Legacy links women through interests in human migration and social justice

Anyone conducting research knows that one’s research dreams are often only hindered by the resources at one’s disposal. However, through generous awards such as the Carla Thorlakson Memorial Graduate Fellowship, Jill Bucklaschuk was able to realize her research goals and, in doing so, address a gap in current scholarship: observing how Canada’s current national immigration policy shapes the experiences and life-chances of temporary migrants as they seek new opportunities for themselves and their respective families in Canada.

Jill was able to travel to Manitoba communities to interview twenty-six temporary migrants, who were appreciative of the chance to share their experiences through personal, one-on-one interviews. The participants were asked to elaborate on the challenges and opportunities they encountered throughout the migration process, the nature of their decision to work in Canada, their experiences of work and residence, and how their family members were positioned in the migration process. Jill’s research shed light on how temporary migration programs, as currently structured and experienced, unsettle how we think about human rights and social justice in relation to international migration and inclusion in Canadian society.

The Carla Thorlakson Memorial Fund was established by the parents of the late Carla Thorlakson to honour the breadth of their daughter’s intellectual interests and her professionalism.

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Carla Thorlakson (1951–1995)

“In 2013, I was fortunate to receive the Carla Thorlakson Memorial Graduate Fellowship, one of few awards specifically targeted to my area of research.”

–Jill Bucklaschuk
Margaret Laurence Endowment Fund: Thirty years of opportunities and enrichment

In January of 1984, Canada’s Secretary of State and the Minister of the Status of Women put in place an Endowment Assistance program to establish five Chairs in Women’s Studies across Canada and to “lead to a better understanding of the contribution of women in Canada and the world”. In the almost 30 years since this program was launched, the Margaret Laurence Endowment Fund (MLEF) has been an invaluable resource for programs in three Manitoba universities that promote women’s and gender studies, and feminist scholarship and activism, both within the academic and non-academic communities.

The annual Native Women and Film Festival in which invited filmmakers attend and screen their work at venues throughout Winnipeg, is the only event of its kind in North America.

Since the fund’s inception, a wide range of dynamic initiatives have been realized in the Women’s and Gender Studies program at the University of Manitoba including: the establishment of an annual film festival, international internship opportunities, student group projects, and visiting speakers.

In March of 2014, the universities came together to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Margaret Laurence Endowment Fund and reflect on the wide range and longevity of activities, the opportunities for growth and community-building that the fund afforded their programs.
“The borders of our language are the borders of our world!” (Wittgenstein)

In a world of expanding global communication, and in today’s competitive job market, study abroad opportunities are a vital part of a student’s education.

The Faculty of Arts teaches 18 different languages and offers dozens of opportunities, to study, do research, work and travel abroad. The German and Slavic Department has an array of opportunities to visit Europe including exchange programs with the University of Greifswald and the University of Trier. Both programs can be for one term or a full academic year. All credits attained count towards the UofM degree.

Professors work closely with the students that apply for scholarships and financial support. They have been highly successful assisting in obtaining prestigious scholarships such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) which covers summer courses in Business, History, German and most major fields of study. Internships for Science students and Business students can also be obtained through the German and Slavic Studies Department.

Students who want to work in Germany for the summer have the opportunity to sign up for the Work Student Program, finding them safe and fun jobs in Germany. Recent graduates who would like to take a short break or boost up their resume can participate in the Pedagogical Exchange Program, teaching English conversation and Canadian culture at German high schools. The Department also offers language travel courses to Poland, the Ukraine, Russia, and Germany where an experienced instructor from the Department accompanies the students on their trip.

Surveys that explored the long-term impact of study abroad on students’ personal, professional, and academic life showed the unequivocal influence on career path, worldview, and self-confidence.

Students, in their own words, on how the experience has impacted their lives:

“It has been nearly five years since I was a student in Germany, but not a single day goes by where its impact is not felt in my life. My time there fundamentally changed how I view the world and has given me the ability to view the world, and its issues, from several perspectives.”

– former student, German program

“I chose Central and East European Studies because I find the topic fascinating and I felt that I got a unbiased education on these territories at the UofM... My think my best experience was going to St. Petersburg for two months on a language exchange. It was amazing!”

– Erika Groos, CEES student

Dr. Alexandra Heberger has won numerous Academic Awards and Honors for her outstanding teaching and outreach work. As Co-ordinator for Work-Abroad programs and Summer Schools in Germany: Work-student program, and Exchange programs she takes great care in preparing students for an enjoyable and richly rewarding international experience.

“Overall, I learned a lot more about myself in that one semester than I did in the three and a half years in my home school because of the unique space in which I learned, experienced, and spent exploring another culture.”

– current student in German program
Kyle Labelle

“I am a third year undergrad in the Faculty of Arts, working towards an honours degree in philosophy. Taking advantage of the opportunities on campus and in the community has been an integral part of my education at the UofM. From programs like Alternative Reading Week – Nicaragua, to volunteering as a Student Ambassador for my faculty, there are many opportunities that have opened my eyes and allowed me to explore aspects of the world that I wouldn’t otherwise have had the chance to.

I am also a trained volunteer in the Peers program, which seeks to provide support to fellow students by providing everything from simple directions, to a compassionate and listening ear.

After finishing my degree at the UofM, I hope to study international relations at the graduate level, due to my increasing interest in international affairs and ethics.”

Carla Thorlakson Legacy, continued...

Carla Thorlakson worked with the Social Policy and Programs section, responsible for such issues as the United Nations Social Conference and the Status of Women. She played an active role in some of the most exciting immigration issues of the past decades. As Chief of Refugee Policy, she was instrumental in setting up the administrative framework for the admission of some 60,000 Vietnamese refugees to Canada during the height of the Indo-Chinese refugee movement. As Director of International Migration, she dealt with such high-profile issues as the entry of Bosnian refugees to Canada and played an important role in the visit to Canada of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In 1993 she was responsible for creating the first edition of the groundbreaking Reporting and Liaison Handbook, a resource for Citizenship and Immigration Officers in Canada and abroad.

Carla’s legacy continues with scholars such as Jill, who describes her research opportunity as: “a remarkably rewarding endeavour... one that I will value and reflect upon for years to come”.

The annual Student Teacher Recognition Awards ceremony gives outstanding students a chance to recognize teachers who have made important contributions to their education. At the 2013 ceremony, two Faculty of Arts students, Thomas Toles and Alexa Yakubovich, expressed their appreciation for the contributions of their teachers, Dr. Robert Smith and Randall K. Jamieson, respectively.

Thomas received a Rhodes scholarship while completing his double honours BA in English, Film, and Theatre and Psychology. Alexa, who majored in psychology received the University Gold Medal for the highest standing in Arts for 2012-13. She is also off to the University of Oxford to pursue a Masters degree.