

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Alberta Scholars Honoured in 2025 CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards**

September 23, 2025 – Edmonton, AB – The Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA) is proud to announce the recipients of the 2025 CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards. The annual awards recognize exceptional contributions in teaching, research, and service by academic staff at Alberta's public universities.

This year's honourees represent diverse disciplines, but share a deep commitment to advancing knowledge, supporting students, and transforming communities through academic excellence at Alberta's six universities.

2025 Distinguished Academic Award

Dr. Caroline McDonald-Harker – *Mount Royal University*

Dr. McDonald-Harker is a nationally recognized expert in disaster sociology and community resilience. As Director of the Centre for Community Disaster Research at MRU, she has led projects on the psychosocial impacts of natural disasters, securing over \$1.9 million in research funding. Her community-engaged research has informed public policy, supported post-disaster recovery, and amplified the voices of children and families. She is also an award-winning mentor and frequent public speaker, making complex research accessible and impactful.

2025 Distinguished Academic Early Career Award

Professor Florence Ashley – *University of Alberta*

Professor Ashley is a pioneering legal scholar and bioethicist whose work has shaped national policy on trans rights and gender-affirming care. Their research informed Canada's federal ban on conversion therapy, and their concept of "gender modality" is influencing international approaches to transgender health. With over 50 academic publications and regular media engagement, Ashley bridges rigorous scholarship with public advocacy, and was recently awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal for leadership in legal education for contributions to legal advocacy and trans rights.

2025 Distinguished Teaching Award

Dr. Vicki Bouvier – *Mount Royal University*

A Michif scholar and educator, Dr. Bouvier is known for her groundbreaking work in Indigenous education and decolonizing pedagogy. She has played a central role in shaping MRU's Indigenous Studies curriculum and fostering campus-wide Indigenization. Her co-developed "Spiritual Exchange" pedagogy emphasizes kinship, reciprocity, and relational learning. Through innovative teaching, mentorship, and research, Dr. Bouvier creates transformative learning spaces that reflect Indigenous worldviews and values.

2025 Distinguished Teaching Award for Precarious Faculty

Ashley Stasiewicz – *MacEwan University*

As a sessional instructor in Paralegal Studies, Ashley Stasiewicz has earned high praise for her student-centered, practice-driven teaching. She has introduced flipped classrooms, open-access resources, and credentialing opportunities to prepare students for the legal profession. Her mentorship and leadership in inclusive education have been recognized through multiple awards. Despite the challenges of precarious academic employment, Stasiewicz demonstrates exceptional innovation and dedication to student success.

"These honourees represent the best of Alberta's academic community," said CAFA President Dr. Lee Easton. "Their contributions in teaching, research, and community service exemplify the transformative role of public universities in our province."

The CAFA Awards celebrate academic excellence and recognize the ongoing impact of Alberta's scholars across disciplines and institutions.

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For further information on the work of this year's Award recipients, please see the attached backgrounders.

For more information contact: Lee Easton President Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations, email: president@cafa.ab.ca Phone: 780-232-6812

Backgrounders

2025 Distinguished Academic Award

Dr. Caroline McDonald-Harker – *Mount Royal University*

Dr. Caroline McDonald-Harker is a leading Canadian expert on the social impacts of disasters, with a focus on families, children and youth, and community resilience. As an Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Community Disaster Research at Mount Royal University, her work has significantly shaped how communities understand and recover from natural disasters like floods and wildfires.

She has secured over \$1.9 million in research funding and produced 20+ peer-reviewed publications and numerous community reports. Dr. McDonald-Harker's research is distinguished by its community-engaged approach, involving over 30 organizations and informing public policy, emergency planning, and mental health supports.

Her outreach includes child-centered resilience programs, public education initiatives, and mentorship of over 30 student researchers. Through 60+ media appearances and numerous keynote talks, she has raised national awareness on disaster recovery.

Her nomination for the CAFA Distinguished Academic Award recognizes her exceptional scholarship, public impact, and commitment to building stronger, more resilient communities.

2025 Distinguished Academic Early Career Award

Professor Florence Ashley – *University of Alberta*

Professor Florence Ashley is an internationally recognized expert in trans rights, law, and bioethics. Since joining the University of Alberta in 2022, they have produced over 50 academic publications and nearly 90 public articles, significantly shaping policy, legal reform, and public discourse on gender-affirming care.

Their influential book, *Banning Transgender Conversion Practices*, directly informed Canada's federal ban on conversion therapy. Ashley's work has been cited by the Supreme Court of Canada, the UN, and the World Health Organization.

A dedicated public scholar and educator, Ashley advises major health and legal bodies and was awarded the 2025 King Charles III Coronation Medal for their contributions to legal advocacy and trans rights.

Their nomination reflects a career defined by excellence, impact, and commitment to equity.

2025 Distinguished Teaching Award
Dr. Vicki Bouvier – *Mount Royal University*

Dr. Vicki Bouvier is a Michif educator and Associate Professor at Mount Royal University, known for her leadership in Indigenous Studies and curriculum development. She integrates Métis knowledge, oral traditions, and land-based learning into her teaching, creating inclusive and transformative learning experiences.

Co-creator of the “Spiritual Exchange” pedagogy, Dr. Bouvier fosters deep student engagement through relational and reflective practices. She has helped shape MRU’s Indigenous Studies program and contributes widely to Indigenization efforts across campus.

An active scholar and mentor, she has been involved in multiple SSHRC-funded projects and community initiatives. Her nomination recognizes a career grounded in Indigenous values, educational innovation, and student-centered teaching.

2025 Distinguished Teaching Award for Precarious Faculty
Ashley Stasiewicz – *MacEwan University*

Ashley Stasiewicz, a sessional instructor in MacEwan University’s Paralegal Studies program, is recognized for her outstanding teaching, innovation, and student-centered approach. She integrates real-world experience with creative pedagogy, including flipped classrooms, open-access resources, and alternative grading methods.

Her initiatives—such as credentialing students as Commissioners for Oaths, guiding student research, and developing legal textbooks—enhance student learning and career readiness. She received MacEwan’s 2024 Sessional Instructor Teaching Excellence Award and has been honoured by the Alberta Association of Professional Paralegals.

Ashley’s work exemplifies excellence in teaching under precarious conditions, with a strong focus on inclusion, mentorship, and professional skill development.