

Research Fellowships, Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto

Toronto Metropolitan University
Application deadline: Mar 15, 2026

Alex Borkowski, Toronto, Ontario

The Image Centre (IMC) is Canada's leading institution dedicated to the exhibition, research and collecting of photography. Established in 2012 at Toronto Metropolitan University, in the heart of the city, the IMC welcomes visitors to explore the intersection of photography and culture. Through compelling exhibitions and engaging public programming, the IMC showcases work by emerging, renowned, and anonymous photographers, past and present. With a growing collection of nearly 500,000 photographic objects and an innovative scholarly research program, the IMC is also a vibrant hub for the preservation and study of photography.

Since 2014, The Image Centre has offered a variety of fellowships for research related to photography. Research fellows have the opportunity to study select areas of The Image Centre's photography collections first-hand. These include the acclaimed Black Star Collection of photo-reportage, with over a quarter-million prints spanning the 20th century; a historic and fine art photography collection; The Francis Bedford Research Collection; The Edward Burtynsky Collection; The Braun-Epstein Collection; The Rudolph P. Bratty Family Collection (NYT); and several archives devoted to the life and work of a diverse group of photographers, including Werner Wolff, Jo Spence, Wendy Snyder MacNeil, Berenice Abbott, Minna Keene, Violet Keene Perinchief and Richard Harrington.

In 2026, The Image Centre will offer five competitive fellowships for research related to photography.

All applicants are encouraged to read the following guidelines closely and apply to the appropriate fellowship, based on their subject of study and eligibility. Artists, and other scholars seeking to conduct artistic research in the collections, are encouraged to apply for the Tanenbaum Fellowship exclusively. Past winners of IMC Fellowships may not reapply for five years following submission of their previous final report. The IMC will not consider incomplete applications or blanket applications for multiple fellowships; applicants will only be considered for fellowships for which they are eligible. All fellowships are available to Canadian and international applicants.

The Nadir Mohamed Postdoctoral Fellowship

This fellowship includes a \$10,000 (CAD) stipend for travel, research, and other related expenses. Candidates must hold a PhD degree. Candidates' research should utilise the collections and resources of The Image Centre and/or Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Col-

lections. The fellow will be expected to carry out their research on-site for a minimum of one (1) to a maximum of three (3) months, between July 1st, 2026 and January 15, 2027.

The Penny Rubinoff Fellowship

This fellowship includes a \$5,000 (CAD) stipend for travel, research, and other related expenses. Candidates must hold a master's degree; this includes PhD students or candidates, and excludes applicants who hold a PhD or are postdoctoral researchers. Candidates' research should utilise the collections and resources of The Image Centre and/or Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections. The fellow will be expected to carry out their research on-site for a minimum of two (2) to a maximum of six (6) weeks, between July 1st, 2026 and January 15, 2027.

The Elaine Ling Fellowship

This fellowship includes a \$4,000 (CAD) stipend for travel, research, and other related expenses. Candidates must have recently completed a master's degree, or be working toward its completion. Students who are currently enrolled in a doctoral program, hold a PhD or are postdoctoral researchers are ineligible. Candidates' research should utilise the collections and resources of The Image Centre and/or Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections. The fellow will be expected to carry out their research on-site for a minimum of one (1) to a maximum of four (4) weeks, between July 1st, 2026 and January 15, 2027.

The Howard Tanenbaum Fellowship for Artistic Research

This fellowship includes a \$4,000 (CAD) stipend for travel, research, and other related expenses but does not include access to production facilities such as printing labs and darkrooms. Candidates may hold any level of education, and/or be independent artists with relevant experience and demonstrated interests. Candidates' research should utilise the collections and resources of The Image Centre and/or Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections in support of their artistic practice; they should demonstrate awareness of copyright considerations in their use of historical images; they should propose creative methodologies and outputs. Applicants should discuss with the IMC Research Program Coordinator (imagecentre.research@torontomu.ca) the feasibility of their project prior to applying. The fellow will be expected to carry out their research on-site for a minimum of one (1) to a maximum of four (4) weeks, July 1st, 2026 and January 15, 2027.

The Wendy Snyder MacNeil Research Fellowship

This Fellowship includes a \$2,500 (CAD) stipend for travel, research and other related expenses but does not include access to production facilities such as printing labs and darkrooms. Candidates should possess or be working towards at least an undergraduate degree, and/or be photo-based artists with an interest in extended forms of portraiture. Candidates' research should utilise the MacNeil archive as well as other resources of The Image Centre and/or Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections. The selected fellow will be expected to carry out research on-site for a minimum of one (1) to a maximum of four (4) weeks, July 1st, 2026 and January 15, 2027.

This fellowship was established in memory of photographer and filmmaker Wendy Snyder MacNeil, to support new perspectives on MacNeil's work. Best known for her documentation of Boston's Haymarket district, her use of vernacular imagery in forms of extended portraiture, and her later, larger-scale work in platinum/palladium, MacNeil (1943-2016) was also an avid student of history and an educator deeply interested in the ways photographic images convey a sense of an individual, a family, or a group of people drawn together by culture or circumstance. MacNeil published widely and her work is part of numerous North American museums. The Image Centre holds the entirety of MacNeil's personal photographic archive: negatives, prints, maquettes, laboratory notebooks and field notes, correspondence, research materials and interviews, sound recordings, publications and reviews, and exhibition prints. All of her major projects are represented, as well as three of her films.

SUBMISSIONS

Applications, including letters of reference, must be sent via email to imagecentre.research@torontomu.ca no later than March 15, 2026, by 11:59:00 p.m. EST. Please specify how you learned of the IMC Fellowship Program in the body of your email submission. The application must include the following:

1. A project proposal (approximately 1,000 words) that outlines the subject, the originality of the research, its foundation in the collections at the IMC and/or TMU Archives and Special Collections, and the applicant's scholarly abilities to address the subject. The first line of the proposal must indicate which fellowship the applicant is seeking.
2. Curriculum Vitae.
3. One sample of written work (maximum 20 pages). For artists applying to the Howard Tanenbaum Fellowship, an example of previous film or video work (maximum 10 minutes long), or a portfolio of images (no more than 10) may be submitted instead of a writing sample.

These first three components must be gathered into one PDF document with the filename saved as: `FirstnameLastname2026-Application.pdf`. If film or video is being submitted instead of a writing sample, a link to view the file must be included in the candidate's application email, and the proposal and CV should be gathered into one PDF document. The applicant should indicate in the subject line: Application for IMC 2026 Fellowship.

4. One letter of recommendation from someone in a position to characterise the applicant's scholarly or artistic abilities to successfully carry out the proposed project. The letter should be emailed directly from the referee to imagecentre.research@torontomu.ca and must be received before the application deadline. The referee should indicate in the subject line: Reference for IMC 2026 Fellowship Applicant for [Applicant's Full Name]. The letter should be submitted as a PDF with the filename: `ApplicantFirstnameApplicantLastname2026-Reference.pdf`

DETAILS

Research fellowships must take place in Toronto, Canada at The Image Centre or TMU Archives and Special Collections between July 1st, 2026 and January 15, 2027. Dates of residency will be established in dialogue with the IMC's staff. Research fellows must agree to abide to regulations as directed by Toronto Metropolitan University, The Image Centre, and the Ministry of Health for

the province of Ontario.

Fellows are expected to pay the cost of travel and accommodation in Toronto. The stipend awarded with the fellowship is intended to offset these costs. Fellows without Canadian citizenship are responsible for obtaining travel visas as required by law according to their nationality.

Fellows will be offered access to the IMC's Peter Higdon Research Centre and collection materials, and (if applicable) the TMU Archives and Special Collections. Please note, some collection items may not be available for physical consultation during the designated time frame or visitation dates. Please inquire with the IMC Research Program Coordinator (imagecentre.research@torontomu.ca) in advance of preparing your application.

SELECTION PROCESS

A committee will evaluate the applications based on their quality, originality, and foundation in the collections and resources of The Image Centre and/or the Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections. The selection committee includes: Paul Roth (Director, IMC); Dr. Thierry Gervais (Head of Research, IMC; Professor, TMU); Chantal Wilson (Manager, Collections and Registration, IMC); Dr. Charlene Heath (Archivist and Research Specialist, IMC); one faculty member from the graduate program in Film and Photography Preservation and Collections Management at the School of Image Arts, TMU; and one curator/scholar from an external institution.

REPORT

Each fellow will submit a two-page fellowship report summarising their research, no later than one month after the completion of their fellowship at the IMC.

The report must include:

Initial objectives of the research.

1. A description of the body of photographs analysed for the research.
2. A description of resources accessed for the research.
3. The main findings of the research.

The report must be written suitably for both internal reporting and external media release purposes.

CONTACT

For further information, please contact:

General Inquiries and Applications: imagecentre.research@torontomu.ca

Collection Inquiries: imagecentre.collects@torontomu.ca

Scholarly Inquiries: Dr. Thierry Gervais, Head of Research, gervais@torontomu.ca

For more information about the IMC and its collections and resources, please visit theimagecentre.ca.

For more information on Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections, please visit their website: <https://library.torontomu.ca/asc/>

For further information please visit our website: <https://theimagecentre.ca/fellowship/>.

Reference:

STIP: Research Fellowships, Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 31, 2026 (accessed Feb 2, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51633>>.