



# McGill

School of  
Continuing Studies  
McGill Community  
for Lifelong  
Learning

## The Courier

[www.mcgill.ca/mcll](http://www.mcgill.ca/mcll)

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Rabbi Lisa Grushcow



### MCLL 2015 BIENNIAL MEMBER WORKSHOP

The 2015 MCLL Biennial Workshop, “Face-to-Face to Facebook: Fostering Community in a High-Tech World”, was held on October 23 with some 70 members in attendance. President Ruth Rigby, standing in for Dean Potter, gave a brief update on news from the School of Continuing Studies. Robbie Robinson outlined the day’s agenda and what it was hoped to achieve. The guest speaker, Rabbi Lisa Grushcow, Senior Rabbi of Temple Emmanuel Beth Sholom, a McGill graduate and Rhodes Scholar, was introduced by Alta Abramowitz.



The Rabbi’s topic, “Insights into Connection: Bringing ancient teachings into modern realities” was both dynamic and interactive. She looked at biblical references to the need for people to have social connections. She asked, “What does it mean to create community?” In the search for knowledge and meaning, we do better when we learn with somebody else. The ancient concept of “havruta”, studying in pairs, is related to our need for friendship and for finding people in the community who can challenge our thinking in various ways. “Face-to-face contact can make us happier, healthier and smarter”. The issue confronting us today is how we integrate technology into our lives so that we have a reasonable balance between community and alone time. Rabbi Grushcow’s thought-provoking and inspiring talk was enhanced by members’ comments and questions.



The goals for the day were to identify those aspects of our community which work best and suggest ways to strengthen them, and to consider new technologies available to us.

Animated discussions at the round-table sessions were summarized at the end of the day by the table leaders. A stimulating speaker, a delicious lunch, productive discussion – all combined to make a very successful day.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear MCLL Members:

Welcome to the last days of fall which find us in the midst of planning our winter program. The fall program has been very successful. We are delighted to welcome over 80 new

members and hope that you are all enjoying the session.

There were several staff changes at MCLL this summer. Our administrative coordinator, Ana Milic, went on maternity leave and we miss her greatly. Alex Megelas, our liaison with the School of Continuing Studies, has left to further his education. He is currently the lead facilitator and researcher on Prof. Henry Mintzberg's Social Learning for Social Impact online course.

I'm pleased to share the happy news that Ana and Alex's baby, Anouk, was born on October 16 and that the family is doing well. There is a "baby bag" in the MCLL office if you would like to make a contribution.

We are delighted to have Sally Cooper join MCLL as the temporary maternity cover for Ana. Please offer your support as she moves into the position at this time of change. She has quickly become invaluable and we have gained from her long experience at the Thomas More Institute.

Thank you to all who contributed to the recent membership survey. You will see a summary of the results of the members' survey on page 3.

Rory O'Sullivan has generously bequeathed his treasured opera collection to MCLL. We are presently obtaining a safe cabinet and developing a system for sharing this collection with the membership at large. In the spring term, there will be a study group utilizing his collection.

We are also working to address the perception by some members that the existing registration process is arbitrary and inefficient. A small committee has been established to improve this process in time for the winter session. We ask for your cooperation in implementing a straightforward, transparent registration process so that applications are always processed in the order received.

The Planning Committee held its Biennial Workshop on October 23, last. We greatly appreciated their hard work in putting together such an outstanding meeting. It was a master stroke to invite Rabbi Lisa Grushcow, who established an inclusive approach to exploring the many different ways in which community can be created and sustained. The break-out groups produced

an incredible diversity of options of relevance to MCLL's future vision. We extend our thanks to all the Planning Committee members.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all moderators and lecturers for their great efforts, which lie at the heart of the success of MCLL. Our community depends on the efforts of all our volunteers who work towards delivering the highest quality work from which we, as participants, benefit.

Ruth Allan-Rigby

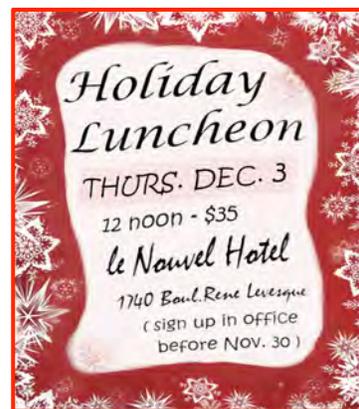
## COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORTS

### Special Events Committee



The Special Events Committee takes care of the hospitality for MCLL events such as Open House and Orientation workshops. Whereas we used to order catering for these rather informal sessions, we have found it

more economical and "homey" to provide our own coffee, tea, juice and a welcoming snack of cookies or other bite-sized goodies to tempt visitors and members at these gatherings. Such offerings in our lounge foster the community aspect of our organization. In addition, we arrange the catering for larger events such as the Moderators' Workshops in the fall when a lunch is provided for all participants. We also arrange the venue for the Annual General Meeting in the spring and the luncheon which precedes it for the moderators. These luncheons are part of MCLL's thank-you for the essential contribution to our existence provided by the efforts of our moderators.



The Special Events Committee is responsible for coordinating two other major outings during the academic year. These also help to promote community at MCLL by offering members the chance to enjoy a good meal together with a party

atmosphere both in December and in June. For the last few years we have been using Le Nouvel Hôtel on Boul. René-Lévesque for our Holiday Party. The table decorations are always a delight (thanks to Ross Allan) and a few of our members add their choral talents to lead us in singing Hanukkah songs, Christmas carols and popular winter ballads. If you

have other suggestions to add to our program, please contact me. If you would like to join our little committee, we could use another member or two, especially to brainstorm for a new location or activity for our June party.

See the poster above for this year's **Holiday Luncheon, December 3**. The sign-up deadline is November 30; the cost remains at \$35. There are always a few lucky members who go home with a door prize of a free lecture or even a free study group for the winter (or spring) session.

Ann Pearson

## Membership Committee



In order to have a handle on where members come from, what they enjoy and where to look for new recruits, the Membership Committee organized an on-line survey of MCLL membership during the summer.

Some 230 members filled out at least part of the survey although not all provided answers. Fewer than 200 answers were received for each question, in fact, but the following numbers provide data which will be helpful in future outreach efforts.

The age group most represented is the 66-75 bunch but 31% of the respondents are aged between 76 and 85 while a valiant 7% are over 85! Bravo! A total of 84 respondents are former McGill employees or alumni but 99 not, which leads to the conclusion that most of the recruitment is from channels outside the University.

With regard to volunteering, 35% say they have already volunteered and/or are currently volunteering and 25 people say they are ready and willing to volunteer. As many as 58 of respondents are even ready to moderate and 39 to give a lecture! About 35% have already been moderators and one third of these have been moderating for 10 years or more. Talk about true commitment! Lastly, 31% have given lectures which, *en passant*, is an excellent first step towards moderating or co-moderating.

Of the various study group styles MCLL currently offers, Style B (a presentation followed by a discussion) appears to be the most popular. But why do people choose one study group rather than another? The factor most cited was the subject matter as opposed to the time slot, the moderator, a friend in the same class, etc.

And the overall satisfaction with members' experience at MCLL? The majority (77%) declare that they have very positive feelings about the study groups and 55% equally positive feelings about the lectures. So, in conclusion, we can boast about our popular community for learning but there is room for improvement and the Membership Committee is already looking into ways to hone our services.

Lesley Régnier for Ruth Bresnen

## Planning Committee



The Planning Committee has the mandate to review and evaluate activities of MCLL, its organization and financing, and to bring its recommendations to Council. The committee is responsible for the biennial workshop, which this year took place on October 23 (see cover page).

This workshop gives members the chance to get together to discuss MCLL's future. It acts as a forum for members to consider and debate issues facing MCLL and provides the opportunity to bring forward ideas and suggestions. An important benefit of participating in the event is that it encourages members to become more invested in the direction, design and implementation of programs and activities.

The themes selected this year were how to take advantage of technology to reach out to people who cannot attend our programs and offer them access remotely; how to promote a sense of community internally, e.g. by looking at ways of incorporating more social contact within MCLL's regular programs and developing more opportunities for sharing interests; and how to identify ways in which MCLL programs can remain relevant to the membership and, at the same time, attractive to potential new members. The Planning Committee will make formal recommendations to Council based on the ideas put forward on these issues.

The current committee, composed of Alta Abramowitz, Chair, Lorne Huston, Mary Ann Mongeau, Robbie Robinson and Lorraine White, has worked tirelessly as a team to ensure the workshop's success. We look forward to reporting the outcomes to Council and to bringing recommendations for new initiatives.

Alta Abramovitz

## Communications Committee



The mandate of the Communications Committee is to communicate in every way MCLL's excellent and stimulating programs with the help of the Marketing Department of the McGill School of Continuing Education. Our most important contribution is to organize and carry out the distribution of our calendar to as many places as possible. We help in the production process of the calendar and try to further the publicizing of MCLL and its activities wherever possible. Posters are produced to emphasize up and coming lectures.

The members of the committee are Juliet Wait (Chair), Ros Accutt, Jackie Cytrynbaum, Robert Foster and Sandra Baines.

Juliet Wait

## A warm welcome to Sally Cooper



Welcome to Sally Cooper who has taken on the job of administrative coordinator in the MCLL office, replacing Ana during her maternity leave. Already well acquainted with Montréal through a friend she often came to visit, Sally arrived in Canada from upstate New York some years ago to study for an MBA at McGill University. She obtained her degree in 1988, then worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway in accounting and finance until the company moved its head office to Calgary. With a certificate in technical communications in hand from Concordia University, Sally then worked for the Thomas More Institute as bursar and marketing coordinator and was also responsible for registrations. That is where she fell in love with the concept and environment of lifelong learning.

After she left Thomas More, Sally immediately offered to volunteer at MCLL. Starting in the fall of 2014 with only one day a week in the office gave her little time to familiarize herself with MCLL office procedures but our office volunteers rallied round and the transition was smooth. So we were very lucky and most grateful to have such an experienced person ready and willing to fill this position at a moment's notice. "I am delighted to be here at MCLL. It is a wonderful opportunity to be around stimulating people and ideas," says Sally. A great fit at a timely moment!

Charlotte French

## MODERATOR PROFILES



### Noga Emanuel

Noga Emanuel loves language. The Israeli-born Montrealer is a translator and writer; she translates from Hebrew, French, English and Spanish. She got her B.A. in English

Literature and Art History from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Noga arrived in Canada 26 years ago. She studied at Concordia and received a Master's degree for her thesis entitled *Ethics in Translation*. Her doctoral studies in Judaic Studies were interrupted for family reasons. Over the years she has designed courses in literature and philosophy for the Thomas More Institute and contributed articles and literary reviews to current affairs journals.

At MCLL last spring she gave two Friday lectures on Jane Austen and Canadian poet Anne Carson, her two most admired authors, whose oeuvres she can never cease exploring. In November she is scheduled to present her view of Shylock in another Friday lecture. She is currently leading a study group on "Ten Jews that Shook the World". Noga sees her role as facilitator of interesting discussion in "the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation." (Jane Austen, *Persuasion*)

Sandra Duchow



### Catherine Main-Oster

Catherine Main-Oster likes to teach in such a way that she herself ends up learning. "I want to expand my horizons too," says the long-time

teacher, a first-time moderator this fall at MCLL. In her study group "Short Documentaries", rather than impose a list of titles to watch, she leaves it up to the members to search a series of web sites for a documentary they'd like to present.

To keep things spontaneous, the cheerful 56-year mother of three gives no advance notice of what films have been chosen. Introductions have to be brief – "literally under five minutes. Just the director's name, the year it was released, and why they picked the film." As a member of the MCLL Curriculum Committee, she's learned that many people dread giving presentations and worry about their technical expertise. Instead of preparation and production, she prefers to see lively discussion after the documentary is shown.

Born in Toronto, Catherine graduated from the University of Toronto in 1982 with a degree in Biopsychology then worked for many years with IBM, mostly in Calgary. When eventually she and her husband moved to St-Lazare, west of Montréal Island, she ran a pre-school in nearby Hudson and was a Scout leader. Her proudest accomplishment has been serving as a certified provincial soccer coach, a high-level, time-intensive job she did for 20 years.

Now a grandmother, Catherine has conducted educational tours at the West Island Eco Museum for the past eight years. "It's my ideal job. You're outdoors, teaching and doing science." Grinning, she adds, "except you don't get paid". In January she'll again offer a group on short documentaries.

Sue Purcell



### Roz Paris

Roz trained as a nurse at the Jewish General Hospital, got a Master's degree in Nursing and became a clinical nurse specialist. She also worked for many years in women's

health and particularly enjoyed working in the menopause clinic. Chatting with women about their lives was a rewarding experience and helpful in making plans for retirement, and after. At 72, Roz decided to give up working and asked herself, "What next?"

A member of MCLL for some years, she enjoys taking classes in writing and meeting some of the interesting, lively and creative people who frequent the classrooms there. She, like many other retirees these days, has trouble keeping up with all the activities she has chosen to pursue. "Will I have time to finish reading the book for my Book Club meeting this afternoon?"

When asked why she chose to moderate a study group on aging and dying, she recalled a conversation with someone getting on in years who hadn't made any 'end-of-life' plans. This was a bit of a shock to her. She couldn't help thinking that perhaps there are many others in a similar situation. So she did some research into the issues to be considered on this topic. The outcome is this study group, "Aging and Dying with Dignity", which she is co-moderating with Rhoda Wise, Roz says she finds being a moderator a 'perk' in attending MCLL.

Eleanor Hynes



### Sheila Whitzman

Sheila Whitzman's Romanian parents were living in Montreal when they decided, in 1928, to move to Cornwall, Ontario, after reading about the job prospects due to the imminent construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway and the route that it was taking right through Cornwall. The St. Lawrence Seaway was indeed built, albeit about 30 years later, and it bypassed Cornwall!

Having graduated from Grade 13 at the age of 16, Sheila desperately wanted to write but there was no college in Cornwall so she packaged her book of compositions and went to see the editor of the local newspaper, offering to work for no wages as long as he allowed her to work on his paper. Little did she know that the social editor had been ill for some months already and an interim social editor was sorely needed. She was hired at the minimum wage of \$11, standard in 1945. She doggedly carried out her assignments, traveling around on her bicycle, and adored her job. One year later, she left to attend Carleton College. By the age of 22 she had married a fellow student at Carleton and given birth to two children. They moved back to Cornwall and helped to manage her parents' menswear store for roughly 20 years; to this day, she can "size up" a man with one look. After the birth of another child in 1963, and now divorced, she moved to Montréal in 1968 and became a successful real-estate agent.

Her passion at the moment is Bill 52, the "euthanasia" bill. She researched the subject of assisted dying thoroughly, and became highly interested. In her opinion, the scope of palliative care is too narrow, concerned mostly with terminal cancer patients, worthy though that cause is. Yet there are other diseases, especially neurological, where there is no cure (such as ALS or Parkinson's) and some patients linger painfully for years. These are the individuals who may choose a natural death rather than being kept alive for years, with no hope. The topic is highly contentious and always will be, comparable to the never-ending subject of abortion. Her study group is full, and the class of both women and men is listening carefully to the many facets of aging and dying with dignity.

Paula Friedlander



### Vera Bondy

First-time moderator Vera Bondy is also a long-time docent at the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts. Although Vera has been an active member of MCLL for the past four

years and has frequently been encouraged to become a moderator, she was hesitant to make the big commitment of moderating a ten-week session. She finally hit upon the idea of offering a five-week session drawing upon her expertise as a docent, thus combining the two roles.

Vera's study group, "A Virtual Tour of the Museum", gives participants a mini art history course, an illustrated overview of the development of European art, from the early Renaissance to Modernism, based on the riches in the Museum's permanent collection. The fall study group was a resounding success. The participants were sorry when it ended, persuading Vera to extend it by giving them a 'real' tour of the permanent collection. Vera is now a woman with a mission: an ambassador for the museum.

Vera herself very much enjoyed her experience as moderator and is looking forward to repeating the same study group, probably in the spring. We are delighted with her growing involvement in our community. Vera is an interesting woman, deeply engaged in the cultural life of Montreal. She also has many hobbies, a passion for exercise, and an active family life.

Pamela Sachs

## LE COIN FRANÇAIS



### MCLL se rend à Kahnawaké

Dans l'intérêt de préserver la culture unique de Kahnawaké, le Centre culturel et du langage, mis sur pied en 1978, possède une immense bibliothèque de livres et de documents—cartes, parchemins, copies de traités, etc.

Grâce à Chantal Tittley, qui a organisé cette sortie, une vingtaine de membres MCLL ont eu le plaisir d'entendre le directeur du Centre, Thomas Deer, nous exposer l'histoire du village Mohawk depuis plus de quatre siècles. Monsieur Deer est responsable de l'enseignement de la langue mohawk au Centre et enseigne à la Polyvalente des Six Nations. Il a répondu à nos nombreuses questions, autant sur l'histoire de la nation Mohawk depuis et avant l'arrivée des colonisateurs français et anglais, que sur l'économie, l'industrie et l'enseignement. Au point de vue économique, depuis Kahnawaké les Mohawks pouvaient contrôler la très lucrative traite des fourrures venant de l'ouest vers les colonies française de la Nouvelle France et anglaise de la Nouvelle Angleterre

Monsieur Deer a fait tomber plusieurs préjugés sur les Mohawks de Kahnawaké : avant l'arrivée des colonisateurs, ils occupaient avec les autres nations de la confédération iroquoise une grande partie du sud-ouest du Québec actuel et du nord de l'état de New-York. Agriculteurs sédentaires, ils cultivaient de grandes quantités de maïs, de fèves et de courges et complétaient leur diète par la chasse et la pêche. La terre de la Montérégie, toujours aussi fertile, fournit les maraîchers d'aujourd'hui. Traditionnellement, le village était déplacé à peu près tous les vingt ans à la suite d'une culture intensive qui appauvissait le sol.

La confédération iroquoise, comprenant six nations dont les Mohawks, dut combattre différentes nations entre 1608 et 1667. Les Hurons, les Algonquins et les Montagnais s'allièrent aux Français pour combattre les Iroquois. En 1667, une entente avec les Français a permis aux Mohawks de s'établir dans le nord du territoire des Six Nations, le long du Saint-Laurent; ils pouvaient ainsi prévenir l'établissement des Français et ou de leurs alliés autochtones sur le territoire réclamé souverain de la nation Mohawk.

Au 20ième siècle, après la construction du pont de Québec, les ferrailleurs («ironworkers») de Kahnawaké ont connu une réputation bien méritée : ils sont à l'aise pour travailler en hauteur sur des structures métalliques. Plusieurs ont travaillé à la construction des gratte-ciel de New-York. Ils revenaient au village les weekends, contribuant à l'économie grâce à leurs excellents salaires. Nous avons eu de la chance de passer du temps avec un guide qui connaît tellement bien l'histoire de la nation Mohawk et qui a si bien animé notre journée.

Roch DesRochers



## Books for Giving and Receiving

### Non-Fiction

***Montreal Cooks*** by Jonathan Cheung and Tays Spencer (2015), hardback.

Eighty recipes from the city's top chefs made available for everyone. Handsome but inexpensive—a holiday treat.

***This Is Happy*** by Camilla Gibb (2015), hardback. Her first work of non-fiction. An intensely moving, compassionate memoir about heartbreaking loss and survival through the telling of stories and building a new type of family.

***History's People*** by Margaret MacMillan (2015), paperback. The 2014 Massey lectures. MacMillan's personal selection of historical figures who stand out for her. Engaging and immensely readable.

***On the Move*** by Oliver Sacks (2015), hardback. His last book. His own case history written when he knew he was dying. Courageously honest and self-revealing.

***The Meaning of Human Existence*** by Edward O. Wilson (2014), paperback. A valedictory work by a Pulitzer prize-winning biologist. Helps us make choices at this defining moment in the history of our species. Lucid, lively, and urgently important.

### Fiction

***His Whole Life*** by Elizabeth Hay (2015), hardback. A sensitive boy comes of age in the 1990s against the backdrop of the threat of Québec separation. Elizabeth Hay writes beautifully as always.

***Purity*** by Jonathan Franzen (2015), hardback and paperback. A new Jonathan Franzen is always an event. This book has been acclaimed as his most intimate and accessible novel yet. A perfect holiday read.

***The Moor's Account*** by Laila Lalami ((2015), paperback. The disastrous attempt to conquer Florida told from the point of view of a black slave, one of the four survivors. Brilliant and beautiful.

***The Children Act*** by Ian McEwan (2015), paperback. One of my favourite McEwan novels. Fascinating insights into the life of a woman judge. Gripping, compassionate, and deeply humane.

***Ru*** by Kim Thuy (2015), paperback. Winner of the Governor General's Award. The story of her family's escape, as boat people, from Saigon to Québec during the Vietnam war. Loosely strung vignettes that shift from past to present. Impressionistic and poetic as well as timely and topical.

Pamela Sachs

## Remembering Rory O'Sullivan



The MCLL community is saddened by the death of Rory O'Sullivan. A stalwart member of MCLL, former chair of the Curriculum Committee and president (2005-2006), for many years Rory moderated study groups and regularly lectured on opera and music.

Rory was born in Dun Laoghaire, Ireland. Following his studies in architecture, he joined the Irish Office of Public Works and became manager of the Irish division of an international building company. On immigrating to Canada, he started his own company designing and building houses in Montréal's West Island and later managed the real-estate division of Royal Trust, now Royal LePage. Rory was a founding member and past president of the Irish Canadian Heritage Society. An avid traveler, Rory would always share his architectural discoveries with MCLL members by way of Friday lectures.

While in the hospital and hopeful of a rapid recovery, Rory was very preoccupied by having interrupted his study group. He was very pleased that participants Miriam Tees, Pat Green and Avril Craig came to the rescue and offered to continue the study group until his return. Rory will be sorely missed by the MCLL community and by his close friend and companion Timmy Cohen.

We are thankful to Rory's family for having donated to MCLL his imposing collection of 350 current opera DVDs in his memory. These will be properly catalogued and made available for educational purposes and for the enjoyment of MCLL members who wish to borrow them. The love of opera that he imparted to many will remain as his legacy.

Charlotte French

### Newsletter Committee

Co-chairs Charlotte French, Lesley Régnier,  
Ruth Allan-Rigby ex-officio,  
Roch DesRochers, Sandra Duchow, Paula Friedlander,  
Eleanor Hynes,  
Sue Purcell, Pamela Sachs

# KANIEN'KEHÁ:KA ONKWAWÉN:NA RAOTITIÓHKWA



Tom Deer (left), Director of the Mohawk Cultural & language Center, Kahnawake, spoke to the group from MCLL on October 17, 2015

## MCLL's baby announcement



Anouk Megelas Milic was born on October 16 at 8.22 a.m. I cannot tell the story of her birth without talking about MCLL, my deep connection to this community, and all the love and support that my family and I have received from our MCLL friends. This is not the first life event I have shared with MCLL and not the first time you wonderful people have demonstrated your kindness and generosity. I am so grateful that MCLL became part of my life for this is where I met and fell in love with Anouk's father. It is also where I made friends for life and met amazing women who have been such an inspiration and role models for me. I only hope my daughter will one day look up to me the way I look up to them. So thank you MCLL for being there for me on this important journey, thank you for your wishes, emails, casseroles and visits. I feel blessed and proud to call Anouk my MCLL baby and I can't wait for you to meet her. With love, Ana and family

## Art in the lounge

**Amita Virmani's** attraction towards photography started as a hobby. Realizing that there is a difference between snapshots and photographs led her to the pursuit of becoming a photographer. On a recent visit to India, she visited Pushkar, a small city in the state of Rajasthan. Famous for its camel fair, the city pulsates as camel traders arrive, each with a retinue of camels which careen down the sand dunes kicking up a sandstorm with their hooves. Colorful camel



carts with canopies can be spotted a mile away in the otherwise barren sands of the desert that stretches across the state of Rajasthan. "Camels oblivious to their fate nuzzle each other, while photographers like me stealthily walk around taking pictures," says Amita.

