

LEONARD & KATHLEEN O'BRIEN
HUMANITARIAN TRUST



LA FONDATION HUMANITAIRE
LEONARD & KATHLEEN O'BRIEN

THE O'BRIEN FOUNDATION

News

Autumn 2021

Greetings! Fellows and Friends,

Fifty years in, the Foundation is still going strong and carrying on. The annual cycle of fellowship applications, selection, and awards continued without a hitch and *ten* new O'Brien Fellows joined our ranks in 2021. I hope you'll take a few minutes to meet them below.

In spring as our Selection Committee evaluated the applications, an ad hoc committee comprised of Board members Richard Hornsby and Deborah Robichaud (aided and abetted by yours truly) began production of a short video about the life and legacy of J. Leonard O'Brien. Who knew that our founder & benefactor, a scion of the business and political worlds, also had a passion for painting and filmmaking?

The year's major event, though, was the Lieutenant Governor's reception, which 'Covid' had cancelled last year. New Brunswick's scheduled reopening gave a window of opportunity to celebrate our 2020 and 2021 Fellowship recipients *ensemble*--and it was a memorable event.

A bumper crop of applications this fall has kept me busy and this newsletter on hold ("no news is good news"). But there are Alumni updates to share and a snapshot of who "we" are: the people behind the scenes who keep the Foundation running, yet rock solid too. You don't see us often, especially since we started wearing masks.

Cheers,

Dr. Jill Watson

Executive Director (O'Brien Fellow 1992)

In its 46 years of awarding Fellowships (1975 - 2021), the O'Brien Foundation has received **2,445** applications and granted **363 fellowships**. This year also marks the 10th award of a fellowship made possible by our generous Alumni. This year's awards amounted to \$75,000, and the cumulative total awarded over the years is close to two million: **\$1,922,000**. This financial assistance often comes at a time when it's most needed, and recipients deeply appreciate it. We are exceptionally proud of all O'Brien Fellows and their accomplishments!

And the winners of this year's O'Briens are...

Mathieu Martin

Université du Québec à Montréal

Mathieu is originally from Edmundston, NB. He began his bachelor's degree in 2015 at the Université de Moncton - Edmundston campus, where he served as president of the student association in 2017-2018. After completing his Bachelor of Arts (Individualized Studies) in 2019, he earned a Master of Arts in History from Université de Moncton (2021) and in September began his doctoral studies in history at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

Mathieu's academic interests span the history of religion, Acadian studies, and women's history. His doctoral dissertation combines these themes by examining the Christian women's movement in Acadia during the second half of the 20th century. Through his research, Mathieu wants to illuminate Acadian women's contributions within the historical context of the region.



Proud of his origins, Mathieu has presented conference papers and published several articles on the history of Madawaska. He's a firm believer in the importance of transmitting knowledge and would like to return to teach history in New Brunswick once he has completed his doctoral studies.

At the reception:

Mathieu receives his certificate of award from Lieutenant Governor Brenda Murphy.

(Photo: Yinje Wang)

Robert Tay-Burroughs

University of New Brunswick



Robert is a PhD candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John. His research examines the future of the Crown and its viceregal representatives in New Brunswick and Canada within the context of Reconciliation. It connects with a larger international comparative project, partly funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, on the evolution of executive powers in the Westminster system. Robert has received a Bombardier Canada Graduate Student Award in support of his work.

Robert is a former executive director of the New Brunswick Student Association and was an associate at Higher Education Strategy Associates in Toronto before attending UNB. Once named the most charming bartender in Ankara, he now lives in Fredericton and can also be found on Twitter (@fattbert).



Robert is shown at the reception accepting his certificate of award from Lieutenant Governor Brenda L. Murphy.

(Photo credit: Yinje Wang)

Natasha Levesque

Université de Moncton

Natasha is from Moncton, NB and completed her bachelor's degree in psychology at the Université de Moncton in May 2020. She is now enrolled in the university's professional doctorate program in clinical psychology, researching parental support as a mediating factor in the psychological and academic functioning of adolescents.

In addition to having obtained various research and educational assistantships through the School of Psychology, Natasha currently works part-time at a crisis intervention center, which allows her to continually apply her psychological knowledge. In addition to winning the top academic achievement award in her program each year of her post-secondary studies, Natasha is the recipient of several fellowships including one from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation and the National Health Training Consortium.



At the reception:

Natasha receiving her certificate of award from Lieutenant Governor Brenda Murphy.

(Photo credit: Yinje Wang)

Ian Baird

University of New Brunswick

Ian was born in Fredericton, grew up in Winnipeg and Moncton, earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Business Administration, and had a successful career in corporate banking and public-sector business development. After establishing and growing a national university research network, [Mitacs](#), throughout Atlantic Canada, Ian returned to graduate studies to pursue his lifelong passion for History.

Having completed his Master's in 2018, he is now in the third year of his PhD research in History, diving deep into the spiritual lives of Canadians during the Great War. His work considers the complex ways in which Canadians coped with death and bereavement at battle fronts and home fronts, particularly in armed forces communities. Ian has two sons, one of

whom is also in his third year of doctoral studies (in Chemistry at the University of Alberta), while the other is doing an Honours degree in Philosophy at St. Thomas University.



*Ian Baird receives his certificate of award from Lieutenant Governor Brenda Murphy.
(Photo credit: Yinje Wang)*



Chloé Melanson

Université de Moncton

Chloé was born and raised in Moncton, NB, and is currently a Master's candidate in Biology at the Université de Moncton. She has always had a passion for the natural world and the variety of species that inhabit it.



Since the beginning of her undergraduate degree, she has had the opportunity to do molecular laboratory work as well as field work with salmonids. Under the supervision of Dr. Simon Lamarre and Dr. Suzie Currie, she is now studying how sociality (whether an animal is with other animals or not) influences the response of fish to warm temperatures.

Chloé's experimental model, the mangrove killi, is a perfect example of the wonders of the natural world - it can reproduce on its own and is able to survive for several weeks on land! Understanding more about the relationship between temperature and physiology will help predict how species respond to climate change. As she advances in these endeavours and continues having her work recognized, Chloé hopes to have a career that will allow her to continue researching aquatic organisms and ultimately contribute to more effective conservation rules.

Nicolas Richard

Rice University

Nicolas is pursuing his Master of Music at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music under the tutelage of Benjamin Kamins. Originally from Fredericton, Nicolas credits his early teachers, including Richard Hoenich, Kristin Day, and Yvonne Kershaw, as important influences on his musical development and the significant achievements that have led him to a promising career in music.

In 2019, Nicolas was appointed Principal Bassoon of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra, a position he won while completing his undergraduate degree and studying with distinguished woodwinds artist Christopher Millard at the University of Ottawa. Nicolas has performed regularly with the National Arts Centre Orchestra and with symphony orchestras in Windsor, Kingston, and Ottawa. Beyond the orchestral experience, Nicolas has appeared as a soloist with the National Arts Centre Orchestra and the University of Ottawa Orchestra. Nicolas won the second prize in the 2020 OSM (Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal) Competition and is first prize winner of the National Arts Centre Orchestra Bursary Competition, the Ottawa Symphony's S n cal-Mozart Prize, and the University of Ottawa's Concerto Competition.



For a musical treat, enjoy [this sample of Nicolas's talent](#)

An avid chamber musician as well, Nicolas has performed with conductor/violinist John Storg rds and members of the National Arts Centre Orchestra in their "Music for a Sunday Afternoon" chamber music series. He has spent summers as a fellow at the Music Academy of the West, the National Repertory Orchestra, the National Academy Orchestra, and the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. He is very grateful for the award of an O'Brien Fellowship to continue his professional studies at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

Allen Chase

University of New Brunswick



In addition to working on his Ph.D. in Educational Studies, Allen is employed as a middle school teacher in Fredericton, among other endeavours, and his research interests include critical pedagogy, school culture, teachers' professional praxis, and ethical and social justice issues in education. Allen's doctoral work aims at documenting New Brunswick's teachers' experience in the COVID-19 (and hopefully post-COVID) era by examining neoliberal educational policies and practice. Allen's research is supported in part by the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation (NBIF) and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) project in conjunction with his doctoral supervisor, Dr. Matt Rogers.

Allen holds a Master of Arts in Political Science from UNB and a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Western Ontario, specializations that have brought him opportunities to work with educators in New Brunswick and abroad. It was the division between school libraries and teaching in his career that fostered Allen's interest in social justice and equity issues faced by teachers.

Apart from time spent on campus or in a classroom,

Allen can be found hiking NB's trails with his wife and son or brewing beer with his nanobrewery business partners.



At the reception:

Allen's father, Stephen Chase, is shown at the reception accepting the award from the Lieutenant Governor on Allen's behalf.

(Photo: Yinje Wang)

Sandrine Duval

McGill University



Sandrine hails from Edmundston and is currently working towards her PhD in French language and literature at McGill University. Her research examines the emergence of women in Canadian francophone theater, focusing specifically on the affirmation of identity among women authors who are doubly minoritized because of gender and their evolution in a minority francophone environment.

As an undergraduate at Université de Moncton's Edmundston campus, Sandrine was recognized with two awards for community involvement, Personality of the Year and the Citizen Engagement Award.

After earning her bachelor's degree (2019), she began her Master's in literary studies at the Université de Moncton, where her thesis examined the hybridization of storytelling and monologue in Acadian playwriting of the 2010s. In addition to receiving research assistantships, she published artistic critiques for the web-zine *Astheure* and the journal *Liaison*.

Sandrine's doctoral research aims to continue illuminating the work of women whose theatrical

contributions are too often in the shadows, and she is pleased to be the recipient of a 2021 O'Brien Fellowship.



*Her Honour Brenda L. Murphy presents Sandrine Duval her certificate of award at the reception.
(Photo: Yinje Wang)*

Richard Yeomans

University of New Brunswick

Richard Yeomans is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of New Brunswick. His dissertation examines the role of scientific knowledge in New Brunswick's development after the American Revolution and arrival of loyalist refugees, until Confederation in 1867. It shows how the provincial Assembly regulated the province's finite resources, such that New Brunswickers created a knowledge commons in order to disseminate information about agriculture, fisheries and timber, and were more motivated to manage the environment than other settler colonies in the pre-Confederation era.

Originally from Fredericton, Richard earned his BA in history from UNB and his MA from Queen's University.



Since his return to NB he has published papers on settler science and actively participates in academic organizations such as UNB's Atlantic Canada Studies Centre, with whom he is developing a documentary on environmental change in the lower Bay of Fundy and Grand Manan. Richard is co-creator and editor of the New Brunswick Storytellers book project, a forthcoming collection of micro-histories about New Brunswick's pre-Confederation past, and is the recipient of several awards including a Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada doctoral fellowship and a 2021 O'Brien Fellowship.

*Richard Yeomans receives his certificate of award from Lieutenant Governor Brenda Murphy.
(Photo: Yinje Wang)*

Ahmed Eldesoky

Dalhousie University

O'Brien Alumni Award 2021

Ahmed is a PhD Candidate in Chemistry at Dalhousie University who holds a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship and Killam doctoral fellowship for his research on Lithium-ion and Lithium-metal batteries. He is finding ways to improve these batteries' lifetime capabilities to meet the demands of grid energy storage and electric vehicles.

Ahmed earned his Bachelor of Science with Honours in Chemistry from the University of New Brunswick. While at UNB, his interests had fluctuated from salmon research to healthcare, until he received an NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award to work with Professor Jeff Dahn at Dalhousie on renewable energy and Li-ion battery research.

Continuing in this field for the last two years of his bachelor's degree, Ahmed went on to complete industry internships at Tesla in California and



Bayerische Motoren Werke AG--better known as *BMW*--in Munich.

In addition to his research, Ahmed enjoys being outdoors, travelling (when that was possible) and cooking. Ahmed has been awarded an O'Brien Fellowship and the O'Brien Alumni award for 2021.

Ahmed's parents, Nivin Elmorsiather (left) and Abdelhamid Eldesoky (centre) are shown accepting the certificate of award on Ahmed's behalf from Lieutenant Governor Brenda Murphy. (Photo: Yinje Wang)

Best Directors... The 2021 Selection Committee

The O'Brien Foundation's mission is accomplished by a handful of extraordinary human beings who are known for their dedication to research and teaching, and for outstanding contributions to their academic communities and beyond. This year the Selection Committee was delighted to welcome

DR. ANDRÉ LOISELLE

Dean of the Faculty of
Humanities and
Professor of Film Studies

St. Thomas University

André Loiseau taught film and held senior administrative positions at Carleton University, including Assistant Vice-President (Academic), for over twenty years before joining STU in 2018. His main areas of research are Canadian and Québécois cinema, theatricality in cinema, and the horror film.



He has published nearly fifty refereed articles and chapters in anthologies, a dozen books, and is currently co-editor with Liz Czach of *The Canadian Journal of Film Studies*.

BA (UQAM), MA, PHD (UBC)

Selected works

- ★ *Cinema of Pain: On Quebec's Nostalgic Screen* (2020, with Liz Czach)
- ★ *Theatricality in the Horror Film* (2019)
- ★ *The Canadian Horror Film: Terror of the Soul* (2015, with Gina Freitag)
- ★ *Stages of Reality: Theatricality in Cinema* (2012, with Jeremy Maron)
- ★ *Denys Arcand's 'Le Déclin de l'empire américain' and 'Les Invasions barbares'* (2008)
- ★ *Cinema as History: Michel Brault and Modern Quebec* (2007).

André was joined by our returning members, who represent all of New Brunswick's major universities.



Dr. Alan Sears
Chair

Professor Emeritus,
Faculty of Education

University of New
Brunswick

[\(more info...\)](#)



Dr. Andrea Morash

Assistant Professor
of Biology

Mount Allison
University

[\(more info...\)](#)



Dr. Kevin Englehart
O'Brien Fellow 1994

Associate Dean of
Graduate Studies;
Professor of Electrical &
Computer Engineering

University of New
Brunswick

[\(more info...\)](#)



Malaïka
Bacon-Dussault, LLM

Professor,
Faculty of Law

Université de
Moncton

[\(more info...\)](#)



Dr. Jonathan Wilbiks

Assistant Professor of
Psychology;
Director, Music &
Multisensory Processes
Lab

University of New
Brunswick, Saint John

[\(more info...\)](#)

We extend special thanks--with best wishes--to Andrea Morash, who's served on the committee since 2018 and recently stepped down to focus on other commitments. We're seeking a new member from Mount Allison University and welcome [your suggestions](#).

To our valued Selection Committee members, one and all

👏 **BRAVO!** 👏

Thank You!



The Year in Review

The Reception Returns

Thanks to the amazing support and enthusiasm of the O'Brien Foundation's Honorary President, **Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick Brenda L. Murphy**, and her staff, a lovely reception was held at Government House in Fredericton on July 27th to honour "our pandemic Fellows," the 2020 and 2021 O'Brien Fellowship recipients.

Adhering carefully to all Public Health guidelines in effect at the time, attendance was limited to fewer than 50 people -- sixteen of whom were the honourees.

Board members Dr. John Tivendell (chair) and Dr. Edmund Biden (centre photo) served as masters of ceremony. It's safe to say that in beautiful surroundings, with music in the air--thanks to Ian Burdon and William Simons--all eyes were smiling above the masks!



A long history in a short video



J. Leonard O'Brien in 1925-26, elected Speaker of the House at age 30.

Photo: [Speakers of the Legislative Assembly, Province of New Brunswick, 1786-1985](#)

In 1971 (fifty years ago), J. Leonard O'Brien created the Leonard & Kathleen O'Brien Humanitarian Trust to award postgraduate Fellowships as a means of helping New Brunswickers achieve their educational goals. The first awards were made in 1975, and nearly \$2 million in support has helped deserving and distinguished recipients ever since. A short video commemorating Leonard O'Brien's life and legacy was proposed by Board members **Deborah Robichaud (1976)** and **Richard Hornsby** early in 2021, and production began in May. It's anticipated that the video will premiere in 2022.

*Spoiler alert! The video includes footage from some of Leonard O'Brien's own documentary films and features several of the Foundation's actors, including **Gordon Thomson (Chair Emeritus)** and **Dr. Carmen Poulin (former Board chair)**. Some other familiar faces appear in it too.*



July 28, 1959 at Fredericton Raceway:
Lieutenant Governor J. Leonard O'Brien looks on as Queen Elizabeth examines the programme.
Her Majesty and HRH Prince Philip (listening to Premier John B. McNair) were witnessing their first harness race.

Benefactors

While major events and “onstage” moments--in life and theatre, on film and video--generate excitement and garner most of the attention, it's the action backstage that keeps everything going like a regular heartbeat, a steady pulse.

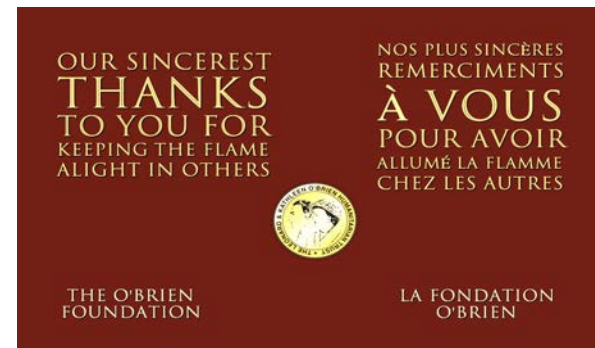
For many years, The O'Brien Foundation has received annual gifts from Alumni whose quiet generosity behind the scenes has done immeasurable good. We hope they'll accept this as a standing ovation.

Dr. Michael Cherry (1978 O'Brien Fellow)

Dr. Thomas Clair (1987 Fellow, Board chair 1998-1999)

Dr. Gary Foster (1997 O'Brien Fellow)

Dr. Glen Pugh (2000 O'Brien Fellow)



News of alumni

J. David Miller (1978) is enjoying a remarkably varied career. Currently a Distinguished Research Professor at Carleton University in Ottawa, David has always maintained close personal and professional connections to New Brunswick--and to the O'Brien Foundation as well. A native of Saint John, NB, he was recently featured in the UNB Alumni News (Fall/Winter 2020 edition, [which you can read here](#)).

Peter Pacey (1976) was recently honoured by the University of New Brunswick as a 2020 recipient of the Proudly UNB Award: “Actor, director, writer, producer, mentor and founder of Calithumpians Theatre Company, Peter Pacey is one of the most recognized theatre personalities in Fredericton”--and he is also well known for his leading role in the sport of rugby. ([Read more here](#))

The province and the UNBSJ community lost [a well known coach and faculty member](#), **Dr. Gary L. Worrell** (1985) in October of last year. Born and raised in McAdam, Gary attended UNB (B.P.E., 1975), Penn State U (M.Sc., 1977) and Florida State U. (PHD, 1987), where his studies were assisted with the award of an O'Brien Fellowship in 1985. Gary's 41 years of dedication as a faculty member and coach of several varsity teams at UNBSJ were recognized in 2012 when he received the President's

Medal for distinguished service to the university. Our deepest sympathies are offered to his wife Sue, and to his many friends and colleagues.

Daniel J. Belliveau (1990) touched many lives and had a distinguished academic career that was sadly cut short in July 2021 by neuroendocrine cancer. Originally from Bathurst, Dr. Belliveau had been appointed [Dean of Science at St. Francis Xavier University in 2019](#) and was loved and admired by students and colleagues throughout his career, particularly at the [University of Western Ontario](#), where he was Associate Professor and Director of the School of Health Studies (Faculty of Health Sciences) and served as President of the Faculty Association. To all of Daniel's family, and with gratitude to his wife Margaret who shared this sad news with us, the O'Brien Foundation extends our sincerest condolences.

Mutatis mutandis

“Heraclitus, I believe, says that all things pass and nothing stays, and comparing existing things to the flow of a river, he says you could not step twice into the same river.” – Plato

Far be it from me to argue with Greek philosophers, but 'change' isn't the *only* constant. The O'Brien Foundation enjoys great stability thanks to the staying power of our Executive and [Board](#) members. For example:

- ★ **Half a century ago, J. Gordon Thomson, CA**, witnessed as Leonard O'Brien signed the Trust Agreement setting it all in motion, and ever since then has traveled from Calgary (AB) or Cape Breton (NS) whenever an O'Brien Foundation event or commitment calls for his attendance.
- ★ **G.Brian Trenholm, CPA, CA** has steered the Foundation through peaks and troughs of “the Accountant-Sea” for nearly two decades. He keeps the Foundation afloat and on course, ensuring it never runs aground.
- ★ **Dr. John Tivendell** initially served on the Selection Committee, retired as a full Professor of Psychology from the Université de Moncton a few years ago, and continues to serve reassuringly as chair of the Board.
- ★ O'Brien Fellow **Deborah Robichaud (1976)** gave back to the Foundation long after receiving her fellowship. Following a successful career in public service, Deborah served on the Board for nearly a decade before stepping down last June. As a driving force behind the “Capturing our History” video project, she'll continue shepherding it through to completion. The O'Brien Foundation has benefited enormously from Deborah's many contributions over the years.
- ★ **Dr. Edmund Biden** started out as a Rhodes Scholar, established the Institute of Bio-Engineering at UNB and was Dean of UNB's School of Graduate Studies when he joined the Board in 2011. He and former Selection committee member

Richard Hornsby (Director of Music, UNB) have about a quarter-century of service between them. Will the Board's most recent members, Dr. Enrico diTomasso and Dr. Alan Sears, match that record? Time will tell.



Steady as she goes: The Administrators

Honorary Fellow **Anne MacNeill, LLB**, was the warm, welcoming face of this organization for over 20 years. **Dr. Barry Miller** served first on the Board and then as Executive Director for nine years, expanding the Foundation's reach and keeping in touch with a great many Alumni. He handed me the torch three years ago.

I'd have liked to hang on to it longer but must admit that Heraclitus had a point. Life is unpredictable and so is health.

So at the end of 2021 I'll be leaving this role, with some regrets but also a revised sense of what's necessary, as in this famous stage direction:

"Exit, pursued by a Bear" (*The Winter's Tale, Act III, Scene 3*).

Rest assured that although the cast may change, the torch will remain in good hands!



My time as Executive Director has been busy, memorable, and a privilege. It's always been a pleasure to learn about--and to meet--my fellow Fellows, their families, and friends, so it was especially gratifying to be able to celebrate in person the *twenty* O'Brien Fellows who received awards during this pandemic. And I'm pleased to report that during my comparatively brief tenure, the Foundation has

- awarded 30 fellowships
- welcomed four new members to the Selection Committee--and a new chair;
- migrated to a "cloud-based" (virtual) office and enhanced digitization of records
- maintained a healthy "bottom line."

All in all, a pretty good run.

Fifty years on, the O'Brien Foundation still moves forward and is still inspired by Leonard O'Brien's bequests. Can you believe it? He left a message to us all, via Twitter!



National Historic Sites of New Brunswick
@NHSNB



We could all use something to cheer us up, right? In 1973, J. Leonard O'Brien asked that some message of good cheer be placed on @beaubearsisland in #Miramichi. These lines by #Fredericton poet Francis J. Sherman were chosen. #ExploreNB



Be of Good Cheer!

Wishing you

*Happy Holidays
and a wonderful New Year*

← from ["A Life" by Francis J. Sherman](#)

Donations to the O'Brien Foundation, a CRA-registered charity, are eligible for federal and provincial income tax credits. All funds donated are awarded as one or more special Alumni Fellowships (in addition to our normal awards) in the subsequent calendar year.

It's always a pleasure to hear from our Alumni and friends. If you have any comments, information, or material you'd like to share, [send an email](#) to: Executive Director, The O'Brien Foundation.