

# Agenda



**March 14, 2026 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.**

McGill Community for Lifelong Learning  
680 rue Sherbrooke Ouest, Montreal, QC  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 1041



## AI in Community History & Heritage

**Welcome and opening remarks – 1:00 p.m**

Dwane Wilkin, Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN)

### Case study

**Leveraging AI in historical research – 1:05 p.m.**

Jon Stewart, owner, Calumet Media, and volunteer with Pontiac Regional Archives

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be used as a practical and responsible tool for historical research, as demonstrated by the Pontiac at War project. Developed in collaboration with the Pontiac Archives, this project draws on more than 3,000 pages of First World War–era coverage from The Equity newspaper, capturing the experiences of local English- and French-speaking residents as they navigated a rapidly changing world.

Leveraging modern research tools and AI-assisted workflows enabled our small team to organize, analyze, and surface themes across decades of reporting while still respecting the integrity of the original sources. What's more, these technologies help identify patterns, timelines, and connections that might otherwise have remained hidden, showing how generative AI in particular can be used to present local history in ways that are more engaging and accessible, particularly for younger generations..

From document analysis to content generation, this project shows how AI can support historians, archivists, journalists, and educators to extend our ability to explore, preserve, and share our collective history.

### Workshop

**Managing audio records with AI – 1:45 p.m.**

Dr. Richard Arias-Hernandez, associate professor of teaching, the School of Information, University of British Columbia (UBC) and academic director, Vantage College.

Historical societies, museums and archival organizations in Quebec hold a sizeable number of audio recordings in their collections. Some contain information gathered during oral-history projects, others may be administrative in nature. Many groups have also taken steps to preserve older analog records by transferring them to digital format, and frequently use digital media to engage with local communities. This rapidly growing volume of digital media presents a challenge for archivists.

This workshop introduces and reviews AI tools used for processing and managing digital audio records. It introduces a framework for using AI applications to process audio records, case studies, as well as critical assessments of the limitations of using AI in this context.

Participants will be invited to respond to prompts, interact with various AI tools, and share their own experiences and concerns regarding the use of AI for processing audio records held in community archives or records-management offices. The materials for this workshop have been developed as part of the InterPARES Trust AI project and are openly available as Open Educational Resources from the InterPARES website.

**Health break– 2:30 pm**

## Eye to AI: Photo analysis and avatars – 2:40 p.m.

Johanne Gervais, Quebec Genealogical eSociety

Prompting generative AI applications like ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, Google's Gemini, Google Translate or Microsoft's Copilot is fast becoming second nature for those of us who work online. Each chatbot has its own strength depending on your needs, including research and even DNA analysis.

But there is one often-overlooked type of AI application that has become practically indispensable for many family historians: photographic analysis. It is now possible, using AI tools, to extract impressive amounts of information from old photos, including the identify of depicted persons, locations, and notable features within the image. AI can also help researchers estimate the historical time period during which a photograph was taken, uncovering fascinating detail and insights that might otherwise go unseen.

Another lesser-known type of AI application is designed to let users generate avatar images – literally, digital representations – of real persons, to help tell stories and share information. Avatars can also be used to narrate presentations in multiple languages, making content widely accessible. This approach introduces creative possibilities for connecting with audiences worldwide.

Together, these advancements in AI offer exciting ways to explore, present, and share historical and genealogical information,

## Atelier

### Trouver les Montréalais des 17<sup>e</sup> et 18<sup>e</sup> siècles à l'ère numérique – 3:10 p.m

Dre Dominique Deslandres, professeure titulaire au département d'histoire de l'Université de Montréal.

Grâce à l'intelligence artificielle et aux bases de données uniques au monde que nous possédons au Québec, il est possible de reconstituer le passé des Autochtones et Allochtones qui ont fait Montréal aux 17<sup>e</sup> et 18<sup>e</sup> siècles. Dans cet atelier, l'exemple de la vie de Marie Pournin de La Faye (1622-1699), cette fondatrice totalement oubliée de l'histoire, servira à en faire la démonstration.

Dominique Deslandres dirige le partenariat **Donner le goût de l'archive à l'ère numérique**, qui assure la transcription automatique des écritures, le partage des collections d'archives et la science participative. Sa recherche sur les peuples autochtones et allochtones qui ont fait l'histoire de Montréal souligne autant les rapports de pouvoir dans la société montréalaise que le passé esclavagiste de la colonie.

## Re-imagining historical reality - 3:40 p.m.

Randy Kritkauskay, author and educator,  
McGill Community for Lifelong Learning (MCLL)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a new and immature tool that can be used for rescuing, gathering, and sharing historical information. It also gathers up erroneous “data” and frequently generates its own serious errors which are then re-presented as knowledge. Our opportunities and responsibilities at this moment in AI’s evolution are to enhance potential benefits and to reduce harmful distortions of history as this tool literally re-imagines what was, is, and will be recognized as historical reality.

AI struggles, in particular, when encountering cultures outside the English-speaking mainstream. As an Indigenous person I will provide a few examples of laughably grotesque mis-representations of my ancestral history and who I am. I will also discuss how I use AI daily, and carefully, in my research, teaching and writing.

I will explore some of the disconnects that occur when AI engages with traditional cultures that often have only relatively recently utilized written communications. I will point to what these disconnects teach us about AI and how, paradoxically, our Indigenous oral traditions may hold the key to rescuing AI from some of its more formidable and concerning failures.

## Discussion and question period

### Towards a framework for ethical AI – 4:20 p.m

Featuring our panel of guest speakers, moderated by  
Dwane Wilkin

Human ideas, knowledge and creativity have always been central to the work of writers, historians, museum curators, educators, artists and indeed all branches of the humanities. Although digital information storage and processing has largely helped these institutions continue to serve communities in the age of the internet, the changes brought about by AI will be much more profound.

AI use raises many ethical questions for the community heritage sector, not the least of which is declining public trust in knowledge and information quality. Just as the development of facial-recognition software has given rise to deep-fake videos and police surveillance systems, large language-model based algorithms are now used to effortlessly synthesize human written expression, from emails and poems, to musical compositions and research papers. Do learning institutions, local historical societies and museums have any purpose if reading, thinking and writing become obsolete human pursuits?

Panelists and other participants will be invited to discuss this question and share ideas for developing a set of principles for ethical AI use in the heritage sector, in the absence of regulatory oversight.

### Closing remarks – 4:55 p.m

## About our guest speakers

### Jon Stewart

Jon has spent his career in Canada's media and technology space, helping broadcasters, publishers, municipalities, and small mom-and-pop businesses better understand and use digital tools. With deep experience in web development, content management systems, and digital workflows, he has worked closely with organizations moving from print to online platforms. Born and raised in Quebec's Pontiac region, Jon recently returned home to purchase his local newspaper, **The Equity**, which has been publishing since 1883. He remains committed to strengthening local journalism while modernizing how community news is produced, distributed, and preserved.

### Richard Arias-Hernandez

Dr. Richard Arias-Hernandez is associate professor of teaching in the School of Information at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and academic director at UBC Vantage College. He teaches technology-related courses in UBC's Master of Archival Studies program and is current principal investigator of the InterPARES Trust AI project, **Teachable AI for the Archival Professions** (2021-2026). This project focuses on curriculum design for archival studies programs that leverage and incorporate AI and machine learning into archival and records management practices.

### Randy Kritkauský

Randy Kritkauský is an enrolled tribal member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in the United States. He lives in rural Vermont and part-time in the Lachine-Montreal where his French-Canadian voyageur ancestor began his adventures into the west in the 18th century. Randy trained as an historian and has authored articles on Indigenous issues and history. His book, **Without Reservation: Awakening to Native American Spirituality and the Ways of Our Ancestors** documents his path to re-connecting with his heritage. He frequently offers study-group courses on Indigenous issues through the McGill Community for Life Long Learning (MCLL).

### Dominique Deslandres.

Dr. Dominique Deslandres is a full professor in the Department of History at the Université de Montréal. The partnership she directs, **Donner le goût de l'archive à l'ère numérique** (Giving a Taste for Archives in the Digital Age), provides automatic transcription of written documents, facilitates the sharing of archival collections, and promotes citizen science. Her research on Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples who have shaped Montreal's history highlights both power dynamics in Montreal society and the colony's history of slavery.

### Johanne Gervais

Johanne Gervais worked for over 25 years at various large companies in Montreal, implementing computer business systems. She is owner of Quebec Family Search ([www.quebecfamilysearch.com](http://www.quebecfamilysearch.com)), a company that provides assistance in estate and family history research. Her clients include for various large genealogical companies; her work was also featured in Season 9 of the television program **Finding Your Roots**, with Henry Louis Gates Jr. Johanne launched the non-profit Québec Genealogical eSociety ([www.genquebec.com](http://www.genquebec.com)) in 2018, providing members with various tools to conduct their own Quebec family history research.