



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Forward Together: Georgian College and YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka Drive Progress in Future of Belonging Project**

**Simcoe County, ON – March 18, 2024** | Georgian College and the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka are pleased to provide an update on the ongoing collaborative initiative, the Future of Belonging project. Spearheaded by the Social Innovation Team at Georgian College and the YMCA, this project aims to explore and enhance community belonging in the region through innovative approaches and community engagement.

The recent community workshop held on December 8 at the Sandbox Centre provided invaluable insights into the opportunities surrounding community belonging. Over 40 partner organizations and individuals participated, contributing to a rich dialogue that will shape the project's next steps.

Reflecting on the workshop, Pamela Marck, Vice President at the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka, remarked, "The levels of engagement and collaboration at the community workshop were truly inspiring. It highlighted the importance of community-driven solutions in addressing complex social issues. We are excited to share our findings and continue this collaborative journey."

The Future of Belonging project will be showcased at the upcoming RISE event, an annual celebration of research, innovation, scholarship, and entrepreneurship at Georgian College and in the community. Scheduled for April 3, the RISE event will feature Jill Tettmann, CEO of the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka and Dr. Mira Ray, Executive Director of Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Georgian College, who will be making an exciting announcement. This announcement will spotlight the progress of the Future of Belonging project and outline its next steps, aimed at exploring innovative solutions to ensure long-term economic viability in rural-focused communities. Join us as we celebrate this milestone in community collaboration.

"It has been incredible to work with the team at the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka. Our region is a mosaic of communities within a Community. The outcomes of this project will help map the pathways for organizations like Georgian and the YMCA to learn together how we can build inclusive future-ready social infrastructures together with Community", says Nicole Norris, Director of Social Innovation Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Georgian College.

As part of the project's next phase, a report-back workshop titled 'Let's talk about Community Belonging' will take place at the Rise event on April 3, from 10am – 11am. Community members are

invited to join and provide their input on the insights gathered from the first workshop. Registration for the workshop is now open [click here](#).

To further support the Future of Belonging project, a community conversation workshop with Newcomers and International Students will be held at the RISE event on April 3, from 12pm – 3pm. Registration for the workshop is open [click here](#).

For more information about the Future of Belonging project, visit [futureofbelonging.ca](http://futureofbelonging.ca)

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### **About the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka**

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka is a charity dedicated to building healthy communities. We are committed to nurturing the potential of children, youth and families, promoting healthy living and fostering social responsibility within the community. We serve 1 in 5 people throughout Simcoe County and the District of Parry Sound and Muskoka. In keeping with our commitment to inclusiveness and accessibility, the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka offers financial assistance to those unable to afford program fees, including thousands of children and youth who experience YMCA camps and programs each year. For more information, please visit [www.ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca](http://www.ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca).

### **About Georgian College**

Georgian is MORE than an education – it’s an experience. The multi-campus college offers 130+ market-driven programs, from degrees and diplomas, to certificates, apprenticeships, corporate training and more. A recognized leader in co-operative education, our graduate employment rate – 88.1% – continues to be above the provincial average, which we’ve exceeded for more than 20 years. We’re the first – and only – college in Canada designated a changemaker college by Ashoka U for our role as a leader in social innovation and changemaking in higher education. For more information, please visit [GeorgianCollege.ca](http://GeorgianCollege.ca).

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