



Continued learning  
for the sheer joy of it

## Description

# McGill Community for Lifelong Learning celebrates members during Volunteer Week

As a community built upon in-person lectures, study groups and events, the **McGill Community for Lifelong Learning** (MCLL) was forced to look for alternate ways of creating community when the pandemic hit. Our members, who range from 55 up to 99, did just that, showing incredible adaptability in such unprecedented circumstances, and demonstrating how we can physically distance ourselves to keep safe while continuing to learn, care for ourselves and others, and foster our community ties.

With the launch of a Zoom program that trains members, provides hosts, and assists members on a one-on-one basis, over the past year, MCLL volunteers have shown how we can create a culture of true caring and engagement, even when virtual. And we are proud to say that we now have participation from as far away as Brussels!

MCLL appeals to people who want to continue learning for the sheer joy of it, and who wish to share their passions, knowledge, ideas, experience, and interests with each other.

As part of the **McGill School of Continuing Studies**, the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning is a volunteer-run community of some 800 senior learners managed by a council elected from its membership. Based on a peer-learning concept, MCLL appeals to people who want to continue learning for the sheer joy of it, and who wish to share their passions, knowledge, ideas, experience, and interests with each other.

Study groups are led by members who “moderate” rather than teach. Among our moderators have been an engineer who specialized in opera, a nurse who leads groups in architecture, history and literature, and even an eye surgeon fascinated by all aspects of the brain.



While in-person social connections, an integral part of MCLL, were put on hold during the early part of the pandemic, a group of volunteers made phone calls to all the members to find out how they were coping and whether they needed any assistance, in the spirit of community. That is volunteering at its best! As well, volunteers have created virtual “hang-outs” that allow members to come together to share, giving them that feeling of still being part of a community.

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Peer learning and active participation are two cornerstones of MCLL’s curriculum; these principles differentiate its programs from traditional university classes. Our informal, small-group approach makes our programs very accessible. No exams or grades to worry about, and no age limits! The level of involvement can range from just listening and commenting to advanced preparation/research, participation in group discussions, and presentations to the class.

**Sandra Baines**, our volunteer MCLL President over the past year, attests to the joy and value of volunteering at MCLL. “What we know is that individuals who work together realize amazing goals. We have demonstrated that sharing responsibilities, by contributing in whatever way we are able, is a model of success that cannot be underestimated. National Volunteer Week in Canada, which takes place from April 18-24, will be a time to celebrate volunteers in multiple domains and especially our volunteers at MCLL.”

Meet other MCLL volunteers along with McGill program administrator, **Ana Milic**, as they share their stories of building and maintaining a community that feels like a second family. Discover us on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ck8iJms3pEI&feature=youtu.be>

*Image: courtesy of McGill Community for Lifelong Learning*

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