



RADIO-CANADA

News release

Radio-Canada Scientist of the Year prize for 2020 awarded to Julien Arino, Marc Brisson, Caroline Colijn and Mathieu Maheu-Giroux

Sunday, January 17, 2021 – Radio-Canada is pleased and proud to announce that it is awarding its “**SCIENTIFIQUE DE L’ANNÉE 2020 DE RADIO-CANADA**” prize to **Julien Arino, Marc Brisson, Caroline Colijn** and **Mathieu Maheu-Giroux**, representatives of **Canadian data modelling teams** whose work has supported, informed and guided decision-making by public-health bodies and governments relative to management of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Scientists across the country have developed mathematical models to simulate and/or predict the spread of the epidemic. Their epidemiological modelling has enabled governments and public-health bodies to forecast the various scenarios and the likely consequences of their decisions. Policy-makers have in turn used those models to build their pandemic response in an effort to reduce mortality, safeguard health-care systems and minimize social disruption.

The four winners represent the modelling community. They are specialized in different areas, are based in different regions and have addressed the challenges of the pandemic from different angles, and are continuing to advise public-health and government policy-makers. The pandemic has led them to evolve their research areas at lightning speed, since the data collected power their models and help refine them. Their work in turn has affected the evolution of the pandemic via the measures adopted.

Data modellers have been working behind the scenes, attuned to the virus and in action, since late 2019. They are closely observing data on people’s health and behaviours, alert to the latest developments in basic science, and committed to improving pandemic response. They are powering much more than their models.

Radio-Canada Executive Vice-President **Michel Bissonnette** hailed the importance of their work. “Understanding how a virus spreads through populations has never been so important. This vital work being done by teams of scientists is enriching both science and society, and that is what we sought to acknowledge in awarding them Scientist of the Year honours,” he said.

Julien Arino earned his PhD at INRIA (France’s National Institute for Research in Computer Science and Automation). He teaches at the University of Manitoba Faculty of Mathematics, where he is a participant in the Data Science NEXUS multidisciplinary program as well as the VADA (Visual and Automated Disease Analytics) graduate studies program. He is particularly interested in the risk of virus importation.

Marc Brisson is a professor at Université Laval and head of the Research Group in Mathematical Modeling and Health Economics of Infectious Diseases. He has contributed to mapping out scenarios for the province of Quebec.

Caroline Colijn, a mathematician and epidemiologist, is a professor in the Faculty of Mathematics at Simon Fraser University. She holds the Canada 150 Research Chair in Mathematics for Evolution, Infection and Public Health. She has worked to model the impact of physical distancing on the infection curve in British Columbia.

Mathieu Maheu-Giroux is assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at McGill University, and holds the Canada Research Chair in Population Health Modeling. His research focuses on infectious disease modelling, epidemiological surveillance and monitoring, and impact evaluation of public health interventions. The overall goal of his program is to support development of policies and responses aimed at improving population health, in particular those designed to control and eliminate infectious diseases. He has worked on forecasting hospitalization requirements for Quebec.

The “**SCIENTIFIQUE DE L’ANNÉE DE RADIO-CANADA**” prize dates back to 1987, making this the 34th time it has been awarded. It is given annually to a person or team that over the previous year has been responsible for a discovery, publication or achievement worthy of attention and acknowledgement.

Get to know the 2020 winners

The science shows *Les années lumière*, on **ICI PREMIÈRE**, and *Découverte*, on **ICI TÉLÉ**, will spotlight the **2020 Scientist of the Year** winners and their work today, **Sunday, January 17**.

Starting at noon, during *Les années lumière*, produced by **Sébastien Landry**, host **Sophie-Andrée Blondin** will interview the four winners, **Julien Arino**, **Marc Brisson**, **Caroline Colijn** and **Mathieu Maheu-Giroux**.

Tonight’s episode of *Découverte*, broadcast at 6:30 p.m. and hosted by **Charles Tisseyre**, will feature a segment by journalist **Gaëlle Lussiaà-Berdou** and producer **Jean-François Michaud** allowing viewers to better understand the importance and scope of these scientists’ work, which has been key to Canada’s pandemic response.

Tune in!

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