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Saint Mary's Archaeology Team Digs up the Past at Grand Pré



To some, the Grand-Pré National Historic Site outside of Wolfville, Nova Scotia, is symbolic of the deportation of the Acadians and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem, "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie." But Saint Mary's anthropology professor Dr. Jonathan Fowler literally sees something much deeper.

"It's a puzzle," he says. "It's a site we know very well through tradition, stories, and myth. But the archaeological evidence of the Acadian settlement is much more fragmented and more intriguing."

For the past eleven seasons, Dr. Fowler and a number of his archaeology students have been working on a dig at Grand Pré, which was recently named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the process, they are helping to deepen our understanding of Acadian history in Nova Scotia.

Dr. Fowler's work at the site, which is officially known as the Grand-Pré Archaeological Field School, has demonstrated the Acadians had an abundance and variety of trade goods.

A number of musket balls were found at the site, which may give evidence that a New England military unit was based in the village during the 1755 deportation.

“We’re making the story more captivating and realistic,” says Dr. Fowler, himself a former Saint Mary’s Arts student who earned his undergraduate degree in anthropology.

Dr. Fowler and his colleagues are also doing other work to help enrich our understanding of the Acadians. He and colleague Dr. Tanya Peckmann worked on a 3D facial reconstruction of an Acadian child whose skull was unearthed at a construction site in the 1990s.

“Our province has a lot to offer in terms of archaeology.”

The Grand-Pré dig is just one of many projects Dr. Fowler has worked on during his career. Recently, he co-edited *Underground Nova Scotia: Stories of Archaeology* with colleague and senior Saint Mary’s anthropology professor, Dr. Paul Erickson. The book covers details of the work being done at Grand Pré and other archaeological work happening in the province, including the Fortress of Louisbourg in Cape Breton and a Black Loyalist settlement in Birchtown.



Dr. Johnathon Fowler

“Our province has a lot to offer in terms of archaeology,” says Dr. Fowler. “You don’t have to go far away to see it – we have a 10,000 year long archaeological record here.”

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Making the World a Better Place

Alumna Sunyata Choyce, BA International Development Studies

Sunyata Choyce has a vivid childhood memory that led her to pursue International Development Studies. She remembers seeing an infomercial on television describing the plight of young children in third-world countries. Shocked by what she saw, she asked her parents if the infomercial was about something that happened in the past. Her parents told her the truth – it was the present day. “That made no sense to me,” recalls Choyce. “I said, ‘How come no one has jobs helping them?’ My parents said that people do have jobs helping them and I could do it too if I wanted to someday.”

“One person can really make a difference in the world if they are willing to take the courageous leap of putting ideas into action.”

Today, she’s doing just that. Choyce is the founding director of Project COLORS International Society, a small, grassroots humanitarian aid organization based in Wilderness,

South Africa, with extension projects that take place elsewhere. The group works at helping disadvantaged communities through hands-on initiatives, including building preschools and foster homes, as well as providing clothing, shoes, and first aid kits.

Choyce majored in International Development Studies (IDS) at Saint Mary’s University and graduated in 2002. She credits her education with giving her the credibility and training needed to work in the international development field.

Choyce founded COLORS in 2004 when she was 23. At the time, she was working in South Africa on a wildlife rehab project for primates and was also working at a children’s home with another volunteer group from Germany. The latter experience served as Choyce’s catalyst for action.

“We felt so sick about how so many of the supplies and donations were not getting to the kids that we decided to start our own projects to help them,” she says.

COLORS started by collecting toothbrushes, underwear, shoes, and jackets for a children’s home for 55 kids who had AIDS. The organization has since helped thousands of people, not only in South Africa, but other countries such as the Dominican Republic and Madagascar. Choyce’s



work has not gone unnoticed. In 2007, she was awarded the Canadian Red Cross’s Young Humanitarian award. Receiving the honour gave her a boost of confidence and validated her work. This was especially true because when Choyce received the award, she was battling post-traumatic stress disorder from an incident where she was mugged and held at gunpoint during a United Nations (UN) assignment in the Dominican Republic. (To support herself, Choyce works side jobs with the UN).

The award was a reminder that despite the risks, Choyce was doing the right thing. “One person really can make a difference in the world if they are willing to take the courageous leap of putting ideas into action.”

From refugee camp to Saint Mary's campus

Rupesh Dhungana, BA International Development Studies



Rupesh Dhungana has travelled a long way in a short time to become a student at Saint Mary's University. Less than two years ago, he was living with his family in a refugee camp in the eastern part of Nepal.

"We lived in a bamboo hut with no tap water," recalls the first-year International Development Studies (IDS) student. "We had to source for food, shelter, and education. There was lots of crime, and it was a struggle for existence."

Dhungana was born in Bhutan, but moved to the refugee camp in Nepal with his family at a young age. He moved to Canada in June 2010, along with his parents, three sisters, three brothers, and other relatives. In total, 21 members of his family came to Canada. The decision to immigrate was based on a recommendation from a family friend who lives in the city.

With an interest in working abroad, perhaps as a social worker, Dhungana asked people what university in the area had the best IDS program. Saint Mary's was the answer that kept coming up. Enrolling at Saint Mary's is a decision that he's very pleased with.

"It's so beautiful and there are so many immigrants," he says of Saint Mary's.

Dhungana's favourite classes are sociology, philosophy, and math. When not studying, he's very active in the community. He participates in a group called Druk Atlantic Youths (DAY), which celebrates Nepalese culture through art classes, language classes for children, and other programs. There is no charge for those wanting to take part and everyone is welcome. He also has a part-time job at McDonald's.

As for the future, Dhungana would like to work with the Red Cross or United Nations in an effort to give back. "I want to be a good man within my community," he says, adding that he would like to go back to Nepal and his home country, Bhutan.

In the meantime, Dhungana is thrilled with his life in Halifax. "I get freedom here," he says. "My family is happy. People are so friendly and helpful. There is better education, health and transportation. Everything is better."

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Japan Awaits You Go Global with Asian Studies

Japan and Atlantic Canada may be two worlds apart, but one can step right into Japanese life at Saint Mary's.

While there are many examples of such opportunities, one is a speech competition co-organized by Saint Mary's and the Consulate of Japan in Montreal, which helps students immerse themselves in Japanese language and culture.

At the Atlantic Canada Japanese Language Speech Contest, the speeches can be on any topic and are judged on content, grammar and performance.

"We try to see language in the context of culture," says Dr. Alexandre Avdulov, a professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Classics. "For us, it's not just a language competition. We like to see the speeches as part of the more complex cultural fabric. I want to give students a chance to be there and learn from the experience and from each other and to be creative."

This year marked the 13th year of the event, and it was hosted at Saint Mary's this time. (Hosting duties rotate amongst other local universities where Japanese is taught.) Of the 14 awards up for grabs, Saint Mary's students won nine of them.



Other ways that students experience Japanese language and culture at Saint Mary's include that from day one, students in Dr. Avdulov's classes are taught how to bow to each other. He also organizes groups for tea ceremony study, flower arrangement, and Japanese court dance, as well as other cultural presentations.

One student who has benefitted from this immersion is Asian Studies student Alexandria Dugal. "The professors are friendly, helpful, dedicated and knowledgeable," she says. "Dr. Avdulov is a talented, passionate and dedicated Japanese language professor who wants students to succeed. He has been instrumental in my Japanese learning."

Dugal studied in Japan for two years. While there, she participated in two Japanese speech contests, winning second place both times. Her goal is to get an education degree and teach Japanese in the future.

**We're living what
we're teaching.**

Alexandre Avdulov feels Saint Mary's is an ideal place for studying Asian Studies. "Japan has an amazingly rich, incredibly elegant culture," he says. "If the students are interested in it, this is a great program because we care about them. We have a great department that is inter-cultural and extremely interesting. We're living what we are teaching."

Arts Students Cultivate Hope

Meet Lori Corkum, MA Religious Studies, and Katie Hunt, BA IDS

One day, during a discussion on sustainable development and environmental issues in the Religion and International Development class they were taking, students Katie Hunt and Lori Corkum both expressed frustration with the negativity and harsh critiques the subjects were fraught with. Missing from the discussion was the role of hope.

We all decided there needed to be space in the program for a discussion about hope,” says Corkum. “This is



Katie Hunt

“We all decided there needed to be space in the program for hope.”



Lori Corkum

when we came up with the idea to run a special topics course on hope for the following semester.”

Religious Studies professor Dr. Anne Marie Dalton created the framework for the course, titled “Special Topics in Religious Studies,” while Hunt and Corkum contributed to the content.

From there, a partnership was born, as the two decided to research and write a paper about hope. It was titled *Imagining Our Future Together: Changing the Social Imaginary through Hope*. The paper looks at the significance of imagination in creating and sustaining hope.

“We both found that with the tendency to focus on negativity and critique – in both academia and a

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Hope, continued

a society – that it was easy to feel overcome by despair when discussing and learning about such issues,” says Corkum.

“Essentially, we discuss the current social imaginary of the West, how it has materialized, and the fundamental role of hope – as an action – in creating change at the individual and societal level,” adds Hunt.

Earlier this year, the pair presented the paper to the 16th Annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference at Concordia University in Montreal, where the presentation was well-received. Looking back on the experience, the students are thankful for the support and encouragement they received from Dr. Dalton.

“She encouraged us to pursue our interest in the topic of hope and volunteered to lead us in a special topics study,” says Corkum. “She introduced us to the ‘call for papers,’ supported us throughout the application process, gave us feedback and guidance on our topic, organized a run-through of our presentation to faculty members at Saint Mary’s before going to Concordia, and was always just someone we knew we could count on through the entire experience.”



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