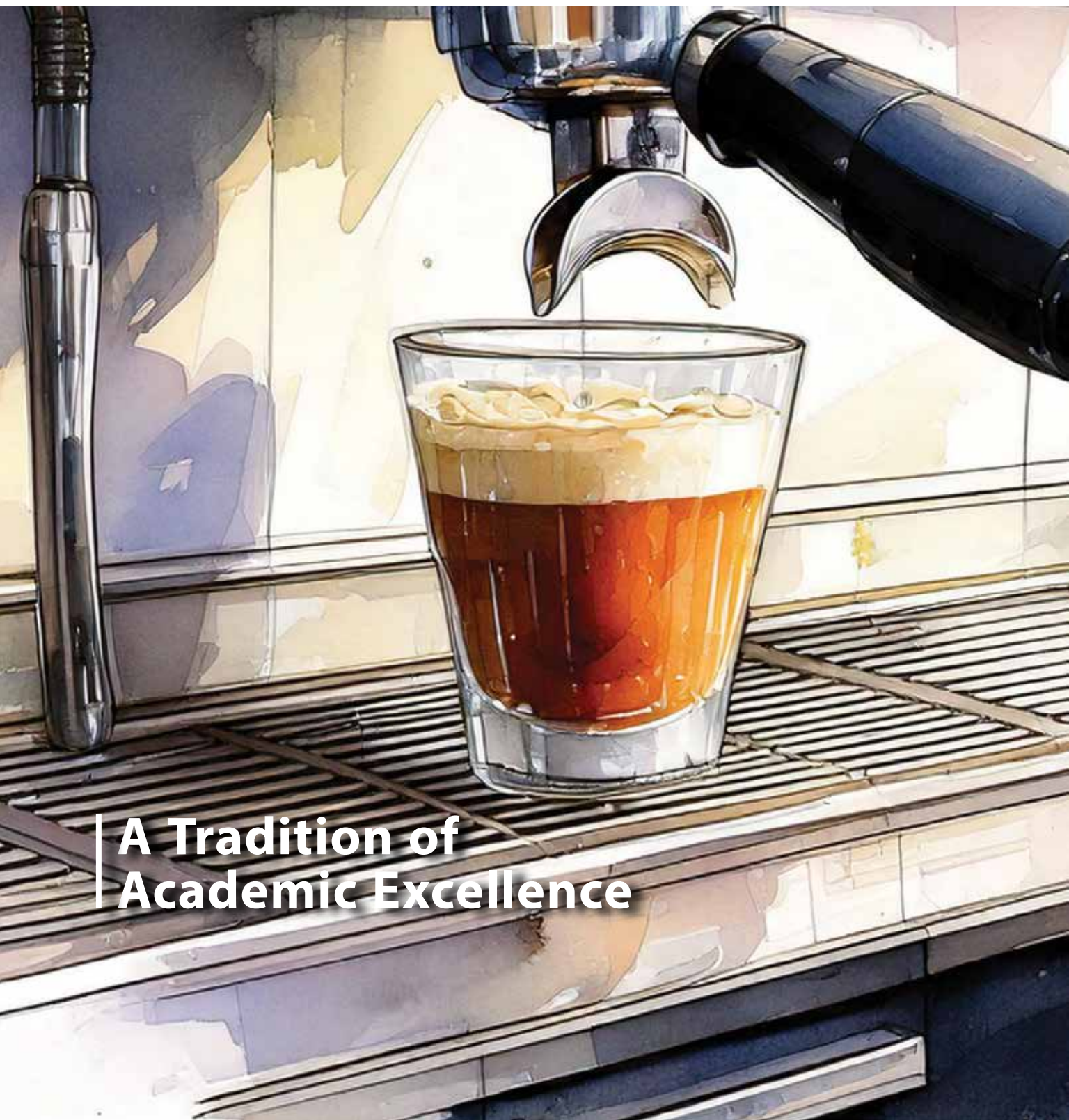


The BLAZER

CONNECTING ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF CMU

FALL 2024



| A Tradition of
| Academic Excellence

In an era where personal connections seem to be waning in society—which includes the context of higher education—CMU stands as a testament to the enduring value of intimate learning environments. For nearly 25 years, the distinctive opportunities and benefits of a small university have been and continue to be palpably felt. Put simply, CMU is a nurturing space that fosters academic excellence.

At CMU, students are more than just numbers. Professors know their students by name and provide individualized attention. This personal touch allows for meaningful mentorship and invaluable feedback, enabling students to thrive academically and personally. A few years ago, an illuminating Canada-wide study revealed that an astounding 98% of CMU students felt their professors genuinely cared about them and their future—a testament to the university’s supportive culture.

This is further reflected in the experiences of alumni, who often find themselves better prepared for post-graduate studies than their peers from other universities. While others may struggle with new academic challenges, CMU graduates leverage their robust undergraduate experience to excel (some even say their undergraduate work was more demanding!).

Augmenting its attention to academics, CMU is committed to developing the whole person. With a curriculum rooted in its Christian Anabaptist heritage, the university integrates cross-program pollination and work-integrated learning, creating well-rounded graduates who write persuasively, speak confidently, and can think critically from a range of different perspectives.

The opportunities for student engagement are numerous. From conducting research to hands-on participation in labs to international study abroad options, students gain invaluable experience that enhances their learning and prepares them for lives and careers in the “real world”. This holistic approach is what sets CMU apart and contributes to its tradition of academic excellence.

CMU offers a compelling vision of what higher education can and should be—a place where academic rigour meets generous support, and where students emerge ready to make meaningful contributions to society. I invite you to explore the pages that follow and discover the myriad incarnations of academic excellence expressed through CMU’s faculty, students, and alumni.

Kevin Kilbrei
CMU Director, Marketing & Communications



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The Blazer Production:
 Editor: Kevin Kilbrei
 Managing Editor: Myles Tiessen
 Writers: Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe, Myles Tiessen
 Design: Craig Terlson
 Associate Design: Joseph Warkentin
 Photography: Craig Terlson, Joshua Paetkau, Darryl Neustaedter Barg
 Contributors: Claudia Dueck, Dr. Jonathan Dueck, Dr. Cheryl Pauls, Dylan Tarnowsky
 Cover photo illustration: Craig Terlson

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 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Canadian Mennonite University,
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 Toll-free: 1.877.231.4570 | Fax: 204.487.3858 | cmu.ca

Affirming Academic Excellence

Recently a CMU grad of 15 years ago said this to me. Every generation needs to figure out what to do with the traditions and institutions bequeathed to it. Some within each generation clearly continue the legacy of their predecessors, albeit as shaped in different times. Others experiment wildly with traditions through initiatives that look to some as if the original no longer stands—even if others see the original grain deeply honoured and sustained. Still, others pursue rather thin threads of continuity and largely re-root what is bequeathed to them elsewhere.

I was intrigued by the framework this alumnus provided as he reflected on who he is as an organist. Does he play a two-note slur exactly as the master before him and so on up the chain? Does he experiment with (fantasy-type) underwater organ concerts, where the gesture of a two-note slur is rather inconsequential? Does he become the one on “keys” in a rock band? Or does his livelihood take shape as a lawyer, business owner, politician, pastor, or any other vocation that repurposes his (musically-learned) competencies for equal measure discipline with creative ingenuity?

I was compelled too by how the framework awakens reflections on the soul and scope of CMU over time. In 2025 the university will celebrate its 25th anniversary. The notion of each generation needing to figure out what to do with the institutions bequeathed to it rings true as I consider how the soul of entrustment has been sustained across transformations of CMU’s education scope every 20-25 years for the past 100 years, which means stretching back to the predecessor colleges. The present transformation is creating a highly integrated and well-balanced equilibrium across

Every generation needs to figure out what to do with the traditions and institutions bequeathed to it.

longstanding, somewhat newer, and really new areas of study (such as social work) within a highly diverse student body.

Academic excellence has been a factor of continuity through these transformations; this excellence was strongly affirmed in spring with an extensive survey of students,

alumni, and widely-ranging observers of the capacities of CMU alumni. Another enduring thread is of understanding of academic excellence of not being rooted in academics defined narrowly but emerging through living up to the comprehensive purpose laid out in the The Canadian Mennonite University Act (Province of Manitoba): to



further the intellectual, spiritual, moral, physical, and social development of, and a community spirit among, its students, graduates, and staff for the betterment of society, consistent with a Christian perspective rooted in the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition.

Indeed, this array of dimensions speaks not only to academic excellence but presents a hallmark of the Anabaptist tradition. As much faith-based as hope-drawn as love-bound, what is bequeathed through CMU carries forward grains of the spiritual intersecting with all dimensions of life and vocation.

Take heart as you read this issue of *The Blazer*. Along the way, consider how your life contributes to transforming and sustaining the soul of traditions bequeathed to you.

Peace and joy,
Cheryl Pauls

CMU President

New CMU Faculty

As a university that continues to grow in its mission and vision, CMU proudly welcomes an assemblage of new faculty into its company.

Spanning various disciplines and backgrounds, the new members of the CMU community bring years of dedicated focus and a rich passion for guiding and teaching the diversity of members that make up CMU.



Noha Ghattas

“What draws me to CMU is its warm and inclusive community,” Dr. Noha Ghattas, Assistant Professor of Business says.

Having spent over two decades working in Egypt and Kuwait, Ghattas found that CMU embodies the values of interdisciplinary collaborative engagement that resonates with her values.

“I find immense excitement in teaching any accounting course due to my passion for the subject. I love sharing my enthusiasm for accounting and helping students navigate and appreciate its complexities,” Ghattas says.

Ghattas’ research addresses the evolving challenges in the accounting profession and the innovative integration of disruptive technologies in accounting education.

Excited to join the CMU community, Ghattas says “the students’ growing curiosity and engagement inside and outside the classroom inspires me to strive for continuous improvement in my teaching practices.”



Buetta Warkentin

As the new Associate Professor of Social Work and Field Education Coordinator, Buetta Warkentin brings with her almost 20 years of social work education. Warkentin’s love for her work comes from “the opportunity to support students as they explore ways of supporting the marginalized and facilitating change in our world.”

“My research interests are engaged with the question of how our worldviews shape us as social workers,” says Warkentin.

“I’m curious about how these religious, spiritual, or secular values impact our choice to become social workers, our approach to the work, and how practices related to these might support us through difficult work.”

Warkentin says her motivation always comes from her students, as she watches them push themselves, make connections between concepts, and sees them “facilitating change and championing justice in ways that can make a difference at individual, family, and community levels.”



Kelly Dueck

Dr. Kelly Dueck, Assistant Professor of Business, studies what he calls “marketer behaviours.”

“I’m interested less in coming up with new tools and techniques and more interested in the broader implications of what practitioners actually do,” Dueck says.

Significant and fast changes in digital technologies and media have led to an increase in an industry where marketing has become the default job, regardless of your skill or trade. “I’m interested in how these changes impact worker identities and subsequently what marketers do in the world.”

Dueck was drawn to CMU due to its focus on “management for the common good.” He says, “Management is not only about business and maximizing profit; it’s about bringing resources together to make things happen in any area in ways that respect people and planet.”

“CMU’s liberal arts and humanities foundation means an emphasis is placed on reflexivity and looking at the big picture. I like that. Many business schools like to pretend that business tools and techniques are somehow neutral; they’re not,” Dueck says.

With a background as a marketing practitioner since the 1990s, Dueck has spent most of his time in publishing and professional audio spaces. He’s worked with mega-corporations like Rogers and Glacier Media and grassroots newspapers like The Wolseley Leaf, of which he is a co-founder.



John Hutton

“When I heard last year that CMU was starting a social work program, I immediately reached out about being part of it,” John Hutton, Adjunct Professor of Social Work, says. “And now here I am.”

Approaching his 40th year in the world of Social Work, Hutton’s professional career includes numerous forms of advocacy, peace and conflict resolution, and social service management. Now, he’s ready to begin work as an educator.

“I will be mostly involved with supporting the field education component of the social work program, assisted by my previous experience working in social services and strong connections to Winnipeg’s Indigenous community,” Hutton says.

Hutton is co-teaching a course called Decolonizing Human Behaviour in the Social Environment, which looks at Indigenous, anti-colonial, and non-Western theories that challenge a colonizing view of human nature.

“It’s very exciting to be part of a brand-new professional program and to see the other initiatives the university is pursuing at the same time,” Hutton says.

Faculty Reflections

As its name may imply, the Annual Faculty Activity Report (AFAR) provides CMU's teaching faculty the opportunity to reflect on the academic year and provide their individual highlights on what they found gratifying and motivational last year—be it in the classroom, in their research, or as an extension of their service to the CMU community



David Balzer,
Associate Professor of
Communications and
Media

A highlight this year was visiting recent grads in several broadcast outlets. These grads are at the forefront of storytelling, crafting stories for good. And current students produced a delightful long-form audio documentary featuring the lived experience of 10 alumni spanning 23 years as part of a CMU research project. It's always exhilarating to watch people literally and figuratively find their voice!



Dr. Rachel Krause,
Associate Professor of
Biology

A highlight of my year was traveling to Zimbabwe with a major research project. It was a privilege to be at the project inception meeting in Bulawayo in November, and to meet local project implementing partners and researchers. I traveled again in January to work alongside researchers from Bindura University on the baseline biodiversity survey of the project. During that time I strengthened relationships with Zimbabwean research colleagues and gained a better understanding of the project communities.



Dr. Christine Longhurst,
Assistant Professor of
Music and Worship

One of my highlights this past year was celebrating the Lord's Supper together in chapel. It marked the first time communion had been celebrated in the context of a CMU chapel. Given the diverse liturgical backgrounds of both the student body and faculty/staff, it felt especially significant that we could come together in such a way.



Dr. Alex Sawatzky,
Professor and Chair of
Social Work

After several years of research and writing, I am excited to see multiple publications coming out in rapid succession. I am grateful to Oxford University Press in giving me the opportunity to publish a book on anarchist perspectives for social work practice. New approaches in social work may be possible by engaging with these concepts and ideas to challenge a status quo that has been experienced as harmful by so many people. It is encouraging to know that there is an interest in exploring these approaches.



**Michelle Yaciuk, Associate
Professor of Music Therapy**

The music department at CMU has worked hard this year to put together a new and innovative degree program. The changes will provide new opportunities for students with a diverse musical background and types of training success in the program. Preparing students to be well-rounded musicians and humans is a priority set forth by the music faculty, and we believe we have created a program that will support students to be successful professional musicians and community members.



Dr. Paul Doerksen,
Associate Professor of
Theology and Anabaptist
Studies

I received a student request for an independent study that addressed Anabaptist peace theology. What followed was a rewarding experience—the three students asking for the course were Hutterites training to be teachers. They described a personal stake in their request; namely, they felt that while pacifism was often assumed in their communities, they were not confident that there was a sufficient basis of knowledge to support the assumption. These students felt to grapple with the Anabaptist tradition on these matters would be useful. In my experience, this is what education can look like—people gathering, with something important at stake, to rigorously examine a tradition, to learn, to then recalibrate if necessary, to prepare to live faithfully, and be able to communicate clearly to others.

CMU Elder-in-Residence



This fall Vince Solomon accepted the role of Elder-in-Residence for the CMU learning community of students, staff, and faculty. He is a member of Norway House Cree Nation where he was recently named Elder by his community. Reverend Elder Solomon is an ordained priest in the Anglican Church of Canada and serves as Urban Indigenous Ministry Developer with the Anglican Diocese of Rupert's Land and as pastor of Epiphany Indigenous

Anglican Church. (The Anglican Church is generous in freeing up some of Vince's time for CMU.) Last year Elder Solomon taught a Biblical and Theological Studies course on Indigenous traditions and Christianity. As Elder-in-Residence, Solomon will meet with individual students, host healing circles for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, staff, and faculty, and participate on the CMU Indigenous Council.



Each person—commonly a CMU student—carefully makes each drink by hand. Each beverage is uniquely excellent. **The shared commitment to excellence is a shared commitment to making good things by hand.**

What's the tradition of academic excellence at CMU?

Introduction by Dr. Jonathan Dueck, Vice-President Academic

Stories by CMU Staff Writers Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe and Myles Tieszen

Many large universities have a big chain on-campus coffee shop where drinks are made in somewhat-automated fashion, built for reasonable quality at scale. At CMU, I get my daily coffee at folio café in Marpeck Commons. Each person—commonly a CMU student—carefully makes each drink by hand. Each beverage is uniquely excellent. The shared commitment to excellence is a shared commitment to making good things by hand.

Academic excellence at CMU is like that. We are an institution where teaching, learning, and the making of knowledge are hand-made. This is enabled by our small, human-scale size, and our commitment to caring for each other and the world.

CMU is a place where teaching matters and is linked to research. Professors see students (undergraduate and graduate) as the most important discussion partners, as people who are ready to learn and impact the world in real ways. We invite students into research and we learn from them. CMU's human-scale size and commitment to inclusive community facilitates a genuine and intellectually curious conversation of students and faculty.

There are very few Canadian institutions like CMU where students will be in conversation throughout their degree with those taking other majors. In so doing, students learn to evaluate the characteristic truth claims, worldviews, values, and so on, of an academic discipline that might be far from their own chosen path. At CMU, every student does this—all majors include curricular elements called the Commons where we bring together students from different disciplines into common conversation. And we invite students outward too, to Panama, to India, to Guatemala; and, for every

A Tradition of

Academic

Excellence

student, to an incredible diversity of work-integrated learning opportunities. CMU's pedagogy is designed to help students navigate complexity, and to do the new and interesting things required to survive and thrive as Manitoba, as Canada, as the world.

The remarkably strong track record of CMU students in winning entry into medical school, law school, competitive after-degree programs, and the business world (among many other paths) proves the effectiveness of our interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. Our student-athletes are also worthy of special mention here, excelling not only while in uniform but in the classroom, and as research or teaching assistants and student leaders.

CMU's professors are in demand not only in the classroom. They can be found speaking to the US Department of State, to the Bank of Canada, to MCC, and to agencies, educational institutions, research environments, and other places around the world. CMU's role as knowledge mobilization partner in MCC's \$15 million LINCZ Government of Canada research project, aiming to empower women and girls in Zimbabwe, is one embodiment of this. Another is the naming of Dr. Heather Campbell-Enns as CMU's first Canada Research Chair. An unusual achievement for a small university, this project focuses on health research, exploring how families and communities support people living with dementia.

This issue celebrates CMU's made-by-hand academic excellence, rooted in an Anabaptist commitment to community where everyone's voice shapes the conversation. We teach by hand. We are a research institution where the entire university collaborates to engage complex questions across disciplines. CMU's programs build leaders, professionals, and researchers. CMU is a tradition of academic excellence!

Undergrad research at the forefront of scientific discovery

In the eyes of Dr. Tim Rogalsky, Associate Professor of Mathematics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) could take the CMU campus by storm. But not in the way you might be thinking.

"From both personal experience and academic studies, it's clear that AI tools can significantly boost productivity and capacity," Rogalsky says.

Rogalsky isn't speaking of using AI to write an essay or a literature review, which would be considered cheating or plagiarizing in the academic context. He's referring to using AI to help and push students in their undergraduate studies through unique research opportunities.

"Now I teach students how to use AI as a co-intelligent assistant to meet these higher standards. In my mathematical biology course, this means that students are now capable of completing a full research project as part of an undergraduate course."

It's relatively uncommon for undergraduate students to be able to take part in interdisciplinary research with faculty. In most other institutions, those opportunities would go to graduate students.

"CMU science students have consistently been involved in research, presenting in classes, at conferences, and publishing with faculty," Rogalsky highlights.

"Project-based learning gives students a deeper, hands-on learning experience that goes well beyond traditional exams and builds skills that will be essential for success beyond the classroom."

For undergraduate science students at CMU, the supportive academic environment allows them to apply their theoretical knowledge to real-world environments.

Rogalsky points to students like Naomi van Benthem (BSc Biology, 2024), whose research with Assistant Professor of Biology Nicolas Malagon led to van Benthem co-authoring a paper that was subsequently published in *The Canadian Journal of Undergraduate Research*.

Van Benthem was only one of many undergraduate science students whose research was published in peer-reviewed journals or presented displays at various academic conferences in North America.

With so many CMU students at the forefront of scientific exploration, Rogalsky and other members of the

science faculty realized that there had never been a dedicated event to celebrate the achievements of these students at CMU.

This led to the Celebration of Science Symposium at CMU. "The symposium was our opportunity to showcase the outstanding undergraduate research happening across the department, bringing students and faculty and the broader CMU community together to share, recognize, and honour the significant work being done," Rogalsky says.

Land-based relationship

Academic excellence at CMU is all about scholarly rigor, high expectations, attentive professors, and student supports. CMU is also actively transformed by enduring partnerships with the broader learning community and by the land.

The partnership CMU has with Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC) is one embodiment of this kind of transformative, land-based relationship at CMU.

SSSC is a non-profit organization involved in theological and cross-cultural training. Located in a wooded parkland on the Brokenhead River near Beausejour, MB, SSSC uses land-based learning to connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous neighbours in spiritual guidance.

"At Sandy-Saulteaux, we say the Earth is our faculty," Erica Young, Communications Assistant at SSSC, says. "Learning on, with, and from the land moves our learning out from our minds and into the world in embodied ways."

With a rich history between CMU and SSSC, Dr. Jonathan Dueck, Vice-President Academic, explains the two institutions have been making connections for almost a decade, when Adrian Jacobs, former SSSC Keeper of the Circle, began teaching Indigenous studies and theology at CMU.

"When I started work [at CMU], Adrian and I became friends, partly through working together on CMU's Indigenous initiatives council," Dueck says.

"Adrian suggested that CMU and SSSC formalize our institutional friendship," notes Dueck. "We sat in a circle and gifted elements of a sacred bundle to one another."

The bundle ceremony is an Indigenous tradition where a sacred collection of items, each carrying a unique story, is shared by the giver and entrusted to the receiver. It symbolizes the deeply meaningful relationship between groups.

Every year since then, the community at SSSC and the community at CMU open up our bundles and tell the story of the elements, and gifts, and friendship."

In this relationship, SSSC often invites CMU to learn with Indigenous teachers and students on the land. "Through colonialism, Indigenous people have been separated from

The bundle ceremony is an Indigenous tradition where a sacred collection of items, each carrying a unique story, is shared by the giver and entrusted to the receiver. It symbolizes the deeply meaningful relationship between groups.

In this relationship, SSSC often invites CMU to learn with Indigenous teachers and students on the land.



our own lands. Land-based learning is part of our path to connect to our true selves and nurture true partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous neighbours," Young says.

Through collaborative courses and sharing faculty members to teach, serve, and lead, SSSC and CMU have become beloved members of each other's communities.

On reflecting on the partnership's future, Dueck notes, "I hope that the deep respect and care that CMU feels for SSSC—including its land and its community, of which we are a part, and its stories—can continue to be borne out in teaching and learning together."

Professor brings innovative environmental justice course to social work program

"Social workers are uniquely qualified to work at the front lines of catastrophes." So why hasn't the field engaged more with the global climate crisis?

CMU Professor and Chair of Social Work Dr. Alexander Sawatsky is asking this question with a course he introduced this semester: Environmental Justice and Social Work Practice.

Developing a program from the ground up, like CMU's Bachelor of Social Work, which is in its first full year, means there are countless ways to shape its direction. Sawatsky and his colleagues chose Environmental Justice and Social Work Practice to be the first elective offered for the degree, to emphasize the topic's importance.

Through this course, students are learning how climate change is affecting people's lives around the world, through issues like environmental racism, ecological anxiety, and the creation of climate refugees. They are exploring the role of social work in these contexts and



reconciling social work's failure to centre the environment thus far.

"We need to be responding to the way the world is, so that we continue to be relevant and helpful to it," he said. "Like it or not, climate change is a reality, and if we don't equip our students for that reality then we're failing them and the people they may end up serving."

Throughout his career, Sawatsky found minimal literature or conversation between social work, decolonization, and environmental justice in his research of the broader field. Colleagues he spoke with across the country expressed affirmation and mutual interest in the direction he was exploring.

The course he developed as a result is the elective he's now teaching at CMU. The Bachelor of Social Work also includes environmental studies and biology courses in its degree requirements. "That's something we haven't seen before in a BSW, and I think that's exciting," Sawatsky said. "CMU's social work program is on the very forefront of this new paradigm."



CMU professor awarded prestigious Canada Research Chair

Dr. Heather Campbell-Enns, Associate Professor of Psychology, has been

awarded a Canada Research Chair (CRC) Tier 2 in Families and Aging.

This is the first time CMU has received a CRC award from the Government of Canada, which will contribute \$120,000 to the university annually over a period of five years, for a total of \$600,000 in funding.

"While CMU scholars have been actively producing community-based, social science, and theological research for decades, this honour of hosting a CRC allows us to continue strengthening our research infrastructure, ultimately supporting us in building a better world and equipping students for lives of service to the community," said Dr. Jodi Dueck-Read, Director of Research and Program Grants.

Tier 2 CRCs are awarded to exceptional emerging scholars recognized for having the potential to lead in their field of social sciences, humanities, health sciences, engineering, or natural sciences.

"In addition to the recognition of our faculty member as a researcher of international significance, the award also recognizes the quality and potential of CMU's research environment," said Dr. Jonathan Dueck, Vice-President Academic.

As the CRC in Families and Aging, Campbell-Enns' research will focus on family-provided care for older adults, particularly in the context of dementia. As Canada's population of older adults is growing and families continue to provide essential care for persons living with dementia, the needs and desires of intergenerational families require further study.

"Families provide so much unpaid care to older adults in Canada. In fact, if they weren't doing that and healthcare had to pay for it, the system would crumble," she said. "We count on families to provide care, but we don't have a lot of resources that go to families when they start struggling."

While she has been researching in this field for several

years, Campbell-Enns said the CRC will enable her work to grow substantially by equipping her with more time and resources. Over the next five years, she will conduct new research exploring intergenerational family-provided care for persons living with dementia, including the ways families provide care from different cultural perspectives.

Ultimately, the goal of Campbell-Enns' research program is to design and implement services to support family-provided care for older adults. "It's interesting to learn new things, but if we haven't developed something in the end that can help patients and families, then we haven't really done the job," she said.

"Dr. Campbell-Enns' work is a perfect fit for CMU's strengths," Dueck added. "As an institution, we engage with community to an unusual degree within the landscape of Canadian universities; and we are driven to ask interdisciplinary questions, drawing together the best resources across disciplines and approaches, as a university."

A celebration and official acknowledgment of CMU's CRC designation took place on August 22, attended by Hon. Renée Cable, Manitoba Minister of Advanced Education and Training, and local MLA Carla Compton.

New BTS course unpacks fear and hope

"Terror and hope walk hand-in-hand in the Bible and in our world," Dr. Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, Associate Professor of New Testament at CMU, says.

In developing the programming for the new course, titled *Terrifying Texts*, co-taught with Dr. Sunder John Boopalan, Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, Klassen-Wiebe approaches the most challenging corners of the Bible with honesty, compassion, and sensitivity.



"It is of no use pretending that the Bible doesn't contain difficult, even horrifying, texts, and it does no one any good to try to sanitize them and make them other than what they are."

Offered this coming winter term, *Terrifying Texts* is a dual-track course, meaning it's offered to both undergraduate and graduate students. In the course, the students will examine the disturbing, dramatic, and often painful Bible chapters, offering contemporary analogies to learn where tension and terror reside in Biblical interpretation today.

"It is of no use pretending that the Bible doesn't contain difficult, even horrifying, texts, and it does no one any good to try to sanitize them and make them other than what they are," Klassen-Wiebe says.

"The Bible is about real people in a real world, not a make-believe world where nothing bad ever happens. The question is how we can meet God in this world, both ancient and modern, and even through these disturbing texts."

Boopalan views the course's approach to Biblical literacy as essential to any theological study. "The Bible is a set of books that talks about the hopes, fears, and aspirations of a people who were, for the most part, on the "losing" side of history. Developing our ideas, then, means engaging with the complexity of the worlds and words of the Bible with curiosity and openness," he says.

Inspired by the reality of emotional turbulence throughout any given day, Boopalan says holding the truth of hope and terror simultaneously is a significant part of this course. Although it is hard to find balance and live into those



Regardless of background, both instructors emphasize the importance of sensitivity when approaching these texts. They recognize that the trauma of Biblical times is not unlike the traumas experienced today by many people, including the students in this class.



terrifying moments, the value of critical engagement with those otherwise unsavoury aspects is vital to discovering a deeper, more holistic understanding of ourselves and the Bible's influence on our lives.

A significant draw to this course is its rich classroom dialogue and intersectional teaching approach expressed through its co-instructor model.

"Sheila, as a white feminist scholar and me, as a Dalit liberation theologian, will be approaching Biblical texts with our contemporary lenses, lived experiences, and embodied perspectives. I imagine there will be similarities in our approaches, but also real differences," says Boopalan.

Regardless of background, both instructors emphasize the importance of sensitivity when approaching these texts. They recognize that the trauma of Biblical times is not unlike the traumas experienced today by many people, including the students in this class.

Klassen-Wiebe says, "We will try to help students make those connections through readings, through discussions,

and through assignments. I imagine students will also help us as instructors make those connections in ways that we had not even anticipated."

Learning abroad opportunities strengthen academics

CMU's academic calibre is not limited to the classroom; it shows up in the rainforests of Panama and the temples of India.

Estamos, CMU's learning abroad program that facilitates these opportunities, is in its third year of operation. The program has sent a cohort of students to Guatemala each year for a full semester of study and work. This year, groups also travelled to Panama for three weeks in May and to India for two weeks in August.

"You can learn about a subject in a class and you can read a book about it, and that is valid and good. But when you're surrounded...your whole being is learning," said Tim Cruickshank, Director of *Estamos*. "What you're learning about sinks in and hits you on a whole different level."

Dr. Sunder John Boopalan, Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, led a group of 11 students through India, his home country. It's also where he did his PhD research on the intersection of North American racism logics and Indian casteism logics. The goal of his course, *Multiculturalisms: Social and Theological Models*, was "to figure out how we think about, and then practice, living together across difference."

It's an important task in a world that feels increasingly divided. Canada highlights its multiculturalism in policy and vision, but Boopalan said the reality is not so straightforward and comes with challenges. "From the point of visibility, if a drone goes above Winnipeg and takes a picture, and imagine you could see everybody in Winnipeg, yes it does appear multicultural. But that doesn't mean we are in fact living well together across difference," he said.

In their quest for answers, the class studied multiculturalism in India, a country of immense diversity. They toured ancient religious temples, modern churches, and mosques, engaging with the local Muslim community. They walked through bustling street markets, visited a Christian medical college and hospital, and ate dosa and biryani. They examined their daily experiences and observations through four dyads: majority and minority, centre and margin, secular and religious, global and local.

Numerous students had their first international and cross-cultural experiences in India throughout this

"You can learn about a subject in a class and you can read a book about it, and that is valid and good. But when you're surrounded...your whole being is learning," said Tim Cruickshank, Director of *Estamos*. "What you're learning about sinks in and hits you on a whole different level."

program, as did many of the 12 students who visited Panama with Dr. Rachel Krause, Associate Professor of Biology. She said travelling for a course was exciting but also asked a lot from students, who were constantly together, far from home, and learning at an intense pace in a context where English was rare—and none of the students spoke fluent Spanish.

"It gave them a better understanding of themselves that can only make them better learners," Krause said. "Any time you get uncomfortable, that's where learning happens."

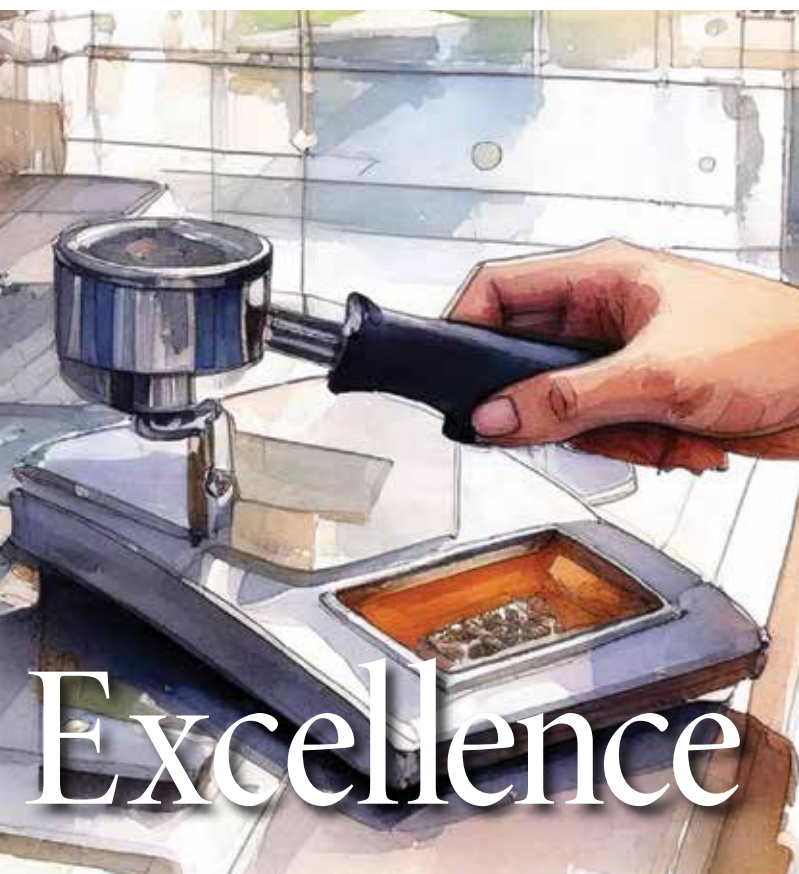
Her course—*Healthy Ecosystems, Healthy People*—dived into conservation biology, development, and human health. She taught with a systems thinking framework, the idea that people, communities, and ecosystems are bigger than the sum of their parts. They hiked in the rain forest, encountered endangered species, went snorkeling, toured Panama City, and visited an Indigenous Caribbean territory maintaining land-based autonomy.

Krause has maintained close relationships in Panama since 2011, when she lived there and did her PhD research on malnutrition and intestinal infections in small children. "I have always wanted to take CMU students to meet local students of a good friend of mine who is a professor at the University of Panama," she said, about the special experience. "We had talked about doing that for a long time."

Estamos continues CMU's tradition of valuing experiential learning, as seen in the requisite practicum program and former Outtatown discipleship program. Students take what they've learned on these adventures and apply those insights to their own contexts, sharing their new perspectives and skills with their communities.

"*Estamos* at a place like CMU allows for academic excellence to be grounded," Boopalan said. "Grounded in critical thinking, grounded in immersive experience, grounded in a certain kind of ecumenical theological DNA that emphasizes that we cannot be excellent without also being good persons at the same time."

Estamos is made possible by funding from Global Skills Opportunity, the Government of Canada's Outbound Student Mobility Program. CMU is one of 120 universities and colleges across Canada that received the grant, which makes international learning experiences more accessible for students by offsetting costs.



2024 Report to the Community



Undergraduate Degrees:

CMU offered five undergraduate degrees –

- » Bachelor of Arts
- » Bachelor of Business Administration
- » Bachelor of Music/Music Therapy
- » Bachelor of Science

And launched a Bachelor of Social Work

20 BA Majors:

Including:

- » Biblical and theological studies
- » Peace and conflict transformation
- » Communications and media
- » Environmental studies
- » Arts and science
- » English
- » History



Faculty:

- » 40 full-time faculty, 50 part-time instructors

Faculty-Student Ratio:

1:18, including first- and second-year courses



Geographical Representation:

- » 75% from Manitoba (13% First Nations, Inuit, or Métis)
- » 25% other provinces and international (30 countries)

Faith Representation:

- » 70% from Christian traditions, including 30% from Mennonite/Anabaptist traditions
- » 5% from other faith traditions
- » 25% no faith disclosed



2023/24 Enrolment:

- » 665 students on main campus
- » 163 full-time equivalent students at Menno Simons College (CMU courses in UW degree programs)

On-Campus Housing:

200 students lived on campus in dorms and apartments



Your Impact at CMU

Where generosity drives excellence and transformation

Every day at CMU, your generosity comes alive, shaping the lives of students and strengthening the foundation of this learning community. It's not just about giving. It's about what you make possible.

You fuel academic excellence.

Because of you, students can access the highest quality education without the burden of prohibitive tuition costs.

You nurture more than education.

At CMU, learning goes *far* beyond the classroom. Thanks to you, students have access to mental health resources, spiritual support, a competitive athletics program, and a deeply caring community.

You foster a vibrant space for faith and spiritual growth.

At CMU, faith is woven into the fabric of daily life. Your generosity ensures students have access to chapel services, small groups, and faith-building opportunities that shape their personal and spiritual journeys.

You build leaders for tomorrow.

Your support extends into communities, churches, and beyond. Your generosity empowers students to engage deeply with the issues that matter, equipping them to serve the church and the world in ways that make a tangible difference.

You uphold the heart of the campus.

Through your support of the *Uphold* campaign, our Poettcker Hall dormitory is being transformed. This iconic building has been central to CMU life for decades, and now, thanks to you, it's getting the care it needs to continue serving students for generations to come.

You keep the lights on—and much more.

From classrooms to student residences, your gifts ensure that CMU remains a warm and welcoming place for all.

Thank you!

Your gifts are so much more than financial support. It's an investment in people, ideas, and a shared vision for a brighter, better world. At CMU, your gifts are at work every single day, creating lasting ripples of change. Thank you for all the ways you support this place.

Scholarships and Bursaries

by the Numbers

\$712,066

Total distributed to students through established bursaries and scholarships

\$395,165

Total bursaries (need based)



181 Number of students receiving bursaries



\$316,901

Total scholarships (merit based)

179 Number of students receiving scholarships

\$152,289

Total distributed through gifts to the CMU Fund



\$468,019

Total distributed through annual donor gifts and endowment earnings

\$89,758

Total distributed through church matching gifts and external scholarships

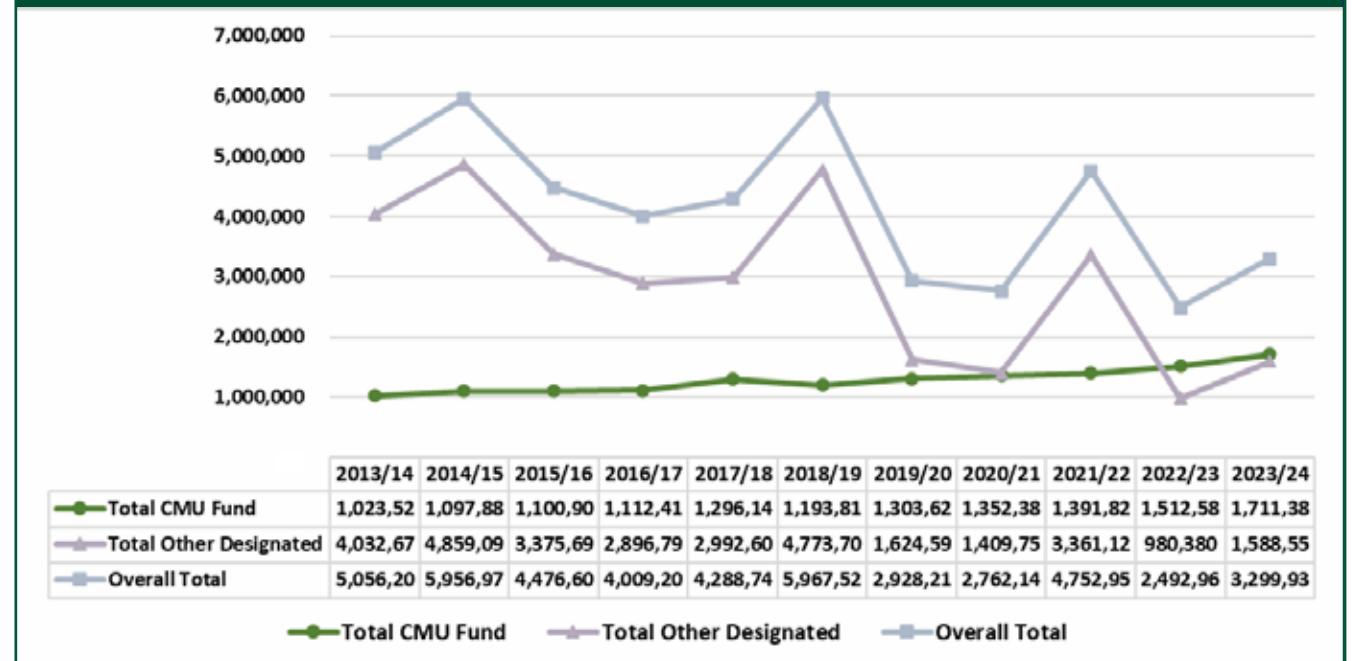
Giving to CMU

Thank you to all of our supporters who continue to give generously to the CMU Fund for annual program and operations. These gifts make the health and sustainability of CMU possible.

Giving to All Funds: Fiscal Years 2013/14 to 2023/24

The chart below reflects giving from individuals, corporations, and church bodies to the CMU Fund for annual program and operations, as well as to many other designated initiatives including scholarships and bursaries, capital projects (notably Marpeck Commons), various programs (notably the Redekop School of Business), endowments, bequests, and gifts-in-kind. Generous giving in support of constructing Marpeck Commons and support for the Redekop School of Business form a bulk of 'Other Designated' giving from 2013-24.

Eleven-year giving history: all funds



883 donors/donor households supported the CMU Fund for annual program and operations



652 alumni (representing 476 households) gave to CMU Fund for annual programs and operations



\$1.71 million was gifted to the CMU Fund for annual program and operations



CMU Finances 2023/24

A message from Cheryl Pauls, CMU President

Thanks to deep trust and generosity from a great many (well over 1,000) friends, alumni, and church bodies as well as the Province of Manitoba, I am heartened to report that CMU continues to be able to provide high-quality and affordable education. With honour, we see equal measures of investment in CMU over the past 25 years from surrounding donor communities and from the Province. CMU ended 2023/24 with a very small surplus of \$7,400 in revenues over expenses for an overall stable financial position on a \$14,800,000 annual operating budget.

Now, the scale of those numbers sometimes is hard to interpret. In university terms, CMU has a tiny budget. In household, congregational, and small business or non-profit agency terms, CMU has an enormous budget. So think of it this way: CMU is a relatively small university and yet a fairly large organization.

CMU educates about 800 students (full-time equivalent) through outstanding contributions of about 200 staff and faculty members (110 full-time and 90 on part-time or small stipendiary contracts). Inflationary increases were as much a factor for CMU as everywhere else last year; this necessitated fiscal restraint through underspending in a number of areas.

Still, on the whole, the story of the numbers tells of institutional health and stability in an era of considerable volatility and strain.

It is helpful that in 2023/24 CMU carried the lowest amount of capital mortgage since we opened in 2000; this context has afforded us capacity to re-engage a mortgage process for a major Poettcker Hall renewal project of \$8.2M. The project will be funded by the a \$4.45M mortgage and a \$3.75M campaign. You're most welcome to see the CMU 2023/24 audited financial statements on our website cmu.ca/communityreport.

All who contribute to CMU see something vital as being at stake for church and society in the mission entrusted to this university. Thank you for collectively holding CMU and carrying it forward as we approach our 25-year anniversary in 2025 and set the framework for the next quarter century.



2023/24 Donors and Sponsors

The mission of CMU is made possible by the gifts of an incredible network of generosity. Thank you to the 1,014 donors and sponsors below whose support sustains CMU programs, student bursaries and scholarships, capital projects and more.

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Community gathers for CMU's annual fall festival

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe



Hundreds of people gathered on September 21, 2024 for Fall at CMU, celebrating the start of another academic year and the changing of seasons.

This annual event, held on the CMU campus, includes beloved traditions like the farmers and makers market, MennoCross cyclocross race, and class reunions. Despite some morning rain, the sky cleared and made way for a beautiful afternoon.

This year's market featured 37 vendors selling a myriad of food and crafts, from carrots to honey to woven baskets. Shoppers were entertained by music from the MPK Folkfest, a long-standing music event organized by students.

Meanwhile, 178 thrill-seeking cyclists of all ages raced through the MennoCross course winding all around the north side of campus, up and down hills, kicking up mud amidst cheers and clanging cowbells. Others sought out favourites added in recent years, like food trucks and children's entertainment with the Bubble Man, Karlheinz Sawatzky-Dyck (CMBC '94).

New this year was an artist tent presented by the MHC Gallery that hosted two artists currently on exhibition at the gallery. Jessie Jannuska demonstrated techniques she uses in her art, which blends realism, beadwork, and symbolism to explore her Indigenous culture. Katrina Craig taught participants about indigo and how to naturally dye textiles with it.

Fall at CMU concluded with Song Feast, an evening of congregational and choral singing led by a 68-voice choir of alumni and current students, and by Dr. Janet Brenneman, Professor of Music, and Anneli Loepp Thiessen, Teaching Lecturer in Music. This novel take on the Mennonite Saengerfest tradition was a new and sure to be repeated feature that brought in a crowd that filled the Laudamus Auditorium to capacity.

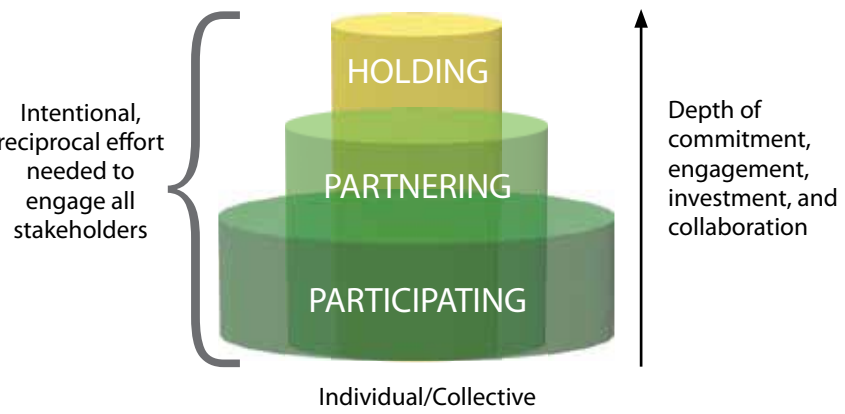


What does it mean to belong to a place? Holding CMU in Common

by Claudia Dueck

The Hold in Common community-based research project, which I was closely involved in, attempted to narrate how different people see themselves in relation to CMU. Together, the team of researchers with input from alumni and donors developed a theoretical framework for levels of belonging that gives language to the different ways people connected to CMU position themselves in relation to the university. It is a path forward for those who belong, who want to belong, and who, with good reason, remain critical.

The following model introduces the idea of porous engagement levels, inviting community members to be in relationship in different but defined ways. The model aims to allow anyone connected to CMU to locate themselves and name the ways they engage with CMU. It also shows how all parts of the model are necessary for CMU to thrive.



Participating is choosing to be involved in CMU because what CMU offers fits with what they are looking for and is good for personal transformation. There is opportunity and willingness to provide feedback which helps shape CMU's offerings within the context of its stated mission. For example, studying at CMU or occasionally attending CMU events.

Partnering is staying connected to CMU because being affiliated with CMU enables them to accomplish something significant with others for collective impact. Partners choose to engage because they recognize that CMU is good for the transformation of society. For example, giving an occasional gift or promoting CMU when opportunities present themselves, giving a guest lecture, or collaborating on joint efforts. The depth of engagement, investment, and collaboration is significant over time, but is less than "holding".

Holding is having a vested interest in and lasting loyalty to the larger vision of CMU. Those holding CMU see themselves as part of the collective community surrounding the university and strongly believe that CMU is good for the transformation needed in our world. They hold a sense of ownership in CMU that links them with the future of the institution with the highest level of engagement, collaboration, and investment over time. For example, being

involved in the Board of Governors, actively promoting CMU in their personal networks, and giving financially to the institution.

Partners choose to engage because they recognize that CMU is good for the transformation of society.

It has become clear to me throughout my work at CMU that each of these levels are needed and are already at work. So many people are contributing to the legacy of CMU in so many ways, however they are able. But we need more people to actively engage across each of these levels. Whether through *participating*, *partnering*, or *holding*, CMU is inviting you to belong: to critique, to support, to guide. CMU needs this. CMU needs you.

Dueck, C., Durant, K., Martin, J., & Janzen, R. (2023). Hold in Common Research Report. Centre for Community Based Research. Waterloo, ON.



Poettcker Hall, September 2004

Picture it: 25 young adult men with varying hygiene practices sharing a communal washroom for a year. I can still smell the first-floor hallway of the men's residence. It's... unpleasant. I can feel it too, from the irregular temperature of my room to the thin carpet atop a concrete floor.

It wasn't all that bad. Sure, there weren't enough outlets for you and your roommate. And you'd risk a burst pipe just to crack your window and let in some air when the radiators got too hot. But there was snack every night at 9:00 PM! Few deadlines were more important than leaving your room every night and shuffling to the Dining Hall to hang out with friends. For me, many of these relationships have endured 20 years.

This was home for a glorious eight months and I'd do it again in a heartbeat with a few caveats: geothermal heating and cooling with dorm room controls, updated washrooms, and improved accessibility. These aren't modern comforts; they are foundational to a post-secondary experience we'd all expect today.

That's why I'm making a pledge to the Uphold Campaign; so that Poettcker Hall can be the home for future generations of Blazers in this exceptional community we call CMU.

Please join me.

Dylan Tarnowsky graduated from CMU in 2008 and was on staff in the Development Department from 2010 to 2012. He and his partner Kim Penner, and children, Jackson and Ethan, live in Kitchener-Waterloo. Dylan currently serves CMU on the Board of Governors.



People and Events



The CMU Bachelor of Social Work receives pre-accreditation from Canadian governing body of social work

CMU is pleased to announce that its social work program was pre-accredited by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) effective July 1, 2024.

This significant recognition ensures that students who earn a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) at CMU will be fully entitled and prepared to practice in the field of social work anywhere in Canada.

The CMU BSW program adheres to the core learning objectives of CASWE and also maintains CMU's distinctive commitments to an inclusive and supportive learning environment that combines theory, research, and practice through practical, hands-on learning experiences that encourage continuous self-reflection.

"It is incredibly validating to have official recognition of the quality and rigour of our program by our peers in the social work field," Dr. Alex Sawatsky, Professor and Chair of Social Work at CMU says.

"Our students will benefit from our BSW, which we believe is an innovative and important contribution to the growing field of social work, and know that our status with CASWE ensures that their degree will create future possibilities—be they in practice or further education with other CASWE-accredited programs and beyond."

The CMU BSW program will be the third CASWE-accredited BSW program available in Manitoba alongside offerings by the University of Manitoba and Université de Saint-Boniface.

In addition to the CASWE accreditation process, CMU has also connected with the Manitoba

College of Social Workers, the regulatory body that maintains the standards for qualification of social workers throughout the province.

The CMU BSW program deeply aligns with the university's mission and commitments to reconciliation in church and society, as well as the Mennonite/Anabaptist traditions of service and community development. It is the first CASWE-recognized BSW offered by a Christian university in Canada.

The program is designed as a one plus three-year program where students enter the program in their second year of studies after completing specific "pre-social work" courses. This structure allows for a comprehensive and immersive educational experience rooted in a broad range of interdisciplinary options that will ground future social work studies.

Announcing the P.M. Friesen Chair in Biblical and Theological Studies

Edwin and Agnes Redekopp of Winnipeg, MB have gifted CMU with \$2,000,000 through the Edwin and Agnes Redekopp Endowment Fund for the P.M. Friesen Chair in Biblical and Theological Studies (BTS). An endowment to support this chair creates



permanent funding for a position at CMU that ensures the ongoing strength of BTS excellence in teaching, research, and service in ways that draw on the witness of and provide service to the Mennonite Brethren (MB) church tradition. Further,

the provisions of the endowment ensure that CMU can continue to offer BTS with a commitment to ministry leadership formation in relation to the MB church.

The P.M. Friesen Chair will typically be expressed through one full-time professor and/or, where appropriate, through several part-time appointments. The PM Friesen Chair in Biblical and Theological Studies will begin formally in summer 2025 and will be initially shared by Dr. Andrew Dyck and Dr. Paul Doerksen, each in a one-half time arrangement.

J.J. Thiessen Lecture Series

This year's J.J. Thiessen Lecture Series explored the spiritual theology of early evangelicalism.

Titled "True Religion in a Modern World: The Spiritual Theology of the Early Evangelicals," the lecture series was presented by

Dr. Bruce Hindmarsh, James M. Houston Professor of Spiritual Theology and Professor of the History of Christianity at Regent College.

In his first lecture, Hindmarsh studied the early evangelicals emphasis on forming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This sort of custom-built-relationship led to thousands of conversions that bear witness to the fresh approach to Christianity and the joy of Christ's forgiveness.

The second lecture asked us to consider the goal of spiritual life. In this, Hindmarsh examined the maturation of evangelicals faith by looking at both wings of the early evangelical movement (Calvinist and Wesleyan).

In the third and final lecture, Hindmarsh wondered how we know the authenticity of our spiritual experiences. Within the context of what he called "the revival and charismatic renewal," Hindmarsh let us ponder the ultimate question: How do we know this feeling is really God?

Hindmarsh is a professor specializing in the history of Christianity and spiritual theology. In addition to his academic work, he frequently speaks and preaches both at his own church and in other settings.

Previously, he served as a staff worker for Youth for Christ and was the founding director of Camp Cedarwood.

Find the recorded lectures at cmu.ca/jjt.



CMU shapes what quality work-integrated learning looks like in Canada

CMU has been selected as one of the top universities in Canada to develop a national quality work-integrated learning (QWIL) certification.

In collaboration with 12 other institutions, this venture operates through Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL), Canada's leading organization in the field.

"CMU will be working with its higher ed colleagues across the country and the social impact research advocacy firm SISCO to review and provide feedback on the framework, process, and potential value of what constitutes "quality WIL" for our students in our context," Dr. Christine Kampen Robinson, Director of the Centre for Career and Vocation at CMU says.

Kampen Robinson says CMU will be among the first universities to have the opportunity to apply for certification in Canada as a result of this project.

CMU already has over 20 years of WIL history, with over 500 distinct organizations hosting CMU students for placement.



CMU announces 2024 Leadership Scholarship recipients

CMU is pleased to award the 2024

Leadership Scholarship to Adalynne Pahl (Westgate Mennonite Collegiate), Milo Klassen (Mennonite Collegiate Institute), and Ella Grijalva (Collège Béliveau).

The award, worth up to \$14,000 over four years of study, is granted annually to high school graduates who demonstrate significant leadership ability, academic excellence, personal character, service, and vision.

The competitive scholarship process requires applicants to submit a resumé outlining their leadership involvement, two letters of recommendation, and a 1,000-word essay reflecting on what leadership means to them.

This year's recipients each approached their view on leadership through different lenses—polarization, faith, and sports—but shared the common perspective that leaders must be compassionate listeners.



Reunions at CMU

This year's Fall at CMU brought together well over 100 alumni from various grad classes dating back to 1964. Students from 1964, 1974, 1984, 1994, 2004, and 2014 gathered throughout the day for their reunions to reconnect, share meals, and enjoy the various Fall at CMU attractions.



In addition to these reunions, Fall at CMU brought about 40 alumni as part of the alumni choir who performed at the evening concluding event, Song Feast.

CMU always looks forward to connecting with students, alumni, and the wider community through various events. Please visit our events calendar at cmu.ca/events for other opportunities to connect, learn, and celebrate.



\$351,000 secured in funding for Poettcker Hall geothermal project

CMU is pleased to be the recipient of new funding in the amount of \$351,000 from the Government of Manitoba Department of Environment and Climate Change provided via the Government of Canada's merit-based Low Carbon Economy Fund.

The funding will be allocated to a project that

will convert the mechanical systems of the Poettcker Hall residence and a portion of the south administration building from fossil fuel/natural gas-fired boilers to a geothermal ground loop system, according to the agreement signed between CMU and the Province.

Broadly, this project is a part of CMU's Uphold Campaign, which aims to revitalize and renew the Poettcker Hall residence at CMU.

"I am grateful to the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada for their contribution to our geothermal project," says John Unger, Vice-President of Administration & Finance.

"This funding helps CMU kick off the first phase of its campus energy transition plan," Unger says.

Poettcker Hall is CMU's most carbon-intensive and least energy-efficient building. By replacing the current natural gas boiler with a net-zero-carbon and net-zero-energy geothermal ground loop system, campus-wide greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 17%. Specifically, this means a reduction of 400 tCO₂e by 2030.



Poettcker Hall has housed numerous generations of CMU students for nearly seven decades. As CMU continues to grow, so must the existing infrastructure, in alignment with CMU's commitment to environmental sustainability.

"It's very satisfying to achieve such significant emissions reductions with a single project, and we look forward to future partnerships as we continue with our energy transition," Unger says.

The funding provided through the merit-based Low Carbon Economy Fund goes a long way in helping CMU as it continuously works to make the campus more environmentally sustainable.

To learn more about CMU's Uphold campaign, visit cmu.ca/uphold.



William Janzen (CMBC '67), Ottawa, ON, was made a Member of the Order of Canada in June 2024. He served as director of the

Ottawa office of Mennonite Central Committee Canada for over 30 years, through which he influenced government policy and made significant contributions to refugee resettlement, citizenship, development aid, and peacebuilding. A notable example was his instrumental role in creating the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program, mobilizing Canadians to support incoming refugees, especially from Southeast Asia, thus marking a turning point in Canada's immigration policy.



Leonard Ratzlaff (MBBC '70), Edmonton, AB, was awarded an honorary doctorate from Concordia University of Edmonton, in recognition

of his contributions to the field of choral music, both locally and internationally. He is Professor Emeritus, Department of Music at University of Alberta, where he taught for almost 40 years. He co-founded and directed the masters and doctoral choral conducting programs, and conducted the university's award-winning Madrigal Singers. Ratzlaff has been decorated with the Order of Canada, the Alberta Order of Excellence, and the Queen Elizabeth II Golden, Diamond, and Platinum Jubilee Medals. He has also been granted spots in the Royal Society of Canada and in the City of Edmonton Arts & Culture Hall of Fame.



Abram Bergen (CMBC '72), splits his time between his homes in

Winnipeg, MB and South Bend, IN. Last September, the members of Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, commissioned him to serve on their pastoral team. He is one of two volunteer pastors from within the congregation that work together with the half-

time salaried pastor. Bergen also coordinates CMU's Xplore program, a learning enrichment program for all ages, delivered in six-week courses.



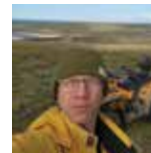
Don Stoesz (CMBC '75), Bowden, AB, is an ordained Mennonite minister who worked as an institutional chaplain in Quebec

and Alberta for 35 years. He was part of a stakeholders group that established Circles of Support and Accountability in Calgary, a restorative justice program that assists formerly incarcerated individuals in integrating with society and leading responsible and full lives. He recently published a book with Catholic chaplain Joan Palardy, titled *Transformative Moments in Chaplaincy*. It celebrates Rev. Dr. Pierre and Judy Allard's 50 years of ministry in the correctional system, weaving together broader historical moments with their life experiences and other Canadian chaplains' stories of prison ministry. Stoesz was recently interviewed about the book by broadcaster and actor Logan Crawford.



Jewel Casselman (MBBC '88), Winnipeg, MB, won the Juno Award for MusiCounts Teacher of the Year at the

2023 Junos, Canada's music industry awards show. This was the fourth time she was nominated, and the win finally came in her last year of teaching; she retired later that year from a 35-year career as a music educator. Casselman is the first elementary school educator to earn this honour. Along with the statuette, she received a grant for Lakewood School in Winnipeg where she taught and a \$10,000 cash prize.



Michael Bartel Sawatzky (Sawatzky, CMBC '01), Winnipeg, MB, is an Aquatic Science Technician in the

Arctic and Aquatic Research Division of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. His focus is on population size estimates of various fish species using imaging sonar systems.

His work currently involves traveling to northern communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and assessing the Arctic char population in the Hornaday River. Most of his summer field season is spent in a camp near Paulatuk, NWT, where he enjoys building relationships with the people he works with and exploring the Arctic landscape. An article he co-authored was published this summer in the ICES Journal of Marine Science, exploring migration patterns of Pacific salmon in the Fraser River near Mission, BC. He holds a Diploma of Technology in Renewable Resources: Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation from the British Columbia Institute of Technology.



Anna Bigland-Pritchard (CMU '15), Victoria, BC, is the co-founder of

Gay4Nature, a creative music collective dedicated to the amplification of community connection, queer joy, and nature advocacy at the intersection of sound, movement, and drama. The group performed its first live touring production in May, funded by a grant from the City of Victoria. It presented Bach's Coffee Cantata, a whimsical 30-minute opera about a daughter and father who cannot agree on coffee. Translated from German and revised by the performers through a queer, feminist, and ecological lens, it toured around coffee shops and brunch spots in Victoria. Her collective also released the trailer for "Green," an upcoming eco opera film set to vocal music by Debussy (find it on Youtube @gay4nature). Bigland-Pritchard is music director at Oak Bay United Church.



Anna Goertzen Thomas (Goertzen Loepky, CMU '18), Winnipeg, MB, is the social worker at River Park Gardens,

a personal care home. Her role involves supporting residents and their families during admission, facilitating resident care conferences with the interdisciplinary team, and providing psycho-social supports to residents, loved ones, and staff. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work from Booth University College and is a Registered Social Worker. Goertzen Thomas also has a passion for pottery, an art form she started exploring in 2018. After taking a few classes at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, she began creating out of a shared studio space. Find her work on Instagram @peony.pots.



Thomas Friesen (CMU '18), Brandon, MB, has been working for the past six years as a sports reporter and photographer at the

Brandon Sun. He is the 2024 recipient of the Fred 'Gus' Collins Award, which annually recognizes a member of the media who works tirelessly covering the Canada West Universities Athletic Association and its student-athletes. He earned this award for his passionate and thorough coverage of the University of Brandon Bobcats and other local collegiate sports.



Hannah Derksen (CMU '19), Delta, BC, recently became a clinical dietitian in the Neonatal Intensive

Care Unit (NICU) at Surrey Memorial Hospital, part of the Fraser Valley Health Authority. Her role is to support the nutritional needs of premature and seriously ill newborns. She helps the babies grow and recover with fortified breastmilk, formula, IV nutrition, and essential vitamins and minerals. She also guides parents on how to continue meeting their babies' specific nutritional needs after leaving the NICU. Hannah holds a Master of Applied Nutrition from the University of Guelph and is a Registered Dietitian.



Claire Hanson (CMU '20), Winnipeg, MB, graduated from the University of Winnipeg in 2023 with a Bachelor of

Education. At the convocation ceremony, she won the Chancellor's Gold Medal for the Highest Standing in Education. She is now a grades 4–6 teacher at Isaac Brock School in Winnipeg, where she's excited to be teaching a multi-age classroom, incorporating nature-based learning into the curriculum, and building relationships between the English, Cree, and Ojibwe language classrooms within the school.



Mike Thiessen (CMU '24), Winnipeg, MB, is a staff photographer for *The Uiter*,

a newspaper founded at the University of Winnipeg that reports on campus, local, and national news from varying perspectives with an emphasis on social consciousness. He also writes and photographs for *Stylus*, an independent music magazine in

Winnipeg covering art, music, and culture outside of the mainstream. Thiessen recently published a zine titled, *It's Not Working*, a 24-page collection of photos reflecting on what constitutes work—real work, hard work, important work, and more. As the recipient of the 2023 Jon Thordarson Memorial Photojournalism Internship, he spent a summer working at the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Marriages

Darian Neufeld (CMU '21) and **Alexa Neufeld** (Dyck, CMU '21), Edmonton, AB, August 19, 2023

Jubilee Dueck Thiessen (CMU '23) and Luke Thiessen, Winnipeg, MB, July 20, 2024

Jonathan Dyck (CMU '08) and Sarah Ens, Winnipeg, MB, August 24, 2024

Danika Gingerich (Warkentin, CMU '24) and **Joshua Gingerich** (CMU '22), Winnipeg, MB, August 24, 2024

Nolan Kehler (CMU '17) and **Joanna Loep Thiessen** (CMU '22), Winnipeg, MB, August 31, 2024

Holly Smith (CMU '22) and Finn Makila, Winnipeg, MB, September 6, 2024

Births and Adoptions



Paul Peters (CMU '12) and Carianne Peters, Altona, MB, a daughter, Sierra Elizabeth Peters, March 25, 2024

Valerie Alipova (CMU '20) and **Jim Cheng** (CMU '16), Winnipeg, MB, a son, Noah Cheng, May 19, 2024



Rebekah Miller (Koop, CMU '15) and **Jacob Miller** (CMU 2010–12), Stanley, MB, a daughter, Sofia Janice Miller, June 25, 2024



Rachel Bergen (CMU '11) and Carolina Chang, Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, Adrien Lu Bergen-Chang, July 4, 2024

Ayla Berry (Manning, CMU '17) and **Liam Berry** (CMU '24), Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, Beatrice Margaret Berry, July 18, 2024



Darian Neufeld (CMU '21) and **Alexa Neufeld** (Dyck, CMU 2017–21), Edmonton, AB, a daughter, Iris Agatha Neufeld, July 27, 2024



Mariette Koop (CMU 2013–14) and Dawson Neufeld, Winnipeg, MB, a daughter, Johanna Aspen Neufeld, July 29, 2024

Justony Genido (Vasquez, CMU '19) and Jay Genido, Winnipeg, MB, a son, Joseah Kay Genido, July 30, 2024



Kenny Wollmann (CMU '18) and Sheri Wollmann, MacGregor, MB, a daughter, Sophia Jami Maryanne Wollmann, August 19, 2024

Passages

Leonora Pauls (Dyck, MBBC '57), Richmond, BC, March 23, 2024

Isaac Pankratz (CMBC '62), Watrous, SK, April 2, 2024

Abe Konrad (MBBC '64), Abbotsford, BC, April 6, 2024

Lena Sawatzky Pauls (Sawatzky, CMBC '64), Winnipeg, MB, April 6, 2024

Victor Adrian (MBBC president 1967-72), Winnipeg, MB, May 14, 2024

John Pauls (MBBC '56), Richmond, BC, May 15, 2024

Peter Friesen (MBBC '49), Winkler, MB, June 11, 2024

Paul Peters (CMBC '51), Winnipeg, MB, June 15, 2024

Jacob Heinrichs (CMBC '58), Winkler, MB, June 26, 2024

Mildred Schroeder (Bartel, CMBC '48), Winnipeg, MB, July 30, 2024

Linda Neufeld (CMBC '66), Winnipeg, MB, September 16, 2024

Alumni are invited to submit recent news—marriage, job change, addition of a child, award, promotion, graduate school, retirement, and so on—to the Alumni Relations Office. Mail to **500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2**, email to alumni@cmu.ca, or visit cmu.ca/about/info-update. Model your information after the current listings above, beginning with name, graduation year, city, and province or state.

CMU degree fosters holistic approach to therapy

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Rachel Robertson has always been interested in understanding why people do what they do, and CMU's free counselling services furthered her passion for mental health care. "I would like to say my time at CMU was the best time of my life, but honestly it wasn't always; some years were really hard. But it was at CMU where I first accessed mental health supports, and that was life-changing for me," she says.

Robertson graduated from CMU in 2018 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Social Sciences. She then earned a Master of Arts in Counselling from Providence University College in 2022.

She grew up, like many others, in a context where mental health was not discussed, and mental illness went largely unrecognized. CMU provided her the opportunity to try therapy at a time when she could not afford it. "Through my own benefit from counselling and the benefit I saw in other people's lives, I got excited and wanted to be part of that."

Her approach to therapy is one of non-judgemental, radical acceptance. She draws on techniques from attachment theory, internal family systems, narrative therapy, and more, to give care that is trauma-informed and integrates mind and body. "I try to work in a way that sees the person for all of their parts," she says.

The psychology and counselling courses Robertson took at CMU laid a solid foundation for her future career. Even more formational was the arc of her whole social sciences degree. "It prepared me because it was such an interdisciplinary program. The themes of how we care for ourselves, others, and the earth ran throughout my entire program. That is still what I'm passionate about and bring into my practice."

CMU prepared me because it was such an interdisciplinary program.

Robertson cares deeply about supporting people facing unexpected hardship. "We live in a world where there's this idea that if we know enough, research enough, and act in all the right ways, bad things won't happen to us," she says. "But the reality is, they will. Life is uncertain and fragile and uncontrollable."

So, when things get ugly, we wonder, why is this happening to me?! "Traumatic things can make us feel really isolated and alone," she says. In truth, everyone suffers. To experience



pain is to be human, but through shared understanding and relationship we can endure.

This theory was put to the test in a personal way when Robertson had her first baby in 2023. "I had a very healthy, no problems pregnancy, but my baby was born with life-threatening health conditions and required immediate surgery." She had researched pregnancy extensively, followed all the rules, received positive ultrasounds at appointments—and yet, something terrible happened.

She pushed herself to connect with others who share similar experiences. "I am even more confident that we're healed in the context of relationships," she says. "I feel so privileged to be one of those relationships for my clients, helping them move towards connection instead of isolation, sitting with them as they survive the things they deem to be unsurvivable, the things that are supposed to happen only to other people."

Most of the community that supported Robertson through the difficult time with her baby were people she met at CMU. "I care about shared humanity, people not feeling alone or othered, people feeling like they are part of something—and that's something CMU tries to do," she says.

After graduating with her master's degree, she worked at a group practice until her maternity leave. In January she is opening her own independent practice, Rachel Robertson Therapy, offering individual and relational therapy. She's excited for how it will allow her to provide clients with even better care.

For more alumni stories, visit cmu.ca/alumni

CMU CALENDAR

- November 30:** Christmas at CMU
- December 3:** Giving Tuesday
- January 23:** John and Margaret Friesen Lectures with Dr. Astrid von Schlachta
- February 10-11:** **renew** Pastor's Conference
- February 27:** Face2Face: Celebrating Anabaptism at 500
- February 28:** Midwinter Together alumni dinner

For more information on upcoming CMU events please visit cmu.ca/events.

The Blazer Magazine Readership Survey

You are invited to take part in a short, anonymous survey about *The Blazer* magazine. Your responses will give us a better understanding of what CMU's alumni and friends would like to read. To participate, simply visit the web address below or scan the QR code with your smartphone.

cmu.ca/blazer-survey



GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday: December 3, 2024

Join this international day of philanthropy with a gift to CMU. Donations will directly support current CMU students through our scholarship and bursary program.

All gifts given are multiplied through the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative—for every \$2 you donate, the Province of Manitoba contributes \$1. In addition, we have individual donors who are committed to matching your Giving Tuesday donation, dollar for dollar.

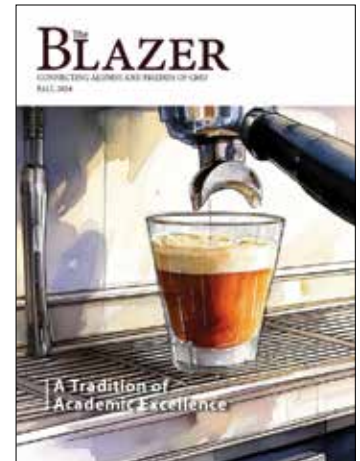
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