

Newsletter

Léa Roback Foundation

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12/25

Women Scholarships 2025-2026



A Word of the President

Lighting a Candle...



Our annual fundraising campaign is in full swing. With the theme “It ain’t gonna be easy,” it’s an invitation to support the Foundation because women need our help now more than ever. This call for solidarity reminds me of a saying from Confucius: “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

Both our theme and the Confucian saying are invitations to take action. In a world that has become so disoriented due to armed conflict, extremism and polarization, climate disasters, the horrific gap between rich and poor, the power wielded by heartless and unscrupulous oligarchs, it is only natural to become discouraged and to be overcome by a feeling of helplessness. And yet...

Like athletes who know that no competition will be easy, or like activists who are engaged in a struggle to advance a cause or defend human rights, and like all those who, when faced with a challenge, roll up their sleeves and tackle it head-on, we know that action brings hope.

Thanks to your contribution – a concrete demonstration of solidarity – the Foundation is able to support women who are committed to pursuing their studies to improve their lives and the lives of their families, to escape poverty, and even violence, and to realize their dreams. Their path is difficult, demanding, and fraught with obstacles. They couldn’t do it without the helping hand that a scholarship represents.

In recent years, individuals and organizations have joined the ranks of donors by becoming major partners of the Foundation. This has enabled us, thanks to significant contributions guaranteed for a number of years, to increase the number of scholarships awarded each year. Our heartfelt thanks to the Foundation of the Sisters of Saint-Joseph of Saint-Hyacinthe, the JOC Foundation, the Fondation

Pierre-L. -Baribeau, the Fonds Baillargeon-Marleau, Ms. Nicole Ranger and Ms. Nicole Choinière. Donors who wish to remain anonymous have just signed a partnership agreement ensuring a donation of \$10,000 over a five-year period, while the Fondation Pierre-L. Baribeau has recently extended its agreement. Discussions are underway to conclude similar agreements with other individuals and organizations. The tribute paid in these pages to the Foundation's first president, Nicole Lacelle, who recently passed away, is an eloquent illustration of how action remains the best way to bring about hope and dispel darkness. Léa Roback also believed in this, as she focused on the patch of blue sky amid the grey clouds, as she liked to say.

The women who turn to us for financial support to begin or pursue their studies light a candle to dispel the darkness that has fallen upon them. The Foundation lights a candle by accompanying them on their journey. Our donors light a candle and bring them hope by making the Foundation's work possible. As you read our Newsletter, you will see this for yourself in the many inspiring stories you will find here.

At the year draws to a close, on behalf of the members of the Board of Directors and all our scholarship recipients, I want to thank you for your unwavering commitment to our cause. We wish you all the best for 2026 and hope that it provides you with many opportunities to bring a little light into a world that sorely needs it.



Lorraine Pagé
President



**Fondation Léa-Roback,
Case postale 431, Succursale Boucherville
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Introducing the Léa Roback Foundation Scholarship Recipients

Thanks to the generosity of the Foundation's friends and partners, we were once again able to award 36 scholarships ranging from \$1,500 to \$4,000. These scholarships often make a big difference, as Valentine attests:

"I am deeply grateful to have received this scholarship, which is a real source of motivation for me. Your financial support not only helps me to continue my studies, but it also inspires others who, like me, have academic ambitions but who face financial obstacles."

"This scholarship represents much more than just financial assistance; it symbolizes the opportunity to realize my dreams and contribute to my community."

We are proud to introduce these 36 determined women.

Literacy

Véronique

Courageous: the word is not strong enough to describe Véronique's journey. After several years in the workforce, including 15 years as a flight attendant for a well-known airline, Véronique's life was turned upside down.

She suffered a trauma that affected her memory and the knowledge she had acquired at school, forcing her to resume her academic studies. In 2024, she enrolled in a literacy program at La Maison des mots, in the Laurentians, to "learn to write and to regain confidence in myself." The scholarship will help her purchase school supplies.

Véronique also volunteers in the kitchen at La Maison des mots and is always ready to help others.

General Secondary Education

Sara

Sara is the mother of a four-year-old boy and the guardian of her ten-year-old niece and is the sole person responsible for them.

Sara decided to return to school and complete her secondary education at Le Retour, a general education centre in La Sarre, to find a better job.

She is very active in her community. She worked on a sewing project at Le Retour, and since 2023 has been actively involved with the solidarity kitchens at L'Érigé, a women's centre.

She also does odd jobs for an organization that provides shelter to people with mental health issues.

Nicol Rodriguez



Nicol is a single mother of a two-year-old boy. After her parental leave, her employer laid her off, and since she'd received certain benefits (for example, vacation pay) during her maternity leave, she had to make repayments.

But as she says, her worst nightmare was not being able to find a job because she didn't have a high school diploma. She's currently studying at the Centre Paul Graton to obtain her high school diploma and hopes to enter CEGEP in 2026.

To help the community, she is involved with La Nouvelle Espérance church. She does gardening for Les Arpents Verts, a community organization whose harvest is donated to those in need and to women who have been abused. She also helps single-parent families.

Vocational Secondary Studies

Suzanne

Suzanne decided to change her career path and to do secretarial studies at the Samuel-de-Champlain vocational training centre. Previously, she worked in the restaurant industry and at Super C.

In continuing her studies, she hopes to have a better-paying job. She is very active with AA: she works at a women's detention centre and at as a facilitator at conferences.

She is also actively involved with the Fraternité St-Alphonse, a home that welcomes people in need, those with addiction or personal problems.

Élyane Gagné



Élyane is still very young, yet she has been volunteering for several years at the Françoise-Angers library in L'Épiphanie, in Lanaudière. She is currently enrolled in an agricultural training centre in Mirabel. While still in high school, Élyane

took part in an extracurricular program on the environment, ecology, and crops. She says she *"has always been passionate about agriculture and studying it and making it my future career is a dream come true."*

Maguiraga Badiallo Coulibaly

Badiallo has had an extraordinary journey. Originally from Mali, she fled to Canada via New York and now lives in the Beauce. She has two children, one of whom is less than a year old, while the older one, a teenager, lives in Africa.



She is very involved in her adopted community. She has been a case-worker and volunteer at Praida, an immigrant integration organization in Montreal. With the Alpa (Accueil Liaison Pour Arrivants) organization, Badiallo taught French language courses. She is now a volunteer and counsellor at the youth centre in Beauce-Centre.

Although she has a keen interest in culture and audio-visual media, Badiallo chose to enrol in the Pozer vocational training centre in St-Georges, in the Beauce, and study in the Health and Social Services Support program.

Sasha

Sasha obtained her high school diploma while studying at home, as her parents were members of a sect in the Lanaudière region. She had little freedom as she grew up in a very rigid environment and was obliged to comply with the sect's rules.

Sasha and her sister left their family home. She must support herself and works as a cashier. She is studying Visual Arts at the Cégep de Joliette. In 2023, she was a counsellor at St-Paul summer camp.

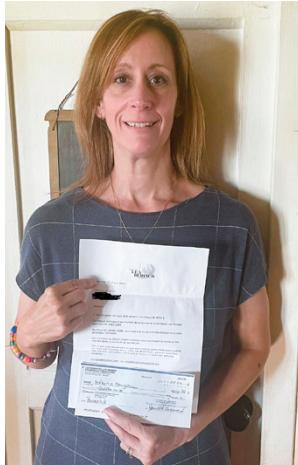
One of her teachers describes Sasha in these terms: ***"Few students her age are able to successfully pursue full-time studies while also being financially responsible and managing their own apartment as well as all the uncertainties of adult life."***

CEGEP Technical Training

Mélanie Mongrain

Mélanie is the mother of six children, two of whom have mild disabilities. Mélanie volunteers at her children's schools.

Since 2022, she is the parent mentor for the Music-Study program La Découverte Secondary School.



Since 2023, she has been a member of the school council at the elementary school as well as a representative on the parents' committee at the school service centre. She's also a parent volunteer for activities and school outings.

In the fall, she began an intensive course in Educational Technology at Collège Laflèche in Trois-Rivières. This is a two-year course rather than the customary three years. Previously, Mélanie worked in the healthcare sector, but she is more interested in the education sector.

Sarafina

Sarafina has a child for whom she is solely responsible; the child's father doesn't live in this country. Life has not always been easy for her as she has been a victim of violence.

Instead of pursuing her DEC in Humanities, Sarafina chose to study Administration and Management at the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles. The scholarship will allow her to focus more on her studies.

She has volunteered at the Église Evangelique du Salut and was a counsellor at a Bible day camp. She plans to create a cooperative for immigrant women to facilitate their independence and integration.

Megane Bourdon

Mégane agreed to give an interview, an account of which can be found At page 16 of this newsletter.



Marianne Lachance



After ten years in the labour market, Marianne enrolled in a multidisciplinary Bachelor's degree in Linguistics and university-level Second-language Teaching, at Université de Laval. She chose this field "to better understand the mechanisms of language and its acquisition, so that I, in turn, can be a better teacher."

"Marianne considers herself a feminist, socialist, and trade unionist." For four years, she was an engaged and mobilized activist with the Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de la Librairie Renaud-Bray-CSN. She leads a workshop in French language acquisition and designs educational materials for the Vie de Quartier organization in Ste-Foy. She participates in the global health program at the CLSC and collaborates with community organizations.

Mireille

Mireille came to Canada from Mexico in 2008 with the man who would become the father of her children, who are now six and ten years old. She lived and studied in La Pocatière and now resides in Quebec City.

She experienced a series of misfortunes and difficulties. She went through a tumultuous divorce, and there is still a case pending in court. Her home was destroyed by fire, and she was seriously ill, which led to the loss of her job. She is persevering and is now pursuing a Bachelor's degree program in Social Work at Université Laval. Despite her

difficulties, she devotes time to others. She is currently a volunteer with Jeunes musiciens du monde. She has been a member of the environment committee at Cégep de La Pocatière as well as at Cégep du Limoilou. In Quebec City, she has been an activist with Engrenage St-Roch, promoting quality of life in the neighbourhood, and at the Centre Jacques-Cartier, which supports young adults.

The scholarship will help her "meet my basic needs, reduce stress, and stay healthy."

Michaëlle Rollin

Michaëlle has worked with a most challenging clientele, providing support for children diagnosed with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) and who have severe behavioural issues. In the course of her work, she was a victim of an assault and experienced post-traumatic stress disorder.

She was off work for several years and cannot return to her job as a special education teacher.

She has shown great determination to rebuild her life. She took Spanish classes and developed a passion for Hispanic culture. Michaëlle did two immersion internships in Mexico, living with local families.

She is currently pursuing a university certificate in Hispanic Language and Cultures with Téluq.



"Please know that receiving this scholarship marks the end of a journey fraught with obstacles, and the beginning of another, easier one. This scholarship will allow me to offer the best of my knowledge so that I can help others in turn."

Shanie Beaudin



Shanie is pursuing a degree in Administration and Management at the Cégep de l'Outaouais.

Earlier in her schooling, she received a number of honours; in high school she was the recipient of a

Governor General's award for the success of an entrepreneurial project.

At CEGEP, she sits on the committee that organizes activities for the program in Administration. She is also involved in her community, La Petite Nation, and in her town, Thuroso, for example with bingo, carnival, and the creation of a haunted house.

Baillargeon-Marleau Fund

Vocational Secondary Education DEP

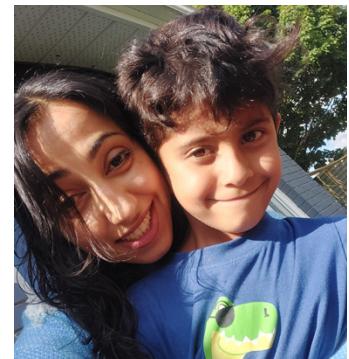
Kareen

Kareen is a single mother of a six-year-old child. Several events turned her life upside down, but in 2024 Kareen decided to go back to school, for her son and herself.

While she has a DEP (Vocational Studies Diploma) in Hairdressing, she chose to change careers, since hairdressing wasn't exactly what she wanted to do. Instead, she chose a DEP in Secretarial Studies. This option will allow her to better balance work and family life. She is enrolled in the Fleuve-et-des-Lacs vocational training centre in Témiscouata-sur-le-Lac. Kareen has done volunteer work in seniors' residences.

Noor Alamri

Noor is a permanent resident who is originally from Yemen and now lives in Gatineau. She has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Sana'a University in Yemen. In her country of origin, she raised awareness about the dangers related to war and antipersonnel mines by training volunteers and by accompanying teams going into the communities.



She is now studying Early Childhood Education at Heritage College. She shows great sensitivity in her interactions with children. The situation in Yemen, where poverty, social challenges, and years of political instability prevent children from receiving proper care, led to her desire to contribute to improving the lives of children.

Her teachers say she is hardworking, excels in her studies, and is a model student. She has volunteered as an assistant childcare worker at the Connaught Montessori Daycare and La Passerelle daycare in Gatineau.

Jessika

Jessika is the mother of two children who live with her most of the time. After careful consideration, she decided to study at Cégep de Victoriaville to obtain an AEC (Attestation of College Studies) in Special Education. This is quite a challenge since the CEGEP is 125 kilometres from her home, but fortunately, several courses are offered remotely. She wants to pursue her dream career. She has also been inspired by workers she met in group homes when she was under the care of youth protection services.

Jessika worked at the Maison de la famille du Bassin Maskinongé and has also volunteered her time there and continues to do so. She was also involved with La Croisée, a centre in Repentigny, was a teacher's assistant for seniors and people with intellectual disabilities. Today, she continues to participate in community activities of the CJE (Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi) in Maskinongé.

Laura

Laura had to stop attending school to take care of her mother for 16 years. She is currently studying Nursing at Cégep Bois-de-Boulogne, where she chose the intensive two-year program instead of the customary three years. She has been involved with young marginalized and culturally diverse teenagers at La Converse. She is also a volunteer-scout at the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, where she directs people in distress to resources.

Karen Gutierrez

"I will obtain my diploma in social work, a dream I've had ever since I immigrated to Canada."



Karen is enrolled at Cégep St-Foy. She will also take courses remotely since she lives in the Lower Saint Lawrence region. She attended high school in Mexico, her country of origin, but had to complete her secondary education through adult education classes in Quebec. She participates in community

life, is involved in the Atelier du Partage de Saint-Pascal and the soup kitchens in Rivière-du-Loup. She translates for newcomers and as such plays an important role in their integration in their country of adoption. Karen also has a family that includes three young children. People who know her say she is dedicated and very energetic.

Bachelor's Degree and University Certificates

Fléchelle Doucet

Fléchelle was raised in a religious sect in the Joliette region and did her high school courses at home, with unqualified teachers.

"If it weren't for my curiosity and interest in reading, I probably would never have graduated, like most of my classmates."

Education for women is frowned upon in the sect. She obtained her diploma, certified by the school board.

She experienced another trauma: her mother's illness. At a very young age, her mother had to be placed in a long-term care facility, where she passed away. Fléchelle was her caregiver for seven years.

At 18, she left the cult and completed her studies at CEGEP, where she was very active. She was in charge of the thrift shop and sat on the environment and human rights committee. This fall, she began studying for a certificate in Creative Writing at UQÀM.



Em Dufour

Em holds a CEGEP diploma in Arts, from the Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. Her time there was noteworthy and she received several honours, including the Desjardins scholarship for academic excellence and community involvement.

The CEGEP awarded her the Prix d'excellence in Visual Arts and the Prix d'excellence in the Socio-Chimie artistic-research residency.



She is also very involved in several art-related activities, both at the Cégep and in the community. She is an active advocate for the climate and for environmental protection. The list of her involvements is long.

In the fall, she will begin a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Concordia University, with a major in Fibre and Material Practices and a minor in Art History.

"My goal is to play an active role in the democratization of the visual arts, by highlighting the concerns of contemporary artists and by connecting with the community."

"My decision to specialize in the textile arts stems from the historical importance of this discipline for women and marginalized people."

Karyane Grégoire

Karyane “wants to go into dentistry because it will allow her to combine scientific rigour, manual dexterity, and human engagement.”

Indeed, Karyane is starting studies in dental medicine at Université Laval. Karyane completed her college studies at the Cégep de Victoriaville, where she was very active and involved. Among other things, she became responsible for the thrift shop.

She was a member of the Environmental Action and Consultation Committee (CACE) and the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDI), as well as a member of the Cégep's academic committee.



Merveille Kouevi

Merveille came to Canada from Bénin at about four years of age. Her family life has not always been easy, but she has done well. Today, she has a diploma in accounting and management from the Cégep de Victoriaville. She is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, with a focus on marketing, at the Université du Québec de Trois-Rivières.

She has been actively involved in the student association, first as secretary of educational affairs, then as vice-president of internal affairs, and finally, since March 2024, as president of the association. She has also been involved in the Cégep's coop, first as vice-president, then as chair of the board of directors.

"This scholarship represents more than just financial aid: it will support me in achieving my ambitions and realizing my dreams of social change and engagement."



Lori-Ann

"In 2023, I made the decision to go back to university to finish my studies, which I had put on hold 11 years ago. I left my job as a childcare worker." "Obviously, my studies will benefit my family. But I am pursuing this project first and foremost for myself."

She is enrolled in a Bachelor's degree program in Preschool and Elementary School Education at the Université de Sherbrooke. Her work experience and her commitment have prepared her well for her future career.

Lori-Ann is the mother of two children, ages 8 and 10. She participates in numerous educational projects and activities, including the Université de Sherbrooke's Passeurs de Lecture project, in which she reads books to a Grade 5 class; and also volunteers at the school services centre for the Sherbrooke region, and at the foundation of Les amis de Waterville (La Passerelle). As part of the Massawippi Foundation's education through nature program, she accompanies students on forest outings.

Thalie

Thalie completed a DEC in Science, Literature, and Arts at Cegep Lionel-Groulx, in the spring. She is currently beginning studies in aerospace engineering at École Polytechnique.

“Women are poorly represented in engineering, yet their contribution is remarkable, unique, and innovative. We need to achieve parity.”



Thalie hopes to become the next Farah Alibay, an inspiring engineer. There is no doubt she can do it, given the scholarships and awards she has already received: a special scholarship from the foundation of the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec to pursue her studies in the field of engineering, and an admissions scholarship from the Déplace de l'Air competition at the Polytechnique de Montréal, for finishing in first place.

At just 20 years old, she has already been involved in several activities at the Cégep: the student council, an Amnesty International letter-writing campaign; and a food drive for the Cégep's foundation. In addition, she has accompanied residents of the long-term care facility in Ste-Thérèse de Blainville to bingo and other leisure activities. Thalie is ready to meet the demands of her future profession.

Pierre-Laurier-Baribeau Scholarships

Secondary Education

Taïna Laverdière

Taïna, a woman in her early twenties, went back to school to get her secondary education. As a young person, she had a complex life experience which, combined with academic difficulties, led her to quit school. However, despite the difficulties she encountered, Taïna always hoped that she would finish high school. This year, she gave herself the opportunity to do it, to realize her dream of one day working in the field of communications. Despite a busy schedule, Taïna is involved in a variety of activities, in particular committees working to raise awareness about the status of women.



Léane St-Germain

Léane is a young adult in her early twenties who lives in the Lower St. Lawrence region.

Due to a serious accident, she recently had to re-orient her studies. Despite a difficult year following her accident, Léane is doing well.

She is studying full-time for a high school diploma in accounting and hopes to be able to continue her studies at the university level.

Despite her young age, Léane is a responsible person, for whom it is important to get involved with others. She cared for her little sister for a year and volunteers at a daycare centre.



Merveille MuFula Dhawadi

Merveille is a young woman in her twenties who comes from an immigrant background.



Due to a lack of financial resources, Merveille had to interrupt her education, but a sponsorship program enabled her to return to school. She should finish her studies in nursing this year, in Montreal. However, the sponsorship program is coming to an end and, even though she is working, Merveille faces many financial challenges since she is supporting herself. Tuition fees, the cost of school supplies, and high housing costs mean that it's difficult to make ends meet. A scholarship will be a great help in enabling her to finish her studies and achieve her ambitions. It will also allow her to continue to make a real contribution to her community; despite her financial challenges, Merveille is involved in her student community and volunteers at two hospitals.

Ruth

Ruth, a young woman in her mid-twenties, is an example of resiliency and strength of character. She and her siblings have had a difficult life. Her life, marked by family violence that she both witnessed and experienced as a victim, led her to live in a youth protection facility. Taken in by her older sister and dependent on community and government aid organizations, she works hard

to overcome these difficulties. Having become financially independent at age 18, this scholarship recipient emphasizes the importance of providing access to dental care for those in need and vulnerable communities. The scholarship will help Ruth to overcome certain financial challenges, in particular the purchase of equipment needed to complete her final year of dental hygiene studies. Despite the many difficulties she has faced, Ruth is involved in a homework assistance program for children in need.

Valentine Uwimana

Valentine is a young millennial who fled the Congo with her family and ended up in a refugee camp in Uganda. Selected for a study program in Canada, she is currently studying Social Work in Montreal. She lives on her own in Quebec and must therefore cover her own expenses while helping her family, who still live in a refugee camp. Despite her financial difficulties, she continues to be involved with young refugees. Highly motivated to pursue her studies, she is grateful for the opportunity she has had to build a stable future and contribute to Canadian society.



University Bachelor's Degree

Esther

Esther, a 23-year-old woman, is pursuing a university degree in Psychology. As a child she lived in a difficult environment which ultimately led her to live with a foster family. She would like to become a clinical child psychologist so that, when her studies are completed, she can work in the field of youth protection. Having benefitted from the positive impact of support services in this field, she hopes to give other children the tools they need to overcome adversity. She is currently involved in a homework assistance program in disadvantaged communities as well as a program on youth mental health and well-being on the campus where she is studying. Since she is supporting herself, the scholarship will help ease her financial burden so she can continue her studies.

The scholarship she has been awarded is a special one given to a student who wants to work with at-risk youth.

JOC Scholarships

French Language Acquisition

Niclette

Niclette is a young single mother of two children. Having recently arrived here from the Congo, she is enrolled full-time in a French language integration program in the Centre- du- Québec region. Despite her parental responsibilities and her studies in French language acquisition, Niclette is actively involved in her community and contributes to several community projects aimed at immigrant women. Receiving this scholarship not only provides her with financial support but also gives her additional motivation to continue her studies and build a stable future for her and her children.

Secondary Education – Vocational

Scheba

Scheba is a young woman of African origin. She was granted refugee status due to persecution in her country of origin because of her sexual orientation. Despite a university diploma from her country of origin, she decided to return to school here, to study computer science and electrical engineering, to facilitate her integration into the Canadian job market. The financial aid provided by the scholarship will help her meet the many financial challenges she faces. In Canada, Scheba continues to be involved in the LGBTQ+ community.

University – Bachelor's Degree and Certificate

Maryam Al-Ali

Maryam, a woman in her early twenties from the Eastern Townships, who is from an immigrant background, is studying for a Bachelor's degree in Health Biochemistry. Despite the commitment required by her studies, she is active in her community: in collaboration with the Office municipal d'habitation de Sherbrooke, she has been involved in various projects to improve the living environment for residents of OMH-subsidized apartments.

Convinced that education is a powerful tool for breaking down inequalities and offering new

opportunities, she is also involved in literacy to support immigrants who are learning French, a challenge that she herself had to face when she arrived here.



Receiving this scholarship provides her with essential financial support that allows her to continue her studies without placing additional financial pressure on her family, which faces significant challenges in this area.

Marya Natanaël

Marya Natanaël, a young Indigenous person in her twenties, is pursuing full-time studies to obtain a university certificate in Indigenous Law at the University of Ottawa. Deeply committed to addressing the complex issues facing Indigenous people, she is pursuing her studies to better serve and defend her community, while improving her own socio-economic status. She hopes that, thanks to this scholarship, she will be able to devote more time to her studies and to her social commitments, while becoming a model for Indigenous women.

Galiah Faust

Galiah began a Bachelor's degree in Preschool and Elementary School Education last September, in Quebec City.

Despite her young age, she has always been very active in her community. She got involved in her CEGEP student association as vice-president of sociocultural affairs and sports events. Since high school, she has also been involved, as a volunteer, in various charitable activities. As a resident of the Mauricie, studying outside her native region involves significant expenses. Although she receives financial assistance from her family, the scholarship will help her pay for the many expenses associated with her university education in Quebec City.



A Conversation with Mégane Bourdon

The voice is cheerful, dynamic, self-assured. On the other end of the line Mégane Bourdon conveys all her energy, openness, generosity, and determination.

We don't often have the opportunity to meet or speak with one of our scholarship recipients, so this telephone conversation allows us to make a different kind of connection and to get a vivid picture of this young woman.

In 2017, Mégane finished high school and decided to stop studying: she wanted to work, and support herself, but most of all she had no idea what she wanted to do with her life. *"I wanted to explore."*

From bartender to restaurant manager, she quickly took on responsibilities, gained a wealth of experience, and learned about the demands and a few secrets of the food and restaurant industry.

In 2022, when she decided to go back to school, her experience was useful. She enrolled full-time for the Administration and Management program at the CEGEP de Lanaudière, in Joliette. Now she had a plan, which would become clearer and be refined over time.

At CEGEP, she wanted to become involved and make a difference. She plays an active role on various committees, is fully engaged, expresses herself, takes part in discussions, gives her opinion, is involved in everything, and most of all, she says: *"I acquired confidence in myself, and learned to ask questions."*

Elected representative to the Curriculum Committee, the Board of Governors, and the Board of Directors, active on the Committee Against Sexual Violence, the Green Committee and the



Intercultural Committee, Mégane Bourdon is bursting with ideas for projects and wants to bring them all to fruition. Older than her fellow students, she knows that she has the experience required to help others:

"I plan ahead. I know what it is to study, work, and eat well."

Supported by the director and a teacher, she proposed and has put in place vending machines for free morning snacks and free sanitary products. Well aware of the needs of and challenges faced by the student population, she's created a monthly event, La Faim du mois, which provides bags of food and essential items.

Most of all, she has discovered the power of union solidarity. A revelation.

"I found a mission: to defend those who have no voice."

Where does this desire to help, and give, come from?

"From my grandmothers. They're my inspiration, they were so kind and generous."

Once Mégane finishes CEGEP, she'll apply to university. She wants to become president of the CSN's executive committee.

How will she do that?

She plans to enrol in a number of diploma programs: humanities, political science, industrial relations, law, sociology, which will enable her to teach. Passing on knowledge, helping others, showing solidarity. Her path seems clear.

We wish her a wonderful life

Maman va à l'École Scholarships

“Maman va à l'école would like ALL mothers of single parent families to obtain recognized qualifications.” *

“According to MVÉ, 61,590 single parent mothers do not have a recognized diploma.”

In 2025, the organization awarded 133 scholarships of \$500 to young women from different regions of Quebec, 13 of which were funded by the Léa Roback Foundation.

Métis Chapter

Naomi Lusamba Kayembe

Naomi is currently completing her SASI (Health, Assistance, and Nursing) training at the Centre de formation Rimouski-Neigette.

In 2021, she left South Africa for Canada and settled in Rimouski. She completed level 7 in French language training, obtained a secondary 5 equivalency, and was thus able to continue in the SASI program.

Trained in hotel management and speaking several languages, Naomi is now a volunteer for Accueil et Intégration BSL, an organization in the Lower St. Lawrence. She is a French-Swahili translator for new arrivals. Her sponsor at Maman va à l'école is convinced that her commitment will be an enduring one.

Monique Vicker

Monique was able to get her life track back on track after a rocky start and before having her daughter. She is enrolled in a double DEP (Professional Studies Diploma) at the Centre de formation professionnelle in Dégelis. She would like to become a wildlife officer. She is

applauded for her independence, perseverance, and interest in her studies. Grateful for the help she has received, Monique is involved in her neighbourhood's youth centre.

Gaspésie Chapter

Jessicia Annette Marenger



Jessicia is a devoted mother to her daughter and is keen to pass on important values, such as perseverance and respect for oneself and others, and to convey the love she has for her child.

Jessicia is a committed student. In addition to her involvement in the training centre's activities, she has been volunteering with the Breakfast Club for the past two years.

Jessicia returned to school in 2023. She is now finishing her Secondary 2 in French and Mathematics. She hopes to continue on to Secondary 3 next year. Jessicia is a student who asks questions in class and constantly seeks to gain understanding.

De la Chaudière Chapter

Johannie Bélanger

Johannie is pursuing studies in a DEP in Secretarial Studies after a 20-year hiatus in her education.

Despite the difficulties she has encountered, she remains very involved in her daughters' lives and in the community. She has participated in her town's leisure committee.

She served on the school council to defend the parents' point of view and improve her daughters' school environment. She is currently the director of the Western Festivities in St-Victor.

This scholarship is of great help to her.

Haut-Richelieu Chapter

Kristina Biagioni

Kristina took charge of her sister's education while she herself was still a minor.

"When I became an adult, my sister had her two beautiful children, which delayed her return to school," says her sister.

Today, Kristina has resumed her studies after a 17-year hiatus. She even had the courage to start all over again, because the basics had changed over the years. She has dreams of becoming a nurse.

She is a committed, caring, and generous person. She helps out a neighbour, volunteering every day by looking after her children when they come home from school.

According to her sister, Kristina *"is the most determined, persevering, and passionate person I know, despite the challenges she's had to face."*

Lanaudière Chapter

Gina Perri

Gina is the mother of an adult and a teenager who lives with her. She dropped out of school at a very young age, in Secondary 1. Aware of her lack of professional and educational qualifications, she insisted that her two children persevere in their schooling, stressing that it was essential in order to have a good life.

She then realized that what was true for her children was also true for her, and decided to return to school. It wasn't easy, but she persevered.

Now she loves school and is doing well.

She will soon move on to Secondary 4 and in October will begin a DEP in Nursing to become a nursing assistant. She also volunteers as a coach for Sainte-Sophie's minor league baseball team.



Laura Estafania Royas Parra

Laura, a mother of two, is studying French Language Acquisition at the Centre de formation Les Berges, in Laval. She has only been in Quebec for a few years and has had to overcome many challenges. Despite everything, she's a fighter; she is determined to succeed and does whatever it takes to get there.

In addition to being a mother and student, she finds time for several volunteer activities. First of all, in her class she offered to create and manage the WhatsApp group. She also keeps track of the birthdays in her group and bakes a cake to celebrate each one.

In addition, she volunteers at a long-term care facility in her region to help combat isolation among the elderly.



Vanessa Briard-Lacombe

For as long as she can remember, Vanessa has always struggled at school. But to help her five-year-old son with his studies and to improve their quality of life, she courageously decided to go back to school.

With determination, and support from Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi, she participates in the Odyssey program, which allows parents to gradually return to school in a way that is tailored to their needs. Her goal is to become a patient care attendant.

She has no regrets about her choice and is highly motivated. In particular, she is doing very well in math, which used to be her nemesis!...

In addition, she finds the time and energy to volunteer in her community, at Pax Habitat (a long-term care facility), Héma-Québec, and Paramé, an organization whose motto is Learn, Develop, Transmit.

Repentigny Chapter

Roxanne Lavoie

Roxanne Lavoie is a single mother of two children aged 11 and 13. She is studying towards a DEP in Accounting at the CFP des Riverains and hopes to achieve her goal of becoming an accounting clerk in the automotive industry.

In addition to her personal qualities, Roxanne stands out for her community involvement, in particular for promoting various local activities. She is involved in photography and video editing and screening. She also participates in the community choir, making use of her voice and her energy.

Finally, she is very involved in disseminating relevant information for her church, and her constant desire to contribute to the well-being of the community is undeniable.

Stéphanie Rainville

The personal and academic journey of Stéphanie Rainville, 50, has been punctuated by obstacles. At a very young age, she had to move several times and each time adapting to a new school was particularly difficult. She studied and worked as an aesthetician, but what she really wants to do is be a patient care attendant. Her two children, aged 14 and 16, each have significant personal challenges, but despite this, she has managed to go back to school full time.

Stéphanie is also a socially involved mother who, for four years, was group leader with Action Famille, a community organization. She organized and volunteered in collective cooking workshops. In addition, for the last 15 years, she has been a volunteer with Moisson Lanaudière and participates in the Guignolée des médias, a fundraising event, to help disadvantaged families in her region.

Victoriaville Chapter

Yenny Fabiola Sevillano Portocarrero

In the fall, Yenny will continue her studies at the Centre Monseigneur Côté with the aim of becoming a patient care attendant. Yenny has distinguished herself through her community involvement, including volunteering at Sécurité alimentaire, a food bank in Victoriaville. She has performed various tasks for this organization, such as customer service, food donation distribution, and inventory.



Drummondville Chapter

Émelie Couture

Émelie Couture is a courageous and determined mother. Formerly a patient care attendant, she had to reorient her career following an accident that left her with functional limitations. She is the mother of two teenagers. She will complete her DEP in Secretarial Studies and Accounting in January 2026. Throughout all this, she has been involved in volunteer work, primarily in sports activities. Émelie has volunteered at the Ste-Anne-des-Plaines sports centre during Pee Wee and Bantam hockey tournaments. Now that she has moved to the Drummondville region, she will continue to volunteer for the Drummondville Voltigeurs. She is a devoted hockey fan.

Abitibi Chapter

Sara Jolicoeur

Sara is a double scholarship recipient from the Léa Roback Foundation, having received the Maman va à l'école scholarship, funded by the Foundation, as well as a scholarship directly from our Foundation. To learn more about her journey, see the text on the Foundation's scholarship recipients.

A First Biography of Léa-Roback

The first biography of Léa Roback, written by her great-niece, Tara Goldstein, was published this year. A member of the extended Roback family, Tara is the daughter of the late Edgar Goldstein, one of Léa's nephews. He was a friend of and generous donor to the Léa Roback Foundation and his wife, Louise Roskies, served on the Foundation's board of directors for some 20 years.

In this biography, written in English and titled *Léa Roback, Quebec Social Justice Activist*, the author analyses Léa's role and work in trade unionism, the peace and antiracism movement, women's suffrage, and abortion rights. She explains how Léa's multilingualism—she spoke fluent French, English, and Yiddish—and her familiarity with several social circles allowed her to cross cultural, religious, and linguistic divides to become actively involved in a range of struggles and social movements. Léa's activism took place in the field, with and for the people directly involved, to advance social justice in Quebec.

This biography is based primarily on interviews with people who knew Léa Roback well, including two former members of the Léa Roback Foundation. They are the late sociologist Nicole Lacelle, who recently passed away and is the author of the book *Entretiens avec Madeleine Parent et Léa Roback*, (Conversations with Madeleine Parent and Léa Roback), first published by Éditions Remue-ménage in 2005, and filmmaker Sophie Bissonnette, who directed

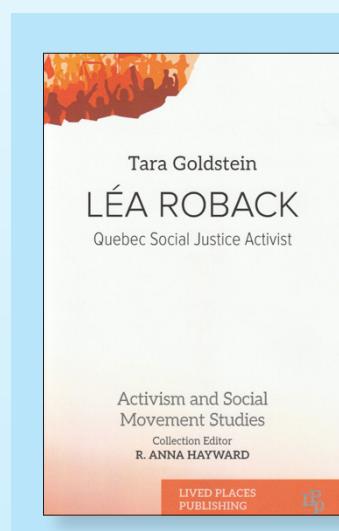


the 1991 documentary *Léa Roback Des lumières dans la grande noirceur*. Tara Goldstein also met with Merrily Weisbord, author of *The strangest Dream* as well as other members of the Roback family, and consulted the Archives of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal, where Léa Roback's archives are held.

One of the interesting aspects of Tara Goldstein's book is the links and connections between her own activism in various social struggles and that of her great-aunt. The book illustrates how this desire to be involved spans generations.

We eagerly await the French translation of this book.

Jrène Ellenberger



Tara Goldstein
Léa Roback, Quebec Social Justice Activist
Activism and Social Movement Studies,
Collection Editor
R. Anna Hayward
Lived Places Publishing
(2025) 174 p.

The Léa Roback Foundation Loses a Great Friend

Nicole Lacelle, July 2, 1947 - September 22, 2025

The first chair of the Foundation's board of directors, and one of its founders, Nicole Lacelle, passed away last September 22 after a long illness.

Feminist, activist, lesbian, a woman of the left, and a committed social advocate, Nicole made a lasting impression on all those who crossed her path during her lifetime.

In my case, it was over 40 years ago, in the late 70s. We became friends almost immediately and remained so ever since, because beyond the causes we shared, her personality, her keen intelligence, and her sense of humour won me over right away.

In addition to her impressive intellectual abilities, Nicole showed great humanism, resolutely siding throughout her life with the abused and the exploited. The sociologist in her was never far off when it came to the recognition and analysis of class relations.

Throughout her professional life, both at the ICEA in adult education, in the women's, community, and trade union movements, and in her work as a facilitator, Nicole left no one indifferent, so striking were her words and actions.

Afflicted since the age of 20 with a chronic illness that at times caused her great suffering, she was nonetheless active in attempting to and succeeding in overcoming her limitations.

Founder of Éditions Remue-ménage in 1975, author of many articles, texts, and essays, including "Entretiens avec Madeleine Parent et Léa Roback" (Conversations with Madeleine Parent and Léa Roback) and "À l'école du pouvoir" (At the School of

Power) on women's experience in municipal politics in Montreal, Nicole Lacelle always pushed her analysis further, beyond the conventional line of thought.

Nicole's career, although very diverse, remained consistent throughout her life. Her guiding principle was her keen interest in and her curiosity about "the other" and the search for greater social justice.

An ardent activist, with an aversion to dogmatism, Nicole shared her strategic acumen with numerous organizations. So many turned to Nicole to ask for advice or to help them out in an impasse.

In 2024, knowing that she had an incurable cancer and that she had little time left to live, Nicole wanted to hold a "pre-death" gathering to see all those she loved in one place at one time and to hear their tributes to her, and to deliver a final message to her friends. This celebration, as it truly was a celebration in her honour, brought together close to 150 people. Moving and forceful words about her were spoken, but none were as powerful as those Nicole spoke in closing the event.

Nicole loved women, she loved her sister, she loved young people, and she loved her friends who were by her side until the very end.

Nicole loved summer, singing, swimming, and playing cards. She loved boats and dogs. She loved life and lived it to the fullest. In this she was a worthy heir to Léa Roback.

Monique Simard



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Honorary Friends

Honorary friends are people who have made exceptional contributions to the Foundation and whose memory we wish to honor.

Mrs. Jeannine Chénard
Mrs. Margaret K. Howes
Mrs. Thérèse Laliberté
Mrs. Madeleine Parent
Mrs. Hélène Pedneault

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