

A History of IYAC /ACYI and the Board

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This timeline is designed as a high level orientation for Board members. It is not meant to be an exhaustive history of the association.

It provides highlights of the founding of IYAC/ACYI and how it has evolved over the years. Our association was first called the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Assn., an association for teachers. At that time there were about 50 members. Over the years, with Guruji's encouragement, we opened membership to students of Iyengar yoga. Typical, the ratio of students to teachers is about 20%. In 2020 when we hosted Abhijata for an online workshop, there were about 800 members, half of whom are students.

From our beginnings with the focus on training and assessing teachers, the overseeing and implementing teacher training guidelines and assessments was and continues to be the responsibility of the Professional Development committee. They work hand in hand with the Board which is responsible for the overall function of the organization which includes finances, membership, website, maintaining contact with RIMYI, Bellur donations, communications, proper use of the certification mark and ethics.

Timeline

1984 - Guruji travelled to Canada for the first time after the international Iyengar yoga conference in San Francisco. He visited Edmonton, Galiano Island, Vancouver and Victoria. In Victoria there were several events including a visit with Swami Radha from the Yasodhara Ashram. In the entourage were Jawahar Banghera and Birjoo Mehta.

1987 – Guruji taught at a convention at Harvard University. Canadian teachers were present and held their first meeting. Canadian Iyengar yoga teachers have met annually since then.

1990 – Guruji taught at a conference in Edmonton organized by Liz McLeod. There was a medical question and answer time.

1993 - While in Toronto to teach at our convention, his last visit to Canada, Guruji told us we must begin to hold assessments to certify teachers. That was the beginning of annual conferences that focused on learning about the assessment process, the syllabi, and how to train teachers ourselves rather than through RIMYI.

1997 - the last Canadian month long intensive at RIMYI. Guruji granted the “first wave” certificates to founding members and senior teachers such as Margot Kitchen, Ingelise Nehran, Shirley Daventry French, Marlene Mawhinney, and others. They were tasked to be first assessors. They had to be over 50 years of age, taught for ten years and been to Pune at least three times. During the same year, Guruji requested Assns be licensed to use his service mark (the symbol that only Associations use) and for certified teachers to sign an agreement to use his certification mark, and teach and use his name.

1998 - First assessment in Vancouver for second wave teachers who had been teaching for ten years. It was a very unique format, all the candidates sat in a gallery and could watch all the other candidates teach.

Prepared by Patricia Fernandes with contributions from Leslie Hogle and Drew Perry (former presidents of the association)

2001 - teacher training guidelines were developed for use in Canada

2001 – May 2-6 conference taught by Geetaji, Vancouver, BC

2002 - at the request of the Canadian Assn., Guruji gave permission to the Canadian Assn to license the certification mark; previously Canada had paid and received the CM licenses through the US association.

2004 - Pune Constitution, Guruji's desire to support and bring consistency to Assns around the world. Canada had incorporated under Corporations Canada as a non-profit association and developed internal policies and procedures. This relationship continues to this day: Pune provides a constitution and the assessment guidelines, and Assns. around the world are tasked with interpreting and applying the guidelines for their country's unique laws and situations.

2006 - Initiated in 2003, in 2006 Guruji established the Bellur Trust, a charitable body to improve the quality of life for villagers, and asked the Assns to commit to supporting that work on an ongoing basis.

2008 – Hosted Geetaji (accompanied by Abhijata) at conference May 1-4, Penticton, BC

2014 - Pune teachers began travelling to other countries to teach in the spring when RIMYI was closed. Canadian teachers wanted to take advantage of going to major conferences in the spring and still have our own conference. The PD Cttee asked if we could change our AGM to the fall, and IYAC/ACYI changed our fiscal year end from Dec. 31 to June 30, to make this possible.

2018 – a new website was launched, using different software with the intention of easier maintenance by volunteers

2019 - the PD Cttee reported to the Board that the fall timing of a conference and AGM was not working with realities of teaching terms and travel. For 2020-2021, the two events were separated - a virtual AGM in fall 2020 (to minimize the need for travel) and conference in spring 2021.

2019 – RIMYI asked representatives from all countries to attend a meeting in December where a new assessment and teacher mentorship guidelines was presented. A draft was sent to associations for distribution and comments from members in late January 2020 and the final document was circulated in July 2020. All members were encouraged to submit questions and a FAQ was started which can be accessed at any time.

2020 – the global pandemic of covid-19 forced everyone to severely limit their activities outside their homes. Yoga teaching went online in a huge way. We hosted Abhijata in a 5 day workshop which had over 600 attendees from 18 countries. PD committee reviewing new assessment guidelines and determining how to implement.