



2023-2024 YEAR-IN-REVIEW

NOTE FROM QRIITICAL CO-LEADS:

In 2023, we founded and launched OriTical: queer + trans research hub to serve as a connector and intellectual hub for Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) faculty, staff, students, and the broader community at Mount Royal University. OriTical is a university-wide and interdisciplinary initiative that aims to bring together 2SLGBTQIA+ people from across campus and the broader community.

Building OriTical was motivated by a variety of factors at MRU, including a 2022 hiring year which saw 60 new faculty join the campus community. Many new queer and trans studies scholars from a wide range of disciplines joined MRU at this time, and it became clear that there was a need for a pathway to connect and collaborate. While MRU hosts a variety of student-focused spaces, 2SLGBTQIA+ faculty members as a group have not been collectively engaged in relation to their research, teaching, or community-based activities. MRU also lacked a space to facilitate connections between 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff, faculty and the broader community. We saw this gap in support for 2SLGBTQIA+ research, teaching, and community-engagement as an opportunity to create something new and innovative at MRU.

We aim for the OriTical hub to be a space where people come together to build intellectual communities, solidarities, and a sense of belonging. We see our work with the hub as supporting and uplifting research, teaching, and community mobilizations that challenge cisgender and heterosexual norms from an intersectional lens. We are explicitly committed to decolonial, anti-racist, anti-oppressive engagements with queer and trans studies, and our work aims to facilitate social change.

Our first year was focused on building visibility and establishing the hub on campus. Through conversations in Summer 2024, we secured a home-base in the Trico Changemaker Studio, where we have office space and are able to hold meetings and host community members and events. In Fall 2024 we gained university-wide recognition as an official “Research Collaboration”. We also wrote a lot of grants, sought internal and external funding for a range of faculty, student, and community-focused events that we highlight in this report. By all measures, OriTical had a banner first year!

Moving forward, our hope is for OriTical to continue to grow as a connecting place for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within and outside of the university, to support initiatives that aim to foster solidarity and

community, and to establish MRU as a key site for queer and trans studies locally, provincially, and nationally. In order to continue the work of OriTical, we are seeking consistent and sustainable funding which will increase our abilities to expand our programming, to facilitate longer-term initiatives geared at structural and social change, to redistribute resources to enable a broader array of 2SLGBTQIA+ student, staff, faculty, and community initiatives, and create time to continue to build and sustain meaningful relationships.

The success of OriTical would not be possible without our Core Faculty team, Jill Thompson, Gloria Perez-Rivera, Gio Dolcecore, and Lisa Gasson-Gardner, and our student assistants, Mel Perez-Morales, Zachary Barnes and Jules De Guzman.

We are beginning to dream about our initiatives for the 2024-25 academic year and we can't wait to continue what we've started!

Stay OriTical,

Corinne L. Mason & Celeste Pang, Co-Leads



Celeste Pang (she/they)



Corinne L. Mason (they/them)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Mount Royal University is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi and the people of Treaty 7, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai; and the Tsuut'ina, and the Îyârhe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, and the traditional Blackfoot name of this place is Mohkinstsis, which we now call the City of Calgary. The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation.

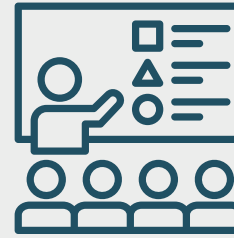
The OriTical Hub recognizes that decolonial work must include respecting Indigenous sovereignty, supporting Land Back movements, and unsettling the colonial sex, gender, sexuality binary imposed on Turtle Island.



MOHKINSTIS

CRITICAL'S MISSION IS TO:

- To be a place where queer and trans scholarship and teaching is celebrated and recognized as essential to the broader framework of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility at MRU;
- To help create a campus climate at MRU where gender and sexual diversity is not only accepted but celebrated;
- To drive 2SLGBTQIA+ student success through belonging, identity affirmation, and a climate of acceptance and celebration, especially for those most marginalized within the community 2SLGBTQIA+ Black, Indigenous, racially minoritized, disabled, and neurodivergent;
- To create mentorship, networking, and training opportunities for students and prospective students at MRU and through our connection to community organizations, agencies, and business



ACADEMIC & CAMPUS LIFE

Lectures, workshops, and dialogues
Create, sustain and amplify research, teaching and community-engagement
Social activities and solidarity events



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS & PUBLIC OUTREACH

Cultivate connections with community organizations and leaders
Act as a resource for public and media inquiries
Facilitating 2SLGBTQIA+ MRU alumni connections



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Opportunities for mentorship and networking with faculty and community practitioners
Create and maintain annual student awards (currently seeking funding support)
Add to culture of 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and belonging

CRITICAL CORE FACULTY (2023-2026)

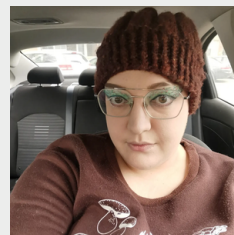


Corinne L. Mason, Gio Dolcecore, Celeste Pang, Gloria Pérez-Rivera, Lisa Gasson-Gardner, Jill Thompson

STEERING COMMITTEE



Sexuality and Gender
Expression Acceptance Club



Mason Weakley
See Change Collective



SAMRU Pride Centre



Calgary Outlink

IMPACT



engagement events



20+

2SLGBTQIA+ student works showcased



1000+

students community members, staff, and faculty reached



300+

General Members

ALBERTA TRANS STUDIES TEACH-IN

On January 31st, premier Danielle Smith announced a slew of new gender and sexuality policies focused on education, healthcare, and sport. Under the guise of “preserving choice” for kids and “extending care” for adults, these policies will directly and negatively impact children, youth, and our students in the immediate future.

In immediate response to this announcement, OriTical organized an online teach-in featuring 8 trans studies scholars and experts from Alberta who engaged with attendees to dispel mis/disinformation, explore the impact of the proposed policies on communities, and to explain the larger context in which these proposed policies emerged.

More than 850 members of the general public from across the country attended.

The Alberta Trans Studies Teach-In was supported by the MRU Faculty of Arts, MRU Department of Child Studies and Social Work, the MRFA (Mount Royal Faculty Association), the 2SLGBTQ+ Health Hub, and the J-Series (Athabasca University).

“

[...] thank you for all the work you are doing to support trans youth in the Province of Alberta. I had the opportunity to attend the Alberta Trans Studies Teach-In last night and was incredibly moved and inspired by the work being done within the trans studies community. Collectively working together to make this province a better place is incredibly important and inspiring considering the current political rhetoric in Alberta.

- *Community member*

”

“

Thank you for such a thorough and informative speaker series last night! I look forward to many more. And thank you for all of the powerful work you are doing for the community!

- *Community member*

”




QRITICAL
queer + trans research hub

ALBERTA TRANS STUDIES TEACH-IN

RESPONDING TO
ALBERTA'S NEW
ANTI-TRANS
POLICIES

 TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH

 6-7:30PM MST

 ZOOM WEBINAR

JAMIE ANDERSON

- PhD Candidate, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

FLORENCE ASHLEY

- Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Alberta

EVA LAGARE,

- Registered Nurse, MRU Alumni

ZACK MARSHALL

- Associate Professor, Department of Community Health Sciences, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary

TOBIAS WIGGINS

- Assistant Professor, Women's & Gender Studies, Athabasca University

JJ WRIGHT

- Assistant Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies, MacEwan University

REGISTER TO RECEIVE
THE ZOOM LINK

ASL IS SUPPORTED BY THE
2SLGBTQ+ HEALTH HUB



HISTORY WITH A DRAG QUEEN: NAZI PUNKS F*CK OFF

On February 8th, this event drew more than 200 community members and MRU students, faculty, and leadership for an evening of learning with Karla Marx (developed and embodied by Dr. Victoria Bucholtz, MRU faculty). Known for her comedic brilliance, riveting historical analysis, and cheeky approach to educating through entertainment, Karla Marx and company used the art drag to lead the audience on a reflective journey through histories of facism and the contemporary rise of global fascist politics.

Paying particular attention to questions of gender and sexuality, Marx invited the audience to think critically and carefully about the role that “sexual anxiety” is playing in our current social and political landscape. In the context of growing and loudening anti-2SLGBTQIA+ movements in Canada- often under the guise of “protecting the children”- this teach-in offered offered audience members a chance to better understand the functioning of “sexual anxiety” in right-wing movements while enjoying drag numbers by Karla Marx, Smokey Waters, Rip Em, and Ruffen Tumble.

The Reflector coverage: [RECAP: History with a Drag Queen makes waves at MRU](#), by Bella Coco.


This event was supported by the Faculty of Arts Endeavour Fund.



THE TEA: CRITICAL DIALOGUES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING


“The Tea” dialogues are an opportunity for MRU faculty and staff to informally discuss teaching and learning experiences and strategies. In January 2024 we held one dialogue focused on “Teaching Gender and Sexual Diversity” in which we discussed how the rise in “anti-gender ideologies” and anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate movements were affecting our classroom dynamics, pedagogical approaches, and approaches to supporting students.

In February 2024 we convened “Holding Space”, a gathering for 2SLGBTQIA+ staff, faculty and allies to digest and discuss the impacts of new anti-trans policy announcements on campus life.



**Topic: Teaching Gender and Sexual Diversity
in Hostile Climates**

January 5, 2024
2pm
Trico Changemaker Studio
EB 3013
All faculty welcome!



QRITICAL
queer + trans research hub

THE QUEER AGENDA

What's on your queer agenda for 2024? Held on March 1st, this community showcase featured panelists from MRU and the broader community who shared what was on their queer agendas for 2024. Showcasing advocates, community organizers, MRU students, this event brought together 'town and gown' for an afternoon of sharing, strategizing, and queer joy! More than 70 members of the community, students, faculty, staff, and administration attended this event.



This event, overall, was genuine in being inclusive towards the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Not only that, but they were also very inclusive of specifically the BIPOC 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Being an Asian, bisexual, cis-woman myself, I felt that this event fostered a warm and welcoming environment, where I genuinely felt safe, as well as a sense of belonging.

- Hannah Buan, MRU student



“OriTical Ideas” Faculty and Student Leader Roundtable, from left to right: moderated by Celeste Pang, featuring Gloria Sesay (SAMRU Pride Centre), Gloria Pérez-Rivera, Gio Dolcecore, Jill Thompson, Lisa Gasson-Gardner, and Sydney Morrisette (SAGA Sexuality and Gender Acceptance Club).





▲ *QriTical Advocacy* Community Roundtable, from left to right: moderated by Jill Thompson, featuring Mason Weakley (See Change Collective), Amanda Gómez (Lavendar Club), Boban Stojanovic (Centre for Newcomers), and Brie Vuong (Calgary Outlink).



▲ *QriTical Representations* Media Roundtable featuring, left to right: Dr. Gabriela Perdomo Paez, Ethan Seaborn, Bella Coco, and Angie Therrien. Moderated by Gloria Pérez-Rivera.

CRITICAL LAUNCH

Following The Queer Agenda on March 1st, we officially launched the OriTical hub! Hosted at the Trico Changemaker Studio, the launch party featured MRU's very own Karla Marx (MRU faculty member Victoria Bucholtz) with fellow performers King Smokey Waters, Dayna Hart (MRU alumni), and Doggi Chow, and DJ Mollyfi.

OriTical is the first university-wide research hub that focuses on queer and trans studies and the first 2SLGBTQIA+ initiative that brings together faculty, students, staff, administration, and the community to facilitate and celebrate research, teaching, and community engagement.

Over 50 community members, students, faculty, staff, administration, and alumni attended the launch to celebrate this milestone at MRU and to connect with 2SLGBTQIA+ folks on campus.

“

Just wanted to say learning about OriTical made my heart sing louder this morning. Thanks for all you do and being you!
-MRU faculty member

”

Our Community coverage: [OriTical research hub helps foster connection, belonging for MRU's 2SLGBTQIA+ community](#), by Em Medland- Marchen

This event was co-sponsored by the Faculty of Arts Endeavour Fund and the Faculty of Business & Communication Studies Research Events Fund



QUEER JOY! ART + ACCOUNTABILITY ON ALBERTA POST-SECONDARY CAMPUSES

The Queer Joy! project was a collaboration among Mount Royal University, MacEwan University, Norquest College, and Olds College.

Recognizing a need to build solidarity among post-secondary 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff, and faculty, we got together to plan a multi-campus arts event focused on queer joy. Held on March 13th 2024, this event brought together more than 70 students, staff, faculty, and alumni from across our four campuses for a collective arts engagement session facilitated by social artist Melanie Schambach.

The Queer Joy! digital mural contains artworks from 53 2SLGBTQIA+ participants. This image was created by, with, and for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Our hope is that it resonates and sparks joy among those who encounter it, and that by dwelling on different aspects of the images viewers can reflect on the importance of queer joy in our lives and what queer joy can look like.





Queer Joy! Arts + Accountability on Alberta Post-Secondary Campuses participants (2024). Queer Joy! [Digital Mural]. Facilitated by Melanie Schambach.

This project was supported and funded by Egale Canada & Women's and Gender Equality Canada.

LET'S GET CRITICAL! STUDENT COLLOQUIUM

This inaugural student colloquium showcased the research, creative, and community organizing work of 2SLGBTQIA+ MRU students. Held on April 5th in alignment with MRU Research and Scholarship Days, the student colloquium brought together more than 50 students, their families, communities, and MRU faculty, staff, and administration in a half-day of learning and celebration.

The event included two interdisciplinary student panels and a digital display of creative works. Twenty MRU students from faculties across MRU showcase their work in this event, including from the Faculty of Arts (Psychology Women & Gender Studies, Criminal Justice), the Faculty of Business and Communication Studies (Journalism), and the Faculty of Community Health & Education (Social Work, Child Studies).

Student Panels: Students presented work ranging from "Transparentc" a proposed support group for parents of transgender youth to an overview of local resources for people participating in survival sex to personal essays addressing coming out, religion, and hunger.

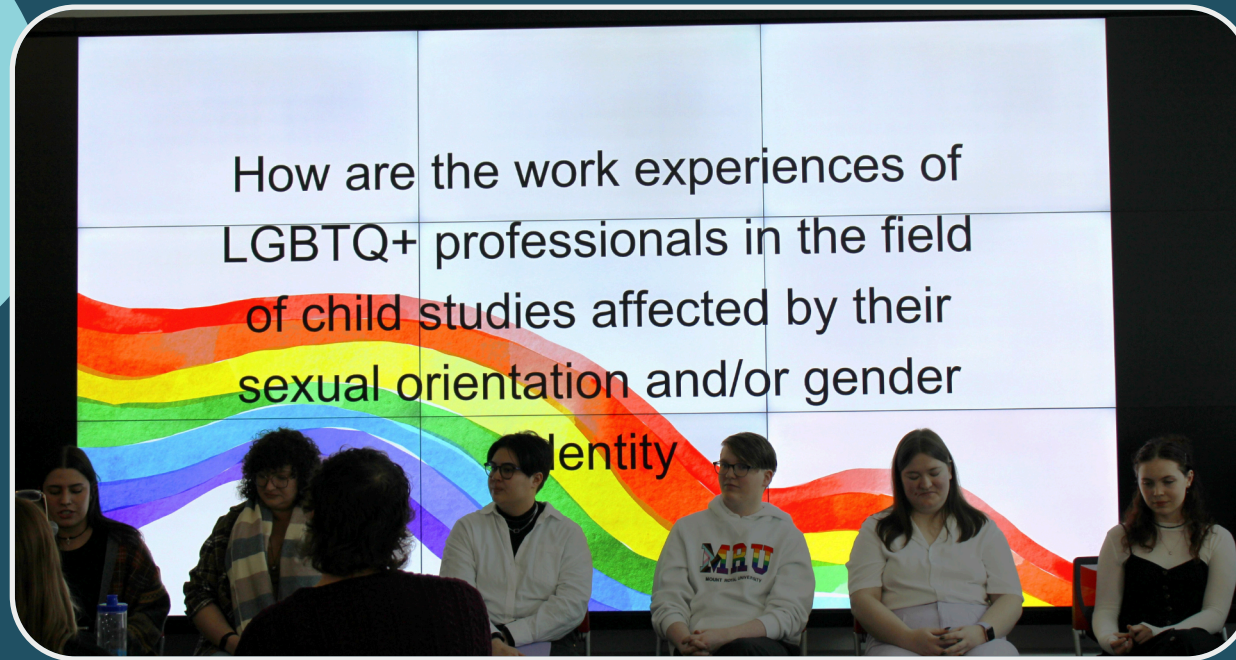
The Calgary Journal profile: [Queer joy: new MRU research hub builds connections within the LGBTQ+ community](#), by Lucy Beauregard

Digital Display were submitted by: Anastasia Holy, Emily Osgood, Emma Radford, Liv Dunow, Michailya Pollock, Willa Marshall



▲ Panel Participants, pictured left to right: Sarah S, Ashton Bennett, J.R. Alsip. Not pictured: Willa Marshall, Bella Coco, moderator Eva Legare.

Panel participants, pictured left to right: Madison Carrizo, Stephanie Allen, Meaghan Mah, Sarah Lappin, Maddox Nelles, and Sophia Zannis. Not pictured: Mason Weakley, Paige Anweiler, moderator Mel Perez-Morales.



“

Let's Get Critical was an incredible experience, fostering a safe space where like-minded individuals gathered to engage in meaningful discussions. Hearing students share their research and personal insights was greatly inspiring. Vivek Shraya's presence as a guest speaker was additionally moving, adding an enriching aspect to the event!

- Emma Radford, MRU student presenter

”

Multi-disciplinary artist and scholar Vivek Shraya served as the keynote speaker which was moderated by MRU alum Sammy Ansari.



“

Thank you so much for the opportunity! I have been telling people it is for sure one of the highlights of my academic career!

- MRU student

”

This event was supported by the EDI Opportunity Fund.



QRITICAL
queer + trans research hub

OUR FUNDERS

ARTS ENDEAVOUR FUND

EDI OPPORTUNITY FUND

FACULTY OF BUSINESS & COMMUNICATION
STUDIES RESEARCH EVENTS FUND

EGALE CANADA & WOMEN'S AND GENDER
EQUALITY CANADA

MRU FACULTY OF ARTS

MRU DEPARTMENT OF CHILD STUDIES AND
SOCIAL WORK

2SLGBTQ+ HEALTH HUB

MRFA (MOUNT ROYAL FACULTY
ASSOCIATION)

criticalhub.com

 @critical.mru