



BAN RIGH CENTRE News



SUMMER 2026

SPRING CELEBRATION 2026



Photos by Josh Sauer Photography

On May 2nd, we returned to Grant Hall to celebrate 14 remarkable mature women students at this year's Ban Righ Foundation Spring Celebration. A much-anticipated annual tradition, the Spring Celebration is a highlight in the Ban Righ Foundation calendar.

These awards, established by generous donors, honour the resilience, determination, and achievements of mature women students. The event serves as a meaningful close to the academic year, offering a moment to reflect on the journeys and successes of those we support.

Award recipients were joined by their families, mentors, and friends, alongside donors, Ban Righ Foundation Board members, staff, community supporters of the Ban Righ Centre, and many of our regular students.

This year's celebration was emceed by Gabriela Castillo Raga, PhD History '25, who was a mature student and former Ban Righ Foundation Board member. The afternoon featured a vocal performance by alumna Abby Stewart, Indigenous drumming by Yessica Rivera Belsham - Ocelopacihuatl, and a keynote address by Vanessa McCourt, director of Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre at Queen's.



BAN RIGH CENTRE

WRAP UP 2025-26

\$ Emergency Bursaries

\$204,892

\$12,300

Winter Gear Bursaries



Awards

\$25,280

"The Ban Righ Centre, their staff, committee, and donors are doing an excellent job, and this is needed these days. It is a very hard decision for a mature woman to start studying and completing [their degree] at such a late age. The support provided by the Centre not only helps financially, but also gives emotional support and courage, just like parents give to their kids, to achieve their goals"



125
Mothers



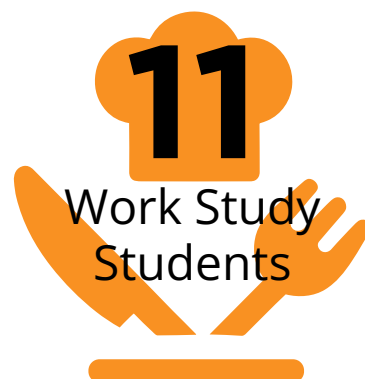
313

Students Registered at
the Ban Righ Centre

63% Graduate & Professional
37% Undergraduate & Other

29% International Students

Work Study Students prepare our lunches and keep the Centre clean, tidy, and running smoothly.



11

Work Study
Students



4331

Bowls of Soup
Served

"Ban Righ Centre student advising and soup have been instrumental to my student experience at Queen's. It's relieving knowing I can always walk into the Centre and have a warm lunch and friendly faces there who can support me in whatever I am currently dealing with!"

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Ningjing (Natalie) Zhang MA Gender Studies '20; JD Law '23

Ningjing (Natalie) Zhang earned a Masters in Gender Studies in 2020 and went on to complete a law degree at Queen's (JD 2023). We recently received an update from her and wanted to share it with the wider Ban Righ Foundation community.

In April Natalie received the 2026 Inspirational Entrepreneur Award from the Kingston Economic Development Corporation, presented by the Mayor of Kingston. Natalie was the first Chinese immigrant to receive this honour. *"This award means so much — not just to me, but to every immigrant entrepreneur who dares to dream big in a new country. It is a quiet, powerful reminder that our stories belong here, and that the communities we serve are watching, cheering, and rooting for us."*



During her time at Queen's, Natalie was a regular presence at the Ban Righ Centre. She participated in our programs, often with her children and was part of a vibrant community of student-moms who kept the Ban Righ Centre lively. Natalie was also the recipient of several Ban Righ Foundation Spring Awards.

Natalie's story is inspiring, and she tells it best; *"The support I received through the Ban Righ Centre came at a pivotal moment. Ten years ago, I fled domestic violence and arrived in Canada as a refugee with my two children. The Ban Righ Centre's mission — to support women navigating non-traditional paths in higher education — resonated deeply with my own experience, and the bursary helped make my legal education at Queen's possible. I have never forgotten that."*

After graduating from the Faculty of Law in 2023, Natalie joined a law practice where she gained valuable experience. In 2024 she decided to take a leap and founded her own firm, BridgePoint Law in Kingston, a boutique immigration and refugee law firm dedicated to serving newcomers and vulnerable clients. She says her passion for this work is driven by lived experience and a commitment to ensuring others are not left to navigate the system alone.

When Natalie wrote to us she said *"I share this news not to boast, but because I believe it belongs, in part, to the people and institutions that believed in me when the road ahead was uncertain. The Ban Righ Centre was one of them."*

We're so pleased that Natalie is experiencing this personal and professional success, and we're delighted to share this story of her strength and determination to rise above the significant challenges she has faced.

We love the chance to brag about our alumnae.

Do you have an inspiring story to share? Get in touch to let us know what you are up to.

SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOPS

Thanks to a grant from the Cold Beverages/Sustainability Fund grant we received from Queen's Hospitality Services, this year we were able to provide a series of innovative hands-on workshops. Each session explored a different aspect of sustainability – from a nature walk at Lemoine's Point, to food preservation, to container gardening, and more. We invited community experts in to share their skills and knowledge with Ban Righ Centre students. Many of our workshops were open to the families of our students too!



Learning off the Land
Walk Talk at Lemoine's Point
with Misty Underwood
October 10, 2025



Preserving the Harvest
Canning Workshop with
Caitlin Newey
November 13, 2025



Roots & Shoots
Companion planting with
Mutual Aid Gardens & OPIRG
April 24, 2026

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES

For decades, graduating students have returned to the Ban Righ Centre during convocation to have their photo taken on our stairs. Carrying on with this tradition, we host a Grad Tea where we invite our students to come with their families and friends to celebrate their success, have some light refreshments, and visit the staff and students in the Ban Righ community.



GETTING FESTIVE

Fall Feast



On November 20, Ban Righ Centre Staff, student staff, and board members prepared a holiday lunch to share with our students. Our lounge was full of lively conversation and new experiences for some students who hadn't tasted some of the "traditional" Canadian holiday foods.



This year's menu included roast chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, stuffing, cranberry sauce, glazed carrots, brussels sprouts, and some sweet treats.



Sing-A-Long

On December 12 we held a sing-a-long with over 20 students and staff in the lounge over lunchtime. We sang holiday favourites accompanied by live musicians.

Winter Bazaar

The Winter Bazaar is a highly anticipated event for our student-mothers every year. On December 10 we held our 10th Annual Winter Bazaar where the kids get to "shop" for gifts for their families (everything costs 25¢ - and we provide the quarters!) while the parents have an opportunity to visit with each other upstairs. Board members helped at the wrapping station, and we all joined together for a feast, catered by former BRC student Midhila Muthurkrishnan. This year we had 11 moms attend with a total of 15 children.

As a way to include distance students in our celebration, we sent a holiday care package with gift cards, games, and gingerbread houses. We had 4 distance students participate with 13 children.



LISA WEBB AWARDED THE JEAN ROYCE FELLOWSHIP

Many will remember Lisa Webb, a beloved student advisor at the Ban Righ Centre for over 20 years. Lisa retired in 2024, but she just can't stop working to make the world a little brighter, and we can't help bragging about her.

Lisa is this year's recipient of the prestigious Jean Royce Fellowship. Awarded annually to Queen's women alumni, the award supports a year of study, research, or a project that fosters creative expression or drives progress in knowledge or society.

Lisa's Good Neighbour Rural Housing Initiative starts with the simple question: What if underused rural land could become a place to live, grow food, restore ecosystems, and build community? Using her own 18 acres as a starting point, Webb is researching what it would take to make the model practical – from zoning and official plan restrictions to water, wastewater, heating, and small-dwelling options.

Read more about it in the [July 2 edition of the Queen's Alumni Newsletter](#).

queensu.ca/alumni/news/from-housing-to-health-advocacy-2026-alumnae-fellowships-announced



STAYING IN TOUCH

There are many ways to find out what is going on at the Ban Righ Centre. We regularly post about upcoming events on Facebook, Instagram, and our website. If you are in Kingston, we welcome visitors to the Centre Monday to Friday 9am - 4pm.

 queensu.ca/ban-righ-centre

 [instagram.com/banrighcentre](https://www.instagram.com/banrighcentre)

 [fb.com/TheBanRighCentre](https://www.facebook.com/TheBanRighCentre)

 [youtube.com/@banrighcentre](https://www.youtube.com/@banrighcentre)



32 Bader Lane, Queen's University
Kingston, ON K7L 2S8
banrighcentre@queensu.ca
queensu.ca/ban-righ-centre

WHO WE ARE and WHAT WE DO

The Ban Righ Centre relies on a team of experienced staff to provide supports and services to mature women students at Queen's. It takes creativity, time, and dedication to stay connected with our students. We provide one-on-one student advising both in person and virtually, offer quiet study spaces, and student-centred programming.

Ban Righ Centre Staff

Susan Belyea: Director

Taylor Cenac: Student Advisor & Program Coordinator

Liz Turner: Student Advisor & Program Planner (maternity leave replacement)

Nikisha Grant Ridley: BRC Assistant

Lubna Rahman: Student Advisor & Program Planner (on maternity leave)

Ban Righ Foundation Board of Directors 2025-26

Pam Briand
Heather Carter
Alexa LaFleche
Danielle Macdonald
Anne Shropshire
Yasmine Djerbal

Amber Hastings Truelove
Shannon Marginson
Esther Odan-Egwurube
Susan Korba
Madeleine Nerenberg
Heather Jamieson

Carla Renata de Souza
Juliane Okot Bitek
Liz Turner
Taylor Cenac
Susan Belyea
Lubna Rahman (on leave)

Welcome New Staff Member, Liz Turner

When our Student Advisor, Lubna Rahman, went on Maternity Leave this year, we hired the multi-talented Liz Turner to fill in.



I first encountered the Ban Righ Centre way back in 2009 during my undergrad at Queen's. I spent many hours across the street doing student organizing in the Grey House and loved the welcoming atmosphere whenever I wandered over to the Ban Righ Centre. It is exciting to be returning to this space after my time living and working in Kingston, and I am eager to contribute to the community as Lubna Rahman's maternity leave replacement as a Student Advisor and Program Coordinator.

I have spent many years involved in community organizing in Kingston and am currently working on a collective garden project, radio show, and radical bookstore/lending library. I love science fiction, hanging out with my giant dog, partner, and friends, and hiking around the Frontenac Arch.

"The student advising has been a beacon of light and support, and I don't know what we would have done without the financial help."

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SOUPERHEROES



Thanks to everyone who donated so generously to our SouperHeroes Fundraising Campaign. At the Ban Righ Centre, our daily, free soup lunch program offers more than just a meal. It creates a warm, welcoming space where mature women students gather to share nourishment, offer encouragement, and build friendships.

Your donations help us purchase food and pay student staff wages for this on-going program.

We couldn't do it without you.

Gifts from the generous community of friends, family, and alumni make it possible for the Ban Righ Centre to do what we do best. From student advising and emergency bursaries to soup and community-building, your donations support our work.

Donations by credit card can be made online through the donation website or you can make a gift over the phone by calling 1-800-267-7837.

Donations by cheque must be made payable to "Queen's University (Ban Righ Centre)". You can mail or drop off a cheque in person at the Ban Righ Centre or post to:

Queen's University
Gift Services
Summerhill
55 Stuart St
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

We know that each of our donors has a special reason for giving, and we offer heartfelt thanks for your support. A tax receipt will be issued by Queen's University.

For assistance or questions about making a donation, please call the Ban Righ Centre director, Susan Belyea by phone 613-533-6000 ext. 74931 or email at susan.belyea@queensu.ca.

