



BC Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Jennifer Whiteside (centre) meets with senior members of YMCA BC's Y Mind team during a Sept. 5 funding announcement at the Robert Lee YMCA. Pictured from left: VP, Community Programs Samantha Hartley-Folz; Director, Mental Wellness Programs Helen Playle; Supervisor, Y Mind Teen & Youth Rowena Kelly; and Manager, Y Mind Mandy Thayil.

Foundation-funded Y Mind made available nationwide

A mental wellness program started by the YMCA in Vancouver with a small investment from the Foundation is now being offered nationwide and is guaranteed to remain an available resource to British Columbians for the next several years.

Y Mind—a free, seven-week program providing teens and young adults up to age 30 with strategies to manage stress and anxiety—received a \$7-million injection from the Public Health Agency of Canada earlier this year, allowing YMCA Canada to introduce the program at two-dozen Y locations across the country and deliver it to participants online. The funding includes support for Mind Medicine, an adapted version of Y Mind developed specifically for Indigenous youth.

The program has been offered throughout BC since 2018 with support from the provincial government, which this summer pledged another \$3 million over the next three years to ensure Y Mind continues. Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, visited the Robert Lee YMCA on Sept. 5 to make the announcement and discuss the program's progress with Y staff.

"We're impacting 600 youth per year within British Columbia," said Samantha Hartley-Folz, YMCA BC VP, Community Programs. "It's good to acknowledge programs that are doing good work and stick with them. We're happy the Ministry is staying with us as a funder for a long time."

Y Mind has remained on an upward trajectory since 2015 when it was put forward as a new program via the YMCA of Greater Vancouver's Innovation Fund, which grants Foundation funding to new initiatives proposed by YMCA staff. Starting with just \$5,000 in seed funding, Y Mind launched as a pilot project within Vancouver that demonstrated an immediate impact on participants seeking skills to cope with their mental health. Although YMCA staff in Vancouver had started building partnerships with other YMCA locations outside of BC in 2021 with support

continued on next page...

Message from the Chair



In formally introducing the YMCA BC Foundation to our selfless donors in the preceding issue of *Newsworthy*, we were proud to share how an expanded reach would allow the Foundation to make a greater impact for British Columbians.

Though it hasn't even been a year since the YMCAs in Kamloops, Greater Vancouver and Northern BC unified to form one association, it's exciting to see our ability to strengthen communities on a wider scale coming to fruition.

Foundation support is starting to reach programming and initiatives that extend beyond our previous purview in Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, and we're better positioned to make an immediate difference throughout the province. As you'll read in this newsletter, the challenging summer of wildfires in the North and Interior served as a perfect example, as the Foundation was able to offer efficient support to displaced families and individuals.

As always, your gift to the Foundation is an investment

in the future of our local communities, but this issue also shows instances where that influence has stretched beyond our region, too. A couple of programs that have thrived thanks to Foundation backing—the youth-focused mental-health initiative Y Mind, as well as our long-running Youth Peace Network—have achieved significant milestones this year, and we're eager for you to read about the national and global influence these initiatives have advanced while remaining crucial locally.

Altogether, your generosity is helping the YMCA BC Foundation shape our world for the better, and we're as grateful as ever for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melinda McKie'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Melinda McKie
Chair, YMCA BC Foundation

Foundation-funded Y Mind made available nationwide continued...

from the McCall MacBain Foundation, the federal funding commitment has helped fast-track its delivery beyond the provincial border.

YMCA Canada recently teamed up with Canadian indie pop band Walk off the Earth, who are known for their unique cover versions of well-known songs, to promote Y Mind's coast-to-coast availability. The two-time Juno winners recorded a reimagined version of the "Y.M.C.A." song first made popular by The Village People, providing a modern take on the tune with updated lyrics that focus on mental wellness. With an accompanying music video amassing more than 150,000 views in its first two weeks, the song is proving to be an effective way to raise program awareness among youth.

Though Y Mind is now reaching young Canadians on a wide scale, there's still room for the program to grow. Y Mind Adult, for those aged 31 and up, regularly has a waitlist to participate in Greater Vancouver but is limited in the number of people it can assist without the same level of funding as its youth-focused counterpart. No matter their age, the vast majority of Y Mind participants have self-reported improvements in their overall wellbeing.

"Mental health is an ongoing issue, so this is something that the Y can invest in as an organization," said Hartley-Folz. "We're not a crisis mental-health organization, but we're helping people to avoid crisis."

Celebrating legacy and impact at the Heritage Club Luncheon

The YMCA BC Foundation's 39th annual Heritage Club Luncheon was marked by warmth and gratitude as we came together to recognize and thank legacy donors at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club on June 15. Though each year's luncheon is special, this one was especially significant as our first gathering since becoming the YMCA BC Foundation.

The event is also a great opportunity to reflect upon the Y's wide-ranging impact, so attendees were fortunate to have Tyler Yuzik share his inspiring personal journey in a keynote speech. From joining the YMCA swim club as a child, receiving guidance as a teen participant in the Plusone mentoring program and benefiting from Youth Employment programming, the Y has touched many parts of Yuzik's life. Now, he gives back as a volunteer Plusone mentor himself.

"I went through a lot of things when I was very young and the YMCA was always there for me when I needed it," Tyler recalled gratefully.

Foundation Chair Melinda McKie shared some important highlights resulting from the generosity of donors from the past year. She also led a moment of silence to honour our Heritage Club members who passed away in the preceding year, including our dear friend and longtime luncheon volunteer organizer Jone Brodie Fraser.

YMCA BC President & CEO Heidi Worthington gave an update



Tyler Yuzik delivers his keynote address during the YMCA BC Foundation's Heritage Club Luncheon.

on YMCA BC's unification journey and expanded impact. She also highlighted several of YMCA BC's recent achievements, including the grand opening of the Bettie Allard YMCA, the naming of the Bob Chan-Kent Family YMCA, the post-pandemic reopening of YMCA Camp Elphinstone and celebrating the Tong Louie Family YMCA's 20th anniversary.

Worthington also took the time to thank all donors and governance volunteers, stressing how important the Foundation's legacy donors are in helping to create vibrant, healthy and inclusive communities for all.

"We are forever grateful for your generosity," she said. "Your support allows us to keep making a big difference in the communities served by the YMCA."

Foundation steps up to support wildfire evacuees

Donor support ensures that the Y is positioned to help communities in times of wildfire risk. With so many of our neighbours throughout BC forced to evacuate their homes due to fire risk, YMCA BC was proud to offer support to dozens of displaced individuals and families with assistance from the Foundation.

All evacuees were invited to access any of YMCA BC's Health, Fitness & Aquatics facilities on a complimentary, drop-in basis, providing them with free access to recreation, showers, drop-in programming, fitness classes and more during a difficult time.

The Foundation was quick to step in with financial support when drop-in access was first opened at the Prince George Family YMCA for Northern BC evacuees in July, and again when the offer was extended to all YBC facilities as wildfire risks

impacted more and more of the province.

Though all of YMCA BC's regions saw some uptake on the offer, the majority of those accessing drop-in services came in the Kamloops area after thousands were put on evacuation order in the Interior in August.

"I know that drop-in access was greatly appreciated by those who did take advantage of it," said Ashley Kotai, General Manager, Member Services, Health, Fitness & Aquatics, YMCA BC— Kamloops Region.

Among those were a youth group from the Neskonlith Indian Band, with 15 kids and their group leader coming to the Kamloops Downtown Y seeking a space to relax and have fun.

"They ended up in the pool at the same time as our Y Summer Camp kids," said Kotai. "It was a very loud, happy and busy place."

Leaving a gift to bring Youth Leadership Training to life

Glancing around the Robert Lee YMCA provides Barrie Sutton with a reminder of just one of the ways in which he and wife Lorna have made contributions to support the Y.

"We've donated to many YMCA initiatives, including this building," he said while visiting the Downtown Vancouver centre of community.

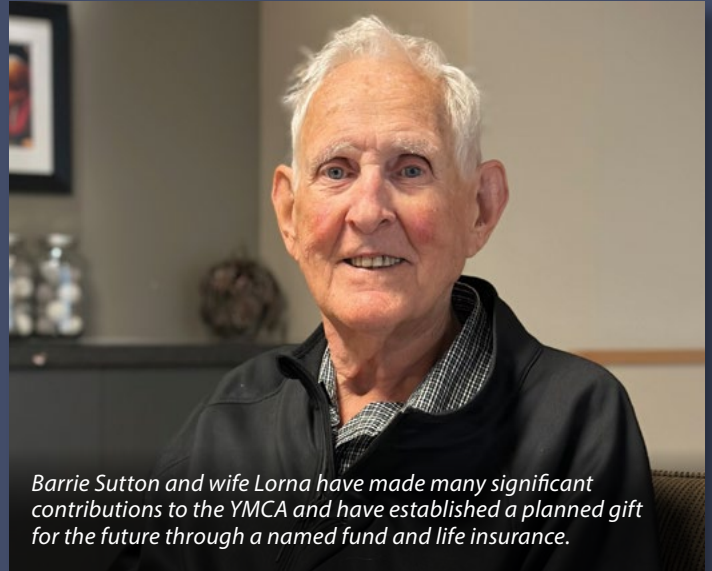
As a dedicated volunteer for more than 40 years, Barrie has selflessly given back to the Y in a wide variety of ways during his lifetime. But he's also established a plan to provide further support upon his passing, too.

Barrie's connection to the YMCA goes back to his time making summer visits to Camp Elphinstone in his youth. The Sutton family's involvement with the Y deepened when he and Lorna's five children became engaged with programming that helped mentor and shape them during their crucial growing years.

Barrie has also held several leadership roles, including as President of the North Shore YMCA and later the Downtown Y during the exciting Expo years. He and Lorna have travelled abroad as YMCA Canada representatives, and Barrie has volunteered his time to the Y in leadership and fundraising positions. He was twice named Volunteer of the Year and in 2001 was appointed an Officer of the Fellowship of Honour, the highest and most valued award in the YMCA in Canada. He remains an active volunteer to this day.

Barrie and Lorna have felt it crucial to support the Y's efforts in youth leadership development, and in recent years set up a fund with the YMCA BC Foundation to assist with the costs of training youth leaders who will go on to make a difference within their communities.

"I thought leadership was starting to drop back a bit and I knew student leaders are an expensive part of running a Y," said Barrie, emphasizing that the YMCA's impact extends far beyond its walls, as leaders in various industries and organizations have received valuable



Barrie Sutton and wife Lorna have made many significant contributions to the YMCA and have established a planned gift for the future through a named fund and life insurance.

guidance from the Y at some point in their lives. "So, we set up a fund to train future leaders to carry out the work of the YMCA and other non-profits."

For all that the Suttons have done to give back to the Y in life, Barrie was pleased to learn through his late friend, Richard Tingley, about the potential to create a lasting impact through a planned gift using life insurance. He liked how simple and straightforward the process was: By making annual payments towards a life insurance policy owned by the YMCA, he and his wife would create a substantial future gift while receiving annual donation receipts along the way.

"Over the years, it builds up," he said. "We've paid roughly \$500 a year to cover the policy premiums... and that's going to build up to a larger legacy gift." The manageable premium has enabled the Suttons to make other significant contributions to the Y in addition to their planned gift.

The approach of using life insurance to leave a legacy enables donors to make a significant future contribution while balancing their current financial needs, Barrie noted. He also appreciates the deep connections he and Lorna have made with fellow Heritage Club members. "We've become very good friends," he gratefully reflected.

Thanks to their generosity, foresight and the power of planned giving, Barrie and Lorna's dedication to nurturing future leaders will continue making an impact for generations to come.

Ellen Bell Scholarship recipient's curiosity benefits community

Oceanna Nguyen describes herself as “a curious person.” That desire to learn has already prompted the 20-year-old to take on some unique opportunities early in her marketing-focused career, but it has also helped her to make a significant impact on members of her community.

“I love trying and experiencing new things, and marketing is such a great umbrella for that,” said Nguyen. “A big part of it is getting to work with people at something that energizes me, because I find that when I’m collaborating with others, that’s when my work is best.”

A third-year undergrad student in UBC’s Sauder School of Business, Nguyen’s volunteerism and academic achievement were key to her selection as the 2023 Ellen Bell YMCA Memorial Scholarship recipient. The award is presented annually to a female student pursuing a career in marketing or advertising who embodies Bell’s values.

A dedicated YMCA volunteer who valued giving back to her community, Bell was highly regarded within BC’s advertising industry before her passing more than 30 years ago. Bell’s friends and family, led by Shirley Broadfoot and Nick Vos, founded the scholarship to support other remarkable young women like Nguyen with similar career aspirations.

Though Nguyen has been working to support herself since she was 14, she has found a variety of ways to help people of all ages through her selfless spirit. Just a couple of her volunteer pursuits include serving as a youth day camp counsellor and establishing a gym-buddy program for fellow female UBC students. Nguyen has also given her time to teach seniors how to use smart devices, an idea sparked by introducing technology to her own Vietnamese immigrant father.

“I thought, ‘If I’m doing this for him, how many people are out there who don’t have a daughter who can help them?’” said Nguyen. “I’ve grown up in a privileged space in that I was born here and can speak the language... When you recognize your privileges, you can turn that into: ‘How do I lower barriers for others?’”

The marketing jobs Nguyen has held in her young career have varied from positions in the finance world to serving as a social-media coordinator for a company selling “the world’s first dog bed for humans.” In her current role as a Product Marketing Manager for Microsoft, Nguyen is helping develop a platform within the video game Minecraft to deliver indigenous teachings in partnership with the Kwikwetlam First Nation and Coquitlam School District. It’s a project close to Nguyen’s heart because it fuses her desire to “empower the minds of tomorrow” and her values of diversity and inclusion.

“You need diverse perspectives because that’s where all the strengths lie,” she said. “I think that times are changing, and you can no longer say: ‘This is the only way.’ We have to always be questioning why we’ve done things a certain way. There’s always so much more to learn and ways to grow.”

Beyond the knowledge that she’ll remain in marketing, Nguyen is uncertain where her career path may lead, partly because she anticipates that “jobs will be coming up that don’t even exist yet” in the years to come. For now, she’s grateful for Foundation donors who are helping to alleviate her financial burden.

“I’d just love to say thank you for investing in this really special scholarship,” she said. “It’s life-changing in that it opens up more doors and opportunities for students like me.”



Oceanna Nguyen

Youth Peace Network: 20 years of global connections

The Global Room at YMCA Camp Elphinstone may not stand out at first glance, but on closer inspection, it reveals itself as a living time capsule of what has become YMCA BC's signature international program.

Attached to Recreation Hall, the space and its walls are filled with reflections on world peace, conflict resolution, multicultural understanding and friendship left behind by two decades worth of participants in the YMCA's Youth Peace Network (YPN) program.

YPN is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, its longevity a testament to the significant impression it has made—and continues to make—on visiting participants, youth campers and other YMCAs around the world.

"It's always the stories from the participants that really hit home," said Lisa Stiver, YMCA BC General Manager, Fund Development, who was part of the YMCA's Global Committee that first developed the program. "That's when you see how big the impact of the program is, how much they get out of it and what they're taking home with them."

Since 2003, YPN has welcomed young leaders aged 19 to 30 from international YMCAs to spend the summer in the Greater Vancouver area, where they volunteer as Camp Elphinstone counsellors, develop leadership skills, engage in important conversations with their fellow participants about peace and cooperation, and provide campers with a cultural education about their respective homelands.

"I had high expectations," said Argentina's Santiago Luli, one of this summer's participants, during his final week at Camp Elphinstone. "But the experience has been far better than those expectations."

Impacts felt both abroad and at home

Over the past 20 years, more than 300 international participants representing 57 countries have come through the program. Many have become influential figures within their Y, such as Sierra Leone YMCA CEO and General Secretary Christian Kamara, who ascended to his role after his YPN experience.

Another is Dr. Koshy Vaidyan, a Secretary heading multiple departments for YMCA India. Vaidyan credits his 2007 YPN experience for changing his worldview and leaving him with crucial values that have shaped him and his 20-year career with the Y.

"I was very narrow-minded before I came to Vancouver, but I became a global citizen after YPN," Vaidyan said from the Western Indian state of Goa, where he was working to establish YMCA programming in the soccer-like sport of futsal. "I started



Mario Soos, a 2015 Youth Peace Network participant from Egypt, stands at the entrance to YMCA Camp Elphinstone's Global Room.

accepting cultural differences and all perspectives. My attitude was changing."

Vaidyan had never travelled abroad before joining YPN at the age of 29. He quickly found himself eager to implement new ideas at YMCA India that were inspired by his fellow participants and the all-are-welcome approach to Y programming in Canada.

"One of the things I adopted was inclusiveness," he said. "People are different and we should accept everyone, not only Christians, and (people of any) colour or creed."

It's not just the YPN participants who have left Camp Elphinstone—or the former YMCA Camp Howdy in the program's early days—with new perspectives. Thousands of campers have visited the Global Room to learn from YPNers about their home countries, receiving insights into a world beyond their own.

The impact on campers is immediately noticeable. Following one Kenyan participant's presentation in 2008 about the challenges of food and water insecurity that many Africans endure, camp staff saw a significant reduction in wasted resources that was led by the campers themselves. Parent feedback surveys have indicated that many campers return home with a greater appreciation for differing cultures and inspired to help tackle issues facing developing countries.

"For me, the best time of my stay here in Canada was getting to help kids understand more about where I come from," said 2023 Nigerian participant Adura Temitope. "The kids were really happy to learn about Nigeria.

"That creates peace. These kids will grow up understanding that beyond where they are, there's a world outside of Canada and North America."



YMCA BC Board Directors Gavin Hume, K.C., (far left) and Megan Stowe (second from left) join President & CEO Heidi Worthington (back right) and 2023 Youth Peace Network participants as they display their Legacy Project.

Program perseveres despite COVID challenges

In recent years, the program has been forced to adapt amid pandemic-related challenges. With international travel at a standstill and Camp Elphinstone closed due to public-health restrictions for two summers, YPN pivoted to a virtual program in 2020 so that participants could continue to engage in conversations and share ideas about the concepts of peace in sessions led by a YMCA facilitator.

As the program was already shifting toward providing participants with more education on relevant topics prior to their arrival, Stiver said the ability for YPNers to connect online before and after their time in Canada has been an unexpected benefit.

"It seems that the participants have built a strong network that way, so I think that's a really good change, and maybe an added bonus, that's come out of COVID," she said.

The program's unique and impactful nature has made it a popular program for many Foundation supporters, as multiple named funds have been established with YPN as the primary focus. Stiver said there are a variety of reasons why the program has resonated with donors.

"Some give because they see the benefit it has for our Canadian youth being exposed to a global world at camp," she said. "Others may be immigrants to Canada or have family that immigrated and see the value of providing leadership opportunities to people in countries who otherwise may not get them. I think everybody has their own reason, which is the interesting part."

'Bright' future ahead for YPN

This summer marked the program's return to in-person programming at camp. There were six individuals in this year's cohort as YPN regains momentum and aims to resume pre-pandemic participation of around 16 per year.

"The future is looking quite bright," said Taran Kingsbury, YMCA BC Manager, Youth Programs. "I would categorize this as the build-back year, and over the next couple of years we'll be back at full capacity."

With the summer camp season wrapped up, the 2023 cohort gathered with donors, YMCA staff and other invited guests for an Aug. 28 dinner at the Vancouver Rowing Club to reflect on their experience and the program's 20th anniversary. The gathering saw participants present their legacy project, which depicts their six arms interlocked around a group photo to represent their friendship. Before departing Camp Elphinstone, they also completed a mural in the Global Room that features images of cultural significance to their home countries.

Luli said he was eager to take what he'd learned this summer back to his YMCA in Argentina.

"The hardest part of the program is putting into practice all of the things we've learned in our countries, because there are different cultures and different missions (at each) YMCA," he said. "But at the same time, it's the most fun."

A Legacy of Kindness and Laughter

Jone Brodie Fraser passed away April 26 after a long and gallant battle with cancer, leaving behind a legacy of kindness, laughter and unwavering support for the YMCA.

A longtime YMCA champion, Jone created and raised funds for the Hall Brodie YMCA Memorial Fund for Camp Elphinstone, a tribute to her first husband's memory. She actively supported the Foundation and helped organize the annual Heritage Club Luncheon, at which her absence was deeply felt this year.

Jone had a remarkable sense of humour, turning every situation into a moment of joy. Conversations with Jone were never short, as she always had some wisdom and a laugh or two to share.

Jone is survived by her loving husband Russ Fraser, sister Marion Parkes, children Scott Brodie and Krista Briggs, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. She will be deeply missed by her family, friends and the larger YMCA community who held her dear.



Jone Brodie Fraser

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A Thanksgiving Tribute to You

This Thanksgiving, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to you, our YMCA BC Foundation donors and Heritage Club members. Your unwavering support forms the bedrock of our organization. You enable us to invest in communities and support vital YMCA BC programs benefiting children, families and seniors. Together we are building vibrant, healthy, and inclusive communities now and for generations to come.

We hope you enjoy a safe and joyful Thanksgiving celebration with loved ones and wish you a wonderful fall season.

Thank you for your invaluable support.

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