

MIR CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



Selkirk College Courageous Dialogues researchers Leeza Perehudoff, Jayme Jones, Jennie Barron and Pablo Pastor. Photo by Bob Hall.



Message from the Chair

Once again, it has been quite a year in this country and our precious world. Just when we felt a glimmer of hope that we might be emerging from the COVID pandemic and its associated social conflict, a horrific war erupted in Ukraine, devastating families, cities, and homeland for millions of people, and touching our own community in profound ways. Through the past few months, the Mir Centre has been called to serve as a gathering place for processing these events and learning together. Given the horrors taking place, it is not always possible to ensure that everyone walks away with feelings of peace in their hearts. But we continue to encourage peaceful and constructive dialogue across sometimes-deep divides in the interests of building cultures of peace.

Over this past year, we have been putting our new strategic plan into action. Our substantive priorities include supporting and educating about nonviolence and conflict transformation; promoting dialogue across difference; advancing justice, equity, diversity and inclusion; and working towards decolonization and reconciliation. On a process level, we are also making strides in connecting more with other college departments and initiatives, reaching out to Selkirk staff and students from other Schools and campuses, increasing our connections with

community groups, and developing a long-term strategy for sustainability of the Mir Centre.

In the following pages, you will see how exactly we are working to meet our goals in these areas. In addition to the types of work and programming we have always done, such as lectures and peace cafés, we have added an applied research project – *Courageous Dialogues: Moving Beyond Polarization* – and student service learning opportunities. We have built new relationships with organizations and individuals in Trail. We have continued our Readers for Racial Justice book club (online) and added a film series about the power of nonviolence. It is gratifying to look back and see all that we've been part of, even as we want to reach higher and do more.

The Mir team includes many colleagues and friends. I thank them all for their dedication, passion, ideas, and support. We share a belief that a better world is possible and it's on all of us to help it grow.

Jennie Barron, Chair

Courageous Dialogues: Moving Beyond Polarization

This year marked the first year of a three-year applied project being led by the Mir Centre, Selkirk Innovates, Vancouver Community College, and Capilano University, and in partnership with Decoda Literacy Solutions, the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL), New Stories, and the Continuing Education & Training Association of British Columbia (CETABC).

The goal of the project is to understand polarization as it is manifesting in our communities and our work in the public and community education sector, and to explore a range of strategies that may be adopted by educators and community development workers to mitigate polarization and facilitate constructive dialogue across divides.

In the first year of the project, we produced a literature review and two annotated bibliographies pertaining to the nature of polarization, its causes or drivers, and the capacities, skills, and habits of mind that we, as a society, need to develop to move beyond it. The report points the way to some already-existing tools we can employ, and suggests others that may yet be developed. Those documents are available here: https://sc.arcabc.ca/innovates_courageous_dialogues.

In the second and third years of the project, we will take a deeper dive into the strategies we have identified, and experiment with them in the contexts where we experience polarization. The goal is to match strategies to the needs and opportunities of each of the partners in the project. To follow or get involved in this work, please contact Selkirk Innovates at innovate@selkirk.ca with “Courageous Dialogues” in the subject line.



L to R Leeza Perehudoff, Jayme Jones, Jennie Barron, Pablo Pastor (for Selkirk College); Andrea Korens (for Vancouver Community College); Diana Twiss and Jane Agyeman (Capilano University).



Films & Peace Cafés



WE WERE CHILDREN

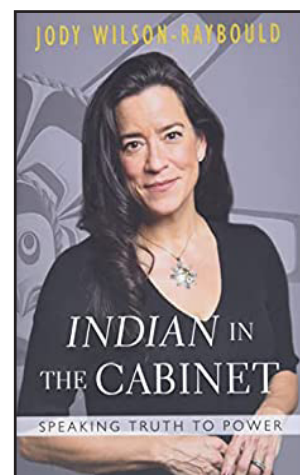
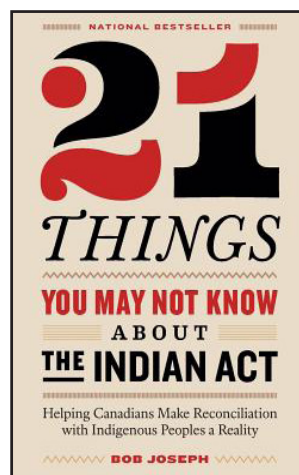
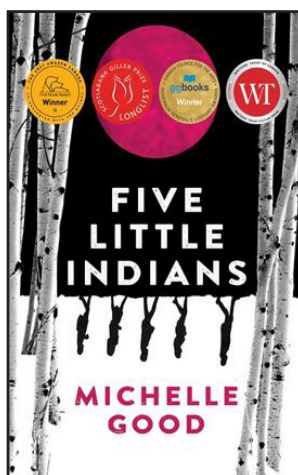
September 29, 2021

In recognition of the country's first national Day for Truth & Reconciliation, the Mir Centre for Peace and Indigenous Services at Selkirk College co-sponsored a screening and discussion of the 2012 National Film Board production, *We Were Children*. The film is about the experiences of two First Nations children in the Canadian Indian residential school system, and combines interviews with dramatic re-creations of the children's real-life experiences.

Following the film, we hosted two discussion circles – one online and one led by Elders in the college's beautiful new Indigenous classroom.

Readers for Racial Justice Book club

The Mir Centre's Readers for Racial Justice online book club chose three books related to truth & reconciliation this year: Michelle Good's *Five Little Indians*; Bob Joseph's *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act*; and *Indian in the Cabinet*, by Jody Wilson-Raybould.



Mir Lecture: Raven Sinclair

DISLOCATION AND DISRUPTION: RECONCILING THE FORCED REMOVAL OF CHILDREN DURING THE SIXTIES SCOOP

April 7, 2022

In early April, we partnered with Indigenous Services at Selkirk College to welcome the delightful Dr. Raven Sinclair to Castlegar. Part of our co-sponsored Truth & Justice Speaker series, it was also our first in-person event in over two years. Nearly 200 people attended the hybrid event, our first attempt at livestreaming on Zoom.

Dr. Sinclair, who is a Sixties Scoop survivor, professor, researcher, trainer and brilliant, engaging speaker, shared thought-provoking, difficult, and sometimes humorous stories of her own and others' experiences to illuminate the turmoil of Indigenous child removal from family, community and culture. She offered deep insight into Canada's push for assimilation, as well as Indigenous resistance and paths forward.



Mir Lecture: Seth Klein

A GOOD WAR: MOBILIZING CANADA FOR THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Nov 30, 2021

Drawing on lessons from our wartime experience, Seth Klein offered an original and uniquely hopeful vision of a way through the climate crisis. Reminding us that we have come together before in common cause across class, race and gender, he showed us that it is possible to entirely retool our economy in the space of a few short years, and align our politics and economy with what the science says we must do to address the climate crisis.



Mir Peace Café: Let's Talk Divestment

LET'S TALK DIVESTMENT: HOW INVESTMENT CHOICES CAN FUEL CLIMATE ACTION

April 21, 2022

For Earth Day, the Peace Cafés Working Circle brought together six experts from across the country to join us and our online audience in an in-depth interactive conversation on the ethical and financial dimensions of divestment from fossil fuels, covering such topics as strategic considerations, responsible reinvestment and justice for workers in an energy transition.

We are grateful to our expert guests for their generosity in sharing their time with us: Kenzie Harris (Banking on a Better Future), Bruce Wilson (Iron & Earth), Joe Reid (Vancity), Amy Bell & Eva Hernandez (West Kootenay Boundary Community Investment Co-op), and Thomas Holloway (Genus Capital Management).



Film Series: A Bold Peace

This year, with the help of an extraordinary student volunteer, Greg Elliott, we hosted a series of four films about the power of nonviolence to stop and prevent wars. Each film was shown in-person and was followed by a discussion on Zoom.

SOLDIERS WITHOUT GUNS - An unforgettable, incredible success story about the tiny Pacific island of Bougainville's ten-year civil war and the incredible women who ended it, with the help of unarmed Kiwi peacekeepers and the power of culture, trust, and non-violent intervention.

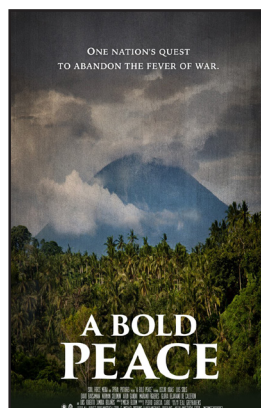
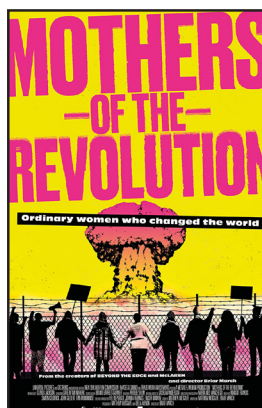
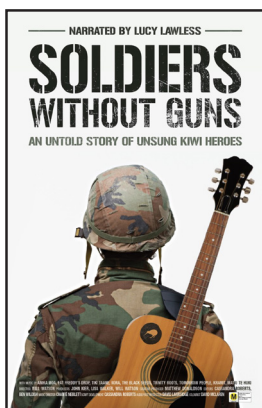
PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL - In Liberia, a war between a dubious government and rebel factions left countless civilians brutalized beyond belief. With unyielding courage in the face of atrocities, women of the country stood up to demand peace, bringing an end to bloodshed and war.

MOTHERS OF THE REVOLUTION - In 1981, with the Cold War looming and nuclear war increasingly likely, a band of British mothers set up camp at the Greenham Common military base. Tens of thousands soon joined them and many stayed there for years. Their determined, creative, and uniquely feminist protest helped arrest nuclear proliferation and make history.

A BOLD PEACE - There IS an alternative to militarism and endless war. Nearly seventy years ago, Costa Rica took the radical step of abolishing its military and investing instead in health, education and social security for its people. What could our world look like if we all adopted this perspective?

We are grateful to our discussion guests for their generosity with their time, insight and stories: Will Watson (Director, Soldiers Without Guns), Erin Hunt (anti-nuclear activist), and Selkirk instructors Duff Sutherland and Pablo Pastor who shared their knowledge of Central America.

Links and information about accessing all films and recorded discussions are available at selkirk.ca/mir-centre-for-peace/events-workshops/mir-film-series.



Statement on the Ukraine Crisis from the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College

The Mir Centre for Peace strongly condemns Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. It is a dangerous and blatant violation of the UN Charter. We stand with the people of Ukraine who have already suffered great losses and are demonstrating even greater courage as they endure violence and resist occupation.

As peacemakers, we do not believe that violent escalation is the only way forward. There must be a political solution. There is a basis for negotiations in the Minsk Agreements.

Nonviolent civil resistance is also a source of great power and has been successful in displacing authoritarian leaders and resisting occupying forces before. Thousands of nonviolent resisters are engaging in widespread protest and political noncooperation right now, both in Ukraine and in Russia. This is under-reported. Let us support and amplify their brave actions.

In the name of human dignity, let us reject the use of dehumanizing language to refer to the "other" and refuse the demonization of any ethnic group. We remember that many within Russia – and Russians abroad – also oppose this war, as do people around the world. The actions of any nation's government do not necessarily represent the will of its people.

Let us remember that soldiers are not the cause of the conflict, nor should they be excluded from our sentiments of care. Many have become instruments of violence – not always by choice but sometimes simply by virtue of gender, age or decree – but they are also victims of violence. Too often, wars benefitting the rich exploit the poor to fight.

We acknowledge that there are complex historical and political roots to this crisis, and that coming to consensus

about its underlying causes and possible resolution is not easy. As we engage in dialogue, let us resist over-simplified narratives that reduce the conflict to a single cause or frame it in binary terms. There are many forces and failures that have brought us to this terrible place. To point out one is not to deny the others. Let us practice humility and openness in our quest to learn more.

We decry the tremendous loss of life, waste of resources, and risks to humanity that the arms trade – and especially nuclear proliferation – represents. All states and all people have valid security interests and needs that must be recognized if any are to be safe. Ultimately, our common security depends not on threats of mutually assured destruction but on our ability to co-exist on one shared and finite planet.

We, therefore, call on all parties to respect international law and uphold their commitments to treaties and conventions that safeguard human rights, democratic institutions and humanitarian principles, including assistance to refugees.

We are at a very dangerous point in time when thousands of nuclear weapons stand ready to be deployed. The intentional, accidental or terrorist use of such weapons jeopardizes the safety, well-being and security of each and every one of us. We urge all countries – including Canada – to sign on to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which has already made nuclear weapons illegal under international law.

War is an abomination. How easily we forget that. Let us unite instead in our common wish for peace.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION: CONTINUE TO EDUCATE, SUPPORT AND PROMOTE NONVIOLENCE AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE FOR PEACE

March 6, 2022

In response to the Russian invasion and worsening of hostilities in Ukraine, the Mir Centre invited community members to come express their concerns and desires for peace in dialogue with other concerned community members at the Mir Centre for Peace. We shared thoughts, questions, and ideas; listened to each other's feelings; and offered prayers, courage and care. We are grateful to special invited guests Olga Hallborg, Alexa Atamanenko and JJ Verigin for their participation and to Randy Janzen for his assistance in moderating.

PRESENTATION ON NONVIOLENT CIVIL RESISTANCE

March 18, 2022

Mir Chair, Jennie Barron, gave a talk to Selkirk College staff on the power of nonviolent civil resistance, examples from other conflicts and evidence of how it is being used in Ukraine.

MUSICAL FUNDRAISER FOR UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION

June 4, 2022

The Mir Centre and the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC) hosted a fundraiser in support of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping/Protection (UCP) in Ukraine. Held at the Brilliant Cultural Centre in Castlegar, the evening featured the beautiful music of Allison Girvan, Doug Stephenson, Dylan Ferris, and Jill McKenna. The event was lovingly opened by Toinya Sammartino and Netta Zeberoff, and featured a generous offering of delicious *piroshki* (fruit tarts) made by the Kootenay Ladies Organization. The Cultural Interpretive Society organized a raffle and together with donations at the door, we raised nearly \$4500 to send to Operazione Colomba, an Italian organization doing UCP work in Ukraine right now.



Respect & Connect: A Better Community for Us All

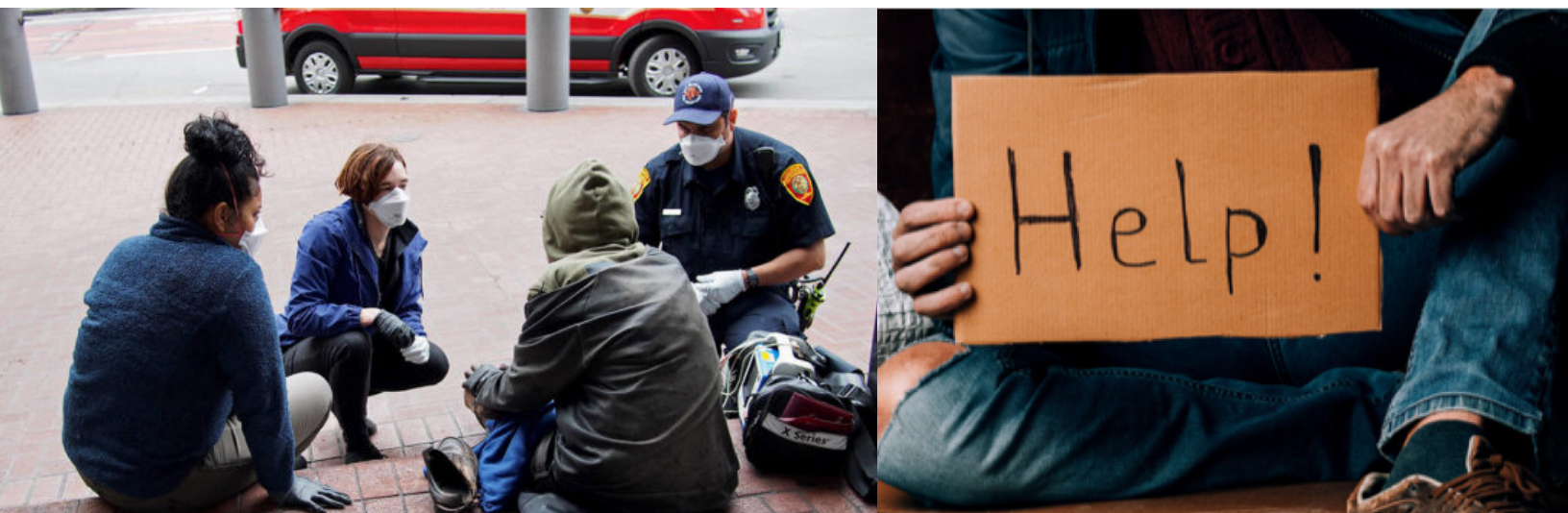
The Mir Centre teamed up with Selkirk College's School of Adult Upgrading and Development (AUD), the Trail & District Arts Council (TDAC), the Trail Public Library and Trail Community Action Team (CAT) to organize an educational series about homelessness, mental illness and substance use. Our aim was to provide insight and tools to help us better interact with everyone in our community.

A COMMUNITY'S GUIDE TO HOMELESSNESS - ONLINE TRAINING WITH RYAN DOWD

Dec 10, 2021

Ryan Dowd is the executive director of a large homeless shelter in Chicago and is the author of *The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness: An Empathy-Driven Approach to Solving Problems, Preventing Conflict, and Serving Everyone*. He offered a four-hour training that explained how empathy enhances our ability to resolve or avoid conflict, and gives people the tools to confidently and compassionately solve problem behaviour for everyone's benefit.

Funding for this event was also contributed by the BC General Employees Union (BCGEU) and Selkirk College Faculty Association (SCFA) PD Fund.



ADDICTION AND THE POISONED DRUG SUPPLY: WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW. HOW WE CAN HELP

Feb 15, 2021

The second Respect & Connect event was a public talk given by Nurse Practitioner, Zak Matieschyn, who has completed an Addiction Fellowship with the BC Centre for Substance Use. Zak brought his practical perspective on how we can support and make life better for people who use drugs, based on his many years in research and practice. Zak was joined by two community members with lived experience who generously shared their personal stories.


COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR WALK & SCREENING OF *THE PUBLIC*

Feb 26, 2021

The third Respect & Connect event was a fundraiser for La Niña homeless shelter in Trail. The team screened the film, *The Public*, about a group of homeless library patrons in Baltimore who occupy a city library to escape freezing temperatures – and the extreme reaction by local authorities and media that follows. We followed the film with team participation in the “Coldest Night of the Year” walk, raising nearly \$5,000 between the two events.



Mir Guests, Community Partners, Co-sponsors, and Funders 2021/22



Alex Atamanenko	Dylan Ferris	Raven Sinclair
Allison Girvan	Eileen Kooznetsoff	Rob Thompson
Amy Bell	Erin Hunt	Ron Zaitsoff
Ashlyn Schwaiger	Eva Hernandez	Ryan Dowd
BCGEU	Greg Elliott	School of Academic Upgrading & Development
Beth Stupple	Indigenous Services at Selkirk College	Selkirk College Faculty Association (SCFA)
Bill Popoff	Jill McKenna	Selkirk Innovates
Bruce Wilson	Joe Reid	Seth Klein
Capilano University	Joyce Buckler	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Carolyn Schramm	Leah Lychowyd	Thomas Holloway
Colin Markin	Liana Zwick	Toinya Sammartino
Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy	Kenzie Harris	Trail & District Arts Council
Columbia Basin Trust	Kootenay Ladies Organization	Trail Community Action Team
Continuing Education & Training Association of BC	Marcia Stralaeff	Trail Public Library
Cultural Interpretive Society	Mary Ann Morris	Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC)
Decoda Literacy Solutions	Michael Cheveldave	Vancouver Community College
Dianne Biin	Netta Zeberoff	Will Watson
Doug Stephenson	New Stories	Zak Matieschyn
Donna Wright	Olga Hallborg	
Duff Sutherland	Pablo Pastor	
Dunavan Morris-Janzen	Randy Janzen	

Every attempt has been made to ensure completeness, however, we apologize if there have been any errors or omissions. We appreciate every single guest, partner, co-sponsor and volunteer!

Student Service Learning

PEAC 202: LEADERSHIP FOR PEACE

This year, for the first time, students in the second-year Leadership for Peace course, taught by Pablo Pastor, engaged in service learning projects with the Mir Centre. Working with the Mir Chair, they chose projects that advanced their learning about peace and developed their practical skills in event organization, public speaking, writing, planning, and working with community members and guests. We look forward to continuing this collaboration between the School of University Arts & Sciences and the Mir Centre.

Haley Sluter – Haley organized a panel of speakers working in the fields of peace, justice, conflict transformation. The event was held in late March at the Mir Centre for an in-person audience of students keen to follow their passions to make a better world. We are grateful to Rob Thompson, Beth Stupple, and Ashlyn Schwaiger for their kindness in sharing their stories and time.

Soleil Lyon – Soleil began work on a long-range project to erect a peace pole at the Mir Centre. A peace pole is typically a four-to-six-sided wooden pole bearing the words “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in languages significant to the location of the pole. It is a symbol of hope for humanity. Soleil’s work involved thinking through the processes of consultation, definition, planning, fundraising, budgeting, and design for the eventual peace pole.

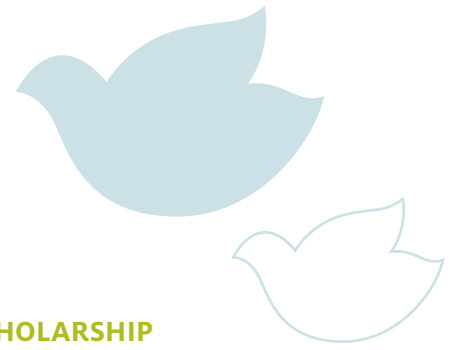
Minnu Somanathakurup – Minnu organized a fundraiser for Voices of Children Ukraine. She offered henna by donation to her fellow students and staff at the Castlegar campus of the college and raised \$450 in just a few hours!



Peace Pole



Student Awards



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 **MICHELLE DURNING**

Law & Justice program



PEACE & HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

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

awarded to **HALELUYA HAILU**

Music & Digital Technology program



MYLER WILKINSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP IN PEACE STUDIES

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

ALEX P. RELKOFF SCHOLARSHIP

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

THE MIR CENTRE FOR PEACE GRANT

This grant supports an undertaking of a student's choice. Haley will be using it to attend the annual conference of the Peace & Justice Studies Association. The theme is the vocation of the peacemaker.

awarded to **HALEY SLUTER**

Peace & Justice Studies program

Myler Wilkinson Memorial

In September 2021, we held a memorial for Mir Centre co-founder, Dr. Myler Wilkinson. We planted a tree in his honour and shared reminiscences of the scholar, visionary and friend that Myler was.

We encourage you to help keep Myler's spirit alive by donating to the Myler Wilkinson Memorial Fund.



Give by cheque:

Write a cheque to "Selkirk College Foundation" In the memo line, write "Myler Wilkinson Memorial Scholarship in Peace Studies". Mail the cheque to: Attn: Advancement Selkirk College 301 Frank Beinder Way Castlegar, BC V1N 4L3

Give online:

- Visit selkirk.ca/support, click "Donate Now"
- On the donation form, select your donation amount.
- Tap the dropdown menu and select "Other" as the Designation.
- Type "Myler Wilkinson Memorial Scholarship in Peace Studies" in the comment box.
- Enter your billing and payment information to finalize the process.

Team Mir

It takes a village to run a peace centre! This year, our team was made up of two staff, an Advisory Council and several Working Circles consisting of college employees and community members. Working Circles help in the following areas: Mir Lecture Series, Peace Cafes, Building and Grounds, and Community Engagement. We are deeply grateful for the tremendous commitment and energy of all, especially our valued volunteers!

Dean, Mir Centre for Peace – *Allison Alder*

Chair, Mir Centre for Peace – *Jennie Barron*

Mir Centre Assistant – *Richele McEwan*

Mir Administrative Assistant – *Caroline Barabonow*

Advisory Council and/or Working Circles –

Allison Alder, Rhys Andrews, Tyler Ballam, Noah Cannon, Morag Carter, Angus Graeme, Sarah James, Todd Kettner, Aaron Korbacher, Bronwyn Krause, Leah Lychowyd, Fred Makortoff, Maggie Matear, Linda Merlo, Sumika Motoki, Pablo Pastor, Shana Rablah, Gerry Rempel, Jos Sharp, Duff Sutherland, JJ Verigin, Linda Wilkinson, Peter Wood.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Jennie Barron, Mir Chair

email jbarron@selkirk.ca

web selkirk.ca/mir