Keynote Address: Building Collaborative Networks to Support Academic Integrity

ⓘ Sarah Elaine Eaton, University of Calgary

Abstract

Academic integrity work can be time-consuming and invisible, but you are not alone. Learn how a systems approach and formal and informal networks provide academic integrity experts and advocates with support to learn with and from one another.

By the end of this session, engaged participants will:

- Understand how the academic integrity community is developing, both in Canada and internationally.
- Find out how you can get support and get involved.
- Reflect on your how your experience, expertise, and wisdom can help others.

Keywords: academic integrity, Canada, Manitoba, higher education, networks

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Hello friends! Thank you to the Manitoba Academic Integrity Network and Red River College Library Services for inviting me to join you for the 2021 Academic Integrity Inter-Institutional Meeting. Special thanks to Lisa Vogt and Brenda M. Stoesz who have been in constant communication with me for several weeks to prepare for today.

I'm honoured to join you to talk about building collaborative networks to support academic integrity. I hope that by the end of time together today you'll have an idea about how the academic integrity community is developing, both in Canada and internationally. Throughout the talk I invite you to reflect on how your experience, expertise, and wisdom can help others. Finally, I hope you'll know how much you are part of this community, how you are connected and how you can get involved in ways that are sustainable and meaningful.

If you are on Twitter, feel free to tag me and the Manitoba Academic Integrity Network in your Tweets about this presentation.

Before I go any further, I'll take a moment to pause and give gratitude to the territory from which I am joining you today. The city of Calgary, where I settled more than 25 years ago, is located on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta. These include the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations). It also includes people from the Tsuut'ina First Nation and the Stoney Nakoda, who include the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

We take time at the beginning of our gatherings to acknowledge these traditional territories on which we find ourselves, not has an obligation, but as a sign of appreciation and connection to the land and those who lived on the land for centuries or even millennia before settlers arrived.

I'll return to these ideas throughout today's talk, about being connected to those who came before us, as well as those we know today, and those who will come after us.

Because this is a presentation on academic integrity, I thought it was important to start with a brief note about citing, referencing, and the ethical decision-making processes I used to prepare for today's presentation.

Firstly, I've included a complete list of references and works consulted at the end of the slide deck, so you can find them yourself later if you wish.

I have included photos of individuals in the presentation. These photos are either official photos from institutional websites or have been publicly posted on the Internet. I have used stock photos from Colourbox using an institutional license from the University of Calgary.

I am going to start with a story. When I was a graduate student, doing my PhD at the University of Calgary in Educational Leadership, my supervisor, Dr. Tim Goddard, taught me – and all of his grad students – how to do a literature review. This is a common thing for supervisors to work with their grad students on, but Tim's way of teaching it was different from any approach I'd learned about before. He would tell us, "Imagine you are coming to a conversation circle where people are talking about your topic. The conversation has been going on for many years, maybe even centuries. The people who are in this circle can be from any point in history. When you join the circle, you sit down and listen to the voices of those who have come before you. Listen closely to what they have to say and try to understand their point of view. Then pay attention to the relationships between the people in the circle. Who wrote on the topic first? Who influenced whom? Who disagrees with whom, and why? How has the conversation shifted over time? What have people been saying recently? Your job when you first join this circle is to listen, and to

understand. In time, you will contribute your own voice to the conversation, but you don't start by talking. You start by listening" (T. Goddard, oral teachings. Multiple dates from 2005 onward). Of course, by "listen," he meant "read."

Originally from the north of England, Tim's career was deeply affected by working with Indigenous populations across the world. His way of teaching us how to understand and undertake a literature review was no doubt influenced by Indigenous perspectives and teachings, as it was based on the sacred tradition of sharing circles in Indigenous cultures.

Tim's approach focused on people and relationship-building. He taught us that starting with the sources first was backward. He was insistent that people write the books and journal articles that we read and cite, and so we must start with the people, rather than with the sources. Tim's approach differed from many textbooks and websites that offer instructions for conducting a literature review. Through his teachings, Tim challenged us to situate ourselves within a circle situated within the traditions of our discipline and within a community of scholars.

Today I am going to show you how this approach to circles has applications beyond graduate student or scholarly literature reviews. Imagine, for example that we are in a circle today. If we were in person, we could be in a physical circle, but instead we find ourselves in a virtual circle. A circle keeper is the person who brings people together, opens the circle, sets the intention for what will happen, creates opportunities for listening, learning, and sharing and then closes the circle. Our circle keeper today is Lisa Vogt, chair of this inter-institutional meeting. We acknowledge the work that went into preparing for our us to arrive today, for welcoming, and hosting us. If you look on the participant list, you'll see a name above yours and a name below. If we were in a circle, these people would be on either side of you. There are a few of us who are guests to the AIIIM circle today, and we will stay connected to you, but those of you who live and work in Manitoba are the ones who sustain your Manitoba Academic Integrity Network, your circle, over time.

Let me show you how my connection to the Manitoba circle has grown over time. As I do, I invite you to reflect on how your own experiences and connections.

First let's set the stage. The word integrity comes from the same Latin root that we get the verb "to integrate" or "to make whole".

We often talk about a set of values that are the foundation of academic integrity (ICAI, 2021). This means that integrity is about principles not rules. Academic integrity is more than just the absence of academic misconduct. It's about a daily practice of ethical decision-making in our learning environments that serves as the foundation for ethical decision making for life. Academic integrity is about much more than student conduct. It extends to everyone in our

learning communities including educators, staff, administrators, and of course, students. And now onto the story…

My path that led to the academic integrity community was long and not without its struggles. Although I have worked in higher education for more than 25 years, I spent the first 22 years as a sessional instructor, living life as a "precariously employed academic". I taught as many courses as I could get in a year, including both credit and non-credit courses and workshops, without job security, benefits or a pension. I supplemented my teaching by providing educational consulting services to non-profit organizations and government. One side project I took on in 2015 changed the trajectory of my career forever.

In late winter of 2015, the associate dean of teaching and learning in the Werklund School of Education, the place where I'd graduated from with my PhD and had been teaching as a sessional, asked if I would be interested in working with the Vice Provost of Teaching and Learning on an internal report about academic integrity. It was a side hustle that I desperately needed at the time and I said yes.

That led to working with Dr. Lynn Taylor. Dr. Taylor gave me a copy of a partially drafted report on academic integrity at the University of Calgary. She said, "the literature review needs refreshing; it's outdated. Could you do that for me, please?"

"Sure," I said, knowing of course, that I had no background on the topic. As I recall, the literature review had stopped sometime around 2012, the year Dr. Taylor came to the University as the inaugural Vice Provost of Teaching and Learning. She went on to tell me that she'd done some previous work in the field herself, and had worked with Don McCabe, an American researcher who developed a survey that she'd administered at a previous university she worked at. And that she also had connections to others involved in the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE), such as Julia Christensen Hughes, who'd also run the same survey at her institution, the University of Guelph. I remember Lynn telling me, "Don's ill and we can't get the data. He didn't keep very good records of his research, so it's gone."

She seemed frustrated and sad. I could see it, but I didn't have much context to go on. I said I would update the literature review and so, I started reading. In one of our meetings about the project, I commented, "Lynn, there's almost no research out of Canada on academic integrity since Christensen Hughes and McCabe published their two articles in 2006".

Lynn replied, "I know…"

I waved my arms and said, "Someone needs to do this research!"

Lynn nodded and said, "I know… and I'm retiring."

As it happened, I was in the process of applying for a tenure track role at the University of Calgary. I got the job! Almost immediately upon being hired, the Associate Dean, Research, sat me down and said, "You need a research program. You've been a generalist for too long. This is a research position, and you need to focus your research. It needs to be something you're passionate about, something you can publish on, and something you can do for the rest of your career. Are we clear?"

I nodded. Conveniently, I'd just identified a major gap in educational research in Canada that I already felt passionate about. And so, my entrance into the world of academic integrity was formalized.

I dutifully did what all research professors are expected to do and began applying for grants. I was successful in receiving faculty level grants to conduct a project on faculty experiences with academic integrity in the school of education. In 2017, when I attempted to "level up" and apply for a university-level seed grant, my application was rejected outright. When I received the feedback on the application, it said:

Reviewer #1: "Academic integrity is an administrative issue, not a research topic."

Reviewer #2: "There is insufficient evidence to show academic misconduct is an issue in Canada. If the applicant believes this is worth researching, the first step is to publish a literature review in a peer-reviewed journal."

I took Reviewer #2's advice and together with a graduate student, started preparing a literature review that was later published in the International Journal for Educational Integrity (Eaton & Edino, 2018).

Our search resulted in 56 sources with publication dates ranging from 1992 to 2017. From our review, we learned about some wonderful research published by scholars and practitioners who have lived and worked in Manitoba:

Lynn Taylor, who co-published two studies with her graduate student, Brandy Usick from the University of Manitoba, along with their colleague, Barbara Taylor.

The Master's thesis of Lynn Taylor's graduate student, Brandy Usick was in there, too, along with another student thesis, by Paul MacLeod, who did his doctoral research at the University of Calgary and worked at Assiniboine Community College.

I am going to pause for a moment and talk about the work of Dr. Lynn Taylor before she came to the University of Calgary. Not only did Dr. Taylor bring me into the academic integrity world, but also, the research she did paved the way for much of the work that has followed.

Although two of the major articles about academic integrity in Canada were published in 2006 by Julia Christensen Hughes and Don McCabe (Christensen Hughes and McCabe, 2006a, 2006b), and lots of people know about their work, it was actually Dr. Lynn Taylor at the University of Manitoba, her grad student, Brandy Usick, and her collaborator Dr. Barbara Paterson who were doing pioneering work in the field a few years prior, that has gone largely unrecognized. So today, I want to take a moment to show you how important the research conducted led by scholars in Manitoba has been.

Dr. Lynn Taylor led the only major Anglophone research funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) on academic integrity (see Eaton & Edino, 2018). There has been SSHRC-funded research in Quebec, led by our Francophone colleague, Dr. Martine Peters, but let me emphasize how important Dr. Taylor's work was in English-speaking Canada.

The three-year project ran from 2002 to 2004, with almost $80K in federal research funding.

This is significant because to the best of my knowledge, this is the only academic integrity research project at an English-language university that has ever received federal funding... and it was from Manitoba!

Dr. Lynn Taylor left the University of Manitoba to come to the University of Calgary in 2012, where she later went on to hire me to work with her on a report in 2015, and then inspired me to take up academic integrity research when I was hired into a tenure track position.

The effects of Dr. Taylor's work continue to ripple across the Canadian academic integrity community long after she left the University of Manitoba, not the least of which was that she established a culture of academic integrity at the University of Manitoba (U of M) that has had a multiplier effect that takes years to grow. The culture and leadership established at U of M led to the university hosting Manitoba's first AIIIM meeting on Friday, June 2, 2017 (University of Manitoba, 2017). So, let's take a moment to retrace our steps and start connecting the dots...

I did not attend AIIIM 2017, but about six weeks after you held that milestone event, I experienced one of the happiest accidents of my career. We have a Doctor of Education (EdD) program at the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary where I work. Students come for two-week on campus residency for two years and complete the rest of their program online.

In July of 2017, at a BBQ held to welcome the incoming cohort of EdD students studying leadership in post-secondary contexts, I happened to strike up a conversation with one of the students. She introduced herself as Brandy. During the course of our conversation, I asked what she'd done her master's level research on. She replied, "academic integrity".

In less than a second, my brain made a connection. I asked, "Are you Brandy Usick?"

If you know Brandy, you know it is hard to catch her off guard, but at that moment I did. She laughed a but nervously and said, "Yes," with a puzzled look and asked, "How do you know my name?"

I replied, "I just read your master's thesis!"

She went from looking puzzled to slightly alarmed. She asked, "You read my master's thesis?!"

I realized that must have sounded quite strange, so I explained, "I have been working on a literature review about academic integrity in Canada. I found your thesis as part of the literature review. You worked with Lynn Taylor, right?" And the conversation went from there…

You can see how my network was in its early stages in 2017. Through working with Lynn Taylor, I'd read the work of Brandy Usick and Paul MacLeod. Then, I met Brandy in person – by accident -- during her student residency at the University of Calgary. In 2017, I had read Paul's work, but I had not yet met him in person, so the line to him is dotted, rather than solid.

One thing led to another and I ended up having the privilege of being Brandy's doctoral supervisor. Although she's working on a different topic for her doctoral research, having the opportunity to connect with someone with long-time experience in the academic integrity field has been deeply meaningful for me. A recurring topic of our early conversations was how wisdom and knowledge about academic integrity practices were not well documented. Although practitioners would give workshops or present at conferences, unless you had the chance to attend in person, there were almost no opportunities for professional development or self-study. We decided that there needed to be a way for academic integrity professionals to share their experiences and wisdom with others in the field.

As a result, in 2018 we co-founded Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity, an open access journal, available completely free of charge.

We invited Manitobans, Brenda M. Stoesz and Loie Gervais to become members of the editorial board when we founded the journal. They accepted and continue to champion its success.

Loie Gervais was the first Manitoban to contribute a practitioner article to the journal, when she wrote her piece on "Launching an Institutional Academic Integrity Campaign" for the inaugural issue of the journal (Gervais, 2018).

Later that same year, in September, Brenda Stoesz and Ana Yudintseva (Stoesz & Yudintseva, 2018) became the first Manitobans to publish in the International Journal for Educational Integrity, the journal launched by Tracey Bretag in 2005. You can see from the screen shot that their article has been accessed over 5000 times since it was published less than 3 years ago.

In 2019, Manitobans – and Canadians in general – began to really show how their academic integrity networks were growing in an exponential way.

That article that Stoesz and Yudintseva published in the International Journal for Educational Integrity served as the basis for their presentation at the 2019 International Center for Academic Integrity Conference (ICAI) in New Orleans. Their presentation garnered international acclaim when it was highlighted in Plagiarism Today as a top session at the conference (Bailey, 2019). It was at that conference where I met Ana Yudintseva in person.

At that same conference Brenda Stoesz represented Manitoba at the Canadian Consortium day, as well as in collaborative research presentations including:

Panel on tools used to educate students about academic integrity (Miron et al., 2019)

A deep dive into Canadian college policy: Findings from a provincial academic integrity and contract cheating policy analysis. (Thacker et al., 2019)

The following month a number of Manitobans joined us in Calgary for the inaugural Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity (2019).

It was during the symposium that I got to meet some people for the first time such as Lisa Vogt, the Chair of today's event, and see others in person again, including Brandy Usick and Brenda M. Stoesz. In addition, we all got to learn more about research and practitioner work being led by Manitobans who presented at the symposium, including Stephanie Crook, Loie Gervais, and Paul MacLeod.

You can see how the network is growing…

At the symposium, our colleagues at the Academic Integrity Council of Ontario (AICO) presented a workshop on how to build a regional academic integrity network (Ridgley et al., 2019). Less than six months later, the Manitoba Academic Integrity Network (MAIN) was launched.

Since the launch of MAIN, Manitobans have become leaders across Canada and internationally with academic integrity work. In case you were not already aware of some of the work being led by MAIN, let me show you:

Josh Seeland (Assiniboine Community College), Lisa Vogt (Red River College), and Brenda Stoesz (University of Manitoba) launched the URL Blocking project – Multi-institutional initiative to block contract cheating websites from being accessed within an institutional network.

This initiative was modelled on a similar project in Australia that was championed by Tracey Bretag.

This is the first project of its kind in North America, to our knowledge. It has had a ripple effect across other provinces and beyond. For example, it was not until I showed our administration that that Manitoba was leading the way with this kind of project in Canada and told them that if we didn't launch a similar project, we'd be falling behind. I am happy to say that we have since launched our own URL blocking project at the University of Calgary, thanks to the Manitobans showing us that yes, it could be done. Let's keep going…

The Multilingual Academic Integrity Statement Project led by Lisa Vogt, Red River College is another project that is the first of its kind in Canada.

First project of its kind in Canada and has led to making international connections with colleagues in the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI) who are offering support and encouragement.

Manitoba also initiated the Western Canadian network collaboration when executive members of MAIN began inviting representatives from the Alberta and BC networks to join their meetings as guests. This has led to reciprocal invitations, leading to regular cooperation among the three networks, including a shared commitment to having a common academic integrity week in 2021, to be held October 18-22. (If you haven't done so already, mark your calendars!).

Let's connect the dots again…

You can see how the network growth has grown over time. By 2020, Manitoba is firmly established as a leader in academic integrity across Canada, not because of the work of any one person in particular, but because of numerous people, committed to sustaining the work over time, with long-standing leaders continuing to mentor and create opportunities for newcomers. This is a sign of a healthy, vibrant and sustainable network. And it gets better. Let's look at new things that have already happened in 2021…

As of January 2021, our national journal, Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity, is now co-edited by two Manitobans, Brandy Usick and Brenda Stoesz. This doesn't mean the journal is owned by any one institution or province, but rather that Manitobans are taking the lead, which means being responsible for the stewardship of a national body of knowledge from practitioners, administrators, and scholars. They are committed to preserving the knowledge shared by Canadians through their contributions to the journal, and to ensuring its sustainability over time.

Also in 2021, three Canadians, including Manitobans, Brenda M. Stoesz and Josh Seeland, together with me, and three Australian colleagues, Guy Curtis, Joe Clare, and Kiata Rundle came together to conceptualize the first ever edited volume on contract cheating. As a global team of editors, we successfully recruited chapter authors from all over the world. We planned, wrote, and submitted the book proposal. In February, we signed a book contract with international publisher, Palgrave MacMillan. As we speak, chapter authors from across North America, Europe, and Australia, are busy writing their chapters for the book, which is due to come out next year.

Here we are at AIIIM 2021. By now you can see, unequivocally, how we are all connected, not only to one another here today, but to those who come before us, and those who will come after us.

Much of the work we do in academic integrity is invisible. The work I've showcased today doesn't tell the whole story. It doesn't tell the story of the day-to-day cases of academic misconduct you manage or adjudicate. It doesn't tell the story of the myriad of ways you mentor and support your students. It doesn't tell the story of the things you've been working to change at your institutions but haven't been successful with yet. It doesn't tell the story of how lonely, emotionally draining, and frustrating academic integrity work can sometimes be.

Remember this: You are not alone. You have an amazing network of colleagues and friends right here in Manitoba. If you don't know them yet, this is your chance to get to know them better.

Everything you do to support and uphold academic integrity and ethical decision-making matters. Every conversation is worthwhile because you just never know when you're going to run into someone who can help you and inspire you in ways you could never have imagined. You never know when you are going to be the person who helps and inspires others.

I conclude with a call to action. Here are 5 things you can do to contribute to your Manitoba academic integrity network:

#1: Share your story: Contribute to Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity. Share your wisdom, experiences and experiments. Show us what worked, what didn't and why. We're here to listen to you and to learn with and from you.

#2: Help lead the way: Become actively involved with the Manitoba Academic Integrity Network (MAIN). Networks stay strong when they are sustained over time. We need people to jump in, contribute actively, and commit to the work.

#3: Participate: Join us at a national level. The next Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity is being hosted by Thompson Rivers University on June 22 and 23. Come and join us. Meet new friends and like-minded colleagues. You'll be glad you did.

#4: Create opportunities for others: Whenever possible collaborate with colleagues from other institutions. Hire students as peer mentors, research assistants and anything else you can.

 And finally:

#5: Preserve and document your efforts: Be the stewards of academic integrity practices, knowledge, wisdom. This helps those who are working in the field today and those who will come after us.

My talk today was designed to show you how building collaborative networks to support academic integrity has a multiplier effect on our work. We grow stronger when we grow together. If there's one thing we can say for sure, it is that Manitoba is a Canadian exemplar of excellence and leadership for academic integrity. I, for one, can't wait to see where you go from here. Have a great conference, everyone!

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