

From Our Students 2024-2025

Asher Warkentin, Springridge Mennonite Church



Each year our bursary applicants are asked to include a short essay with their application. As Asher Warkentin continues his education at Canadian Mennonite University, he writes this:

This past winter, CMU hosted Dr. Ally Menzies as our Scientist in Residence. Dr. Menzies is a Métis Conservation Biologist and Professor at University of Calgary. She led a series of lectures focussed on incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into conservation. As a student looking to pursue conservation biology, this series of Scientist in Residence lectures were of particular interest to me.

She spoke of the challenges that can be encountered when working in a field than is often resistant to the influence of non-western science, such as Indigenous Knowledge or faith. A real strength of CMU's science program – and one reason why I keep coming back – is that it prepares students to thrive in this field that may otherwise seem incompatible with faith.

Having pushed through these challenges themselves, CMU's science faculty are able to teach in a way that accommodates people from all faith backgrounds while not discrediting the "science". The diversity of people and backgrounds that are able to participate – and feel like they belong – in CMU's science courses is remarkable. A breadth of learning comes from being in classes not only alongside other biology majors, but people studying music, psychology, and biblical & theological studies.

There are students who are full-out biology nerds and have likely never thought of its interplay with faith, and there are others who enter CMU hard-set against evolution due to their religious background. These courses may not cause either side to change their thoughts, but both perspectives enrich the classes. CMU integrates faith into its faculty of science to a degree that few other institutions – religious or not – can achieve, and continues to draw me back as I complete my degree.