



# Graduate Student Symposium 2025

Education and Community: Encountering the Other

March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025 - Department of Education, Concordia University  
1610 Saint-Catherine Street West, Montreal, QC H3H 1L9

## General schedule

| Time        | Activity   |  |  |   |
|-------------|--|--|--|---|
| 09:00-09:30 | <b>Registration and breakfast</b><br>Room: FG 5.405 (Faculty Lounge)                                   |  |  |   |
| 09:30-09:45 | <b>Opening Remarks</b><br>Room: FG 5.225   |  |  |   |
| 09:45-10:45 | <b>Keynote Panel: <i>Education and Community: Encountering the Other</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.225         |  |  |   |
| 10:45-11:00 | <b>Short break</b>   |  |  |   |
| 11:00-12:00 | <b>Session 1: <i>Reasoning across different communities</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.315                      | <b>Session 2: <i>Including diverse communities of students</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.335               | <b>Session 3: <i>Integrating communities through education</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.245     | <b>Session 4: <i>Innovative community spaces for learning</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.255         |
| 12:00-13:15 | <b>Lunch</b><br>Room: FG 5.405 (Faculty Lounge)  |  |  |   |
| 13:15-14:15 | <b>Session 5: <i>Arts, identity, and community</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.315                               | <b>Session 6: <i>Communities and social justice</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.335                          | <b>Session 7: <i>Language, heritage, and cultural communities</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.245  | <b>Session 8: <i>Innovative educational methods for communities</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.255   |
| 14:15-14:30 | <b>Short break</b>   |  |  |   |
| 14:30-15:30 | <b>Session 9: <i>Teachers as a resisting community</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.315                           | <b>Session 10: <i>Critical views in educational contexts and communities</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.335 | <b>Session 11: <i>Communication within and between communities</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.245 | <b>Session 12: <i>Communities through the lens of autoethnography</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.255 |
| 15:30-15:45 | <b>Short break</b>   |  |  |   |
| 15:45-16:45 | <b>Closing Panel: <i>Educational Research: Conversation with Faculty Members</i></b><br>Room: FG 5.225 |  |  |   |
| 16:45-17:00 | <b>Closing Remarks</b><br>Room: FG 5.225   |  |  |   |
| 17:00-19:00 | <b>DOEIGSA Wine &amp; Cheese</b><br>Room: FG 5.405 (Faculty Lounge)                                    |  |  |   |

## Detailed schedule

### Keynote Panel: *Education and Community: Encountering the Other*

Room: FG 5.225

**09:45** Panel on the theme Education and Community  
Keynote Speakers: [Anna Barrafato & Jayne Malenfant](#)  
Moderator: *Adèle Aubin*

### Session 1: *Reasoning across different communities*

Room: FG 5.315

- 11:00** [Strategies and Reasoning in Geometry Problem-Solving: A Middle-School Students' Perspective](#) - *Minh-Tri Nguyen*
- 11:20** [Bridging the Gender Gap: Embodiment of Spatial Reasoning in Young Girls](#) - *Sabrina Turrin & Marta Kobiela*
- 11:40** [The Role of Language and Movement in Spatial Reasoning: A Study on French and English-Speaking Primary School Students](#) - *Hedi Jaza*

### Session 2: *Including diverse communities of students*

Room: FG 5.335

- 11:00** [Equitable Pronunciation Lessons Informed by Tenets of Pedagogical Translanguaging](#) - *Anna Patterson*
- 11:20** [Navigating Higher Education: Insights from Autistic Students Across Canada](#) - *Kathryn Urbaniak*
- 11:40** [Educator Resistance in the Face of Divisive Policy and Rhetoric: Parental Rights Legislation in Alberta's Publicly Funded Catholic Secondary Schools](#) - *Adela Czyzewska*

### Session 3: *Integrating communities through education*

Room: FG 5.245

- 11:00** [Between the Hammer and the Anvil: Multilingual Pre-Service Teachers' Identity and Agency in a Translanguaging Framework](#) - *Antoniya Encheva*
- 11:20** [The Role of Language in Immigrant Integration: Experiential Learning Insights through Quebec's Francization Program](#) - *Timea Nagy*
- 11:40** [Navigating Integration: The Role of Education in Supporting Older Refugees in Canada](#) - *Meghri Bakarian*

### Session 4: *Innovative community spaces for learning*

Room: FG 5.255

- 11:00** [Bridging Difference and Building Community through a Wilderness Solo Experience \(WiSE\) Educational Framework](#) - *Madeline Carr*
- 11:20** [Co-organizing Summer Climate Circles: Making Space for Informal Community](#) - *Vanja Lugonjic*
- 11:40** [Innovative Learning Models: Participatory Alternative Book Clubs as a Curriculum Framework](#) - *Maria Petrella*

**Session 5: Arts, identity, and community**

Room: FG 5.315

- 13:15 [Rhyming Resistance: Gazan Youth Poetry as Popular Education in the 2023-2025 War in Palestine](#) - Zeina Jhaish
- 13:35 [Community, Identity, Belonging and Jazz: An Exploration of Montreal's Jazz Scene](#) - Matthew Mullone
- 13:55 [Apii nimazinigwaas indAnishinaabe-gaagiigid \(When I bead, I give a speech in Anishinaabe\) Stitching Together Language and Culture: Anishinaabeg Beading as a Pedagogical Tool for Language Preservation](#) - Jenni Makahnouk

**Session 6: Communities and social justice**

Room: FG 5.335

- 13:15 [Conversations with Clothing Labels: Using Thing Ethnography for Social Justice Education](#) - Rebeca Esquivel
- 13:35 [Aqui Vive Gente: The Use of Counterframing to Expose the Epistemic Injustice of Mass School Closures](#) - Amanda Doran

**Session 7: Language, heritage, and cultural communities**

Room: FG 5.245

- 13:15 [Heritage Languages: How Can Valuing Heritages Languages in Education Contribute to Positive Social Outcomes?](#) - Benjamin Lafontaine
- 13:35 [Bridging Differences through Cultural Learning Activities in Language Classes](#) - Ryuichi Suzuki

**Session 8: Innovative educational methods for communities**

Room: FG 5.255

- 13:15 [Braided Lives: Experiential Learning through Narrative Inquiry and Literary Métissage in a Professional Educational Community](#) - Kristen Witczak
- 13:35 [Reimagining Climate Conferences as Equitable Educational Spaces: Design Study Reflections from Two Early-career Professionals](#) - Sophia Richardson & Vanja Lugonjic

**Session 9: Teachers as a resisting community**

Room: FG 5.315

- 14:30 [The Role of In-House Teacher Professional Development in Circumventing Neoliberal Structures: An Autobiographical Discussion](#) - Jessica Louise Mills & Komal Waqar Ali
- 14:50 [Voices of Virtue: Teachers' Reflections on Past Experiences of Addressing Harms Between Peers at School](#) - Ricardo Salas Dorado, Laura Pareja Conto, Holly Recchia, & Ana Maria Velasquez Nino
- 15:10 [Navigating Emotional Labour](#) - Laura Taylor

**Session 10: Critical views in educational contexts and communities**

Room: FG 5.335

- 14:30 [Truth Before Reconciliation: Unpacking Statements of Ontario School Boards](#) - Abigail Llacer
- 14:50 [Literature Review: Epistemic Fragility and How Continuing Professional Education is Failing Professors](#) - Erika O'Hara

**Session 11: *Communication within and between communities***

Room: FG 5.245

**14:30** [Community Engagement: The Role of PECS in Promoting Spontaneous Communication in Play for Children with ASD](#) - *Selina Di Nitto*

**14:50** [Preventing Language Deprivation Syndrome: The Rationalist Argument that Deaf Babies Should be Immersed in Signed Language](#) - *Allison Cameron*

**Session 12: *Communities through the lens of autoethnography***

Room: FG 5.255

**14:30** [“Dramatic play just bleeds out into everywhere”: A Narrative Inquiry of Risky Dramatic Play](#) - *Miriam Francisco*

**14:50** [Growing Up as a Minority: Please Don't Give Us Labels](#) - *Kim-Britney Vu*

**15:10** [Exploring Informal Language Education Through the Japanese Tea Ceremony](#) - *Aya Halliday*

**Closing Panel: *Educational Research: Conversation with Faculty Members***

Room: FG 5.225

**15:45** Panel with professors of the Department of Education, Concordia University  
Panelists: *Arpi Hamalian, Sandra Chang-Kredl, Florent Michelot, Walcir Cardoso*  
Moderator: *Vitor Yano*

## Keynote Speakers

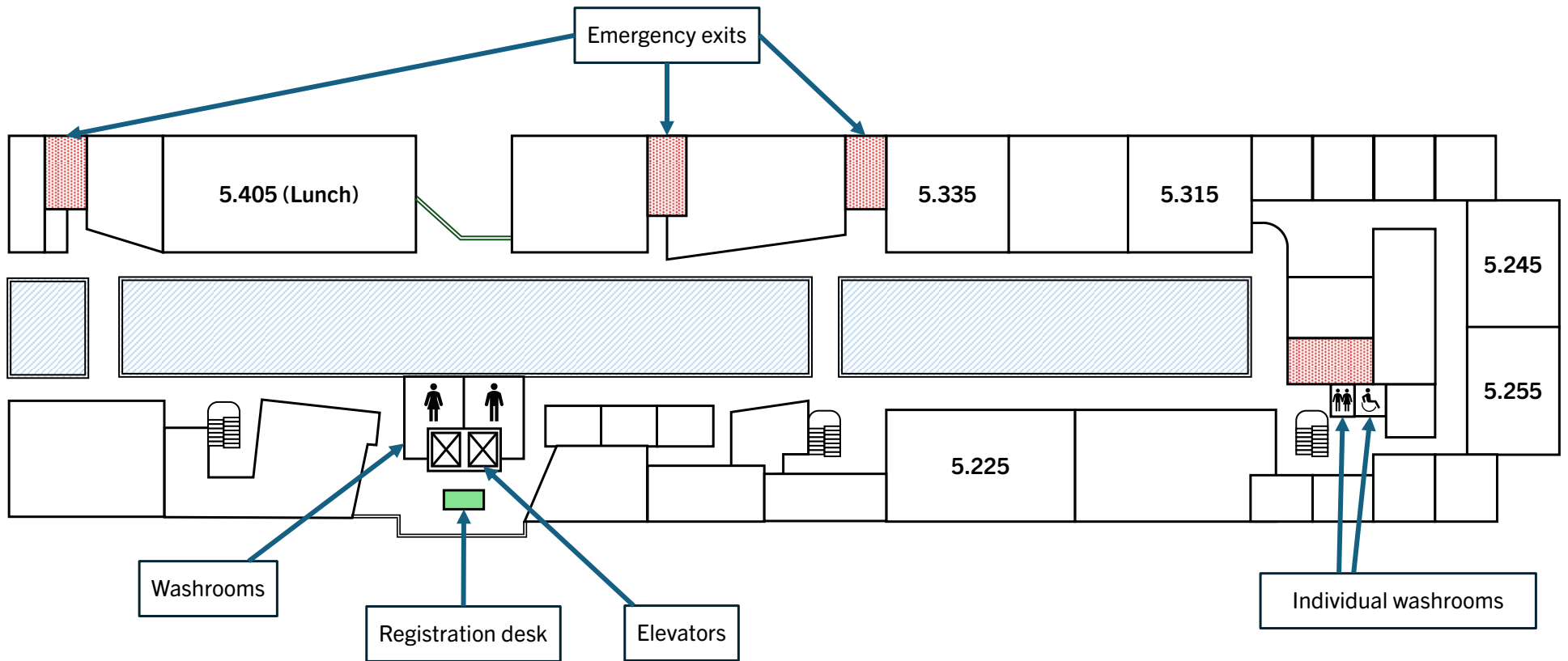


**Anna Barrafato** is the Disability Accommodation Lead at the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) at Concordia University. She is an experienced professional in higher education with expertise in accessibility, inclusion, disability services, and mental health. She began her career as a psychologist with Concordia's Counselling and Psychological Services and most recently held the position of the inaugural Accessibility Lead at the Equity Office. She has presented nationally and internationally at conferences on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), mental health, strengths-based advising, and inclusive teaching practices. Anna is a licensed psychologist and a part-time faculty member. She holds a Master's degree in Child Studies from Concordia and a Master's in Counselling Psychology from McGill University.

**Jayne Malenfant** is an Assistant Professor at McGill University, in Tio'tiá:ke/Montreal. Their work focuses on the educational experiences of young people and adults navigating homelessness, the engagement of people with lived and living experience of housing precarity in advocacy and research, and the experiences of Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary communities navigating housing precarity and institutional harm.



### FG Building - 5th Floor



## List of Abstracts

(Ordered by the first author's last name)

## **Navigating Integration: The Role of Education in Supporting Older Refugees in Canada**

Meghri Bakarian  
*McGill University*

Canada has a long-standing commitment to human rights and refugee protection (Ghosh et al., 2019). Successful refugee integration requires efforts from both the Canadian community and the newcomers themselves (Fantino & Colak, 2001). Elderly refugees face unique challenges, managing both aging and integration (UNHCR, n.d.). The World Health Organization (2015) defines older age as individuals 60 and over. Unlike older adults in the host country, who have planned for aging, older refugees navigate these changes in an unfamiliar environment with limited support (Burton & Breen, 2002). Recent conflicts, such as in Ukraine, have increased the number of older Ukrainian refugees, many considering returning home due to integration struggles (Waldie, 2022). This study aims to explore the integration experiences of older refugees, emphasizing their learning processes, needs, and available support services. Research highlights education systems' role in refugee integration (Bakarian, 2021). This paper examines formal and non-formal education opportunities/programs for older refugees and how they facilitate integration. Unlike younger refugees, who gain language skills through school or work (Mui & Kang, 2006; Pumariaga et al., 2005), older refugees often lack resources, social support, and access to services, hindering integration (Help Age International & Handicap International, 2014). Grounded in Ager and Strange's (2008) theory of integration, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, and Feminist Intersection Theory (Choo et al., 2013), this study underscores the significance of refugee integration and learning opportunities. This corresponds with the symposium theme, which emphasizes the community's role in providing each individual with quality education, both within formal school settings and through non-formal educational opportunities beyond the classroom. Ultimately, education fosters sustainable communities, emphasizing the broader role of education in community building and social cohesion.



## **Preventing Language Deprivation Syndrome: The Rationalist Argument that Deaf Babies Should be Immersed in Signed Language**

Allison Cameron  
*Concordia University*

Inadequate exposure to language during the critical period of acquisition can lead to language deprivation syndrome (LDS) - a lifelong cognitive impairment. Without early intervention, structural supports, and - most importantly - access to signed language, Deaf children born to hearing parents are at risk for LDS. Unfortunately, lack of knowledge about the causes and effects of LDS are still pervasive in the medical community and amongst educators. I will argue that much of the empirical research into choice of communication modes with Deaf children (and resulting outcomes) is fundamentally flawed. Drawing partly on my background in theoretical linguistics, I will instead present a simple, rationalist position in favour of sign language as the one reliable method for preventing language deprivation syndrome.

## **Bridging Difference and Building Community through a Wilderness Solo Experience (WiSE) Educational Framework**

Madeline Carr  
*McGill University*

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, leaders must navigate diverse perspectives, bridge cultural divides, and foster inclusive communities. However, leadership education often focuses on external engagement without emphasizing the inner reflective work necessary for meaningful connection and community-building. My research addresses this gap by developing Wilderness Solo Experiences (WiSE) - self-directed nature retreats that cultivate deep reflection, self-awareness, and leadership adaptability, applicable in cross-cultural contexts. While solo experiences may seem introspective, they are a critical foundation for bridging difference and building community. Leadership grounded in self-reflection, resilience, and nature-based learning equips individuals to approach cross-cultural engagement with humility, adaptability, and a deep sense of responsibility toward others. By integrating land-based eco-pedagogy and experiential learning, WiSE provides a universal, place-based framework that transcends cultural barriers, helping leaders develop the skills needed to facilitate dialogue, build inclusive teams, and navigate global challenges. My research explores how solitude and nature immersion enhance cross-cultural leadership competencies, equipping individuals with the reflective, empathetic, and adaptive leadership skills required to bridge difference. Findings will inform educators, NGOs, and international development organizations, offering a scalable leadership education framework that fosters deep personal growth as a pathway to stronger, more inclusive communities. By shifting leadership education beyond traditional, Western classroom models and grounding it in place-based, culturally responsive experiences, my research demonstrates how solitude in nature fosters the self-awareness necessary for effective collaboration, community-building, and global leadership.

## **Educator Resistance in the Face of Divisive Policy and Rhetoric: Parental Rights Legislation in Alberta's Publicly Funded Catholic Secondary Schools**

Adela Czyzewska  
*McGill University*

This presentation stems from my MA thesis, which investigates the impact of parental rights legislation and religious policies in publicly funded Catholic secondary schools in Alberta. Alberta's recent Education Amendment Act (2024) requires parental consent for student pronoun and preferred name usage and exposure to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) education. Using Institutional Ethnography (IE) (Smith, 2005), this study examines how individuals' experiences are shaped by textually enforced structures known as ruling relations (Campbell and Gregor, 2002; Smith, 2005). Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten 2SLGBTQ+ and/or allied educators and three recently graduated 2SLGBTQ+/allied youth from Alberta's Catholic schools. These interviews explored factors that hinder or support resistance to divisive homo/transphobic rhetoric and investigated how safe spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ students are shaped by this legislation. Participants expressed concerns about the legislation, including its impact on student safety, increased censorship, and fears of reversing progress for 2SLGBTQ+ visibility in Catholic schools. Educators noted a societal shift toward less accepting attitudes that permeated school environments. Yet, all of the educators in this study were skilled in navigating and resisting restrictive homo/transphobic religious policies. This resilience emboldened educators to continue to create safer spaces for students despite new legislation. Student participants recognized educator resistance, which positively influenced their experiences despite obstacles they faced in their school environments. The findings highlight the importance of resisting divisive rhetoric amid growing polarization around gender and sexuality in education. It is crucial that educators find ways to resist divisive rhetoric and cultivate safer spaces that foster justice, diversity, and inclusion.

## **Community Engagement: The Role of PECS in Promoting Spontaneous Communication in Play for Children with ASD**

Selina Di Nitto  
*Concordia University*

Communication skills are essential for full participation in a community, yet children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often experience deficits in this domain that hinder their ability to engage with others. Support systems, such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), offer a promising approach to enhancing communication. Through PECS, children learn to exchange pictures with an adult to request items, often promoting spontaneous communication in structured settings. However, its potential to support communication in natural play environments remains underexplored. This study will employ a multiple-baseline design to assess whether PECS increases spontaneous communication in minimally verbal children with ASD during free-play sessions with an adult. Participants, aged 3 to 5 years, will be recruited from autism intervention centers in Montreal and will participate in two 15-minute play sessions per week for six months. The baseline phase will document existing forms of spontaneous communication (gestures, directed gaze, and vocalizations). The intervention phase will introduce PECS training to track whether it increases the overall frequency of spontaneous communication. A visual analysis will compare changes in communication frequency across phases. By examining how PECS fosters engagement in naturalistic interactions, this study highlights the intersection of education and community inclusion, emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies that empower all children to participate actively in their social environments. Findings are expected to inform educational and therapeutic approaches, promoting communication skills that help children with ASD build connections and integrate more fully into their communities.

## **Aqui Vive Gente: The Use of Counterframing to Expose the Epistemic Injustice of Mass School Closures**

Amanda Doran  
*Concordia University*

Mass public school closures, referring to the shuttering of numerous schools in a specific area within a condensed timeline, are not a new phenomenon. The research for my Directed Study paper has found that reasonings for closures provided by those in power, no matter the location, are similar- low enrolment, test scores, budget issues and ‘failing’ schools. Left out of prominent news cycles, these decisions affect the most marginalized and vulnerable communities, and the choice of framing in communicating information to stakeholders (students, parents, educators, inhabitants of the region) can directly influence the perception of the rationale, and whether there can be a change of outcome. Intentional framing often results in news items that are glossed over, or forgotten over time, although there are profound epistemic harms surrounding these choices. Drawing from Miranda Fricker’s definitions of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, this text will discuss the ethical components and socioeconomic consequences for communities in Chicago, New Orleans and Puerto Rico, to highlight the epistemic injustices inherent in the decision-making and execution of these closures. Using a critical approach, this paper will focus on Benford and Snow’s concepts of collective action framing (2000) to illustrate how the community responses to closures in these areas act as essential counterframes and reinforce the significance of the community and its inextricable connection to schools and education.

## **Between the Hammer and the Anvil: Multilingual Pre-Service Teachers' Identity and Agency in a Translanguaging Framework**

Antoniya Encheva  
*Concordia University*

Language diversity has the power to connect, inspire and challenge prejudices through a shared sense of difference. This is especially true in a country like Canada, where over 200 languages are spoken (Canadian Heritage, 2021). Education has an important role in affirming and legitimizing the identities and experiences of multilingual learners. As educators, we should meaningfully apply multilingual pedagogical frameworks such as Translanguaging, which acknowledge the full range of discursive practices multilinguals employ to construct meaning within their communities (García, 2009). This includes the sphere of Teacher Education, as teacher candidates should be aware of their own linguistic diversity to advocate for and support multilingual learners. This literature review examines how Quebec's educational policies fail to address translanguaging practices in the teacher training curriculum. It also explores how pre-service teachers' sense of professional agency shapes classroom environments that favour linguistic diversity and challenge monoglossic norms. Current research suggests that training on translanguaging gives multilingual teacher candidates the ability to think critically about their role in perpetuating existing linguistic hierarchies. In turn, training on translanguaging becomes the framework through which they develop agency in their communities of practice and can become advocates for their multilingual learners. This study will be of interest to educators as Translanguaging Pedagogies for multilingual teacher candidates create more equitable classrooms in which students are experts in their own right and foster a climate of curiosity and openness towards multilingualism instead of distrust. This framework shift cultivates empathy and a sense of community, extending beyond the language classroom.

## **Conversations with Clothing Labels: Using Thing Ethnography for Social Justice Education**

Rebeca Esquivel  
*Concordia University*

The textile and garment industry employs over 12 percent of the global population, most of whom are women who labour long, poorly paid hours in dangerous work environments to mass produce articles of clothing for fast consumption (Solidarity Center, 2023). How can explorations of the articles of clothing we purchase and use lead to education on, and action against, these exploitive systems of production? In this presentation I will present the literature review and theoretical framework that informs an in-progress "thing ethnography" (Giaccardi et al., 2016) that seeks to address this question. This project proposes using clothing labels as a medium to "interview" the garments and obtain key information about the beginning of their lives, how to care for them during their existence, and question what happens at the end of their life cycle. Garments can tell us rich stories of the systems and structures that brought about and mediate their existence. Informed by a feminist ethics of care (Noddings, 1988) and decolonial feminist theory (Lugones, 2010), I posit that listening to the labels' stories is a crucial step to examine the structural features of oppression within this industry that we are all complicit in, and ultimately empower individuals to choose to participate in it in more care-full and just ways.

**“Dramatic play just bleeds out into everywhere”:  
A Narrative Inquiry of Risky Dramatic Play**

Miriam Francisco  
*Concordia University*

This study explores how early childhood educators conceptualize the intersection of risky play and dramatic play. Two research questions guided the project: (1) How does an early childhood teacher describe their pedagogical approach to facilitating dramatic play? and (2) How does an early childhood teacher describe the relationships between physicality, risk, and dramatic play? The project was informed by the lenses of narrative inquiry and phenomenology and draws on Vygotsky’s Social Learning Theory and Zone of Proximal Development. Data was collected via a semi-structured interview with a practicing early childhood educator. The interview data was analyzed using a three-level coding process. Three themes emerged from the analysis: (1) Purposes and content of dramatic play, (2) Evolved play pedagogy, and (3) Safety, boundaries, and limitations in risky dramatic play. In analyzing and interpreting possible play pedagogies, I reflect on my experiences as a teacher through autoethnographic writing. The findings highlight how risky play, which is generally associated with physical experimentation and thrill-seeking behaviors, may overlap with dramatic play in ways that challenge existing boundaries between these forms of play. Importantly, this study suggests that teachers’ past experiences and pedagogical beliefs shape their actions towards physical risk-taking in imaginative borderlands between selfhood and otherness. In support of practices that address young children’s development across domains, further research on this topic could illuminate the constellation of relationships between dramatic play, risky play, and teachers’ play pedagogies.



## Exploring Informal Language Education Through the Japanese Tea Ceremony

Aya Halliday  
*Concordia University*

Amid growing socio-political tensions that often weaponize language as a divisive tool (Crump & Halcomb-Smith, 2022), cultural arts can provide a pathway to both community building and the preservation of linguistic heritage (Echeverria & Sparling, 2024; Parra, 2013). The purpose of this pilot study is to examine the role of cultural arts practices, specifically the Japanese tea ceremony (chado), in heritage language (HL) learning and maintenance within the linguistic context of Montreal, QC. This study explores the tea room as a site where shared language, cultural practices, and community goals foster belonging and connection in addition to HL learning. Grounded in critical applied linguistic perspectives (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Kubota, 2019), this exploratory research further seeks to understand how informal language education can extend learning beyond traditional classrooms. This ongoing pilot study focuses on how culturally grounded arts-based practice supports linguistic and cultural practices that strengthen community ties. As a chado practitioner and a learner of Japanese HL, I adopt autoethnographic and critical ethnographic methodologies to explore how chado can serve as a site for language learning and cultural engagement. Data sources include field notes, journal entries, and interviews, analyzed through a thematic process. The preliminary results highlight how cultural practices can be both a tool for facilitating community building and sustaining heritage languages. The findings of this study will be of interest to educators and language learners interested in the educational importance of informal and community-centered approaches to language education, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts characterized by linguistic tensions.

## **The Role of Language and Movement in Spatial Reasoning: A Study on French and English-Speaking Primary School Students**

Hedi Jaza  
*McGill University*

Spatial reasoning is the ability to visualize and manipulate objects in 2D and 3D space (Whitely et al., 2015). Spatial reasoning is a critical skill for success in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, yet it is underemphasized in many curricula (Gilligan-Lee et al., 2022). Moreover, students are underperforming on spatial reasoning tasks and we know a little about their reasoning process. Reasoning involves the use of linguistic resources, which are often coordinated with bodily movements and interactions (Shusterman & Spelke, 2005). This study explores how language and movement influence students' spatial reasoning, focusing on 2D rotation, or the mental manipulation of objects or diagrams (Fujita et al., 2020). My research is informed by the sociocultural theories of learning (Wertsch, 1998) and embodied theory (Alibali & Nathan, 2012), where I view spatial reasoning as an action-oriented process. This case study will involve semi-structured task-based interviews with 12 primary school students in grades 5 and 6 from English speaking and French speaking schools. Students will be given 2D rotation tasks and asked to explain how and why they solved them in the ways they did. Using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I will identify patterns in students' language use and movements while solving spatial tasks. This research aims to further understand the connection between language, movement, and spatial reasoning. The findings will inform educational practices of primary school teachers and support the development of inclusive and culturally sensitive interventions to enhance students' spatial understanding.

## **Rhyming Resistance: Gazan Youth Poetry as Popular Education in the 2023-2025 War in Palestine**

Zeina Jhaish  
*McGill University*

The thesis analyzes the social and political messaging evident in poems written in the 2023-2025 war in Gaza from twelve Gazan poets worldwide. This thesis is an educational analysis of how poetry produced by Gazans during the 2023-2025 war in Palestine can inherently educate general audiences. Research Questions: (1) What are the poems' social and political themes about the genocide? (2) What are the most common social themes about Gazan experiences in the genocide, and what does this commonality educate general audiences about the shared experiences of Gazans during the genocide? (3) What social and political aspects can the poetry teach the reader about Gaza in the broader context of the Palestinian plight for freedom and resistance to the Israeli occupation? The research stems its base from two educational theories: constructivism and popular education. Popular education as praxis is relevant to the objective of empowering Gazan youth as a demographic that continues to be oppressed and marginalized by Israel (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Through literary and content analysis, the thesis contextualizes youth narratives from the latest war in Gaza as part of a broader effort within the Palestinian social movement to politically educate audiences on the Palestinian issue. This thesis aims to offer educational narratives from the genocide. The demographic of the thesis is Palestinian youth from Gaza who self-identify as poets and from Gaza. Literary and Thematic Analysis: To answer the main research questions listed above, the study will use literary analysis (Eagleton, 1983) to analyze the literary devices and messaging. After literary analysis, the study will employ qualitative thematic analysis to develop contextualizing different themes among the poetry pieces. Finally, in a time of understanding social change and solidarity, this thesis aims to offer a unique perspective often undermined by mainstream media.

## **Heritage Languages: How Can Valuing Heritages Languages in Education Contribute to Positive Social Outcomes?**

Benjamin Lafontaine  
*Concordia University*

In 1979, the influential Speak Mandarin Campaign pressured the Chinese Singaporeans to replace Chinese “dialects” and forced them to speak Mandarin to encourage Singapore’s economical growth and academic success. Consequently, they were banned within Singaporean society, and began to dramatically decline. The purpose of this paper is to present a literature review about the Speak Mandarin Campaign that caused both negative language attitudes towards Chinese “dialects” and their loss. By drawing on twenty-six peer-reviewed articles, I argue that heritage languages must never be perceived as an impediment for academic success. The results demonstrate that the decline of Chinese “dialects” within younger generations holds true. Chinese Singaporeans have tendency to put greater priorities to academic subjects (math, chemistry, etc.). My interpretation is that education and schooling are two separated but complementary concepts. Schooling is done in schools where academic subjects are taught in the official language. On the other hand, education involves transmission of culture and values which must be done in the heritage language. The findings of this literature review have significant implications for policy makers, educators, and language programs. Lessons learned from the Singaporean community will be important to other contexts where linguistic diversity tends to be disregarded. In the symposium *Education and Community: Encountering the Other* I will explain that learning heritage languages does not entail academic failure but rather develops linguistic abilities. Heritage languages bring a whole lot of cognitive and social benefits, such as juggling with different linguistic systems of rules and inclusion. Since this symposium encourages discussions about inclusion, diversity and creating bridges between differences, promoting heritage languages within the field of education would help to erase any language hierarchy.

## **Truth Before Reconciliation: Unpacking Statements of Ontario School Boards**

Abigail Llacer

*Toronto Metropolitan University*

Integrating Indigenous knowledge into public schools is essential, but teaching about the harms of Indian residential schools risks reinforcing settler colonial narratives. My study critically analyzes eleven statements published by school boards in Central Ontario about National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, which commemorates the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Nation children who never returned home, the survivors, their families, and communities impacted by the legacy of residential schools. Given education's role in cultivating intercultural awareness and empathy, the language of these statements reflects schooling's ideological biases. Informed by critical settler colonial and race theory, I examine how these statements acknowledge truth and reconciliation but do not always reflect progress. Using summative content analysis, I systematically coded keywords and concepts from a non-random cluster sample of publicly available statements sourced from the school boards' home webpages – the resulting themes related to Indigenous identity, historical accountability, and reconciliation discourse. Five of the six publicly-funded school boards were found to not place any blame or accountability on the government and church for their involvement in facilitating residential schools. The rhetoric found in these statements legitimizes Canada's ongoing colonial project, amplifying the notion that reconciliation is only a metaphor to mediate settler guilt and complicity. Without explicit accountability and direct engagement with Indigenous communities, school board statements risk reinforcing colonial narratives and undermining genuine reconciliation. Future educational reforms must incorporate Indigenous-led curriculum changes, actionable policies, and direct collaboration with Indigenous communities to create substantive change in truth and reconciliation initiatives.

## **Co-organizing Summer Climate Circles: Making Space for Informal Community**

Vanja Lugonjic  
*McGill University*

The climate emergency requires educational offerings that inform and transform learners to go beyond the perpetuation of systems and modes of thinking which have created these conditions in the first place (Stein, 2024). Many climate education scholars posit that working within communities of practices, or for a greater community such as a neighborhood can contribute to the pro-environmental behaviors and beliefs (Bradbury & Middlemiss, 2015; Monroe et al., 2019). ‘Community’ can then be theorized as a container for transformative learning, a powerful theory taken up by the climate adult education field to demonstrate how certain moments change an individual but also can be applied to a group or organization (Singer-Brodowski, M, 2023, Meizrow & Taylor 2009). Additionally, sites of social exchange associated with community initiatives are more heavily associated with positive emotional reactions in the context of transformative learning (Grund et al., 2009). However, what does it mean to create, maintain and manage a group of learners coming together? In collaboration with Alicia Aikens from Solacene, we organized the Summer Climate Circles: free, weekly, public, outdoor and experimental events which showcased local knowledge from our networks, centred climate emotions and taught tangible skills like mending. This session presents and reflects upon the process of building a community of learners in a non-formal environment within the context of the climate justice movement (Kluttz & Walter, 2018). By presenting this emergent project, we hope to share valuable lessons for community organizers, activists and educators, and learn from the audience about potential pathways forward.

**Apii nimazinigwaas indAnishinaabe-gaagiigid (When I bead, I give a speech in Anishinaabe) Stitching Together Language and Culture: Anishinaabeg Beading as a Pedagogical Tool for Language Preservation**

Jenni Makahnouk  
*McGill University*

In 2021, just over 1 in 10 First Nations people in Ontario could speak an Indigenous language, a decline of nearly 10% in five years, despite a 10% increase in the Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2021; 2023). This contrast highlights the urgent need for culturally grounded Indigenous language education. Traditional art forms like beading are crucial to preserving identity and cultural practices (Bagley & Castro-Salazar, 2011), offering a hands-on, culturally rich approach that blends artistic expression with pedagogical tools for language learning (Chew, 2019). However, while arts-based learning has shown promise in language revitalization, there is little research on the use of beading as a pedagogical tool for Anishinaabemowin fluency. The literature presents key themes supporting this approach. Chew (2019) compares weaving to language reclamation, aligning with beading's intricate, intentional process in fostering linguistic and cultural continuity. However, gaps remain in the empirical application of arts-based methods in Indigenous language education, particularly within Anishinaabe communities. To address this gap, my research will explore how Anishinaabeg beading can be used to teach Anishinaabemowin, assessing its accessibility and effectiveness for First Nations youth unfamiliar with traditional practices. As a member of Lac Seul First Nation and an experienced beader and language advocate, I aim to contribute to this emerging field by blending cultural artistry with language learning in meaningful and practical ways. Research Question: How can Anishinaabeg beading practices be used to effectively teach Anishinaabemowin?

## **The Role of In-House Teacher Professional Development in Circumventing Neoliberal Structures: An Autobiographical Discussion**

Jessica Louise Mills & Komal Waqar Ali  
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Due to globalization and international non-state actors involving themselves in educational institutions, schools across the globe are utilizing curricula and imposing “best practices” from North America. Both authors worked in schools in Asia where they witnessed what happens when schools apply pedagogical practices that are not tailored for their students. They both experienced this phenomenon first as English language teachers, and then again when they transitioned into teacher professional development roles. Both authors then devised ways to make their curriculum and training materials more appropriate for their context. They employ the situated perspective to critically reflect upon their experiences. They discuss how leading needs-based on-site professional development, inclusive of teachers’ needs and workloads, at their schools was the most appropriate strategy for their specific contexts. In both contexts, English was perceived as a language of access and as English language teacher trainers, the authors discuss how they were able to circumvent the limitations of the structures imposed on them, in order to create learning environments cognizant of their faculty and students’ needs. By highlighting their own acts of resistance within neoliberal structures, the authors advocate for small, consistent acts of resistance, both individual and collective, in order to bring forth meaningful change.



## **Community, Identity, Belonging and Jazz: An Exploration of Montreal's Jazz Scene**

Matthew Mullone  
*Concordia University*

This research explores notions of identity and community within Montreal's Jazz community, specifically focusing on the Black experience. While my proposed research is situated within what is understood as the Jazz community in Montreal, it is not limited to what is known as conventional Jazz, which is often understood to be improvisational music with its origins beginning in New Orleans, merging African rhythms and European harmonies (Schuller, 1986). Jazz is often hard to define due to the mysterious nature of the music, but Jazz has become a continuation of multiple musical styles with no precise boundaries (Townsend, 2000). For the purpose of my research, it will encompass all genres of music affiliated with Jazz (such as Hip-Hop, Rock and Roll, R&B, and so on) to develop an inclusive and holistic understanding of musical and educational subcultures formed under the umbrella of Jazz. This investigation is centered on my lived experience as a Black Anglophone Jazz musician. It will interrogate the following research questions: 1) How has Jazz (expansively understood) allowed the Black Anglophone community to belong in Montreal? 2) How might Jazz music be used in local, informal, and community-based educational contexts to understand community and identity formation better? By focusing on the themes of identity, belonging, and community, this autoethnographic study will recognize and reiterate the importance of informal and community-based education for honoring the cultural and historical contributions of the Black community in Montreal. This presentation will present the preliminary findings of my thesis work.

## **The Role of Language in Immigrant Integration: Experiential Learning Insights through Quebec's Francization Program**

Timea Nagy  
*Concordia University*

This paper explores my experiential learning journey through Quebec's Francization program, shedding light on the complexities of language acquisition as a pathway to community integration. Anchored in the theme of "encountering the other," the study reflects on the dual role of language as both a bridge to belonging and a barrier to full participation. Through personal narratives, I examine how the Francization program enhanced my linguistic skills while simultaneously highlighting the challenges of fostering meaningful social connections within the constraints of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on scholarly insights from migrant education and adult learning theories, I argue that language learning is deeply intertwined with community-building and emotional support, both of which are critical for immigrants' successful integration. The paper critiques the program's inability to address the need for a robust sense of community, despite its strengths in skill-building and accessibility. By situating my experience within broader discussions on adult education and immigrant inclusion, I emphasize the importance of participatory approaches that transcend classroom walls to create spaces of authentic interaction and mutual understanding. Ultimately, this paper invites educators and policymakers to reimagine language programs as transformative sites where education and community converge, facilitating encounters with "the other" that are essential to fostering a more inclusive society.

## **Strategies and Reasoning in Geometry Problem-Solving: A Middle-School Students' Perspective**

Minh-Tri Nguyen  
*McGill University*

To deal with complex situations in everyday life, students require problem-solving, the ability to work through a task where there is no immediate solution (NCTM, 2000). Problem-solving is especially critical in mathematics, particularly geometry due to its visual nature (Vale & Barbosa, 2018). However, problem-solving in geometry is often underemphasized in school mathematics due to assessment pressures (Blinkey et al., 2012). This proposed research aims to explore the reasons behind the strategies used to understand and solve an unfamiliar problem in geometry. I will use a situative learning framework, with a focus on the intersection of cognitive processes and interactions with tools and people (Greeno, 2011). This framework will allow me to understand students' participation in problem-solving in relation to disciplinary community norms and practices. Using a case study approach (Yin, 2013), I will conduct 60-minute individual video recorded semi-structured interviews with 10 students in grade 7 from an English Montreal secondary school. To situate their problem-solving, I will first ask students about their perceptions and experiences with it. Then, students will complete 3 geometric problem-solving tasks. After each task, I will ask them to describe how they started, why they used specific steps, and how they dealt with any challenges encountered. The data will be analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Results will reveal areas for student improvement and inform mathematics teachers about students' learning processes of geometry, creating classroom environments that foster effective communication of ideas, promote better mathematical understanding and encourage problem-solving autonomy.

## Literature Review: Epistemic Fragility and How Continuing Professional Education is Failing Professors

Erika O'Hara  
*Concordia University*

I will begin my review of literature with research that features epistemic fragility in action. This will include a brief discourse on the values of discomfort and comfort when educating those in positions of privilege. I will then discuss what power professors have and lack and how Continuing Professional Education (CPE) is failing to help them become more confident with using Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) in their practice. Unfortunately, there is little research done on epistemic fragility at this time. What does exist focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (and Medicine) (STEM(M)) faculty. Although it is believed that professionals can self-determine their educational needs, this may not be true for EDIA education. At least as it relates to educators within STEM(M), it would appear that, if left to their own devices, educators are more comfortable maintaining the status quo than educating their way out of it. University professors exist at a crossroads where they simultaneously are the front-line change-makers in the lives of their students as well as the arbiters of policy. CPE, especially when provided by an academic institution to its own faculty, is liable to be little more than a bureaucratic recertification system that does not address competence and is at risk of groupthink and the illusion of unanimity. Without addressing changes to organizational culture and increasing support for professors, it is difficult to implement EDIA into the classroom by offering CPE alone.

## Equitable Pronunciation Lessons Informed by Tenets of Pedagogical Translanguaging

Anna Patterson  
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The section of English teaching concerned with pronunciation is informed by native-speakerist and raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Ponzio & Deroo, 2024). Communicative language teaching (CLT) promotes strict "English-only" classrooms and monolingual, native-speaker standards as assessment goals (Cook, 2001). To argue against these ideologies teachers, are in need of more equitable materials. Responding to a call for anti-racist pronunciation pedagogy by Ramjattan (2024), I am developing materials which value and integrate students' diverse language backgrounds and pronunciation needs in the classroom by centering intelligibility and learner autonomy. These lessons draw from pedagogical translanguaging (e.g. Cenoz & Gorter, 2021) and the field of cross-linguistic influence (e.g. McManus & Marsden, 2017). These materials are theoretically grounded in four tenets of pedagogical translanguaging: the integral use of students' full linguistic repertoire, the development of students' metalinguistic awareness, the fostering of critical metalinguistic awareness, and centering students' multilingual identities. Piloting these lessons in private lessons with five adult, advanced English users of different language backgrounds who sought out pronunciation or "accent reduction" courses allowed me to explore the anti-nativespeakerist teaching possibilities offered by these tenets. This presentation, from a teacher originally trained in CLT, will focus on how engaging in anti-native-speakerist translanguaging pedagogy promotes education's role in fostering justice, diversity, and inclusion. I will highlight the co-construction of goals, the dismantlement of accent myths, and cooperative engagement in activities which exemplify the tenets above. These reflections will benefit other teachers who are looking to engage in more equitable pronunciation instruction for multilingual learners.

## **Innovative Learning Models: Participatory Alternative Book Clubs as a Curriculum Framework**

Maria Petrella  
*Concordia University*

My Directed Study Project explores the transformative potential of participatory alternative book clubs as a dynamic curriculum framework that fosters engagement, critical thinking, and collaborative learning across diverse educational contexts. In response to widespread dissatisfaction with traditional one-size-fits-all education models, this research advocates for a horizontal approach centering the learning experience around students' engagement with subject matter, promoting collective empowerment and inclusivity. The study is based on a course co-developed with peers in the Educational Studies Department during summer 2024. The course allowed students to explore academic texts on educational studies through dynamic seminars, discussions, and concept mapping. Inspired by Ivan Illich's "Learning Webs" in *Deschooling Society* (1971), the model's core concept emphasizes creating knowledge webs using diverse research materials. The research examines the functioning of participatory alternative book clubs, drawing on scholarship on participatory pedagogy, alternative assessment models, and engaged scholarship. Additionally, it identifies gaps and limitations in current scholarship and addresses critiques of both traditional and progressive educational models. The methods section outlines the alternative book club model within the Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework. The summer course demonstrates the model's adaptability and effectiveness in higher education, empowering learners and fostering social transformation. The presentation concludes with a discussion on applying participatory pedagogy and PAR principles in community organizations, non-profits, and NGOs. By examining interdisciplinary approaches and areas requiring further research, this project contributes to educational reform discourse, showcasing the value of participatory alternative book clubs in promoting peer-to-peer learning and transformative educational experiences.

## Reimagining Climate Conferences as Equitable Educational Spaces: Design Study Reflections from Two Early-career Professionals

Sophia Richardson & Vanja Lugonjic  
*McGill University*

This presentation is situated within the global #Flyingless and #Fly-shame movements, which urge academics and universities to reduce or eliminate air travel (e.g. Kreil, 2019; Langin 2019), and criticize a return to pre-pandemic practices amid an existential climate crisis as "highly irresponsible, exclusionary and unjust" (Chasi & Heleta, 2023, p. 605). Although evidence indicates that institution air travel is largely driven by high-profile academics (e.g, Wynes & Donner 2018), the debate as to who should fly and how flying-less might impact the professional development of early-career professionals (ECPs) must be considered (Harvey et al., 2021). As two ECPs navigating this debate, we share our experience in a design study which reimagines conferencing practices for Adaptation Futures, an UN flagship climate conference that brought over 1600 participants from 127 countries to Montreal in 2023 (Huang, n.d.). At the symposium, we will reflect and share video-based reflective essays, including Richardson (2024), on the experience of bridging commonly tokenized and excluded perspectives through the redesign of conference field trips. Two insights related to the role of education at climate conferences will emerge; 1) the need for our higher education institutions to support intergenerational learning between ECPs and more experienced professionals in the conference learning environment; 2) our knowledge mobilization process acted as one such method of support, by extending the learning space beyond the temporal confines of the conference itself. The session will be of interest to the audiences interested in collaboratively reimagining conferences as equitable educational spaces for a low-carbon future.

## **Voices of Virtue: Teachers' Reflections on Past Experiences of Addressing Harms between Peers at School**

Ricardo Salas Dorado, Laura Pareja Conto, Holly Recchia, & Ana Maria Velasquez Nino  
*Concordia University*

This research explores teachers' perspectives and approaches to addressing peer harm incidents in educational settings through a qualitative analysis of their narratives and focus group discussions. Employing thematic analysis of in-depth individual interviews and a focus group with eight teachers from a public school in Bogotá, Colombia, two overarching themes were identified: 1) Teachers' philosophies: Reflecting on navigating tensions between different concerns while centering students' needs, and 2) Teachers' recognition that harms occur in complex social contexts, requiring collaboration with the larger community. The first theme highlighted teachers' tensions between following protocols and adapting to individual circumstances when addressing peer harm. They prioritized proactive strategies, restorative approaches, and considered students' perspectives to support their moral development. The second theme revealed teachers' understanding that students' behavior is shaped by family dynamics and sociocultural factors such as socioeconomic and peer pressure, necessitating a holistic and contextualized approach to address peer harm and promote positive relationships. In this complex educational landscape, the virtue of prudence was identified as a valuable lens for understanding teachers' interventions. This approach offers both structure and flexibility, aligning well with their student-centered philosophies. Teachers strived to develop thoughtful and context-specific interventions, highlighting the importance of prudence in shaping their philosophies, roles, and strategies for addressing peer harm. These findings provide deeper insights into the challenges of managing student conflicts and underscore the human element of the teaching profession.



## **Bridging Differences through Cultural Learning Activities in Language Classes**

Ryuichi Suzuki  
*Concordia University*

In an increasingly interconnected world, education plays a significant role in fostering inclusive communities that embrace diversity and justice. Foreign language education uniquely enables learners to engage with diverse perspectives by exploring the culture of the target language, fostering encounters with otherness. To this end, a series of cultural learning activities was introduced in college-level beginner Japanese language classes at the author's previous university. These activities aimed to develop intercultural competence (IC) through small group presentations on Japanese cultural topics, class discussions, and reflective writing conducted in English. For this study, I analyzed 46 students' reflection essays using a deductive qualitative approach based on the elements of Byram's (2021) IC model, while also exploring emergent themes through an inductive approach. Through this analysis, I identified all components of the model – attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery, and critical cultural awareness. Additionally, an emergent element of social engagement (Byram, 2008) was observed, illustrating how learners were inspired to address social issues beyond the classroom through cultural learning. This presentation (1) outlines the practical procedure for implementing cultural learning activities, which can also be applied beyond language education, and (2) highlights the evidence of IC development and other themes found in students' reflective writings.

## Navigating Emotional Labour

Laura Taylor  
*McGill University*

I am a second-year PhD student in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. This presentation introduces the concept of emotional labour and examines how it influences teachers' engagement, disengagement, and overall commitment to the teaching profession. My research employs narrative and arts-based methodologies. The specific methods used are semi-structured interviews, journaling, and collage work to gather teachers' personal stories of engagement and disengagement throughout a school year. These stories will be analyzed using a narrative inquiry approach. The primary focus of this study is to examine how emotional labour shapes teachers' experiences and to develop concrete training and professional development strategies to assist pre-service and early-career teachers. By linking emotional labour to teacher training, this research addresses a critical gap in teacher education, which has traditionally overlooked the emotional dimensions of professional practice. The outcomes of this work will include the development of targeted workshops for both pre-service teachers and in-service teachers at various stages of their careers. These workshops will focus on recognizing, processing, and coping with emotional labour, helping to foster resilience, reducing disengagement, and promoting sustainable career commitment. In doing so, this research contributes to the broader conversation on teacher well-being. It will provide insight into emotionally attuned pedagogy and training required within teacher education programs and ongoing professional development initiatives.

## **Bridging the Gender Gap: Embodiment of Spatial Reasoning in Young Girls**

Sabrina Turrin & Marta Kobiela

*McGill University*

Spatial reasoning is essential to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields (Davis & SRG, 2015). Despite discourse surrounding comparison of women and young girls' underperformance in spatial tasks compared to men and boys (Bartlett & Camba, 2023; Lauer et al., 2019), few studies have investigated how young girls reason about spatial tasks. This study investigated how young girls embodied spatial reasoning as they solved six geometric spatial scaling tasks. Dr. Marta Kobiela and I used situative learning theory (Greeno, 1997; Langer, 2009) and embodied cognition theory (Wilson, 2002) to provide the context of prior mathematical learning and center reasoning in an embodied way. As principal investigator, using case study methodology, I conducted individual video-recorded, semi-structured, task-based interviews with 17 Grade 3 girls to capture their embodied reasoning. The spatial scaling tasks involved matching an object on one picture to a picture of a different scale. Using thematic analysis, we analyzed the interviews to capture the embodied reasoning of each student. Student reasoning was identified by linguistic and gestural cues. Overall, the findings revealed seven forms of embodied reasoning when solving spatial scaling tasks. Three forms of reasoning were divided into sub-forms of reasoning. Intersections between the forms of reasoning were also revealed. Six student cases revealed complex and multiple forms of reasoning, where they used objects in their surroundings and past experiences to solve the spatial scaling tasks. This study suggests teacher practices of integrating student reasoning with gestures in their classroom and highlights implicit bias towards gender in mathematics.

## **Navigating Higher Education: Insights from Autistic Students Across Canada**

Kathryn Urbaniak  
*Concordia University*

As more autistic students enter higher education, universities have a growing responsibility to support these students. Many autistic students report not receiving adequate support in postsecondary education (e.g. Anderson et al., 2018; Gurbuz et al., 2019). Graduate students with disabilities in Canada report experiencing “lower levels of satisfaction, both academically and socially, and identify as having greater difficulty navigating the academic, professional development, and campus social environments at their institutions” (NEADS, 2018, p. 6). Research also indicates that autistic university students in particular are at an increased risk of failure with “high rates of academic and non-academic difficulties but low usage of supports” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 615). It is clear that many barriers exist. Through a lens of critical disability, and situated in the neurodiversity paradigm, this presentation will share the preliminary results from a qualitative study on the lived experiences of autistic students at Canadian universities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten autistic students about their experiences attending 16 universities across six provinces. The results will shed light on the topics of identity formation, disclosure, use of accommodations, and recommendations.

## **Growing Up as a Minority: Please Don't Give Us Labels**

Kim-Britney Vu  
*Concordia University*

This autoethnography explores the detrimental effects of labeling minority students in educational contexts, using critical race theory and post-structuralism to challenge how identity and power are constructed within schooling systems. Drawing on personal experiences and Michel Foucault's insights into discourse and power-knowledge relations, this study examines how labels such as "at-risk," "underserved," or "minority" shape students' identities in ways that perpetuate marginalization and limit opportunities for self-definition. These labels, often intended to support students, are argued to function as mechanisms of control, reinforcing systematic inequalities and shaping expectations that can hinder rather than help. The research employs qualitative methods, including discourse analysis of educational policies, curricular language, and teacher-student interactions in diverse school environments. It interrogates how labels are deployed, internalized, and intersect with social constructs such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The theoretical framework integrates Foucault's theories of discourse, power, and subjectivation with critical educational theory, particularly regarding race and identity. By viewing labels as discursive tools embedded in systems of power, the study highlights how they produce both knowledge about and constraints upon minority students. It also considers how students resist or reconfigure these labels, asserting agency in the face of structural limitations. Findings have significant implications for education policy, curriculum design, and teaching practices. Moving beyond reductive categorization requires rethinking how educators engage with diversity, prioritizing practices that affirm individuality and potential without relying on essentializing labels. The paper advocates for a shift toward relational and dialogic approaches to identity in education, emphasizing fluidity, multiplicity, and the co-construction of meaning. By interrogating the role of labeling in education, this paper contributes to ongoing conversations about equity and inclusion, urging educators to critically reflect on how well-intentioned interventions may inadvertently reproduce the inequalities they aim to address.

## **Braided Lives: Experiential Learning through Narrative Inquiry and Literary Métissage in a Professional Educational Community**

Kristen Witczak  
*Concordia University*

“Braided Lives: Transformative Learning in a Professional Educational Community” is an autoethnographic research paper outlining my growth and learning as a teacher-researcher within a professional education community of writers. I was moved to autoethnographic work, here defined as “artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience.” (Adams et. al, 2014) as an early-career secondary teacher in search of support and mentoring in community. My early experiences as a classroom teacher challenged my conceptualizations of the education system and thrust me into a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2009) as to my professional direction. Autoethnographic writing became the vehicle through which I engaged in critical reflection on my individual experiences, and working in a professional education community provided me a safe space for dialectical discourse (Schlepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021). Throughout the years, I engaged in lifelong learning (Boucouvalas, 2020), intergenerational learning (Hartley, 2020), and non-hierarchical peer mentoring (Alston & Hansman, 2020), as well as worked to bridge gaps between the academy, schools, and school boards by challenging perceptions of teacher professional development and in-service learning. Our collective work was based in teacher-research (Arhar, Holly & Kasten, 2001), professional conversation (Earl & Timperley, 2009), arts-based (Leavey, 2015) and narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) inquiries, life-writing and literary métissage (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo 2009), and Living Theory research (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Autoethnographic research and writing continue to provide a meaningful space to challenge my perspectives and acquire new dispositions toward my life and work. I endeavour to continue my transformative learning, both as a teacher-researcher and within the academy, in and outside of larger learning communities.