



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Forward Together: Georgian College and the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka Aim to Redefine the Landscape of Community-Driven Innovation**

**Simcoe County, ON – Wednesday, April 3** | Georgian College and the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka made waves at the Research, Innovation, Scholarship and Entrepreneurship Symposium at Georgian today with an announcement aimed at reshaping community engagement and innovation. The two organizations revealed plans to co-create a Community Innovation Network – a first-of-its-kind initiative in the region.

Together, Georgian and the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka, along with other interested community organizations, will participate in a Future of Belonging lab in which the group will explore how various community services will maintain relevancy into the future, as well as how they can collaborate to cause change and bring agency to underrepresented groups.

“The goals we are working towards through our Future of Belonging lab are focused on creating new opportunities for community innovation that will have a lasting and positive impact, and also supports our Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship vision of being a driver of inclusive socio-economic growth within the region,” said Dr. Mira Ray, Executive Director, Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Georgian.

Jill Tettmann, CEO of the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka, echoed Dr. Ray's sentiments. “We are thrilled to join forces with Georgian College on this effort. By harnessing the power of community collaboration, we aim to create new models of inclusive innovation that address the unique needs of our region. We invite other organizations to join us in co-creating this Community Innovation Network, as we work together to build a brighter future for all.”

The Community Innovation Network will build upon the ongoing collaboration between Georgian and the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka, including their joint exploration with Georgian’s Social Innovation Team on the Future of Belonging in rural communities. Through this project, they have identified a critical need for innovative solutions tailored to the unique challenges faced by community-building organizations like the YMCA.

As the project progresses, there will be numerous opportunities for community members to engage and participate, ensuring that the voices of all those we serve are heard and valued. Together, Georgian and

the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka aim to redefine the landscape of community-driven innovation, setting a new standard for collaboration and inclusivity in the process.

For more information about the Community Innovation Network or to get involved, 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 college offers 130+ market-driven programs, from degrees and diplomas, to certificates, apprenticeships, corporate training and more. A recognized leader in student work experience, our graduate employment rate – 90.3 per cent – is in the top 3 for Ontario colleges. Georgian graduates continue to play a pivotal role in meeting the demand for a highly qualified workforce. 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.

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