

# **2019 Mandelbaum Fellowship Award**

Citation for Rebecca Ellis

The logo for OCUFA, consisting of the letters 'OCUFA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The 'O' and 'C' are connected, and the 'U' and 'F' are connected. The 'A' is a simple, blocky letter.

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## **Citation for Rebecca Ellis**

*Read by Rahul Sapra, OCUFA Vice-President*

This year's Henry Mandelbaum Graduate fellowship award winner at the PhD level of study is Rebecca Ellis, a doctoral candidate at the University of Western Ontario in Human Geography. She is the eighth PhD candidate to win this fellowship and she clearly embodies the spirit of the Mandelbaum award, as she is a true leader, community organizer, and optimist.

Using a political ecology analysis framework, Rebecca is conducting a multispecies ethnography to explore the relationship between people and urban bees in two Ontario cities. Given the global decline in insect populations which impacts our food systems and bee migration patterns, this research aims to determine how we can create cities where wild and managed bees can live harmoniously with humans.

In addition to her academic work, Rebecca has proven herself a leader in her community, driven to build a better world. This volunteer work has spanned many areas including:

- environmental endeavours, such as organizing the Mantis Arts and Eco Festival in London for three years, sitting on the steering committee of the London Environmental Network, and acting as the Chair of the Urban Agriculture Steering Committee;
- building community networks through work at the London Public Library, starting the Byron Community Organization, and being on the Board of the London Cycle Link;
- investing in youth by creating a popular children's gardening program called Sprouts, receiving multiple grants to set up community gardens and beehives; and
- promoting education through the facilitation of a reading group called Feminism for the 99%, blogging about permaculture, and podcasting about social justice issues,

In addition to her formidable community work, Rebecca is a prolific publisher and presenter. She has an impressive record of disseminating her knowledge in academic journals, at conferences, and in the local media through op-eds and



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interviews. Her commitment to sharing her research and experience is commendable.

Rebecca's academic standing is equally impressive. She has earned Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funding for both her Master's and PhD work as well as an Ontario Graduate Scholarship in the first year of her PhD.

The selection committee was not alone in being impressed by Rebecca's record. Her references were glowing and included the following comments:

*Rebecca has a level of boldness and creativity that is only found among the most elite graduate students, as well as outstanding communication skills and a long record of voluntarism and meaningful public engagement related to environmental and social justice advocacy...I can say in all sincerity that Rebecca is one of the most passionate and dynamic people I know. Her boundless energy for research, teaching, and community outreach are ultimately driven by a deep desire to contribute to a more sustainable and socially just world. In sum, I have no doubt that Rebecca has the intelligence, commitment, and work ethic to be a rigorous and highly original scholar, who will make a great contribution within and beyond academia.*

Another referee echoed these sentiments:

*In addition to being the highest achiever of her competitive cohort in our doctoral program, Rebecca's supervisor and professors consistently remark on her thoroughness, originality, and thoughtfulness in work as a scholarly and community leader and teacher.*

A third referee went on to laud her mentoring abilities and her capacity to treat all students she teaches with dignity and respect. It was noted that her exceptional presentation skills have made her a wonderful guest lecturer as well.

It is clear that Rebecca has passion and dedication. The committee found her enthusiasm, giving nature, and commitment to social justice inspiring. Her research is timely in the context of drastic environmental changes and her work on the plight of Ontario's bees is likely to yield important knowledge in the coming years. For all her contributions, both academic and to her community, it is my pleasure to add the OCUFA Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship to Rebecca Ellis' growing list of accomplishments.