

Spring 2024



MCLL News

Bursary renews family's hope for future

MCLL honoured our founder Fiona Clark in 2019 by establishing a bursary in her name to provide financial help to mature students enrolled in McGill's School of Continuing Studies. The 2023 recipient, a student in his third term of the Certificate in Applied Cybersecurity program, expresses his thanks below.

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for being selected as a recipient of the Fall 2023 Fiona Clark Bursary. Your support has made a significant impact on my family's journey, and we are truly thankful.

I am a refugee from Nigeria, seeking asylum in Canada with my family of seven. Our arrival in April 2018 brought unexpected challenges, particularly discovering that our eldest daughter, then 12 years old, had chronic heart disease. This added another layer of complexity to our already daunting situation.


Fortunately, the cardiology department of the Montreal Children's Hospital provided profound support, healing our spirits with kind gestures and love. Our daughter received a pacemaker, and during a December examination, she underwent another procedure. It was a traumatic experience, but with the help of your bursary, we were able to ensure her health and well-being.

Your recognition and support have contributed to our determination to build a new life in Canada. The importance of community and compassion, exemplified by the Montreal Children's Hospital and now the SCS Bursary, has been a beacon of hope for us.

My work experience has been with computers, particularly in information and system security. Pursuing a certificate in cybersecurity aligns with my passion for contributing to a secure digital landscape.

Once again, thank you for this incredible opportunity. Your generosity has not only made a difference in our academic pursuits but has touched our hearts, giving us renewed hope for a brighter future.

Warm regards,

Mr. Paul Oluwadare Agbe 



AGM '24: Hard work by council is paying off

At our virtual Annual General Meeting held March 22, new members of the MCLL executive and committee chairs were elected. Starting one-year terms June 1 are new president **Chris Neal**, vice-president **Nadine Ozkan**, and past-president **Rick Jones**.

Two-year mandates begin in June for committee chairs **Yvon Bérubé** (communications), **Linda Sidel** (special events), **Christine Mutter** (secretary and volunteer coordinator), and **Tim Skene** (IT coordinator).

Continuing as chairs for a second year are **Ana Maria Klein** (curriculum), **Tony Wait** (development), **Ginette Bazergui** (planning and membership), **Jeff Sidel** (treasurer), and **Sandra Baines** (community outreach).

Rick Jones thanked **Astri Thorvik** (volunteer chair) and **Lorne Houston** (secretary), who are leaving council, as well as all staff and volunteers who keep MCLL running smoothly. Council chairs reported on positive initiatives. Nadine Ozkan said new agreements have been struck with the Segal Centre and Centaur Theatre, and with the magazine *La Scena Musicale*, to promote one another's activities. Treasurer Jeff Sidel reported that following pandemic losses, winter registration numbers were six per cent higher than last year, and the fiscal year is set to end with a balanced budget. But faced with increased salaries and rent costs, in January MCLL created a task force, Operation Net 30 Plus, to increase membership by 30. To this end, online and in-person info sessions were held in early April. Membership fees have also been raised by \$5 to \$125 per semester. 🍁

Susan Purcell

Watercolours grace the walls of our lounge



MCLLer Sandra Woods began sketching and painting in 2021. She carries watercolour supplies in a backpack when she cycles, and sketches when she needs a rest stop. Afflicted with a painful neuroinflammatory disease, Sandra finds making art therapeutic. Scenes from her rides on Montreal Island are on display in the MCLL lounge this spring. 🍁





Richard Pound

A chat with the champion of clean sports



The AGM featured a “fireside chat” with Richard Pound, former McGill chancellor and longest-serving member of the International Olympic Committee. Here are some of the highlights from his conversation with McGill’s Cynthia Price Verreault:

Pound’s first responsibility when named to the IOC was to negotiate Olympic TV rights and corporate sponsorships, transforming the IOC into a multibillion-dollar enterprise:

TV: “In the eighties it was a paradigm change. The networks thought it was distasteful to consider money. But when I proposed extending the Games to three weekends, so they could sell more ads, they quickly jumped on board.”

Advertisers: “The Olympic rings are one of the world’s most recognized symbols; they stand for youth, aspiration, cooperation. We put that in a package and went to a sponsor like Coke, promising them exclusive access to viewers worldwide. They thought they’d died and gone to heaven.”

In 1999 Pound, by then IOC vice-president, was named chair of a committee to investigate charges of IOC members accepting huge bribes to advance the bid of Salt Lake City for the 2002 Winter Games:

“No country(’s IOC members) would admit they’d taken favours. They were afraid it would sully victories by their athletes. We had to get out in front fast. It was a very tough period.” At this very time, McGill was pushing for Pound to be their next chancellor, a position he accepted amid the stress of his IOC job.

Also in the late 90s, the IOC got into hot water for an insensitive response to charges that athletes were using steroids to win. Pound was again called in and campaigned vehemently for stronger drug testing. In 1999 he founded the World Anti-Doping Agency.

“Even after WADA set up a drug-testing regimen, “Most countries still had no rules to test their athletes before competitions. We spent two years negotiating a World Anti-Doping Code. But at the meeting to approve it, members wanted to vote by clapping! I said no no no. We need everyone singing from the same sheet. So I asked the room: ‘Who does not agree?’ There was dead silence. The code was adopted.” 🇨🇦

Susan Purcell



Indigenous Insights

Crack sniper became a leader of his people

This is first in an occasional series on Indigenous history or worldview, drawn from content of MCLL study groups or from members' experience. The account below is from a presentation by Mark Peacock to the winter SG, Canada's Wars and Rebellions.

Francis Pegahmagabow, an Ojibwa from the Parry Island Band (now the Wasauksing First Nation) in Ontario, was one of Canada's most decorated Indigenous soldiers. Following the First World War, he also excelled as an Indigenous leader for his band, and nationally.



Taught the patience and expert marksmanship of game hunting by the band elder who raised him, he was amongst the first Indigenous volunteers to enlist in 1914. He did so even though Canada had not yet given Indigenous citizens the right to vote federally and originally discouraged Indigenous enlistment. Ultimately, as losses mounted, over 4,000 Indigenous soldiers participated in Canada's military in the Great War.

Pegahmagabow was an exceptional soldier. Along with only 38 other Canadians, he was awarded the Military Medal, with two bars, for three separate "acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire." The medal itself says: "For Bravery in the Field." And how. He was credited with killing 378 of the enemy and was responsible for the capture of 300. His direct actions saved the lives of countless Canadian soldiers.

He saved the lives of countless Canadians

Sniper/scouts like himself had a life expectancy of weeks in No Man's Land. However, such was his skill and courage that Pegahmagabow was in active service throughout the war: all the more remarkable since he had been shot in the leg, contracted pneumonia, and was gassed, for which he suffered chest pains the rest of his life.

Upon his return to Canada in 1918, Pegahmagabow threw himself into championing nascent Indigenous rights. On two occasions, he was elected local band chief. Afterward, he held leadership positions in early national Indigenous political organizations that ultimately united to become today's Assembly of First Nations. He never forgot his roots.

Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians can be proud of Francis Pegahmagabow's lifelong devotion to duty and service for his people and for Canada. 🇨🇦

Mark G. Peacock

For more about Francis Pegahmagabow, check out:

- Canadian Encyclopedia at <https://mcgill.ca/x/wwN>
- YouTube for a short video from the CBC at <https://mcgill.ca/x/wwx>
- and this Global News report bringing his story up to today: <https://mcgill.ca/x/wwY>



Spring study groups

New moderators bring teaching, international experience

Suzanne Alley

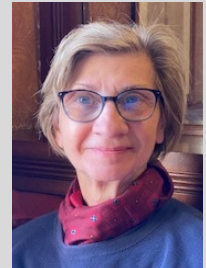
Trailblazer Women Throughout the Ages



Having joined MCLL just last September, Suzanne is already pitching in as a moderator. After she attended his fall study group, Dr. Henry Olders invited Suzanne to co-moderate this group. “He could see I wasn’t shy to speak up,” she quips. Newly-retired after more than 30 years teaching math at Centennial Regional High, the Brossard resident opted to share the contrasting stories of two mathematicians. Her reason: “Women in math and science are so often overlooked.”

Barbara Karasek

Fairy Tales: Once Upon a Time... Today



“Fairy tales were never meant for children! They used to be filled with cruelty and violence,” says Barbara Karasek. “It was only in the 19th century that the Brothers Grimm cleaned them up.” Barbara has taught children’s literature at McGill, Concordia, and several Montreal junior colleges, and she recently retired from Vanier College as a tenured English professor. Her 1991 text *Folk and Fairy Tales* is on college and university courses across North America.

Marisa Consolata Kemper

L’Actualité: perspectives des médias québécois

Born in Calgary, Marisa has had an international career working in Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Gaza, with a focus on Palestinian-Israeli dynamics. Her work has included business brokering and exchanges following the Oslo Accords, and supporting the peace process in the region in the late 1990s. Marisa returned to Canada in 2018. Now in her early 50s and fluent in Arabic as well as French, she works on contract with Global Affairs Canada to help build good governance and promote universal rights in conflict-affected areas.



Alicia Zlatar

Exploring Pedro Almodovar through Two Films and his Autobiography

Alicia was born in Patagonia, at the southern tip of South America, later moving to the U.S. and, in 1986, to Montreal. She has a Master’s in social development and has served with a Canadian aid agency in Lima, Peru. In Montreal she has been a liaison between immigrant families and the teachers of their adolescent children. Alicia has always been intrigued by the films of Almodovar. Previously, she animated a Spanish conversation group at MCLL, whose members still meet to keep up their language skills. 🍁



Susan Purcell

Books

When is a poet not a poet?

Do You Remember Being Born?

by Sean Michaels (2023)



Marian Ffarmer, the 75-year-old, widely-read poet, has a big decision to make. This will not be the only big decision she has made in her life. As a young woman, she walked away from a haphazard marriage and a very young son to focus her

energies on her need to grow and develop into the poet she has become.

Over the years, Marian has maintained an awkward and sporadic relationship with her son. Now she sees a chance to give him something he truly wishes to have, namely a house for himself and his young wife. Rather a grand gesture, but possible.

In this seductive book by Montreal writer and Scotiabank Giller Prize-winner Sean Michaels, Marian has been offered a huge sum of money by a gigantic high-tech company with a special interest in artificial intelligence. Her challenge is to collaborate in the creation of a significant, publishable poem with Charlotte, an AI poet the company has developed. What does this say to Marian about the painful path to her vocation as a poet? But then, there is the money.

She agrees to the deal, and her week-long relationship with Charlotte begins. The exchange that follows raises some big questions for Marian. What is poetry? Can Charlotte be called a poet? Will Marian's value as a poet be diminished? Will the final collaboration be authentic? The author draws the reader skillfully into these questions.

What astounded me was that, as I read, I found myself seeing Charlotte as a person, and had to remind myself repeatedly that “she” was not.

Alert! A surprise revelation in the book's Acknowledgements may hit readers with a jolt. Read the book first! 🍁

Mary Ann Mongeau

Donations help improve access



MCLL raised over \$20,000 in the annual McGill24 fundraiser last month for the purchase of accessibility resources, assistive listening devices, handheld microphones, and classroom speakers. The hard work of our volunteers ranged from from baking treats for the donation table downstairs to making phone calls to members and supporters. Seen here at our table are Christine Mutter, Laura Grunberg, and Astri Thorvik. 🍁

Zoe Chiu

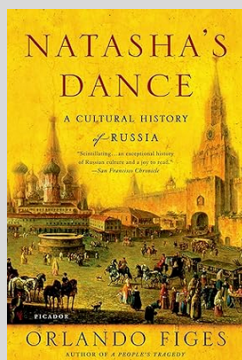


Books

A Russia built on absolute authority

Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia

by Orlando Figes (2002)



At a time when Russia is the object of extensive media coverage, *Natasha's Dance* filled a void in my knowledge of that country. The title refers to a passage from Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, in which young Countess Natasha Rostov performs

a traditional peasant dance. Her performance illustrates the contradiction between the aristocrats' contempt for the native Russian culture and the fact that it is also partly their own.

The book begins with the founding of St. Petersburg, Peter the Great's choice for capital of a new Russia. He viewed Europe as culturally superior and was determined to create a Russia that was European, both in architecture and social norms. It is the starting point of an exploration of Russian society over many centuries. The chapter "Descendants of Genghiz Khan" on the Mongol invasions in central Russia

covers the first of many dictatorships to have ruled Russia. The Tsars and the Soviet proletariat that succeeded also exercised absolute authority. Should we be surprised that democracy has failed to establish itself in a country that still admires Ivan the Terrible and Stalin?

The author provides the historical background of many works of literature and art. In the visually striking painting *The Boyar's Wife Morozova*, the defiant noblewoman is taken away to be detained because she is a member of the Old Believers, the Orthodox Christians who refused Church reforms that Tsar Alexey supported.

In the novel *War and Peace*, the reason Count Pierre Bezukhov throws himself into the battle, a decision that seems suicidal, is that for many aristocrats at that time, fighting Napoleon's army on the battlefield gave purpose to their otherwise useless lives at the Tsar's court.

I finished reading the book with the feeling of having glimpsed the essence of this great country. 🇷🇺

Yvon Bérubé



Boyarina Morozova by Vasily Surikov (1887), State Tretyakov Gallery
From *Russia Beyond* (<https://mcgill.ca/x/www>)



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What is a legacy gift?

A legacy gift – such as a bequest left in a will – is a charitable donation that is arranged during your lifetime, but not available to McGill or MCLL until sometime in the future. It is an opportunity to make your mark, maximize your impact, and create a better, fairer, and more prosperous world.

Why make a legacy gift to MCLL?

- Maximize your impact: A legacy gift is often a donor's most significant gift.
- Minimize your tax burden: There may be financial benefits.
- Create a lasting legacy for years to come: Gifts can immortalize donors or loved ones, and endowed gifts live on in perpetuity.
- As with any gift to McGill, you can direct your funds to MCLL, and/or any other area of the university you are most passionate about.

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Have you already included McGill in your estate plans?

Please let us know using this form:

<https://mcgill.ca/x/www>

This helps ensure your estate plans are carried out and allows us to express our appreciation during your lifetime.

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We'd love to hear from you!

Please send your comments or suggestions to suepurcell@videotron.ca

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plannedgifts.dev@mcgill.ca

<https://giving.mcgill.ca/ways-give> 

Who has the green thumb?



Ever wonder why the plants in the lounge look so healthy? We can thank MCLLer Josée Franco, who rides her bike several miles to our building every week or so to give them the TLC they need. We really appreciate it!

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