

Fall 2022



M^CLL News

An enjoyable start to a new year!

Our “See you in (almost) September” luncheon on August 31, 2022, attracted some 60 members enthusiastically celebrating our first time together in more than two years. One whole canopied area outside the Duc de Lorraine on Côte des Neiges was occupied by a happy, chattering crowd of returning and new members. 🍁

L. Sidel



On the right is our new Special Events organizer Linda Sidel (on right) with husband Jeff, and Denise Lord, (centre). Linda organized the luncheon with help from Sally Cooper, Cynthia Bowllan and Soheila Raesinezhad.



Tim Skene



L. Sidel



McGill

School of
Continuing Studies

Move to hybrid is welcomed by most

Jeff Sidel



Screen-equipped lectern

MCLL has upgraded two classrooms to accommodate an innovative hybrid model that allows study group members to participate from home and in the classroom simultaneously.

Seven hybrid groups began in April, allowing up to 12 participants to meet in each classroom, while up to 16 tuned in on Zoom. An additional study group was offered exclusively in-person, with no online component. By fall we had expanded to 11 hybrid and five in-person-only groups.

Our new state-of-the-art equipment consists of screen-equipped lecterns, microphones hanging over classroom tables to improve acoustics, and a camera that shows the people around the table to those online. Huge screens allow classroom participants to see their online counterparts and view their presentations. The cost of purchasing and installing the equipment has been covered by funds raised by MCLL from outside sources, as well as from our members.

A hybrid task force consisting of **Tim Skene**, **Martin Coles**, and **Susan van Gelder** has worked overtime to configure the classrooms and train study group participants, moderators and Zoom hosts to use this new technology effectively.

Those returning to Sherbrooke Street seem delighted to see one another. But problems do exist. A survey of spring participants indicated that while most attending in-person were glad to be back, and interacted easily with online participants, some found the masking requirement “difficult to endure”. A few who registered for in-person later decided to attend online, sometimes due to masks or COVID apprehension. Online participants generally welcomed the addition of in-person learners, though some reported static or problems hearing classroom participants. 🍁



In-person attendance suits Denise to a “T”

Denise Lord describes how she evolved from dyed-in-the-wool Zoom user in recent years, to delighted participant in study groups now being offered at 680 Sherbrooke:

Although I had been less than enthusiastic about online learning, I soon recognized and appreciated the advantages of Zoom: no need to go out in the rain, sleet or snow, no rush to arrive on time for morning study groups. I could turn off “video” to do some discreet stretching, warm up coffee and deal with personal needs.

It was therefore with some reluctance that I showed up for my first hybrid in-person class. As soon as I walked in, however, I knew I had made the right decision. What a great feeling to see familiar faces and interact in person with friends, acquaintances and new participants! The smiling eyes, nods and even fist or elbow

bumps all made for a real connection. Everyone was joyful and happy to be back.

Thanks to our tech-savvy moderator and host, everything ran smoothly. The large screen in front of the class allowed us to clearly see all participants on Zoom and to interact with them. It almost felt as if they were in class with us. After the moderator’s presentation, the usual animated discussion ensued with more and more eager participants joining in.

Catching up during the health break was a definite plus, and going out for lunch with friends afterwards made my “in-person attendance” perfect!

Although, at times, I found myself yearning for my easy chair and my home-made coffee, I chose to register for other in-person hybrid SGs in the fall. As for the winter session, it’s too soon to tell. 🍁

Jeff Stidel



The Trump Legacy group continued online during the pandemic, and is glad to be “in-person” again.



Ann saw beauty in everyday things...

Gordon Campsey



Ann with collage

The photographs currently on display in our lounge at 680 Sherbrooke are a tribute to the memory of Ann Pearson, who passed away in May, 2020. Ann was a CEGEP teacher who in retirement became adept at fine art photography. Ann moderated several study groups on visual arts. The quotations on this page and the next are taken from her Artist's Statement of 2016.

"With the advent of digital photography, I felt I could become the artist I always aspired to be. I had loved working in the darkroom and discovering how to turn what the camera captures into something that matched my response to the subject matter. Using the digital darkroom my creativity was limited only by the scope of my own imagination." 🍁



Curtain landscape

...And strove to delight the human spirit

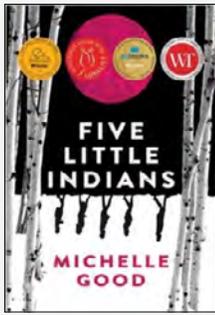


Hosta leaf on painted plate

“To be a photographer trains the brain and the eye to become aware of our surroundings in a special way, to remove the filters which stop us from ‘seeing’. We become more aware of the quality of light that transforms the banal into the beautiful, the ordinary into the extraordinary. We strive to discover the harmonious components in our subject matter which have the power to move and delight the human spirit, like music.” 🍁



Books



How residential school set the stage for lives of struggle

Five Little Indians
Michelle Good,
2020

This novel is a must-read on many levels. It addresses the realities of five Indigenous children who leave residential school, and shows how the effects of their early experiences continue to ripple through their lives.

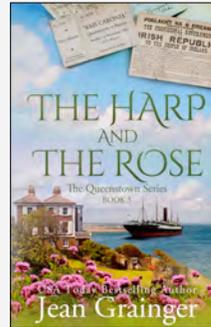
Michelle Good is a member of the Red Pheasant Cree Nation. Her mother and grandmother, as well as many other relatives were residential school survivors.

She has degrees in both law and fine arts. It was as she was working on her MFA that she started writing *Five Little Indians*, her first novel. It has won numerous awards, including a Governor General's Literary Award, and the Canada Reads competition on CBC Radio. Good has also published a book of poetry.

Michelle Good clothes reality in fiction and the result is a powerful story. The author puts the reader in touch with the emotional impact of the residential school experience. Their education provided the children with nothing that would help them succeed in the world. Each character grapples with issues of anger, pain, difficult memories and setbacks as they try to function in a world that often doesn't respect them. With no skills, they struggle with relationships and obstacles to earning enough money to survive. Some develop the resilience needed; others fall victim to depression, addiction and despair.

In reaction to the book, one of my friends said, "I'll never see the homeless, indigenous people in Cabot Square the same way again." I can think of no better motive for reading this book. 🍁

Susan van Gelder



Rollicking tales blend Irish history with fiction

I discovered an author at the beginning of the summer who has electrified me with her stories. A native of County Cork, Jean Grainger writes fiction set in Ireland of the past century, but entwined with frequent references to centuries past. From *The Tour* written in 2013 to *The Harp and the Rose* of 2021, her novels bring alive history from the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169 to the 20th century Troubles in Northern Ireland.

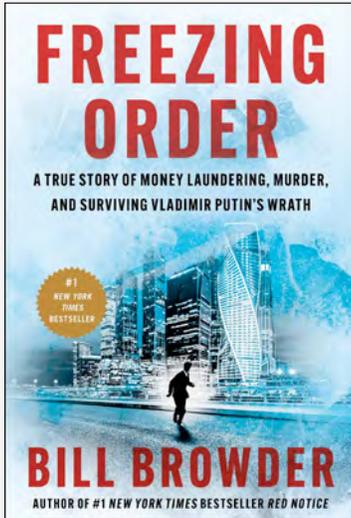
In her prolific writing Grainger draws on her experience as a university history lecturer and later as a tour guide. She has written at least six separate series set in different periods, and there are some stand-alone stories as well. If you pick up a book from the middle of a series, you will not be lost — Grainger provides just enough explanation for you to understand what has happened previously.

Influenced by her Irish counterpart Maeve Binchy, Grainger writes a rollicking good tale, complete with mystery, romance, suspense and wonderful descriptions of the land, its people, its customs and its idiosyncrasies. I've read 27 of her books and can't wait for the next one. 🍁

Sandra Frisby



Books



Freezing Order

By *Bill Browder*

2022

Much has been written about Vladimir Putin, the man who currently exerts such influence on geopolitics and has earned a reputation for deceit and malevolence. The harrowing events described in *Freezing Order*, like the unfolding story told in Bill Browder's previous book, *Red Notice*, confirm that Putin's reputation is not undeserved.

Browder is a British financier who ran a successful business in Russia until a \$230 million tax rebate fraud was perpetrated by the Russian government against his asset management firm. Browder exposed the fraud and keeps publishing books about it, as a safeguard against threats on his life from Russia's powerful elite, most notably Putin himself.

The author's dogged pursuit of justice for the murder of his lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, has given rise to the adoption of laws by a growing number of countries worldwide, sanctioning foreign individuals for human rights abuses or corruption.

Browder exposes how anyone looking into Russia's corrupt power brokers faces a mortal threat. Investigations uncovering evidence of Russian money laundering likely exceeding hundreds of billions of dollars, have led to false accusations and preposterous lies from the Kremlin, assassinations, and a series of threats to Browder and others. This latest book reveals how Russian corruption leads straight to Putin himself and how much Browder has gotten under the Russian president's skin.

Freezing Order is gripping, because of its detective story style but especially because the events it describes are true. The facts speak volumes about power and ruthlessness in the Russia's highest circles, and about enablers including Interpol, a Danish bank, wilfully ignorant western governments, American lawyers and a U.S. president. The storytelling is somewhat diminished by the author's ego, but this might be forgiven considering what he has been through and what he has accomplished. 🇷🇺

Paul MacLean



New moderators Zoom in from far and near

Anni Walsh

Writing, a creative challenge

After 40 years as a lawyer, Manchester-born Anni turned to writing, with a brief detour as a hatmaker. Based in Cardiff, Wales, she fell in love with Paris in her youth and keeps an apartment there now that she's retired. Members of a writers' group Anni attends in Paris recommended some writers' groups in Montreal, and these new online connections led her to Michael Moore, who introduced her to MCLL. After Anni remotely attended one of Michael's study groups, they decided to join hands across the ocean to co-moderate this non-traditional online writing workshop. 🍁

Linda Sidel

Blue Moon, Yellow Submarine

Linda worked as an interior designer, a real estate agent and a manager of the Fleurs de Lindy gardening business before turning to acrylic painting 15 to 20 years ago. She is past president the Artists' Association of Dollard, and uses the image transfer technique incorporating textiles and photos into her work. A Master's swimmer, Linda teaches at the Dollard Centre for the Arts and is represented by Galerie 203 in Old Montreal. Her hybrid discussion group runs for five weeks from October 18. 🍁

Norm Haslam

Invitation to discuss global travel

Norm got the travel bug while accompanying students from the school where he worked as an audio-visual technician, to London, UK – 23 times! In retirement, Norm was seen regularly at MCLL lectures until an ankle fracture in 2015 put an end to his trips downtown from South Shore McMasterville. But Zoom brought him back: He began remotely tech-hosting a study group about travel moderated by Peter Lontos. This term is his first co-moderating, again remotely, with Peter. Norm is also tech host for the SG on music of the 60s. 🍁



Volunteers celebrate summer

On a sunny June 24, 2022, most of our 11 MCLL office volunteers gathered in a downtown park for their annual picnic. Ample leftovers from a meeting of outgoing and incoming council members that week, plus home-baked desserts and a “special” lemonade, made for a welcome feast. Reflecting on the day, Astri Thorvik wrote: “We have a grand group of women who are fun and committed... There is a warmth and sharing among us that is very special for me and while we are all so different, we are all really comfortable with each other, making our outings great fun.” Hamming it up were, front row from left: Susan Biggs, volunteer coordinator, and Helen Forsyth; rear from left: Astri, Anne Tittler and Sally Cooper, administrative coordinator. 🍁



Susan Purcell





October outing to cutting-edge campus

An upcoming “trek urbain” will introduce a small group of MCLL members to l’Université de Montréal’s exciting new Campus MIL (Montréal + Innovation + Laboratoires), the largest university building project in Canada. On Friday, October 14, **Marjolaine Lalonde** plans to lead a bilingual tour of the development spanning Outremont and Park Extension.

The Campus MIL is described on its website as “*l’un des sites universitaires les plus avant-gardistes en Amérique du Nord, aussi bien pour son Complexe*

des Sciences ultramoderne que pour son caractère écoresponsable.”

All construction on the campus conforms to the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building certification program, assuring competence in sustainable practices. Campus MIL will accommodate 10,000 students and staff, 190 research labs and residents living in 1600 housing units. *C’est bien “un vaste projet de réaménagement urbain en plein centre de l’Île de Montréal”.* 🍁

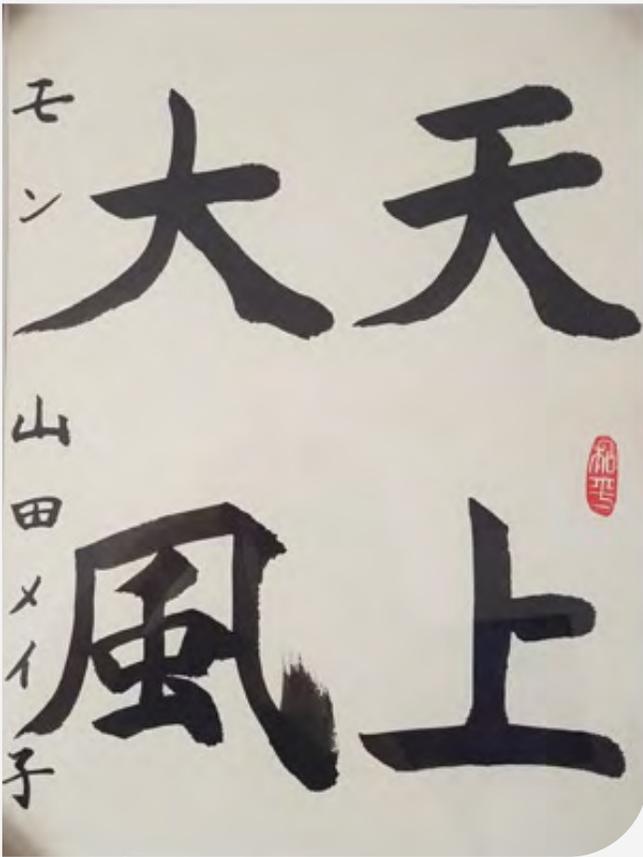
Editor’s note:

Hope you’re enjoying the second issue of the redesigned MCLL News. With the help of SCS, we’ve eliminated the cover photo and created a more traditional newsletter front page. The beautiful summer weather provided us with some lively outdoor photos, as members gradually reestablished contact. Busy people took time from their lives to write book reviews, much appreciated: many others helped with information and checked content. With each issue I hope we can widen the circle of contributors and learn more about your interesting lives. Ideas? Comments?

I’m at suepurcell@videotron.ca 🍁

Susan Purcell, Editor





Magic of the brush

An exhibition of brush painting and calligraphy will take place in our lounge in November and December, focussing on works created by MCLL members from 2016 to 2020. The classes were facilitated by Ya-Shiung Wei, who shared her passion for ancient Chinese history and literature, along with basic techniques for using the brush pen. Works in the show are by Matilda Cheung, May Ah-Sue, Reto Koch, Christine Burt and Wilfrid Dubé. Paintings not collected by the artists will be offered to viewers free at the close of the exhibition.

For more information contact

yashiung@gmail.com 🍁

Facebook ad for Open House brings in 30 new members

MCLL's third Virtual Open House was our most successful such event to date. This was likely due to our recent decision to run ads on Facebook targeted to our demographic. Dozens of people tuned in on Zoom to hear program administrator Ana Milic, as well as members and moderators, outline our program and explain what makes MCLL special. Since the first Open House in August, 2021, these events have consistently brought in new members, but this year was exceptional. Thirty new members signed up, compared to 10 or 12 in the past. 🍁



Lesley Regnier:

“There was no one quite like her”



Lesley Regnier’s intellect, humour and keen wit will be much missed by her friends at MCLL. She passed away on June 30, 2022. Editor of this newsletter until late last year, Lesley epitomized what it means to be a volunteer and peer learner.

Colin Hudson remembers Lesley from study groups. “She joined our history study group about 20 years ago, and ..participated in its various guises right up to this spring...When we were ‘doing’ Russia, most of us prepared a conventional paper ...Lesley (did hers) on ‘Life and Living in 19th century Russia.’ ...a series of letters exchanged between a Count in St Petersburg and his serf in the country, each describing their.. contrasting styles of living – housing, food and meals, entertainment, etc.; it was a work of art.”

Lesley was active in the organizational life of the MCLL community, acting as coordinator of visits by MCLL lecturers to local seniors’ residences.

Sidelined many years ago by injuries from a major car accident, Lesley defied doctors who warned she would never walk again. Fiercely independent, she commuted on public transportation between South Shore St. Lambert and Montreal with her urban hiking poles, carrying a small knapsack, no matter the weather. She volunteered at the MUHC Glen Campus in the ER and as a patient rep, and nearer home supported people living with mental illness.

A former French-to-English translator born in Yorkshire, UK, Lesley also found time for gardening. Timmy Cohen recalls dining at Lesley’s: “Dessert would always include homemade pies or salads made with produce grown in her garden.” Timmy reflects, “There was no one quite like her”. 🍁

Many thanks to Charlotte French for her contributions to this article. SP

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