

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Laurier students to retrace steps of Canadian soldiers in France *Eight students selected to be on the first Cleghorn Battlefield Fellowships Tour*

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WATERLOO – Eight Laurier students will retrace the steps of Canadian soldiers – some of them relatives – who fought in France during the First and Second World War. The students depart next week on the first Cleghorn Battlefield Study Fellowships Tour.

The Cleghorn Fellows include two master's students in history, Teresa Iacobelli and Michelle Fowler; three undergraduate honours history students, Elissa Marion, Evan Habkirk and Mary Duncan; and three undergraduate business students, Paul Wheaton, Daniel Sosna and Drew Franklin. Fowler, Habkirk, Wheaton and Sosna all have family ties to either the First or Second World War.

Fowler's great-grandfather was killed in the First World War and her great-uncle died on D-Day as a member of the First Hussars. She is also the granddaughter-in-law of a major in the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, who participated in the liberation of Holland. Wheaton's maternal grandfather served in the Second World War with the Royal Canadian Regiment right from the beginning of the war. He fought in Italy and the Netherlands.

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“My goal from the tour is to try to understand, by being on the ground that Canadians fought on, just what it was like for so many of my grandfather’s generation who fought and died for Canada and the Allies,” says Wheaton. “I think as young adults, we have an obligation to remember and honour the memory of people like my grandfather who fought, and in many cases gave their lives for our lifestyle today.

Sosna’s ties to the Second World War are through his grandfathers, Alexander Sosna, who served with the Russian Army as a non-commissioned officer and Malcolm Adam, who was a sergeant in 432 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The eight students will travel to Paris, France, on August 25. They will visit two of the major First World War memorials – Beaumont-Hamel and Vimy Ridge. They will then travel to Dieppe to study the beaches where Canadian soldiers landed in the infamous raid of August 19, 1942, and will stay overnight in a hotel that overlooks the beach.

They will also spend seven nights in Normandy, based just outside Bayeux. From there, the students will visit the most important Canadian battlefields, as well as D-Day sites such as Omaha Beach and the airborne landing areas. The tour returns to Paris on September 4 and ends in Toronto on September 6.

Throughout the two weeks, fellows will participate in daily on-site discussions and participate in tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs), which put the students into the shoes of those who fought for Canada.

The Cleghorn Battlefield Study Fellowships are funded by a generous donation from John Cleghorn, former chairman and chief executive officer of the Royal Bank of Canada and past chancellor of Wilfrid Laurier University, along with his wife, Pattie, and their children. The family donated \$1 million to Laurier last year to fund five initiatives, including the fellowships.

The Cleghorn Battlefield Study Fellowships program supports efforts to expose students to Canada’s role in world conflicts by touring famous battlefields. The fellowships are designed to foster greater understanding of military history and, in particular, battles in which Canada played a significant role.

The Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS) fosters research, teaching, and public discussion of military and strategic issues of national and international significance. Founded in 1991, LCMSDS supports classroom teaching and educational programs at Laurier in the departments of history, political science and mathematics. For more information, please visit www.canadianmilitaryhistory.com.