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## **Research grants focus on projects to revitalize and preserve ancestral knowledge**

University of Lethbridge researchers will look at strengthening Indigenous cultural continuity thanks to grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

“These grants highlight the breadth of expertise at ULethbridge and the meaningful work our researchers are leading,” says Dr. Dena McMartin, vice-president (research). “They directly advance our new Research and Creative Activities Plan by strengthening our foundation in Indigenous culture and supporting projects that make a difference here in southern Alberta, in Canada and around the world.”

### **Advancing the Indigenous Quijos Nation of Ecuador**

Dr. Patrick Wilson, an associate professor in Modern Languages and Linguistics, will focus his research project on advancing the priorities of the Indigenous Quijos Nation of the Ecuadorian Amazon with nearly \$35,000 from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, an organization dedicated to advancing anthropological research. The Engaged Research Grant was awarded to him and co-principal investigators Roxana Tanguila, Lourdes Jipa and Gonzalo Alvarado of Sacha Awana, the research arm of the Quijos Nation.

The ancestral territory of the Quijos Nation lies in the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest, an area of rich biodiversity. Traditional Indigenous practices included subsistence gardens or chakras that are the foundation of the domestic economy. They are managed primarily by women and not only produce food but also medicine and fibres. Beginning in the 1960s, the forest has been the site of mining, logging, African palm production and cattle production, leading to ecological degradation and the loss of biodiversity. This has led to deepening socio-economic marginalization and the erosion of food security and sovereignty

for the Quijos people, while compromising their traditional chakra practices and the knowledge systems associated with them.

"This proposed research seeks to invert this historical power imbalance around land use and forest management practices by formulating a Quijos-centred chakra and forest management plan," says Wilson.

The project is led by Quijos researchers and Western academics and involves establishing a Mama Chakra as a model forest garden for research, teaching and learning.

### **Indigenous Girls' and Women's Hockey**

Dr. Jason Laurendeau, a sociology professor, working in collaboration with Dr. Carly Adams (Professor of Kinesiology and Physical Education and co-director of ULeithbridge's Centre for Oral History & Tradition), was awarded a SSHRC Connection Grant of \$25,000 to examine the past, present and future of Indigenous girls' and women's hockey. The Indigenous Girls' & Women's Hockey Gathering is in partnership with the Indigenous Girls Hockey Program (IGHP) led by Mi'kmaw hockey organizer Ryan Francis, and the Indigenous Hockey Research Network, funded by a \$2.5 million SSHRC Partnership Grant. The Gathering will bring representatives of Indigenous sport organizations, Indigenous athletes, coaches and administrators, and Indigenous and settler-allied students, faculty and community researchers together to foster connections, strengthen directions, address the needs and well-being of Indigenous girls' and women's hockey communities and envision the way forward for Indigenous girls' and women's hockey programming. The Gathering will take place in Kijipuktuk (Halifax), on lands and in communities where stick-and-ball games have long traditions.

"For three days, the Gathering will bring members of diverse Indigenous girls' and women's hockey communities into dialogue with an array of interdisciplinary researchers involved in community-engaged research on Indigenous hockey," says Laurendeau. "At the heart of the work is a hockey jamboree for Indigenous girls between the ages of six and 14, led by Indigenous women, many of whom experienced the IGHP themselves as participants."

The aim of the Gathering is to curate a co-created vision for the future of Indigenous girls' and women's hockey programming on lands claimed by Canada and how it can be supported through research. The Gathering will also contribute to an anthology that will amplify and follow the desires of Indigenous Elders, communities, athletes and organizers.

### **Blackfoot language revitalization**

The Blackfoot language group in the Department of Indigenous Studies, consisting of Annabelle Chatsis, Mary Fox, Inge Genee, Caroline Russell and Alexandra Smith has received a \$49,000 SSHRC Connection Grant for a project on revitalizing the Blackfoot language.

While Blackfoot is taught in schools, tribal colleges and post-secondary institutions on the reserve and in Lethbridge, Calgary and Missoula, Montana, the Blackfoot language is at a crisis point. Fluent speakers are passing away with no one to replace them.

The project, titled *A'tsimaani: An invitation to Niitsi'powahsini (Blackfoot language)*, will bring those working on Blackfoot language revitalization, from tribal governments and teachers to community activists and non-Indigenous allies, together at a conference to develop an action plan.

"A'tsimaani means invitation, and this name was given to us by Elders Dr. Francis First Charger (LLD '24) and Dr. Leroy Little Bear (BASc (BA) '72, DASc '04)," says Genee. "It underscores that, at this critical juncture, everyone is invited to participate in whatever way they see fit and with whatever skills and knowledge they have. We need all hands on deck."

In addition to contributing to the scholarship on community-based Indigenous language revitalization work, the conference will aid the sustainability of the Blackfoot ancestral language and respond to the TRC Calls to Action.

[Read online.](#)

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*Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.*