



YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg  
2024-2027  
**Strategic Plan**

Heartbeat  Community



# Message from the President & CEO

**The need for community has never been greater than it is today. So with more than 145 years of experience building community in Winnipeg, we need to be bold, innovative, and intentional in our actions.**

The YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg's Strategic Plan represents the collective wisdom, passion, and vision of our team, partners, and supporters. It recognizes our reputation as a safe and welcoming centre of community, but challenges us to strengthen our commitments, deepen our relationships, and proactively shape our future as the heartbeat of community in Winnipeg. In other words, we are not merely responding to change; we are driving it.

We find ourselves in a time marked by income inequity, societal division, and growing needs for mental and emotional health support within every demographic. As Manitoba's largest child care provider and a source of integrated supports to community members, we are already a leader in providing wrap-around services in our community. However, we recognize a need to shift our reputation away from being limited to existing as a health, fitness, and aquatics-centred organization that delivers social supports. Instead, we strive to be known as a family-centred organization that provides physical, social, and mental health services.

In prioritizing our inclusive view of families, we serve members from all generations, cultivating opportunities for connection, leadership, and community building. As we embark on this exciting new era in our history, we recognize the need to renew our commitment to developing leaders. We must focus on building strong families and serving not just the members who walk through our doors every day – but seeking out and inviting in those who need us most.

Our strategic plan is a reflection of our deep commitment to fostering belonging, igniting potential, and championing equity in the communities we serve. It challenges us to think beyond inclusion to deliberately elevate diversity and equity in our programs, spaces, and ways of working. Our plan is a call to action to build and deepen relationships, investing in our community for generations to come.

When I consider our multi-generational legacy of community building, I am reminded that we are simply the temporary stewards of this living history. The commitment of our people, their dedication to our community, and their fierce loyalty to our mission have been the source of our success. And as today's caretakers of this heart-led organization, we know that Y Winnipeg is in the unique community of belonging, where each person is not just a member but an integral reflection of our community.

I invite you to join me as we embrace possibilities, ignite potential, and strengthen the heartbeat of our community together.

Cordella Friesen  
President and CEO  
YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg



---

*Thank you to the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg Board of Directors who invested a great deal of time and expertise in not only the development of our new strategic plan, but also in the extensive background work required to do so. From countless consultations to numerous meetings held both here in Winnipeg and with other Ys across the country, the Board's commitment to our success is reflected throughout these pages.*

# The Foundation of our Strategic Plan

Every day, in each of our program sites, the sparks of community are ignited. Our centres are hubs for interaction, connection, and personal growth – the building blocks for healthy and vibrant communities.

## Our Vision

### To be the heartbeat of our community

Our vision serves as a powerful compass guiding us toward a transformative role within the communities we serve. Just as a heartbeat sustains life, our members and families see us as a vital force that sustains their well-being and connection with community.

This vision captures our commitment to not just exist within the community but to pulse with energy, connection, and a shared sense of purpose. It reflects our place at the core of community life, serving as the convener that connects people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

## Our Mission

### We empower individuals to reach their full potential through connection, belonging, and active participation in fostering a healthy self and community.

Our mission embodies our dedication to holistic community well-being. At its core, our mission reflects a commitment to empowerment, recognizing that every individual holds untapped potential that can be ignited through meaningful connections and a profound sense of belonging.



Our mission's emphasis on active participation underscores our belief in the transformative power of engagement. We envision a community where individuals don't merely exist but actively contribute to a collective vitality, playing an integral role in fostering both personal and community well-being.

We know that healthy individuals contribute to healthy communities. Therefore our mission is to be a catalyst for positive change, where connections, belonging, and active participation converge to create a vibrant and diverse tapestry of community life.

# Our Core Beliefs

Belonging is the spark that ignites possibilities; community doesn't simply develop by chance. The actions we take every day are guided by the core beliefs we hold, which help us to inspire healthy communities through our intentions, actions, and their impacts – one person at a time.

## We Believe

-  **Belonging is the heart of potential.**  
We help people find their spark, because individuals shine when they know they belong.
-  **Potential is the heart of equity.**  
Everyone has the right to reach their full potential and we help people on their journey.
-  **Equity is the heart of community.**  
We actively and intentionally remove disparity to build healthy communities where diversity is not simply tolerated, but celebrated.
-  **Community is the heart of possibility.**  
We work together to make great things happen.
-  **Possibility is the heart of everything we do.**  
We are bold and innovative with a bias towards action to achieve a sustainable future for our organization, our environment and the people we serve.

*The YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg is grateful to operate on Treaty 1 and 3 Territories in the original lands of the Indigenous Peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation. We acknowledge that Winnipeg's clean drinking water is sourced from Shoal Lake 39 and 40 First Nations and electricity, from Treaty 5 Territory. We are committed to honour and respect the Treaties that were made on these territories and dedicate ourselves to moving forward with humility in partnership with Indigenous Peoples in a spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.*

# Our Commitments

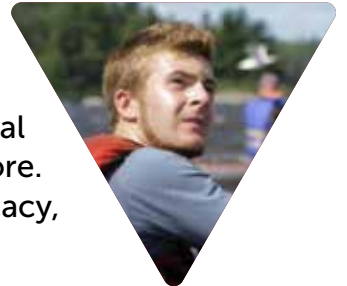
## 1 Ignite Potential and Nurture Belonging

At its core, our strategic plan is about creating the conditions for healthy communities to thrive. This begins with investing in the potential of individuals. When we cultivate their sense of belonging within our communities, people feel safe and supported to evolve into their best selves, generating a ripple of positive change throughout our community.

This strategic pillar is focused on driving transformative outcomes for our community members. It challenges us to think beyond the status quo to reimagine programs, services and spaces that ignite passion, transformation, and belonging. It also reminds us that volunteerism is our foundation and our legacy for the future.

### **Develop youth as a new generation of community leaders.**

Today's youth face unprecedented challenges. They are growing up in a post-pandemic environment dominated by technology and social unrest. They are more networked, but less connected than ever before. Yet our community needs them more than ever – as voices of advocacy, talented contributors to our social fabric, and powerful architects of positive global change.



While we have an impressive legacy of investing in youth – through Camp Stephens, our leadership and volunteer programs, and targeted physical and mental health programming – we must reignite our commitment to youth to develop the thoughtful, ethical, and passionate leaders our community needs. By empowering youth as active contributors to our community we shape our collective future, informed by leadership, empathy, and shared values.

### **Create and deliver transformative programs and spaces that integrate physical, mental, emotional and social health and well-being.**

Every day, our centres foster a convergence of people from different cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic experiences. It would be easy to look at the diversity across our city and assume we could apply the same programming to each of our sites. However, each of our locations serves a unique community with its own demographics, needs, and internal culture.

# Belonging

To help these unique communities thrive, we must approach our work with curiosity and the desire to build the right mix of programs and services to support the holistic needs of the people who call that location home. This requires us to harness data, foster meaningful partnerships, and take a member-centred approach to the design and delivery of our programs and spaces to address community needs.

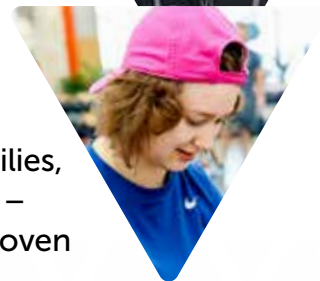
Camp Stephens is a special place where youth find their spark and create memories that last a lifetime. It is a place that changes lives, and one that holds a special place in the hearts of many of our community members and camp alumni. By developing a sustainable stewardship plan for Camp Stephens, we will invest in the experience of camp to ignite the potential of future generations of young people.

## **Elevate diversity and equity through our programs, services, and spaces.**

Passive inclusion is very different from ensuring equity as a central tenet of our philosophy. While we are proud of the diversity that exists within our programs, this has evolved by circumstance and not necessarily through an intentional equity lens.

The signals we send through our programs, services, and spaces must reflect intentional connection. In addition to creating inclusive opportunities for all members, program participants, and child care families, we will enhance experiences and improve equity for diverse members – celebrating the unique perspectives, strengths, and humanity that is woven into the tapestry of our communities.

We also recognize our role in responding to the Calls to Action in Truth and Reconciliation as well as the National Inquiry for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. This is a part of our generational journey and requires purposeful consideration and action



# Our Commitments

2

## Be Unforgettable

Within the dynamic landscape of the dedicated community organizations that serve Winnipeg, we face the risk of being overlooked in terms of our programs, services, and the impact we have on individuals, families, and communities. To advance our mission to foster healthy individuals and communities, we know we need to be a key leader in driving positive change.

Our impact is substantial, but our steady and quiet approach as a heart-led organization can stand in the way of telling our stories, sharing our impacts, and seeking the philanthropic support we need to rise above what we do every day and be a leader in shaping the health and well-being of the communities we serve. Being unforgettable in the hearts and minds of our community members, donors, and partners strengthens our impact and demonstrates our place as the heartbeat of our community.

### **Proactively build strategic partnerships to create impact.**

As a large and well-established community organization, we often look internally for ideas when we should be working externally to amplify our impact. When community organizations operate as isolated silos, we limit the collective effectiveness of our work. We miss opportunities for cross-sector collaboration, fail to align efforts, deliver fragmented services and limit community impact.

We must break down our bias to working internally and actively seek opportunities for collaboration, resource-sharing, and alignment with external partners. This includes deepening our partnerships to advance the national and international YMCA and YWCA movements. Fostering a culture that values collaboration encourages our team to cultivate a network of partners to address complex community challenges together, collectively uplifting the communities we serve.







### **Tell our stories to share our impact.**

Powerful stories can inspire change and foster deep feelings of connection and belonging in our community. However, in this age of bountiful information, it can be challenging to help community members understand the depth and breadth of our services and to amplify our stories to reach diverse audiences.

We must tell our stories with pride, reflecting on the transformative work we do and the positive impact our work has on the lives of individuals and communities. We see this work as the responsibility of every member of our team, each of whom is an ambassador of our mission to engage and inspire positive action in our community.

### **Be a primary destination for philanthropy.**

As the current caretakers of our organization, we have an obligation to future generations that will follow. Our work seeks to fill gaps in community and ensure equitable access – commitments that call on us to invest in the future of our community in addition to serving those community members who are already engaged in our work.

We cannot do this work alone. We must build meaningful relationships with longtime members, child care families, camp alumni and donors who share our vision of a connected community and whose motivations and values align with ours. Through a sustainable stewardship strategy, we will work together to make investments that will have a lasting impact on the communities we serve.



# Our Commitments

3

## Lead the way to equitable access to high quality child care

Equitable access to exceptional child care is not just a service we provide. It is a catalyst for empowering parents, nurturing young minds, and fostering a community that values the importance of early education. As the largest child care provider in Manitoba, we have a responsibility to not just deliver excellent care to children at our centres, but to advocate for and support the evolution of equitable and quality care in every centre across our province.



As Manitoba's leader in child care programming, professional development, and space design, we demonstrate the powerful effects of quality child care experiences on the well-being of children and the economic inclusion of families every day. Our commitment to taking a leadership role in the child care sector is part of our underlying commitment to community – to ensuring every child, whether in one of our centres or not, is provided the nurturing and supportive environment they need to thrive.

### **Be the centre of excellence for quality child care in Manitoba.**

With diverse families at the centre of everything we do, we have a unique perspective on what it takes to care for healthy children. Quality child care requires programs and spaces that enrich young minds and inspire them to follow their dreams. By setting the gold standard for excellence, we contribute to the overall development and readiness of the next generation, instilling in them the values of empathy, curiosity, and resilience.

Our role as a trusted partner and centre of excellence in the delivery of child care in Manitoba offers us the unique opportunity to collaborate with post-secondary institutions and advance knowledge through applied research. Our spaces and programs serve not just as a rich learning environment for children, but also for researchers, early childhood educators, and future educators as we develop new knowledge and apply the principles of exceptional best practices for child care.





# Equitable High Quality

## **Address unmet child care needs to optimize impact and equity.**

Access to child care is one of the most important economic equalizers, particularly for women and families from low-income and multi-barriered experiences. We know there are child care needs in every community and the opportunities for us to open new centres are endless. However, because of our expertise and because we see the potential of every child, we need to focus on those who may need us the most, including children and families who may experience other barriers.

As the leader in our sector, we are committed to not just advocating for equitable access to child care, but to prioritizing it ourselves. By gathering data on community needs, working closely with our government and community partners, and prioritizing the delivery of tailored child care in low-income and underserved neighbourhoods, we play a critical role in fostering healthy communities and creating opportunities for those who need them most.

## **Increase physical capacity and develop a sustainable workforce.**

While the demand for child care has never been higher, we continue to face a shortage of qualified child care educators in our labour market. Since accessibility and quality of child care are interdependent, this requires long-term strategic investments in physical capacity and the sustainability of our workforce.

We must invest in recruitment, training, and retention strategies for child care professionals. Only by building a sustainable and skilled workforce can we seek to address unmet community needs and offer children and families the lifechanging support they need to thrive. This expansion also requires us to establish a capital and asset management plan that ensures we have the physical capacity to provide quality child care over the long term. We need to look at opportunities to leverage the scale of operations to create optimal benefits for families and for long term sustainability.



# Our Path

As a community-based organization, the approach we used to develop the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan was deeply informed by our community partners, members, and team. Only by taking the time to listen to their perspectives could we build a strategic plan that would address the gaps and opportunities faced by our community.

Our process was guided by the Strategy and Planning Committee of the Board of Directors. Beginning in April 2023 with a review of **more than 30 background documents** and through **conversations with 99 stakeholders**, Joanne Zuk Leadership and Strategy developed a strategic analysis of our current context, which informed future-state visioning at the Board and Broad Leadership Team levels. This shared vision is the foundation for the commitments and strategies found in this plan.

While the Board of Directors is responsible for setting the direction of the organization, it is the leadership team that must execute the strategies in the plan. Therefore, we took an approach of collaborative iteration to ensure alignment between the Board and the Broad Leadership Team. This resulted in a plan that is understood, supported, and owned by Board members and each member of our leadership team.

## Our Conversations Included

### 30 Staff Members

- Community Program Staff
- Child Care Providers
- Lifeguards & Swim Instructors
- Health, Fitness, & Aquatics Staff
- Program Managers
- Camp Stephens Staff

### 33 Program Users and Members

- Older Adults
- Teenagers
- General Members
- Parents & Childcare Users
- ESL Students
- Homeschool Families
- Individual Donors

### Organizational Partners

- IRCOM
- Lifesaving Society
- Rainbow Resource Centre
- Red River College Child Care Program
- United Way
- Winnipeg Foundation
- YMCA Regional Development Centre
- YWCA of Canada

### YMCA-YWCA Leadership Team

- Dedicated staff of program, child care, wellness & industry professionals

### 2023 Board of Directors

- Jeff Cochrane (Chair)
- Kaitlan Buchko (Vice Chair)
- Edward Acuna (Past Chair)
- Kevin Freedman
- Russell Rollins
- Angie Wittmann
- David Klein
- Virginia Dueck
- Luke Campbell
- Liz Choi

**Join Us**

We invite you to join us as we embrace possibilities, ignite potential, and strengthen the heartbeat of our community together. Please donate today!