



University of  
Lethbridge

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **In a first for the U of L, a religious studies scholar wins a Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship**

Dr. Shayne Dahl (BA '07), who was a sessional instructor in the University of Lethbridge's Department of Religious Studies until the end of April, has been awarded a prestigious Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship, one of only 70 awarded across Canada and a first for the U of L.

The two-year fellowship worth \$140,000 provides funding to postdoctoral fellows who will positively contribute to the country's economic, social and research-based growth.

"We are excited to host our first Banting Postdoctoral Researcher," says Dr. Dena McMartin, U of L vice-president research. "Banting Fellowships are awarded in recognition of high-quality research and researchers, as well as the research environment and quality of experience available. This award reflects Shayne's excellent scholarship and the strength of the support he'll receive from the department and his supervisor, Dr. John Harding."



As a Banting Postdoctoral Researcher, Dahl will study global Shugendō practices and how they intersect with Indigenous beliefs and practices. Shugendō is an ancient Japanese religion that involves mountain worship, asceticism and ancestor veneration that has seen renewed interest in recent years, both in Japan and around the globe. Dahl wants to look at how Shugendō is practiced in other regions.

"Do Shugendō practitioners just go to Japan and worship Japanese mountains, or are they going to start worshipping the natural landscape in their home countries?" says Dahl. "If they're going to start worshipping the natural landscape in their home countries, what are the Indigenous politics of that land and how do they entangle with that? These are some of the questions that my proposal focused on."

Dahl, who's currently completing a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-funded postdoctoral fellowship in religious studies at McMaster University, has also received the Reischauer Institute Postdoctoral Fellowship in Japanese Studies at Harvard University. He's the first scholar who received a PhD in Canada to win the award in more than 20 years. Beginning

Sept. 1, he'll spend the next year at Harvard and start work on his Shugendō project and then return to the U of L to complete the project.

"Shugendō is starting to catch traction everywhere, and in its travels, it's picking up and losing different components," says Dahl. "So, it's sort of becoming something new, even though it retains its old name, but what does Shugendō mean in the 21st century? That's the question I'm going to try and answer."

This news release is available online at [Banting Postdoctoral Researcher](#).

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