

Artifact/Artifiction
Royal Saskatchewan Museum's Graduate Student Scholarship
Backgrounder

The Royal Saskatchewan Museum's (RSM) Graduate Student Scholarship is a partnership between the Friends of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and the RSM. Its aim is to support highly qualified graduate students pursuing research that focuses on Saskatchewan's natural or human history in areas including biology, ecology, palaeontology or archaeology. In 2018, scholarship's value is increasing from \$25,000 to \$30,000, \$15,000 per year for two years.

Research by past scholarship recipients has resulted in several published papers and new research has begun, including some with international partners.

The first ever RSM Graduate Student Scholarship recipient was Tera Edkins who has done some exceptional research on snakes in Saskatchewan. Tera's thesis, co-supervised by RSM's Head of Research and Collections and Curator of Vertebrate Zoology Ray Poulin, was on the variability of habitat selection by bullsnakes and described that snakes in different areas use habitats in different ways. Experienced in field work, Tera studied bullsnakes in Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park and in the Big Muddy valley.

In 2016, Tera contributed her knowledge to the development of the hugely popular temporary exhibit *Snakes Alive* at the RSM and in 2017, she spoke about her research at the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation's 88th Annual Convention. Tera successfully defending her thesis in spring of 2017 completing her Masters of Science in Biology from the University of Regina.

The most recent scholarship recipient, Pierre Cockx, is originally from France. He visited the RSM labs in the summer of 2016, as part of a three-month research internship at the end of his Master's degree from Université de Rennes 1, France. During this time, he completed three papers on new species of wasps preserved in Cretaceous amber from France, Canada and Myanmar.

Pierre is currently working on his Ph.D. at the University of Regina and with assistance from the RSM Graduate Student Scholarship, Pierre is part of a research project on bonebed amber that examines the specimens for inclusions of insects and feathers. Further analyses of the chemistry and composition of the surrounding resin will help determine which trees and conditions prevailed at the time of preservation. His work is co-supervised by RSM Curator of Invertebrate Palaeontology, Ryan McKellar.

The three papers Pierre completed can be accessed from:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ryan_McKellar/contributions