

MIR CENTRE FOR PEACE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



Mir Lecturer, Tzporah Berman (centre), with Elder Donna Wright (left) and Sinixt Cultural Advisor, Shelly Boyd (right), Capitol Theatre, Nelson, May 1, 2024

Message from the Chair



Looking back on the very eventful and distressing 2023-24 year, it is clear that peace education is ever more relevant and that the need for it continues to grow. Likewise, the demand for skills in conflict transformation and dialogue across difference remains high. And while the reasons for this demand – increasing violent conflict and polarization – are nothing to celebrate, it is gratifying to have the opportunity to try to address these dynamics constructively through the Mir Centre’s programs, outreach, and community engagement.

We are now three years into a five-year strategic plan, and the strategic goals we’ve identified continue to guide our work. In the following pages, you can read about the activities we undertook this year, and the ways they are helping us move in the strategic directions we’ve identified as priorities at this time.

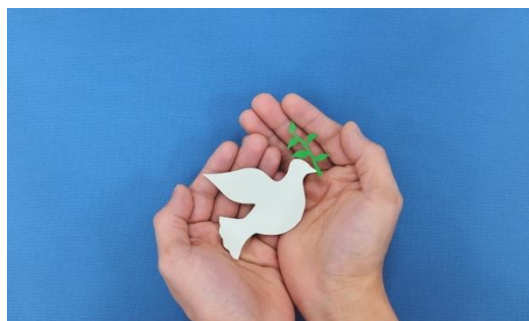
Amid so much suffering globally, we continue to feel inspired by the commitment of the many courageous and wonderful peacemakers we’ve had the pleasure to invite here, work with, and learn from. We hope you enjoy this little walk through 2023-24, and that it gives you energy to continue to work for peace, at home, in the community, and in the wider world. While we bear witness to pain and suffering, let us also seek out and amplify stories of compassion and positive change.

- Jennie Barron, Chair



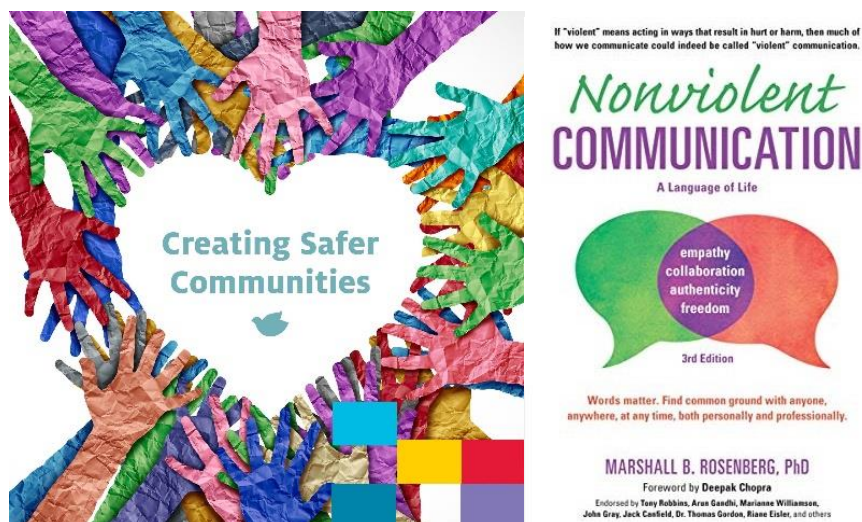
Participants in “Creating Safer Communities” course, offered in June 2024 at 10th St campus by instructors Randy Janzen (back), Madelyn MacKay (right, in pink) and Kathleen Luchtan (second from right).

Strategic Direction: Continue to Educate, Support, and Promote Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation



PEACE CAFES: WOUNDED DOVES

In response to the extreme violence in Israel-Palestine, the Mir Centre organized *Wounded Doves*, a series of peace cafés featuring speakers and organizations working in three different areas: humanitarian aid (Paul Caney, working with Doctors Without Borders); dialogue (Raja Khouri & Jeffrey Wilkinson, working with Palestinians and Jews in the North American diaspora); and peacebuilding (half a dozen different organizations active in Israel-Palestine today). We also hosted a Mir Lecture by Raja and Jeff and a community gathering for peace in the Middle East (details in the following pages).



SKILLS TRAININGS: NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION & CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES

We continue to respond to the demand for conflict transformation skills training, with two offerings of the popular Nonviolent Communication (NVC) course, taught by the skilled Holly Hume, and a course in Creating Safer Communities, taught by the very experienced trio of Randy Janzen, Madelyn MacKay and Kathleen Luchtan. Participants reported a high level of satisfaction with their learning in both courses.

“The open-ended debriefings, anecdotes from the field, and opportunities for collective brainstorming were fantastic.”

“Couldn’t have been better to address my current needs.”

Strategic Direction: Promote Dialogue Across Difference

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." - Dr Martin Luther King Jr.



GATHERING FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In October, the Mir Centre organized a Gathering for Peace in the Middle East in October at which diverse speakers, including Rayya Liebich, Zaynab Mohammed, Kim Robinson, and Bessie Wapp, shared poems, prayers and other words of comfort and peace. We invited attendees to respond to four prompts: *What is your personal connection to this war/conflict? What makes it so hard to hear each other's pain? What is one thing you wish people who think differently from you could understand? What do we need to do to heal, and build bridges of understanding across divides in our community?*

MIR LECTURE: THE WALL BETWEEN

In December, we invited Raja Khouri and Jeffrey Wilkinson, authors of *The Wall Between: What Jews and Palestinians Don't Want to Know About Each Other*, to deliver a Mir lecture at the Brilliant Cultural Centre. It was extremely well received as a constructive intervention into a very polarized situation.

MIR LECTURE: LEAN IN AND LISTEN: BUILDING BRIDGES IN A WORLD ON FIRE



In June, we were treated to a brilliant talk by Tzeporah Berman. Regaling the audience at the Capitol Theatre with stories of her 30-plus years working for the protection of old-growth forests and the climate, she combined humour, passion, and insight about the necessity and wisdom of working across divides – *with* industry, but without losing sight of the values that motivate the work.

RESOURCE GUIDE: COURAGEOUS DIALOGUES: NAVIGATING POLRIZATION

RESOURCE GUIDE Courageous Dialogues: Navigating Polarization



Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada



RESEARCH - This year we concluded the first three-year phase of our applied research project, *Courageous Dialogues: Moving Beyond Polarization*. In 2023-24, our work involved convening groups of research participants to take a deep dive into resources that provide strategies and tools for communicating openly across divides, with curiosity, humility, and civility. We also produced an interactive guide to some of our favourite articles, books, tip sheets, and videos that offer instruction and encouragement to engage in this challenging work.

Currently, we are writing up our findings from the first three years, which we plan to share through both academic and popular channels. To read, follow, and learn, please see Selkirk College's online repository [HERE](#).

The project has been a partnership with Capilano University, Vancouver Community College (VCC), Decoda Literacy Solutions, the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, and the Continuing Education and Training Association of BC, and we are very grateful both for their ongoing support, and for the funding provided through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).



Courageous Dialogues research team, from left: Andrea Korens (VCC); Leeza Perehudoff, Jayme Jones, Jennie Barron and Pablo Pastor (Selkirk); Alisha Samnani and Diana Twiss (Capilano).

Strategic Direction: Actively Work Toward Decolonization and Reconciliation



TRUTH & JUSTICE SPEAKER: MONIQUE GRAY SMITH

Our Truth & Justice speaker this year was the lovely Monique Gray Smith, who spoke with heart and wisdom about weaving love and joy into the journey of truth and reconciliation, with special attention to young people. The Truth & Justice Speaker Series is a partnership with Indigenous Services and the event was generously sponsored by the Selkirk College Faculty Association (SCFA).



FILM: THE MAKING OF THE WITNESS BLANKET

In October, we showed a film about the making of The Witness Blanket, a very large artistic exhibit made of collected objects from residential schools across the country. The goal of the project is to invite Canadians to bear witness to the experience and the aftermath of Canada's residential schools. The exhibit will be touring the country, coming to Nelson in Aug-Sept 2024.

SELKIRK READS! In September, we held the first *Selkirk reads!* Event, modelled after CBC Radio's *Canada Reads*. Twelve employees championed ten books by Indigenous authors and invited their colleagues and community members to join them in reading and discussing them. To mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Sept 30), we gathered to hear excerpts from those books and share inspiration for further learning about indigenous histories, realities, and cultural resurgence.

Selkirk Reads! is being repeated this year, with new titles and champions (photo on right).

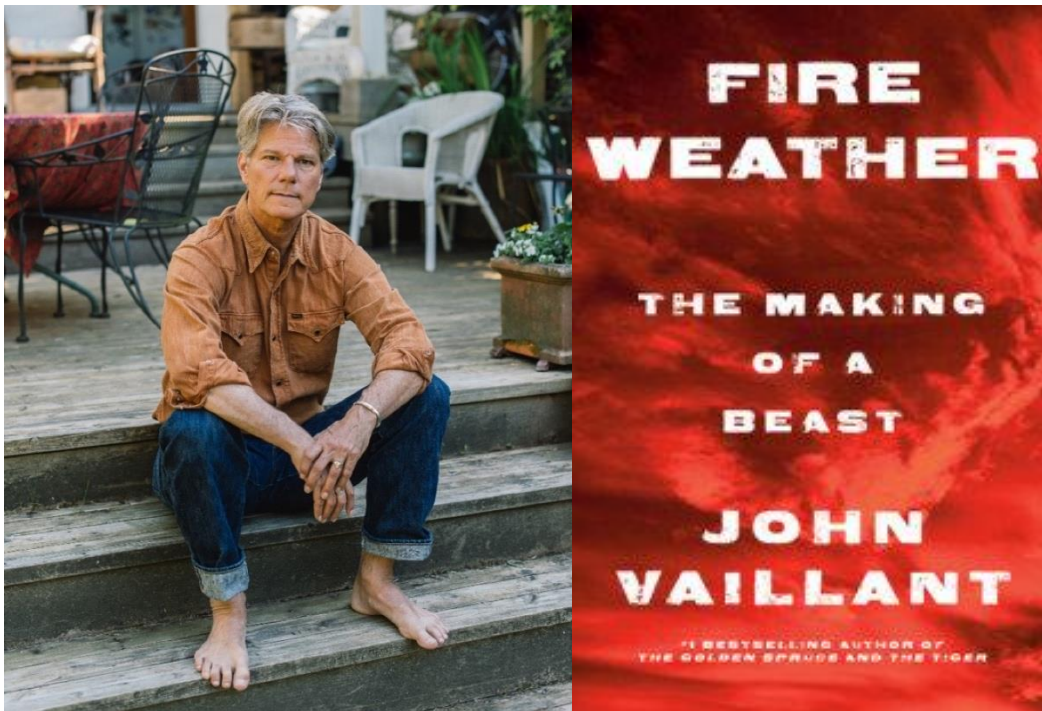


Strategic Direction: Advance Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

HYBRID FORMATS - Our efforts to advance justice, equity, diversity and inclusion are cross-cutting and involve most of our work. Now that we have livestreaming equipment, most of our Mir Lectures and Peace Cafés are delivered in hybrid format – i.e., in-person with an on-demand streaming option - to make them available to people who cannot attend in person.

LOW-BARRIER TICKETS & SPONSORSHIPS - This year we began offering low-barrier tickets to Mir Lectures, available to patrons based on self-identified need. We also provided both partial and full subsidies to community members wanting to take the Creating Safer Communities course.

CLIMATE JUSTICE - We also hosted two Mir Lecturers – John Vaillant and Tzaporah Berman – whose work is focused on addressing climate change, which poses the greatest risks to those already marginalized due to poverty, illness, or social inequities. Working for climate justice is also a matter of inter-generational justice and equity, as increasing sustainability will have the greatest impacts on future generations.



Award-winning author, John Vaillant, who spoke at the Capitol Theatre in September 2023.

Strategic Direction: Focus on Selkirk College Students and Staff

OUTREACH - This year, we endeavored to connect more with students, staff and faculty across various departments, campuses, and schools at Selkirk College. The Mir Chair made presentations to various schools within the college at their respective Planning days to make connections between their areas of interest and Mir offerings. We continued to offer a service-learning placement for a student in PEAC 202: Leadership for Peace, which was filled this year by the very capable Kierra Kinch.

SPONSORSHIP - We worked with Healthy Campus to identify a Student Ambassador who was very interested in taking the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) course and to offer her a full scholarship for it, sponsored by an anonymous community member. We also reached out to students who we felt might have a particular interest in attending certain Mir Lectures, to offer them complimentary tickets. For the Tzeporah Berman lecture, we were able to support ten students from the School of Environment and Geomatics (SEG) to attend for free.

OPPORTUNITY - We also invited a graduate of our Peace & Justice Studies program – Jamie Hunter – to be a co-interviewer on stage with Tzeporah. We were delighted to give him this opportunity and so very impressed with the intelligent, mature, and thoughtfully considered questions he asked our guest.



NVC instructor, Holly Hume



Jamie Hunter, interviewing Tzeporah Berman

I participated in the nonviolent communication course offered by Selkirk College, and it was an amazing experience! It has become essential to my social work education and personal life. I realized how much nonviolent communication could help me professionally and personally navigate my conversations.

- Brina Bowen, Social Work student

Strategic Direction: Focus on Selkirk College Students

Selkirk College gives many awards to students, some related to academic performance, some based on student initiative and service to the community. Although these are adjudicated separately, by different people, using different processes and criteria, this year, one remarkable student was awarded all of them. We heartily congratulate Eirin Murray for her hard work and dedication to peace. Eirin is currently studying in Korea for a semester, and then has plans to complete an undergraduate degree, and continue on to a masters in Peace Studies. We wish her the very best as she continues along her academic path and explores the wider world.



MIR CENTRE FOR PEACE GRANT

This award is given to a student who is actively engaged in work and/or learning that aligns with the mission of the Mir Centre for Peace and who needs funds to carry out a related project or further their learning and development. This year, it was awarded to Eirin Murray, who used the funds to travel to Guatemala on a 10-day field school with Rights Action.

MYLER WILKINSON SCHOLARSHIP

This award is given to a student with a high grade-point average who demonstrates passion and commitment to the field of peace studies.

ALEX P. RELKOFF SCHOLARSHIP

This award goes to a student who is entering their second year of Peace & Justice Studies.

MAURILIA COC MACS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

This scholarship, established by Randy Janzen and Mary Ann Morris, commemorates a little girl in Guatemala who dreamed of learning to read and write. It supports the opportunity for others who want to study and learn more about building cultures of peace.

PEACE & HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

In recognition of Doukhobor and Tolstoyan ideals, the Peace & Human Rights Award promotes the ideals of peace, international and local unity, and the dignity of work and service on behalf of humanity. The award is given in memory of those who once lived on the Mir Centre lands—Indigenous Peoples and Doukhobors.

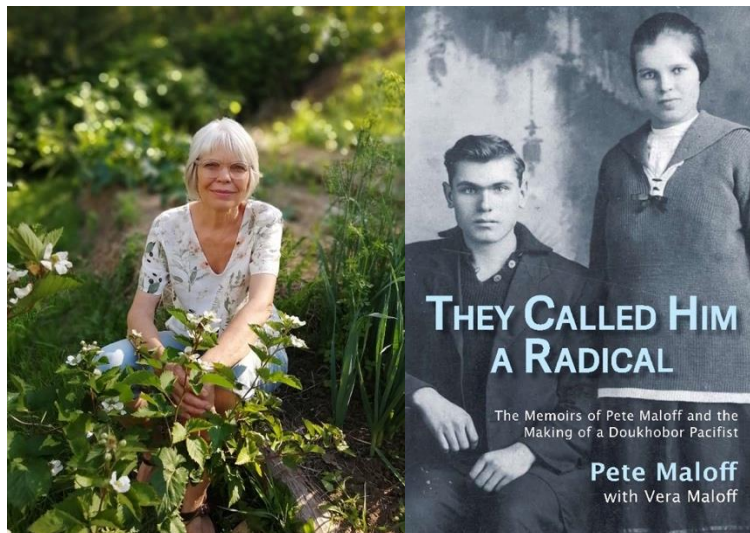
Strategic Direction: Increase Connections Between the Mir Centre and Community Groups

PARTNERSHIPS & SCHOOL VISITS - This year saw us partnering with the Elephant Mountain Literary Festival to bring in John Vaillant, and with local high schools to whom we offered a free classroom visit by four of our Mir Lecturers. John spoke to Kari Kroker's grade 12 English class at LV Rogers Secondary School in Nelson in September; Raja Khouri and Jeffrey Wilkinson spoke to all students from grades 7-12 at Mt Sentinel Secondary School in South Slokan in December; and Tzaporah Berman visited Riston Turner's grade 12 Law class at Stanley Humphries Secondary School in Castlegar in June.

APPRECIATION - For John Vaillant's lecture, we offered complimentary tickets to community volunteer and wildland firefighters as a gesture of appreciation for their work on the frontlines protecting us all.

OUTREACH - In March, the Mir Chair presented about the work of the Mir Centre to the College's Board of Governors to encourage a deeper understanding of our mission, vision, values, and programming.

AUTHOR TALK - In May, we were delighted to host local writer, Vera Maloff, for an author talk at the Mir Centre. She shared stories of growing up in the local Doukhobor community and read excerpts from her latest book, *They Called Him a Radical: The Memoirs of Pete Maloff and the Making of a Doukhobor Pacifist*. The edited collection features the writings of her grandfather, the noted Doukhobor pacifist and philosopher Pete Maloff, and was written during his years under house arrest for activities related to his pacifist convictions. As the Mir Centre owes so much to the Doukhobor community and their long-standing commitments to peace, we are always very pleased to do what we can to encourage appreciation of those ideals.



Author Vera Maloff and her newest book

Thank You to Our Guests, Supporters, Partners, Funders, and Friends

Adam Thomas	Kierra Kinch
Alisha Samnani	Kim Robinson
Allison Lutz	Kyla Hurst
Andrea Korens	Leeza Perehudoff
Bessie Wapp	Madelyn MacKay
Capilano University	Matthew Carroll
Claire Philipson	Matty Hillman
Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy	Michael Cheveldave
Continuing Education & Training Association of BC	Monique Gray Smith
Decoda Literacy Solutions	Pablo Pastor
Diana Twiss	Paul Caney
Dianne Biin	Raja Khouri
Donna Wright	Randy Janzen
Elephant Mountain Literary Festival	Rayya Liebich
FPSE Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee	Selkirk College Faculty Association
Hamza al Hanafy	Shelly Boyd
Jamie Hunter	Tyler Ballam
Jayne Jones	Tzeporah Berman
Jeffrey Wilkinson	Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ
John Vaillant	Vancouver Community College
Kathleen Luchtan	Vera Maloff
Katie Comrie	Victor Villa
	Zaynab Mohammed

TEAM MIR

CHAIR, MIR CENTRE FOR PEACE: Jennie Barron

DEAN, MIR CENTRE FOR PEACE: Allison Alder

MIR CENTRE ASSISTANT: Marya Skrypiczajko

MIR CENTRE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: Laura Nessman

ADVISORY COUNCIL AND/OR WORKING CIRCLE MEMBERS: Aaron Korbacher, Allison Alder, Bronwyn Krause, Dianne Biin, Duff Sutherland, JJ Verigin, Joslyn Sharp, Maggie Matear, Morag Carter, Noah Cannon, Pablo Pastor, Peter Wood, Sarah James, Shana Rablah, Taya Whitehead, and Todd Kettner

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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