



University of  
Lethbridge

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **U of L oral history workshops expand to Milk River**

The Centre for Oral History and Tradition (COHT) at the University of Lethbridge is taking its oral history workshops farther afield thanks to the efforts of alumnus Dale Leffingwell (BASC '71).

As president of the Milk River Historical Society, Leffingwell partnered with the U of L to bring an oral history workshop to the community on Saturday, Oct. 5. The workshop will focus on the basics of doing an oral history project, including interviewing and transcription.

“I attended an oral history session at the U of L a couple of years ago and I was fascinated because it seemed like a way to fill in the pieces of history in our area,” says Leffingwell. “Much of our history is just not written down. Oral history fills in the gaps and gives us a truer picture of what happened.”

Thanks to a grant from the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta, Leffingwell approached Dr. Carol Williams, director of COHT and U of L professor, and plans for the workshop proceeded. Speakers lined up for the event include Williams; Dr. Carly Adams, a U of L professor and principal researcher with the Nikkei Memory Capture Project; Aimee Benoit, Galt Museum curator; Kimberley Lyall, motivational speaker and consultant; and Diane McKenzie, a U of L graduate student. Madison Allen, a history graduate student, is serving as workshop assistant.

“Dale is one of the most energetic and enthusiastic community historians I’ve ever met,” says Williams. “We are pleased to be running this workshop to train Milk River residents, both young and old, and U of L students who are involved with COHT about oral history methods.”

“What I’m excited about is that the U of L has engaged so many students,” says Leffingwell. “It’s so important to get young people engaged in our history. There are so many stories that can be saved through oral history interviews.”

The Milk River Historical Society has been a going concern since it was formed in 2016 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Milk River with a mini-museum. The society succeeded in getting a small but permanent location. This summer, they secured a 334 square-metre (3,600 square-foot) building for their museum collection.

Society members are also working on preserving an 1889 Northwest Mounted Police barracks that once sat on the Milk River Ridge overlooking the Fort Benton-Whoop-Up Trail.

“It was built with square nails,” says Leffingwell. “When completed, it will be a tribute to first responders, including the 1st Special Service Force, which became known as the Devils Brigade.”

The Devils Brigade was a joint Canadian-American Second World War commando unit. Members were extensively trained in stealth tactics and became the model for units like the Green Berets, Delta Force, Navy SEALs and JTF2. Highway 4 between Lethbridge and Helena, Montana, was renamed the First Special Service Force Memorial Highway in 1999 to mark the route Canadian volunteers took to join American volunteers for training in Fort Harrison, Montana.

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