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Laurier researchers receive funding from Canadian research council to develop partnerships

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University researchers Ginette Lafrenière and Alison Blay-Palmer received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for community partnership projects. Canadian Minister of State for Science and Technology, Gary Goodyear, announced the Partnership Development Grant recipients at the opening of the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, hosted by Laurier and the University of Waterloo. The announcement took place at the Communitech Hub in Kitchener May 25.

“On the eve of Laurier playing host to the Canada-wide Congress 2012, it is particularly exciting to celebrate the research of Lafrenière and Blay-Palmer, two researchers who have already demonstrated the degree to which solid academic research can be extended to significant community involvement,” said Abby Goodrum, Laurier vice-president: Research.

Lafrenière, associate professor in Laurier’s Faculty of Social work, will receive \$198,000 over three years for her research into community integration and support for survivors of domestic violence after they leave women’s shelters. Director of the Social Innovation Research Group, Lafrenière will be working with Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region to develop a partnership that will look closely at the post-shelter experiences of women and children in Waterloo, Peel and Halton Regions. Their goal is to establish a long-term partnership that can develop services that respond to the survivors’ needs, combining the expertise of both academic researchers and social-service professionals.

Blay-Palmer, associate professor in the department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Laurier, will receive \$197,000 over two years to investigate the creation and reinforcement of regional food networks. She will be developing partnerships with a network of university researchers in Ontario and community food organizations, including First Nations communities in northern Ontario and several local food organizations in southern Ontario. They will explore the importance of the local food movement for regional community wellbeing and economic and ecological viability.

The SSHRC Partnership Development Grant program is designed to provide support to partnerships to develop research and related activities in the social sciences and humanities, including knowledge mobilization and the meaningful involvement of students and new scholars. Partnership Development Grant projects may also test partnership approaches that serve as models for other researcher partnerships on the regional, national or international level.

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