have already donated to the 2024 Secours Campaign. I am hoping that, once again, many of the Alumni will make a contribution to this worthy cause.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Best Wishes,

John



In Case You Missed it! **YMCA Canada launches *Shine On* Brand awareness campaign**

The YMCA's new brand campaign launched September 15!

September 15 was a special day for the YMCA as we launched our first-ever national Shine On brand awareness campaign! This campaign, which started with the YMCA of Greater Toronto, is now expanding nationwide, spreading our message of belonging, support and empowerment to every corner of the country across TV, streaming and digital platforms.

The campaign emphasizes the importance of belonging, meaningful employment and physical and mental health. It conveys that no matter the obstacles or setbacks, the Y is a welcoming place offering support, positivity and guidance, empowering individuals to achieve their full potential.

[Watch the full-length campaign video!](#)

This will amplify our efforts to connect more people to the Y — at a time when they need our critical programs and supports more than ever. It will also highlight the life-changing difference the Y can make in people's lives, showing potential donors the incredible impact they can help make possible by giving to our charity.

The YMCAs of Quebec, with the support of Publicis, adapted the Obstacles campaign platform to better reflect the Y's unique offering and impact in the province. The result is a bilingual campaign – Let your potential Shine On (in French: Brillez à votre plein potentiel) which will be airing in Quebec. The centerpiece of the Quebec campaign is a 60-second video. [Click here to watch!](#)

As we embark on this exciting journey, keep your eyes and ears open for the campaign, share it on social media and tell your friends and family. You deserve to be proud of the impact you've made in both your own life and the lives of others by being part of the Y. Let's celebrate the start of something great!

To check out the creative and where you might see the campaign, visit our [public campaign page](#).

The Canadian YMCA Alumni Awards

It's that time to shine a light on our Alumni!

These awards are the most valued recognition of our members and YMCA institutions. The awards are presented annually to celebrate and recognize:

- A. Members of the Canadian YMCA Alumni retirees who have made a significant contribution to the YMCA as a volunteer after retirement.
 - B. Members of the Canadian YMCA Alumni retirees who have made a significant contribution to their community as a volunteer after retirement.
 - C. A YMCA institution (Association, YMCA, YMCA-YWCA, YMCA Canada etc.) which has made a significant contribution to the development and/or enhancement of the Canadian YMCA Alumni.
- Normally one award per category will be presented but the Executive may present more
 - Volunteer Category — a Canadian YMCA Alumni member or the CEO of a YMCA, YMCA-YWCA or YMCA Canada.
 - Institution Category — by any Canadian YMCA Alumni member

Awards are not made posthumously.

Nomination information and names are to remain confidential. Nomination form appears at the end of TieLines.

Due date: on or before November 20, 2024.

Canadian YMCA Zoom Events

Aging in Place: Honouring Voice, Respecting Choice

October 10, 2024

Murray Kilfoyle, from the Riverview Health Centre, is the speaker. The issue of choice and where people want to be. What are the supports and options for aging in place. In case you missed the presentation, it can be found here. [Click Here!](#) (Passcode: **OkC^43y.**)

Topic covers the issue of choice and where people want to live. Continuum of care from staying in your own home to end of life. What supports are available or should be cultivated to help you stay in your own home, to different types of independent living and assisted care to end of life.

Save the date: Homelessness Webinar

December 4, 2024 at 1pm EST

This event will take place during our Annual General Meeting as we welcome presenters Mike Braithwaite, Blue Door, and Shannon Barry, Moncton Y ReConnect as co-presenters.

To register, please **click here!**

YMCA Fellowship of Honour 2024 – Media release



For immediate release
September 25, 2024

12 Canadians awarded the YMCA Fellowship of Honour medal

OTTAWA – Today, the Honourable Senator Ratna Omidvar presented a small group of Canadians with the YMCA's most prestigious award: The YMCA Fellowship of Honour. These 12 committed individuals have provided distinguished service to the YMCA in communities across Canada. Senator Omidvar presented the YMCA Fellowship of Honour medal, designed by award-winning artist Dora de Pedery-Hunt, to the following appointees. Each also received a framed citation and lapel pin during a ceremony held at the Rideau Club in Ottawa:



Companions

- Brenda Flaherty of Hamilton, ON
- Scott Haldane of Ottawa, ON
- Marilyn Kapitany of Winnipeg, MB
- Craig Rowe of St. John's, NL

Officers

- David Beatty of Brockville, ON
- Ian Brown of Metchosis, BC
- Dan Bulger of Cobourg, ON
- Janet Giles of Sherwood Park, AB
- John Lindsay Jr. of Seabright, NS
- Andrew Melton of Calgary, AB
- Richard St-Yves of
Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot, QC
- Robert Vokey of Charlottetown, PEI

"These YMCA volunteers and staff have touched thousands of lives in so many ways," said Nik Nanos, Chair of the YMCA Fellowship of Honour Advisory Council. "They have helped to ensure that there are modern, high-functioning Ys in communities across the country. They have made sure that generations of children have the opportunity to experience YMCA summer camp. They have developed leadership and alternative suspension programs for young people. They have created groundbreaking community health programs and partnerships. They helped YMCAs across Canada and around the world to keep their doors open and continue to serve their communities during a global pandemic."

"Each of these individuals is a shining example of what it means to give back to community," said Peter Dinsdale, YMCA Canada's President and CEO. "Their passion for helping to ensure a sense of belonging for all has created ripples of positive impact in communities across Canada and around the world. We are forever grateful for their contributions, and reminded of the tremendous difference one committed person can make."

About the YMCA Fellowship of Honour

The YMCA Fellowship of Honour was established in 1978 as the highest recognition for YMCA volunteers and staff. It is presented every three to four years by its patron, the Governor General of Canada. Today's appointees join a long list of 111 volunteers and staff whose exceptional contributions have been honoured in one of two Fellowship of Honour categories: as a Companion, for outstanding national and international leadership, or as an Officer, for local or regional leadership contributions.

Appointments to the YMCA Fellowship of Honour are governed by a selection process established by the YMCA Fellowship of Honour Constitution and directed by an Advisory Council composed of a Canadian YMCA leader as Chair, at least three Canadians who have served the YMCA with distinction, the Chair of the YMCA National Board and the national President and Chief Executive Officer. The Council considers nominations received from throughout the Canadian YMCA movement and recommends appointments to the National Board for approval.

About the YMCA in Canada

The YMCA is a charity that ignites the potential in over 2 million people annually, helping them grow, lead, and give back to their communities. Across Canada, the YMCA delivers a wide variety of programs and services that empower people of all ages and life stages to overcome barriers and rise to their full potential. Programs include child care, health and wellness, aquatics, employment services, immigrant settlement, camps, mental wellness, and many other community initiatives that respond to local needs. Foundational to all this is the YMCA's commitment to creating spaces and experiences where everyone feels safe, welcome, and a sense of belonging.

The YMCA in Canada is comprised of 37 YMCA Member Associations, supported by YMCA Canada, the national office, working together so all Canadians can shine on.

For more information, please visit ymca.ca



© Scott Haldane

Atlantic — Exploits Valley, NL — following the retirement of long- serving CEO, Steven Williams

YMCA of Exploits Valley Announces New CEO, Paul Rogers.

The YMCA of Exploits Valley is pleased to announce the appointment of Paul Rogers as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective October 7, 2024.

Paul Rogers brings over 35 years of extensive management experience, having held significant leadership roles in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. His career highlights include owning and operating three McDonald's franchise locations, where he successfully managed over 125 employees and spearheaded numerous community initiatives. His dedication to community involvement earned his franchise the prestigious Street Fighter Award for outstanding community engagement.

In addition to his professional achievements, Paul has been a dedicated volunteer, serving as a Director on the Board of Ronald McDonald House Newfoundland and Labrador. His efforts in guiding the strategic direction and enhancing the visibility and fundraising efforts of the charity have been instrumental in its success. Notably, he played a crucial role in raising close to \$1,000,000 for the Family Time Park, an accessible play area for children.

Paul's commitment to operational excellence, strategic planning, and community engagement aligns perfectly with the YMCA's mission and values. His ability to build strong relationships with community groups, funders, and other stakeholders will be invaluable in driving the YMCA's mission and expanding its impact across Central Newfoundland. Paul Rogers expressed his enthusiasm for the new role, stating, "I am excited about the opportunity to lead the YMCA of Exploits Valley and contribute to its continued growth and success. The YMCA's core values of caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, and diversity resonate deeply with my professional values, and I look forward to working with the team to serve our community effectively."

We are thrilled to welcome Paul Rogers as the new CEO of the YMCA of Exploits Valley. Paul's extensive experience and dedication to community service make him the ideal leader to guide our organization into the future.

Trevor Miller, Board Chair, YMCA of Exploits Valley

Canada West — Something new and different at YMCA Calgary — Esports

The program is online and in-person, including tournaments. Youth can experience the thrill of esports and dive into competitive gaming in a safe and inclusive space for youth in Calgary. Participants will join old friends and build new bonds with fellow gamers as they have fun and develop new skills through the power of video games. Esports help youth thrive through community and healthy competition. The progressive pilot program gives all youth in Calgary a safe place to play together, learn about technology and develop the skills required for success in STEM.

At the Y, we treat our players like any other athlete and nourish their physical and mental health and wellness. Our esports pilot also nurtures hand-eye coordination, problem-solving, strategy skills and self-confidence.

[Here is a link to a news interview \(TV\)](#)

And a new CEO in Saskatoon!

Although in place earlier this year, we thought you might be interested to read about a new leader in our federation:

Please welcome DeeAnn Mercier to the YMCA of Saskatoon!

The CEO Selection Committee and our Board of Directors are thrilled to announce the appointment of DeeAnn Mercier to the position of CEO of the YMCA of Saskatoon.

DeeAnn is a visionary community builder who brings non-profit management, fundraising, program development, and public relations experience to the role. DeeAnn has a heart for people, community, and meeting basic needs. With her vast experience and community connections, we're very excited about the future of our YMCA with her leadership.

She is no stranger to Saskatoon and most recently was the Executive Director at the Broadway Business Improvement District (BBID), where she integrated community, culture, and commerce to build a vibrant future for the district.



Prior to this, DeeAnn was the Communications Director at The Lighthouse Supported Living Inc. She was responsible for strategic communications and fundraising, where she successfully executed both capital and operating philanthropic campaigns.

"I am incredibly excited to have DeeAnn as our new CEO. The impact the YMCA has in our community has grown tremendously over the last decade. DeeAnn's energy and experience and her love for community will amplify our organization's profile and the positive impact we provide to families and the Saskatoon community." Says Mike McKague, Chair of the Board of the YMCA of Saskatoon.

DeeAnn is equally excited: "Becoming the new CEO of the YMCA is a tremendous opportunity to help strengthen our community, inspire positive change and shape the future of Saskatoon. With a young family myself, I know the enormous need for affordable child care spaces, before-and-after school care, and the many other health and wellness programs the YMCA provides. I am looking forward to the challenge and responsibility of leading the team at the YMCA, driven by the belief that together we can help all people thrive in our community." DeeAnn will officially begin her new role on February 20, 2024. Please join us in making DeeAnn's welcome as warm as possible.

As one of the largest charitable organizations in the city, the YMCA impacts hundreds of families and individuals daily. Our footprint in our community is large. We are Saskatoon's largest child care (Early Childhood Education) provider, operating six sites, with a seventh site opening in Aspen Ridge in 2024. The YMCA supports families by operating Before and After School Care programs at fifteen elementary schools in the city. We are the community operator of the Saskatchewan Health Authority-funded Family Resource Centre (FRC) in Fairhaven. The Centre provides free health and community services to families. We have been selected to operate a new Eastside FRC, and one in Warman/Martensville, both in 2024. Post-pandemic, our biggest area of growth is providing YMCA Canada programming for teenagers in mental health, leadership, return-to-school, and school mentorship. We also continue to provide health, fitness and aquatics programs to thousands of members at our historic Downtown site.

The future is bright! Shine on.



WORLD YMCA NEWS



Please see the following YMCA communications to help keep you connected to some of our YMCA communities.

July/August World YMCA News — [Click Here!](#)

September YMCA World News — [Click Here!](#)

October YMCA World News — [Click Here!](#)

A look at YMCAs Impact across Europe — [Click Here!](#)

August — YMCAs across Europe Newsletter — [Click Here!](#)

August Bridges – World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees — [Click Here!](#)

World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (WFYR) virtual gathering was held on **October 23, 2024**

Theme: YMCAs in Asia and the Pacific — Opportunities and Challenges
If you missed this gathering, you can find the recording [here](#).

[Click here!](#) (Passcode: ^W9KFzGB)

What does your editor do in the summer?

Diana Deakin-Thomas

I suspect many of you know that I spend most of my summer sailing, (swimming, stand up paddling, hiking and riding my bike) on Heart of Gold (no, not a Neil Young reference but Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy). For over 30 years, Graham and I sailed Lake Ontario and all its ports with a trip to the beautiful Thousand Islands each summer along with a few trips to the Caribbean and B.C.

With our permanent move to our chalet in the Horseshoe Valley area in 2022, we decided to move our boat from Lake Ontario to the Georgian Bay area. An incredible six week adventure travelling 910 nautical miles (1,700 kilometres) though the Welland Canal — Lake Erie — Lake St. Claire — Lake Huron, the North Channel and then into Georgian Bay.

Fast forward to summer 2024 — we determined we wanted to explore more of Georgian Bay and the North Channel. Many have said that it is even more beautiful than the Caribbean and we heartily agree. Full disclosure: this is the reason we did not have an August issue of TieLines as it is near impossible to have any wifi connection in these waters.



We started our season this year enjoying the sights and sounds of YMCA camps on Beausoleil Island, just north of Midland. This is one of Canada's National Parks — full of Indigenous history and beauty. Watching as Camp Kitchikewani (YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka), conducted early season staff training and hearing the chants of the counselors as they welcomed first session campers to Camp Queen Elizabeth (CQE — YMCA of Southwestern Ontario). While I don't have a good picture of CQE, I do have a photo of one their friends on Beausoleil!



We began our six-week journey by venturing off to the west side of Georgian Bay, anchoring off an Island north of Christian Island, then on to Owen Sound where we enjoyed the company of none other than Alumni Executive member, Gayle Graham, and her husband, John.



A few photos to tell our story... and yes, Graham is wearing a YMCA t-shirt! Sometimes it's warm and sometimes we need winter gear. But hey, this is Canada — we need to be ready for all kinds of weather! And some beautiful sunsets.



Many more adventures and nautical miles later, we anchored in Moyles Harbour where, of course, we find John Island Camp (YMCA of Northeastern Ontario). This is where I finally had the opportunity to meet Alumni Executive member, Gary Gray IN PERSON! Gary provided us with an extensive tour of this wonderful camp and filled us with all its history of the storied Moyles brothers and how they stole a sawmill in the late 1800's from Detour, Michigan and started up again in the North Channel. If interested, you can [learn more here!](#) This is a tricky anchorage as there are so many deadheads — some can be seen while others lay just under the water waiting to grab our anchor!

Of course, we signed in at the camp office showing our ID prior to our great tour. It was a treat for us to be at a YMCA overnight camp watching the kids have soooo much fun. Most importantly, to meet Gary in person after working together for so many ZOOM years! Thanks again, Gary!



YMCA connections are everywhere!

There is so much history and so much beauty in Georgian Bay and the North Channel and we are appreciating it all. Many more years of exploration ahead of us!

I want to hear from you!

Comments please!

Each month, your editor and team works to pull together interesting stories and provide articles that you might enjoy reading. I am so very thankful to those who provide such thoughtful content for me to insert and share. I would be delighted to receive and share your thoughts on articles you read in our TieLines.

Please send along to me at
dianadeakinthomas@gmail.com.

Thank You!

Staff at YMCA of Northern Alberta lay out and prepare TieLines for production. Thanks to Nick Parkinson (President and CEO), Amber Niemeier (Chief Community Engagement Officer), Curtis Shurvell for copy editing and Abdullah Al-Nono for designing. Franca D'Angelo (General Manager, National Office YMCA Canada) and Alexandra Mooney (Y Canada) distribute TieLines for us. And of course, thanks to Nancy Dube and Marg Flett who check your editor's work! To Scott Haldane for his beautiful photography used in our TieLines. And to those of you who have contributed this month — **THANK YOU!**

Canadian YMCA Alumni Awards

Nomination Form:

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Nomination Category _____ YMCA Contribution _____ Community Contribution _____ Institution

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #s Home _____ Cell _____

Email Address _____

NOMINATION CHECKLIST

We request your nominee NOT be advised of the nomination. Separately please include the following information and details

Volunteer Category

- The type and scope of the service provided
- The duration and time commitment
- The impact on the individuals served
- The impact on the YMCA
- A resume of the individual's service

Institution Category

- The type and scope of the service provided
- The duration and time commitment
- The impact on the Canadian YMCA Alumni

Please include your name, contact information and relationship to the Volunteer or Institution you are nominating.

Name: _____

Contact (email/address): _____

Send your nomination by **November 20, 2024** to Chairman, Awards Committee:

Jim Bonk
Chair, Awards Committee
jmb.bonker@yahoo.ca

34 Borland Dr.
Guelph, ON N1G 5B5



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Photo credit: Scott Haldane