



YMCA of Newfoundland and Labrador, Memorial Day/Canada Day Statement

A Time for Reflection

July 1st is Canada Day. In Newfoundland and Labrador it is also Memorial Day, a day to commemorate the losses of the 1st Newfoundland Regiment during the First World War at the battle of Beaumont-Hamel. We recognize how challenging a year it has been. While there has been a lot to be thankful for, this is also a time to pause and reflect on where we have been, and where we want to be as a country.

In recent months, we have witnessed the discovery of the remains of 215 children buried on the grounds of the Kamloops Residential School, the 104 remains uncovered at the former site of the Brandon Residential School, and the 751 remains found at the former site of the Marieval Indian Residential School at Cowessess, Saskatchewan, and with the knowledge that many more discoveries are to come. In the same time period, we have also witnessed the Islamophobic attacks in London, Ontario, and a documented rise in Anti-Asian hate crimes. This is not the Canada we want to be.

We have a lot of work to do to live up to the promise of the Canada We Want. The Canada We Want is a place where oppressive and systemic barriers have been removed and replaced by opportunity, and where all have a deep sense of belonging. And we know a lot more work, by a lot more people and organizations, including ours, is needed to get us there.

As one of Canada's largest service charities, the YMCA has a role to play in fostering social inclusion. Over the last year we have been expanding our focus on anti-racism and addressing systemic discrimination, including creating learning opportunities for staff and volunteers, working with community partners, and conducting research on our practices to help us understand how we can better reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. We will continue to invest in these efforts and engage in listening, learning, and improving, to ensure that the YMCA is a space that is safe and welcoming for everyone.

Canada continues to grow and develop as a country, and we can choose what kind of country we want to be. By fostering belonging and inclusion in our organizations and in our communities, we can be the Canada We Want.

Here's to building that better future, while never forgetting where we've been.