

# Highlights of our Year 2024-2025

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## Message from the Chair

In 2024-25, while wars continued to rage in the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan, and elsewhere, we also saw a surging civil society taking to the streets, demanding peace with justice and human rights for all. Locally, the Mir Centre met that appetite for peace with diverse programming including creative exhibits, films, peace cafés, talks and performances by local artists, and our popular lecture series, which featured one of the biggest-name speakers we've had in years – CBC broadcaster Carol Off. New partnerships with local organizations and external funders allowed us to increase the value of the lecture series by adding workshops and school visits by our guest speakers, in particular Dr Lisa Gunderson. Through *Selkirk Reads!* we supported the college community in deepening our understanding of Indigenous histories and resilience, and of the ongoing need for truth-telling and justice. And with polarization increasing, we responded to the rapidly growing interest in our applied research project, *Courageous Dialogues*. As we look back on this eventful year, at both the heartbreaking violence and the many people clamoring for change, we are reminded of the words of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century pacifist and civil rights activist, A.J. Muste,

*"There is no way to peace. Peace is the way."*



Bob Hall, Carol Off, Jennie Barron (Feb 12, 2025)

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## International Day of Peace

On September 21, dozens of people gathered to watch *A Bold Peace*, the inspiring true story of how the small Central American country of Costa Rica abolished its military in 1948-49 and built a culture of peace. The event was co-sponsored by the USCC, Kootenay Regional United Nations Association (KRUNA) and the Boundary Peace Initiative.



## Selkirk Reads!

*Selkirk Reads!* is an annual initiative to encourage the Selkirk College community to read books by Indigenous authors and join in guided discussions about themes related to truth and reconciliation. This year's short-listed books spanned fiction, short stories, poetry, non-fiction, graphic novels, memoirs and children's literature. We thank Sarah James, Danica Weager, Duff Sutherland, Brier Albano, Heather Bishop, Allison Alder, Andrew Jupp, Marissa Carrasco, Laurie Langille, Kim Verigin and Claire Philipson for contributing to make *Selkirk Reads!* a success.





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## Peace Cafés

**Supporting Palestinian Nonviolent Pathways to Justice** - Dr. Randy Janzen spoke about his recent trip to the West Bank in the Occupied Palestinian Territories where he took part in a feasibility study to implement a large-scale unarmed civilian protection (UCP) team in the West Bank and Gaza, addressing what human rights groups have declared to be apartheid and genocide. Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) aims to support Palestinian-led grassroots campaigns by creating safer spaces for people to campaign for their basic human rights.

### Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Africa

Former Selkirk College Peace Studies student, Parfaite Ntahuba, is an award-winning senior pastor in the Quaker community in Burundi, in East-Central Africa. She spoke about her work to prevent gender-based and election-related violence in Burundi. She organizes school and church presentations by male leaders and clergy, premarital counseling, mediation, trauma-healing workshops, and teaches protective accompaniment using the methods of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP).



### Natasha Edmunds – Finding Common Ground

Local mediator and practitioner of conflict resolution, Natasha Edmunds, presented on how compassionate curiosity can help us engage in more meaningful conversations, expand our capacity to see another's humanness, and transform our connections within our communities, workplaces, and the world we all care about.



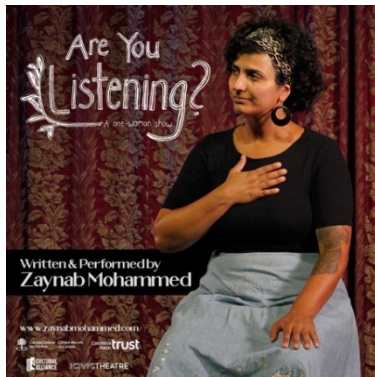
### Aaron Korbacher & Jacob Martens – Critical Media Literacy

Local educator Aaron Korbacher and Jacob Martens showed participants how to better identify and dissect propaganda, spot fake-news stories, understand ideology and representation in media, and cultivate more mindfulness regarding their information environments.

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## Special Events & Exhibits

### Are You Listening?



Zaynab Mohammed is a Nelson-based performance poet who was named a BC Culture Days Ambassador in 2022. Her one-woman show told the story of a woman who loses her innocence at a young age due to cultural inequity, whilst navigating a terrain foreign to her ancestors. *Are You Listening?* is Zaynab's first-person account of how she freed herself from generations of colonization and displacement by leaning in and listening.

### Forty Words for Yes

Forty Words for Yes is an innovative 40-part choral work by Nelson composer Doug Jamieson. It uses eight synchronized stereos playing a 15-minute sound loop of singers in forty different languages. Co-presented by the Kootenay Musical Theatre Society.

### War Up Close



"War Up Close" is a virtual-reality exhibit that uses state-of-the-art technologies – including Virtual Reality (VR) goggles, 360-degree panoramic images and drone footage – to create an immersive experience, allowing visitors to witness the destruction of cities and hear the stories of those affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine. The event featured works by photographers who risked their lives to document the extensive damage caused by Russian bombardment, as well as artwork by children displaced due to the war. The goal was to raise awareness of the immense human costs of war and build support for a just peace in Ukraine. The exhibit was organized by the VR Museum of War in Ukraine, the Maple Hope Foundation, Unissued Diplomas, and the Sunflower Project, with support from the Mir Centre for Peace.

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## Mir Lectures



### **Sharon Stein: What Do We Owe Young People in Times of Crisis?**

Converging ecological, social, economic and mental health crises are profoundly affecting our youth. Dr Sharon Stein spoke about how we, as educators and older adults, can interrupt our usual patterns to cultivate greater emotional stability, healing, responsibility, and relational connection across generational divides.

### **Carol Off: At a Loss for Words: Conversation in an Age of Rage**

Through stories from her fifteen years of talking to people in 25,000 interviews, CBC broadcast journalist Carol Off shared her insights into what happens when we lose our shared political vocabulary – and the importance of reclaiming the words that give meaning to our pursuit of a better world. Generously sponsored by the Selkirk College Faculty Association (SCFA) & USCC.



### **Lisa Gunderson: Building Belonging with Courage and Respect**



Anti-racist educator Dr Lisa Gunderson spoke about the roles each of us can play in dismantling systemic racism. By naming the barriers that keep us silent during racist incidents and offering practical strategies for bystander intervention, she gave listeners the tools to help channel our influence toward real change. Very generously “Dr G” also gave an afternoon workshop on going beyond allyship and spoke to a full assembly of students at Trafalgar Middle School where she was extremely well received.

This event was a partnership with Intercultural Kootenays with funding from Heritage Canada.

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## Skills Training

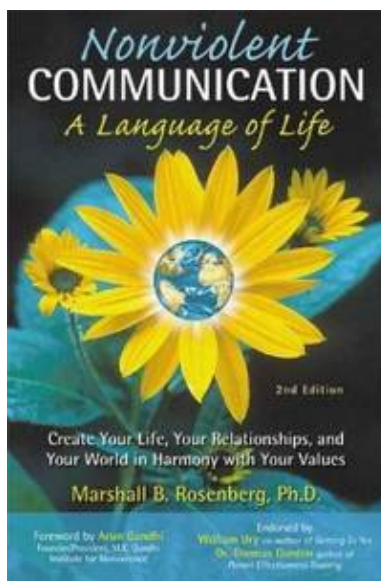
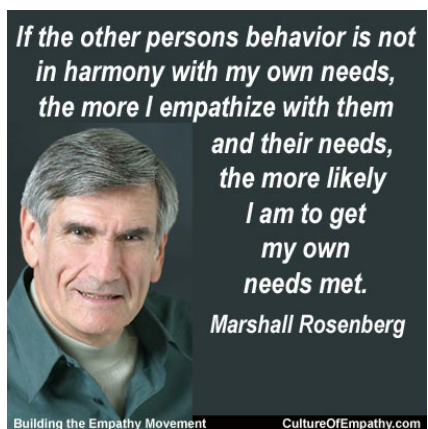
### Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

In 2024-25, the Mir Centre again hired Holly Hume to teach three offerings of the NVC course. We have had consistently positive feedback about Holly's course from participants who have described the learning as "invaluable," the tools as "essential," and the course as "amazing." Some participants drove from other parts of the province to attend and said they would happily do that again.

*I can see how these communication skills will diffuse a lot of tense scenarios in my life, and I wish I had learned them when I was younger.*

*It's a great way to learn how to get to the root cause of so many hard to handle emotions. There's no judgement, shame, embarrassment. It really strips things down to basic human needs.*

*The opportunity to learn together and practice is valuable and NVC opens up an entire world of options for connection and deepening relationships.*





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## Courageous Dialogues: Moving Beyond Polarization

*Courageous Dialogues: Moving Beyond Polarization* is an applied research project that aims to build skills, capacity and willingness to understand how we, as a society, have come to be so divided on so many issues of social concern and what we can do to overcome these divisions. Overcoming polarization is essential if we are to bring our best selves forward to collaborate around solving the big social and environmental problems we face. This collaborative project is led by the [Mir Centre for Peace](#) at Selkirk College and [Selkirk Innovates](#) in partnership with [Capilano University](#) and [Vancouver Community College](#).

In 2024-25, we continued our learning about overcoming polarization and responded to requests for presentations from organizations as diverse as the Conference Board of Canada, the Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, Vancouver Island University, and WorkSafe BC.

We also laid the groundwork for a new iteration of the project which will launch in September 2025, thanks to funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). In the coming three-year term of the project, we will be focusing more on bridging dialogues in classrooms, on campuses, and in community spaces like libraries.

To learn more about strategies and tools for overcoming polarization in your community, workplace, social circles and families, please see our publications in the [Selkirk College Online Repository \(SCOLR\)](#).



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## Student Award Winners

**Peace and 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.

**Awarded to: Elizabeth Hallborg**



**Myler Wilkinson Memorial Scholarship in Peace Studies** – This award is given to a student with a high grade-point average who demonstrates passion and commitment to the field of peace studies.

**Awarded to: Carys Askeroth**



**Alex P Relkoff Scholarship** – This award for academic excellence goes to a student who is entering their second year of Peace & Conflict Studies.

**Awarded to: Bella Palmer**

**Mir Centre for Peace Student 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 related to peace.



**Awarded to: Oscar Hunter**

**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. **Awarded to: Parker Hargreaves**

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## Thanks!

To everyone who helped organize, promote, deliver, fund & support our programming this year.

Aaron Korbacher	Jos Sharp
Adam Thomas	Kathy Loxam
Allison Alder	Kim Verigin
Andrea Korens	Kootenay Regional United Nations Association
Andrew Jupp	Laura Nessman
Bob Hall	Laurie Langille
Boundary Peace Initiative	Leeza Perehudoff
Brier Albano	Lisa Gunderson
Bronwyn Krause	Madelyn MacKay
Capilano University	Marissa Carrasco
Carlo Alcos	Marya Skrypiczajko
Carol Off	Michael Cheveldave
Claire Philipson	Morag Carter
Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy	Noah Cannon
Continuing Education & Training Ass'n of BC	Olena Heichenko
Danica Weager	Olga Hallborg
Decoda Literacy Solutions	Pablo Pastor
Diana Twiss	Parfaite Ntahuba
Dianne Biin	Peter Wood
Donna Wright	Randy Janzen
Doug Jamieson	Sarah James
Duff Sutherland	Selkirk College Faculty Association
Eleanor Stacey	Shana Rablah
Heather Bishop	Sharon Stein
Heritage Canada	Shelly Boyd
Holly Hume	Svitlana Kominko
Holly Steenvoorden	Terri Macdonald
Intercultural Kootenays	Todd Kettner
Jacob Martens	Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ
Jayne Jones	Vancouver Community College
Jennie Barron	Zaynab Mohammed
JJ Verigin	

