

LEONARD & KATHLEEN O'BRIEN
HUMANITARIAN TRUST



LA FONDATION HUMANITAIRE
LEONARD & KATHLEEN O'BRIEN

THE O'BRIEN FOUNDATION

News

Summer 2020

Greetings! While news from here might not travel as quickly as viruses do, at least it's mostly good news. Along with the rest of the world experiencing the "C-19" pandemic, we've been adapting to make sure that New Brunswick's most promising postgraduates continue to benefit from O'Brien Fellowships.

The 2018-2019 transition was followed by many more changes, including the departures from office of several people who've played important roles in the life of the O'Brien Foundation. We mourned the losses of former Lieutenant Governor Jocelyne Roy-Vienneau and former UNB Dean of Nursing Dr. Krista Wilkins, who had served on our Selection Committee. Two long-serving members of the committee, Dr. Enrico di Tomasso (chair for five years) and Dr. Mylène Lachance-Grzela, moved on to new endeavours, taking with them lasting friendships and our profound gratitude for their important contributions. Recent months brought departures from annual routines,

such as face-to-face meetings and the cancellation of our major event, the Lieutenant Governor's reception in honour of this year's Fellowship recipients, which would've been held at the end of July.

While departures made the past year challenging, they also showed how very important are the people and routines we usually take for granted and how much we miss 'presences', the spontaneity of face-to-face interactions and introductions. But departures are also starting points that can lead to introductions, which are full of potential. So introductions are the focus of this newsletter, and though it can't compete with the warm (often very warm!) liveliness of a reception, I hope you'll find pleasure in being introduced to some remarkable people whose endeavours are as remarkable as they are. So feel free to pull off your mask, put up your feet, and save handshakes for... another time! 'Til we meet again,

Jill

Dr. Jill Watson, Executive Director (Alumni 1992)

Introducing the O'Brien Fellows of 2020

The O'Brien Foundation received dozens of inquiries and over 30 applications for fellowships as of the November (2019) deadline. This year the Selection Committee recommended ten scholars for Fellowship awards ranging from \$3,000 to \$10,500. The total amount awarded in 2020 was \$70,000, of which a \$5,000 Alumni award was made thanks to generous gifts from O'Brien Alumni. Here they are, the 2020 O'Brien Fellowship recipients!

Andrew Holmes

University of Toronto

Andrew Clark Holmes was born and raised in Charlotte County, New Brunswick. In 2012 he obtained a BA in Archaeology and Physical Anthropology from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Focusing his attention upon the study of evolution and paleontology, Andrew then obtained his MSc in Anthropology at the University of Toronto under the supervision of David R. Begun. In his MSc research he analyzed the wrist bones of *Rudapithecus*, a large-bodied ape that lived in Hungary over ten million years ago. Andrew is currently in the process of completing his PhD at the University of Toronto under the continued supervision of Dr. Begun.

In his PhD research, Andrew explores the evolutionary history of a group of primates called the pliopithecoids, a group of medium-sized monkeys that lived in Eurasia between 18 to 7 million years ago. By studying the teeth of these pliopithecoids, Andrew has shown how different species are related to one another and used this information to create a pliopithecoid family tree. His research also explores the diet, behavior, and extinction of this unique group of monkeys that once inhabited forests ranging from western Spain to eastern China.

Andrew has worked as an archaeologist / paleontologist in several Canadian provinces (NB, NL, ON) as well as in Spain, France, and Hungary. He has presented his research at national and international paleontological research conferences, instructed at the University of Toronto, and has shared his knowledge of primate paleontology with the wider public by appearing on [science-themed podcasts](#). He is very pleased to receive the award of an O'Brien Fellowship in 2020.



Caitlin Furlong

Université de Moncton



Originally from Bathurst, Caitlin Furlong resides in Dieppe with her fiancé and is working on her PhD in Education at l'Université de Moncton (UdeM), where she received her bachelor's (2014) and master's degree (2017) in mathematics education. Having previously taught mathematics and sciences at the high school level, she is now teaching education classes at UdeM. Her research interests revolve around "STEM" (sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics) education and the development of digital skills, with a focus on problem-solving in technology-rich learning environments. Since 2015, she has worked with [CompeTI.CA](#), a strategic partnership devoted to understanding the ecosystem, adaptability, and transfer of digital skills. Caitlin's PhD thesis specifically examines the development of problem-solving skills in digital fabrication laboratories (makerspaces).

Throughout her graduate studies, Caitlin has had the chance to publish several articles and give scientific talks in Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario, British Columbia, and Denmark. Her most recent publication, written in collaboration with her supervisor Michel Léger and Viktor Freimanis, is "The Development of Digital Skills in a Makerspace: The Case of Brilliant Labs" in the [Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology](#). In 2019, she was awarded the Allard-Landry prize for the best article written by a graduate student at UdeM.

In addition to her academic endeavours, Caitlin is the spokesperson for the graduate students' association at UdeM and a member of GAMA ("Groupe d'Action pour les Mathématiques en Acadie"), a group that aims to enrich mathematical life in French-language schools in New Brunswick. She is also a strong ally of the 2SLGBTQI+ community and served on the board of River of Pride for seven years.

Cecile Proctor

University of New Brunswick Saint John

Cecile Proctor is working towards her doctorate in clinical psychology at the University of New Brunswick under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Best. In addition to being a new O'Brien Fellow, she is a Joseph Bombardier SSHRC Doctoral award recipient. When she is not in class, working with clients, or engaged in research, she is at home with her husband and two beautiful children. Upon graduating, she plans to raise her family and work as a clinical psychologist here in New Brunswick. Research will always play a major role in her evidence-based practice because she believes that as clinicians and researchers, we have to engage with both the data and with individuals to do our jobs properly.

Cecile's honours thesis explored the psychological impacts of brain injury on survivors and their caregivers. Building on those findings, her master's thesis explored the utility of acceptance and commitment therapy as an aid to increasing life satisfaction following an injury. Currently she is working in collaboration with New Brunswick healthcare professionals to identify, and potentially mediate, the negative psychological impacts of living with a cancer diagnosis. Cecile is active in her community and is always looking for ways to apply her research in ways that will help improve overall well-being in the populations that she studies.



Daniel Saucier

University of Sherbrooke

Daniel received his bachelor's and master's degrees in biochemistry from the Université de Moncton and is currently a PhD candidate in health sciences at the University of Sherbrooke's Centre de formation médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick. For his doctoral research, Daniel is exploring the association between environmental factors and the development of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).



His interest in this neuromuscular disease began during his master's, where, under the supervision of Dr. Pier Morin, he identified circulating microRNAs as biomarkers with diagnostic potential for ALS.

The results of this interdisciplinary study have since been published in the journal [Brain Research](#). In addition to being lead author of that publication, Daniel has presented his research at several conferences, including the 28th International Symposium on ALS / MND, and has recently co-authored a review article on the diagnostic potential of extracellular vesicles in ALS. Apart from his doctoral studies, Daniel is a research assistant for the clinical neuropsychology lab at the University of Moncton, where he is helping to develop an app that can assess individuals' risk of developing dementia.

Beyond research, Daniel also enjoys sharing his love for science by animating activities in schools through [Let's Talk Science](#). At the end of the day, he can either be found playing board games

with friends or running the Riverfront Park trails near his hometown of Riverview, New Brunswick. Daniel would like to thank the O'Brien Foundation for the support and looks forward to a lifetime of discovery.

Ines Hamam

Dalhousie University

Born in France to Tunisian parents, Ines Hamam immigrated to Canada at a very young age and grew up mostly in Moncton, New Brunswick. She obtained a Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) at the Université de Moncton and is now pursuing her Master's in Science at Dalhousie University.

Ines has always been an environmentalist and a strong believer in the importance of developing a green, sustainable modern society. Her master's project focuses on developing positive electrode materials for high-performing lithium ion batteries that can be used in electric vehicles and grid storage applications. She hopes that this work will facilitate the lowering of greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to an increase in renewable energy sources on the power grid.

Lithium ion batteries are a state-of-the-art electrical storage technology, and Ines is excited to be involved in such a valuable and relevant field of research. She intends to pursue a doctoral degree in this fast-growing domain and contribute further to the development of better lithium ion batteries.

When she is not in the lab, Ines enjoys painting, visiting art galleries, and working with a university-community partnership program, the [Imhotep's Legacy Academy](#) (ILA), helping school-age youth build the confidence to pursue STEM fields. Ines is infinitely grateful for, and honoured by, the support of the O'Brien Foundation.



Isabelle Harrigan

Université de Moncton



Isabelle Harrigan grew up in Dieppe, New Brunswick, and has been planning since high school to become a psychologist. In the course of her undergraduate studies at the Université de Moncton, she had the opportunity to spend an exchange semester at the Université libre de Bruxelles (2017). Upon returning to Moncton and with the support of a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) scholarship, she worked for two summers as a research assistant in Professor Jean Saint-Aubin's cognitive science laboratory, and subsequently in the laboratory of Professor Geneviève Bouchard where her interest in couples research began there, led to her bachelor's thesis, which earned an award for best thesis in her graduating year. Isabelle completed her bachelor's degree with honours in psychology in 2019.

In the first year of her doctoral studies in clinical psychology at the Université de Moncton, Isabelle was recognized for having the highest academic average of her doctoral studies cohort (2020) and received a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship (SSHRC). Her thesis, under the supervision of Professor Geneviève Bouchard, explores the underlying motivations of young couples to publish their love relationship on Facebook,

focusing on ways in which young adults in relationships interact, and the shaping of their emotions, behaviours and attitudes, through social media. In conjunction with her research, she has co-authored 5 posters presented at conferences in Canada and the United States.

In her spare time, Isabelle enjoys giving back to the community as a volunteer at the Ronald McDonald Family Room at the Moncton Hospital, spending time with her family and cat, and hiking in Fundy Park. Upon completion of her studies, she hopes to establish her career as a psychologist in New Brunswick and improve access to mental health care in the province.

Jennifer McWilliams

University of New Brunswick

Alumni Fellowship

Jennifer was raised in Elm Hill (NB), one of Canada's earliest Black settlements (est. 1806) and one of the last surviving Black Canadian communities in New Brunswick. Having grown up observing and experiencing racial prejudice and discrimination, Jennifer knew that she wanted to help individuals whose voices go unheard, and pursuing a degree in psychology was one way that this aspiration could be realised. In 2016, Jennifer received a Bachelor of Science degree with First Class Honours in Psychology from the University of New Brunswick (UNB).

Jennifer is currently a PhD Candidate in the Experimental Psychology program at UNB, working under the supervision of Drs. Carmen Poulin and Lynne Gouliquer. Her research interests include the psychosocial impact of social and cultural practices on the daily lives of marginalised populations and on women in men-dominated occupations, as well as the effects of prejudice and discrimination on Black individuals. During her SSHRC-funded master's research, she examined the experiences of ageing career women firefighters in Canada.

Inspired by her future role as a sibling caregiver of an individual with an intellectual disability, Jennifer's PhD thesis, also funded by SSHRC, focuses on the lived experiences of sibling caregivers of individuals with intellectual disabilities who reside in NB and Ontario. With this research, Jennifer hopes to establish direct connections between problematic social practices and established policies, as well as to promote change. She is honoured to receive an O'Brien Fellowship and the Alumni award for 2020.



Mylène Suzie Michaud

University of Ottawa



Mylène Suzie Michaud grew up in Baker-Brook, a small village in northwestern New Brunswick. In 2011, she obtained her Bachelor of Nursing degree from the Université de Moncton, Edmundston campus. Shortly after obtaining her bachelor's degree, she completed the New Brunswick Critical Care Nursing Program (NBCCNP) and began her career in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) as a bedside nurse. Her clinical experience in critical care has made her aware of the many challenges faced by people requiring life-sustaining support in today's high-tech care environment, particularly those requiring “ventilation”--that is, help with breathing by means of mechanical ventilation.

In an effort to improve nursing care for ventilated individuals, Mylène Suzie enrolled in the Master of Nursing program at the University of Ottawa. In the fall of 2017, she received her graduate degree, her certification in Critical Care Nursing from the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), and began a PhD in Nursing at the University of Ottawa. Her doctoral thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Jean Daniel Jacob and Dr. Marilou Gagnon, is the first of its kind and aims to understand the process of care (meanings, interpretations and actions of nurses) with respect to the management of ventilated individuals in the ICU.

Mylène Suzie wishes to thank the Leonard and Kathleen O'Brien Humanitarian Trust for awarding her a doctoral scholarship to continue her graduate studies, as it contributes significantly to her research productivity and achievement of an academic career.

Sacha DeWolfe

University of New Brunswick

Sacha DeWolfe has been an educator for 14 years, working in the field of Indigenous education at all levels of practice. In addition to serving as Director for the Office of First Nation Education at the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, she is currently doing her PhD in Education at the University of New Brunswick (UNB). Sacha has been active on several research teams investigating various aspects of Indigenous education and is the recipient of the Dr Althea Warren Macaullay CFUW scholarship (2018-2019) and of Indspire's Building Brighter Futures awards for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. Her PhD research focuses on examining the social, political and historical factors contributing to her identity as a Mi'kmaq woman, and on how her life stories and those of an Elder contribute to a more expanded dialogue of Wabanaki identity.



Sacha's academic life has been multi-faceted. As an undergraduate who excelled in athletics, she earned many awards as a member of the University of New Brunswick's Women's Volleyball team while completing her Bachelor of Arts (with a major in Sociology and a double minor in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations) and subsequently her Bachelor of Education, with a focus on elementary. Sacha completed her Masters of Education in Critical Theory with her thesis "Schooling Behind Bars: An Analysis of the Therapeutic Community Model and How it Shaped Education for Incarcerated Youth" (UNB, 2012).

Passionate about the pillars that uphold community--education, economic growth, social capital, and the well-being of Indigenous peoples--Sacha is pictured here with her mother and her 4-year-old son ("They are the reason I've made it this far"). She is honoured and elated to receive an O'Brien Fellowship and particularly wishes to thank the Selection Committee for seeing value in her research.

Shawn Kroetsch

University of New Brunswick Saint John



Shawn is pursuing his PhD in Biology at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John, New Brunswick. His thesis seeks to combine biology, genomics, statistics, and bioinformatics to explore the gut bacteria of aquatic insects and crustaceans.

Gut bacteria are believed to play a key role in maintaining host fitness and health; however, they are currently highly understudied in aquatic insects and crustaceans. New Brunswick features many ecologically- and economically-valuable invertebrate species, so gaining an understanding of how their gut bacteria are affected by several ecological factors is crucial in determining their importance. Shawn plans to combine natural sampling of aquatic habitats with tank-based experiments and machine learning-based simulations to explore these relationships.

In his spare time, Shawn enjoys catching up with and spending time with his friends and family. Over the past couple of years, he has taken an interest in photography and enjoys capturing, editing, and sharing his works with his friends. Most recently, Shawn has also started learning several programming languages which he feels will complement various aspects of his PhD project, and will prove invaluable in his path toward an eventual career in data science or medical research.

The 2020 Selection Committee

Highest accolades always, and especially this year, are owed to members of the Selection Committee. In addition to giving so much of their time and expertise to the O'Brien Foundation, they evaluated the many applications and made important recommendations while experiencing extraordinary disruptions in their own institutions and personal lives. We are profoundly grateful to them for all that they have done and continue to do.

In November 2019, returning member [Dr. Alan Sears](#) (Education, University of New Brunswick) became Selection Committee Chair. Together with [Dr. Mary Lou Babineau](#) (Spanish and Latin American Studies, St. Thomas University) and [Dr. Andrea Morash](#) (Biology, Mount Allison University), who've served on the O'Brien Selection Committee since 2016 and 2018 respectively, Dr. Sears and the Board were extremely pleased to welcome three new members to the Selection Committee in 2019-2020:

[Dr. Kevin Englehart](#)

University of New Brunswick

Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering, former Director of the Institute of Biomedical Engineering, and O'Brien Fellow in 1994. With over 160 peer-reviewed publications & five book chapters to his credit, his research in biomedical signal processing has led to major advances in the control of artificial limbs. Dr. Englehart serves on national & international committees including National Science and Engineering Research Council, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the U.S National Institutes of Health, the Hong Kong Research Grants Council, and the Italian National Institute of Health.
www.ece.unb.ca/kengleha/



[Malaïka Bacon-Dussault, LLB, LLM](#)

University of Moncton

A member of the Law Faculty at the University of Moncton since 2013, Professor Bacon-Dussault has served as legal counsel in Ontario provincial courts, Canadian federal courts, and for the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. In addition to her extensive list of publications, she is fluent in several languages and her scholarly/professional interests are diverse, ranging from environmental law (natural resources, biodiversity) to human and animal rights, international and interprovincial trade laws/regulations, and development of legal standards.



[Dr. Jonathan Wilbiks](#)

University of New Brunswick Saint John

Dr. Wilbiks is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of New Brunswick Saint John and director of the Music and Multisensory Processes Lab. He is also current Chair of the Canadian Psychological Association (Brain and Cognitive Sciences) and was a Margaret and Wallace McCain Postdoctoral Fellow at Mount Allison University Department of Psychology. Dr. Wilbiks researches how our brains integrate auditory and visual information, how musical training affects our perception and cognition, and how attention functions cross-modally. Learn more about Dr. Wilbiks and his work [Learn more about Dr. Wilbiks and his work.](#)



You may recall introductions to Dr. Alan Sears and Dr. Andrea Morash in the O'Brien News Spring/Summer 2018 edition, and the feature on Dr. Mary Lou Babineau in the Winter 2016 issue. (See [previous newsletters](#) on our website.) In addition to volunteering their time to the O'Brien Foundation, these dedicated scholars and faculty serve their students, their professions, and the larger world in ways that merit more attention than they can receive here. For example, in addition to her research and teaching, Mary Lou Babineau continues to serve in various capacities (president, spokesperson, and now treasurer) on the Board and Executive of the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations ([FAFNB](#)). Andrea Morash has recently [received multi-year research grants](#) from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC). Alan Sears received national and international attention in presenting the [2017 Eaton Lecture](#) and earned the highest distinction that the University of New Brunswick bestows upon faculty, as the 2019 recipient of [the President's Medal](#). The O'Brien Foundation is honoured by the generous spirits of the individuals who make up its Selection Committee now, as well as those who've served in the past.



We salute you all!

Meet New Brunswick's new Lieutenant Governor

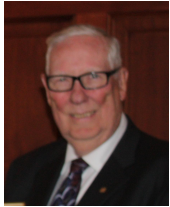
Last fall, the Prime Minister of Canada announced the appointment of a new Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, the [Honourable Brenda Murphy](#). A longtime advocate for social inclusion, gender equality, and economic justice, Ms. Murphy had worked professionally and voluntarily for over two decades with local, provincial, and national organizations dedicated to advancing gender equality and lifting people out of poverty. She had also served three terms as a municipal councillor in her home community, the town of Grand Bay-Westfield. As Premier Higgs observed, "she has demonstrated her commitment to our province through her work aimed at ending poverty and family violence, and advancing women's equality, and I know she will continue to do so as our new lieutenant-governor."

It is a great pleasure to congratulate Her Honour on her appointment to office and to welcome her as Honorary President of the O'Brien Foundation. As the 32nd Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, the Honourable Brenda Murphy is the third woman since Confederation (1867) to serve as the province's viceroy.



Looking Forward...

Along with others near and far, I'm optimistic that "in person" meetings and events will once again take place on a larger scale, hopefully in time for **2021, when we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Leonard and Kathleen O'Brien Humanitarian Trust**. The 'bold' in that statement is a correction to the Reception Cancellation Announcement of May 8, 2020, which erroneously stated that 2021 marks "the 50th Anniversary of the awarding of O'Brien Fellowships." (In fact, the awards were first made in 1975, so the semi-centennial of the *awards* will be in 2025.) Next year is *the Foundation's* 50th anniversary, a half-century since the establishment of the Leonard and Kathleen O'Brien Humanitarian Trust (1971-2021).



I am deeply grateful to Gordon Thomson, our Chair Emeritus, for drawing my attention to that distinction. As many of you know, he played a central role in establishing the O'Briens' legacy and he continues to serve--with unparalleled kindness--as its faithful guardian and our guide.

...to celebrating!

With the 50th anniversary of the O'Brien Foundation just around the corner, we'd like to reconnect with as many of you--Alumni and former Board or Selection Committee members--as possible. The next issue of *The O'Brien Foundation News* will focus on our Alumni and friends, and we'd love to hear from you! *Where are you now? What are you currently doing? Have you had any experiences you'd like to share? (Did the O'Brien Foundation have any bearing on them?)*. Please, [send an email](#) or letter with any information or material that you'd like to share with us, or call me:

Dr. Jill Watson, Executive Director, The O'Brien Foundation
215 rue Kings College Rd, Fredericton NB, E3B 2E6. Tel: 506 230-5646

In its 45 years of awarding Fellowships (1975 - 2020), the Foundation has received 2,426 applications and granted **353** fellowships. This year (2020) also marks the *ninth* award of a fellowship made possible by the O'Brien Alumni. The total value of awards granted in these years is now **\$1,847,000**. The financial assistance received by our Fellows is critically important to them, usually coming at a stage in their studies and career when they most need it. We are exceptionally proud of the accomplishments of all our O'Brien Fellows, past and present.

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