



## MRFA Spring Retreat 2024

*“Belonging, Building, and Connecting Communities”* is a compelling call to reflect and act, and the 2024 MRFA Spring Retreat program is filled with exciting sessions that promise ample opportunity for members to pause, connect with each other, challenge themselves, and learn from one another after a very busy year. Great thanks to all the faculty members from across the university who submitted proposals and who will be facilitating recreational activities!

The annual Retreat is an exceptional occasion. It strengthens collegiality and facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration in scholarship, teaching and service. It helps us to focus on all the important things that make Mount Royal an outstanding university and that make the MRFA a strong and vibrant community.

The MRFA expresses its deep appreciation to the Board of Governors, the President’s Office and the University Secretariat for the ongoing contribution of \$10,000 that they have committed to this Retreat. This sponsorship stretches back to the 1990s, and we are happy that the University continues to support our valuable annual event. It’s an opportunity for gathering together as a community that we cherish now more than ever.

As we endeavor to create a positive and generative space, we’d like to point your attention to the community agreements and related matters detailed in the following preface. We’re confident everyone will learn a lot at the Retreat, and we hope you can all relax a little, too. Perhaps we’ll even see one another on the dance floor!

Regards,  
The MRFA Professional Development Committee





## Retreat Preface

The Association is committed to providing this opportunity for members to connect and engage in important dialogues and discussions in a positive and proactive way. What this means is that we need to consider our own positionality and be thoughtful in our approaches to ensure that we are all able to engage fully in conversations while minimizing harm and supporting each other when needed.

## Community Agreements

As participants at the MRFA Spring Retreat we agree to the following Community Agreements:

- Recognize and seek to understand individual differences.
- Speak from our own experience and not invalidate others' experiences.
- Respect every person's right to withdraw consent to physical, mental, and/or intellectual interactions.
- Approach difficult topics with the aim of mutual understanding (not necessarily agreement).
- Recognize that our intention does not mitigate impact. The statement recognizes that there are some who have been able to speak openly and freely without regard for consequences and that others have not been heard. We aim to create a respectful and inclusive space where people who have not been heard feel invited to speak while inviting those who have spoken to listen and to choose words judiciously and be mindful of their potential impact.

Facilitators will be present in each session throughout the retreat to provide support to speakers and attendees in adhering to these Community Agreements. If necessary, individuals may be asked to reframe their comments in alignment with the Agreements. If individuals engage in actions or words that are intentionally or unintentionally aggressive, bullying, or intimidating they may be asked to leave a session.

\*due to the number of attendees and sessions at the retreat, these Community Agreements will only be read in the first sessions of each day.  
Members with comments, questions or feedback related to community Agreements are welcome to submit them [here](#)

## Expectations of Participants

We need to operate in an environment of safety to fully engage in potentially difficult conversations. The Association has set the following expectations to assist in creating a safer environment.

Retreat participants are expected to adhere to the Association's [Standards of Professional Conduct](#).

## Supporting Each Other Through Difficult Conversations

Should a participant or moderator perceive that the community agreement has not been observed or a behaviour does not meet expectations, the moderator will draw attention to the situation and may

- Offer the participant an opportunity reframe their comments,
- Provide suggestions on how comments might be reframed, and
- Should the participant not take up these opportunities to address the situation, the moderator may ask the participant to leave the session.



## ***Seeking Support When Needed***

The program does include sessions which may give rise to difficult conversations; wherein, conversations may activate members and ongoing engagement in such conversations may be challenging in various personal, interpersonal, and emotional ways. Depending on your position, preference, and personal approach to these difficult situations, you may seek support at the retreat in the following ways:

- Continue to engage, respectfully, in the conversation in accordance with the Community Agreements and Expectations listed above and remind others, where needed, to abide by these same expectations. There will be facilitators in each session to assist in this.
- Disengage from the conversation and remove yourself from the space
  - We hope you may feel empowered to do so without concern for impact or perceptions: many of your colleagues in the space with you are allies and will support your decision to leave a space that is harmful to you
  - Refer to the [Member Support Form](#) to connect with support on site or otherwise
- If you want to remain in the session but seek support or advice from a qualified resource, complete this [Member Support Form](#). Our remote support person, Kim Smith, will be monitoring this form and will respond promptly.
- After leaving the space seek out support from Kim remotely. Please email her at [LabourRelations@bvcfa.com](mailto:LabourRelations@bvcfa.com) or call her at 403-542-8482.

On returning to campus, members are reminded of these existing resources to which you may refer for support or advice if you have concerns:

- Office of Safe Disclosure - Request a consultation here: <https://bit.ly/3KXozZM>
- MRU's Confidence Line - <https://bit.ly/3rBkF11>
- Relevant Policies and Processes - <https://bit.ly/3JV8nH8>
- Homewood Health - <https://bit.ly/3rDir5j>
- MRFA Contacts:
  - MRFA Faculty Relations Officer - [FacultyRelations@mrfa.net](mailto:FacultyRelations@mrfa.net)
  - MRFA Labour Relations Officer - [LabourRelations@mrfa.net](mailto:LabourRelations@mrfa.net)
  - MRFA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer - [edi@mrfa.net](mailto:edi@mrfa.net)

**We appreciate your participation in the annual MRFA Spring Retreat.**

**We hope that it is a positive experience for all attendees.**

*This program has been reviewed and approved by the MRFA Executive Board.*

*Questions about the program can be directed to [president@mrfa.net](mailto:president@mrfa.net)*





# MRFA 2024 Kananaskis Retreat

## Day 1 – April 29, 2024

8:30 – 9:00 | Arrival and Coffee in Mount Kidd Manor – Conference Foyer

9:00 – 9:30 | Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Opening Prayer

9:30 – 11:00am | Keynote - Cultivating Connections at MRU and Beyond

The keynote panel for the 2024 MRFA Spring Retreat will focus on building and supporting connections between MRU and local communities. This panel will highlight the impact faculty members have beyond the classroom, emphasizing the invaluable relationships between members of our academic community and the communities we serve. The panel features a diverse array of speakers, each bringing a unique perspective to the discussion:

- *Jaime Waucaush-Warn*, an Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities, will delve into the intersection of "Community Building through Indigenizing and Connections to Land" and how explorations of art on campus can illuminate the broader connections that exist between MRU, our communities, and our history.
- *Mirjam Knapik*, Associate Professor in the Counselling department, will explore the theme of "Building Faculty Communities." With insights into the dynamics of faculty collegiality and the role these community bonds play in the broader success of our academic community.
- *Yasaman Amannejad*, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Computing, will address the critical theme of "Building and Supporting Student Communities" and how faculty play a pivotal role in shaping and nurturing student communities within the academic environment.
- *Richard Gregory*, Contract Faculty in the Department of Child Studies and Social Work, will speak on "Teaching in Local Communities and Contract Faculty Communities;" specifically, considering the outreach and impact that faculty can have beyond the classroom, especially within local communities.

This keynote session will, also, provide an interactive space for attendees to share their experiences in building and supporting communities both on campus and locally. We hope this session will inspire, engage, and foster an enhanced understanding of the impact that faculty members have in collectively shaping the community experience at MRU.

11:00 – 11:10 | Coffee and Refreshments in the Mount Kid Ballroom foyer





**11:10 – 12:30pm | Session 1**

## **The Development of an Engaged Association: Creating a Community Prepared to Champion Collective Excellence**

**Presented by:** Lee Easton (80 minute Presentation - Hybrid)

**Location:** Mount Kidd Ballroom **Facilitated by:** Lee Easton

The outgoing president of the Mount Royal Faculty Association will share insights on developing an engaged community poised to champion collective excellence. Key points include crafting a strategic vision, promoting inclusive leadership, fostering a culture of collaboration, navigating challenges, sharing success stories, and preparing for future leadership. Join us for a concise exploration of practical strategies and lessons learned in building a vibrant and united academic association.

## **International Field Schools: What's the problem?**

**Presented by:** Joe Pavelka (80 minute workshop)

**Location:** Mount Kidd C **Facilitated by:** Marva Ferguson

Internationalization is a key priority in the current academic plan. Short term faculty-led study abroad programs or field schools present an ideal opportunity for student growth in a variety of dimensions. They can also support faculty in developing innovative scholarship and service-learning opportunities. However, they have struggled to take hold at MRU relative to other comparable universities. This session will explore what is working and what is not in relation to the facilitation of such programs. We will address everything from barriers to entry to factors related to successful execution. This session is ideal for faculty contemplating the development of a field school or currently engaged in such a program. The aim is to present background content and facilitate a broader discussion with all present.

## **Play to Learn: Using Games to Increase Engagement and Connection in the Classroom (and with our Colleagues!)**

**Presented by:** Michele Wellsby (30 minute Presentation and 50min. Rec. Activity - games)

**Location:** Wildflower Room **Facilitated by:** Teresa Merrells

This session will start with a brief discussion of how board games (or elements of games) can be integrated into the classroom to increase student engagement, create a sense of community, and facilitate learning. The remaining time will be an opportunity to play some different board games and connect with colleagues!

## **Creating a Culture of Respect: Strategies for Navigating Academic Incivility**

**Presented by:** Leda Stawnychko (80 minute Presentation & Workshop)

**Location:** Mount Allan Room **Facilitated by:** Chi Dara

This interactive workshop explores workplace incivility, drawing on empirical research conducted across four Canadian universities and the participants' own experiences. The research investigated the nature of incivility, its causes and consequences, and the strategies adopted by academic leaders to address these behaviours. Participants will be invited to engage in self-reflection, role-plays, and collaborative discussions to strengthen communication and conflict management skills and prepare personalized plans to manage conflict in their units.







12:30 – 1:20pm | Lunch in the Rockies Dining Room

1:30 – 2:00pm | Session 2

### Engaging a Community of Practice in Curricular Redesign

**Presented by:** Breda Eubank, Jocelyn Taylor, Andrea Phillipson, Nadine Van Wyk, Mark Lafave (30 minute presentation – **Hybrid**)      **Location:** Mount Kidd A      **Facilitated by:** Teresa Merrells

Curriculum redesign should not occur from a top-down, outside-in approach. Rather, curriculum redesign must be developed as part of a community of practice to bring about real change. Therefore, Wiles & Bondi (1984) designed a systematic approach to curricular redesign that involves six steps: 1) Identifying the need for change; 2) Information gathering; 3) Review overall course goals; 4) Development of the course and its instructional strategies, and implementation; 5) Evaluation of the redesigned course; and 6) Dissemination. We will outline how we have created a community of practice and adapted these six steps in our journey of redesigning the first-year core course HPED 1040: Wellness & the Student: From Personal Health to Community Action. Lessons from this session can be applied to all curricular redesign.

### Facilitating and supporting student coping: the instructor role in supporting student mental health.

**Presented by:** Michael Huston, Mirjam Knapik (30 minute Presentation)

**Location:** Mount Kidd C      **Facilitated by:** Marva Ferguson

Stress and coping are key ingredients in the student experience and play central roles in the development and trajectory of student mental health concerns and academic achievement. Helping students cope with and manage their most important demands can reduce stress and significantly boost both their mental health and learning. We will present a few key models and highlight MRU coping resources. Most importantly, we will reveal the secret, ancient techniques that unleash the power of student coping and academic success, and which can, in turn, increase instructor satisfaction and well-being. Tips for faculty and other nice people will be embedded throughout.

### Better than an A? Community Service Learning as Motivation to Learn

**Presented by:** Alana Gieck and Karen Owen (30 minute Presentation)

**Location:** Wildflower Room      **Facilitated by:** Michele Wellsby

Broadcast Media Studies students and the community partners discover schoolwork goes beyond an assignment and a grade. The collaborative media productions have tangible benefits. The partners can use the content for promotion and education. CSL demonstrates to students the value of connecting experiential learning with community needs.

Previous research has demonstrated that service learning can positively impact a student's motivation, engagement, and marks. There are also indications, it is a better fit for some students over traditional teaching methods.





## Cultivating Agency and Belonging through Student-Choice in Assessment: A Case Study from ELCC 1110

**Presented by:** Maureen Cullen and Nancy Espetveidt (30 minute presentation)

**Location:** Mount Allan Room

**Facilitated by:** Astrid Heidenreich

This paper presentation delves into the transformative journey of redefining student assessments in the Bachelor of Child Studies Early Learning and Childcare Play I - ELCC 1110 course. By thinking with the theme of the MRFA 2024 retreat of Belonging, Building, and Connecting Communities, our proposed presentation narrates a pedagogical shift towards student choice as a catalyst for fostering belonging and engaging diverse student communities. We redesigned the assessment structure by offering 17 distinct assignment options, enabling students to tailor their learning opportunities. This strategic restructuring allowed students to build a personal assessment portfolio by choosing assignments ranging from 5% to 30% in weight, accumulating to 35% for each term, complemented by mandatory assignments and guest speaker engagements. This paradigmatic shift in pedagogical approach empowers learners to align their academic engagements with their individual preferences and strengths.

Our approach is rooted in the principle that student choice is instrumental in dismantling the traditional colonial education structures characterized by power, control, and compliance (Zinga & Styres, 2019). To critically address the historical implications of colonization and settler privilege within university structures and early childhood education, this course's assignment framework endeavours to decentre instructor authority and augment student agency (Patel, 2015). By prioritizing choice, we cultivate a learning environment that values autonomy, personal relevance, and intrinsic motivation, steering away from superficial learning towards profound, meaningful educational experiences.

Through this innovative approach, we envisage a dialogic and participatory classroom ethos that aligns with the conference theme of Belonging, Building, and Connecting Communities and embodies the spirit of educational equity. The paper will conclude with reflections on the challenges and successes of implementing this model, along with practical recommendations for educators seeking to embrace student choice in curriculum design. By sharing our experiences, we aim to inspire a reimagining of assessment practices that build inclusive educational spaces where every student feels a sense of ownership and integration in their educational journey. Our presentation will contribute to the ongoing conversation on how pedagogical strategies can build stronger, interconnected learning communities that are responsive to the needs of the 21st-century student.

2:00 – 2:10 | [Coffee and Refreshments in the Mount Kid Ballroom foyer](#)





**2:10pm – 3:00pm | Session 3**

### **Your Association: Your Contributions Create the Campus Community You Want!**

**Presented by:** Brenda Lang, Lee Easton, Liza Choi, and Marty Clark (50 min. panel - **Hybrid**)

**Location:** Mount Kidd A **Facilitated by:** Lee Easton

Make your service count! Through your contributions to MRFA committees you help to build the campus community in which you, your colleagues, and your students can thrive! While serving on MRFA committees, contract and full-time faculty work with colleagues to champion collective excellence in teaching, scholarship and community engagement. Our work is collaborative and grounded in equity, diversity, and community. We are united in our commitment to upholding the highest of standards for post secondary education, celebrating the power of collegial governance, advancing the rights of our community, and advocating for a better future. In this session, you will hear about members' experiences in serving on Association committees and learn of the many benefits your service provides for you individually and to the broader MRFA and MRU communities.

### **Adapting Instruction (AI): Faculty Responses to the Proliferation of Generative AI Tools**

**Presented by:** Sarah Banting, Jill Boettger, Chris Bullen, Tony Chaston, and Randy Connolly

**Location:** Mount Kidd C **Facilitated by:** Chi Dara (50 minute presentation)

Our multi-disciplinary panel will address the ways generative AI tools are changing our approaches to teaching and assessment, and shifting our perspectives on the work we do.

### **Connecting with Self and Community Through Sound and Good Vibes**

**Presented by:** Stacey Bliss (50 minute session and workshop - bring a yoga mat!)

**Location:** Wildflower Room **Facilitated by:** Teresa Merrells

This presentation + workshop first illuminates SSHRC-funded research projects over five years in Canada, Chile, India, and the UK. The presenter outlines themes from 'sound educators' who use voice (singing/mantra) or 'healing instruments' (symphonic gongs/crystal bowls/shruti box). At the interface of sound studies in education and wellness education, the research follows assertions that sounds are affective vibrations that resonate and form educational systems of knowledge and meaning-making. Two salient themes for an embodied, sonic, healthy education include: 'You are an instrument' and "Functional Harmony." This session embarks on how a 'sound education' greatly affects both personal and social health and well-being. After the presentation of the research (15 mins), the workshop portion includes humming, conscious breath work, and a mini sound immersion (relaxation) (20 mins), and group discussion of a 'sound pedagogy' and application for attendees personal, social, and educational contexts (15 mins). (Attendees - if you like, bring a yoga mat to lie down for the sound immersion/relaxation portion. Chairs are provided.)







## Successes and Failures in Building an Interdisciplinary Faculty Community

**Presented by:** Charles Hepler (50 minute presentation)

**Location:** Mount Allan **Facilitated by:** Michele Wellsby

Global video game revenues in 2023 were on the order of \$200 billion. There is a student video game development club within the SAMRU student club umbrella. There have been other student video game clubs. But, there is no coherent faculty group working with video games.

The study of video games crosses many disciplines. In the games development course that I've taught, I've started trying to bring students from multiple disciplines together. So far, I've had limited success.

In preparation for teaching the course next year, I have attempted to build a group of Faculty who are interested in video games and are interested in supporting students in working together across disciplines. In this presentation, I'll talk about what went well what what didn't go so well in my attempts. And I'll invite attendees that I haven't yet reached to join whatever group(s) have formed.

**3:00 – 3:10 | Coffee and Refreshments in the Mount Kid Ballroom foyer**

## 3:10pm – 4:00pm | Session 4

### Almost Halfway! Preparing for your Mid-Term Tenure Evaluation

**Presented by:** Michael Ata, Rachael Pettigrew, and Kevin O'Connor (50 minute - Hybrid)

**Location:** Mount Kidd A **Facilitated by:** Michele Wellsby

This session is geared towards faculty in year three of the tenure-track process. In this session, a panel of department chairs and colleagues who have recently completed their year three evaluation will share their perspectives and experiences. Topics covered include how to prepare your year three dossier, expectations towards tenure at the mid-term meeting, and what to expect in the meeting generally. The goal of the session is to make the midterm evaluation process more streamlined by allowing tenure-track faculty to become more informed about the process in a personable manner. The session is envisioned to start as a presentation, but end as a collegial discussion between panelists and tenure-track faculty.

### Journeying with students in Indigenous land-based learning towards wellbeing, sustainability, and interconnectedness

**Presented by:** Joshua Hill (50 minute presentation)

**Location:** Mount Kidd C **Facilitated By:** Astrid Heidenreich

I will share some of what I have been learning about wellbeing and sustainability education through engaging in Indigenous land based learning alongside my students. I will chronicle the pedagogy, assignments, and ethical considerations I have explored. I will draw on a scholarship of teaching and learning research study to provide student perspectives on a land based learning assignment and the impact of these practices on their relationship with themselves, the land, and all of their relations. Ultimately, I aim to make my practice visible and open up a space to connect with others interested in this work.





## Making It Stick

**Presented by:** Nancy-Angel Doetzel

(50 minute presentation)

**Location:** Wildflower Room

**Facilitated by:** Chi Dara

Honoring “Championing Collective Excellence,” this session “Making It Stick” can encourage building community within the classroom and inspire building a healthy connectivity between professors and students. The session will address the value of “story telling” associated with the content being covered in the class. Stories have a special power to capture and maintain interest. Effective stories can evoke emotions and when emotions are present, student’s cognitive capacities can be heightened. Emotions assist students to recall important material. Some stories can induce laughter and others can be “heart wrenching.” Emotions stirred up from stories can become a contagious fire keeping the content being taught interesting. As suggested by Willingham (2009), “the human mind seems exquisitely tuned to understand and remember stories; so much that psychologists sometimes refer to stories as psychologically privileged, meaning they are treated differently in memory than other types of material” (pp. 66-67). Stories can assist in the process of making the course content stick while also inspiring collective excellence.

\*This session will be based on a discussion with participants, about the importance of story telling and hopefully the sharing of some stories.

## Making Governance Work for Faculty, Or How ever did THAT get approved!?

**Presented by:** Lee Easton and Marc Schroeder

(50 minute presentation)

**Location:** Mount Allan

**Facilitated by:** Lee Easton

Universities are unique since faculty have through Faculty Councils and GFC the right to make decisions on a range of issues that affect the conditions of academic work. Faculty Councils, for example, have authority to effect changes to scholarship criteria for tenure and promotion while GFC approves the Academic Calendar. Still, sometimes we remain uncertain how these decisions are made or how exactly to become involved in these decisions.

This session will focus on how individual faculty can connect with other colleagues to meaningfully engage with academic governance in Faculty Councils and through General Faculties Council. After outlining the mandates of governance bodies, we will focus on building and connecting with academic communities to create change. We will provide practical strategies on how to directly impact governance decisions.

4:00 – 4:15 | [Coffee and Refreshments in the Mount Kid Ballroom foyer and transition time to activities](#)





**4:15pm – 4:30 | Group Photo**

**Location – Waterfall / Pond in the center of the resort**



**4:30pm | Recreational Activities**

**Sign up sheets for all at the registration table**

- **Powwow Session** – *Mount Kidd Ballroom* - Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane
- **Photography Nature Walk** – *Meet at the Registration Table* - Shiraz Kurji
- **Pickleball** - *Meet in the Mount Kidd Building Foyer* – Astrid Heidenreich
- **Meditation / Yoga** – *Wildflower Room*
- **Drumming Circle** – TBD

**6:30pm – 1:00am | Dinner, Music Trivia, Facilitated Games and Dance**

**Mount Kidd Ballroom** for the Dinner, Trivia, Dance & Karaoke

**Wildflower Room** for Facilitated games and non-alcohol spaces.

Games include (depending on the number of people who choose to participate):  
Poker, Hearts, Sequence, Apples to Apples, Carcassonne, Risk, Reversi (Othello),  
Scrabble, Catch Phrase, and Code Names.

**Mount Allan Room** for the Faculty Band.





## **Day 2 – April 30**

Checkout early and store your bags in a room by the registration table

**8:00 – 9:00am | Morning Walk** (meet at the pond by 8:00am)

### **9:00 – 10:30am | Breakfast and Lightning Rounds**

**Location** – Mount Kidd Ballroom      **Facilitators:** Lee Easton and Chi Dara

Lightning Rounds: Hear from new MRU faculty members about their experiences and journeys which have brought them to MRU, their passions, their research endeavors, and their interests. In a time when many of us have not been able to meet with each other face-to-face, this will be a particularly great opportunity to get to know some of our colleagues. And, hear from some of our long-standing members on their experiences as they prepare to transition into retirement.

**10:30 – 10:40 | Checkout / Bag Storage**

### **10:40 – 11:30pm | Session 5**

#### **You've got tenure! Now what?**

**Presented by:** TBD      (50 minute presentation - **Hybrid**)

**Location:** Mount Kidd A      **Facilitated by:** Lee Easton

Congratulations, you achieved tenure/promotion! Years of hard work have paid off and you should be proud of your accomplishment. That's what you were aiming for in your career, right?

But what now? What other opportunities are there for you to share your experience, expertise and knowledge to benefit students, colleagues, and the university?

This session is designed to support faculty post-tenure and post-permanency to better understand the variety of options available to them moving forward once they have achieved these milestones. Participants will hear from their colleagues about what other opportunities might exist for them as they continue in their careers at MRU. Whether you are looking for some change, thinking of how you might give back for the support you received, or wanting to pay it forward to others who are on a similar path, this session offers a chance to learn more about the variety of opportunities that exist within our community post-tenure/promotion. Designed as an interactive conversation and a space to ask questions and hear ideas, you will leave with a better understanding of the multitude of possibilities that can be explored for faculty who have achieved tenure and promotion.

#### **Expanding Horizons: Community Building and Pedagogical Innovation Through OERs**

**Presented by:** Amanda Williams      (50 minute presentation)

**Location:** Wildflower Room      **Facilitated by:** Teresa Merrells

This presentation aims to delve into the potential impact of Open Educational Resources (OERs) within Research Methods education, offering insights applicable across diverse academic disciplines.

Drawing from my engagement with MRU's Open Educational Resources Grant (OEG) program, the session will explore the integration of a customized textbook specifically tailored for Journalism and





Broadcasting students. It will delve into the utilization of the Pressbooks publishing platform, complemented by the invaluable guidance provided by library staff concerning copyright and Universal Design for Learning principles.

Moreover, this presentation aims to offer a nuanced perspective on the advantages and challenges associated with OER implementation. It highlights the adaptability of OERs in meeting evolving student needs while addressing concerns regarding quality assurance, sustainability, and the initial time investment required for customization.

Reflecting on collaborative experiences with a student Research Assistant, this discussion underscores the inherently collaborative nature of OERs. It proposes effective strategies for maximizing these resources and encouraging the creation of "non-disposable"/"living" assignments, such as digital learning objects.

In summary, this presentation aims to underscore how OERs have the potential to transform teaching practices. Attendees will gain valuable insights into the potential of OERs for creating engaging, accessible, and adaptable learning experiences. Additionally, practical guidance will be provided for effectively utilizing these resources to enhance teaching and learning, especially within the framework of a blended classroom.

## Beyond the Hype: The Real AI Revolution

**Presented by:** Erik Christiansen & Kris Hans (50 minute panel presentation)

**Location:** Mount Allan

**Facilitated by:** Astrid Heidenreich

Join Erik Christiansen and Kris Hans as they explore the often-misunderstood world of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In this insightful session, we'll move beyond common misconceptions to present a clearer, more nuanced view of AI's impact and development. We encourage attendees to reconsider AI's role and influence in academia, society, and what lies ahead. This engaging presentation is designed to broaden perspectives and deepen understanding of this transformative technology.

## 11:40 – 12:00pm | Session 6

### Cultivating Inclusive Nursing Education: A Two-Decade Exploration of the EAL Nursing Student Support Program and its Impact on Sense of Belonging and Cross-Cultural Understanding

**Presented by:** Liza Choi (20 minute presentation - delivered remotely - **Hybrid**)

**Location:** Mount Allan A

**Facilitated by:** Chi Dara

Grounded in two decades of secondary data, our research study builds upon the foundational work of Choi and the EAL\* Nursing Student Support Program, aiming to contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive society through a nuanced exploration of the program's impact on a sense of belonging and cross-cultural understanding.







\*EAL includes “international students, newcomers (with permanent residency status or recent Canadian citizens), Canadian-born individuals who identify strongly with their family of origin,” and people of colour (Choi, 2023).

## Generational Divide or Generational Integration: The legacies of Elders in sustaining communities

**Presented by:** Marva Ferguson (20 minute presentation)

**Location:** Wildflower Room **Facilitated by:** Teresa Merrells

In the African, Caribbean, and Indigenous communities, Elders hold high esteem and importance, cultural knowledge, language, and are revered. In their role, they pass on information and knowledge from one generation to the next (Dei, 2020). During the 1980s Sonja Harris, Gender Specialist and Consultant at the Jamaica Bureau of Gender Affairs implored communities to stay close to their historical roots by establishing the Elders and Youth Programs designed to transfer traditional skills to youths in rural communities. As a successful program, it laid the foundation for a creative mindset in recognizing the potential for generations working together. Western societies such as Canada tends to be source of constant reminder of ageism and marginalization of a cohort who could contribute to the development of any community or society. Grappling with the notion of senior’s discount, anti-aging products, blame for health challenges and identified as bed blockers, these are common terms used to describe older adults. Lena Dominelli, a professor of social and Community Development at Southampton University in England believes the decline of the economic status of older people in the west is part of the explanation for ageism (Dominelli, 2004). How do we begin to critically examine some of the myths and assumptions about Elders in contemporary Canada? The focus of the presentation is to explore the impact of the narrative used to discuss the roles and function of older adults from a structural and empowerment position and how their skills could be transferred to the class room. Participants will gain knowledge about the lived experience of Elders and how their stories can contribute to sustainability in higher education and the wider community.

## Reflections of Interdisciplinary Collaboration While Teaching Leadership Skills to Midwifery Students

**Presented by:** Joyce Totton and Leda Stawynchko (20 minute presentation)

**Location:** Mount Allan Room **Facilitated by:** Marva Ferguson

Midwifery in Alberta is in infancy compared to other Canadian provinces. With the implementation and integration of a newly regulated profession in the healthcare system, there have been challenges with understanding and trusting between the professions, most notably nursing and medicine. This has led to impacts on patient care and professional dissatisfaction and burnout. By better equipping students in midwifery to understand the landscape of healthcare and with tools to manage communication and conflict, the hope is to provide an overall better experience once practicing that may improve patient outcomes, interprofessional relationships and attrition rates.





Recently, a new framework to support midwives to support physiologic birth in current organizational structures was published (Feeley, 2023). Most previous models focused specifically as a leader role (manager, director, etc) and limited information on the personal skills and attributes of a leader within a person (Hewitt et al, 2021; Avci et al, 2021).

There have been some studies outlining skills in leadership and interprofessional collaboration of midwifery students, including using simulation in a hybrid model (remote and in person), but none focusing specifically on self leadership skills in a remote format (Pedersen et al, 2021; 2017; Tervajarvi et al, 2021)

This roundtable will focus on the interprofessional collaboration that took place to develop self leadership teaching tools for midwifery students.

12:00 – 1:00 | Lunch in the Rockies Dining Room

## 1:00pm – Finish | Session 7

### More than Good Intentions: Developing a culture of accountability at MRU

**Presented by:** Milena Radzikowska (80 minute session and discussion - **Hybrid**)

**Location:** Mount Kidd A **Facilitated by:** Michele Wellsby

In this cooperative, interactive session, we will begin by sharing the ways that meaningful, positive change has been manifested within MRU in becoming a more equitable and inclusive place to work and learn, then explore additional and alternate methods towards building a more accountable institution.

### Media, Misinformation, and Information Literacy: Where Does it Fit at MRU?

**Presented by:** Brooks Decillia, Elaine Ori, Erika Smith, Sara Sharun, Nick Strzalkowski, and Madelaine Vanderwerff (80 minute Panel)

**Location:** Wildflower Room **Facilitated by:** Astrid Heidenreich

The new MRU Strategic Plan commits to “delivering a liberal education that prioritizes students’ development of transversal skills,” including media and information literacy. For these types of transversal skills that are not specifically related to a discipline, how do we teach them across disciplines such that they become an outcome for all MRU graduates? What does a universal or transdisciplinary approach to teaching about media and information literacy look like? What are the potential benefits of discipline-specific approaches?

In this session, MRU faculty with various disciplinary perspectives will share their thoughts on teaching these skills and facilitate conversations around the following questions: Why and how should we teach about media and information literacy - including misinformation, information integrity and information pollution - in our classrooms? What are the differences and similarities in how media, digital, and information literacies are being taught among various academic programs? What are the opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration and working together to ensure all MRU students develop these





skills? And, is it possible to co-create consistent curricula across the institution that addresses media and information literacy? And if so, how might this be accomplished?

Drawing from research expertise and teaching experience, this session is aimed at connecting MRFA community members with an interest in addressing media and information literacy for students at MRU.

## Variations on a Theme: Diverse Interpretations of “Belonging” in the Multicultural MRU Classroom

**Presented by:** Carolyn Bjartveit (30 minute presentation)

**Location:** Mount Allan Room **Facilitated by:** Marva Ferguson

This interactive session explores how creating brave spaces for dialogue enabled post secondary immigrant students, enrolled in the Bachelor of Child Studies (BCST) degree program, to inform their professors about the meaning of “belonging” in the context of their cultural views, personal histories, and classroom experiences. The SoTL research study is shaped by a set of critical questions around equity, diversity, and inclusion, the voices of power and the marginal in culturally diverse adult education programs and is rooted in critical pedagogy where participation and social action within the classroom occurs. The theoretical framework for the study is built on Gadamer’s (2004) notion of liminality—specifically the space-in-between Self and Other and the connections between past and present lived experiences. Identifying the liminal space as dialogic, the student participants shared their understanding of “belonging” with faculty members and uncovered cultural knowledge and protocols that are often concealed, silenced, and erased in colonized education institutions. This study points to how culturally diverse students situate themselves and learn in Canadian post-secondary classrooms and the implications for pedagogical practices. The research findings interrupt epistemic injustices (Fricker, 2007), and universal notions of what it means to “belong” in post secondary education settings and raises awareness about relationality, issues of identity (self and other) and the potential of student-faculty partnerships in creating inclusive classrooms that support learning for all students.

## Writing Residency (Participation is by application only – space is limited)

April 30, 4:00pm Reception and May 1 - 3 Residency.

**Location:** Wildflower and Mount Allan Rooms **Facilitator:** Andrea Phillipson **Format:** Workshop

Shaped by successful faculty writing support models (e.g., Moore, Felten, & Strickland 2013; Ambos, Wiley, & Allen 2009), this Writing Residency provides faculty with an intensive opportunity to make significant progress on their scholarly activities by working in a low-distraction environment of supportive peers, facilitated by an academic writing specialist.

**Thank you for joining us for the 2024 Spring Retreat**

***This event continues to be an annual success thanks to your participation!***

**Please take a moment to provide your feedback on the Retreat here:  
[surveymonkey.com/r/MRFARetreat2024](https://surveymonkey.com/r/MRFARetreat2024)**





**We look forward to seeing you all again next year.  
April 24-25, 2025**

