#### 2023 ANNUAL REPORT





## **Truth & Land Acknowledgements**

Myles Ahead, Advancing Child & Youth Mental Health ("Myles Ahead"), was established to create system changes that will help children, youth, and their families access timely and appropriate mental health supports, with the ultimate objective of life promotion (i.e., suicide prevention). Myles Ahead is a national charity, operating in Tkaronto, Ontario, Turtle Island, and we wish to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat Peoples. Tkaronto is now also home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

Myles Ahead also acknowledges that Tkaronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. Given our focus on life promotion for children and youth, we particularly want to acknowledge that the suicide rates of Indigenous youth in Canada are alarmingly and heartbreakingly high.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among children and youth aged 10 to 29 in Canada. For First Nations people, the rate of suicide climbs to 6.2 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous Peoples in the same age range. For Inuit people, the rate of suicide skyrockets to 23.9 times higher.

Canada's racialized systems of inequity have existed since confederation and this reality was amplified by the Indian Act (1876), which is still in effect today. The Indian Act "has enabled trauma, human rights violations and social and cultural disruption for generations of Indigenous Peoples." Although mandated Indian Residential Schools and Indian Day Schools are now closed, as of 1996 and 2000, respectively, their traumatic effects are ongoing for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

In addition, while most of the racially segregated Indian Day Hospitals are now closed (two remain in operation by the federal government), given they were "intended to further assimilationist goals," their traumatic effects are also ongoing for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. The oppressive seeds of confederation were planted almost 155 years ago and continue to mutate in various forms, such as the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada's prisons (Indigenous youth comprise 7% of all youth in Canada, although Indigenous girls represent 44% of female youth and Indigenous males represent

29% of male youth in prisons) and the child welfare system (Indigenous children represent 52.2% in foster care, although they represent only 7.7% of the child population); Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) People (Indigenous females represent 16% of all female homicide victims, and 11% of missing females, despite Indigenous people representing 4.3% of the population in Canada); and, as of November 1, 2021, 99 drinking water advisories persist within Indigenous communities.

As the Government of Canada continues to uphold colonial policies and practices that oppress First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, including deprivation of their rights to self-determination and sovereignty, this continues to have varying negative impacts on their multidimensional wellness. Myles Ahead is grateful for the teachings and stewardship of Indigenous Peoples to protect and honour Turtle Island.

We are dedicated to aligning our efforts to the advancement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action, and the 2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People.

We also honour the cultures and teachings of Indigenous Peoples. We are indebted to their ways of knowing, being, and doing that strengthen Indigenous children and youths' connection with Elders, communities, cultures, and lands, which are also life-promoting and protective factors for All.

## **Anti-Violence Policy**

Myles Ahead, Advancing Child & Youth Mental Health ("Myles Ahead"), acknowledges that violence is pervasive within our society. Violence directed towards racialized and marginalized people within Canada requires dedicated action to advance awareness and constructive approaches to help create a just and safe culture for everyone.

For this policy, violence is defined to include, yet not limited to, any form of racism, stigmatization, discrimination, marginalization, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia, among any belief, bias, behaviour, practice, policy, and/or system that oppresses. As documented in this policy, Myles Ahead is dedicated to creating an organizational culture that is safe for everyone: decolonized, inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible, and anti-violent (D.IDEA).

It is fundamental that Myles Ahead's practices and products reflect this policy to fulfil our mission to advance child and youth mental health in Canada. Racism is deeply entrenched and widespread in society; particularly, for more than a century, anti-Indigenous racism and anti-Black racism is a chronic form of violence. Violence towards First Nations, Inuit, Métis, Black People, and other Powerful Groups Targeted for Oppression, has devastating impacts that cause lifelong and intergenerational trauma.

For example, some of these impacts include the cause and/or exacerbation of mental health challenges and barriers to accessing timely and suitable mental health supports. Tragically, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Black People are especially underserved by mental health support systems and overrepresented in the child welfare and youth justice systems. Without equitable access to child and youth mental health services, these communities experience poorer mental health outcomes than other communities.

One way that Myles Ahead demonstrates our dedication to anti-violence is by embedding D.IDEA practices as a fundamental principle to co-design our initiatives. In addition, our dedication to anti-violence, as illustrated in the following diagram, yet not limited to, is also demonstrated by the following actions:

- Providing foundational and ongoing D.IDEA training for employees and Board members;
- Initiatives, policies, and practices are aligned with this policy, including best practices related to antiviolence; and,
- In recognition that language has an immense impact on creating a trusting, respectful, and non-judgemental culture, and that language is constantly evolving, Myles Ahead regularly (at a minimum, annually) reviews and adjusts language in our documents and on our website, among other media, to reflect D.IDEA best practices.



Myles Ahead pledges to be an active partner, supporter, and ally in co-creating a safe and just world for everyone, as outlined in this policy. We stand firmly with our partners to eradicate all forms of violence.

# **Table of Contents**

Exec	utive	Summary	1
1.0	Background		2
2.0	Team		
3.0	Boai	rd of Directors	5
4.0			
	4.1	SafER Space	6
		Myles to Mars	
5.0	Scho	ool-Based Initiatives	8
6.0	Life Promotion / Suicide Prevention Initiatives		9
7.0	Com	communications10	
8.0	Fuel	ling Myles Ahead	11
	8.1	Run Myles Ahead	11
	8.2	Constantine Yorkville Run	13
		The Printing House Employee Participation Program	
9.0	Con	clusion	15
	ndnotes		

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, Myles Ahead, Advancing Child & Youth Mental Health ("Myles Ahead") made significant strides in advancing child and youth mental health through focused initiatives, strategic partnerships, and impactful community engagements. Our key initiatives, SafER Space and Myles to Mars, focused on creating safer, more responsive environments in emergency departments and developing scalable youth mental health hubs. We successfully co-designed and published frameworks, implemented knowledge mobilization plans, and presented at national conferences, broadening our reach and influence.

Our fundraising efforts, including Run Myles Ahead and the Constantine Yorkville Run, received overwhelming support from the community and corporate partners, empowering us to surpass our financial goals. The generous contributions from donors and partners such as Over the Rainbow and The Printing House have been instrumental in our progress.

Throughout the year, we maintained strong connections with the Myles Ahead Community by sharing valuable resources and updates, engaging in collaborative efforts to address systemic gaps in mental health supports and services. Our dedication to inclusivity, equity, and evidence-informed practices drives our mission to prevent child and youth suicide while enhancing mental health outcomes for young people across Canada.

# 1.0 BACKGROUND

Founded in 2018, Myles Ahead, Advancing Child & Youth Mental Health ("Myles Ahead") is a registered national charity in Canada that was established in memory of Myles Kulperger. Our mission is to improve access to mental health supports and services for young people, enhancing recovery pathways and preventing suicide risks. We endeavour to identify and bridge gaps in the care system, making it more responsive to all young people, especially those at higher risk. Strengthening transition points in the care system is crucial to our approach.

We are dedicated to implementing evidence-informed best practices that help ensure timely access to appropriate mental health supports and services for young people, wherever and whenever they need them. Ultimately, our purpose is to prevent child and youth suicide. To fulfil this purpose, we focus on three key areas:

- 1. Mental Health Systems
- 2. Education / School-Based Initiatives
- 3. Life Promotion / Suicide Prevention

To develop our initiatives, we validate preliminary concepts with strategic partners and through environmental scans to help ensure they are valuable and not duplicative. Our process includes best-practice literature reviews, primary research with industry and lived-experience experts, and co-design with these experts. Draft frameworks undergo detailed, iterative reviews by contributors and collaborators before being finalized and published. Once published, we work to mobilize these scalable frameworks to address gaps in support of child and youth mental health.

As part of Myles Ahead's systems approach, our industry network helps amplify our work and prevent duplication within mental health-related systems. We operate as a learning organization, using methodologies like the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) framework to help ensure efficiency, quality, and accountability, all governed by our Board of Directors.



Figure 1. Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Model

## 2.0 TEAM

In addition to Leslie Kulperger, Myles Ahead's Team includes Shelley Kulperger, Nicole Weatherly, and Stefanie Baios, who collectively focused on initiatives to advance child and youth mental health in 2023.



#### Leslie Kulperger (She/Her), Founder & Executive Director

In loving memory of her son Myles, Leslie has dedicated her life to advancing child and youth mental health systems in Canada. As Myles Ahead's pro-bono Executive Director, she combines her personal experience as a mother with her extensive professional background. Before founding Myles Ahead, Leslie led significant projects locally, nationally, and internationally, focusing on continuous improvement, evaluation, governance, and strategic programming, while building strong relationships with diverse stakeholders.



#### Shelley Kulperger (She/Her), Senior Director of Strategy & Engagement

Shelley leverages her extensive expertise in healthcare and social policy, government relations, and community engagement to advance child and youth mental health initiatives. She excels in developing and managing health and social strategies, campaigns, and programs, and her skills in research and co-design methodologies ensure that lived experiences drive system change. Dedicated to creating an integrated care ecosystem, Shelley works to support young people and prevent suicide through strategic planning and stakeholder engagement.



#### Nicole M. Weatherly (She/Her), Director of Transformation

Nicole channels her passion for child and youth mental health by transforming relationships, processes, and ideas for Myles Ahead's innovative initiatives, including D.IDEA practices. With a diverse background in engineering, teaching, management consulting, project management, change management, digital transformation, graphic design, and service design, her multifaceted expertise allows her to excel in various roles, from co-designing with youth, crafting social media strategies, and writing grants to accomplishing any task that needs her creative insights and dedicated touch.



#### Stefanie Baios (She/Her), Research & Development Analyst

Stefanie completed her Master of Science in Developmental Psychology and Clinical Practice in September 2023 at University College London. In addition to working as an Assistant Psychologist with the National Health Service, Stefanie supports Myles Ahead's development of meaningful mental health initiatives by conducting research and related activities.

## 3.0 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



#### Edward Kulperger (He/Him), Founding Director, Chair of the Board

As a Senior Vice President at Geotab and a Board of Director at BeWhere Inc. (BEW:TSX-V), Edward brings a wealth of business development and organizational governance expertise to Myles Ahead. Edward is dedicated to making a difference in memory of his nephew, Myles, and translates his innovative business strategies to help fill gaps, creating effective and efficient solutions to enable more access to services for those who need it.



#### Mike Singleton (He/Him), Founding Director, Treasurer

Mike Singleton has more than 15 years of experience as an energy economist, operating a non-profit organization focused on energy policy and resource planning. As the Executive Director of Sustainable Buildings Canada (SBC), Mike has extensive experience developing capacity with hands-on activities, including stakeholder design charrettes, demonstrating the potential to improve building designs and operations.



#### Bella Karsh (She/Her), Founding Director, Secretary

After graduating from Concordia University with a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bella attended the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto to complete a Master of Arts in Applied Psychology and Human Development. She has worked for the Toronto District School Board for the past 20 years, which includes 12 years as a teacher and 8 years as an administrator. Bella is currently the principal at William G. Miller Public School.



#### Dr. Stacey Espinet (She/Her), Founding Director

Stacey has over 15 years of experience conducting research and large-scale program evaluations in the fields of child development and mental health. She has a Doctor of Philosophy in Developmental Psychology from the University of Toronto, where she focused on facilitating the early emergence of executive-function skills that underly mental health



#### Anseh Dibaji (They/Them), Founding Director

Anseh is a clinical social worker and mental health lead at a Family Health Team in downtown Toronto. She has a Bachelor of Social Work from Ryerson University and a Master of Social Work from the University of Toronto. Anseh worked in the children's mental health sector for 7 years prior to focusing on youth and adult mental health treatment in a primary care setting, developmental trauma, and the neuroscience of mindfulness meditation.



#### Dr. Dina Lafoyiannis (She/Her), Director

Dina is a Clinical Psychologist registered with the College of Psychologists of Ontario. She holds a Master's in Medical Sciences from the University of Toronto and a Ph.D. in Clinical Developmental Psychology from York University. A strong advocate of public mental health services, Dina has worked in a number of public children's centres and provided clinical supervision to psychology trainees. Dina currently runs a private psychology practice in Toronto.

# 4.0 MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

In 2023, Myles Ahead focused on progressing the following mental health frameworks:

- SafER Space: A Human-Centred Approach for Advancing Child & Youth Mental Health in Emergency Departments; and
- Myles to Mars: An Evidence-Informed, Scalable, Framework to Equitably Co-Design Youth Hubs.

These initiatives are further outlined in this section, highlighting our progress and next steps.

#### 4.1 SafER Space



In 2023, we made considerable progress in our mission to advance the planning and integration of SafER Space within emergency rooms (ERs) across Canada, prioritizing children's hospitals. Through concerted efforts in relationship building and knowledge mobilization, we have established strong relationships with hospitals, government officials, and strategic partners to successfully pilot SafER Space.

Our dedication to advancing the SafER Space initiative remains steadfast, and we are excited about the continued impact and growth in the coming years. Together with our partners, SafER Space will create safer, more responsive ER environments that prioritize the mental health needs of children and youth across Canada.



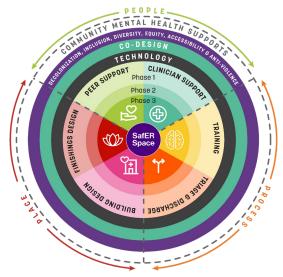


Figure 2. SafER Space Framework Documentation and Model

Next Steps: Our focus in 2024 will be on confirming a partnership with a children's hospital to pilot the SafER Space framework.

#### 4.2 Myles to Mars



In 2023, we achieved key milestones in the development and promotion of the Myles to Mars initiative. Our efforts have culminated in the successful finalization of the co-design process, final draft of the framework, and the creation and implementation of a comprehensive knowledge mobilization plan. Our focus on Myles to Mars in 2023 has laid a solid foundation for the initiative's expansion and impact. We are dedicated to continuing our efforts to promote and implement Myles to Mars across Canada, helping to ensure that youth can access comprehensive supports and services they need to thrive.

Myles Ahead was honoured to present at Frayme's annual youth mental health conference in Vancouver. Nicole Weatherly, Director of Transformation, and Madeleine Cho, a Youth Collaborator, co-presented "Co-Designing Youth Hubs - Myles Ahead!" They shared insights into the Myles to Mars initiative and facilitated an interactive simulation of the co-design process. The team also previewed an upcoming informational video co-created with Sphere Media. This opportunity allowed Myles Ahead to make valuable connections and align with Frayme's collaborative values. We look forward to officially launching the Myles to Mars framework, including its publication and piloting with one of our strategic partners.



Figure 3. Avatars of the voiceovers showcased in Myles to Mars' explainer video, illustrating the components of the framework's model

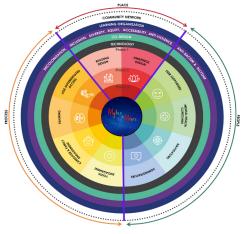


Figure 4. Myles to Mars Framework Model, co-designed with, and for, youth

Next Steps: Our focus in 2024 will be on publishing the Myles to Mars framework, building partnerships for a future pilot and official launch.

In 2023, our commitment to advancing the mental health and well-being of children and youth has led us to prioritize the SafER Space and Myles to Mars initiatives. As these two critical projects demanded our full attention and resources, we made the strategic decision to temporarily put the Heart-to-Heart initiative on hold.

Our original plan for Heart-to-Heart was to establish and initiate a co-design process with parents and caregivers to develop a comprehensive framework focused on supporting the emotional and mental well-being of children and their families. While this initiative remains a vital part of our long-term vision, we recognized the immediate and pressing need to focus on SafER Space and Myles to Mars.

# 5.0 SCHOOL-BASED INITIATIVES

Building on the foundation laid in 2022, our sole focus for School-Based Initiatives in 2023 was the weekly Educator Outreach via email. This initiative was designed to provide educators with critical insights, tools, resources, and classroom content focused on increasing practical awareness. The primary goal was to provide diverse resources and tools for educators to help them effectively support their students' mental health, particularly those who are at risk of suicide.

The curated content for the Educator Outreach continues to emphasize the development of healthy relationships, resilience, and the principles of D.IDEA. Our content covers a wide array of topics, including self-awareness, social-emotional learning, anti-oppression, and Indigenous Worldviews.

This year, we introduced additional content and resources to further support educators in their roles. New topics included advanced strategies for supporting inclusive classrooms, techniques for enhancing student engagement, and updated guidelines for mental health intervention.

Our efforts in 2023 have not only broadened the scope of our Educational Outreach but also deepened the impact on the educators and students we serve. We remain dedicated to providing comprehensive support to educators for co-creating safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments for all students.



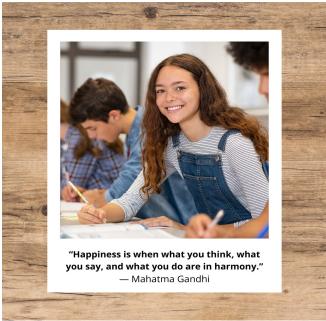


Figure 5. Activating & Maintaining Mental Health Figure 6. Promoting Mental Health & Happiness

Next Steps: In addition to gathering continuous feedback and increasing the subscribers list, Myles Ahead will focus on evaluating our educator resources through educator surveys, and increasing subscribers.

# 6.0 LIFE PROMOTION / SUICIDE PREVENTION INITIATIVES

As one of the five founding members of the Ontario Youth Suicide Prevention, Life Promotion Collaborative, Myles Ahead continued our work in support of the Collaborative's mandate. Formed in 2019 to help ensure young people in Ontario, and their supporters, "have access to current evidence-based, practical knowledge to effectively guide their efforts in suicide prevention and life promotion." As a result of our collective work in 2023, "School-based suicide prevention, life promotion initiatives: Resources for community-based providers" was published.

In addition to Myles Ahead, the Ontario Youth Suicide Prevention Life Promotion Collaborative's founding members include the following organizations: Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario (Acting as the Secretariat); Canadian Mental Health Association, Waterloo Wellington; Children's Mental Health Ontario; Jack.org; Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addiction; Mental Health Commission of Canada; and School Mental Health Ontario.



Next Steps: We will continue to work with the Collaborative and release knowledge products to help support the reduction of suicide-related risks for young people in Ontario. Myles Ahead will also work to promote these resources across Canada.

## 7.0 COMMUNICATIONS

In 2023, we maintained strong connections with the Myles Ahead Community by sharing valuable child and youth mental health resources and updates. To help further our reach, we are particularly grateful to Hydro One for their support in developing an explainer video and featuring a blog article about Myles Ahead. The video, highlighting our founder Leslie Kulperger, summarizes our story, initiatives, and approach, while the blog article also discussed warning signs of suicide risk and how to help. For more details, visit the Hydro One Blog and watch our Explainer Video.





Advancing systems to support child and youth mental health



February 6, 2023



Toronto, ON

Leslie Kulperger is dedicating her life to co-create changes to reduce the risk of child and youth suicide.

Read Now >

Figure 7. Blog Article by Hydro One



Figure 8. Myles Ahead Explainer Video by Hydro One



Figure 9. Members of Myles Ahead's Team - on set of filming for the explainer video

# 8.0 FUELLING MYLES AHEAD

We are immensely thankful to the Myles Ahead Community for their steadfast support, which has empowered us to remain hopeful and dedicated to creating impactful changes in child and youth mental health systems. We are especially grateful to all participants and donors whose generosity has made these efforts possible.

#### 8.1 Run Myles Ahead

We are excited to introduce the Run Myles Ahead series, which includes the following events in chronological order: i) Ottawa Tamarack Race Weekend, ii) Constantine Yorkville Run, iii) Run Myles Ahead Community Fun Run, and iv) TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon. Highlights from the Constantine Yorkville Run and the Run Myles Ahead Community Fun Run are featured in our annual report. We are thrilled to announce that we surpassed our goal of \$50,000 for this year's Run Myles Ahead series, raising over \$70,000!

The Run Myles Ahead Community Fun Run was on Sunday, October 1st. Thank you to everyone who sponsored, donated, or joined the 5th year of our annual 5km run or walk. We continue to be touched by how many people show their support. It was a beautiful sunny day for the event, including Myles' cousin Mabel returning with friends to host her Lemonade Stand and "Bad Jokes" alongside Myles' best friend Ben who had a table full of his homemade baked goodies for donations. In addition to the generous sponsors shown below, we express our appreciation for BenchSci for their employee giving campaign, and The Richard's Group Peer-to-Peer Campaign with Capital Home Lending and ShandyMan Contracting, and Mazda Canada.

Run Myles Ahead's Generous Sponsors:















Figure 10. Tote bags printed with our Community Leader Sponsor: Gyro Group of Companies





Figure 11. Dedicated participants from Run Myles Ahead

#### 8.2 Constantine Yorkville Run

On World Suicide Prevention Day, September 10, 2023, members of Myles Ahead's team participated in the Constantine Yorkville Run, a premiere 5K event supporting over 20 Toronto charities. This year, Over the Rainbow company, with co-owner Daniel Carman, selected Myles Ahead as a fundraising partner to raise vital funds for youth mental health. We are deeply grateful that Daniel Carman introduced Myles Ahead as a charity for the Constantine Yorkville Run in addition to fundraising for us! Through this event, we also received a generous donation from Parallax, Rio Can, and Westdale Developments, for which we are incredibly grateful.



**Figure 12.** Members of Myles Ahead's team and Over the Rainbow co-owner, Daniel Carman, onsite at Myles Ahead's booth for the day of the race

#### 8.3 The Printing House Employee Participation Program

Founded in 1961 by Earle O'Born, The Printing House (TPH) is a Canadian-owned family business with branches and retail centres across Canada. TPH is one of those unique, value-based organizations that has been giving back to the community since its inception. On April 3, 2023, Myles Ahead's founder, Leslie Kulperger, and siblings Edward (Board Member) and Shelley (Senior Director of Strategy & Engagement) met with Janice O'Born, Chair of TPH Charitable Office, who presented them with an employee donation of \$21,000. It is an honour to be selected as one of three organizations for TPH's 2022 charitable Employee Participation Program. To show Myles Ahead's appreciation, Leslie presented Janice with a Tree Ring plaque, created by Memories Made Canada. We are grateful for the dedication of TPH and their employees to advance child and youth mental health. From one family organization to another, we can't thank you enough TPH.



Figure 14. ATP presents Myles Ahead with donation (L-R: Janice O'Born and Leslie Kulperger)



Figure 15. ATP and the Kulperger Siblings exchange a donation and a Tree Ring plaque of gratitude (L-R: Edward Kulperger, Janice O'Born, Leslie Kulperger, and Shelley Kulperger)



# 10.0 CONCLUSION

Myles Ahead had a transformative year in 2023, marked by significant achievements in our mission to advance child and youth mental health. Through dedicated efforts, strategic partnerships, and community support, we have laid a solid foundation for future growth and impact. Our initiatives, SafER Space and Myles to Mars, are making meaningful changes in the mental health landscape, helping to ensure that young people receive the supports and services they need to thrive.

As we look forward to 2024, we remain dedicated to our mission and are hopeful about the opportunities to further our work. We extend our deepest gratitude to our community, donors, and partners for their unwavering support. Together, we are co-creating a brighter, healthier future for all children and youth.

**Advancing Child & Youth Mental Health... Myles Ahead!** 

## **Endnotes**

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# Onwards!Upwards!MylesAhead!



Photo by Orchidpoet: Shoreline and beach of Killbear Provinical Park, in the Robinson Huron Treaty and Williams Treaty areas, and one of Myles' favourite places.



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