



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

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U of L students create innovative programming for Galt Museum

Two University of Lethbridge students completing Applied Studies courses have developed unique tools to help educate school children about local history.

Ashley Henrickson (MA '19), museum educator at the Galt Museum & Archives, and Dr. Kristine Alexander, associate professor of history and Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Child and Youth Studies, supervised LaRae Smith and Benjamin Weistra, both Education students, as they completed Applied Studies courses last semester. Their projects involved working with museum staff to research and produce new educational programming for school groups visiting the Galt.

“Recent scholarship about teaching and learning in higher education has shown that the opportunity to work on community-engaged research projects produces enormous gains in terms of student engagement and retention,” says Alexander. “The U of L’s Applied Studies program is a model in this respect, and it has been a real pleasure to be able to watch Ashley, LaRae and Ben work together to connect historical research, cutting-edge technologies and museum education.”

Smith’s project, sponsored by Farm Credit Canada, was about the Great Depression in southern Alberta. Smith, with guidance from Henrickson, developed a simulation that’s like a board game.

“The game, which is designed for Grade 5, is played in a number of rounds and, in each round, students choose what crops to plant and which agricultural techniques to implement,” says Henrickson. “The students analyze newspaper articles and photographs from the 1930s to help inform their choices. Their farms are then hit by a number of travesties which affected Alberta farmers, including drought, grasshoppers and low market prices. Finally, the emotional reality of life in the Great Depression is driven home by sharing the stories of local families who lived through the period. LaRae collected these stories through oral history interviews.”

“As the ideas for this simulation started flowing and it began to take shape, I couldn’t help but get increasingly excited for the launch of this program,” says Smith. “I can’t wait for students to be able to come and experience firsthand what it was like as a farmer in southern Alberta during the Great Depression. It was a very rare opportunity to get to spend so much time on a

single lesson plan and dive right into the fine details. I feel lucky to have been able to partner with the Galt Museum on this project and I am excited to see how students react to the program.”

Smith’s Great Depression simulation is still in the building stages but is expected to launch in September.

“LaRae’s work has been amazing,” says Henrickson. “I had envisioned the Applied Study being a jumping-off point for the research and the game, but she was so effective that it was nearly a finished product at the end. She’s also a very talented teacher.”

Weistra’s project focused on Ukrainian-Canadian internment in the First World War, a topic that’s part of the Grade 3 curriculum.

“There was an internment camp here in Lethbridge, although many people don’t know a lot about it,” says Henrickson. “Ben researched the camp in Lethbridge, located where Exhibition Park is now, and the camps in Banff because people from Lethbridge went there.”

Several prisoners escaped from the Lethbridge camp in 1916 using shovels, an auger and a fan to dig a tunnel under the fence. These tools are now held in the Glenbow Archives and therefore cannot be easily accessed by Grade 3 classes in Lethbridge. Ben examined how technologies like augmented reality, photogrammetry and 3D printing can be used to bring replicas of these objects to local students.

“This project not only made me realize the potential of using 3D/AR/VR technology in my future teaching adventures and other history projects, but led to great connections at the University, the Galt and Agility,” says Weistra. “It also led to other great experiences like taking part in the Agility pitch competition. As a student with Ukrainian heritage, it makes me proud to be able to take part in a project like this which helps bring light to a darker and lesser-known part of Ukrainian-Canadian history.”

U of L Agility, a student-centred program that focuses on innovation, provided valuable support for Weistra’s project by sharing knowledge about virtual reality and 3D printing. He also won the Agility Pitch Competition with his idea and now the Galt is waiting for the outcome of a grant application to help with the costs of digitizing the objects.

As part of their learning, Weistra and Smith presented their projects during the recent Institute for Child and Youth Studies symposium and have each won scholarships as a result.

“LaRae and Ben were spectacular students and they made significant contributions to the museum,” says Henrickson. “We are very excited that both of them are working with us again during the summer. I am also very thankful to Dr. Alexander and the U of L for supporting these projects.”

This news release can be found online at [Students create innovative programming.](#)

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