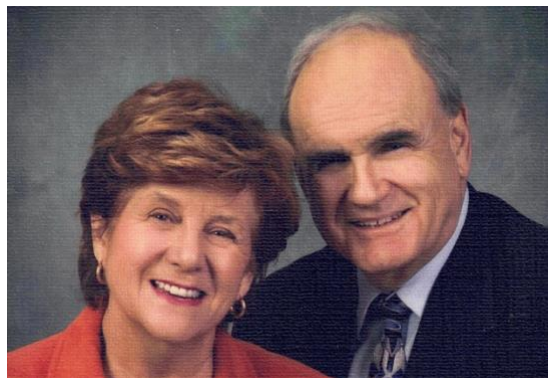


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## U of L establishes Evelyn Hamilton Chair in Liberal Education

Thanks to a \$2-million donation from Art and Mary Jane Crooks, the Evelyn Hamilton Chair in Liberal Education at the University of Lethbridge will honour Art's mother and her lifelong desire to learn.

"We are very grateful to Art and Mary Jane for this generous donation," says Mike Mahon, U of L president and vice-chancellor. "Art's mother, Evelyn Hamilton, is a perfect example of someone who lived the values of liberal education and we are proud to name the Chair of Liberal Education in her honour."



Evelyn Hamilton and her husband, Hew Crooks, resided in Ontario, where Art grew up. Art and Mary Jane moved from Ontario to Lethbridge in 1979 to open the city's first Canadian Tire Store. Since then, they have been benefactors to many organizations in the city and elsewhere.

"We wanted to establish the Evelyn Hamilton Chair in Liberal Education in dedication to her memory," says Art. "My mother had an expansive and inquisitive worldview and her standards were exacting. She had many talents and embodied lifelong learning. Throughout her life, she was grounded by her core values of self-reliance, self-discipline and intellectual rigour."

The Evelyn Hamilton Chair will be engaged in teaching and evidence-based research within the School of Liberal Education. The position is designed to instill among students the liberal education goals of rigorous inquiry, the pursuit of knowledge and critical thought grounded in evidence-based reasoning. The Chair will advance a culture that educates and promotes discussion among students, the public and decision makers on how to think clearly and carefully about issues and assess evidence and impact.

"This Chair is a great fit for the vision we have for the School of Liberal Education and we are absolutely thrilled to have this happening," says Dr. Shelly Wismath, dean of the School of Liberal Education. "Liberal education is our foundational teaching and learning philosophy and

this Chair is going to heighten that. We're going to be looking for someone to help in the areas of critical thinking, but within that, to look at things like media literacy, how to teach students to be thoughtful consumers of what they see and read in the media, to question the sources of things, to think about viewpoints being presented and to engage in open and careful discussion of issues."



Evelyn Hamilton is described as a relentless force, a distinctive combination of prairie thrift, grit and self-reliance fused with a lifelong desire to learn, travel, explore and expand her view of the world. Along with being a gifted artist, Hamilton was a demanding teacher, a strong feminist and a staunch defender of the environment.

Her philosophy of life is evident in her words, taken from a 1931 letter to her fiancé, Hew Crooks:

"I want to feel that we are using to the full the gifts that we have, and that we are lifting ourselves inwardly as well as outwardly above the average run. This does not mean that we will be snobbish or self-satisfied. In fact, I believe it means that we will be in a better position to be true friends to those about us and truly helpful to the world. I do feel that one can fulfill a worthwhile mission in life by being worthwhile, not being afraid to take a stand for what you consider right, and by lending a helping hand to those about you whenever possible."

Born in Saskatchewan in 1904, Hamilton spent her early childhood in the Crowsnest Pass where her father operated Leitch Collieries. She graduated from high school in Lethbridge at age 15 and spent a year studying music at the Winnipeg School of Art before entering the University of Manitoba. After graduating in 1924, she returned to Passburg, a small town in Crowsnest Pass, to become the schoolmistress at a one-room school.

As the town of Passburg was in decline, Hamilton returned to Winnipeg and became a decorative specialist and model home stylist for Eaton's. The job allowed her to travel to major cities, including New York. The city's energy captivated her and she obtained a position at a major department store on Fifth Avenue. When the Great Depression occurred, the loss of her work visa forced an early return to Canada.

She met her future husband, Hew, while working at Eaton's in Toronto. The Depression spelled some hard times for Hamilton and her family, and they eventually settled in Guelph, Ontario. When the Second World War broke out, Hew enlisted and spent the next six years overseas. During this time, Hamilton taught high school and studied early childhood education. She also obtained a position as a student of and assistant to Group of Seven-member Arthur Lismer. Hamilton continued to paint throughout her life.

Following the war, Evelyn and Hew settled in London, Ontario. She was active in public service and a pioneer in advocating for working women. Her steadfast efforts were key to establishing the city's first day-care centre. Hamilton was also at the forefront of preserving the historic character of the city. After her children were grown, she continued her education, learning Spanish and earning an MFA from the University of Guadalajara in Mexico. Back in London, she became an arts superintendent and taught high school French and Spanish. Hamilton passed away in London in 1990.

The investment is part of the U of L's SHINE campaign and highlights the community's involvement in supporting students and promoting opportunities for them to thrive while working to achieve their academic goals and become engaged citizens of the world.

This news release can be found online at [Evelyn Hamilton Chair in Liberal Education](#).

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