

## INTRODUCTION

### COVID-19 IN NEW BRUNSWICK: HOPE, SAFETY, RESILIENCY, AND CREATIVITY

### LA COVID-19 AU NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK : ESPOIR, SÉCURITÉ, RÉSILIENCE ET CRÉATIVITÉ

Christina Ionescu

This Special Issue of the *Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick* is a collective response to the challenges brought about by a global pandemic that has affected our province in multifarious ways and left a permanent mark on our ways of living, working, and thinking. In our Call for Papers, we invited contributions addressing the impact of the novel coronavirus on the people, communities, and economy of New Brunswick for a thematic issue on this topical and important subject that would be published in what we had hoped would be the aftermath of the pandemic: November 2022. The publication of the Special Issue, as many other projects undertaken during COVID-19, was slightly delayed by unforeseen circumstances related to the pandemic, which reflect our “new normal”—(re)infection with COVID-19, other sudden illnesses, mental health issues, career challenges, family obligations, etc.—but our contributors soldiered on to reach the finish line. Between the lines, the articles included in this issue capture their challenges, struggles, frustrations, experiences, and restrictions.

In specific terms, we sought to assess the response of the Government of New Brunswick to this public health crisis and its economic reverberations, to stimulate discussion on community trauma and mental wellbeing, to discuss the social impact of this pandemic, and to look at creative expression inspired by a virus that has drastically altered our lives and the very fabric of our province. At the outset, these ambitions may have seemed lofty, but this Special Issue fortuitously sheds light on all these themes, though undoubtedly it could have been more wide-ranging. It would have been useful to provide, for example, a comprehensive study of the impact of federal emergency regulations and policies on New Brunswick during the public health crisis; an in-depth reflection on COVID-19, community trauma, and mental health; an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the provincial arts and culture sector and reactions from cultural institutions to the pandemic; a comparison of COVID-19 to past pandemics and other health crises that have impacted New Brunswick; a case study of creative engagement with COVID-19 (painting, photography, poetry, theatre, graffiti, etc.) from the perspective of cultural studies; or an analysis of the materiality of COVID-19 in the context of our province (community banners, regulatory or informational signage, home-made masks, etc.). As we undertake decolonisation efforts and address institutionally and culturally the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, we would have liked to have included the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati communities in our discussion of COVID-19 and its effects in New Brunswick. Despite these limitations, this Special Issue provides informed and engaging assessments of this global pandemic that consider the initial response and present situation within New Brunswick in relation to a new coronavirus reality, concluding with insights and lessons learnt.

During the pandemic, hand-drawn rainbow images with messages of hope and appreciation coloured our neighbourhoods—displayed in windows, hanging on trees in makeshift frames, taped onto doors. To moor an interdisciplinary and collaborative reflection on this complex subject to an evocative

picture, we consequently used, in the proposed title of the Special Issue, the image of the visually and culturally appealing rainbow—a powerful metaphor introduced by the global rainbow movement and which intertwined, in our view, hope, resiliency, and creativity. On social media as well as in popular culture and community images, the rainbow, a symbol since ancient times with a constellation of meanings that varies across cultures, was inextricably attached to the inspiring motto of this worldwide movement: “We will be okay.” New Brunswickers created their own bilingual dictum, “Ça va bien aller NB / We will be ok NB,” and it was widely adopted, generating even a powerful Facebook movement. The rainbow was supposed to lift our spirits and inspire us to hold onto hope, to think of ourselves as members of a global community united in its struggle against a common enemy, and to have faith that we will survive the pandemic and imminently return to “normal” life.

Rainbow artworks and flags were also intended as support for health care professionals and other essential workers who were risking their lives while providing key services during the pandemic. In “Whose Rainbow Is It Anyways? Queer Art and the Pandemic,” Sabine LeBel characterises this semantic association, however, as “a problematic appropriation for it co-opts the rainbow, a queer symbol hard fought for through decades of queer activism combating homophobia and transphobia.” LeBel reminds us that the ‘appropriation’ stirred up feelings of discontent and reactions of protest among members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S+) communities, for whom the rainbow, a symbol associated with the Pride flag, held special meaning. Designed by Gilbert Baker, a gay activist and drag queen, the Pride flag in its first incarnations was flown at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day parade on 25 June 1978; since then, it has become the emblem of the LGBTQ2S+ community and its use as such is widespread. Kirsty Conway, a British psychologist, captured the mixed emotions she experienced while apprehending the rainbow flag being used as a nation-wide symbol of appreciation for the National Health System (NHS) in the United Kingdom and displayed with its logo affixed onto it:

I felt saddened, and disappointed. I am proud to work for the NHS, and of course public support for the NHS, and all other essential workers, can only be considered a good thing. However, I couldn't help feeling that taking the rainbow flag, which has been a symbol of LGBTQ+ pride and protest for more than 40 years, and repurposing it to represent support for the NHS, was at best thoughtless, failing to consider what this symbol means to our community, and at worst an act of erasure, sending a message that LGBTQ+ rights are not considered important.<sup>1</sup>

Like Conway's reflection, LeBel's article, which is anchored in autoethnography, opens a window onto the daily reality of the LGBTQ2S+ community, whose challenges under COVID-19 restrictions included limited access to health care and socio-economic repercussions. It also reminds us that New Brunswick LGBTQ2S+ youth were one of the demographics most severely affected by stay-at-home restrictions: if living alone and hence with minimal contact to a community on which they depended for support, these young people were sequestered in solitude and isolation, known causes for mental health issues; and many of those sharing a home were forced to reside with unsupportive family members or roommates, which potentially augmented their exposure to abuse and led to an increase in feelings of anxiety and depression. As United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet underlined, “LGBTI people are among the most vulnerable and marginalised in many societies, and among those most at risk from COVID-19,” adding: “In countries where same-sex relations are criminalised or trans people targeted, they might not even seek treatment for fear of arrest or being

subjected to violence.”<sup>2</sup> We thus made the decision to take into account the reaction of the LGBTQ2S+ community and discarded from the original title the reference to the rainbow symbol.

The proposal I submitted in May 2020 to the Editor of the *Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick*, Dr. Michael Boudreau, and its Editorial Board captured my mood and thoughts in ways that I now find poignant:

As we walk through our once-buzzing neighbourhoods, following directives to seek exercise not socialisation, our eye is inevitably caught by rainbows of hope decorating windows—drawings imperfectly executed by children whose parents are struggling to keep them occupied and positive in what has become our new normal. Each colourful picture is unique, but all these window compositions provide a deceptively blissful glimpse into home interiors closed to outsiders, populated by adults whose socio-economic situation, mental health, and life prospects have been severely impacted by a pandemic that crept up on New Brunswick. A new constellation of terms and expressions has become part of our lexical reality and dominates everyday discourse (*aerosol form; hydroxychloroquine; flattening the curve; self-isolation; community spread; social distancing; global pandemic; Wuhan, China; etc.*). On television and social media, elaborate infographics project scenarios that range from a frightening worst to a cautious best, both costing hundreds of thousands of lives worldwide; experts weigh in on causes, effects, and possible solutions; and an avalanche of moving tributes to the dead bring a human element to the narrative.

This quotation immediately brings to mind vivid personal memories of my own neighbourhood (Chemin Leblanc, Dieppe, New Brunswick) when the pandemic first shut it down—of stretches of forest coming to life after a long winter; empty, quiet streets devoid of school buses and other daily traffic; deer leisurely wandering around in the daylight; outside lights turned off completely overnight in homes inhabited by neighbours whose economic situation was suddenly in peril and who were worried about paying their NB Power bills. Rereading this introductory paragraph, I now recall this difficult period when my only socialisation outside the home consisted of walking the dogs in the park and virtual meetings in front of the computer screen, the rest of the time spent on planning for an online Fall Term and watching K-dramas to cope with solitude and uncertainty. On bad days (and most were not good days), I just put on a work attire top and kept on my pyjama pants and bright wool socks, half of me ostensibly engaged in my daily reality and the other completely detached from it.

In the proposal that I submitted, I also commented on the impact of COVID-19 and government measures on our teaching and research, two spheres of my own professional life:

As researchers, we are trained to offer objective assessments, to propose interpretations eloquently argued and solidly anchored, to set aside emotions and personal histories. The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus, however, has upended the very foundation of our daily routines and professional lives, dictating how we interact with our colleagues and students, limiting access to resources such as libraries and archives, completely shutting down the artistic and cultural scenes in our local communities, and confining us to long-term self-isolation. As a scholarly collective, we are in the midst of grappling with the complexities of a once-in-a-century global pandemic and have yet to engage in the process of constructing meaning around it, understanding how it will change our future, and

developing strategies and tools to cope effectively not only with this virus but also similar future challenges.

Being productive seemed unimportant in light of what was happening in the world; what mattered most to me was to get through the long days. Who would really read anyway a carefully researched and possibly ground-breaking chapter on the intersections between book illustration and book history in the context of the eighteenth century? It seemed futile to do more than just the bare minimum—pressing administrative tasks and teaching classes online. I eventually turned my attention to research, nonetheless, as the contributions to this Special Issue trickled in and required processing.

As Dr. Bonnie Henry and Dr. Jennifer Russell were receiving honorary degrees at Mount Allison University in May 2022, at its first in-person convocation since the onset of the pandemic, I felt as if we were celebrating the end of COVID-19, sitting on stage in my formal attire to celebrate our graduates and almost forgetting about the masks that we all had to wear. On that sunny but still cool day, the auditorium filled to reduced capacity cheered relentlessly as these two well-respected and admired public health leaders walked on the stage. A Mount Allison University alumna, Dr. Bonnie Henry, British Columbia Public Health Officer, provided daily pandemic updates that were watched on local TV channels and YouTube by viewers throughout Canada and abroad despite their specific provincial anchorage, and her famous motto, “Be kind, be calm, be safe,” invaded material culture—appearing on artistic prints, cards, T-shirts, baby clothing, canvas bags, and myriad other commercial products.<sup>3</sup> Closer to home, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Epidemiology and the face of the government’s response to COVID-19 in New Brunswick, Dr. Russell adopted a calm demeanor and fact-based approach as she explained new information and measures in daily televised briefings, often suggesting ways of dealing with wellbeing and mental health during confinement. These chief medical health officers exemplified “[a] new breed of celebrity in the age of COVID-19”<sup>4</sup> and in the heyday of the pandemic we came to depend on their presence in our homes.

Yet, in February 2023, the pandemic is far from over. In the reporting period from 5 to 11 February 2023, the New Brunswick government registered 379 new PCR confirmed cases, ten admissions to hospital (three of which were in the ICU), and nine confirmed deaths, concluding that coronavirus-related hospitalisations remained stable while deaths increased.<sup>5</sup> New variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, will continue to occur, and vaccines are not fully effective in fighting them. At risk are still the lives of the most vulnerable amongst us—the immuno-compromised, senior citizens (especially those seventy years or older), nursing home residents, caregivers, and health care professionals.

## Context

This thematic issue of the *Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick* gave contributors an opportunity to process and critically reflect on the outbreak of COVID-19 as it pertained to the specific context of New Brunswick. It contains six scholarly investigations dealing with the spread, impact, and volatility of COVID-19 within our geographic region, and it was inspired by similar novel coronavirus-focused scholarly publications that were undertaken in other parts of the world and aimed to consider the effects of the global pandemic on a smaller level—national, regional, or local. One of the most interesting publications on the impact of COVID-19 is a special issue of *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, the idea for which was conceived in March 2020 before Canada issued directives for a general lockdown. It was intended as a “rapid response collection of essays”

authored by Canadian-based scholars working in the field of biopolitics.<sup>6</sup> These reflections are personal meditations, with variable degrees of formality and depth, and they capture a snapshot of their contributors' thoughts, hopes, anxieties, and fears as the pandemic was gaining momentum worldwide, leaving behind broken systems and waves of destruction. In the same vein, the Lisbon Consortium in Portugal, associated with the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, created a new website in April 2020, *Culture in Quarantine*, where it sought to publish critical writing, visual essays, as well as other creative responses to the pandemic.<sup>7</sup> What is noteworthy about this venture is the inclusion of cultural analysis side by side with creative writing and artistic expression. Scholarly investigations are normally published separately from creative projects, but the sudden intrusion of COVID-19 in our personal and professional spheres brought these once-disconnected realms together in an unprecedented fashion. The Portuguese research team stated: "In the time of coronavirus, both critical cultural analysis and sustained personal reflection are needed more than ever to put these emerging new realities into perspective."<sup>8</sup>

Demarcating research along geographic lines brings to light the question of perimeters—in particular the invisible borders rendered visible during the pandemic. We are reminded, for example, of the travel checks that were conducted when inter-provincial borders were closed throughout Canada to control the spread of the virus. Within the context of New Brunswick, border closures in 2020 made us aware of our reliance on produce grown outside the province,<sup>9</sup> on consumer goods manufactured elsewhere, and on migrant workers and precarious labour in the agri-food and seafood sectors.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the Special Issue of *Borders in Globalization Review* entitled "Borderlands in the Era of COVID-19" navigates between national perimeters, "documenting experiences of more than 20 international boundaries across nearly all continents of the world" and proposing a collective reflection on border closures and their impact on communities across the globe.<sup>11</sup> In the section "Artwork," this issue contains Natasha Sardzoska's poem *confined body* and Marco Kany's photographs of border crossings between Germany, France, and Luxembourg, taken from 27 March to 10 April 2020. Scientific research and creative expression find themselves once again adjacent, mutually supportive and enriching each other.

Other publishing initiatives focused on COVID-19 from a specific thematic perspective rather than within a circumscribed geographic context. Early research initiatives that shed light on the virus and the pandemic engaged with a range of important issues, and I will provide three examples that were conceived in Spring 2020 and received high visibility in the digital realm to illustrate the range of topics considered in research on COVID-19. First, *Fast Capitalism: An Interdisciplinary Journal* issued a Call for Papers on the topic of "Capitalism, Coronavirus, and Crushing College as We Know It," in order to address the impact of the move to online education during the pandemic and its lasting repercussions on higher education.<sup>12</sup> Another important publication, which would appear in print at the height of the outbreak, is *COVID-19 in International Media: Global Pandemic Responses* (2022); it examines responses in print, broadcast, and online media to social, political, and health issues sparked by or related to the coronavirus.<sup>13</sup> The third example connects nature, ecology, COVID-19, and mental health in profound and thought-provoking ways: Douglas A. Vakoch and Sam Mickey co-edited *Eco-Anxiety and Pandemic Distress: Psychological Perspectives on Resilience and Interconnectedness* (2023), a collection of essays built on the premise that COVID-19 and the climate crisis are "two of the most prominent sources of eco-anxiety today," causing "unprecedented forms of psychological distress, including anxiety and related emotional or affective states like grief, anger, guilt, and depression."<sup>14</sup>

In the early days of the pandemic, lockdowns and other government-mandated measures imposed working from home, the closure of libraries and archives, and the transition to online teaching, which required additional training and substantial time investment in new modalities of course delivery; for many

scholars, the immediate consequence of these changes and limitations was a reduction in research time and publishing output. As we got used to a “new normal” in our professional lives and learnt to make do with what we had, special or thematic issues and collections of essays on COVID-19 began to proliferate, bringing to the forefront comprehensive assessments of topical issues and impacts, focused studies on a range of pressing matters, and lessons learnt with suggestions for policy and practice changes and implementation. Unsurprisingly, many of these journal issues are in the area of public health policy. A notable example in this category is “Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic,” published in the May 2022 issue of *Health Policy*.<sup>15</sup> Similar collective endeavours deal with COVID-19 in relation to consumer behaviour, Long-Term Care, depth and breadth of health inequality, eating disorders, behavioural science, and primary care. In the aftermath of the pandemic, publications related to COVID-19 turn in the direction of preparedness for similar global events, reminding us of the inequalities that exist in the world and the importance of national and global cooperation.<sup>16</sup>

## Contents of the Special Issue

Whether government mandated or self-imposed, home confinement during the pandemic increased our screen viewing, and a large part of our time was spent keeping ourselves informed of the most current COVID-19 and public health information as well as watching politicians and other decision makers discuss the latest measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus and keep us safe. Loss in advertising revenue for the media during the pandemic resulted in newspaper closures and a decrease in professionals working in various segments of the news industry (newspapers, broadcasting, digital media, etc.). It is difficult to assess at this stage the impact of closures and a reduced workforce in the news media industry on the quality of the information provided in regard to the virus itself and the complex ramifications of the global pandemic, but what is emerging from scholarly studies dealing with journalistic reporting on COVID-19 matters is the highly uncritical nature of news updates and commentaries.<sup>17</sup> “News media reporting is understood to play a central role during national security and health emergencies,”<sup>18</sup> however, and the article co-authored by Canadian media scholar Erin Steuter and political scientist Geoff Martin on the coverage of COVID-19 by New Brunswick English-language news media is thus not only timely but also an indispensable component of any collective reflection on the virus and the pandemic. Using “frame analysis” as their methodological approach, Steuter and Martin examine media coverage of COVID-19 in New Brunswick, highlighting cases of scientific quality and informed, “verified” reporting, but also uncovering traces of bias and sensationalism (e.g. public blaming and shaming), failure to shed light on important issues, and dissemination of misinformation. Two of their case studies are particularly interesting: the segregation of students from Listuguj (Mi’kmaq) First Nation during border closures between Quebec and New Brunswick, who could not attend school in person with their classmates, and the accusations levelled at Dr. Jean Robert Ngola, later cleared of causing an outbreak in the Campbellton area when he returned from a trip to Quebec and tested positive for COVID-19. Steuter and Martin argue persuasively that the then Irving-owned New Brunswick news media repeatedly closed policy windows, failing to communicate the need for much-needed change and action on socio-political and economic levels.<sup>19</sup>

Higher education was one of the segments most harshly affected by the measures taken to control the virus not only in New Brunswick but also in other parts of Canada and the world; 220 million post-secondary students across the globe saw their learning disrupted by COVID-19.<sup>20</sup> In a university setting, the sudden transition to online learning required finding alternative ways to deliver course content that had been taught in the traditional classroom, as well as securing immediate, dependable access to

technologies and digital platforms (not to mention quickly training faculty and teaching assistants to use them). A small liberal arts college, Mount Allison University has a lively, close-knit residential campus and prides itself on the diverse extra-curricular opportunities offered to students who seek professional development, volunteer opportunities, or recreational activities. Hands-on, in-classroom teaching is at the core of its academic mission. The mandated closure of the university campus in March 2020, however, impacted the student experience in detrimental ways and sent students home to live with their family or friends, and attend virtual classes in conditions that were oftentimes not auspicious to learning—crowded living spaces, limited or unreliable internet access, lack of peer support and resources, etc. Leslie Shumka’s article, “Rural Community Engaged Learning? Rethinking Practice in a Pandemic,” brings to light the challenges of conducting community engaged learning under pandemic conditions in a small town located in the New Brunswick countryside. As Shumka explains, at its very core, “[c]ommunity engaged learning (CENL) is a transformative, experiential learning activity that sees university students working closely with local non-profits, societies, or schools to address a community-identified need.” CENL is a new program at Mount Allison University, and it was being put into practice just when the pandemic struck. In passionate prose, Shumka details how program goals, operating policies, and instructional practices were adjusted to respond to a new reality—one of remote learning, social distancing, and virtual community engagement. In the process of adapting to a pandemic, this new program built resiliency and demonstrated the fluidity of CENL approaches.

It is worthwhile noting—somewhat paradoxically given that the world was then at a standstill—that “[t]he conditions of isolation in the first few months of the Covid-19 pandemic have been linked to a surge of creativity, both for practicing artists and individuals with little previous engagement with the arts.”<sup>21</sup> In an article that I have already referenced above in my comments on the rainbow symbol, Sabine LeBel discusses a daily, small-scale pandemic project that she started on 16 March 2020 with the aim of keeping busy, staying focused on a creative venture, and connecting to her communities, especially the LGBTQIA2S+ ones. The success of this endeavour led to a larger art project on the theme of isolation, undertaken with her collaborator Alison Taylor at the local artist-run centre, Connexion, in Fredericton, New Brunswick from 6 to 15 May 2020. Both projects involved creative pieces posted on social media by LeBel and Taylor, and responses from various individuals, including members of LGBTQIA2S+ communities who were experiencing isolation in all its complexity. For LeBel, her contribution to this Special Issue is an opportunity not only to underline the problematic appropriation of the rainbow flag and the challenges experienced by a marginalised community during the pandemic, but also to bring to the forefront the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ individuals at a critical time in the history of the province and to highlight their resilience and creativity in the face of global distress and uncertainty.

From news media coverage of COVID-19, community engaged learning during a global pandemic, and creative engagement with isolation, we then turn our attention to the most vulnerable segments of our population, the ones that government measures tried to protect the most and often failed to do so. In a study with long-ranging implications, Janet Durkee-Lloyd and her research team focus on the Long-Term Care (LTC) sector in New Brunswick, reminding us from the outset that we live in a country that had some of the highest COVID-19 LTC facility death rates in the world. The researchers surveyed over 200 participants to determine how individuals with a family member/sponsor living in a New Brunswick special care home or nursing home received information during the first and second waves of the pandemic, starting from the premise that clear and effective communication between staff, family, and residents has important social, psychological, and health benefits. The study concludes with key insights and lessons learnt from the communication strategies used by LTC staff to convey essential information and measures that can inform policies and procedures in the future.

Michelle Lafrance and her colleagues authored the next article featured in this Special Issue, which deals with another vulnerable segment of the population: older adults aging in place in New Brunswick. A recent survey conducted by the National Institute on Ageing at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) determined that seventy per cent of 1,517 Canadian respondents, aged sixty-five and older, will try to live safely and independently in their own home for as long as possible in retirement.<sup>22</sup> This finding highlights how important it is to have homes, support systems, and cities equipped to facilitate aging in place, the manifold benefits of which are indisputable. The eye-opening contribution to senior care submitted by Lafrance et al. gives voice to forty-four informal caregivers whose authentic and moving testimonies in both official languages of New Brunswick—English and French—punctuate this study and reveal a “disjointed, opaque, and confusing” system that presents unnecessary but remediable challenges during already difficult times for a family. The findings elicit empathy for the caregiver reality and build an understanding of a broken system, but one in which professional staff can still make an important difference. The article concludes with useful recommendations for change in policies and practices.

Provincial and federal government measures implemented to contain the spread of COVID-19 and prevent our health care system from collapsing caused unprecedented disruptions to health and social care across Canada at a time when children, young people, and their families needed the most support. Lifestyle changes, which included physical distancing and the transition to online learning, along with in-person care that was switched to virtual interactions in all possible cases thus created a series of complications and obstacles for all parents and caregivers, but even more so for people caring for children and youth with complex care needs. In their contribution to this Special Issue, a qualitative study aiming to capture and critically assess the experiences of caregivers and care providers of children and youth with complex care needs in New Brunswick during the COVID-19 pandemic, Lillian MacNeill and her team surveyed forty-five caregivers and seven care providers through an online questionnaire with open-ended questions to determine what we can learn from the information they provided and how we can improve the system in the aftermath of a global pandemic. The loss of support, mental health impacts, and struggles to balance safety and quality of care are three threads that traverse these questionnaires and highlight the extent to which two segments of the population already stretched to the limit prior to the emergence of the novel coronavirus, caregivers and care providers, were affected by the pandemic.

This Special Issue provides a collective response to COVID-19 that places the spotlight on our province, reflects the themes and emphases of worldwide research on the novel coronavirus and the global pandemic caused by its rapid spread, and advances key knowledge with the potential of effecting consequential changes in policy and practice in New Brunswick and elsewhere in Canada.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kirsty Conway, "The Problem with Using Rainbow Flags to Support the NHS," *The Psychologist*, 15 June 2020; <https://www.bps.org.uk/>, last accessed 10 January 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Department of Global Communications, "UN Supports LGBTI Community during COVID-19 Pandemic," 15 June 2022; <https://www.un.org/>, last accessed 9 December 2022.

<sup>3</sup> For insights into how effective communication and empathetic leadership inspired public trust during a global pandemic crisis, read Dr. Bonnie Henry's account, co-authored with her sister, Lynn Henry, *Be Kind, Be Calm, Be Safe: Four Weeks That Shaped a Pandemic* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Press, "A New Breed of Celebrity in the Age of COVID-19: The Chief Medical Officer," *St. Albert Gazette*, 23 March 2020; <https://www.stalbertgazette.com/>, last accessed 14 December 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Health, Government of New Brunswick, "COVID-19 Report, Reporting Period: February 5 to February 11, 2023 (Week 6)," 14 February 2023; <https://www2.gnb.ca/>, last accessed 15 February 2023.

<sup>6</sup> See Greg Bird and Penelope Ironstone, "Writing in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic: From Vulnerability to Solidarity," *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, special issue: "COVID-19 Essays"; <https://www.utpjournals.press/journals/topia/covid-19-essays>, last accessed 5 December 2022. This publication was followed by a more elaborate and conventional issue of *TOPIA*, edited also by Penelope Ironstone and Greg Bird (vol. 41, Fall 2020).

<sup>7</sup> For a description of this initiative, see "Culture in Quarantine," 7 April 2020; <https://lisbonconsortium.com/2020/04/07/culture-in-quarantine/>, last accessed 14 December 2022. The website *Culture in Quarantine* was not operational in January 2023 when I was finalising this Introduction.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "More than 90 per cent of New Brunswick's produce is imported from out of province." See Hannah Moore, "COVID-19: A Wake-Up Call for Food Security/Sovereignty in New Brunswick," *NB Media Co-op*, 9 May 2020; <https://nbmediacoop.org/>, last accessed 15 November 2022.

<sup>10</sup> For an assessment of the reliance on migrant workers and their situation in the early days of the pandemic, see Raluca Bejan, "New Brunswick Debate on Migrant Workers Leaves a Lot to Be Desired," *NB Media Co-op*, 6 May 2020; <https://nbmediacoop.org/>, last accessed 15 November 2022.

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- <sup>11</sup> Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly and Michael J. Carpenter, “Letter from the Editors,” *Borders in Globalization Review* 2, no. 1 (Fall and Winter 2020), p. 6.
- <sup>12</sup> A special section with five essays appeared under the title initially proposed in *Fast Capitalism* 17, no. 2 (2020); DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32855/fcapital.2020.02>.
- <sup>13</sup> John C. Pollock and Douglas A. Vahoch (eds.), *COVID-19 in International Media: Global Pandemic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2022).
- <sup>14</sup> See Douglas A. Vakoch and Sam Mickey (eds.), *Eco-Anxiety and Pandemic Distress: Psychological Perspectives on Resilience and Interconnectedness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), quotations from the online publicity blurb. Jan Edl Stein’s chapter, “Cultivating Belonging: Healing Defensive Anxiety in Times of Collective Trauma” (pp. 31–43), which contains lessons learnt from a clinical practice during the pandemic, is a particularly interesting read. In response to the global coronavirus crisis, Douglas A. Vakoch and Sam Mickey previously co-edited *Eco-Anxiety and Planetary Hope: Experiencing the Twin Disasters of COVID-19 and Climate Change* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2022), a collection of essays that contains psychological, phenomenological, existential, and artistic perspectives on the eco-anxiety generated by COVID-19.
- <sup>15</sup> Ewout van Ginneken, Erin Webb, Anna Maresso, and Jonathan Cylus (eds.), “Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Health Policy* 126, no. 5 (May 2022), pp. 347–484.
- <sup>16</sup> Examples include Jasleen Kaur and Navjot Sidhu (eds.), *Digital Innovation for Pandemics: Concepts, Challenges, Constraints, and Opportunities* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2022); James M. Kauffman and Jeanmarie Badar (eds.), *Navigating Students’ Mental Health in the Wake of COVID-19: Using Public Health Crises to Inform Research and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2023); and Gabriela Cornejo Weaver, Kara M. Rabbitt, Suzanne Wilson Summers, Rhonda Phillips, Kristi N. Hottenstein, and Juanita M. Cole (eds.), *Acute Crisis Leadership in Higher Education: Lessons from the Pandemic* (New York: Routledge, 2023). The latter publication is a comprehensive collection tackling COVID-19’s impact on a wide range of spheres in higher education (including global mobility and international programs, the academic mission, equity, athletics, information technology leadership, admissions and enrolment, and advancement), and concluding with a thought-provoking piece: “Reflections on Leadership through Crisis” (pp. 230–40). Another interesting read is Michael P. Leiter and Cary L. Cooper (eds.), *Burnout While Working: Lessons from Pandemic and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2023).
- <sup>17</sup> See especially Nora Loreto, *Spin Doctors: How Media and Politicians Misdiagnosed the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood, 2021).
- <sup>18</sup> Katharine J. Mach, Raúl Salas Reyes, Brian Pentz, Jennifer Taylor, et al. “News Media Coverage of COVID-19 Public Health and Policy Information,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8 (2021), p. 2; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00900-z>. The article examines, through a comparative lens, news media coverage in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on the topic of NB media ownership, see Tracy Glynn and Aditya Rao, “The Nobodies of Corporate Media: Postmedia’s Purchase of Irving Media is Not Good News for New Brunswick’s Working Class,” *Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d’études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick* 14, no. 2 (2022), pp. 25–37; and Marie-Linda Lord, “Acquisition de Brunswick News par Postmedia : Quel avenir pour les médias acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick au pays des géants ?,” *Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d’études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick* 14, no. 2 (2022), pp. 39–43.

<sup>20</sup> Mabruk Kabir, Brad Seward, and Elizabeth Dhuey, *Higher Education in Canada during COVID-19: Current Challenges and Future Directions*, FutureSkills Research Lab; <http://futureskillscanada.com>, last accessed 15 February 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Elodie Marandet, Harriet Barratt, and Aristeia Fotopoulou, “Art in Isolation: Artistic Responses to COVID-19,” *The Polyphony*, 16 June 2020; <https://thepolyphony.org/>, last accessed 10 February 2023.

<sup>22</sup> I first learnt about the study by reading Dave Wilkes’ article “COVID-19 Has Made More Canadians Consider Aging in Place,” *The Star*, 29 January 2021; <https://www.thestar.com/>, last accessed 10 February 2023.