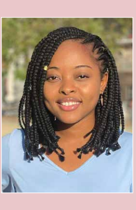
The Royal Society of Canada Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella Prize 2023

The Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella Prize will be presented annually to a graduating law student in each of the law schools in Canada who is most likely to positively influence equity and social justice in Canada or globally upon graduation.

ATONGFOR, Emmanuelle | Université de Montréal



During her studies, Emmanuelle Atongfor was actively involved at various levels, including as a researcher, and subsequently as Pro Bono Coordinator at EPBC. She also promoted diversity and inclusion through various student associations. Having completed her Bachelor of Law degree, Emmanuelle intends to continue to use her expertise to support her community.

BICER, Cem | Thompson Rivers University

Cem Bicer graduated from TRU Faculty of Law in 2023. He was the president of the TRU Human Rights Law Club and participated in TRU Community Legal Clinic. He also worked at First United Church Legal Advocacy in Downtown Eastside. Currently, he is articling at Law Students' Legal Advice Program.

BOUMAN, Leandra | Dalhousie University

Leandra Bouman graduated as part of the Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Initiative. She served as President of the Dalhousie Black Law Students' Association in her final year, having been involved with the association throughout her degree. She maintains interests in promoting literacy, food security, and the arts through ongoing volunteer activities.

BRANCH, Céleste | Université de Moncton

Céleste Branch, a law student at the Université de Moncton (New Brunswick), has distinguished herself through her commitment as President and External Vice-President of the student association. She was a student representative to the Academic Senate and the Canadian Bar Association (New Brunswick Branch). Her involvement with the national Pro Bono network earned her the prestigious Chief Justice Richard Wagner Award. In addition, she bolstered her academic career with a mentoring course at the Court of Appeal, with the Honourable Chief Justice Marc Richard.

BROWNE, Mark | University of New Brunswick

A proud son of Newfoundland & Labrador, Mark Browne's rural upbringing taught him the importance of helping and respecting others. These values propelled him to seek public office, becoming the youngest person ever elected to NL's House of Assembly as the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue. During law school, he exemplified excellence graduating top of his class in May 2023 and being named Best Overall Advocate in Canada during the 2022 Sopinka Moot. His commitment to service also continued during law school as Chair of the UNB Law Students Society, and as a pro-bono volunteer with the PEI Fishermen's Association, the New Brunswick Stewart McKelvey Wills Project and the 519 Trans ID Clinic in downtown Toronto. Mark will clerk at the Ontario Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada and remains committed to championing justice, decency, and equality for all, steadfast in his belief that public service can advance the public good.

CAINES, Casey | University of Alberta

Casey Caines, a Cree & Dene woman, mother, UofA graduate, and advocate from Fort Nelson First Nation has been fortunate to work alongside incredible leaders in diverse spaces envisioning ways to reduce systemic inequalities and barriers to access. She will be clerking at the ABCA then SCC before returning to Wahkohtowin Law & Governance Lodge.

FRANCO, Camila | McGill University

Camila Franco came to law school after working for a justice committee that supports youth navigating the criminal system. At McGill Law, Camila was immersed in community empowerment initiatives through her leadership at Radlaw, the Women of Colour Collective and the L.E.X. outreach program. She worked at the Centre for Research Action on Race Relations, McGill's Legal Information Clinic, and the Citizen Lab on issues ranging from racial profiling to tenant rights, and digital surveillance. Camila completed McGill's J.D./ B.C.L. program with a major in Human Rights and International Development and is currently clerking for Chief Justice Ritu Khullar at the Alberta Court of Appeal.

FRIESEN, Katrina | Toronto Metropolitan University

As a member of the inaugural class at the Lincoln Alexander School of Law, Katrina Friesen launched and led the school's Pro Bono Students Canada Chapter. Her academic research investigates bias in refugee law decision-makers. Katrina is beginning her career in criminal defence, with a focus on reducing barriers to justice for youth.

GÉNÉREUX-MAROTTE, Félix | Université du Québec à Montréal

Félix Généreux-Marotte is a passionate social justice advocate. He volunteers at the Mobile Legal Clinic and serves on the board of directors of the Clinique Droits Devant. Félix is also a community organizer in charge of legal affairs at the Organisation populaire des droits sociaux, an association that defends the rights of social assistance recipients.

HALLAK, Milo | Université d'Ottawa (Droit civil)

Milo is a law graduate and student at BLG. While at the University of Ottawa, Milo founded the LGBTQ+ Rights Association. He remains fully committed to this cause, notably with PRISME, an annual conference dedicated to promoting the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people within the legal profession.

HAQ, Saliha | University of Calgary

Saliha Haq obtained her J.D. from the University of Calgary's Faculty of Law in 2023. During her time in law school, Saliha was elected as the Faculty's Student's Union Representative from 2021 – 2023. In her role as the Student's Union Representative for her Faculty, Saliha spearheaded multiple EDI initiatives within the law school. She established the AMANAH Scholarship in Law which is aimed towards helping new and current law students belonging to systemically marginalized groups to tackle financial barriers that prevent them from pursuing a career in law. She also organized and hosted the Faculty of Law's first Iftar Dinner in 2023, which is the first legal-based Iftar dinner to be hosted by any law school in Western Canada. Saliha is excited be continuing her legal career at Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP in Calgary.

JIROUSEK, Tomas | University of Toronto

Tomas Jirousek is a clerk at the Court of Appeal for Ontario, having graduated from the JD program in the spring. As a law student, Tomas has coordinated the Indigenous Human Rights Program, served as senior editor at the Indigenous Law Journal, and was Co-President of both the Indigenous and LGBTQ+ law student associations.

LONECHILD, Darian | University of Saskatchewan

Darian Lonechild is the former elected Youth Representative of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, as well as the former Co-Chair of the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council. While completing her Juris Doctor, Darian served as a policy advisor to the Chief of Police in Saskatoon and spent a term working as a student legal advocate for Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City ("CLASSIC"). Darian's passion for advocating on behalf of First Nations has propelled her to the legal profession in pursuit of justice.

MADELEIN, Etienne | Université de Sherbrooke

Etienne Madelein is a graduate of the Université de Sherbrooke's JD/LL.B. program. He is currently articling with Power Law, a firm which notably works in constitutional litigation to assert the rights of minorities. He has been involved with Amnesty International and in politics to promote justice at home and abroad.

NICOLIDAKIS-MUSTAFA, Yanni | The University of British Columbia

Over the last three years, Yanni Nicolidakis-Mustafa served Vancouver's Downtown Eastside while working on national interventions centred around access to justice. He is grateful to continue this work while articling at CLAS, a human rights and public-interest law firm. He looks forward to clerking at the BC Court of Appeal thereafter.

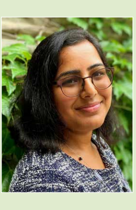
PLENERT, Jodi | University of Manitoba

Currently articling at Cochrane Saxberg LLP, Jodi Plenert strives to assist Indigenous communities in tackling systemic racism and dismantling colonial legal mechanisms. Throughout her degree, she promoted A2J and equity by participating in the Robson Hall Rights Clinic, the Cochrane Saxberg Indigenous Community Legal Clinic, Welcome Place, Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program, and the Legal Help Centre.

ROONEY, Erin | Lakehead University

Erin Rooney is a graduate of Lakehead University's Bora Laskin Faculty of Law. Erin was an active member of her student community, advocating for her peers and advancing equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. With a focus on improved access to justice, she seeks to apply her valuable experience to make a positive impact.

SANDHU, Nikki | Western University



Graduating from Western University, Nikki Sandhu has dedicated her time to social justice initiatives. This includes acting as a Team Leader with Community Legal Services and the Co-Chair for the Diversity Committee. Nikki looks forward to articling with the City of Toronto this year.

SHAREGHI, Nima | Université Laval

Passionate about history and philosophy, Nima Shareghi graduated from the Université Laval's Faculty of Law, where he took an interest in the political and legal foundations of our society that led him to complete an internship at the Quebec National Assembly. During his studies, he was actively involved as President of the student association.

SMITH, Rebekah | University of Victoria

Rebekah Smith is a graduate of the JD/JID program. Over the past ten years Rebekah has worked with non-profit organizations that promote access to justice, youth leadership development, and community building. In law school, Rebekah was a teaching assistant, research assistant, and a peer tutor. She also served as events coordinator and president of the UVic BLSA chapter, where she advocated for pathways to increase black student enrollment at UVic.

STAATS-PANGOWISH, Esentsei | University of Windsor

Esentsei Staats-Pangowish is a citizen of two great sovereign confederacies, Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Three Fires Confederacy. She made history by being the first Indigenous student to graduate with a Master of Laws degree (University of Windsor). She is now pursuing her PhD at Osgoode Hall Law School.

ST-JEAN, Amber | Queen's University

Amber St-Jean (she/her) is a recent graduate from Queen's University's joint MPA/JD program. While at Queen's her commitment to supporting the advancement of reconciliation has been shown through her leadership roles with the Queen's Conference on Indigenous Reconciliation, the Equity & Diversity Committee, and other Queen's Law groups.

THABET, Clémence | University of Ottawa (Common Law)

Clémence Thabet is a graduate of the French common law program, and a settler on unceded Algonquin territory. While at the University of Ottawa, they worked with several social initiatives including the Equality Law Clinic, the Rainbow Refuge, and the ID Project. Going forward, they hope to contribute to queer/trans legal scholarship and advocacy.

TRAISTER, Matthew | York University

Matthew Traister is a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School. He volunteered for various refugee organizations during his time at Osgoode as well as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, seeking to promote a just interaction between state and individual.