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## Gift provides tuition awards for oral history summer institute

The University of Lethbridge recently held its first ever Oral History Summer Institute (OHSI), an opportunity open to anyone interested in oral history, from family historians and genealogists to community organizers and students. As part of the Faculty of Arts & Science rollout of courses geared toward continuing education and professional development, participants learned about oral history methods and theories, heard from practising oral historians and got hands-on experience in workshop and feedback sessions.



Through the Centre for Oral History and Tradition (COHT), five Indigenous students received tuition awards to the summer institute thanks to donations from Drs. Carol Williams and Carly Adams and matching funds from the Mastercard Foundation.

“Our intention for this tuition scholarship initiative was to provide support for U of L students and community participants who were interested but might not otherwise have the opportunity to attend the inaugural Oral History Summer Institute,” says Williams. “Both Dr. Adams and I, and the COHT executive, were extremely grateful for the matching funds from the Mastercard Foundation.”

Oral histories play an important role in Indigenous cultures and provide a way to share stories and teachings about their own cultures to new generations. Interviews from these projects give insight into how people and communities experienced the forces of history. During the summer institute, participants were introduced to topics such as oral history project design, interview techniques, recording technology, ethics requirements, consent forms and interview transcription.



“The most valuable thing I took away from the Oral History Summer Institute was the experiences from the guest speakers,” says Blaise Bastien, a Dhillon School of Business student and one of the tuition award winners. “Hearing them share their stories and how they began doing oral history was eye-opening, as they all came from different backgrounds and introductions to oral history. They shared what difficulties they

encountered, as well as what to expect when progressing in this profession and the importance of oral history not only for themselves, but the general community in which they conduct oral histories.”

Bastien says the summer institute has given him a clear direction for his personal project. He now knows how to start and complete a project and what to expect in between. He is also keenly aware of the power of oral history from interviewing his grandfather about his entrepreneurial history.

“The information I obtained from him in that one session was priceless, as it gave me real insight to my family’s history and the community’s history as well,” he says. “Doing this research would be helpful for the elders and members sharing their stories, knowing that their grandchildren and great grandchildren will hear what they learned as children themselves from their parents and grandparents.”

Going forward, the plan is to offer the summer institute every year.

“The Oral History Summer Institute is an exciting opportunity for students and community members to gain hands-on experience with oral history, whether they are just starting their first project or seeking to enhance their skills,” says Adams.

“Anyone who is interested in oral history or cultural history would benefit greatly from the lessons in the summer institute,” Bastien adds. “The program is professionally run with efficiency and structured to increase your knowledge and skill.”

Other recipients of the awards include Denim First Rider (a community participant), Ruth McDonald, Jacqueline Roth and Skylar Eli.

This news release can be found online at [Oral History Summer Institute](#).

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