



Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory  
on the Rights of the Child  
University of Ottawa

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



uOttawa

# MESSAGE from the STEERING COMMITTEE

The year 2020-2021 has been rich in developments for the Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory on the Rights of the Child (IRLRC). Like everyone else, we had to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially we experienced the shock of event cancellations and restrictions on our movements. As early as March, we had to cancel the annual conference scheduled for May 2020. We have also seen the devastation of the pandemic in the field of children's rights. The IRLRC blog bears witness to actual and potential violations of children's rights in relation to the pandemic, whether it be in education or in the protection of vulnerable children.

However, we have also seen positive developments. As the months went by and we had to make adjustments, opportunities became apparent. For example, we were able to hold our lunchtime lecture series with broader participation and speakers from across the country. Indeed, the use of online meeting platforms has improved our ability to reach people outside the region. Our lunchtime conferences were timely, addressing topics such as anti-racism, climate action and the impact of the pandemic on education. As for the annual conference that was cancelled in 2020, it was rescheduled in a virtual format and took place, with international participation, on May 20 and 27, 2021.

In addition to the events, the IRLRC has experienced structural developments. Our coordinator, Line Bissonnette, who had supported the Laboratory's operations since almost the beginning of its existence, took her well-deserved retirement. We are grateful for her unparalleled dedication! Thus, a new chapter has begun for IRLRC with an agreement signed between IRLRC, the Civil Law Section and the Human Rights Research and Education Centre (HRREC), ensuring the continuity of the Laboratory's operations in collaboration with these actors. This new development came on the heels of the new IRLRC membership procedure and is followed by a new structure that includes the participation of a student member in the IRLRC steering committee.

It is also worth mentioning the re-launch of the assistantship competition allowing IRLRC's academic members to launch interdisciplinary research projects in children's rights, thanks to funding from the Faculties of Social Sciences and Education. In addition, this year we expanded the essay competition to students from universities that host members of the Canadian Association of Human Rights Institutions (CAHRI).

Regardless of these positive developments for the IRLRC, we hope to see a return to a better situation in the coming year, not only for the Laboratory and its members, but especially for the children suffering from the COVID situation around the world.

**Mona Paré** | Full Professor | Faculty of Law, Civil Law Section

**Nathalie Bélanger** | Full Professor | Faculty of Education

**Christine Gervais** | Associate Professor | Faculty of Social Sciences

**Andrea Khan** | Doctoral Candidate | Faculty of Social Sciences

**Viviana Fernandez** | Assistant Director | HRREC | uOttawa

# ABOUT the IRLRC

The Laboratory was created following an international conference on the rights of the child in March 2007. The purpose of the IRLRC is to foster interdisciplinary research on issues related to children's rights and well-being. The range of research initiatives conducted by members and promoted by the Laboratory is vast and rich. A general framework for understanding the research conducted at IRLRC is to recognize the individual identity of the child when it comes to his or her rights. The framework also emphasizes the different systems that influence children and the study of children's rights, including families, schools, neighborhoods, the legal system, the child welfare system, and societies more generally.

In order to foster the development of research partnerships and to encourage the initiatives of its members, the Laboratory has grouped the research axes it favours under four complementary themes:

- the Child and the Law
- the Child and the Family
- the Child, the State and Society
- reflections on Child-Focused Research Methodologies



## Our MEMBERS

Our 40 members are academics from the Faculties of Law, Social Sciences, Education, Health Sciences and Medicine from uOttawa and other academic institutions (17), graduate students (14) and actors in the wider community (9). See the list of our members on the Laboratory's website.



# EXPANDING our REACH & KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION ACTIVITIES

During 2020-2021, the Laboratory organized three webinars, a major academic conference and one virtual art exhibition. Over 250 people attended our events. Details of each activity can be found on our website.

17.11.2020

## **Children and Anti-Racism in the School Context**

The Laboratory and the Faculty of Law, Civil Law Section organized a webinar as part of the Civil Law Section Lecture Series. Speakers included: Marie-Carène Pierre René (Ph.D. in Education, Part-time Professor, University of Ottawa); Cécile Rousseau, MD (Professor, Division of Social and Cultural Psychiatry, McGill University); and Myrna Lashley (Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University).



2020-2021

## **IMAGES OF JUSTICE: Children & Human Rights**

The Laboratory partnered with CONTEKST, the School of Child and Youth Care (Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University), the Human Rights Research and Education Centre (HRREC), and the *Canadian Journal of Children's Rights* (Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights) to create a virtual exhibition of cartoons on the rights of the child, their freedoms, as well as various political, social, and legal issues.

An international jury, which included a high school student from Canada, selected ten works from among 390 submissions coming from 34 countries. The public was invited to vote online to choose the winning cartoon.

The grand prize winner of this edition of Images of Justice was Walter Toscano from Peru.

20.01.2021

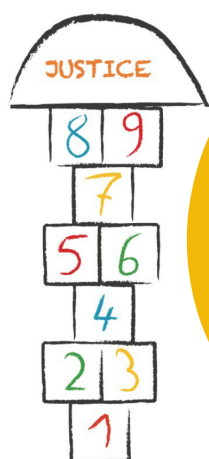
## **The Pandemic & Education: Consequences & Challenges**

The Laboratory and the Chaire de recherche en éducation du Collège des chaires sur le monde francophone organized a webinar featuring speakers: Sylvie Tremblay (Council of Public Schools of Eastern Ontario), Sylvie Petroski (Conseil scolaire catholique de District des Grandes Rivières, Ont.), Mélanie Landry (District scolaire francophone Sud in NB), and Julie Caron (TFO Media Group).

23.02.2021

## Youth-Led Climate Action & Children's Right to the Environment

The Laboratory and the Faculty of Law, Civil Law Section organized a webinar as part of the Civil Law Section Lecture Series. Featured speakers included Chris Tollefson (Founding Principal, Tollefson Law Corporation & Professor of Law, University of Victoria), Albert Lalonde (Climate Activist & Spokesperson for *Devoir environnemental collectif*), Haana (activist from British Columbia), and Annabel Webb (Environmental Rights Fellow, David Suzuki Foundation).



2021  
COLLOQUE EN LIGNE | ONLINE CONFERENCE  
20 + 27 MAI | MAY



Accès et participation  
des enfants à la justice :  
Bilan critique

Children's Access to  
and Participation in Justice:  
Critical Assessment

20.05.2021 + 27.05.2021

IRLRC Online Conference 2021

## Children's Access to and Participation in Justice: Critical Assessment

The sessions defined children's access to justice in a global way, by addressing current challenges, asking questions that have not yet been asked and by bringing new answers to existing problems. Simultaneous interpretation was provided over both half-days of the conference for participants from around the world. The event received the generous support of Accès au Droit et à la Justice (ADAJ), the Faculty of Law, Civil Law Section, the French Embassy in Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the University of Ottawa.

## TEACHING

The Laboratory created a course for graduate students entitled *Children's Rights: An Interdisciplinary Approach* in 2010. During the 2021 Winter semester, the course was offered in English by Professor Christine Gervais, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Criminology. Ten (10) graduate students from the Faculties of Law, Education, Social Sciences (Psychology, Social Work), Arts (Music) and Health Sciences participated in this session. To date, the Laboratory has trained seventy-one (71) graduate students who participated in nine offerings of the course.

## RESEARCH ASSISTANT COMPETITION

A new Research Assistants Competition was organized in winter 2021 and the project proposed by Professors and members Christine Gervais and Elisa Romano titled *Study on Child-to-Parent Violence and Aggression in Adoptive Families in Canada* was funded in the amount of \$3,000.

The funding will be used to support the preparation of an external grant application.

## ESSAY COMPETITION

The Laboratory has organized an essay competition since 2010-2011. For the 2020-2021 edition, the competition expanded its reach to participants from institutions hosting Canadian Association of Human Rights Institutes (CAHRI) members:

St. Thomas University  
McGill University  
University of Manitoba  
Université Laval  
Université du Québec à Montréal  
University of Saskatchewan  
University of British Columbia

University of Toronto  
Carleton University  
McMaster University  
Concordia University  
York University  
University of Winnipeg  
University of Ottawa

The competition has two categories: Undergraduate & Graduate students. The winning submissions will be published by the *Canadian Journal of Children's Rights*. The 2019-2020 winners were:

**Undergraduate Category | ANDREA KORAJLIJA**, Juris Doctor (J.D.) program at the Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, uOttawa, for her essay entitled *An Unfair Game of Virtual Hide-and-Go-Seek: The Passive Collection of Children's Information Online*.

**Graduate Level Category | FABIEN VADNAIS**, Master of Law in Health Law, Policy and Ethics (LL.M.), Faculty of Law, uOttawa for his major research paper entitled *L'encadrement juridique et médical des soins de fin de vie dans le contexte pédiatrique : Analyse d'une discrimination envers les plus vulnérables et pistes de réflexion*.

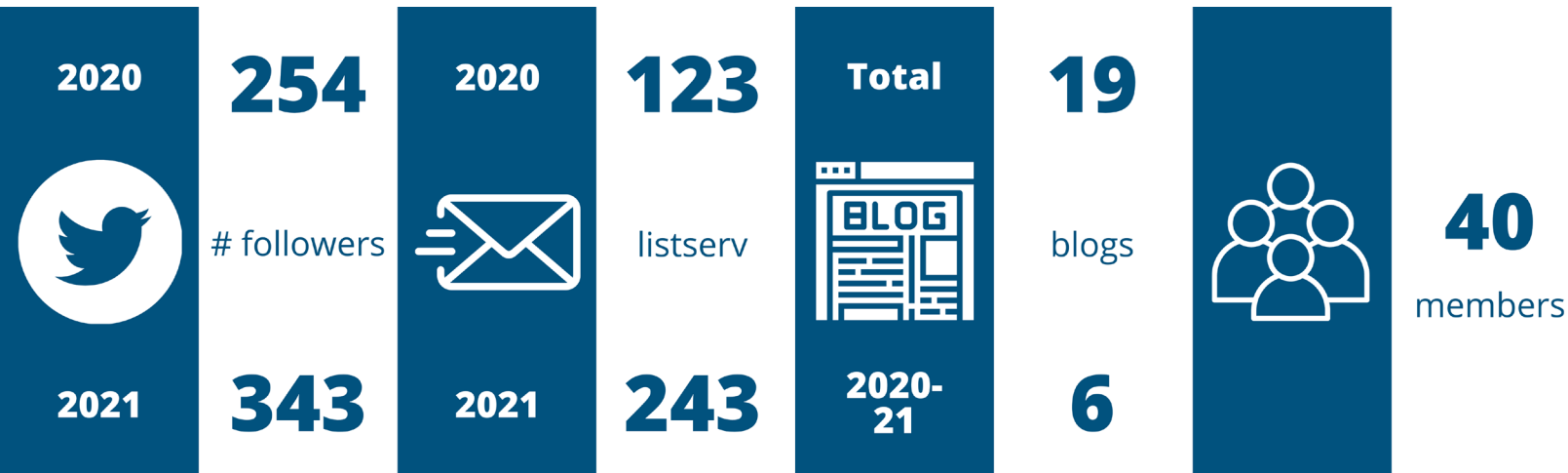
For the 2020-2021 edition, the Laboratory received 6 submissions. The winners will be announced in September 2021.

## BLOGS

The Laboratory's blog features reflections on emerging trends and issues, research findings and programs written by our members and partners. Posts are published in the language of choice of the authors, French or English. During 2020-2021, six blogs were published, with a total of 19 blogs since its creation in 2018.



## SOCIAL MEDIA & OUTREACH



## RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

The IRLRC fosters collaborations in the field of children's rights through membership in human rights and child rights institutions and association in research partnerships.

- *Accès des enfants à la justice et vulnérabilité* in cooperation with the Centre européen d'études et de recherches en droit de la famille et des personnes (Université de Bordeaux), the Centre interdisciplinaire des droits de l'enfant (Université catholique de Louvain et DEI-Belgique), the Department of Child Law (Leiden University), the Laboratoire de droit privé et de sciences criminelles (Aix-Marseille Université), the Bureau du défenseur des enfants et de la jeunesse du Nouveau-Brunswick, the AJEFO and the HRREC. Members involved in the partnership: Mona Paré, Émilie De Bellefeuille, Christine Gervais and Elisa Romano.
- *International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP)* led by Professor Tara Collins and funded by SSHRC. The ICCRP fosters cross-sectoral knowledge co-creation across generations and geographies by analyzing facilitators and barriers, conceptual models, and relational practices related to child rights.
- Canadian Association of Human Rights Institutes (CAHRI).
- Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC).
- Human Rights Research and Education Centre (HRREC).
- Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights (the IRLRC is represented by Mona Paré on the Advisory Board).

## INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH LABORATORY ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

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