



HPI announces the 2024 winner of the Leon and Rose Zitner Prize
July 8, 2024

The Healthy Populations Institute at Dalhousie University is proud to announce **Anja McLeod**, Master of Arts student, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, as the **2024 winner of the Leon & Rose Zitner Prize**.

The Leon & Rose Zitner Prize is awarded annually to an undergraduate or graduate student within Dalhousie University's faculties of Medicine, Health, Dentistry, or Arts and Social Sciences who is making outstanding contributions to citizen knowledge and community engagement in health. Submissions for the prize represent a diverse and eclectic range of theoretical, service-oriented, and practical work with a focus on engagement with equity deserving groups, learning from personal experiences and challenging the boundaries of conventional health knowledge to create something novel and unique.

HPI extends our thanks to a cross-faculty review committee that reviewed 17 high quality applications based on the following selection criteria: (1) Critical thinking, (2) Engagement with a health-related issue, with an emphasis on equity deserving populations or personal experience, (3) Challenge to the boundaries of conventional knowledge and (4) Advocacy, support, and/or allyship.

Anja's extensive body of work includes community-based research, advocacy, knowledge mobilization activities and resources to address **reproductive health equity**, primarily among people experiencing incarceration, with a focus on the role that doulas could play in mitigating barriers to care. Her thesis, supervised by Dr. Fiona Martin (FASS) is titled: *"Community-based doulas in Nova Scotia: Defining the meaning of care at the intersection of reproductive justice and biomedicine"*.

Anja's goal in conducting research is "to improve equitable health services in ways that are informed by the experiences of people who face barriers to access. Generating and translating this knowledge has the potential to influence evidence-informed policies and practices. For example, developing guidelines for family planning professionals in providing care for patients who are incarcerated; and delivering workshops for doulas and staff of community organizations to ensure they are equipped to support clients in prisons as they seek sexual and reproductive health care."

Anja works in partnership with community members, lived experience experts, regional and national leaders in research, clinicians, and fellow students, showing great potential for impact in the population that this research is meant to serve: women and gender diverse people in prisons, and birthing people who are low income, unmarried, primiparous, without a companion in the hospital, or experiencing language or cultural barriers, who can benefit from the support of community-based doulas (Anja being one herself).

Anja works across academia and the non-profit sector: she is a member of [Wellness Within](#): an organization for Health and Justice where she conducts knowledge translation for their research program, and is a founding member of [Access Now Nova Scotia](#), a volunteer coalition of intersectoral stakeholders including health-care providers, researchers, students, and community organizations advocating for the Government of Nova Scotia to fund universal contraception for Nova Scotians. In addition to academic research publications and conference presentations, her contributions include community resources (infographics, posters, toolkits, guides), and public engagement events and workshops associated with reproductive health equity.

The figure below is a collage of images from only some of the knowledge translation activities and resources that Anja has helped develop. **Congratulations Anja McLeod!**

