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## Two U of L researchers win Parkland Institute awards

Two research projects, one on midwifery care in Alberta and the other on the use of gallows humour among the Kainai, got a significant boost thanks to research awards from the Parkland Institute.

Dr. Tiffany Boulton, a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Sociology, will examine access to midwifery care in Alberta and Amberlea Parker, a graduate student, plans to develop an oral history of gallows humour among the Kainai people.



Boulton became interested in midwifery care when she was working with Dr. Claudia Malacrida on a research project on childbirth choices in Alberta. Their research showed that women reported more positive childbirth experiences with midwives than physicians. Her own experience with midwifery care proved the point.

“With a midwife, you have a continuity of care that you’re not guaranteed with a physician,” says Boulton. “You get to develop a relationship with your midwife — you see them throughout your pregnancy, they’re there for the birth and they’re with you for six weeks post-partum.”

In Alberta, the wait lists for a midwife are long and most midwives work in and around Calgary and Edmonton. They attend about five per cent of births in Alberta, while in British Columbia and Ontario, midwives attend around 20 and 15 per cent of births respectively. The Lethbridge region has only two midwives, both working out of Cardston.

Boulton plans to interview midwives about the length of their wait lists, who they serve, who they see as being underserved and challenges they face in their practices. She’ll also conduct a policy analysis at local, regional and provincial levels.

“My longer-term goal is to impact some of this policy and look at how we can make midwifery care more available to more women in the province,” says Boulton.



Parker (BA '17), who's pursuing a master's degree in Cultural, Social and Political Thought, plans to talk with Kainai elders and younger generations in their 20s and 30s about gallows humour. Gallows humor can be defined as grim and ironic humour used in desperate or hopeless situations. One such example from the Kainai people is Everett Soop, a syndicated comic artist who used Indigenous experiences in his political cartoons.

"The Kainai people have been dealing with settler colonization and the residential schools," says Parker, adding the last residential school wasn't closed until 1996. "We're talking about traumas that are alive and well today. It's important to look at how humour has been employed by Blackfoot elders and youths to see how it has changed among the generations, how residential schools and colonization affected elders and how the younger generation uses humour."

The Blackfoot people used oral history and tradition as teaching tools and as a way to pass down stories long before first contact. Parker continues that custom with her oral history project.

"The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) came out with recommendations to place the First Nations at the centre of reconciliation, so it is my personal mandate to make sure that my work and my thesis reflect that," she says.

Parker hopes to speak with 20 to 30 Kainai members, both elders and university aged young people, about how they use humour. When she analyzes the data, she'll be looking for themes, differences in the way the two groups use humour, and how that relates to the recommendations from the TRC.

"This award is a really nice confirmation of how my hard work and passion has paid off and how important it is," she says.

The Parkland Institute is an Alberta-wide, non-partisan research centre within the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta.

This news release can be found online at [Parkland Institute Awards](#).

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