

The power of

BELONGING



BELONGING. BEI

It happens when you find community.

You feel a sense of belonging; discover who you are and realize what you can become.

It's a process of discovery and a path to authenticity, sparked by finding acceptance no matter who you are, or where you're from. And along the way, you find meaning and purpose.

Whether it's at 410 Rebecca or in neighbourhoods across Oakville, YMCA programs reach out and welcome everyone. When you walk through the door, join a class, or drop your children at camp or child care, there is a place for everyone to belong and find their path.

For newcomers like Rabea who long for a safe community, young girls like Gabriela or Magdalena who want people to look past their exceptionality, or for homeschooled youth like Will who need a place to fit in, the YMCA includes people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, and helps them achieve things they never thought possible.

This is the power of belonging.

In 2017, it was these stories and many more, that showed us what can happen when you find a place to belong. And as we move forward together, these stories will continue to inspire us to reach out to more people in more neighbourhoods across Oakville and beyond.



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Board Chair



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NG. BECOMING.

Belonging builds healthier communities.

When you belong, you find a place that welcomes you, just as you are.

You connect with others, share ideas and goals and realize what you have in common. You become inspired to engage and participate — and invite others to join you. Each step along the way generates momentum, leading to a healthier, more vibrant community.

“Generating momentum” is something we first talked about in our new strategic plan launched last May. As our YMCA branches out across Halton Region in the coming years, our strategic focus on capacity, reach and impact will be the driving force that leads us to stronger, healthier communities.

Looking back at 2017, it was our “reach” that stood out for me.

- We reached out with free programs for children, youth and families in four underserved Oakville neighbourhoods.
- Together with the Oakville Community Foundation and Town of Oakville, we surveyed Oakville residents about their “sense of belonging”.
- We helped advance the process of Truth and Reconciliation in Oakville by participating in community discussions with partners, school boards and advisors, hosted First Nations advocate Gabrielle Scrimshaw, along with a panel of Indigenous experts at our YMCA Community Breakfast for Peace, and unveiled a Land Acknowledgement plaque in our front garden.

These are just some of the ways we reached out to create a deeper sense of belonging for more people in our community last year. As we move forward to respond to emerging needs in our region, our continued reach will help create a community where people of all backgrounds have the opportunity to thrive.



Kyle Barber
President and CEO



BELONGING

To find a sense of community



The Y is part of us already

We left Syria because of the war. It was horrible and we were scared for the safety of our kids.

We fled to Jordan and stayed six months, until the UN picked us to come to Canada last April. When we got the news, we were so happy.

At first, I was nervous the kids would not fit in here, but our sponsor, Sharon, made us feel so welcome. It was Sharon who suggested that we come to the Y, so the kids would have something to do.

Being new to the community, we didn't have much money, but the Y helped us with financial assistance for summer camp and membership. Both boys went to Sports Camp and they loved playing soccer! They had never been to camp before, and despite the language barrier, they felt included. The YMCA staff were so supportive.

Now, all three of my kids come here every week. My boys play basketball with their friends and my daughter, Zain takes swim lessons. She used to fear the water, and wouldn't even touch it, but now she can't wait to come. She always asks me, "Is it Friday yet?"

We're so thankful for the support we have found at the Y. My kids don't feel any different than the other kids. They belong. And because of the Y, they are now involved in their community. That was important to us.

The difference between then and now is huge. Having to leave our home was horrible, but now, it's like a dream come true. The kids are so happy and we have a very different life.

The Y is part of us already. Every week we walk through the front door and feel like we belong.

- Rabea

Breaking down barriers

In 2016 Halton Region welcomed 20,500 newcomers from around the world. Almost half of them chose Oakville as their destination of resettlement.

While newcomers face significant resettlement barriers, youth must battle double obstacles of being young and navigating a new language, culture and lifestyle.

The YMCA helps bridge this gap.

With financial assistance for programs like camp and membership, newcomer families find friendly, safe, spaces that welcome them into their community and create a strong sense of belonging.

**What we
do here is
unique.**

“Young kids start out taking swim lessons, move on to volunteering and then training, get their certification and then a job. Simply teaching them a course without giving them the chance to apply their skills is a mistake. We give them opportunities to move on.

With Magdalena, we gave her the opportunity to teach and she started with Bobbers. Now she has moved on to teaching older kids. It's all about helping them in their journey.”

-Nadiya

1,930

children, youth and adults learned water safety skills in swim lessons, starting their path to career opportunities and belonging in YMCA Aquatics

The Y looked at me as a person

I was born without part of my left arm, but for many years, I didn't even realize the difference. My mom never put any restrictions on what I could do.

When I was four, she put me in swim lessons because I loved the water. She told me recently people would often ask her why she was setting me up for failure. But she ignored them. I continued swimming and dreamed of teaching lessons one day.

After moving to Oakville in Grade 9, I decided to get my Bronze Cross certification. That's when I came to the Y. As soon as I walked through the door, I felt a sense of community. All the aquatics staff, especially Nadiya, were so supportive.

The day I got my Bronze Cross, I was so excited! I told Nadiya I wanted to move on to NLS certification and when I finished that course, she asked what I wanted to do next. I told her I wanted to get a job, but not sure if I could. Without hesitation, Nadiya said, “I want to offer you a job.” I couldn't believe it. Tears started running down my cheeks and I said, “Me? You're offering me a job?”

After becoming a lifeguard, I got the chance to teach Bobbers lessons. During my first class, I couldn't wear my prosthetic arm. Some of the kids seemed scared of me. When I asked Nadiya what to do, she asked me for a solution. I knew then, this was my chance to “teach”.

I started my next class with a lesson about my arm. I told the kids, “This is how I was born. Everyone is different. I'm proud of who I am and you should be too.” The response was amazing!

I have never looked at myself as having a disability, and neither did the Y. They looked at me as a person and helped me achieve my dream.

- Magdalena



BELONGING IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Oakville is experiencing rapid growth and demographic change. There are an increasing number of newcomers, more low-income families, increased poverty and an identified lack of opportunities for children to get involved, connect to their community and develop the skills they need to grow up healthy and happy.

Research shows that children in low-income neighbourhoods are at a higher risk of unfavourable developmental outcomes like poor health (obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes), poor educational attainment, economic dependency, increased violence and crime, greater substance abuse and depression.

Thanks to a 2016-2018 grant provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we developed a proactive community engagement and outreach strategy that would bring programs into the neighbourhoods where they were needed most. The program was designed to give children in four underserved Oakville neighbourhoods the chance to belong by participating in free, neighbourhood-based programs.

In 2017, in collaboration with community partners and agencies, we helped reduce barriers faced by families in four neighbourhoods by providing programs like Robotics, ArtHouse, Bricks 4 Kidz, Multi-Sport, Steve Nash Basketball and a variety of active summer programs.



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Basketball and belonging

Basketball can be the catalyst needed to change feelings of isolation to belonging; to change teammates into friends and to turn a new community into a home.

Since basketball was first created in 1891 by Canadian James Naismith, the goal has been the same: to invite everyone to play, contribute, learn and grow.

For newcomer children like Rabea's sons Mohammed and Raed, having the opportunity to participate has helped create a sense of belonging as they adjust to a different life in a new country.

For children in the community with financial, transportation and/or familial barriers, programs like Jr. NBA and Steve Nash Basketball offer a place to connect, learn new skills and discover their potential.

What's next?

Through feedback gathered from children participating in our free programs we learned that 100% of the children felt more connected to their communities and experienced an increased sense of belonging.

Participants surveyed also requested more programs such as:

- **Sports (soccer, baseball)**
- **Technology (robotics)**
- **Certifications (First Aid)**
- **Gaming club (board games)**
- **Cooking programs**

New and expanded programming is currently being developed based on the survey results. The many recommendations will result in new and targeted programming and strengthened collaborations, to ensure children in Oakville have more opportunities for social inclusion, community engagement, volunteering, skills training, mentoring and leadership.



9,030

people in our community
found a place to belong
without barriers in YMCA
community-based
programs

BEING

To find a sense of self

Investing in youth

When youth have an opportunity to develop skills in YMCA programs they find a safe place to belong. Not only are they given the tools they need to become leaders at the YMCA, but they learn skills to be leaders in all areas of their lives.

480

youth engaged through
YMCA of Oakville
programs across
Halton

In 2017, the
High School
Ambassadors
program was launched
as part of the YMCA
Young Leaders
Initiative.

10 young leaders
from 6 local high schools
came together to:

- Provide support and insight into the development of YMCA youth programming
- Develop and implement initiatives that address needs within their local school communities

I was given a chance to help others belong

My mom started homeschooling me in Grade 6. I was struggling with OCD and being bullied at school. I didn't fit into the regular public school system.

Not long after, my mom started bringing me to homeschool programs at the Y where she got a chance to talk to other homeschooling parents while I socialized with the kids. The difference in me was night and day.

As I grew older, I went from Y homeschool programs to volunteering and eventually working in Game On, an active games program. It's a whole mix of kids — some homeschooled, some with anxiety disorders or autism — but all kids like me who needed a place to fit in.

Coming to the Y and helping other kids forced me to step outside of myself. It also created a sense of responsibility in me to provide guidance to these kids. And the responsibility grew each year.

It was last August when I realized how deeply I felt this sense of responsibility, and how important my role here was. A bunch of the kids in my program were getting ready to go off to university and they were nervous. I knew they needed guidance — to know no matter what happened, they were going to be okay.

I wrote them a good-bye letter with advice for their journey ahead. I told them, even though there is no script to follow, and a bigger stage to perform on, what they've learned from the Y will always be with them, just like the family they've found here.

It was one of the most powerful, impactful moments in my life. With those words, I realized that by finding a place to belong, I had been given the chance to help others belong too.

- Will



Our Youth Engagement department is growing! Thanks to support from the Halton Community Investment Fund, programs for youth have continued to reach more young people across Halton.





Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. As a community, we have the responsibility to honour, care for and respect all that Creation gives to provide us with life. This includes the land, water, air, fire, animals, plants and our ancestors.

The Anishinaabek Peoples have utilized this land for millennia and we acknowledge the Mississaugas of the Credit are part of the Anishinaabek Nation and the rightful caretakers and titleholders of this land, upon which we live, work and conduct ourselves. We acknowledge our treaty relationship and responsibilities to both the land and these original peoples.

We also recognize that this land is rich in pre-contact history and customs, which includes the Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee and since European contact has, and continues to become, home for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It is in the spirit and intent of the Dish With One Spoon, wampum agreement, that we collectively care for and respect the land, water, animals and each other in the interests of peace and friendship and for the benefit of not only ourselves, but to our future descendants.

To learn more about the Land Treaty plaque featured in this photo, YMCA Peace Medals, and the YMCA of Oakville's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, please turn to "Becoming a Community of Reconciliation" (pages 24-25)

From brushstrokes to belonging

For Aiden Lee, the Art from the Heart workshops he teaches are about much more than creativity. They're about acceptance and kindness.

"I want to make sure everyone belongs. No matter what you look like — we all need to accept each other."

It's what made him the recipient of a YMCA Peace Medal during last year's YMCA Community Breakfast for Peace.

"When I won the YMCA peace award last year, I was so happy! I told everyone in my speech I was going to reach 1,000 kids in my Art from the Heart workshops. Now it's 800 and counting.

Art was something I started when I was four. I couldn't speak until I was six, but at four, I realized I could throw my emotions on to a canvas rather than bottle them up. I started painting and it helped me express myself.

Last April, a teacher at my old school, Mrs. Boers, suggested I come in to teach art to her Grade 1 class. At first, I saw them doing crafts, but I wanted them to paint. Now I teach them to express themselves.

I also teach them about Autism. They ask me lots of questions and I talk to them about acceptance.

Last year I saw Gord Downie's Secret Path and it really upset me to see how we have treated Indigenous People. It made me paint a black maple leaf to show a stain on our history. I hope through art I can show kids that the maple leaf is about inclusivity and mutual respect and that everyone has the right to belong."

- Aiden

A space for everyone

Aiden's mom, Judith, runs Project Autism and holds a six-week program at the YMCA three times a year.

The focus is to teach body movement to children and adults with Autism through fun games, running, jumping, balance, dexterity and lots of laughter.

"The Y is not just about belonging, but accepting. The Y makes modifications for everyone. I feel like we belong here. It's amazing to watch the older ones taking care of the younger ones.

It creates community, a sense of belonging and everyone learns from each other.

It's community helping community."

-Judith

BEING AN ENGAGED YOUNG LEADER

How do you find a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar place? For the 19 youth from Halton who participated in our second National Youth Travel Exchange Program in 2017 it was simple: be open to learning about others and embrace what makes you different.

Being partnered with the Refugee Program based out of the YMCA of Greater Halifax, Nova Scotia gave our Oakville, Milton and Acton-based youth an opportunity to discover more about Canadian and local history, cultural diversity, make connections with youth across the country and discover that what makes us unique is also what makes us build community.



At the YMCA, we know that youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow — they are the leaders of today.

We are proud to acknowledge the incredible achievements of our youth staff and volunteers, and in 2017, the following young leaders were recognized with awards for their outstanding contributions to the YMCA and our community.

- The **Peter Gilgan Leadership Award** is given annually to five youth staff pursuing secondary education who demonstrate exceptional leadership qualities. Our 2017 recipients were: Nikki Cadranell, Evan Lubanszky, Ryan Natividad, Caroline O'Brien and Michael Vanstone.

- The **Ted Rogers Scholarship Fund** is awarded annually to exceptional young leaders across Canada. In 2017, only 150 youth received this award, including the YMCA of Oakville's own Christopher Ito. Chris' YMCA journey started as a Halton Sport Leadership participant, where his confidence and engagement grew, leading him to employment within the Y's Summer Camp, Youth Engagement, Child & Youth and Community departments.

- The **Helene & George Coward Award** recognizes the outstanding contributions of a YMCA young leader to building healthier, more inclusive communities and awards them with an international learning experience to further their knowledge and understanding of community. In June 2017, the inaugural award was presented to Katherine Dziedzic, Supervisor of Camp & Youth Engagement at the YMCA of Oakville.



Nikki



Evan



Ryan



Caroline



Mike



Chris



Kat

BECOMING

To find a sense of purpose

Inclusion for all

The YMCA is committed to treating all children with dignity and respect, helping them to grow and develop in a supportive environment.

This allows children to take risks, challenge themselves, develop their skills and have a place to truly belong.

Our national YMCA Playing to Learn and YMCA Place to Connect curriculums enhance all areas of a child's development, including physical, emotional, cognitive, and social well-being. Our child care programs and spaces are designed to ensure all children feel included and have a place to belong.

Through consultation and partnership with Halton Region and ROCK, we are able to successfully support children with special needs in our programs.

I have always been accepted for who I am at the Y

I was diagnosed with Autism just before I turned three, so my mom enrolled me in full-time YMCA Child Care at St. Bernadette for extra support. That's when my journey to realizing my dream began.

My social skills were an issue, but the teachers modified the program so I could learn, just like the other kids. And as I moved on to YMCA Before and After School care, the teachers always took my needs into consideration, modifying the program and my environment when needed. I never once felt that I was different. I always felt like I belonged.

My experience in child care, combined with teachers who were always committed to my success, made me want to be a teacher too. I saw that to be a good teacher, you need to be understanding and always accept others. That's something I've learned from the Y.

Over the years, I've been involved in various Y programs and through each one, I have grown in leaps and bounds. Each step has helped build my confidence.

Last summer, I took the Leaders in Training program at camp and I loved having the chance to volunteer and help other kids. Which is why I picked the YMCA as my project to write about during an Edu-Travel program I also took last summer. I didn't even hesitate because I've seen how the Y impacts people in our community every day.

The YMCA embraces everyone, no matter their differences, giving people like me the opportunity to see they can do more. If I had not been involved with the Y, I would not have had the chance to grow, to have amazing experiences, to make friends and to realize my dream of becoming a teacher.

The Y has made me want to give back to others. I hope that I can go on to impact others, just as the Y has impacted me.

- Gabriela

"At the YMCA, a person with a disability has the opportunity to become an individual with multiple abilities. By giving people opportunities, they can become their own person.

The Y helps people realize they have more to give and share, and they did that with Gabriela. They helped shape her."

- Goretti



BECOMING A COMMUNITY OF RECONCILIATION

As a YMCA, we are committed to creating a deeper sense of belonging by building bridges between diverse communities, including Indigenous Peoples. In 2017, this meant advancing the process of Truth and Reconciliation in Oakville through community partnership and YMCA programs and initiatives.

Together with partners such as the Indigenous Advisory Committee of the Halton Catholic District School Board and Halton District School Board, Centre for Indigenous Learning at Sheridan College, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Oakville Community Foundation, Oakville Public Library and the Town of Oakville, we participated in a series of Vital Conversations focused on understanding and furthering the process of reconciliation.

Truth and Reconciliation from an Inuit Perspective

Thanks to the Community Fund for Canada's 150th and the Vital Community Fund, we hosted Juno-award winning Inuk artist Susan Aglukark at our YMCA last June. More than 300 guests had the chance to join us in our gym for a moving multimedia presentation and vocal performance detailing the history of the Inuit people in Canada. In the true spirit of belonging, we joined hands to participate in a traditional Round Dance at the end of the evening.

"I am proud to say that as an Indigenous person living in Oakville, I have a strong and honest relationship with the YMCA. This has allowed me and my family as well as other Indigenous residents of Oakville to feel that we belong here.

The Land Treaty Acknowledgement plaque that was installed in front of the Oakville YMCA has instilled a sense of pride in our community. I am glad that the Oakville YMCA recognizes the importance of the Calls to Action in the reconciliation report and realizes that this is a journey."

-Stephen Paquette, Indigenous Knowledge Guide



In the weeks leading up to YMCA Peace Week, children in YMCA Before and After School Programs created centrepieces for the YMCA Community Breakfast for Peace depicting their hopes for Truth and Reconciliation, and using the symbolism of the tree to represent a new relationship between Indigenous people and the YMCA.

The **Candlelight Walk for Peace** featured the unveiling of the Land Acknowledgement plaque at the front of our YMCA, greetings from Stephen Paquette and Chief Stacey Laforme, and reflections of truth and reconciliation from YMCA program participants.

Our annual **Community Breakfast for Peace** brought together members of the community to recognize local peacemakers and listen to a keynote address from Gabrielle Scrimshaw, a First Nations advocate.

Following the breakfast, we hosted a youth event for 500 local high school students featuring a panel of Indigenous experts, providing them the opportunity to learn first-hand from their experiences.

2017 Peace Medal Recipients:

Aiden Lee (Youth), Marcus Logan (Adult), GLOW Mentors (Group)

White Pine Dancers performing a traditional dance at the YMCA Community Breakfast for Peace





In collaboration with the Wellspring CancerSmart Exercise Program, a six-month pilot program was launched at the YMCA to provide cancer patients a community-based option for ongoing exercise with cancer specific supervision.



24
patients
participated

449
YMCA visits

54
exercise
sessions

"I joined the CancerSmart Program in June 2017, two weeks after a double mastectomy.

Kate and Lisa were very warm, welcoming and supportive and were always there to help me adjust my routine. I have met so many wonderful people here who have gone through so much.

Hearing their stories, learning from their experiences and getting advice, are just some of the added benefits of attending this program. One of my new friends is giving me a wig she no longer needs!

After only 5 weeks, I felt stronger, more energetic and had a more positive outlook. I don't look like I have cancer and I don't feel like I have cancer!"

-Kate, Program Participant

Imagine Canada

In 2017, the YMCA of Oakville was accredited under Imagine Canada's National Standards Program. With this achievement, we join a growing community of more than 200 organizations dedicated to operational excellence.

The Standards Program is a Canada-wide set of shared standards for charities and nonprofits designed to strengthen practices in five fundamental areas: board governance; financial accountability and transparency; fundraising; staff management; and volunteer involvement.

"It's no small feat for an organization to earn Standards Program accreditation," says Bruce MacDonald, President and CEO of Imagine Canada. "It's a rigorous, peer-reviewed process that is meant to build public trust and confidence in the charitable sector. These organizations take accountability and operational transparency very seriously. We're glad to have them on board."



Year Ended December 31, 2017 (Audited)

	2017	2016
Statement of Financial Position		
Current Assets	\$3,884,582	\$3,668,281
Capital Assets	10,397,443	9,976,745
Total Assets	\$14,282,025	\$13,645,026
Current Liabilities	\$1,206,555	\$907,398
Deferred Capital Donations and Grants	3,565,625	3,898,939
Net Assets	9,509,845	8,838,689
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$14,282,025	\$13,645,026

Statement of Revenue and Expenses

Revenue

Programs & Services	\$21,789,769	\$21,210,098
Donations, Grants & Fundraising	491,849	470,683
Amortization of Capital Donations and Grants	370,107	370,435
Total Revenue	22,651,725	22,051,216

Expenses

Programs, Services, Administration & Amortization of Capital Assets	21,980,569	20,530,491
Total Expenses	21,980,569	20,530,491
Excess of Revenue over Expenditures	\$671,156	\$1,520,725

The summarized financial information is extracted from Annual Financial Statements audited by BDO Canada LLP, Licensed Public Accountants. A copy of the complete financial statement is available online at www.ymcaofoakville.org. Requests for a copy can be made by email to info@oakville.ymca.ca, by phone at 905-845-3417 or by written request to YMCA of Oakville, 410 Rebecca Street, Oakville, Ontario L6K 1K7.

In 2017, thanks to our generous donors,

1,986

children, teens and adults were given the opportunity to belong in YMCA programs through financially assisted memberships, camps and child care

THANK YOU!

394

volunteers gave
20,825
hours of their time to support YMCA of Oakville programs, initiatives and events

11,606

children, youth and adults achieved greater health through a YMCA membership

\$605,585

of financial assistance was provided for YMCA memberships

5,179

children and teens made new friends and incredible memories at YMCA Summer Camps

\$79,936

of financial assistance was provided for YMCA Summer Camps

3,850

children found a safe and inclusive environment in YMCA Child Care

\$21,225

of financial assistance was provided for YMCA Child Care



Belonging is a stepping stone on
the path to a healthier community