

## **2024-2025 YAA Y Report**

To fill a gap from our last annual report, this report covers January 2024 to June 2025.

The YAA Y committee's first major event was ZEEBU 2024, held at the United Church in Killarney, MB from February 16-19th, 2024. 35 participants and 19 young leaders attended ZEEBU 2024, and the theme for this event was "Global Warming of Hearts", where youth were able to learn about climate change from Eli Kanhai, one of our region's climate motivators from the summer of 2024.

We were happy to hold our fall retreat, ALF, at Gordon King United Church in Winnipeg from October 19th-22nd, 2024. The retreat's theme this time around was "Sharing the Torch", with a focus on the Olympics and teamwork. Overall, 26 participants and 22 young leaders gathered to make ALF 2024 a truly special event!

Zeebu 2025 was hosted by Selkirk United Church. Its theme was "Biblical Allyship: A Work in Progress." This theme was centered around how the church had not been entirely inclusive in the past, the obstacles it faced, and how we, as church and individuals, should use our power and privilege to actively resist injustice on behalf of and alongside marginalized people, like Jesus did. There were 20 young leaders and 20 participants this time, which was a rather balanced number.

Neechi Camp 2024 was once again at Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC), August 18 to 23rd, 2024 paired with SSSC's "Mamawe Ota Askihk – Sharing Life Together Here on Earth" camp. Six Indigenous Youth, four non-Indigenous youth and Five leaders made up the Neechi Camp contingent, and alongside many other campers of all ages, participated in activities such as sharing circles, ceremonial drumming and singing, smoking fish and meat, dehydrating apples, sausage making, soap making, night-time hide and seek tag games, playing guitar around the campfire, making bannock on a stick and participating in a Sweat Lodge Ceremony. What a week of great experiences and friendship building!

The YAA Y committee met five times during this period with in-person meetings held at Atlantic Garden City UC in Winnipeg (September 2024) and Trinity UC in Portage la Prairie, MB (January 2025). Starting in September 2024, the YAA Y Committee has hosted a weekend-long Leadership Event alongside their retreat planning team meetings and the YAA Y meetings. These Leadership Events bring together youth (typically high school aged) to get to know each other, learn leadership skills, and plan a Travelling Youth Group, that they run on the Saturday evening. These events have successfully resulted in having new Home Group Leaders at our retreats, and new members for the YAA Y Committee. This is part of YAA Y's succession planning to help continue events for future youth and young adults.

In 2024, the travelling youth group met at different churches in Winnipeg a total of six times. The average number of participants was about 18. In 2025, the travelling youth group has met a total of four times, most of which had about 20 participants. There was also a western Manitoba event

held at Prairie Breeze Stables near Brandon, MB in March 2025 where 17 participants enjoyed learning about compassion while interacting with horses.

In June, 2024, older youth and young adults were invited by Knowledge Keeper, Rey Anderson and his partner, Sharon to experience a Sagkeeng Sundance under their guidance, alongside YAAY staff, Twila MacNair, former moderator Jordan Cantwell, her partner, Laura, and our Executive Minister, Shannon McCarthy. While only one young adult took up this invitation, they had an amazing experience! Rey would welcome young adults and older youth to do that another year, if there was interest.

July 3 to 6, 2024, fifteen from Prairie to Pine Region attended Rendez-vous National Youth Retreat in St. Catharine's, ON alongside about 400 United Church and Presbyterian youth, young adults and leaders of youth from across the country. The theme was Audacious Hope and we had a lot of fun playing, singing, worshipping, workshopping, dancing, eating and building friendships with new church friends! Many of us went a day early and slept in a church overnight where our hosts fed us well and drove us to Niagara Falls to take a boat ride where we could see the falls up close and feel the spray and power of one of God's great creations. So invigorating!

On August 17, 2024, a team of BIPOC (black, Indigenous and people of colour) youth and young adults hosted "Sharing Across Cultures" at Knox United Church in Winnipeg for a group of about 40. This event aims to create a space for BIPOC youth to get to know each other and learn about one another's traditional foods and activities.

In 2024 Anna Ramsey from Brandon, participated in the Climate Motivator program for a second time and did a tree planting campaign in the city of Brandon. Also that summer, Raven Anderson, a young adult from Winnipeg who had participated last year in the mural painting, was hired by the United Church to lead a group of Youth Animators who were tasked in part with planning the Youth Forum program for General Council 45 to be held in the summer of 2025.

The YAAY committee would like to thank all the communities of faith who hosted our events as well as each and every one of the volunteers for the time and work they offered to make events such as these possible, as well as Regional Staff Twila MacNair for the unbelievable support she provides. We would also like to thank the youth not only for their continued support, but more importantly for their participation and the work that they have put in as well in many cases. If you have youth or young adults in your community of faith who are looking to connect with other United Church youth, we would love to include them!

For more information about YAAY's activities, see the YAAY page on the Prairie to Pine website: <https://prairietopinerc.ca/programs/young-adults-and-youth/>

We wish our Prairie to Pine community all the best for the rest of 2025!

Jayden Schettler, Xander Miller, Marissa Smirl.  
YAAY Co-Convenors