

# RYLA 5550: Newsletter

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RYLA DISTRICT 5550: INCLUDING STORIES AND ADVICE FROM CURRENT AND FORMER RYLA CAMPERS!



## ABOUT OUR RYLA NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is a celebration of everything RYLA stands for - leadership, connection, growth, and service. Whether you are a past camper, a future attendee, a longtime member of Rotary, or someone cheering us on from afar, this is your glimpse into the powerful ripple effect of RYLA across our district and beyond.

Inside, you'll find camper stories, alumni spotlights, counsellor reflections, and real-life leadership journeys. It's a chance to reconnect with the heart of camp - the laughter, the courage, the friendships, and the unforgettable moments that stay with us long after the week is over.

Most of all, this newsletter is a reminder that RYLA doesn't end when camp does - the values, the confidence, and the community you build here go with you, wherever you lead next.



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR EDITOR

Hi everyone!

Putting together the first ever RYLA newsletter has been such a joy. It's been a chance to revisit the incredible stories, voices, and journeys that make RYLA so special - and to see just how far the impact of one week of camp can reach.

As someone who has been lucky enough to witness this program from multiple sides, I can truly say that RYLA changes lives. It sparks something in people - confidence, purpose, friendships, the belief that they can make a positive difference - and that spark doesn't go away, it grows.

Thank you for reading, sharing, and being a part of this community. Whether you are just about to attend your first RYLA or are five years past your first campfire, you will always be a part of this RYLA family.

Here's to another year of making memories that will last a lifetime!

Sarah



### A MESSAGE FROM OUR RYLA CHAIR AND ROTARIAN

I was very excited when Sarah first brought up the idea of creating a RYLA newsletter because we are always looking for ways for RYLA Alumni to stay connected. We hope to do more of that through this newsletter and on our social media.

I have been connected to RYLA for over 10 years now and am reminded every year of the amazing youth that we have in our district. My favourite part of camp is watching the campers develop as people, moving forward on their journey to self-discovery, self-confidence and empathy.

Whether you've come to RYLA once, or all six years you're eligible, I hope you are continuing to do good in your communities. It doesn't matter if that means you hold the door more often for others, or if you're part of a huge community project, kindness and service of any size goes a long way. A ripple, a RYLA ripple, can make big waves.

RYLA Alumni, if you're involved in or working on something in your community that you want to share with the district, please let me know so we can get it up on our socials. I want the district to know how lucky we are to have youth like you in it!

Can't wait to meet all the new campers this year, and hope all of you have a wonderful summer!

Jorrel



### A MESSAGE FROM OUR RYLA FACILITATOR

A great teacher friend of mine would always say "I don't claim to know much, but what I do know is this..." so with that in mind, I'll give it a go.

This year has been tough for so many. Wildfires, political unrest, even checking the news is a daunting task. The constant tone has been one of change, be that positive or negative.

I know that RYLA is a way for us to come together, face those hardships head on, and make plans to shape the future into one that is inclusive, full of possibilities and kindness. Somewhere for likeminded people to share their experiences and push themselves in ways they never imagined. Be that taking on a leadership role, performing at the talent show, or jumping into a cool lake. RYLA is the definition of positive change through action!

I also know that we can't change for the better unless we are supported by others. When we "unite for good" the future is looking brighter all the time! Come to camp ready to work with other leaders to work through all sorts of fun challenges and topics! The team of counsellors we have put together this year are unique, passionate, and caring former RYLA campers who are just as excited to meet you as I am!

All the best, Scott!

# This Year With RYLA Day 7: Madyn's Story

Madyn Purdy - RYLA Camper and February 2025 RYLA Day 7 Attendee



**What made you decide to attend RYLA Day 7 after camp?**

I decided to attend RYLA Day 7 because I was keen on the opportunity to reconnect with the amazing friends I'd made at camp. I was also excited to meet all the campers from the other age group. It was a really nice opportunity to be reminded of all the amazing memories I had made over the summer as well as the RYLA values and goals that I had wanted to bring back home.

**How did it feel to reconnect online with your RYLA community after 6 months apart?**

To put it simply, it felt amazing to reconnect with the RYLA community after six months apart. I've made some of my best friends at RYLA and getting to spend another two days with them after not seeing them for so long was truly appreciated. I loved getting to see them all again and hear about what they've been up to.

**What are some of your favourite memories from camp? What were some of your favourite parts of the Day 7 experience?**

My favourite parts of camp were the dance and talent shows. I also loved getting to write and receive shinys (which I still take and read from time to time because they instantly put a smile on my face). My favourite part of RYLA Day 7 is definitely the amount of breakout rooms we get to do because it allows you to connect or in some cases reconnect with so many different people.

**Was there a session or activity that stood out to you or changed how you see leadership?**

One of my favourite things we talked about at RYLA Day 7 was the importance of having a growth mindset. It taught me how, as a leader, if you are too stubborn it slows the entire group down. In the activity, we were taught that something as simple as adding yet to the end of your sentences is how you start to gain a growth mindset. (ex: We can't do this --- We can't do this YET)

**How have you grown as a person or leader since RYLA? Did Day 7 help you reflect or strengthen goals that you set for yourself at camp?**

For me personally, RYLA was the ultimate confidence boost. After my first year at camp I went back to school and was able to recognize how much more talkative and inspired I had become. RYLA taught me incredible interpersonal skills and inspired me to be an overall better person. Day 7 was just another example of the RYLA magic. I was re-inspired and was able to go back to my community with a deeper sense of determination and a brand new set of ideas.

**What's one RYLA skill or value that you've continued to use in your life or school?**

The most important RYLA skills I've continued to use in my life are the ability to connect with new people, the sense of inspiration necessary to create positive change and the magic that lies in having hope. I use these skills in every single interaction of my life be it with my family, my friends, my classmates, my teachers, my neighbours, and more. It helps me to feel like every conversation was positive and meaningful and that I was able to connect with the person with whom I was talking.

# This Year With RYLA Day 7: Madyn's Story

Madyn Purdy - RYLA Camper and February 2025 RYLA Day 7 Attendee



**Did Day 7 motivate you to take action or try something new in your school or community?**

Day 7 definitely re-motivated me to take action in my school and my community. It reminded me of the positive impact my actions could have, the right way to do those actions, and gave me a brand new list of ideas I wanted to try.

**What would you say to a camper thinking about attending RYLA Day 7 next year?**

I would definitely advise all campers to attend RYLA Day 7. It's a lovely opportunity to reconnect with your fellow campers, the counsellors, and Scott and Jorrel. It also truly is a chance to re-inspire yourself to bring back the RYLA magic to your school, your community, your country, and the world.

**What is next for you - and how will you carry your RYLA experience into that next chapter?**

I am spending the summer at a French Language program in Moncton and I know for certain that the things RYLA has taught me will come in handy. I know that I will be able to make new friends easily because RYLA taught me how to connect with new people that I have just met. I know that staying away from home won't be as intimidating because RYLA taught me the importance of being independent. I also know that I am going to miss attending RYLA very much and that if I ever need anything, I have a whole bunch of amazing people that I can reach out to.

**Anything last thoughts to add?**

I want to remind everyone of how much camp is a second home to all of us. RYLA Day 7 is the perfect extension of our happy place when we don't always get the chance to see other campers again.



# From RYLA Camp To Interact Club: Rachelle's Story

Rachelle Brown - RYLA Camper and Dryden Interact President



**How were you introduced to the Interact Club? Was it through your RYLA experience?**

I attended RYLA from the summers of 2022-2025. I first learned about Interact Club during my first year at RYLA. At the time, I had just entered grade 9, and originally, there wasn't an Interact Club. Throughout the year, some of my classmates started the club and it wasn't until my grade 10 year that I got involved. I had heard about it at RYLA, and when the Rotary representative from Dryden's Interact Club, Ms. Hron, reached out to me and other RYLA campers, I thought I would look into it. I started attending meetings regularly and thought it was the perfect fit for me. That year, I got very involved and helped out in whatever way I could.

**What made you want to step into the role of president?**

At the end of my first year as a part of the Interact Club, both leadership positions were left open, after two members, Trista and Clara, graduated. Ms. Hron approached me and Levi, another past RYLA camper, and asked us if we would be interested in representing the Interact Club moving forward. We agreed and decided I would be the President, and Levi and Charlotte would act as the Co-Vice Presidents.

**What have you learned about leadership through your time with Interact?**

Interact and RYLA have taught me a lot about leadership. Leadership is not just a one-person job; it is a way of collaborating as a group to help accomplish your goals. The leadership is there to provide guidance and support to the group, while also participating like everyone else. Interact was my first major leadership experience in high school, and it was a great opportunity. I would recommend it to anyone wanting to get involved in their school.

**In what ways did your RYLA experience prepare you for leading your school's club this year?**

My RYLA experience gave me a lot of insight into the type of leader and the type of person I am. RYLA also helped me discuss and plan a potential project that could be done in my Interact club, some of which I was able to bring back to my community.

**How has your view of leadership changed or grown since being a part of both RYLA and Interact? What are your future plans to stay involved in Rotary programs and youth initiatives?**

This year, I will continue to represent Dryden Interact Club as the President, along with Co-Vice Presidents Levi and Adam (AJ). Thanks to Interact and Rotary, I have also attended another Rotary youth camp called MUNA (Model United Nations Assembly). The experience I gained at MUNA, RYLA, and with Interact has given me valuable lessons on leadership and has shown me I can do whatever I set my mind to.



# From RYLA Camp To Interact Club: Rachelle's Story

Rachelle Brown - RYLA Camper and Dryden Interact President

With these experiences, I have been able to start the first Dryden High School Debate Club along with AJ, and have been invited to join the Music Executive. Without these experiences, I might have never done anything I am doing now, and I wouldn't be the same person I am today. Rotary has done so much for me, and I would like to continue to work with them throughout my life through Rotaract and eventually becoming a Rotarian.

## What are some accomplishments or projects that your Interact Club has completed this past year?

This year, our Interact Club was the largest since it started, with over 16 regular members. The Dryden interact Club was able to complete many projects this year, which was incredible to see. The biggest project we completed was creating a cozy corner in our library. The idea first came from my group's "magic project" at RYLA, where we decided to create a comfy, safe place to host different events. Our school library is already that space for our town where there are meetings, club gatherings, and generally a safe space to hang out and study. With a generous grant we received from the Dryden Rotary Club, we were able to add new furniture, artwork, and life into a part of the library. The library has been well-loved and adding some more love back into the library was just what was needed. Another one of my favourite projects was creating holiday cards for the elderly. The Interact Club and members of the school would come in their free time to make cards, which would later be delivered to the senior home and inpatient ward at the hospital. We understood that many people do not get many visitors, which is especially hard during the holidays, so during that time, we try to bring some joy into their lives, as everyone deserves to be loved and cared for.



## What advice would you give to RYLA campers who might be thinking about starting or joining an Interact Club?

RYLA is a great way for students to get involved in their communities. If someone wants to do something in their community, RYLA is a great stepping stone to doing so. If anyone is interested in starting or joining an Interact Club, they should. Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for help, whether it be from Rotary, the school, or even a friend. Most of the time, people are super helpful and more than happy to help. Most importantly, don't be afraid to try new things. At one point, all of these things were new to me too, and if you don't try them, you will never know!

## What are some of your favourite memories from camp?

RYLA has been one of my all-time favourite experiences. Each year, I have met some of the most amazing people from all over Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Northwestern Ontario. The whole week, you spend time getting to know like-minded individuals, and you make some very close friends within that short week. The counsellors are super kind and good role models of what a young person can become, making this experience even more memorable. My favourite memories are always the conversations you have at camp, whether it be at breakfast one morning, during sharing circles, at campfires, late at night while lying in cabins. The conversations are some of the most unforgettable moments.

## Any last thoughts to add?

I want to thank all the members of the Dryden Rotary, MUNA, RYLA, Interact Club, and the entire district for all of the hard work and time they put into youth activities and supporting their communities. Without them, I wouldn't be the person I am today, and for that, I am incredibly grateful.

# From RYLA to MUNA: AJ and Chloe's Story

Adam (AJ) Millard and Chloe Goulet -  
RYLA Campers and MUNA 2025 Participants

**What made you want to attend RYLA and what was the biggest thing you learned?**

Chloe: I wanted to attend RYLA because it seemed like a great opportunity to learn some leadership skills! I didn't know much about it at first but after actually going it hits different because I didn't know that it was going to be so fun and that I was going to meet so many amazing people!

AJ: I wanted to attend RYLA because I had heard so many great things about it! When I talked to the people who went, they said that I should go. That really inspired me to try to go, and when I got in, I was so excited! One of the biggest things I learned during camp was how to present. I had done presentations before but after camp when we learned the Ten Ted Commandments, my ability to present skyrocketed!

**Did RYLA change how you see yourself as a leader?**

Chloe: Yes I would say so! RYLA gave me a confidence that I definitely didn't have before going!

AJ: RYLA absolutely changed how I see myself as a leader, I had been to different leadership camps beforehand but none had as big of an impact on me as RYLA. I could see that after camp I was more confident and understanding.

**How did you hear about MUNA and why did you say yes to the opportunity?**

Chloe: Technically, I heard about MUNA at RYLA but I found out about the chance to actually go through my school. I said yes, because going to RYLA made me super interested in Rotary stuff!

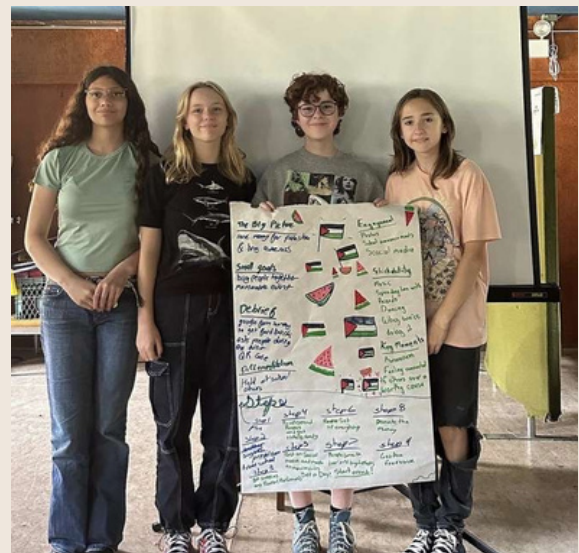
AJ: I heard about MUNA for the first time from Imisi (former RYLA camper and current counsellor), and just him talking about it made me really want to go!



**In what ways did RYLA prepare you for MUNA? Can you share a moment at MUNA where something you learned at RYLA clicked for you or helped you?**

Chloe: RYLA definitely helped me prepare for MUNA with building confidence and my public speaking skills. After RYLA, I had more confidence especially in speaking to a group of people. The team games actually really helped push my confidence to its limits in the best way possible!

AJ: To prepare for MUNA I did a LOT of research, I didn't really work on public speaking because after camp I was feeling pretty confident in my skills. Something at RYLA that clicked for me at MUNA was how to present. Chloe and I were chosen to give our speech in front of the general assembly, and when we got up there I just remembered the Ten Ted Commandments and went for it!





# From RYLA to MUNA: AJ and Chloe's Story

Adam (AJ) Millard and Chloe Goulet -  
RYLA Campers and MUNA 2025 Participants

**What country were you representing and what topics did you debate?**

Chloe: We were representing India and the topic that I mostly handled for the debate was the research and use of genetically modified foods and if they should be used or what guidelines would be necessary.

AJ: We were representing the country of India, I debated the topic of displacement and peace building.

**How did your MUNA experience help you become a better thinker, speaker, or leader?**

Chloe: MUNA definitely helps you become a better thinker because you hear ideas from all the countries and all the delegates and it really makes you think about perspectives! It definitely helps you with speaking because you have to go and speak in front of all the countries and also work with your breakout group! It also helps you become a better leader overall because you have the responsibility of representing and leading your country!

AJ: I definitely think my MUNA experience helped me become a better speaker. There were lots of times where I had to debate or defend my country and I really gained even more confidence in speaking while doing so.

**Why should other RYLA campers consider participating in MUNA?**

Chloe: I think they should consider it because just like RYLA it's an amazing leadership opportunity but also a great way to make new friends!

AJ: I think other campers should consider participating in MUNA because it's an amazing opportunity where you get to meet lots of new people, interact with nearly everyone, and it can help you gain an understanding of how the world works and the political state we're in.

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COULD TOTALLY  
FEEL IT.

- Adam (AJ) Millard

**What are some of your favourite memories from camp?**

Chloe: Some of my favourite memories are the team games, the dance, and the last bonfire! I loved all of camp but my favourites will always be any memories with my friends. I met so many great people and they're some of the most important people in my life today.

AJ: Some of my favourite memories from camp are when we all gathered around the fire or on the dock, and we just talked, and talked, and talked. To me, RYLA felt like home, and in those moments, I could totally feel it.

**Any last thoughts to add?**

Chloe: I didn't fully know what RYLA was before going, but it's one, if not the best, experience of my life. The leadership opportunity was great but it is mostly because of the people I met and the environment that everyone there created!





# Leadership In Style: Ryley's Story

Ryley Herman - RYLA Camper and Founder of "Kingz Street-Fashion"



**What made you decide to attend RYLA and what were you hoping to get out of the experience?**

My family has worked with Rotary International for years, so when the opportunity of RYLA opened up, described as a camp to help build young leaders with an inviting set of counsellors to lead the way, this one week adventure sounded like something to help me build as a person while making friends and lasting memories!

**What is one moment or lesson from RYLA that really stuck with you?**

One of the many important lessons I learned from RYLA was that you can't rely on yourself alone to maintain a team, you need everyone to step up and help where they can.

**Tell us about your clothing brand! What inspired you to start it, and what makes it unique? What is next for you, is there anything big on the horizon?**

My clothing brand "Kingz Street-Fashion" was a big part of me for most of grade ten as I spent most nights working on things like new designs or new posts as others I know, were asleep. The brand started as a group business but I felt like I was the only one who was passionate about it so I took it upon myself to create a legacy for myself.

My brands uniqueness doesn't come from the designs or the place it was started, but the story on how it was created and thrived while I was attending high school. I treated the business like a side project so eventually become a successful entrepreneur when I'm older and already have a base level of knowledge.

**What were some of the biggest challenges and biggest wins so far in starting your business?**

The biggest challenge I encountered during my journey so far was balancing my business life with my work life and I was told by my peers that this is one of the most common and important tasks in life! My biggest win with the company was seeing sales as far as the United Kingdom!

**How has RYLA helped you grow as a leader and entrepreneur? Was there anything specific from camp that helped you look at your business in a new way?**

RYLA has taught me so many incredible life skills like how to connect with others in ways that other companies can't, which was really helpful. I found the skill in the sharing circle where it gives people a chance to open up about problems and connect with others around them.

**How do you plan to use what you learned at RYLA to keep building your business and achieve your future goals?**

I plan to use the skills I've learned to further improve my social skills which would lead to a more positive impact on my future business career. The skills I've learned at RYLA, I personally believe, can only be found at RYLA, and that is what makes it so special.

# Leadership In Style: Ryley's Story

Ryley Herman - RYLA Camper and Founder of "Kingz Street-Fashion"

**What advice would you give to other young RYLA campers who have big ideas but might be scared to take that first step?**

The one piece of advice I'd give anyone who has big dreams but is scared to take the first step is to stick with your dreams and don't let others tear you down. No matter who you are, there will people who will try to do this, you will see if from people you don't know and people you feel you know everything about, so stick to your vision!

**What are some of your favourite memories from camp?**

One of my favourite memories from RYLA isn't any specific moment but the little things and the connections made with people. How a week previous you knew nothing about someone and now you have this strong connection with them, something that only RYLA has and continues to create.



# RYLA's Got Talent: Brayden's Story

Brayden King - Former RYLA Camper and Canadian Country Musician



**What first brought you to RYLA, and how many years did you attend?**

I first heard about RYLA from my sister Morgan, who had gone a couple of times before me and told me how great it was. So I applied, and I ended up going for three years — and it was just incredible.

**At RYLA, you were known for performing at the talent show and strumming your guitar and singing at campfire nights, what did those moments mean to you? Do you remember your first RYLA performance?**

I do remember my very first RYLA performance. Jorrel had asked me to bring my guitar to the campfire — I believe it was the first night of my first year — and he told me to pick it up. I just started playing “Don’t Stop Believin’” by Journey, and everyone sang along. It was so welcoming and beautiful. Those performances hold such a special place in my heart. I felt encouraged at RYLA to be myself, to sing, and to perform. It really brought me out of my shell.

**What are some of your favourite memories from camp?**

The music videos were my favorite — they were so much fun to make and hilarious. But the most powerful memories are from the sharing circles. Hearing everyone’s stories and being able to share mine, in a space where everyone was supported and loved, was just beautiful. And the friendships — I have so many friends for life from RYLA. Now when I tour and play in their cities, they come out to the shows and it feels like a big reunion.

**Can you tell us a bit about your music career today? What are you working on, and where has music taken you over the years?**

I started as a solo artist about four years ago, and things have been going really well. I’m currently working on a bunch of new music, and we’re about to announce a Western-Canada tour. We’re always playing shows all over the country. Music has taken me across Canada and to the U.S. for American Idol — I feel super grateful to have this as my full-time job.

**In what ways did RYLA help shape you - as a person, as an artist, and as a leader in your own field?**

RYLA helped me be a better person. Hearing everyone’s stories and being fully accepted for who I am gave me the courage to be that same person outside of camp. You leave RYLA with a renewed outlook on life — it’s a beautiful feeling and a big reason so many people keep coming back.



# RYLA's Got Talent: Brayden's Story

Brayden King - Former RYLA Camper and Canadian Country Musician



**What would you tell campers who are nervous to get up and perform - or to step out of their comfort zones in general?**

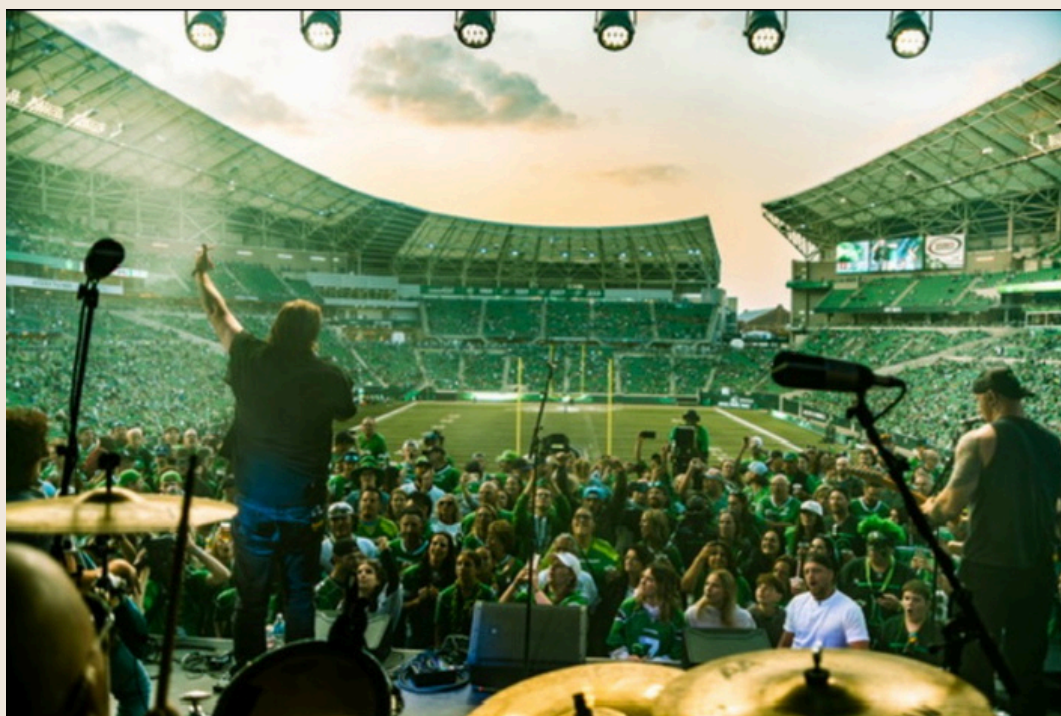
There is no less judgmental place in the world than RYLA. If you get up and share your story or talent, people will accept you with open arms. I'd also say — stepping out of your comfort zone can be life-changing. I stepped way out of mine when I left school, didn't get another job, and went all in on music. It was terrifying not having a backup plan, but it gave me the motivation to go all-in. And now, I've been a full-time musician for four years.

**What is one lesson from RYLA that has stuck with you throughout your music journey?**

To not be afraid to share my story. I shared a song at RYLA that I wrote when I was 13 about losing my grandparents to cancer. After that performance, so many people came up and told me how much it helped them. That moment showed me that music — and vulnerability — can really connect people. That lesson has stuck with me on every stage I've been on since.

**Anything last thoughts to add?**

Just have fun at camp. Take it all in. Be a friend to everyone, and they'll be a friend to you. I'm so thankful to have had RYLA in my life — and if you are a camper this summer you're about to have the best time.



# Leadership Beyond Borders: Sarah's Story

Sarah Szell -  
Former RYLA Camper, Former RYLA  
Counsellor, and International Teacher

**What was your first RYLA experience like, and what made you decide to come back and be a counsellor?**

My first RYLA I was 15 and had just finished grade nine. I dragged a friend with me because I was so unsure of what to expect and was too nervous to go alone. But from the music video, to the sharing circles, to the food challenges, I was hooked! I had an absolute blast and stayed for all three senior camps and came on my own the following two years. I came back as a counsellor to create the same magic I experienced at RYLA for another group of kids.

**How did being a counsellor at RYLA impact you and what did you learn and take away from this experience?**

It was so much fun being a counsellor I got to make relationships with campers and found a sense of community through the team I worked with. Having to counsel through Covid was tough and taught me to think on my feet and be patient. All everyone wanted to do was be in person at camp but we went online for 2 years. Patience and creativity was key!

**Where did you go on Rotary Youth Exchange and what stands out to you the most from that experience?**

I went to Belgium for the 2018-2019 exchange year and it really opened my eyes to cultures and people from around the world. I met friends that I still talk to to this day, learnt some Dutch and got to travel to 10 countries around Europe in one year! That opportunity was not lost on me and I travelled and saw as much as I could!



I CAME BACK AS A  
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OF KIDS

- Sarah Szell

**How did being a RYLA alum prepare you for living and learning in another country and what lessons from RYLA did you take with you on your adventure?**

I think RYLA teaches you to be brave. Most often you're going to the camp on your own and it forces you to be brave and rely on yourself to create a positive experience. When I stepped on that plane by myself I was really stepping out of my comfort zone in a major way and it was up to me to make the most of my experience in Belgium just like I did at camp.

**Explain your career choice in teaching and where you are now! Now that you're teaching outside of Canada, how do you see the influence of RYLA and Rotary in your everyday life?**

After Belgium I went through the U of S SUNTEP program and got my bachelors of education. I've always been drawn to working with kids and I love learning. In my free time I love to write and thought it would be cool to instill that same love of storytelling in my students like my teachers did for me. Now that I'm teaching in NZ I can definitely make a connection back to RYLA for giving me my first taste of adventure the travel bug never leaves you!



# Leadership Beyond Borders: Sarah's Story

Sarah Szell -  
Former RYLA Camper, Former RYLA  
Counsellor, and International Teacher

**If you could connect one lesson from RYLA and one from exchange that helped shape who you are today, what would they be?**

"The best things in life are on the other side of fear" my mom told me this before I left on exchange and I think the same goes for making the leap to say yes to RYLA. I was so nervous before starting each experience and they were both the best decisions I made in my adolescence. Jump headfirst out of your comfort zone and it'll be the best thing you ever did.

**What values or mindsets did you develop through RYLA that you still lean on?**

Kindness and empathy were big values that were stressed at RYLA. You never know what others are going through and that was never more apparent than when we had sharing circles. This is something I take with me into my teaching and just how I move through my community.

**Why would you encourage prospective young people to say yes to RYLA, exchange, or other Rotary youth programs?**

RYLA is the best week of summer! You get to spend 6 days in a gorgeous national park that many haven't ever visited so just for the nature alone it's got the wow factor - PLUS you get to meet new friends from all around the district, and challenge yourself to work in teams and get out of your comfort zone. And for those that are hesitant like I was my first year and not wanting to "miss out" on summer, RYLA is a small time commitment with the biggest reward of any of the programs.

As for exchange, it'll truly change your life. Most of us are from small town Sask or Manitoba and we forget that there's a whole world out there! It's the cheapest and safest way to see a new part of the world and it'll change your perspective and world view for years to come.

YOU DON'T HAVE  
TO BE AT THE  
FRONT OF THE  
PODIUM OR THE  
LEADER OF A  
GROUP TO SHOW  
LEADERSHIP  
QUALITIES

- Sarah Szell

**How do you plan to continue being involved in leadership in the future outside of your own classroom?**

When I got back to Saskatchewan after exchange I created Rotex 5550, a program the district hadn't had ever to my knowledge. Once I'm back from NZ I'd like to develop that again and accomplish my goal of creating a Saskatoon trip for exchange students to go on. When I get back from NZ, I think I'll always take an active roll in my community through choir, theatre and writing. You don't have to be at the front of the podium or the leader of a group to show leadership qualities and that's something I never understood until I went to RYLA.

**What are some of your favourite memories from camp?**

Oh man the whole week every year is a favourite memory! For me, I'll always remember the adrenaline rush after completing and winning the amazing race my first year. The sense of accomplishment of running off the dock and jumping into the water was what hooked me on RYLA that first year.

As for other fav memories, the charm of RYLA is that there's always secret surprises during the week so without giving too much away, I'd say pots and pans and hot chocolate make a good combo at camp.





## COUNSELLOR INSIGHT

Each year, RYLA is shaped not only by the campers who show up ready to grow - but also by the passionate counsellors who return to lead, support, and inspire. This summer, the counsellor team brings a powerful mix of experience, energy, and heart.

In the spirit of this year's Rotary International presidential message - each counsellor was asked to share a quote that reflects what that theme means to them. Whether it's a mantra, a moment they live by, or quote that speaks to them, it connects to the values the counsellor team carries together into camp.

We also asked each counsellor to reflect on their "Why RYLA?" - why they continue to come back, what this camp means to them, and what they're most excited for as they get ready for another unforgettable summer.

Get to know the people who will be cheering you on, supporting your growth, and helping you find your own why. This is your 2025 RYLA counsellor team!

### SARAH

(Dauphin, MB/Lloydminster, AB)

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world"

- Mahatma Gandhi

This quote reminds me that real change doesn't happen alone. It begins when each of us takes responsibility for how we show up and leads into how we support others along the way. At RYLA, we build a community where everyone feels seen, heard, and empowered to make a difference - together!

Why RYLA?

RYLA showed me that leadership is about lifting others while growing yourself. I keep coming back to help create that environment at camp, where we all push each other to be better, and have fun doing it! I also heard an awesome DJ will be there for the dance!



### TYE

(Winnipeg, MB/Portage la Prairie, MB)

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." - Theodore Roosevelt

This quote reminds me that it doesn't have to be something huge. A small change can have a ripple effect that causes something bigger. It tells us that if we are waiting for the perfect moment to come our way before we act that we will not act because there is never a perfect time. Instead we must do what we can now, with whatever we have available to us, wherever we are. At RYLA, we begin to plan ways in which we can act in our own communities, uniting with one another for good.

Why RYLA?

RYLA showed me that it is okay to be your true self and you don't need to pretend to be anyone you aren't. A leader isn't afraid to stand out and be themselves. I keep coming back to RYLA to show others this and help to make people feel seen, heard, confident, and the greatest leaders they can be.



**LIZZY**

(Sioux Lookout, ON)

"The best way to predict the future is to create it together." - Joe Echevarria

When a community unites with a goal, that goal can be achieved. At RYLA, we complete challenges throughout the week and as much as they are fun, these challenges are proof that as we improve as individuals we improve as a team.

Why RYLA?

RYLA is not just a summer camp but a community. I came to RYLA to try something new and it changed me for the better. Not only does RYLA make you a better leader, it is a space to be yourself and uplift others. I come back to be a part of the positive experiences that RYLA is for others.

**BRIELLE**

(Winnipeg, MB)

"We can't help everyone... but everyone can help someone" -Dr. Loretta Scott

I love this quote because the reality is, there is a lot of change needed in the world. It's overwhelming when you think about all the people that need help, especially when you think about all the barriers to big changes. This quote is a good reminder that even helping one person around you or making a single person's day a little bit better, means a lot.

Why RYLA?

Honestly? It will always be the people because I am a people person (guilty as charged). It amazes me how RYLA seems to bring the best people together, all of them innately kind and inspirational. I love watching the campers arrive at camp not knowing anyone just for them to leave having made incredible friendships and good memories. For me, RYLA highlights everything that I love about people.

How could anyone stay away from a place like that?

**JAKE**

(Winnipeg, MB)

"Being yourself is the most important thing you can do." - Tyler, the Creator

This quote reminds me that leadership doesn't mean changing who you are to fit a role. It means understanding your strengths and showing up as your authentic self. At RYLA, that idea comes to life. It's a place where everyone is encouraged to be real, and where differences aren't just accepted, they're valued.

Why RYLA?

RYLA gave me the space as a former camper and now counsellor to grow into the kind of leader I want to be. It helped me build confidence, learn how to work with others, and recognize that leadership looks different for everyone. I keep coming back because I want to help create that same environment for others where people feel supported, challenged, and seen for who they truly are.

**IMISI**

(Winnipeg MB)

"When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you." - Winston S. Churchill

The reality behind this quote has the power to bring about healing and peace to our troubling world. In a world where nations are at each other's throats, unity is the key that can unlock our peace.

At RYLA, we make it a mission to stay united and open with each other, eliminating strife or anything that comes in the way of togetherness. It's only with that, we can make true impact.

Why RYLA?

RYLA is a magical place and it's the togetherness that makes it special. From the group activities to the talent shows to the amazing race, doing them together as a team is what creates lasting memories.



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