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Laurier professor recognized with awards for research on refugee children

BRANTFORD – Wilfrid Laurier University researcher Bree Akesson has received two awards for her research on how political violence and war affects children's sense of place. She won the Award of Excellence Association of Deans of Graduate Studies of Quebec (ADESAQ) from the Association francophone pour le savoir (Acfas) and the 2015 Distinguished Dissertation Award for Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS).

Akesson's research focuses broadly on international child protection. Currently, she is the lead researcher in a study to determine child protection practices and social service workforce needs in southeast Europe. She is also the principal investigator for a pilot study exploring the experiences of pregnant Syrian refugee women in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)-funded research project exploring the experiences of Syrian children within those refugee camps.

"I am honored that this research has been recognized in this way," said Akesson. "My research emphasizes the importance of listening to children and families reflecting upon their own experiences amidst political violence. Many of the families in the research participated because they wanted their stories to be told to those living outside of Palestine. These awards ensure that their voices are heard by a wider audience."

According to the United Nations, there are currently 60 million people around the world forcibly displaced from their homes. That number was 37.5 million a decade ago.

Akesson received her PhD in social work from McGill University and is currently an assistant professor at Wilfrid Laurier University in the Faculty of Social Work. Akesson's awards recognize research that she completed during her doctoral studies at McGill. She is also a treatment facilitator for the Child Psychiatric Epidemiology Group at New York State Psychiatric Institute / Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene. This work focuses on children and families affected by the events of 9-11 and children of parents involved with the criminal justice system.

The **Award of Excellence ADESAQ** includes a \$2,500 prize accompanied by a certificate of excellence. It recognizes outstanding contributions to scientific research by supporting promising researchers of the next generation.

The **Association francophone pour le savoir (Acfas)** promotes scientific activity to stimulate research and encourage the dissemination of knowledge. Based in Quebec, the association brings together thousands of passionate researchers from all areas of knowledge.

The **CAGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Awards** include a \$1,500 prize and a Citation Certificate. It has been recognizing outstanding Canadian doctoral dissertations for more than 20 years and seeks out work that makes significant, original contributions to both the academic community and to Canadian society.

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The **Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS)** brings together Canada's deans and administrators of Canada's 58 graduate schools as well as other organizations with an interest in graduate education.

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