

Historians as Expert Witnesses

All history faculty are involved in ongoing research programs, publishing books and articles, and even weighing in on historical elements in video game design. One sometimes-overlooked aspect of our research is that done in support of legal cases, especially related to Indigenous claims. Keith Carlson, Alessandro Tarsia, and Barbara Messamore have done work of this type.

Barbara recently prepared a 280-page expert witness report for a case involving the 1850 Robinson Treaties. These treaties are unique in Canada in promising an ongoing share of resource revenues to the Indigenous parties. The amount of money at stake is huge and the case profile rose when the prominent American economist Joseph Stiglitz gave his opinion that some \$100 billion was owed to the treaty annuitants.



Featured Professor

Professor Barbara Messamore teaches Canadian history, especially Canadian political and constitutional history, and historical biography. Among her publications are *Canada's Governors General, 1847-1878: Biography and Constitutional Evolution*, and a forthcoming book *Times of Transformation: The 1921 Canadian General Election*. She has co-authored two textbook series, *Conflict and Compromise* and *Narrating a Nation*, and has written numerous articles in edited collections and journals. She is often interviewed by national media outlets and has served as an expert witness on multiple federal-level court cases. Prof. Messamore is President of the Institute for the Study of the Crown in Canada, Massey College, University of Toronto. She is the current chair of the UFV History Department.

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[HTTPS://WWW.UFV.CA/HISTORY/](https://www.ufv.ca/history/)

Faculty Highlights

The courts ruled that the Anishinaabe parties to the treaties are entitled to a larger share than what they have received, a share that, among other things, failed to account for inflation. But questions remain about who bears responsibility.

As someone who specializes in political and constitutional questions, Barbara, over four and a half days of court testimony reported on the nature of the Confederation agreement and its financial arrangements. Her contention was that the government of Ontario, having received the resource revenue, was responsible for satisfying the deficiency in payments to the Anishinaabe.

She explains that expert witness testimony by historians is not informed by any social justice agenda but rather by an examination of the documentation and historical context. In this case, the Anishinaabe plaintiffs were pleased by the report, but it was entirely driven by a full assessment of the historical record. For historians, it is gratifying to see the practical utility of their work, especially when it helps to redress historical injustices.

The Anishinaabe people have kept a sacred fire burning throughout the court proceedings and graciously welcomed to the fire all who have been involved in the case.



Image submitted by Alex Bisson to the CBC article linked above.

Alumni Highlights

From the UFV History Department to Law School: What I've Learned

By Raveena Walia

I graduated from the University of the Fraser Valley in 2019 with a Double Major in History and Political Science. In 2020, I started law school at the University of Ottawa. In 2023, I graduated with my JD and began articling at a law firm here in the Fraser Valley.

Throughout my time at the UFV History Department, I had the opportunity to take courses in a variety of different topics, conduct my own research, and even travel abroad to Germany and Poland on a study tour. Most importantly, my time studying history at UFV allowed me to develop strong research and writing skills, which helped me throughout law school and throughout articling.

The research and writing skills I developed in my history courses at UFV provided me with a solid foundation for the work I did throughout law school and later during articling. Most importantly, my time at the UFV History Department led me to develop a curiosity for learning which encouraged me to pursue different areas of law and different learning experiences while attending law school. Having just graduated from a department that strongly encouraged experiential learning, I often sought out similar experiences while at the University of Ottawa. Rather than focusing on traditional law school courses like many of my classmates, I tried to take courses that required students to learn "off campus" and think outside the box.



Raveena, in front of the Canadian Supreme Court in Ottawa.

Alumni Highlights

For example, I took a course called “Feminist Law Reform”, where I had the opportunity to visit the Senate and the House of Commons, and listen to guest lectures from Members of Parliament and other community leaders. In this course, I applied the writing skills I learned while studying History at UFV and wrote a letter to the Prime Minister’s Office, encouraging his government to consider the impacts of honour-based violence on Canadian women. My letter received a response from the Prime Minister’s Office and was forwarded to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality’s Office for further consideration.

My time at the UFV History Department strongly shaped the way I approach learning, both in law school and professionally. Without the opportunity to learn from the outstanding faculty at the History Department at UFV, my experience in law school and during my articling term would not have been the same, and I would not have learned as much as I did.

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The Rideau Canal in Ottawa

Alumni Highlights

Graduate School Journeys and the Archives

By Michaela Sapielak

When I started at UFV in 2017, I had no intention of becoming a historian. I didn't know UFV had an honours degree, and I certainly didn't think I'd complete it. Yet somehow, I've ended up in a history master's program, and in September, I'll be starting my PhD. Even now, the thought of being a "historian" doesn't quite feel right, but I suppose that's my job - researching the past and writing about it.

I finished my degree in 2021 and had no idea what to do with it. After a year of working a non-academic job, I missed the reading and the writing and the thinking about thinking. I loved working on my undergraduate research projects on the [Abbotsford Lumber Company](#) and the Stanley Cup Riot of 2011, as well as my time as a research assistant, so I went back to school.

In September 2022, I started a [two-year MA in history at Queen's University](#). Moving across the country to Kingston, Ontario was (and continues to be) an odd experience. Sometimes I look around me and think I'm on the film set of a stereotypical American college, but I have found my intellectual experience here to more than make up for the culture shock. In graduate courses and in a vibrant department, I've connected with fellow history fanatics and attended lectures about subjects I never could have imagined existed. I have visited cities like Ottawa and Montreal, whose histories are so interconnected with what I've learned about Canada, that being there felt surreal. Perhaps most importantly, I have learned that "history" should instead be called "histories."



Alumni Highlights Cont'd

Researching and writing has been a challenge. My current project concerns Lady Constance Villiers-Stanley (1840-1922), wife of Canadian Governor General Lord Stanley (1841-1908), and she has proven to be a bit of a mystery. Her archival record is scattered and hasn't always been obvious. On my first trip to the national archives, I spent two whole days scrolling microfilm for an essential bit of evidence, only for it to appear at the end of my last reel in the few hours I had left before closing time. I thought that was a stressful experience, but then I had to learn to read nineteenth century cursive.

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As I come to the final stages of my degree, I have learned the importance of being flexible in my thinking. What I interpret of historical documents in the first draft of my work is inevitably very different from the last. Things change, and that's okay. Despite the challenges, this work is incredibly rewarding. What I do now is what I loved during my time at UFV: reading, writing, discussing, and enjoying. The encouragement of my professors then has given me a confidence now for which I am forever grateful. I still cannot say that I know what I'm doing, but the more I learn, the more I realize how little I know, and I love that being a historian gives me an excuse to perpetuate the cycle.

Student Highlights

Honours Student Profile: A Comparative Study of Race and Book Censorship in the Past and Present

By Jennifer Carstensen



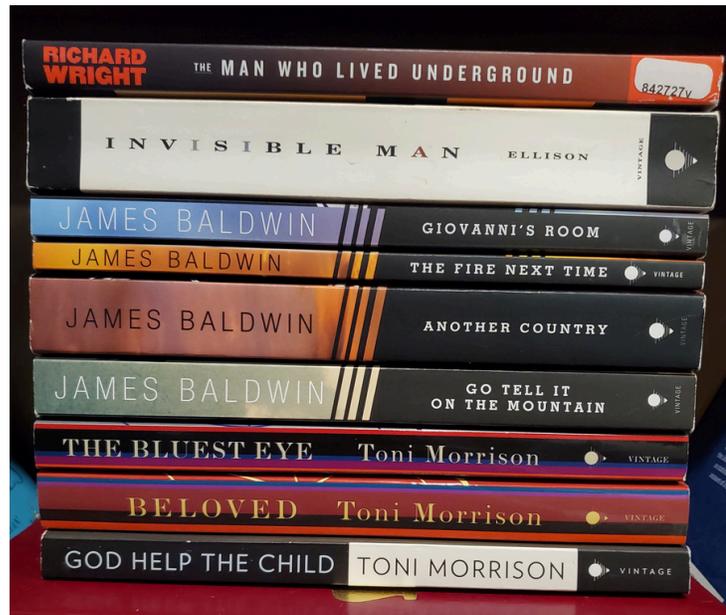
I had the idea of doing an honours paper kicking around in my brain for a while before I approached Prof. Ian Rocksborough-Smith with an idea. Settling on a topic that I felt was interesting and underexplored was my biggest hurdle. As an English Minor I knew I wanted to combine my two disciplines, as the overlap of History and English that comes when discussing historical context and the lives of authors has always been one of my favourite parts of literature. When I led an in-class discussion about book censorship I knew I had found my topic. I debated about what group specifically to discuss and eventually settled on African American Authors, specifically Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison. The racism inherent in how their books are perceived and challenged felt like such an interesting topic to delve into, and something that is overshadowed today by conservative fears of queer sexuality and gender. I decided on a comparative framework, comparing censorship of the Cold War to modern day challenges as I was curious to see if today's fears reflected a sort of modern-day McCarthyism or were something completely different.

The first step was reading the books. One thing I noticed about today's book challenges was that many of the people complaining had only ever read snippets of text divorced from their overall context and I did not want to be like them. Therefore, I read and annotated every book I discussed. After that my research focused heavily on the context of the Cold War surveillance state, as I noticed that while most of the authors I was discussing were never officially banned, the state had other ways to subtly censor them. Once I had that context down I then investigated the current state of the books I was touching on. Schools ended up being my modern-day comparison for two reasons: one, I am considering going into teaching so I am familiar with the area, and two, it was the most obvious case of modern-day censorship in a public institution. I also made sure to take an intersectional approach, as Morrison being a woman and Baldwin being queer both impacted their books and would be a disservice to the important stories they told to not mention.

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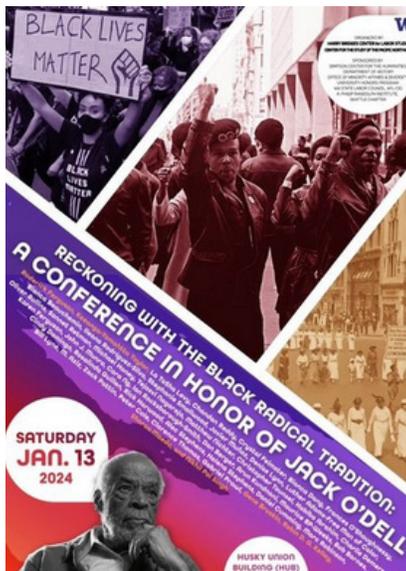
Student Highlights Cont'd

One thing I am left with is the numerous directions this research could be continued in. The type of literary analysis the FBI and modern advocacy groups do that read the books but do not understand the books, extrapolating this idea of censorship to other marginalized groups, looking at black authors in different historical periods or places, and a suggestion given to me that the situation in Palestine could be an interesting continuation with their free speech and censorship issues. This paper not only opened my eyes to many issues inherent in both the past and the present, but also the possibilities open to me if I want to continue this line of research. I am truly grateful to have had this opportunity.



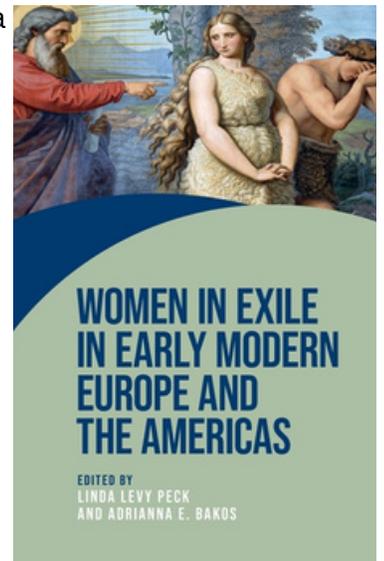
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Conferences and Accolades



Prof. Ian Rocksborough-Smith presented on a plenary session at a conference at the University of Washington in Seattle, entitled: “Reckoning with the Black Radical Tradition: A Conference in Honor of Jack O'Dell” which featured scholars and activists from across the United States. He also presented recent research at the Heidelberg University Center for American Studies.

Prof. Adrianna Bakos published a co-edited volume entitled Women in Exile in Early Modern Europe and the Americas and gave a research paper at the 2024 meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies at Hofstra University in New York.



Student Highlights

Nepalese Internship Reflection

By Maya Drisner



In late November 2023, I learned of an opportunity to complete an internship in Kathmandu, Nepal, through the [Global Development Studies 100 class](#). Although I was already three years into my history major and previous kinesiology minor, I decided to take a chance to travel the world and work towards the UN's sustainable development goals. On January 8, 2024, after three full days of Travel and a day in Seoul, I arrived at an orphanage in Ramkot, Nepal, to work with children and youth who have been diagnosed with HIV/ AIDS.

At [Punarbal Plus](#), the orphanage I volunteer in, I teach English lessons, tutor children from ages 8-18, participate in cultural events or traditions and work on administrative tasks to combat the stigma and discrimination against these children due to their illness.

In late January 2024, I attended a Nepalese wedding. It was a four-hour bumpy jeep ride with nothing but dust beaming through the window. As the maid of honour, I was fully immersed in Nepalese cultural practices. On the previous day, we participated in preparations for the wedding, henna for the bride, and making traditional dishes. Throughout my degree, I have learned about different cultural practices. Through the class Indian Social History, I have learned about caste systems and Hindi practices, which gave me context and some confidence to understand the background of wedding traditions in Nepal as they had various similarities.

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Student Highlights Cont'd

I have also had the opportunity to explore the capital of Kathmandu with other short-term volunteers from around the world, creating connections. I have visited the famous Monkey Temple, Garden of Dreams, Tamil, and more. Although the work at the orphanage may be emotionally draining due to the treatment and history the children have experienced, it is the chance of a lifetime to create change while participating in a hands-on university-level internship.



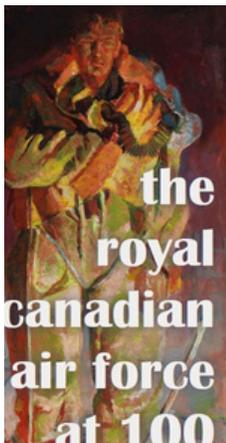
On left: At Punarbal with a few of the children.

On right: Creating pottery in a traditional shop.



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Conferences and Accolades Cont'd



34th
CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY
COLLOQUIUM
3-4 May 2024 | Wilfrid Laurier University

The CMHC is the largest gathering of military historians in Canada, bringing together academics, students, independent scholars and members of the public to share the latest work in Canadian military history and war and society.

This page last updated: 19 April 2024

registration
Registration is closed.

speakers

Above: Prof. Scott Sheffield recently presented at the 34th Canadian Military History Colloquium in Waterloo, Ontario at Wilfred Laurier University.

Below: Prof. Steve Schroeder was involved in supporting the event listed below put on recently by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East. The event is tied to UFV Peace and Conflict Studies partnerships locally and internationally and connects to History 335 on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is regularly offered.

The Law and the Prophets: An online conversation



"Israel is always looking to drive Palestinians into smaller and smaller spaces. To make them invisible, to deny them resources, deny them chances and ultimately to try and force them out."
-Jonathan Cook, Author International Journalist.

The Law and the Prophets is a documentary that amplifies the voices of eight individuals living and working in Palestine and Israel. Through their stories and experiences they expose the brutal matrix of laws, policies, and practices that Israel employs to control Palestinians.

Watch the documentary for free at your convenience on Youtube. Then join the discussion on May 4 with:

Joshua Vis: filmmaker
Sam Bahour: Palestinian businessman, West Bank, Palestine
Stephen Aberle: Independent Jewish Voices – Vancouver

Student Highlights

A Study Tour to Poland

By Clare Vike

At the end of September 2023, I had the opportunity to board a plane headed for Poland. For the next four months, I would be living in the University of Fine Arts dorms in Poznan. While I was there I travelled by train to many different cities in Poland, spending a few nights in Krakow gave me plenty of time to visit landmarks such as Wawel Castle, the Cloth Hall and Saint Mary's Basilica. Since it was late November I was there in time for the Christmas Market set up in the main square. I quickly discovered that Christmas was a very special time in Polish culture and often lasted from the second week of November till New Year. Each market had amusement rides for children, booths with homemade crafts and plenty of food. The market in Poznan was very close to my dorm and I tended to find myself eating there almost every day. Around the end of November, I took the time to visit Auschwitz since it was a place I had learned about in many history courses. It was a solemn experience to see in person what had happened and view the exhibitions. However, I am grateful to be able to connect my classroom experience with in-person experience. Later in December, I visited Gdansk and Warsaw. Both had famous history museums I wanted to visit before returning to Canada. In Gdansk, I learned about the Polish trade union and civil resistance at the Solidarity Museum and then headed off to go explore the Second World War Museum which was only a short walk away.



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Student Highlights Cont'd

Aside from travel, I made many friends in Poznan. The night I arrived I had already been invited out to a pub with a group of people who would then become my closest friends while I was in Poland. We did lots of things together from grocery shopping to clubs, but our ideal activity was cooking nights. We often would all get together and cook something new like perogies or chilli and then watch movies. I learned plenty of new recipes from Germany, Portugal, and Taiwan. We also tried to recreate poutine and Nanaimo bars but that was mostly unsuccessful. Regardless of whether our meals worked out, being all together was what I loved about these nights and I will forever cherish them. I had an incredible experience living in Poland and learned more about myself and European culture. I am very grateful to UFV for allowing me to study abroad.

UFV's Association of History Students (AHS) Events



UFV's Association of History Students has been very active this year, organizing social events like donuts and coffee socials (pictured above) as well as a successful "scavenger hunt" in collaboration with the UFV Library that focused on research skills. Apparently, paintball is happening again soon, among other plans! Stay tuned...

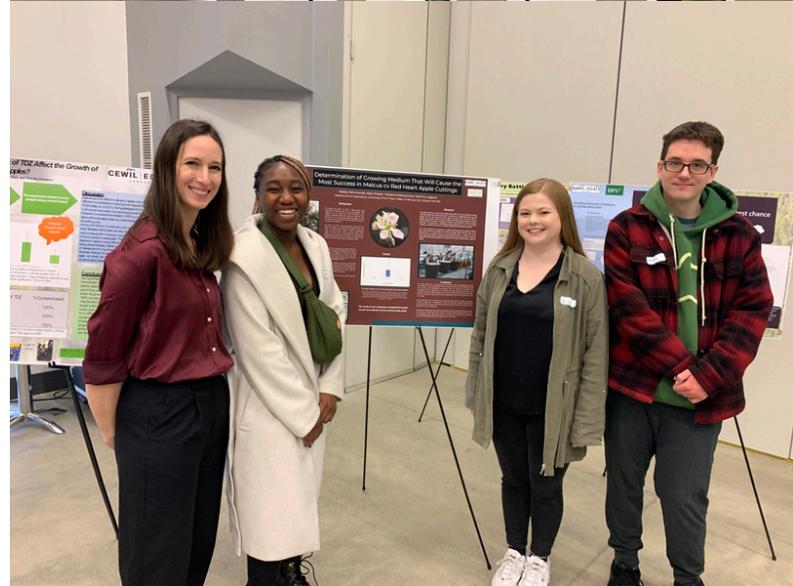


Student Highlights

Helping to Commemorate UFV's 50th Anniversary

By William Horwell

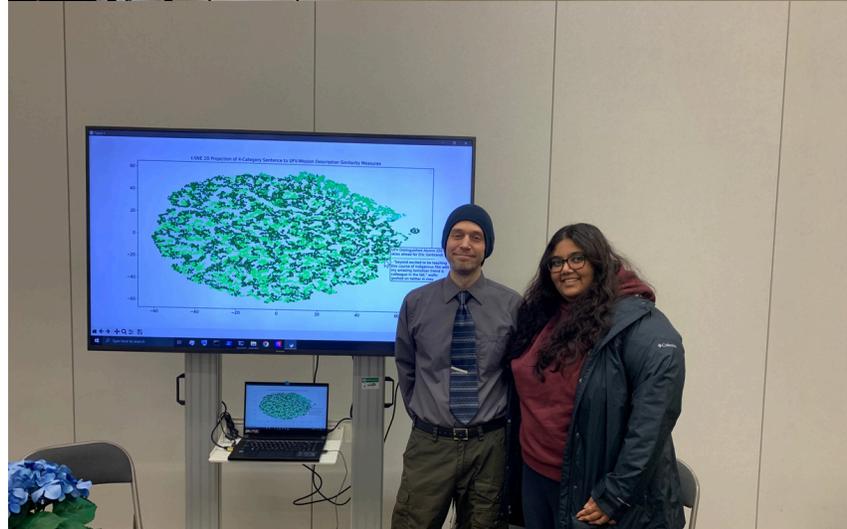
I am a fourth-year history major at the University of the Fraser Valley. During the Fall 2023 semester, I was a practicum student for the UFV 50th Anniversary Project where I was tasked with documentation and compiling for a report on the overall project. This project organised by Professor Larissa Horne, aimed to create a sense of belonging at UFV and to encourage students to explore the historical, economic, and social impacts of UFV's milestones in the community. Students in each participating class would work on an individual project related to 50th Anniversary of UFV. For example, students in Agriculture 323 would focus their individual projects on the history of the land, trees, and gardens at UFV. To help direct students on their projects, Anne Russell, UFV's Media and Communications Manager with over 30 years of working at UFV would provide presentations related to the history of UFV. Anne Russell's presentations truly demonstrated her extraordinary knowledge and connection to the history of UFV. It was during these presentations, where I was tasked with documentation, that I would have the opportunity to learn more the historical significance of UFV in the community. In this regard, Anne Russell's presentations included the history of the land UFV is situated in being the traditional land of the Stó:lō people, who had been present for many generations.



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Student Highlights Cont'd

Before taking part in this project, I had no real knowledge of the history of UFV and how it played such an important role in the community for the last 50 years. For example, I had no idea the Chilliwack Campus is situated on a former military base or that UFV was formally a community college, where students, faculty, and the community lobbied for UFV to be granted university status. We clearly see that by attaining university status, UFV's significance in the community grew and subsequently benefited the community as a whole. Another task I was responsible for in this project was to collect testimonials from students participating in the project. I would ask students about their experiences with the project and the values, knowledge, and skills they had gained from the project. I found it so interesting to gain an insight into the experiences of participating students and to gain so many different perspectives on how students reflected on their personnel projects. Overall, I had an amazing experience participating in this project and it was an honour to be involved in such an important milestone for UFV.



2nd Annual "History" Trivia Night



With the help of Professors Seb Huebel, Ian Rocksborough-Smith, Barbara Messamore and Geof Spurling as well as Department Coordinator Nicole Kungle, UFV History hosted its 2nd annual "trivia night" this past Spring. This year, the theme was music and history, as well as a "Weird Al" category for the final lightning round. That was a game changer... ;p Fun was again had by all. Prizes included swag from UFV History, pro photography from Prof. Emeritus Chris Leach, gift certificates for local food and beverages supplied by the UFV Association of History Students as well as Abbotsford's Sipp Chaai Cafe!



Having tea with history...



Department coordinator Nicole Kungle has organized the annual “History Department Tea” for many years and it always takes place without a hitch in March. This year, it was no exception. No food was wasted thanks to the efforts of Prof. Alessandro Tarsia and Naxaxalhts’i Albert (Sonny) McHalsie who helped bring in hungry students from the hallway in A building. Some good discussions and good times were had here!



Social Media

Association For History Students



UFV Association for History Students

UFV History Dept.

@ahs.ufv

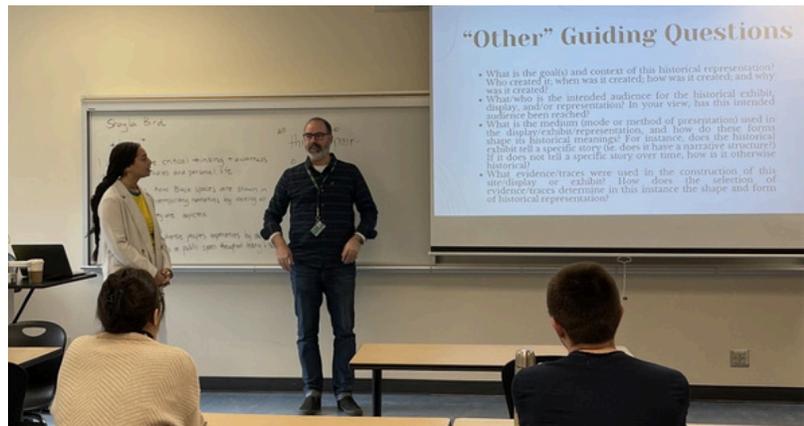
@ufv_history_dept



Follow us to be kept up to date on events, volunteer opportunities and history department information!



Above: Students in History 120 (Europe 500-1600: Saints and Sinners in the Medieval World) with Prof. Aleksander Jovanovic used medieval methods to make candles, tallow paper, and bread.



Center right and below: In History 301 (Studies in Applied History) with Prof. Ian Rocksborough-Smith, students heard from guest speakers such as local educator and community activist Shayla Bird (among others). Students also interviewed deputy mayor of St. John's Newfoundland, Sheilagh O'Leary as a "virtual" resource for one of their group presentations to think about the ways different North American locales represent local "public history."



If you are a current student or alumnus and are working on something you might like to have profiled in this newsletter, consider submitting ideas to *Now and Then*. We would love to hear from you! **Contact: historyinfo@ufv.ca**