

The background of the entire page is a photograph of various autumn leaves scattered on a dark, weathered wooden plank surface. The leaves show a range of colors from deep reds and oranges to yellows and browns. A large, bright yellow-orange leaf is prominent in the upper left, while a smaller red leaf is to its right. In the bottom right corner, another leaf with yellow, orange, and red hues is visible. The wooden planks run vertically, adding a rustic texture to the composition.

# V\_MLTLC

Annual Report  
2021-2022

If we want to grow as teachers...we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives. Risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.

~ Parker Palmer,  
*The Courage to Teach*

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# Executive Director's Note

The V\_MLTLC has been transformative for individuals, communities, and institutional cultures; this report attempts to share some of the profound impact this virtual, integrated, community-driven hub has shaped teaching and learning at Maple League universities and beyond. However, any authentic discussion of impact exposes tensions between what we can measure and what is intangible – and yet profoundly meaningful. Terms like “data-driven innovation,” “benchmarking,” and “academic analytics” are increasingly prevalent in discussions about what and how students learn. Ostensibly, performance metrics can indicate the efficacy of particular teaching strategies, contribute to a culture of accountability and fiscal responsibility, or inform evidence-based policies designed to improve results.

What happens, however, when we cannot measure the impact of our efforts? What happens when we do not have adequate tools to meaningfully assess how and what we learn? And, most dangerously, what happens when we use faulty metrics to make decisions about how to fund projects, programs, or institutions?

We must ask ourselves if we can truly measure the process of encountering, internalizing, and generating new knowledge(s).

We can, and have, measured transactional elements, like the acquisition of skills or content, engagement, and participation, which we assess regularly. More elusive to capture, though, is the process of transformative learning that shapes us as people, informs our views of the world, or engages us in the re-

sponsibilities of global citizenship.

The V\_MLTLC represents a commitment to facilitate intellectual and personal growth for members of our diverse learning communities. Although we cannot see the results on a Likert scale or on a data graph, we must be guided by the values that drive our mission and vision of higher education. Terms like “student learning outcomes,” “core competencies,” and “transformative learning” are useful but we should be mindful of buzzwords that can become hollow and inauthentic with over-use and limited understanding. The VMLTLC takes a curiosity-based approach that interrogates concepts even as we deploy them; when we measure impact, we use multiple data points with nuance responsibly while also recognizing the limitations of what we can measure.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, in *Prometheus Unbound*, writes: “The deep truth is imageless.” This is both an exhortation of hope and humility. For Shelley, acknowledging that something is unknowable doesn’t make the pursuit of knowledge futile; rather, the value lies in the struggle itself, and is what makes us “good, great and joyous, beautiful and free”. The enduring value of the V\_MLTLC is that the work that is ongoing is often invisible but profoundly purposeful.





## Faculty Excellence Lead's Note

I have had a strong personal connection to the V\_MLTLC since long before I joined the team at the Maple League. When, a few weeks into a fellowship at Mount Allison, the pandemic hit and I returned to Toronto for 14 months of online teaching from my small apartment, it was through the Maple League Book Club and the V\_MLTLC that I kept loneliness at bay and felt like a part of a pedagogic community.

In our most recent Book Club, *The Slow Professor's* authors Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber talk about the increasing isolation in the academy stemming from an ever-growing workload and a pressure to perform. I have experienced this first-hand as a contract instructor who rarely has the opportunity to stick around on campus when my class has finished. I also see it as a part of the assumptions about building an academic career, where it's expected that you would choose to uproot your life and leave your community far behind in order to do your graduate studies—and then again for a postdoctoral placement, and again when a full-time position is available.

While I'm very proud of the pedagogical innovation and experimentation that I know faculty have undertaken thanks to Better Together, the Book Club, and all our other programming in the past year, I'm even more proud of the connections we've built, and the many ways that we've helped Maple League faculty, staff, and students to battle the epidemic of loneliness that crosses all our campuses, and the rest of the country.

~ Neil Silcox, Faculty Excellence Lead





## Executive Summary

For the past decade, Acadia, Bishop's, Mount Allison, and St. Francis Xavier Universities have been working together to bring an extraordinary undergraduate experience to the Atlantic region, first under the moniker U4, and since 2016 as The Maple League. Located in small, rural communities across three provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec), and with primarily residential campuses, the Maple League supports a model of inclusivity and student-centred education.

The Virtual Maple League Teaching and Learning Centre (V\_MLTLC) was established in June 2020 with support from the McConnell Foundation. The enduring mission is to support faculty to continually improve their scholarly teaching, educational leadership, and critical reflective practice. While the goal is to foster great teaching, we embrace a holistic understanding of the educator and recognize that all aspects of faculty life (research, service, collegiality, and leisure) contribute to transformative learning experiences for us all.

Guided by the question, “what can we do to-

gether that we cannot do on our own?” we strive to create new and stronger connections across and between campuses and communities.

Our programming in 2021/2022, which aimed to foster deep, honest, and thoughtful conversation, included **204 hours of live programming** with **511 unique participants** from **98 Colleges, Universities and other institutions**—totalling over **1700 live interactions**.

At the forefront of all of the online spaces we create, from hour-long workshops through Better Together, to Book Clubs (spanning each term), to the Maple League Micro-Certificate in Teaching and Learning (across the whole academic year), is a priority for healthy, joyful, hopeful communities.

We have heard from our community members about the immense value of these sessions, and that they have been able to move from talk into action, making material improvements to the lives and learning of students and colleagues across all four campuses.

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# Better Together

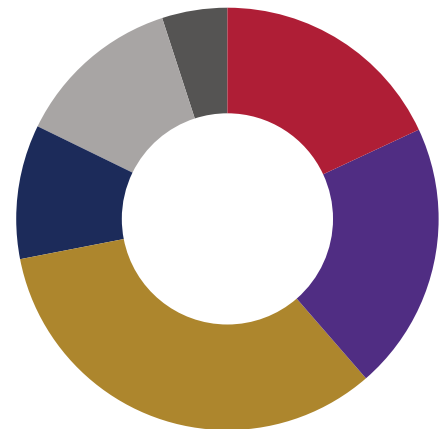
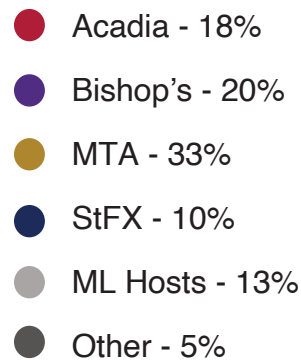
Better Together moved from twice-a-week in 2020/2021 to a seasons model in 2021/2022, where each term a season of four to seven sessions are hosted every other week. By distilling Better Together down, we were able to ensure we were presenting only the highest-quality sessions, and making the best use of time. While this past year saw many fewer sessions than the year before, we saw only a small decrease in live interactions, while doubling the total number of unique participants. More than a quarter of participants attended multiple Better Together sessions, with 10% attending three or more over the course of the year.

**17 Sessions | 38 Presenters | 94 Outside Institutions**  
**438 Unique Participants | 672 Live Interactions**

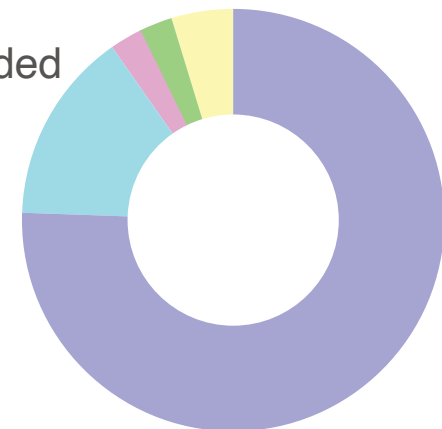
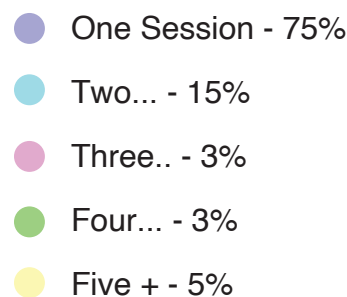
Being part of the Venezuelan diaspora, I am very grateful for the exposure that the Better Together sessions gave to my work as a dedicated and passionate educator. As family, friends and colleagues, both in Venezuela and spread around the world, reached out to me, I realized the importance of telling our stories. Sharing our personal and professional achievements reminds us of the contributions we make to society regardless of where we are in the world and give us hope for a better tomorrow. Thank you Maple League for your support!

~Juan Carlos López, Acadia University

## Presenters in Better Together



## Better Together participants attended



# Maple League Hosts

A special subset of our Better Together series, **Maple League Hosts** brings in leaders in teaching and learning from outside the Maple League to share their insights and expertise. These are among our most popular sessions, and often draw registrants from across Canada and around the World.



**Dr. Lisa Dickson**  
Professor of @ UNBC  
3M National Teaching  
Fellow



**Dr. David Hornsby**  
Associate Vice-President  
(Teaching & Learning) @  
Carleton University



**Dr. Natasha Kenny**  
Senior Director, Taylor  
Institute for Teaching and  
Learning @ University of  
Calgary



**Dr. Shannon Murray**  
Professor @ UPEI &  
2022 STLHE Lifetime  
Achievement Award Winner



**Dr. Jessica Riddell**  
Professor @ BU,  
E.D @ the Maple League, &  
Keynote speaker @ 2022  
STLHE & EuroSOTL  
conferences



**Dr. Gavan Watson**  
Associate Vice President,  
Teaching and Learning @  
Memorial University of  
Newfoundland

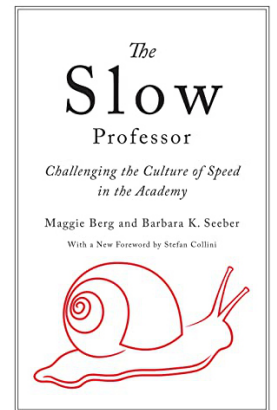
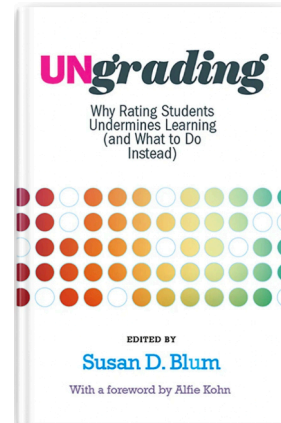
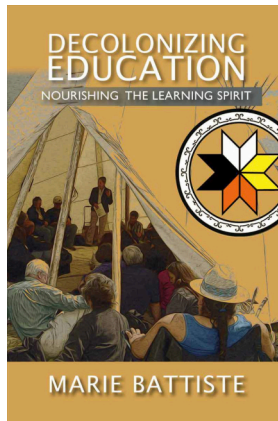
# Maple League Book Club

The Maple League Book Club has been a source of ongoing, long-term reflection and conversation for over two years. This year, we established a new pattern for book clubs which we will be repeating in the coming year: first a fall book which directly addresses issues of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (*Decolonizing Education* by Marie Battiste), then in the winter reading a book which explores a specific aspect of Teaching & Learning more broadly (*Ungrading* by Susan D. Bloom), and finally a summer book club which explores the challenges of academic life more broadly (*The Slow Professor*, by Berg & Seeber).

**62 Book Club Meetings**

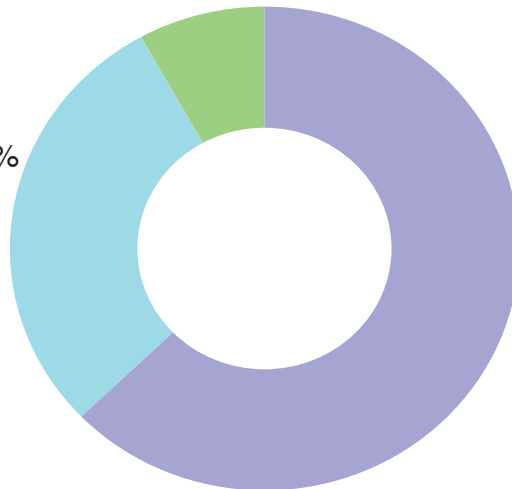
**302 Total Registrants**

**174 Unique Participants**



Book Club participants took part in

- One - 63%
- Two - 29%
- All Three - 8%



We've all been missing the opportunity to talk casually with peers about our work, experiences, teaching, beliefs, and wishes for improving the academy. The book club is a safe space for opinions and for sharing-while-wondering. These brief connections and free-ranging conversations are more fulfilling, exciting, and meaningful than I can express.

~Anonymous Book Club Participant

# Micro-Certificate in Teaching & Learning

This year we piloted a new initiative: the Maple League Micro-Certificate in Teaching and Learning, a 10-month program of mentorship, reflection, and workshops offered for free to faculty from within the Maple League. The initial cohort of 10 participants undertook over 120 hours of workshops, ateliers, and mentorship meetings in addition to attending and reflecting on Better Together Sessions and Book Clubs. Combined, the 21/22 Micro-Certificate Cohort wrote over 60,000 words of critical self reflection.



Ashley Doyle,  
Acadia



Felicia Dunbar,  
St. Francis Xavier



Matthew Dunleavy,  
Maple League



Amatoritsero Ede,  
Mount Allison



Heather Lawford,  
Bishop's



Andrew Nurse,  
Mount Allison



Linda Pearse,  
Mount Allison



Jessica Riddell,  
Bishop's



Jamie Sedgwick,  
Acadia



Donna Trembinksi,  
St. Francis Xavier

I could not recommend the Micro-Certificate more. It will challenge you, engage you, and provide a community of caring educators who support the goal of teaching and learning. Your teaching will not be the same when you are done.

~Dr. Andrew Nurse – Associate Professor, Mount Allison

# Additional Initiatives

## Ungrading Workshop

After the Book Club's *Ungrading* (Winter 2022), a number of participants asked if the Maple League could hold a hands-on workshop to explore the practical realities of implementing ungrading. In this two-hour workshop 23 faculty were divided into their disciplinary fields to address the unique possibilities and challenges that come with engaging with ungrading in their classrooms.

## Hope University Podcast and Maple League Award Winners

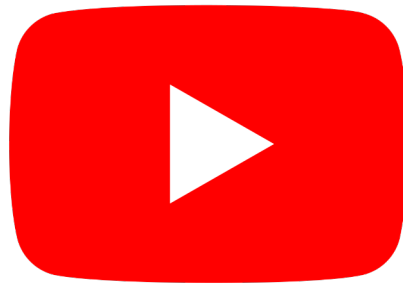
In collaboration with Jessica Riddell's Jarislowsky Chair of Undergraduate Teaching Excellence, the Hope University Podcast created a special series of episodes celebrating Award-Winning teachers from across the Maple League. This series of seven interviews featured winners of institutional teaching awards, as well as the AAU Regional Awards for Excellence in Teaching and Educational Leadership and the 3M National Teaching Fellowship; together they explored their vision for the future of university education.





## YouTube

Our [YouTube channel](#) offers us a low-effort pathway to asynchronous engagement with Better Together and Maple League Hosts sessions. In the 21/22 year videos on our channel had over 6,200 views—an increase of 66% over the previous year.



**6200+  
YouTube  
Views  
In 21/22**



# Outside Universities @ V\_MLTLC Events

|                                   |                                                |                                         |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Arkham Bryan College              | Assiniboine Community College                  | Aurora University                       |
| Brock University                  | Bryant University                              | Cape Breton University                  |
| Carleton University               | Champlain College - Lennoxville                | Concordia University                    |
| Dalhousie University              | Dartmouth College                              | Ferris State University (Michigan)      |
| Flinders University (Australia)   | Georgian College                               | Imperial Valley College (California)    |
| Indiana University                | Indira Gandhi National Open University (India) | International Kinesiology College       |
| King's University College         | Macewan University                             | McGill University                       |
| McMaster University               | Memorial University                            | Mount Royal University                  |
| Mount Saint Vincent University    | Namal University (Pakistan)                    | Nova Scotia Community College           |
| NSCAD University                  | Ontario Tech University                        | Queen's University                      |
| Red River College Polytechnic     | Roanoke College                                | Robertson College                       |
| Royal Roads University            | Saint Mary's University                        | San Diego State University              |
| Saskatchewan Polytechnic          | Selkirk College                                | Seneca College                          |
| Simon Fraser University           | St. George's University                        | Temple University (Pennsylvania)        |
| The Pennsylvania State University | Toronto Metropolitan University                | Touro University (California)           |
| University of Alabama             | University of Alaska, Anchorage                | University of Prince Edward Island      |
| University College, Los Angeles   | University of Alberta                          | University of Bedfordshire (UK)         |
| University of British Columbia    | University of Calgary                          | University of California, Davis         |
| University of Guelph              | University of Lethbridge                       | University of London (UK)               |
| University of New Brunswick       | University of New Mexico                       | University of Northern British Columbia |
| University of Ottawa              | University of the Fraser Valley                | University of Toronto                   |
| University of Victoria            | University of Waterloo                         | University of Toronto, Mississauga      |
| Western University                | Wilfrid Laurier University                     | York University                         |
|                                   | Yorkville University                           |                                         |

## Other Institutions @ V\_MLTLC Events

|                                         |                                                      |                                          |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Ace Inc.                                | ACENET                                               | Birds Canada                             |
| Catalyst IT                             | CCDS Inc.                                            | CEWIL Canada                             |
| CityStudio Global                       | CNC                                                  | FESA                                     |
| Government of Canada                    | Government of Nova Scotia                            | Halifax Water                            |
| Higher Education Strategy<br>Associates | Kelly Services                                       | Little Projects Company Limited          |
| M&K Media                               | Newfoundland and Labrador<br>English School District | Niwa Design Co.                          |
| Novagen Consulting Inc.                 | Outlier.org                                          | Owens Art Gallery                        |
| Pine Hill                               | Polar Knowledge Canada                               | Post-Secondary Accessibility<br>Services |
| ProEdit Japan, Inc.                     | Terranaut Club                                       | VCLA                                     |
| Stratford Festival Education            | YGT Solutions                                        | York Regional School District            |



# 2021/2022 Better Together Seasons

|        |                                                                                       |                                                                                                        |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SUMMER | <b>Maple League Hosts – Critical Hope:</b><br>Reflection to Practice                  | Dr. Shannon Murray<br>Dr. Lisa Dickson<br>Dr. Jessica Riddell                                          |
|        | <b>Early Career Research &amp; Teaching:</b><br>the Good, the Bad and the Ugly        | Dr. Jasmeen Sidhu<br>Matthew Dunleavy<br>Neil Silcox                                                   |
|        | <b>Reaching People Via Headphones:</b><br>Podcasting in the Classroom                 | Dr. Lisa Dawn Hamilton<br>Matt Tunnaclyffe                                                             |
|        | <b>From Research to Classroom</b>                                                     | Dr. Linda Pearse<br>Emma Cameron<br>Emma Yee<br>Kiran Steele                                           |
| FALL   | <b>Educating for Compassionate Communities of Interdependence</b>                     | Dr. Mary Sweatman<br>Dr. Gabrielle Donnelly<br>Dr. John Colton                                         |
|        | <b>Goofball Pedagogy:</b> Authentic Teaching for Authentic Learning                   | Dr. Courtney Plante                                                                                    |
|        | <b>EDID in Teaching &amp; Learning</b>                                                | Dr. Toni Roberts                                                                                       |
|        | <b>Innovative Engagement:</b> 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Lecturing Tools & Strategies   | Dr. Donna Trembinski<br>Dr. Russell Wyeth                                                              |
|        | <b>Maple League Hosts – Socially Just Pedagogies &amp; the Future of Universities</b> | Dr. David Hornsby,<br>Associate Vice-President (Teaching & Learning),<br>Carleton University           |
|        | <b>Accessibility as Collaborative Practice</b>                                        | Dr. Erin Austen<br>Dr. Cynthia Bruce<br>Dr. Jane Dryden<br>Dr. Mary-Ellen Donnan<br>Dr. Katie Aubrecht |

# 2021/2022 Better Together Seasons

## (Cont'd)

|        |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WINTER | <b>Students as Innovators, Collaborators, and Higher-Education Change-Makers</b>       | Emma Trumble<br>Donnovan Faraoni<br>Shannon Goguen                                                                                                      |
|        | <b>Maple League Hosts – COVID, Networks, and Significant Conversations</b>             | Dr. Natasha Kenny<br><br>Senior Director, Taylor Institute for Teaching & Learning, University of Calgary                                               |
|        | <b>Hope University: Designing Resilient Systems so Individuals Don't Have to Be</b>    | Dr. Jessica Riddell                                                                                                                                     |
|        | <b>Maple League Hosts – Ethical Principles for University Teaching: 25 Years Later</b> | Dr. Gavan Watson<br><br>Associate Vice-Principle, Teaching & Learning, Memorial University of Newfoundland                                              |
|        | <b>Cornucopia of Creativity</b>                                                        | Toni Roberts<br>Dr. Elizabeth Wells                                                                                                                     |
|        | <b>Slowly but Surely: Inclusiveness in STEM and Beyond</b>                             | Dr. Juan Carlos López                                                                                                                                   |
|        | <b>Maple League Pedagogy Panel: Award-Winning Educators from Across the ML</b>         | Dr. Jessica Riddell<br>Dr. Susie Andrews<br>Dr. Andrew Wilson<br>Dr. Kailin Wright<br>Dr. Juan-Carlos López<br>Dr. Heather Lawford<br>Dr. Mary Sweatman |