

# MANECCS NEWS & VIEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDDLE ATLANTIC AND NEW ENGLAND  
 COUNCIL OF CANADIAN STUDIES

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members of the MANECCS Community,

It is a genuine honour to serve as President of the Middle Atlantic and New England Council for Canadian Studies. MANECCS has long been a meeting ground for those who seek to understand the cultural, linguistic, and historical interconnections that define North America. It is a community bound by curiosity, generosity of spirit, and the shared conviction that the study of Canada is essential to understanding ourselves and our hemisphere.

My own path into Canadian Studies began in the Detroit-Windsor borderland. There, the boundary between two nations is marked not only by a river, but by centuries of migration, trade, and storytelling. Growing up in that region taught me that Canadian Studies is fundamentally relational, and that our field thrives when we build bridges between languages, disciplines, and histories. Organizations like MANECCS sustain that work, connecting scholars across institutions of every size, united by the conviction that understanding Canada is better understanding the very fabric of North America.

At Harvard, where I serve as Preceptor in French, I have the privilege of guiding students through the vibrant and varied French-speaking worlds of this continent: from the literary traditions of Francophone Canada to the voices of Louisiana, from New England's mill towns to the Great Lakes that have long served as cultural crossroads. In courses such as Exploring French Language in North America through Text, Image, and Culture, I have witnessed how Canadian Studies reshapes students' understandings of language, place, and belonging.

As President, my vision for MANECCS is to deepen that sense of connection—to continue fostering a community that spans disciplines and supports rigorous scholarship. I hope to see our field continue to expand toward the full complexity of the North American experience, engaging Indigenous perspectives, environmental humanities, migration studies, and the lived realities of bilingualism and cultural exchange. I invite you to join in these dialogues at our upcoming 2026 conference, through collaborative research, and in the moments of exchange that remind us why this work matters.

Best wishes,  
 Claire-Marie Brisson, Ph.D.



**CLAIRE-MARIE BRISSON, PHD**

Claire-Marie Brisson, Ph.D., is Preceptor in French at Harvard University, where she leads intermediate and advanced courses on contemporary Francophone cultures and North American identities. Her forthcoming monograph, *Michiganaise* (Wayne State University Press, 2026), examines French-speaking communities of the Great Lakes through regional belonging and cultural memory. A Detroit native, she earned her Ph.D. from the University of Virginia, researching identity, spirituality, and trauma in French-speaking Canada. Brisson bridges scholarship and public engagement as founder of The North American Francophone Podcast and co-founder of *Bonjour Détroit*, promoting French language and culture in Windsor-Detroit. She has served as a cultural correspondent for Radio-Canada and received the 2024 ACTFL Klett Award for Sustainable Development Education for integrating sustainability into language pedagogy.

## VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings,

I echo Claire-Marie's deep gratitude for the opportunity and privilege to serve as new Vice President of MANECCS. New to this role - and to this professional community - I am eager to learn from long-standing members, build on its considerable history, and foster connections with the next generation of Canadian Studies scholars in the broader Middle Atlantic and New England regions, particularly as it relates to our next conference.

My route to Canadian Studies has been both deeply homegrown and highly circuitous. Growing up in Central Massachusetts surrounded by friends whose grandparents bore French-language surnames (and sometimes, still spoke French themselves), I was fascinated from a very early age by the many differences, but also familiarities, that lay across the New England-Québec border (and curious why my mom's Nova Scotian-origin family was different still). These personal and academic interests - combined with financial considerations circa 2007-8 - helped lead me to pursue my undergraduate education at McGill University. There, I immersed myself in courses about US and Canadian history and francophone studies. That education, coupled with summers spent getting lost in the collections of the French Institute of Assumption College (now University) in Worcester, Massachusetts and a subsequent internship at the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, convinced me to pursue a career as a historian. But I did not know how - or really whether - as an American returning from Canada I would be able to marry my passion for Canada and US-Canadian connections with my interests in American immigration and citizenship history.

It was in moving to UC Berkeley as a graduate student that I learned how essential - and equally important, tenaciously vibrant - Canadian Studies remains across so many institutions in the United States. Attending ACSUS, reading ARCS, writing a brief history of Cal's own Can Studies program, and learning from other scholars pursuing Canadian Studies at different schools - from senior faculty to fellow graduate students - brought home to me the vitality and continued value placed on the study of Canada and Canadians south of the 49th parallel. The form of Canadian Studies at our varied intellectual homes might take different shape, lean on distinct disciplinary strengths, or delve deep into specific subject areas of expertise. But at the core, I never cease to marvel at how much we always have to learn from each other despite - and really, because of - those differences. The very interdisciplinarity of Canadian Studies, I learned at Cal and continue to experience in my current position at Yale University, is the fundamental strength of our shared branch of study, ensuring that we break free from all-too-often siloed conversations within disciplines or departments.

As new MANECCS vice president, I look forward to learning from the many people who have and continue to build this organization. I commit to doing my part in trying to welcome any and all scholars in our regions with long-standing - or new - interests in topics pertaining to Canada. I was so fortunate as an early graduate student to have been invited to join in those conversations. They made a real difference to me personally and in my intellectual development. I hope to do the same for others in our increasingly online and resource-strapped age. Fostering the opportunity for such connections at the next MANECCS conference in Lake Placid (October 2026) will be one of my key priorities. And I am all ears for suggestions about how to do that, particularly if any of you have thoughts on what has - and hasn't - worked in the past.

Above all, however, I wish to conclude by underscoring how grateful I am for this opportunity. I look forward to learning from and working alongside such a great community of scholars.

Sincerely,

Brendan A. Shanahan

(The historian, alas, not the similarly named former NHL hockey player)



# News from our Members

**John Morton**, Saint Joseph's University, has a chapter in the following forthcoming publication: Rachel B. Herrmann and Jessica Choppin Roney, eds., *Claiming Land, Claiming Water: Borders and the People Who Crossed Them in the Early Modern Atlantic* (University of Philadelphia Press, April 2026).

**Thomas Murphy:** At Boston College, my course "Why New England is not Canada: Northern Borderlands to 1867" is off to a good start. It is over-enrolled at the moment. We are focusing on issues such as the contrast between the settlement visions of the Puritans and Champlain, fear of French Canada as a factor in the Salem Witch trials, tensions between New England and Atlantic Canada over the fisheries, and contrasting constitutional developments and indigenous relations. The Revolutionary War and especially, the War of 1812 receive emphasis. There is a major focus on the movement among New Englanders to secede from the American Union during the latter War, including discussions of Massachusetts' overtures toward Nova Scotia about possible association. The course is designed to persuade American students of the separate nature of the two countries and support for repairing the traditional goal of establishing the US and Canada as independent but friendly countries at peace with each other. For this reason the strong enrollment is particularly encouraging."

**Stephanie Bangarth**, King's University College at Western University, along with Jennifer Tunnicliffe, Toronto Metropolitan University, announce the publication of their co-edited book, *Revisiting Human Rights in Canadian History* (University of Manitoba Press, 2025). Through insightful essays, *Revisiting Human Rights in Canadian History* challenges the national myths that celebrate Canada's inclusivity, frame this country as a global human rights leader, and minimize persistent inequalities at home. Contributors to this volume critically examine how Canadian citizens and governments have historically understood and mobilized human rights, as well as who has fought for, benefitted from, and been excluded from them.

# What I learned about Canada and about Teaching in my Senior Citizen Classroom

Robert M. Timko

In the September 2017 issue MANECCS News & Views I wrote about a new adventure in teaching Canadian Studies at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Temple University in Center City Philadelphia. (You can read that article on the Newsletter's page [here](#)). That adventure came to a close in December 2024. During those eight years we engaged in the reading, study and vigorous discussion of twenty-three novels, two collections of short stories, and eight biographies. We covered the history, geography, culture of eight provinces and one city (Toronto) with some discussions of regional identities. We had to make some adjustments during the COVID closedowns which meant switching alternatively from face-to-face live in-class discussions to an asynchronous platform that allowed students to log-in on their schedules to scheduled ZOOM classes to an Hybrid class and eventually back to in-person classes. Classes grew smaller and eventually settled into classes of 20-30 students. For the two terms that the classes were in the asynchronous mode, I made several short four or five minute videos and scheduled live chats where the videos and transcripts of the chats were made available to all members of the class. Students also had access to Discussion Boards where they could post comments and ask questions. I would log-in twice each day to read posts and answer questions. For the most part, In-person, Zoom, and Hybrid classes would run ninety minutes, once a week for ten weeks. There was one exception to this 100 percent focus on Canada. In 2018, during the January term, I offered a course on Leadership Ethics in which, for a part of the course, I led discussions Queen Elizabeth II, Tommy Douglas, and Nellie McClung as examples of ethical leaders.

So why did I choose novels, short stories, and biographies as primary resources in the study of Canada. The first and last courses in this eight year journey provided a framework for this journey. Here I used all the usual resources that one would use in a traditional introduction to any study of a people, their culture, their beliefs and values, their economy, geography, history, and governance. The first course was named Getting to Know Our Northern Neighbor and the final course would be Understanding Canada. The latter would serve as an update and reflection on the first course. The novels would be the archeological, the historical, cultural, and philosophical tools that would be needed to show the nature of what it meant and means historically, culturally, and ideologically to be Canadian in the present. The story of Canada needs to be told and understood from the inside. History is important, cultural values are important, the place in which one's story is told is important. How does a shared identity of a people, of a nation evolve? The best source for answers to these questions may be found in the literature of people. How stories are told may be the key to understanding how a people establish an identity, of understanding how they belong to a particular community or nation. I found that when it comes to literature as a vehicle to understanding, the journey needed to be anchored in sound investigation and discovery. To this end I employed Margaret Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* and some of Northrop Frye's insights that are to be found in his *Divisions on a Ground* and *The Bush Garden*. Additionally, both the physical and the spiritual or psychological landscapes are important. Discussions of narratives in literature needed to be mapped. As characters move about, as journeys take place, as tragedies unfold and spread, as hopes and dreams arise, it becomes necessary to use maps. Both physical and spiritual journeys face challenges. Maps provide perspectives, they show the physical distance and natural challenges to a peoples' hopes and dreams as well as a connection to others, as diverse as they may be. Maps give the reader perspective. Novels, short stories, and biographies provide us with a needed perspective. I include biographies because every story includes something from the storyteller's life, their values and their beliefs. The actions and decisions of political leaders and the creations of nation's or culture's artists are founded in their own stories. This helps us understand differences in identity that matter.

About four to five days before each class session, I would post a draft of my notes, my research and talking points, for that class on the class course site. During in-person and hybrid classes these notes would be projected on a screen behind me in a sufficiently enlarged format making the notes easier to read. Not only would this provide me with an opportunity to talk about why I wrote about any particular theme, idea or hypothesis; it would contribute to an increase in both the number and variety of questions in each class.

Canada is a diverse and inclusive society. Its identity is a matter how they embrace their shared values and beliefs. Their identity is shaped by dialogue and mutual accommodation among its diverse populations. It is important, therefore to make sure that the literature which

is chosen to illustrate “a Canadian identity” is diverse and inclusive. It must represent a fair (equitable) accommodation of differences. Consequently, the literature of discovery, of understanding must be diverse and inclusive. I chose novels which included both male and female voices, both settler and indigenous voices, as well as a broad spectrum of ethnically diverse immigrant voices. That list included Gabrielle Roy, Hugh MacLennan, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Morley Callaghan, Jane Urquhart, Wayson Choy, Joy Kogawa, W. O Mitchell, Lucy Maude Montgomery, Frederick Philip Grove, Austin Clarke, Kim Thúy, Richard Wagamese, Michael Ondaatje, Stephen Leacock, Jocelyn Saucier, Sinclair Ross, Alistair MacLeod. and Miriam Toews.

At the conclusion of this eight year endeavor, I began to question where the heart and soul of Canadian identity and culture may lie. I had doubts about Ottawa, Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, and Halifax. Where was the heart and soul of a Canadian Identity to be found? Then I did a survey of which Canadian icons came from where. What I discovered is that it just may be Winnipeg – a thought which gives me great comfort as I listen to The Guess Who or Bachman --Turner Overdrive while I read the likes of Margaret Laurence, Gabrielle Roy, Marshall McLuhan, or the philosophy of Rupert Clendon Lodge.

Bob Timko is Professor Emeritus at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania and is a lifetime member of MANECCS in recognition of his valuable contributions to the advancement of Canadian Studies in the U.S .



## MANECCS at the MLA

The Modern Language Association hosted its annual convention in Toronto, Ontario, where Dr. Claire-Marie Brisson (President, MANECCS) was able to participate on a panel entitled “Literary Studies in Canada: An (Un)Disciplinary Dialogue,” where scholars from MacEwan University, University of New Brunswick, and McGill University were on a panel with Brisson (Harvard) about the present and future of Canadian Studies in literature programs. The exchange was followed by a visit to Canadian publishers in the convention hall. It was an engaging and exciting exchange - one that will certainly be continued during our biannual meeting in Lake Placid this fall.



# MANECCS Call for Papers Building Bridges / Construire des ponts

22-24 October 2026 Lake Placid, NY

[Abstract Submission Link](#)

[Link to full conference information here.](#)

Conference Languages: English with select French panels

Conference Email: [maneccscanadianstudies@gmail.com](mailto:maneccscanadianstudies@gmail.com) Instagram: @maneccs

Canada and the United States share one of the world's closest, most complex relationships - marked by cooperation and competition, friendship and rivalry, common projects and contested borders. The 2026 MANECCS Conference invites scholars, students, and practitioners to reflect on these lines of contact, the cycles of collaboration and conflict, and the cultural, political, and economic bridges that connect the two countries. The conference will feature the first French-language panel(s) in MANECCS history, expanding opportunities for bilingual and Francophone dialogue. A limited number of hybrid presentation slots will be available. This is not a hybrid conference, and these panels are to ensure equity for early career scholars and students who would like to present their work, but are unable to attend in-person due to financial constraints. Formats accepted: Individual papers, panels, roundtables, workshops, student posters, and creative/public-facing proposals.

Deadline for submissions: March 31, 2026

Submission platform: <https://tinyurl.com/maneccs>

Proposals should include:

- Title of paper/panel/workshop
- Abstract (250 words)
- Short bio (150 words) for each participant
- Contact information



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