

WISDOM Newsletter

Women in Science:
Development, Outreach & Mentorship



JOIN US!



Interested in joining us? Check our linktr.ee and stay connected with all the latest news and events!

UPCOMING EVENTS

**MSHRF X
WISDOM: From
Research to
Impact:
Connecting
Trainees,
Researchers, and
Community**
4:30–6:00 pm

**JUNE
16**

**WISDOM Movie
Screening 2026**
12:00 pm

**JULY
09**

**WISDOM
Mentorship
Midway Event
2026**
Coming Soon!

**OCT
08**

**WISDOM Equity
Symposium 2026**
Coming Soon!

**NOV
13**

Welcome to the first newsletter of Women in Science, Development, Outreach, and Mentorship (WISDOM)!

WISDOM is an initiative within the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba, created to support, connect, and uplift women in science. We are a growing community of faculty, mentors, and learners working together to promote mentorship, outreach, advocacy, and gender equity across Manitoba.

This newsletter will share updates on WISDOM activities, upcoming events, mentorship opportunities, and highlights from our members. If you have ideas, would like to get involved, or want to be featured, we would love to hear from you—please reach out to us anytime (wisdommb@umanitoba.ca).

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR

As **WISDOM Chair**, I am honored to work alongside the WISDOM Trainee Working Group and WISDOM Executive Committee members. We collectively share the same vision of making **positive differences in the world of science for women and all gender identities**. WISDOM offers mentorship for women in science, provides fantastic opportunities for professional development, networking, and community engagement. WISDOM strives to increase awareness and guide policy development to ensure gender equity in academic activity. I have been fortunate to be part of **WISDOM since its inception in 2018** and have seen the development and growth of WISDOM-led events that are centred around WISDOM's mandate. Annual events include a **Movie Screening** and **Longitudinal Mentorship Program**, both led entirely by our learners, and **Equity Symposium**, among others. Importantly, WISDOM has created the space for researchers, clinicians, health professionals, community partners, allies, learners, leadership, and staff to come together as a community to learn more about what equity is and what we can do individually and collectively. **Thank YOU, to each WISDOM member, for contributing to being part of our community.** I encourage you to continue to attend WISDOM events and to inspire your fellow peers, faculty, and allies to join WISDOM. I look forward to collaborating with you on advancing WISDOM's purpose. – **Dr. Janilyn Arsenio**



Thank You, Allison and Courtney

As **Allison Balasko and Courtney Marshall** step away from their roles with WISDOM, we want to recognize and celebrate the incredible time, energy, and heart they have given to the program over the years. When WISDOM first began as a faculty initiative, Allison served as the learner representative, essentially making up the entire learner committee herself. Over the years, she **helped grow the learner executive team** into what it is today through her leadership, dedication, and countless contributions. As she graduates from medicine as an MD/PhD, we are **incredibly grateful for everything she has given to WISDOM**.

Courtney has also played an instrumental role in shaping WISDOM over the years. She **created the WISDOM Mentorship Program**, which has become a hugely successful initiative, and **contributed greatly to outreach events such as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science**. As she prepares to defend her PhD in immunology, we thank her for the passion, time, and energy she has dedicated to the WISDOM community.

They will both be deeply missed, and their impact on WISDOM will be lasting. We are deeply grateful for everything they have contributed and wish them both continued success in their next chapters.





WOMAN IN SCIENCE HIGHLIGHT

Jane Goodall was one of the world's most influential scientists and conservationists. Through her groundbreaking research on chimpanzees in Tanzania, she **transformed how we understand animal behavior, intelligence, and the connection between humans and nature**. Her discoveries challenged long-standing scientific beliefs and opened new perspectives in wildlife research and conservation.

Beyond her scientific contributions, Jane Goodall became a **global advocate for environmental protection**, animal welfare, and education. Her dedication, compassion, and perseverance continue to inspire generations of scientists, particularly women and girls pursuing careers in STEM.

Jane Goodall reminds us that **science begins with curiosity and compassion**. Through decades of patient observation and the courage to question convention, she transformed how we understand animals, nature, and our responsibility to protect it.

Rest in peace, Jane Goodall. Your legacy will live on through the world you changed.

"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." — Jane Goodall

My name is **Padmanie Ramotar**, and I am a **second-year PhD student** in the Department of Immunology under the supervision of Dr. Neeloffer Mookherjee. My research focuses on uncovering the **immunological mechanisms underlying severe asthma using an Innate Defence Regulator (IDR) peptide**. I've greatly benefited from being part of the WISDOM mentorship program, where I've had the chance to **connect with peers, learn from mentors, and get involved in meaningful volunteer opportunities**. I especially look forward to volunteering with the WISDOM group on International Day of Women and Girls in Science, where I get to **share how women have shaped science (and still do) with young students**. I'm passionate about leadership, science communication, and getting young people excited about science. Outside the lab, you can find me spending time with family and friends or on a golf course, **doing my best impression of someone who knows what they're doing**.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



CELEBRATING WISDOM'S ACHIEVEMENTS



Congratulations to **Dr. Liam O'Neil** on receiving a \$450,000 grant from Arthritis Society Canada to support research aimed at improving patients' and physicians' understanding of rheumatoid arthritis—(Executive Committee Member)



Congratulations to **Dr. Neeloffer Mookherjee** on receiving the King Charles III Coronation Medal (2025) in recognition of her outstanding contributions to lung health research and education in Canada—(Executive Committee Member)



Congratulations to **Gunjan Thapar** on being awarded both the University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowship (UMGF) and the CIHR Canada Graduate Research Scholarship (Master's)—(Learner Committee Event Executive)



We are excited to congratulate **Dr. Hope Anderson** on her appointment as the new Dean of the College of Pharmacy, beginning July 1, 2025—(Executive Committee Member)



Congratulations to **Riley Greenslade** on achieving a top ranking in the poster competition (PhD category) at the Canadian Society for Immunology 2026 conference—(Learner Committee Co-Chair)



Congratulations to **Marith Been** on being awarded both the University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowship (UMGF) and the CIHR Canada Graduate Research Scholarship (Master's)—(Learner Committee Co-Chair)

Be Featured in WISDOM!

Have a recent achievement or reached a milestone? We'd love to celebrate your success in an upcoming newsletter.

LOOK BACK INTO 2025

WISDOM EQUITY SYMPOSIUM IN HEALTH RESEARCH

In **October 2025**, we hosted the Equity Symposium, **themed Equity in Health Research**, bringing together researchers and trainees for a day of engaging discussion and knowledge sharing.

The symposium featured five invited speakers: **Dr. Purnima Madhivanan, Dr. Marissa Becker, Dr. Tamara Franklin, Dr. Jennifer Rabin, and Dr. Josée G. Lavoie**, who shared perspectives on community-engaged research, public health program science, sex and gender inclusion, ethnoracial disparities, and Indigenous-led research frameworks.

Six learners, **Bhavya Arora, Naomi Gebru, Adi Keynan, Oluwabunmi Adeyemi, Ruzzell Flores, and Nitesh Sanghai**, also presented their research, highlighting equity-focused work across mental health, reproductive health, HIV research, pediatric rehabilitation, cardiovascular physiology, and ALS.

The event welcomed approximately 80 in-person attendees, reflecting strong interest and engagement.

The symposium strengthened our shared **commitment to making health research more fair, inclusive, and community-centered**. We sincerely thank the organizing committee, speakers, learners, and volunteers whose contributions made this event a success. We look forward to continuing these important conversations at future symposia.

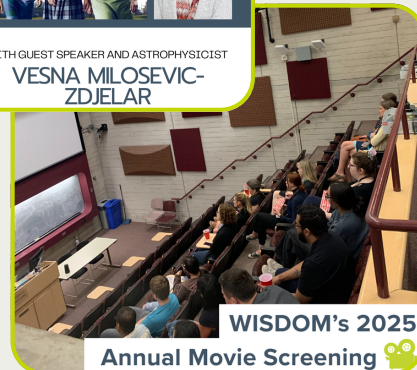


WISDOM's 2025 Annual Movie Screening: Hidden Figures

On **June 3rd, 2025**, we hosted a special movie screening event, bringing members together for an afternoon of inspiration and connection. A free lunch was provided, along with dedicated networking time for attendees to connect and engage.

The event featured a short inspirational talk by **Vesna Milosevic-Zdjelar**, astrophysicist and professor at the University of Winnipeg, who shared reflections on perseverance and representation in STEM.

We screened **Hidden Figures**, which tells the powerful true story of **three brilliant African-American women at NASA**, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, who served as the brains behind one of the greatest operations in history: the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit, a stunning achievement that restored the nation's confidence, turned around the Space Race, and galvanized the world.



WISDOM's 2025 Annual Movie Screening

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM 2025

The WISDOM Mentorship Program continued to foster meaningful connections and community among women in STEM through mentorship groups, networking opportunities, and themed events throughout the year. The 2025 mentorship cycle included **11 mentorship groups, 23 mentors, and 72 mentees**, reflecting the continued growth of the program.

Kick-Off Event

The Kick-Off Event was held on May 29, 2025, with a focus on the **importance of outreach and mentorship** for young girls interested in science.

We welcomed **Kristin Withoos**, teacher librarian at École John Henderson Middle School, who spoke about the importance of mentorship during the middle school years and highlighted the impact of WISDOM’s International Day of Women and Girls in Science outreach event. Her talk also sparked discussions around future collaborations for long-term outreach initiatives.

Midway Event

The Midway Event, held on October 9, 2025, focused on **mental health and well-being**. Speakers included **Sherri Fandray**, President of the Women’s Health Research Foundation, who reflected on resilience, career development, and navigating life’s non-linear pathways, and **Cyndi Kindret**, Director of Student Services at Bannatyne Campus, who discussed women’s mental health, self-care, and supporting one another through academic and professional journeys.

Wrap-up Event

The Wrap-Up Event, held on December 15, 2025, centered on **Indigenous Education**. Guest speaker **Chantal Wahteeshkin**, Indigenous Nurse Navigator at CancerCare Manitoba, shared her journey through nursing and spoke about culturally safe care, advocacy, and incorporating Indigenous approaches to healing and community support into patient care.



CAREGIVERS IN STEM EVENT 2025



On December 10, we hosted our inaugural Caregivers in STEM Panel, creating space for an honest and engaging conversation about balancing caregiving responsibilities with careers in STEM. **Look out for this event this year!**

The panel reflected a wide range of caregiving experiences, from parenting young children to supporting aging parents and siblings, across different career stages, including trainees, clinicians, industry professionals, and faculty members.

Panelists included **Drs. Robin Hutchinson, Lisa Engel, Liam O’Neil, Anita Durksen, Stephanie Nunes, and Chelsea Lukawy**.

We also had a brief talk by **Jasmine** from the Family Centre, who presented on the resources available there.

WISDOM LEARNER RETREAT WITH NAHANNI FONTAINE



The WISDOM learner committee took the day to review successes and challenges of the past year while collectively brainstorming ideas and goals for the coming year. We were also honored to welcome **Minister Nahanni Fontaine**, who joined the meeting to learn about WISDOM's mission and the work of each committee member. The Minister then gave an inspiring talk on women in leadership in spaces not designed for them. The visit concluded with photos and an invitation from Hon. Nahanni Fontaine for WISDOM members to attend the Manitoba Legislative Building. Earlier this year, we were **officially recognized at the Manitoba Legislative Assembly**, where the Minister honored WISDOM for **"reshaping what science looks like"** through its commitment to development, outreach, and mentorship for women in science.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE



Following the success of our inaugural 2025 outreach, we were excited to expand the event in 2026 to two schools, one in Winnipeg and one in rural Manitoba, increasing exposure to women in science.

At **École John Henderson School (Winnipeg)**, we hosted 9 interactive booths with 12 volunteers (graduate students, faculty, and undergraduates), welcoming six Grade 6 classes (around 150 students). In the afternoon, Courtney led a session for 28 girls (Grades 7/8) interested in science, guiding them through different research and career pathways with hands-on activities. The engagement and feedback were excellent.

At **Dawson Trail School (Lorette)**, we set up 9 booths for approximately 125 Grade 7/8 students. Five volunteers each ran two booths, pairing short and interactive activities while highlighting the contributions of women in science. We are proud to continue inspiring the next generation of women and girls in STEM across Manitoba.



We love celebrating and sharing the amazing accomplishments of UM Women in Science! Want to be featured in the next WISDOM newsletter? Send us your news, achievements, events, or highlights at wisdommb@umanitoba.ca with the subject line "Newsletter".

We'd love to hear from you!