

# OMHA<sup>TM</sup>



**THE ONTARIO MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION**



**HELPING GET NEW PLAYERS  
INTO THE GAME**

**TEACHING  
SPORTSMANSHIP  
THROUGH HOCKEY**

**MAKING HOCKEY  
A WELCOME PLACE  
FOR EVERYONE**

**A LOOK BACK AT THE  
2022-2023  
SEASON**

# PLAYING LIKE A CHAMPION STARTS BY EATING LIKE ONE.



Fuel your **GAME** with fresh, healthy, **HIGH-QUALITY** Ontario eggs.



**REAL FARMERS.**  
**REAL EGGS.**

[getcracking.ca](http://getcracking.ca)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|    |   |    |                          |
|----|---|----|--------------------------|
| 03 | BOARD OF DIRECTORS                              | 14 | COACH OF THE MONTH       |
| 04 | MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | 15 | A STORY OF SPORTSMANSHIP |
| 05 | PATRICIA HARTLEY ADMINISTRATORS AWARD           | 16 | ESSAY CONTEST            |
| 06 | WALLY SCOTT BURSARY                             | 18 | OHL DRAFT                |
| 07 | EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENT AWARD                 | 19 | THANK A VOLUNTEER        |
| 08 | HONOUR AWARD                                    | 20 | ORANGE JERSEY PROJECT    |
| 10 | A LOOK BACK ON 2022 - 2023                      | 21 | PLAYER AND GOALIE ASSIST |
| 12 | MAKING HOCKEY A WELCOME PLACE FOR EVERYBODY     | 24 | OMHA CHAMPIONS           |

## 2022-23

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**PRESIDENT: CRAIG LANE**

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT: BOB HILL**

**VICE-PRESIDENT - WESTERN DISTRICT: MARK HOOPER**

**VICE-PRESIDENT - CENTRAL DISTRICT: PETER HARMSSEN**

**VICE-PRESIDENT - EASTERN DISTRICT: CHERYL BROWN**

**TREASURER: LINDA RALF**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: COLLEEN HAWTHORNE**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: DEAN JOHNSON**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: LUANNE FAKELMAN**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: CHRIS BERUBE**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: PAUL WILSON**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: PAUL ALLAN**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: STEVEN PARKER**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: GREIG BAXTER**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: ADAM PARENT**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: ANDY COOKE**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: CATHY BAKER-BELL**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: SUZANNE TERPSTRA**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR: PAUL SEBASTIAN**

## WELCOME



## WELCOME

Congratulations and thank you for being a part of another exciting season across the Ontario Minor Hockey Association.

And what a season it was! We were thrilled to see smiling faces, fist bumps and support in the stands as we were all reminded just how much love we have for our game.

The dedication of our minor hockey parents, volunteers, coaches, officials, trainers, managers and administrators made this a reality as they ensured a meaningful experience for all players.

Our new seasonal structure increased the focus on the well-being of our players with a less stressful start-up to the season and also extended the season, keeping all players playing longer and having the opportunity to participate in meaningful hockey through March.

Today's minor hockey players are the future parents and volunteers of our sport and the leaders in our communities. Let's continue to work together to create a safe, welcoming space for everyone in our game.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to make our game the best it can be!



**CRAIG LANE**  
PRESIDENT



**IAN TAYLOR**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE GAME  
**PATRICIA HARTLEY ADMINISTRATORS AWARD**

# JEFF HASSIM

Garden City Kiwanis



**Patricia Hartley  
 Administrators Award**

The Patricia Hartley Administrators Award is given in recognition of exemplary service in the field of sports administration. This award reflects the achievements of a local executive board member or volunteer staff person who worked toward the efficient operation of an association and the betterment of hockey.

The recipient of this year's award is Jeff Hassim of Garden City Kiwanis. An active member of his community and a role model to his peers, Jeff has been focused on helping kids play hockey for decades and has worked tirelessly behind the scenes over that time to ensure that children are able to play the game and have fun. Whether it's preparing game sheets, setting up mini nets and half-ice boards, or sorting through equipment donations in order to outfit new players in need, Jeff does everything that he can to set up and keep hockey running in his association.

**"He would do anything for any child. Get them out on the ice, suit them up, have everything ready to go, and make sure the kids have the most fun they can possibly have."**

- Darryl Amos, Coach, Garden City Kiwanis

## RECENT RECIPIENTS

**2021**

**Jane Zelko**  
 Essex Minor  
 Hockey Association

**2020**

**Cheryl Carrier**  
 Quinte West Minor  
 Hockey Association

**2019**

**Colleen McGinnis**  
 Elmvale Minor  
 Hockey Association

**2018**

**Ann Flynn**  
 Stayner Minor  
 Hockey Association

**2017**

**Vonnie Crawford**  
 Township of Chatsworth  
 and District Minor  
 Hockey Association

## 2022 AWARDS



### MORE THAN A PLAYER OMHA-DAIRY FARMERS OF ONTARIO BURSARY PROGRAM

**DANI KARN (EMBRO), OWEN OELSCHLAGEL (CENTRE WELLINGTON),  
ALEX PEDERSEN (OAKVILLE), TRISTIN TSOKOS (BRIGHTON) AND  
RORY WALINGA (GUELPH)**



### Wally Scott Bursary

Over the decades Wally Scott's personal and professional interests in hockey have merged to the benefit of the OMHA. The award presented in his name recognizes his contributions and commitment to the OMHA and to the game of hockey. This award reflects the achievements of a young hockey player who is committed to his community and demonstrates athletic ability while maintaining academic achievement.

Players know first-hand the commitment needed to succeed at a high level on the ice and in the classroom. The Bursary Program is comprised of two awards – the Dairy Farmers of Ontario Bursary and the Wally Scott Bursary. It reflects the achievements of young hockey players who are committed to their community, athletic ability, and academic achievement. Each recipient receives financial support towards their post-secondary education. It provides minor hockey players recognition of their outstanding commitment to:

- **Community service:** assisting in building stronger and healthier communities
- **Athletics:** on-ice success/achievement, as well a passion for the game of hockey
- **Academics:** dedication to studies and attainment of high grades in the classroom

Mitchell Anderson (South Kent) and Tyler St. Louis (Ayr) received the Wally Scott Bursary.

## RECENT RECIPIENTS

### 2021

**Luke Bailey**  
Lambeth Minor Hockey  
Association

**Evan Muller**  
Oakville Minor Hockey  
Association

**Dylan Pergentile**  
West Niagara Minor  
Hockey Association

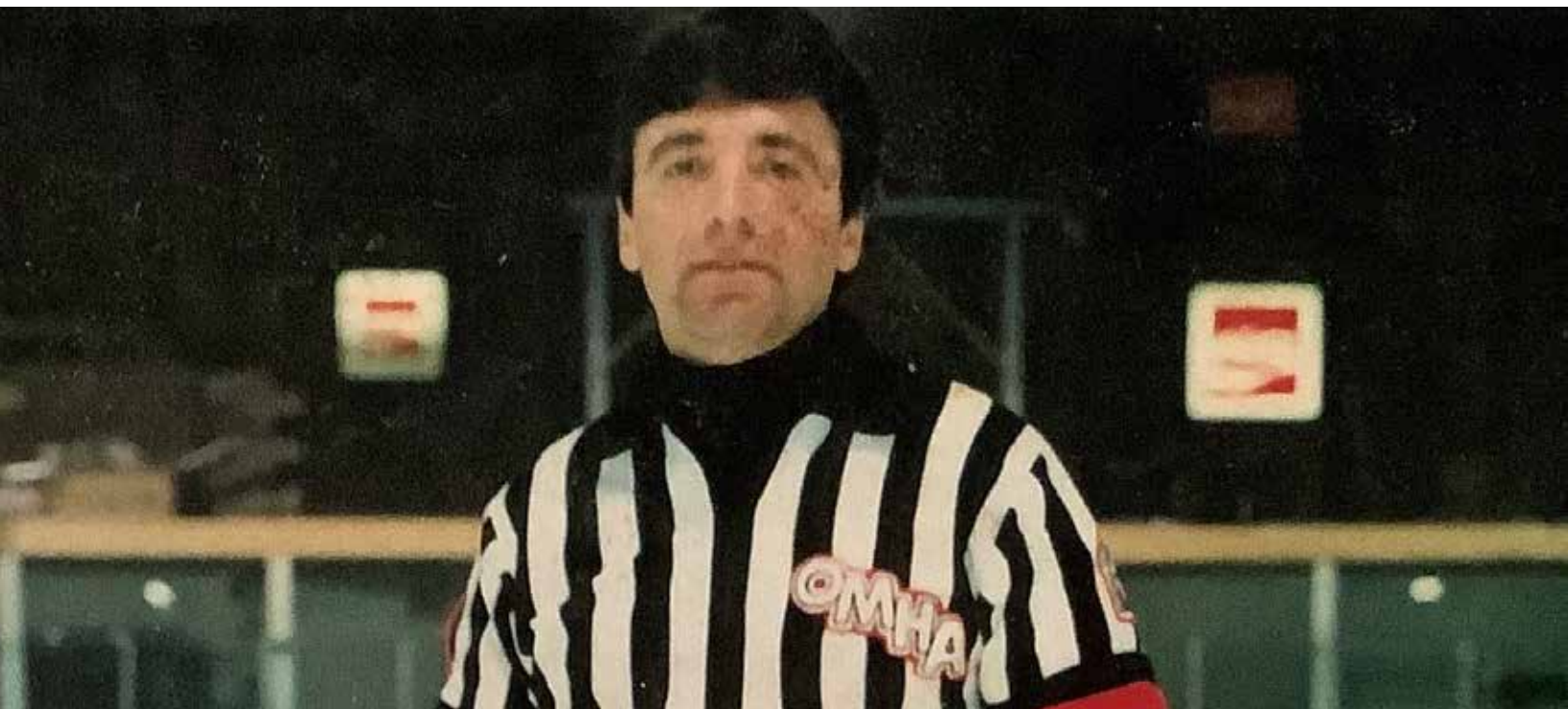
**Aidan Proderick**  
Loyalist Minor Hockey  
Association

**Henry Stephenson**  
Lindsay Minor Hockey  
Association

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO PROGRAMMING  
EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENT AWARD

# KEN CADEAU

Coldwater Minor Hockey Association



## Excellence in Development Award

An award established to recognize and honour individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to hockey development programming in minor hockey in the OMHA. Nominees can be from any area of hockey development, including Player development, Coaching, Officiating, Safety, and Program Administration.

For over 45 years, Ken Cadeau has been a constant figure in the minor hockey scene in Coldwater. In addition to his years spent as a minor hockey player and coach, Ken is a level four official and has spent the majority of his time as a referee as Coldwater's Referee-in-Chief. He always finds a way to support the people in his association, be it communicating rule changes to players and coaches, helping on-ice or off-ice officials get through stressful game situations, or recruiting new officials. He serves as a great mentor to many young officials and hopes to continue to help develop referees once his skating days are over.

**"He always has his ear to the ground looking for new officials, whether they are young officials or more senior people. He's always talking to the kids, always trying to figure out if they are interested in doing this. He's got a good ability to recognize who can be a good official."**

- Frank Brazda, Past President, Coldwater Minor Hockey

## RECENT RECIPIENTS

2021

**Kelly Hastings**  
Collingwood  
Minor Hockey Association

2020

**Matt Bell**  
Ennismore Minor  
Hockey Association

2019

**Wendy White**  
Newmarket Minor  
Hockey Association

2018

**Mike Hendrickson**  
Kent Minor  
Hockey Association

2017

**Derrick Burrows**  
Kincardine Minor  
Hockey Association

## 2022 AWARDS

### HONOURING DECADES OF SERVICE OMHA HONOUR AWARD

# DON EASTER

Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association



#### OMHA Honour Award

The OMHA Honour Award was established to recognize a person who has made an outstanding voluntary contribution to minor hockey for a considerable period of time, doing so of his, or her, own free will and not as part of a job or position for which they receive monetary consideration.

Don Easter of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association is the recipient of the OMHA Honour Award. He has dedicated a lifetime of volunteering to hockey and has exemplified outstanding voluntary contributions to minor hockey for decades in the Whitchurch-Stouffville area. His contributions have come in the form of coaching and executive leadership. This is not the first time Easter has been honoured. In June of 2010, Don was named the Whitchurch-Stouffville Sports Person of The Year.

**“Don was the guy who could come in and help. It didn’t matter what aspect of our Association. If we needed an accountant, he would look after that. If we needed a scheduler, he would help there.”**

- Mike Humphreys, Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association Past President

## RECENT RECIPIENTS

2021

**Neil Skirving**  
Hamilton Jr. Bulldogs

2020

**Rick Thomas**  
Parry Sound Minor  
Hockey Association

2019

**Wendy White**  
Newmarket Minor  
Hockey Association

2018

**Helen Ford**  
Oakville Minor  
Hockey Association

2017

**Cheryll Barr**  
Coldwater Minor  
Hockey Association

# A STORY OF SPORTSMANSHIP – WHAT HOCKEY IS ALL ABOUT

---

## OUR HOCKEY FAMILY ISN'T JUST OUR TEAM, IT'S EVERY TEAM.

---



Today, I am writing to you on behalf of the coaching staff for the Bradford Bulldogs U15 MD team.

In a game in December, an unfortunate incident occurred towards the end where our goalie tried to play a puck in our zone. He accidentally collided with a player from the Ajax-Pickering team and immediately hit the ground. After being cared for by our staff, a representative from Ajax-Pickering left the stands and also tended to Emerson on the ice. I suspect that she was either a medical doctor or nurse practitioner. After a few minutes, our coaching staff instructed me to call paramedics and they tended to Emerson and transported him to the hospital.

For the approximately 40 minutes that Emerson was on the ice, both teams took a knee and waited patiently. When Emerson was eventually loaded onto a stretcher, the echo in the arena was deafening as both teams banged their sticks on the ice as a show of support. Once both teams had exited the ice, the Ajax-Pickering player who was involved in the collision came to our dressing room to apologize for the unfortunate incident. In our opinion, this was one of the classiest moves that any player could ever make, as he undoubtedly felt terrible about the incident which was unavoidable.

But my writing to you is to express sincere gratitude on behalf of our Bulldogs team for the outpouring of support that our team has seen from the Ajax-Pickering head coach and his entire parent group. They sent me an e-transfer with a substantial amount of money, following a collection that his team took to support Emerson and some of the fallout from

that evening. To tend to his injuries, paramedics not only had to cut off Emerson's jersey, but his chest protector. As you can appreciate these pieces of equipment can be costly for any player, but goalies always a bit more. The support and the class shown by this Ajax-Pickering squad was never expected and it goes without saying that this team has really stepped up to support a fellow player in need. We can't thank them enough for their generosity, their compassion and interest that they have shown towards our team and specifically Emerson.

All coaching staff teach the kids to win respectfully and to lose respectfully in the game. That being said, it's just as important that our hockey families be leaders on the ice as they are off the ice. The parents and players from Ajax-Pickering have really demonstrated what being part of a hockey community is all about.

Together with the funds that Ajax-Pickering has donated, in addition to a collection that our team organized, we helped get our goalie back on the ice - with a brand new jersey and chest protector. We're thrilled to have Emerson back between the pipes with our team.

We can't thank Ajax-Pickering enough for their generosity and their class. This leadership starts with parents, transcends to our coaches and is then passed along to our players on the ice. Needless to say that Ajax-Pickering is doing a fine job and we can't wait to see them the rest of the season. Regardless of the score, these teams battle hard and it's great to know that we have two great associations that can support one another both on and off the ice.



# A LOOK BACK AT THE 2022 – 23 HOCKEY SEASON

## AUGUST 2022

The OMHA Development Seminar begins efforts in the field, and OMHA personnel are gathered to share best practices, update on the newest sport technical information available, and depart the event energized to support our Membership.

This past season the OMHA delivered Virtual Online (Live), Recorded On-Demand and In-Person clinics for over 7,000 Coaches and Referees who were seeking to certify or re-certify their credentials.

Close to 12,000 Coaches, Trainers and Referees continue to certify or re-certify their credentials in the off-season.



## SEPTEMBER 2022

The puck drops on the **OMHA Regular Season** as a new year of hockey officially gets underway.

The new **OMHA Referee School** format provided new officials with an opportunity to acquire officiating skills and rule knowledge, while completing OMHA and Hockey Canada qualification requirements.

170 sets of player and goalie equipment were given to over 70 associations across the OMHA as part of the **Player and Goalie Assist Program**, aimed to help eliminate the cost of purchasing equipment for families that are new to hockey.

The **OMHA Referee Assist Program** was launched to support young officials by providing a free Force Sports officiating jersey to nominated officials.

The **Breakaway Podcast** returned for its seventh season. As one of minor hockey's only podcasts, this season of Breakaway featured discussions on practice plans, player development and growing the game.



## OCTOBER 2022

The first set of this season's **U16 and U18 AAA Rankings** presented by Hudl are released. The Top 5 of each group are revealed throughout the year on a bi-weekly basis along with a list of Players to Watch.

The OMHA launched the sixth season of the **Coach of the Month** award presented by The Coaches Site. Nominations from all over the province were submitted highlighting the fantastic work that coaches are doing across all of our associations.

## NOVEMBER 2022

The ninth annual **OMHA Essay Contest** presented by Respect in Sport was launched with this year's theme being 'I Love to Play Hockey'. This year, we asked minor hockey players across the OMHA to submit video essays. Owen Misener from Woolwich was later announced as the grand prize winner. The contest is designed to engage players in an educational manner while encouraging them to express their thoughts on why hockey is a sport that all players can enjoy.

## DECEMBER 2022

The **U16 AAA Showcase** presented by Hudl was hosted in Oakville, featuring teams playing in front of OHL scouts during their draft year.

Many OMHA teams volunteered their time over the holidays, participating in **Hockey Gives Back** to make their communities a better place through gift drives, food bank donations and other great initiatives.

## JANUARY 2023

The regular season picks right back up after the Holiday break and teams play the final stretch of the regular season as OMHA League Qualifiers approach.

The **OMHA Bursary Program** presented by the Dairy Farmers of Ontario returned for the fourth season. The program, comprised of two bursaries, awards seven graduating students who succeed on the ice and in the classroom.

## FEBRUARY 2023

**Thank a Volunteer Week** was celebrated, shining a spotlight on the thousands of volunteers across the province who are the lifeblood of minor hockey working behind the scenes.



## MARCH 2023

As part of the new Hockey Canada Player Pathways, all players play meaningful hockey until March 1. Teams competed in League Qualifiers to punch their ticket to the OMHA Championships.



## APRIL 2023

#RedHats are handed out to 45 Champions at the **OMHA Championships** presented by Egg Farmers of Ontario. Close to 400 teams competed in over 750 games across six locations over four weekends around the province.

The second annual **U14 OHL Cup** presented by Dairy Farmers of Ontario took place in Oakville featuring 12 of the top U14 AAA teams from across the province. The Barrie Jr. Colts took home the silver medal in the event.

The annual **Ontario Hockey League draft** saw 87 players from the OMHA selected including five in the first round, led by first overall selection Matthew Schaefer. The **OHL Under-18 Priority Selection** was also held and the OMHA had four players chosen in the first round including Andrew Arseni, selected second overall.

# COACH OF THE MONTH



This was the sixth season of awarding an OMHA Coach of the Month presented by The Coaches Site and we were overwhelmed with the amount of nominations received and all of the deserving coaches. Aimed to recognize the importance and dedication of coaches in the province, one coach was chosen each month and their work was profiled. Thank you to all of the bench staff who make minor hockey possible for our players!

## NOVEMBER

### BRIAN VINES – MINTO U15 LL

#### How do you keep a group of U15 players focused over the season?

I find team bonding to be very crucial in hockey. At the beginning of the season, I treated the team to a hockey camp to create a team bond. In December, my wife and I have rented the local theatre for a Holiday get-together with all family members invited. We are booked in tournaments where the kids can play hockey but also have fun using the hotel amenities. I feel a good rapport with the parents is so important and I appreciate their support.

## DECEMBER

### TERRY DESHARNAIS – GANANOQUE U13 HL

#### What keeps you coming back as a non-parent coach?

This is my first year but it won't be my last for many reasons. My appreciation for the opportunities I had as a kid playing in Gananoque and the volunteers I had work for me and my teams. Another reason is being a part of the community. It adds a level of joy being out and about. You see kids you have worked with or connected with at the rink through the hockey family and it makes you feel a part of it because they show joy when they get to see you outside of practice or game times. The kids will bring me back, and hockey - I love the sport. Everything about it, how it brings people together, the life and game lessons you learn.

## JANUARY

### MATT HALL – ORANGEVILLE U11 HL 5

#### How do you create an inclusive environment with your team?

Communication is huge. We praise the importance of being a good teammate and playing to your ability. We provide attainable goals for each player based on their skill level and provide the support needed. We try to be organized so that we can make the most of the time we have together on the ice. We build up the more skilled players and show them how to be leaders to their teammates. We also have two post-game awards we hand out - Player of the Game (POG) and Hard Worker of the Game (HWOG). The POG receives the gold jersey and game puck while the HWOG gets the hard hat for leaving it all out there on the ice. Even after a hard-fought loss, the boys are excited to hear who won the jersey and hard hat and happy for the teammate that won.

## FEBRUARY

### DEREK MCLAUGHLIN – SOUTH HURON U15 C

#### What do you try to teach your players?

Outside of teaching the game of hockey, there are many important lessons that make a successful player and a successful team. Learning to respect the game. The officials, the coaches, your teammates, and your opponents. I emphasize the importance of being a great teammate. The value of being a great teammate is immeasurable to the success of the team. When players feel comfortable and supported, they play better. Being a great teammate is a very valued characteristic of a player at all levels. The importance of teamwork. Playing together as a team and working toward a common goal. It's the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. That each player on the team is valued and is an important part of the success of the team.

The value of hard work and commitment. All of these are valuable lessons for hockey and for life.

## MARCH

### JAMES COATHAM – ORONO U9 HL 3 & U7 HL 8

#### Why is it important to create a love of the game in the game's youngest players?

The love of the game for young kids is one of the most important things to me. I never wanted to lose any kids out of the program due to not having fun. I wanted them to enjoy hockey for what it is, a game. Hockey should never feel like work at this age, the kids are there to have fun. They spend their entire days at school learning and exhausting their brain power and patience; They just need to have a place to unwind and enjoy. During this season we had the opportunity to join our two teams for some fun practices where my U9 team came in to work with the U7s. Each kid on that U9 team was full of joy as they helped kids, and every little kid was full of smiles as they worked and played on ice. I know every single kid will end this season with memories which will increase their chances of returning to hockey next year.



# HOW ONE TEAM USED THE POWER OF HOCKEY TO LEARN ABOUT ORANGE JERSEY PROJECT

In January, the coaches of the St. Thomas Minor Hockey Association U11 (2012) AA Junior Stars surprised the players with new jerseys. These jerseys weren't the team's colours. These jerseys were a bolder colour, that stood out, and drew attention. These jerseys had a different logo on them too. The coaches had requested Orange Jersey Project jerseys for the team. The players instantly accepted them with enthusiasm, donning them as soon as they could at their next practice. When the coaches bestowed the jerseys to these athletes, they instilled in the players that these jerseys came with a great responsibility and expectations. The expectation was that the athletes would become educated about the history of Residential Schools. The expectation that they would strengthen their knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. Most importantly, that they would be responsible for acknowledging, accepting, and respecting all athletes without prejudice or discrimination.

In mid-February these jerseys disappeared from their hockey bags. When I asked my player where his jersey went, he told me that the coaches had to do something with them.

Later that month, the St. Thomas Jr. Stars U11 AA hosted the London Jr. Knights U11 AA - White. Prior to the game I received a call from head coach Jon Dryfhout informing me that there would be a speech and presentation prior to the game. I was invited to attend. When my wife, daughter and I arrived all but one player was dressed in their Orange Jersey Project jerseys, with the St. Thomas Stars crest on their left shoulders, and their jersey numbers on their backs. One player was seated not wearing a jersey.

Coach Dryfhout, standing in the centre of the room, began his speech. He quizzed these ten and eleven-year-old athletes on their knowledge of Residential Schools. Within only a moment the voices of seventeen future emissaries and allies began sharing what they had learned about Residential Schools and Indigenous Peoples, with such detail that every adult in the room was speechless at how knowledgeable these youth were. So much so that Dryfhout remarked his admiration for the players far exceeding expectations.

After hearing from the youth, Dryfhout continued his speech, that would have left the most robust of characters choked, emphasizing the purpose and importance of the jerseys that they had been gifted. That the players, while wearing these jerseys, were playing for a greater cause that day. That they were to play with strength, resilience, courage, and determination to honour those who have been impacted by Residential Schools. Those who are survivors, and those who did not.

Following Dryfhout's speech the energy in that room could be felt in the air, if not throughout the entire arena. The player that was not wearing a jersey was #77, Ken Carnahan. Dryfhout then turned his attention on Carnahan. Surrounded by his teammates and the coaching staff, including Dryfhout, Cory S., D.J. K., Dave H., Ryan W., Kevin B., and Mike L., Dryfhout addressed Carnahan, calling him to the centre of the room.

Dryfhout then announced that Carnahan was being gifted his Orange Jersey with "C" on the left chest next to the #87, for Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #87, and had been appointed as the honorary captain for the game. Dryfhout handed the jersey to Carnahan's mother, Sarah, a member of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, to place the jersey on her son. Immediately after receiving the jersey, without prompt, the players began cheering and chanted "Captain Ken" for their teammate, surrounding one another, molding into one indistinct orange form of unity.

Prior to hitting the ice, the players lined up in the hallway, could still be heard chanting "Captain Ken". The coaches had planned for Carnahan to take the ice first. When the gate opened, Carnahan was the first player out the gate, hitting the ice with a tempo not seen before. He was given the ice to complete a lap before his teammates joined him. Carnahan's Kokomis (grandmother), a member of Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, who herself is a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, unaware that the team would be wearing their orange jerseys and that her grandson was honorary captain, was in attendance for the game.

In the audience, families, friends, bystanders, and even players warming up for their game could be heard asking what the "Orange Jerseys" were for. The Orange Jersey Project's mission was a success. They had "...use[d] the power of sport to serve as a vehicle toward educating today's young athletes about the history of Indian Residential School System and strengthen the path toward truth and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples."

Not only are the coaching staff developing athletes, they are undoubtedly developing a generation of the greatest citizens in our communities. The determination, accountability, work ethic, integrity, commitment, and potential of these youth is by far the greatest score on the board.

Chi-Miigwech players, bench staff, parents, families, friends, fans and supporters.



# MAKING HOCKEY A WELCOME PLACE FOR EVERYBODY

He was 17. It was 1986 and the day is etched in stone in his memory. He stepped onto the white sheet of ice for the first time in his hometown of Flint Michigan and felt completely out of place.

"I realized back then the sport didn't have diversity. We didn't use that term at that point. There were just no black people."

Rico Phillips, who is now the Director of Cultural Diversity and Inclusion for the Ontario Hockey League, is talking about his early days in hockey as one of the keynote speakers at the Ontario Minor Hockey Association's (OMHA) recent Annual General Meeting.

Phillips didn't really have much of a playing career given that he didn't learn to skate until he was in high school. Where he made his mark was as an on-ice official which he did for 35 years.

But Phillips tells the audience that career almost ended before it started because of an incident that occurred after only two months on the job.

"I was refereeing a game and like many young officials, I blew a call. The head coach called me over and is giving me the business," Phillips says, as he emphasizes this was a game between eight- to 10-year-olds. He couldn't believe what happened next. Things escalated, and he experienced something for the first time in his life that he'll never forget.

"The team's assistant coach came down and started screaming at me as well, telling me he was going to kick my tail in the parking lot. He called me the "N", word but he didn't say the "N" word. He said the actual word. Here I was 17. It was the first time, I ever faced anything like that."

In shock after the game as he unlaced his skates in the dressing room, he had already decided this was going to be his last time coming to the rink.

"I wasn't going to be part of something that's racist like that."

That's when his senior partner and refereeing mentor stepped in to tell him he couldn't quit.

"He said Rico, today's a day you're either going to grow up or you're going to stay a kid," Phillips says, adding he asked his partner what he meant by that.

"He told me you're going to come across racists in your life. You're going to come across people that look at you that way

because you're different. And you can run and go the other way which is what (the assistant coach) wanted, or you can try to open up people's minds. I'm still here 35 years later."

## FALLING IN LOVE WITH HOCKEY

Despite the rough and very difficult beginning, Phillips tells the crowd at the OMHA's AGM, "when I watched my very first game at ice level, like all of us here, I fell in love with this game."

On stage with Phillips at the AGM is Tara Slone, who is nodding in agreement. Slone spent eight years criss- crossing the country with co-host Ron Maclean for Rogers' Hometown Hockey where she witnessed how hockey, at its best, brings communities together like few other things in Canada.

"I was drawn in as a fan to the best parts of what I would consider hockey culture. You know, the good stuff - the teamwork, elevating people bringing out the best in them, the dedication. That's why I loved what I did on Rogers Hometown Hockey because we got to celebrate those amazing aspects of the game."

"I personally have been very outspoken about what I see as some of the issues in hockey culture. Instead of shrinking back and being on the defensive, if we flip that around, we realize there is so much beauty and so much goodness, and it can be better," Slone tells the audience.

She adds, "we want it to be better because we love this game and because we love the people, the kids we are here nurturing into young adults and adulthood. But it can be better, and we can learn, and we can be open (to difficult conversations)."

## MAKING HOCKEY INCLUSIVE STARTS EARLY

One of those difficult conversations is how to make sure everybody from different backgrounds feels hockey is a safe and welcome place for them.

Phillips says he didn't always feel welcome, but he stayed in the game because he realized the majority were good people.

But he tells the audience if they hear banter that crosses the line or racist comments that occur in the locker room or on the ice, it needs to be called out when it first happens which he's learned can be when players are very young.

Before he started working with the Ontario Hockey League, Phillips was involved in community hockey.

In 2010, he founded an inner-city youth hockey program in Flint, Michigan to promote more racial and socio-economic inclusivity in minor hockey. He was a recipient of the NHL's Willie O'Ree Community Hero Award, named after the NHL's first black player.

Phillips began his role with the Ontario Hockey League in July 2020, shortly after George Floyd was tragically killed by a police officer in the United States, sparking organizations all over the world to look at how to erase systemic racism.

## PHILLIPS GETS ADVICE FROM WILLIE O'REE

"I wanted my voice to be heard. I knew I had something to say. I called Willie O'Ree. Willie said that your voice is being heard around hockey, so you'd better keep speaking because people are listening. I had an epiphany. So, I contacted David Branch, the Commissioner of the OHL, and I was fortunate they created this role."

One of the first things Phillips did was conduct a survey of recent OHL players of colour, which included Black, Indigenous, South Asian and Asian players. He asked them baseline questions about their experience from a cultural standpoint. While a lot of those experiences were positive, the answers to one question stood out. The players were asked if they ever encountered racist slurs or taunts in their hockey careers. Every single one of them answered yes.

**"WE WANT IT TO BE BETTER BECAUSE WE LOVE THIS GAME AND BECAUSE WE LOVE THE PEOPLE, THE KIDS WE ARE HERE NURTURING INTO YOUNG ADULTS AND ADULTHOOD. BUT IT CAN BE BETTER, AND WE CAN LEARN, AND WE CAN BE OPEN (TO DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS)."**

When he dug deeper thinking they might have experienced this for the first time in their Ontario Hockey League careers where the stakes were higher, he was surprised to learn that wasn't the case.

"All of them told me that the first time they heard a racist comment or slur or taunt of any kind was between the ages of eight and 11 and it was at an ice hockey rink and I clarified to make sure it was not at the school yard or some other place. The remarks were made by coaches, teammates, to opponents to parents."

Phillips tells the audience at the AGM that over the years, maybe people have used differences to try to intimidate or throw somebody off their game. But that causes tremendous harm. Hockey has implemented rules penalizing and giving misconducts to anybody who uses racist taunts or slurs.

"The rules are there against marginalizing people. We have always had that one parent who screams at the top of his lungs or acts like a fool during the game. I know none of you have ever been that person," Phillips tells the crowd.

He adds, "But how many of you felt so awkward or ashamed when that person was representing your team as a parent. It is time for us to flip the tables. We need to make that one person feel awkward and set the standard for that bar higher than it's ever been."

## ONGOING EDUCATION

Slone says ongoing education is key.

"These conversations (like this one tonight) are important. Communication is important. But at the end of the day, this is the only way to truly grow the game, let alone doing the right thing and being inclusive and opening our hearts. But to actually grow this game, and to make the great game that we all know and love even better, that's what you have to do."

Slone says it has been great to see some NHL teams hiring former stars of the Women's Olympic hockey team as executives, as well as the recent hiring of NHL player Mike Grier as the first black General Manager in NHL history.

Slone, who is 48, says when she was growing up, she never played hockey because in elementary school she didn't know one girl who played the sport.

"Representation matters. It really does matter. If you don't see yourself reflected in a certain world, you don't have those aspirations. They simply don't exist. If I'm a five-year-old, and I'm not seeing myself reflected in the organization and the minor hockey organization in a relevant way, there's messaging there. It's kind of coded."

In the OHL, Phillips is looking to create opportunities for players to learn more about each other's cultures. That includes everyone from Europeans to players of colour. He's also hoping to recruit more athletic trainers, equipment managers, people in hockey operations, general managers and owners from more diverse backgrounds.

He says there is one key takeaway local hockey associations can also learn from his experience especially if they are trying to reach new Canadian families who aren't involved in the game right now. He says in the US, they have 'try hockey for free days' - in an attempt to reach new people and to remove any perceived barriers.

"If you're recruiting for brand new hockey members to come out - first timers - how often do we go into the not so typical areas? Are we going and reaching out to others and making sure that we have an inclusive mindset? If we don't intentionally include, we unintentionally exclude," Phillips says.

He adds, "that's important for you and your strategy as you go forth looking at ways you can prepare to open up your doors even more."

Phillips says there's a lot of good work happening, and he is optimistic about the game's future. He is happy he didn't quit all those years ago. Phillips believes hockey is the best game in the world and shares one final thought with the audience.

"The time was not right 30 years ago. The time is right now. So please be a part of the leadership that helps us change this."

# “I LOVE TO PLAY HOCKEY”



The Ontario Minor Hockey Association is proud to reveal the Grand Prize Winner and four finalists of the ninth annual Essay Contest presented by Respect in Sport. This year's theme was “I Love To Play Hockey”. The contest was designed to engage players in an educational manner while encouraging them to express their thoughts on what life skills they learn from playing hockey.

We received over 100 video essays from creative and passionate young hockey players. This year's contest entries were a great reflection of just how much the game of hockey means to young players. Playing sports helps both physical and mental health, and this year's entries covered exactly that.

Owen Misener of Woolwich Minor Hockey Association is this year's winner who wrote about how hockey helped him learn the importance of being on a team. For being named winner, Owen will receive the grand prize of \$1000 worth of CCM Hockey Gear. Check out his essay below!

## GRAND PRIZE WINNER



**OWEN MISENER**

U12

WOOLWICH WILDCATS

Hockey makes me feel happy and confident in myself when I make a good pass or help my teammates score a goal. I feel proud of myself and my team. I've learned that we are better together than any one of us are on our own.

I also like how the drills and plays we do challenge my mind, not just my body. I love how hockey isn't just about your abilities, it's also about learning valuable life skills and lessons.

It helps me learn how to take constructive feedback and improve my skills as a player, how to win and lose respectfully and to appreciate what other people might be going through. It has helped me learn how to handle disagreements with my teammates, coaches and opposing players.

My teammates have become my best friends and we'll always have each other's backs. Hockey is also teaching me how to work hard, both on the rink and in all other areas of my life.

It has helped me learn the importance of following through on a commitment by showing up for myself and my team. I will always follow through on my commitments because I know it not only affects me but my teammates as well.

Hockey connects me to the community and the importance of helping others and giving back. My team always works to fundraise and donate to families in need, especially around the holidays.

Hockey is a huge part of my life, and I hope it always will be. The memories I am making will stick with me forever.

# FINALISTS



**BRADLEY CACCHIONE**

U8  
BARRIE JR. COLTS

I like hockey because I like playing with my friends and making new friends. I feel good when I play hockey. I like watching hockey games with my dad. I like wearing my jersey to school. I like the feeling when I score a goal and when my team comes to pat me on my helmet after the game when I am a goalie. I love doing Superman dives and it's really fun. I feel proud of myself for wearing the hockey stop over the past few years. I want to be just like Carey Price when I grow up.



**JACOB MOLONEY**

U12  
AJAX-PICKERING RAIDERS

I love hockey because I feel included and respected. This game has taught me to work hard and never give up because there is always hope and a chance that everyone can work together to win. All our coaches are amazing and put so much effort into planning our practices, games, and tournaments. Every day I look forward to playing hockey with my friends and team because it teaches me teamwork, social skills, perseverance, and to encourage everyone on my team to push through, try their best, and never give up. It does not matter if we win or lose, it just matters if we try our best, support each other, and show sportsmanship. I love hockey, it is fun, inclusive, challenging, and the best sport there ever was.



**JOEL FREEBURN**

U11  
LAKEFIELD CHIEFS

I love hockey because my team always wins. We win all the time because the scoreboard does not define whether we win or lose. We win when we choose to have a smile on our faces. We win when we work hard and play the best we can. We win when we learn to work as a team. Even more than that, hockey allows me to exercise, helps me to improve and learn new skills, and best of all helps me make new friends. My mom and dad say that every time they pick me up they see my teammates and I coming out of the dressing room and we always have smiles on our faces, even when we lose. You do not decide how hard your team works, you do not decide how good the other team is, you only decide how hard you work. At the end of my games, my coach always encourages us with this quote and I think it applies to all of life, "whether you win or lose you always win in your heart if you work hard".



**JOSEPH MERCANTI**

U11  
GLANCASTER BOMBERS

I love to play hockey because it is more than just a sport, it's a way of life. I love the feeling of gliding across the ice, the rush of adrenaline when I score a goal, and the companionship of being part of a team. The hockey community is a welcoming and inclusive one, and I've made so many great friends in hockey! When I'm on the ice with my teammates, we are all working towards the same goal and supporting each other every step of the way. I think this new generation of kids like me are going to help continue to improve the culture of hockey. This Christmas season, our whole team volunteered at Project Concern. Hockey has also taught me important life skills such as discipline, perseverance, and sportsmanship. I have learned to never give up and to always stay positive, even when things aren't going my way. Hockey is a sport that brings me joy and challenges me to my best, so that's why I love hockey.



**OMHA**™

— THANK A —

**VOLUNTEER  
WEEK**

Off the ice or on, whether you see them or not, there is an extremely dedicated group of parents, community members and administrators that give their time to keep minor hockey in motion and ensure a positive experience for our young athletes. From February 27th to March 5th, the OMHA celebrated everyone who spends their time enriching the lives of kids through hockey.

We recognize the impact that volunteers have in delivering minor hockey across the province. Volunteers are the lifeblood of minor hockey, and the OMHA takes great pride in having an outstanding group of volunteers across its centres. There are associations that rely on just a few volunteers to do the work of the many, and having one extra person contribute their time can help immensely.

From association administration to managing a team, to organizing community Hockey Gives Back events or creating a carpool schedule, these things all add up. Organizing registration, payment, scheduling and standings are all areas that volunteers dedicate their time to ensure that everything runs smoothly. While some of these actions may feel small, they are crucial to the big picture and are important pieces of the puzzle, and associations are always looking for parents who want to contribute and get engaged.

Thank a Volunteer Week was highlighted through volunteer video profiles, motivational tools showing the volunteer experience, and material-sharing for associations to call out submissions of thanks. Among the highlights included the reveal of this year's OMHA Development and Administrators Award winners, as well as the Coach of the Month for February.



# OMHA GIVES 170 SETS OF FREE EQUIPMENT TO HELP HOCKEY FAMILIES

---

## RECIPIENT ASSOCIATIONS OF PLAYER AND GOALIE ASSIST PROGRAMS ANNOUNCED

---

The Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) is excited to announce the recipient communities across the province that have received free equipment to the start of the season, designed to encourage new hockey families to try out the sport.

In the program known as Player and Goalie Assist, selected Associations are given full sets of free CCM player and goalie equipment to loan out to young players to use as needed. The equipment is sized for U9 and Below age groups. A total of 70 Associations were selected to each receive a full set of goalie gear, and 10 Associations received 10 full sets of player gear (100 total).

These Assist programs make it easier for new hockey families to fall in love with the sport without facing any financial barriers or having to make the commitment to purchase new equipment. Each set of equipment can be used by the local Association at its discretion, either loaning it out for the season or giving directly to players to keep as needed.

“The Player Assist and Goalie Assist programs have been able to make our sport more equitable,” said Karly Maurice, U9 Convenor with Penetanguishene Minor Hockey, one of dozens of Associations receiving the equipment.

“Eliminating some of cost in the equipment means that we have more members that are joining who aren’t traditionally hockey families, so it’s really helping grow our Association,” added Maurice.

Meghan Boucher is a hockey parent and her son Josh is using the goalie equipment provided after expressing interest in being a netminder.

“When Josh came to me and said he wanted to be a goalie, my first reaction was panic,” Boucher said, as she contemplated many factors including having to buy new goalie equipment.

“This program gives us the opportunity to try it at least. Not having to purchase equipment was huge. To give him that chance to go out and be goalie is great,” said Boucher.

Each year, Penetanguishene Minor Hockey runs a popular equipment swap before the hockey season and they’ve seen how important it is to offer opportunities for parents to save money.

“It might not necessarily mean they are taking every single piece of equipment. They’re coming in for what they need. It really helps our younger players who are constantly going through growth spurts,” said Maurice.

All Associations were encouraged to apply for the Assist programs. The OMHA previously ran Player and Goalie Assist programs, however, this is the first year the two programs were run at the same time.

“Programs like Player Assist and Goalie Assist are crucial in helping our Associations remove some of the challenges in bringing young players into the game,” said OMHA Executive Director Ian Taylor. “We hope that these programs can help alleviate some stresses within our communities and encourage new families to try out hockey.”

The full sets of equipment include:

Goalie Assist: catcher, blocker, chest protector, pads, stick, bag.  
Player Assist: shin pads, pants, shoulder pads, elbow pads, gloves, helmet, neck guard.

# OHL DRAFT



The Ontario Hockey League draft took place over two nights and saw minor hockey players get one step closer to realizing their NHL dreams. Five players from the Ontario Minor Hockey Association were selected in the first round of the draft, led by first overall pick, defenceman Matthew Schaefer from the Halton Hurricanes. The OMHA had 87 players selected from 20 teams. The Peterborough Minor Petes led the way with 13 players chosen. The Hurricanes and York-Simcoe Express followed with 12 and 11 players drafted, respectively. The Barrie Jr. Colts, Southern Tier Admirals, and Whitby Wildcats each had 7 players selected, followed by the Hamilton Jr. Bulldogs with 5.

The seventh annual OHL Under-18 Priority Selection draft wrapped up on April 26th for players to be selected by OHL teams. The top pick from the OMHA was Richmond Hill's Andrew Artenosi, chosen second overall by the Niagara IceDogs. He follows in a long line of high overall selections in this draft's history, including former first-overall picks Kevin Henstock, Aidan Spooner, Mitchell Weeks and Victor Hadfield. In total, there were four OMHA players selected in the first round.

## U16 DRAFT

| ROUND | PICK | NAME             | OMHA TEAM              | OHL TEAM            |
|-------|------|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1     | 1    | Matthew Schaefer | Halton Hurricanes      | Erie Otters         |
| 1     | 4    | Tyler Hopkins    | Halton Hurricanes      | Kingston Frontenacs |
| 1     | 5    | Owen Griffin     | York-Simcoe Express    | Oshawa Generals     |
| 1     | 13   | Carson Cameron   | Central Ontario Wolves | Peterborough Petes  |
| 1     | 17   | Ryan Brown       | York-Simcoe Express    | Sarnia Sting        |

## U18 DRAFT

| ROUND | PICK | NAME            | OMHA TEAM              | OHL TEAM           |
|-------|------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | 2    | Andrew Artenosi | Richmond Hill Coyotes  | Niagara IceDogs    |
| 1     | 5    | Rocco Bigioni   | Ajax-Pickering Raiders | Oshawa Generals    |
| 1     | 11   | Nathan Leek     | Barrie Jr. Colts       | Peterborough Petes |
| 1     | 14   | Adam Varga      | Burlington Eagles      | Saginaw Spirit     |



## CATCHING UP WITH OMHA-DAIRY FARMERS OF ONTARIO BURSARY RECIPIENTS

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW: BURSARY “GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY”

Players know first-hand the commitment needed to succeed at a high level on the ice and in the classroom. With this important year of high school, the hard work put forth by graduating students deserves to be recognized.

The OMHA Bursary Program presented by Dairy Farmers of Ontario rewards student-athletes who are dedicated to community service, academics and athletics as they graduate high school and prepare to enter post-secondary education.

Now in its fourth season, we reached out to some of the previous recipients to see how the bursary impacted them and how their studies are going.

“When you’re coming out of high school, anything you can get helps. The generosity of the Wally Scott Bursary was very big for me,” said Matthew van Oirschot. “Hockey is a big part of my life, and for it to also pay for in academics was nice for me. Going into first year, you have tuition and residence to pay for, it was really helpful.”

A bursary recipient in 2017, the now 23-year-old is in his first year of med school after an undergrad in engineering.

He sees the similarities between his educational path and his experience in minor hockey. Still active in the sport, he is now captaining his team in an all-medicine recreational league.

“As you grow through hockey, you’re often with players that are around your age. As you get older, especially in university, you’re joining teams that have a wider age group. For me, being able to watch the different roles I’ve played, from being a rookie on the team to a veteran and a team leader as you got older, and mentoring those first-year students in the way that you got mentorship and guidance from those roles previously, is something that’s been a really valuable lesson to me.”

The lessons she learned in hockey are also helping Dani Karn in her first year of her Bachelor of Commerce in Food and Agricultural Business at the University of Guelph. She was a recipient of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario bursary.

“It helped me learn how to work with other people. Communicating with everybody, making sure everybody knows what they have to do. Quality of work too, making sure everybody is putting in an effort to reach your goals,” said Karn.

“In terms of balancing hockey and school life, it definitely helped prepare me with the time management skills that I would need,” echoed Owen Oelschlagel, a Dairy Farmers of Ontario bursary winner from last season. “Being in the locker room and collaborating and working as a team definitely helps when you’re working on group projects.”

Studying for his dual degree in Ivey Business and Engineering at Western University means there’s always a lot on the go for Oelschlagel. It’s what he’s noticed the most in the difference between high school and post-secondary education.

“You manage your time on your own, you learn on your own. and you have to take more initiative to get projects done and on time.”

With co-ops and internships on the horizon and the first semester in the books, university is bringing on new challenges and experiences.

“I’m really loving it. I wouldn’t have this opportunity without the bursary,” said Karn.

Hockey remains an important part of their lives. Seeking out intramural leagues within their schools has given them the opportunity to stay involved in the game.

“It’s still my go-to extracurricular activity. It’s something I look forward to every week,” said van Oirschot. “Although times can get very busy, it’s really important to have those outlets and have fun.”

# 2023 OMHA CHAMPIONS



Parents and grandparents packed into arenas cheering on their children as skaters carved up the ice with huge smiles on their faces on the road to the #RedHats, the Ontario Minor Hockey Association's coveted prize for its champions.

Over 740 games took place at OMHA Championships presented by Egg Farmers of Ontario. More than 390 teams attended to crown 45 Champions across nine age groups in rinks in Barrie, Halton Hills, Kingston, Oakville, Whitby and Windsor.

Leading up to the OMHA Championship weekends were League championships and regional qualifying events where teams could punch their tickets to get to these OMHA Championship weekends.



**WHITBY WILDCATS**  
U10 AAA



**WHITBY WILDCATS**  
U10 AA



**CENTRE WELLINGTON FUSION**  
U10 A



**OAKVILLE RANGERS - BLUE**  
U10 BB



**BARRIE JR. COLTS**  
U11 AAA



**CENTRE WELLINGTON FUSION**  
U11 AA



**ESSEX-SOUTHPOINT**  
U11 A



**OAKVILLE RANGERS**  
U11 BB



**STRATHROY ROCKETS**  
U11 TIER 1



**AYLMER FLAMES**  
U11 TIER 2



**SAUGUEEN SHORES STORM**  
U11 TIER 3



**OAKVILLE RANGERS**  
U12 AAA



**BELLEVILLE BULLS**  
U12 AA



**MILTON WINTERHAWKS**  
U12 A



**BARRIE JR. COLTS**  
U12 BB



**WHITBY WILDCATS**  
U13 AAA



**BARRIE JR. COLTS**  
U13 AA



**ESSEX-SOUTHPOINT**  
U13 A



**CLARINGTON TOROS**  
U13 BB



**PENETANG FLAMES**  
U13 TIER 1

# 2023 OMHA CHAMPIONS



**EAST LAMBTON EAGLES**  
U13 TIER 2



**SHALLOW LAKE LAKERS**  
U13 TIER 3



**HALTON HURRICANES**  
U14 AAA



**NEWMARKET RENEGADES**  
U14 AA



**BARRIE JR. COLTS**  
U14 A



**OAKVILLE RANGERS**  
U14 BB



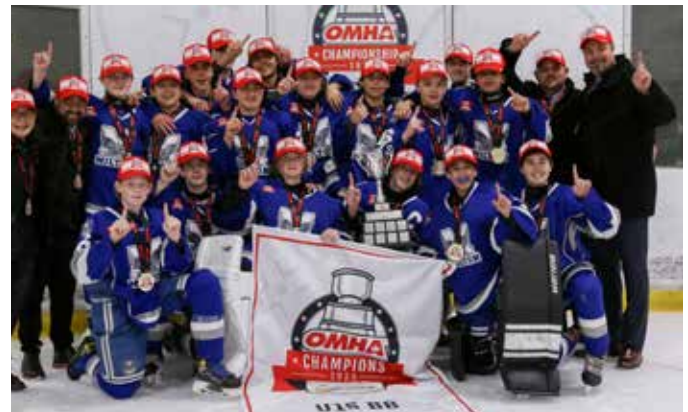
**YORK-SIMCOE EXPRESS**  
**U15 AAA**



**BARRIE JR. COLTS**  
**U15 AA**



**WOOLWICH WILDCATS**  
**U15 A**



**MILTON WINTERHAWKS - WHITE**  
**U15 BB**

# 2023 OMHA CHAMPIONS



**ST. MARYS ROCK**  
U15 TIER 1



**SIX NATIONS BLACKHAWKS**  
U15 TIER 2



**OTONABEE WOLVES**  
U15 TIER 3



**PETERBOROUGH MINOR PETES**  
U16 AAA



**NEWMARKET RENEGADES**  
U16 AA



**ESSEX-SOUTHPOINT**  
U16 A



**WEST NIAGARA FLYING ACES**  
**U16 BB**



**OSHAWA GENERALS**  
**U18 AAA**



**OAKVILLE RANGERS - RED**  
**U18 AA**



**CENTRE WELLINGTON FUSION**  
**U18 A**

# 2023 OMHA CHAMPIONS



**ERIN-HILLSBURGH DEVILS**  
**U18 BB**



**SOUTH MUSKOKA BEARS**  
**U18 TIER 1**



**CLEARVIEW CANUCKS**  
**U18 TIER 2**



**TWEED HAWKS**  
**U18 TIER 3**



**WOOLWICH WILDCATS**  
**U21**

# MilkUP

A source of Vitamin A for healthy bones & teeth.



Because they'll probably need it.

## FuelUP with MilkUP



**OMHA.NET**

