

TIELINES

The Newsletter of the Canadian YMCA Alumni



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

June 2026

As we welcome July and the true start of summer, I'm very happy to share this month's newsletter with you, our alumni community. As you'll read later in this issue, our Story Telling project has reached an exciting milestone: the book has now gone to print. Over the past six months, much of our time and energy has gone into bringing this book together, and at times it truly felt like a full-time job for several of us. Other committee members gave their time and talents to sourcing photos and preparing the case study and how-to guide. I want to sincerely thank every member of the Story Telling committee for the care, commitment, and heart they have brought to this project. During several alumni interviews, we heard the comment, "I stayed at the YMCA because I got an opportunity to do something that I'd never done before." I can certainly relate to that now. This experience has given me a real appreciation for the time, patience, and care involved in writing a book, especially when it comes to checking historical details and background information.

It has also been a busy and rewarding time for those involved in organizing our recent Zoom gatherings. We are especially grateful to the Toronto Alumni, WYFR (the world group), and our own Membership Engagement Group for making these conversations possible. It was wonderful to hear about the work being done by the YMCA in Ciudad Juárez and to deepen our understanding of the World YMCA and the important role Canada has played on the world stage.

This time of year, also gives us a chance to pause and appreciate the connections that continue to bring us together, celebrate the many contributions of our members, and look ahead to what is still to come. Your support, involvement, and pride in our alumni community mean a great deal and help keep our shared spirit alive. In this issue, you'll find updates, highlights, and a few ways to stay connected as we continue building meaningful relationships together.

Until next time...

janet.giles@shaw.ca

Canadian YMCA Alumni News

Celebrating Birthdays!

Happy Birthday to:

May

Martha Lee-Blickstead, Brad Clements, Bill Douglas, Sheila Laursen, Don McCreesh, Marty Reynolds, Susan Waterfield.

June

Bill Dobie, Heather Green, Bill Hallett, Melanie Laflamme, John Lilley, Franz Schmidt, Roger Wilson, YMCA (1844).

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 and Trudy Brydges indicating TieLines in the subject line at geegeenb48@gmail.com and 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.

THOUGHT *for the* MONTH

Never look down on someone
unless you are helping them up.

BE HAPPY...
ENJOY LIFE.



© Scott Haldane

**We encourage you to write to your editors — whatever is on your mind
(well, within reason)!**

Please send to dianadeakinthomas@gmail.com or geegeenb48@gmail.com
anytime!



YMCA Storytelling Project: Exciting Next Steps

To the printer we go!

That's the latest news from the YMCA Storytelling Project steering committee*, as we move on to the next stage of bringing this initiative to life.

Since we last connected with you, the committee has been hard at work to ensure the book text is drafted, images are sourced and selected, and the design is considered. In early June, the book will be printed on schedule, and our distribution plan will be implemented.

The collective wisdom and insights of Canadian YMCA leaders, captured through first-person oral history accounts, have been turned into a practical book that will be a lasting, treasured resource for the YMCA.

Donors and contributors to this storytelling initiative will be among the first to receive the book. We will also be distributing the book to the 1300+ delegates of the YMCA

World Council event, taking place for the first time in Canada, in Toronto this July.

The case study and practical how-to guide that's been developed in partnership with Canada's National History Society will be shared alongside the book. This will be a valuable resource for any YMCA who wants to collect and preserve their own stories of community leadership and impact.

The next steps are exciting ones, and we are so thankful for your support!

For more information

Please contact Franco Savoia, Chair of the YMCA Storytelling Project committee, at: fsavoia@shaw.ca

The next steps are exciting ones, and we are so thankful for your support!

**This initiative is being coordinated through a unique partnership that brings together representatives from YMCA Canada, the Canadian YMCA Alumni Group and YMCA Young Leaders. The YMCA Storytelling Project steering committee members are: Franco Savoia (Chair), Jaclyn Carbone, Franca D'Angelo, Angela de Burger, Maeve Devries, Gloria Elekwa, Janet Giles, John Haddock, Scott Haldane, Marilyn Kapitany, Laura Palmer Korn, Karmen MacLean, Bryan Webber.*

WORLD YMCA NEWS

Interested in knowing more about what is happening internationally?

Here you will find the latest [World YMCA news](#). If you haven't already, we invite you to subscribe to our [monthly e-newsletter](#) to stay updated on YMCA news and upcoming events.

In case you didn't already know!

Announcing keynote speakers for World Council

Colonel Chris Hadfield will take the stage at World Council in Toronto this July.

Colonel Hadfield is an astronaut, business leader, 6-time best-selling author, and global speaker on leadership and change. He's commanded the International Space Station and led organizations on Earth, bringing deep experience guiding teams through complexity and transformation.

From space exploration to leading change: a keynote that speaks to our moment.

Dr Marie Wilson is a journalist, educator, and Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner who led Canada's national effort to uncover and acknowledge the legacy of forced residential schools for Indigenous children.

For over 35 years, she's told stories that needed to be told and championed truth-telling and reconciliation. Her insights speak directly to Transform.

World Council | 19-25 July 2026 | Toronto, Canada

On stage at YMCA World Council, Toronto, July 2026



Colonel Chris Hadfield

Astronaut, business leader,
hi-tech entrepreneur, and author

This keynote is sponsored by **WESTON**

WORLD YMCA #YMCATransform2026 worldcouncil.ymca.int **Transform**

On stage at YMCA World Council, Toronto, July 2026



Dr. Marie Wilson

Journalist, Truth & Reconciliation Commissioner

WORLD YMCA #YMCATransform2026 worldcouncil.ymca.int **Transform**



A message from Carlos Sanvee

LinkedIn

I am deeply saddened to learn of the passing of my dear friend, Medhat Mahdy.

It is hard to imagine travelling to Toronto and knowing he will no longer be there. Medhat was a pillar; an adviser, an inspirer, and a quiet force of strength. He was one of those rare people I would turn to in moments of complexity, when I needed clarity to unblock critical situations. His wisdom was always thoughtful, grounded, and generous.

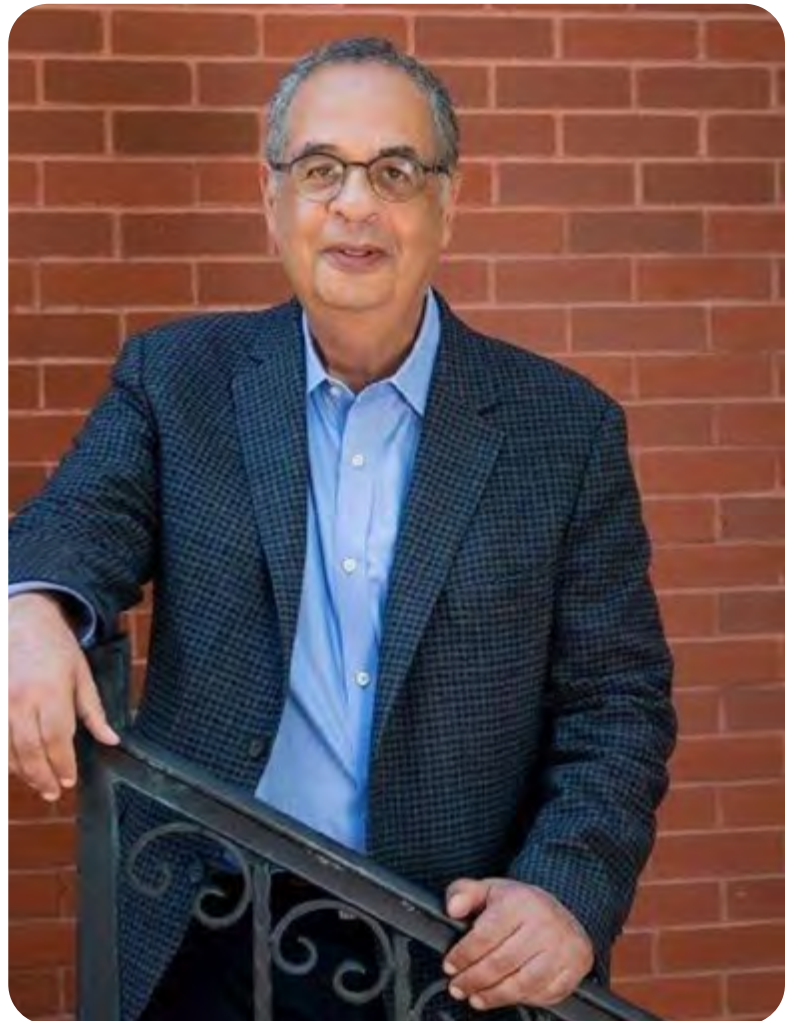
Medhat's leadership was unique: calm yet powerful, strategic yet deeply human. A great thinker, but above all, a great man.

What made our relationship even more special was that Medhat was a Muslim and I am a Christian. Yet this was never a barrier. On the contrary, our respective faiths became a strong foundation for our friendship and leadership. I will never forget when he graciously accepted to speak during the devotion at the World Council in Aarhus; a powerful moment of unity, respect and shared purpose.

I could write pages about the impact he has had on so many of us across the Movement. His absence will be deeply felt. The World Council in Toronto will not be the same without him.

My sincere condolences to his family and to the entire YMCA of Greater Toronto team.

Rest in peace, Medhat. You will be greatly missed. ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)





Standing with YMCA Ukraine: From listening to action

This week, YMCA Ukraine came together with partners from across the movement in Stockholm, Sweden — YMCA Europe, YMCA of the USA, YMCA Finland, YMCA Sweden, YMCA Denmark, One YMCA (England & Wales), and YMCA Germany — for an important exchange on the current realities, needs, and future vision of YMCA Ukraine and its local YMCAs.

The conversation was grounded in three key areas of support:

- Program Support – strengthening joint initiatives and sharing experience across countries
- Strategic Support – providing expertise, advocacy, and alignment at the global level
- Institutional Support – ensuring sustainable systems, core funding, and strong teams

At the heart of the meeting was a shared commitment: to listen, to understand, and to stand in solidarity with YMCA Ukraine — not only in responding to immediate challenges, but in shaping a long-term, resilient future for young people and communities.

This is what a global movement looks like: connected, responsive, and united in purpose. ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)



News from our RDCs and our Hubs

Canada East



**Cape Breton Regional Chamber of
Commerce LinkedIn**

LinkedIn

The Chamber was happy to attend the 140th anniversary celebration of the YMCA of Cape Breton at the Frank Rudderham YMCA in Sydney this morning. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the Y, which has made a lasting impact across Unama'ki–Cape Breton for generations.

For 140 years, the YMCA of Cape Breton has remained committed to building a stronger, healthier, and more connected community through programs and services focused on belonging, wellness, and opportunity for all. Congratulations on this incredible milestone, and we look forward to seeing the continued positive impact the YMCA of Cape Breton will make in communities across Cape Breton for many years to come. ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)

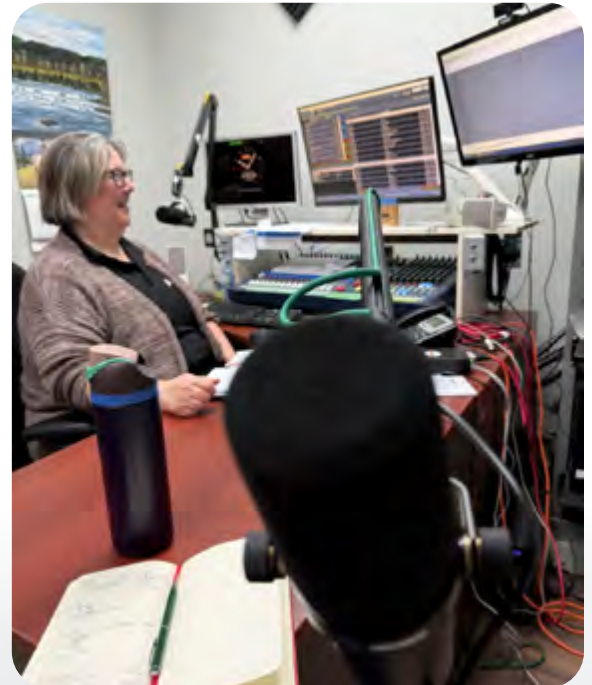




Peter Dinsdale, OOnt, MA, ICD.D

LinkedIn

I spent a great couple of days with the Exploits Valley YMCA. It was wonderful meeting with Mayor Mike Browne to hear about their plans to build a new Centre of Community with our YMCA. I even had an hour on community radio!. ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)



© Scott Haldane



News from our RDCs and our Hubs Ontario

YMCA John Island

Let's get fired up about camp – thanks to Gary Gray for sharing the latest issue of the John Island Spring Alumni Newsletter! ([Click Here!](#))



Lorrie Turnbull

President & CEO YMCA Northeastern Ontario

LinkedIn

There are moments in this job that you know will stay with you - and today was one of them. This morning, our YMCA came together with the Ontario Provincial Police Indigenous Policing Bureau to announce our partnership in support of Niigan Mosewak - a long standing Indigenous youth leadership and cultural program. ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)





YMCA of Three Rivers

LinkedIn

A couple of weeks ago, our YMCA of Three Rivers team welcomed Sun Life to the Stork Family YMCA for a tour and the chance to sit in on Diabetes Fit, one of the programs they've generously supported for many years. This visit was a meaningful reminder of what true partnership looks like. Sun Life continues to show up, provide helpful advice, and care deeply about the people whose lives are changed through this work. ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)



Rob Adams

LinkedIn

Last evening, we gathered for the YMCA of Eastern Ontario Annual General Meeting, bringing together both the YMCA Board and Foundation Board.

As we welcomed new board members, we reflected on the YMCA's impact across our region and our shared commitment to strong financial stewardship and honouring the trust of our donors and partners. ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)

Impact Report: [\(Click here!\)](#)





Lesley Davidson



This week, we celebrated the graduation of our second Inspire Leaders cohort at the YMCA of Greater Toronto.

This program is designed to help employees at all levels grow their leadership skills and develop meaningful connections. As we expanded the program this year to employees across the Y, we also stayed committed to dismantling anti-Black racism by continuing to reserve up to half of the cohort spaces for Black employees. Representation, culturally responsive mentorship, and spaces where people feel seen and supported matter.

Thank you to the community behind this program, including supervisors, guest speakers, peers, and 20 mentors, all investing in one another's growth.

Congratulations to this year's 20 graduates! Your leadership will strengthen our communities in ways that extend far beyond the workplace.

Learn more about how we're building inclusion and belonging at our YMCA: [... Find it on LinkedIn!](#)



News from our RDCs and our Hubs

Canada West



Shannon Doram, ICD.D

LinkedIn

There's something special about the soul of our city. Over the last three weeks I've watched leaders come together to learn, reflect, celebrate, and roll up our sleeves to build a better future for generations to come.

On April 9th, we announced a new partnership with the Calgary Wild FC, a collaboration designed to expand access to sport, inspire girls' participation in physical activity, and connect youth in our community with professional women athletes.

Find it on LinkedIn!



YMCA of Northern Alberta

LinkedIn

We're proud to be part of the YMCA Canada Kananaskis Gathering, bringing together more than 100 participants from 32 YMCAs across Canada, including both senior leaders and program staff, all committed to advancing reconciliation and strengthening Indigenous relationships.

Over the past few days, participants have been learning, reflecting, and connecting in meaningful ways, grounded in a shared commitment to action and impact.

Find it on LinkedIn!





Ace Burpee O.M.

LinkedIn

Just the best morning at the Downtown YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg for the Strong Kids Radiothon. There's still plenty of time to help us remove financial barriers for kids and families to access The Y at **www.ywinnipeg.ca/donate** Thank you the countless generous people of Winnipeg for a record-breaking morning!

Find it on LinkedIn!



YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg

LinkedIn

"You want to make sure that your kids are safe, that they are growing, that they are developing. That social infrastructure provides stability in the workforce."

In this piece, Y Winnipeg's president and CEO Cordella Friesen and Manitoba Chambers of Commerce's vice-president of policy and government relations Elisabeth Saftiuk discuss the far-reaching benefits that low daily rates, increased capital funding and more post-secondary partnerships can have within our community.

A few notable statistics:

- 37% of parents have turned down a job because of problems finding child care
- 52% delayed returning to work
- 17% quit a job
- 63% turned down extra hours

As Manitoba's largest child care provider, we're dedicated to advocating for and supporting families through access, equity, quality, and workforce sustainability!

Find it on LinkedIn!

MBiz | Summer 2026: **(Click here!)**



Heidi Worthington, ICD.D



It was wonderful to welcome Premier David Eby, MLA for Vancouver-Point Grey, this morning for a tour of our newly opened Nobel Park YMCA Child Care Centre. This 37-space facility is now offering high-quality early years education for families living in The University of British Columbia's neighbourhoods. We appreciated Premier Eby taking the time to meet with our Early Childhood Educators for a first-hand look at the amazing support they provide for the kids in our care every day

[Find it on LinkedIn!](#)



The 2026 YMCA BC Kids Walk presented by Odium Brown Limited was nothing short of heroic, with 4,700 Y-superhero kids from our child care programs stepping up across the province yesterday to champion access, belonging, and brighter futures through our Financial Assistance Program.

[Find it on LinkedIn!](#)





REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS

Reinhart Weber

A message from YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka

Today, we honour the life and legacy of Reinhart Weber, a lifelong supporter of the YMCA and a true champion for youth, community, and belonging. From his early days with the YMCA in Germany to decades of dedicated philanthropy with the Midland YMCA, Reinhart's unwavering belief in the potential of young people has left an indelible mark on our community.

Reinhart's generosity was never about recognition - it was about creating opportunities for others. His vision helped shape the YMCA's Leadership Program, empowering thousands of youth to build confidence, develop leadership skills, and discover their purpose. His impact is seen in the lives of young leaders who have gone on to become educators, healthcare professionals, business owners, and community volunteers.

As YMCA President and CEO Jill Tettmann shared, "Reinhart Weber leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of compassion, leadership, and community impact. His vision helped shape generations of young leaders across our region, and his belief in the power and potential of youth will continue to inspire the YMCA for years to come."

Reinhart taught us that leadership is about showing up for your community, believing in others, and creating pathways for people to succeed. His humility, kindness, and belief in the power of youth will forever inspire us.

We extend our deepest condolences to Reinhart's family and loved ones. His legacy lives on in the countless lives he touched and the communities he strengthened.



THE LAST LAUGH

Some people forget to pray until they see the cop make a U turn.

**BE HAPPY
ENJOY LIFE**



Thank You!

I would like to start off by saying thank you to Trudy Brydges (Executive member and AWESOME Atlantic Hub member) who has graciously agreed to help me with the preparation and development of our TieLines. We will be co-editors—so now you have two of us searching for stories to keep you engaged!

And, as always, a hearty thanks to staff at YMCA of Northern Alberta for laying out and preparing TieLines for production. This incredible team makes us look so good every issue! The team to thank includes:

Katherine O'Neill (President and CEO), Amber Niemeier (Chief Community Engagement Officer) 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 editors' 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
TieLines • June 2026

Photo credit: Scott Haldane