



WANAKITA

Leading the Way

Shine On  Hamilton
Burlington
Brantford


WANAKITA
THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE - SINCE 1953
YMCA

The Future Needs Leaders – and Leaders are Made at Wanakita

CASE FOR SUPPORT: Building the YMCA Wanakita Wayne Perkins Leadership Centre (Perk's Place)

In today's world, the demand for strong, compassionate, and resilient leadership has never been greater. In a Canadian society facing complex challenges like economic instability, climate change, inequality, and affordability, we urgently need strong leadership to help us navigate through an uncertain future.

At YMCA Wanakita, nestled in the Haliburton Highlands, we've spent over six decades equipping young people with the tools to lead. Founded on the YMCA values of **caring, honesty, inclusion, respect, and responsibility**, Wanakita's leadership program is a unique opportunity for young people to grow as leaders while making a meaningful impact in the lives of others.

Leaders are strong and humble. They don't boast or brag, instead they show integrity. Wanakita is building leaders who motivate and empower with encouragement and curiosity, leaders who create positive environments and who have a vision of something brighter.

Leaders ignite potential in others. At Wanakita, we ignite the potential in leaders.



Through our two-year Student Counsellor (SC) program we shape tomorrow's leaders, teaching them soft skills—like resilience, collaboration, and empathy—that are essential to thriving in an increasingly complicated world. Now, we need your help to ensure these transformative programs continue to grow and flourish so that our young people are ready to lead.

We are embarking on a campaign to raise **\$2.53 MILLION** to build the **Wayne Perkins Leadership Centre**: a space that will enable us to strengthen the life-changing experiences we provide to young leaders in training, ensuring they gain invaluable skills that will shape their futures, and the future of our communities.

Your support is crucial in making this vision a reality, helping us build the leaders of tomorrow.

Alumni share how the SC program shaped their paths:

"The SC program gave me the confidence to take on challenges I never thought possible. It's where I learned the value of teamwork and how to lead with empathy."

"Wanakita taught me that leadership isn't about being the loudest voice—it's about listening, supporting, and building trust."

YMCA Wanakita's leadership program is foundational to its mission of nurturing individuals who contribute positively to their communities. It represents the essence of why YMCA Wanakita matters—creating a legacy of growth, leadership, and belonging for all.

A Legacy of Leadership at Wanakita

YMCA Wanakita is more than a camp—it's a place where children, young people, and families grow, connect, and build lifelong memories. For more than 70 years, Wanakita has provided transformative experiences in a natural setting, empowering participants to develop confidence, resilience, and leadership skills.

But for the last six decades, a keystone of this legacy has been Wanakita's renowned leadership development program. Then, in the early 1970s, under the guidance of Director Al Knox, the camp embraced a new approach to foster personal growth among campers. Drawing on his experience at the Saskatoon YMCA's Camp Wakonda, Al introduced group work and camper decision-making as tools for growth. Recognizing the potential of Wanakita's skilled staff and exceptional setting, he implemented goals to promote individual development. With the help of Wayne and Pam Perkins, a second year was added to the SC training program to emphasize leadership skills.

Together, they advanced this vision, blending leadership development with skill-building programs. Over the years, each generation of SCs and staff has contributed to shaping this program, making it a defining feature of YMCA Wanakita.

Known nationwide as a frontrunner in leadership training, the two-year SC program has had a profound impact on generations of young adults, empowering them to excel both within and beyond Wanakita.

YMCA Wanakita's programs go beyond "having the time of your life," they embody the YMCA's core values and they empower youth to become the skilled, confident leaders that our world so urgently needs.

With the second year of the program focusing on refining the interpersonal skills required to unite a cabin, empower other campers, and create safe and positive camp experiences, we know the skills learned and developed at YMCA Wanakita lay a robust foundation for our young people's futures in our schools, workplaces, and communities.

From its humble beginnings to its reputation as a frontrunner in leadership training, Wanakita has never stopped innovating. Nearly all camp staff are graduates of the SC program, and it continues to fill up as soon as registration opens, a testament to its enduring value and success.



Student Counsellor Programs:

YEAR ONE

Participants work on developing the physical skills necessary to provide safe, engaging, and enriching outdoor experiences for campers.

This means honing their swimming, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, hiking, and canoe trip—or 'tripping' skills.

YEAR TWO

With a focus on cultivating the soft skills of being a leader, this second, four-week camp experience is about sharpening leadership skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, while also growing as empathetic and resilient individuals.



A Legacy of Leadership at Wanakita - continued

Unfortunately, our facilities haven't kept up with this legacy. For decades, SC participants and staff have used the same buildings, filling them with memories, and while they are well-loved, the wear and tear has put the buildings into disrepair. Wanakita is in urgent need of a safe and welcoming space that reflects the values we teach and the future we envision. The Leadership Centre will be named the **Wayne Perkins Leadership Centre** in honour of Wayne Perkins who passed away in January 2025.

You can ensure Wayne's legacy lives on by helping these transformative programs continue to grow and flourish.



Wayne Perkins

The Numbers Tell the Story

190+

youth participate in the SC programs annually.

95%

of Wanakita's summer camp staff graduate from this program.

90%

of SC program alumni report that the experience significantly influenced their personal and professional development.

Our Vision:

The Wayne Perkins Leadership Centre

- **Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders:** We envision a future where YMCA Wanakita is recognized as a hub for transformative youth leadership development, fostering essential skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and philanthropy, all while nurturing a connection to nature.
 - **Advancing Truth and Reconciliation:** At YMCA Wanakita, we gratefully acknowledge that we operate on Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory. As part of our ongoing commitment to truth and reconciliation, we are working to cultivate meaningful relationships with the Indigenous Peoples and communities of this territory. Through consultation with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community leaders, we aim to:
 - Deepen our understanding of the land's Indigenous histories
 - Honour these histories through the creation of a Library for Indigenous History within the new Leadership Centre
 - Integrate Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action into our programming
- These commitments align with YMCA Canada's broader dedication to truth, reconciliation, and learning.
- **Inclusive Growth:** By fostering an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the Leadership Centre will ensure all youth, regardless of background, feel empowered to lead and contribute to building healthier communities.

A Building for Every Season at Wanakita

Year-round, the Leadership Centre will serve as a meeting space for training and education.

In the fall, winter, and spring, it will be used to enhance programming and increase the capacity of our Outdoor Centre for high school, college, and university leadership groups.

During the winter months, it will also be our snowshoe hut, housing snowshoes and acting as an instructional space for snowshoe lessons and winter programs.

This Leadership Centre is more than a building; it's an investment in the future of YMCA Wanakita and the YMCA of Hamilton|Burlington|Brantford. It aligns with our long-term vision of expanding access, enhancing programs, and creating a lasting impact on the communities we live in and serve.





Help Us Build the Leaders of Tomorrow

The Wayne Perkins Leadership Centre represents the next chapter in our 70-year journey. With your support, we can create a space that ensures generations of young leaders continue to emerge from YMCA Wanakita equipped with the skills, confidence, and compassion to change the world.

Will you join us? Your gift will directly contribute to building the Leadership Centre and securing Wanakita's legacy of leadership development for years to come.

Leadership is a gift that we pass from one generation to the next. Today, you have the power to give that gift to countless young people who, like Wayne Perkins, will go on to shape their communities and the world.

Join us in building a future led by strong, compassionate, and courageous leaders.

Donate today and help us build The Wayne Perkins Leadership Centre.



Scan the code or contact Ashley to learn more about how you can support this transformational initiative.

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