

At a young age Paula Larsson started volunteering with her extended family as a meal server with Feed the Hungry in her hometown of Calgary, Alberta. Paula's large extended family was frequently called to help on Sundays when other volunteers failed to show up and they would arrive en masse, often 10 or 12 at a time. Paula was usually assigned to the VIP table for 'Very Intoxicated People,' where she learned early that substance abuse can lead many regular people into very difficult circumstances. Yet a full stomach and a friendly face transformed even the quietest clients into talkative and smiling acquaintances. No one was turned away until they ran out of food and, once seated, clients could eat as much as they wanted. Through this early and sustained relationship with vulnerable and often 'invisible' people, Paula quickly learned that humans are united under common goals, we all want a kind word, a nutritious meal and a full stomach.

Paula is a current DPhil candidate in History at Oxford University in the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine. She is researching the development of public health programs in Canada and the often-deplorable treatment of similarly vulnerable and invisible populations. Her current research focuses on the deep ties between early vaccination programs and Eugenics programs in Canada. The implementation of vaccination programs for Canada's Aboriginal population on reserves in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario was undertaken through a racialized policy that allowed for individuals to be vaccinated without consent and without proper explanation of risks or benefits. No parental consent was required for vaccination programs within Indian residential and day schools where Aboriginal children were considered public wards and experimental new vaccines were trialed. Public health officials were permitted to

undertake physical and mental evaluations of both Aboriginal children on reserves, and immigrant children in provincial day schools, many of whom were subsequently targeted to be transferred to provincial training schools if they were labeled as 'mentally defective'. Many of these individuals would become the subjects of provincial sterilization programs in both Alberta and British Columbia as part of the implementation of Eugenics in Canada.

The reverberations of this shocking and shameful history resonate today in the deeper roots of anti-vaccination movements and in the suspicion and fears of medical programs and treatments harboured by Aboriginal and various immigrant communities in Canada. A deeper historical understanding and insight into the relationship between the provision of public health and government-sanctioned vaccination trials and sterilization programs will, Paula hopes, provide a foundation on which to build a more insightful public health policy that will address the fear and suspicion with which vulnerable populations currently view medical programs.



Paula Larsson, DPhil in History, New College, Oxford, Oct 2017

Paula is proud to be the President of the Canadian Student Society at Oxford and considers it her home away from home. She describes herself and her compatriots at Oxford as de facto ambassadors for Canada and Paula can now talk about Canadian culture and policy in a much more knowledgeable manner than she could when she lived in Canada. Paula has voted in several UK elections including the Brexit Referendum and the most recent general election, thereby exercising her rights and responsibilities as a Canadian citizen residing in the United Kingdom.

The CCSF was very pleased to award Paula the 2017 Mary Le Messurier Award for the Study of History.