

**PROPOSAL**

**The Campus, the Community and the Global:  
The University of Winnipeg  
Oral History Centre**

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.1. Vision Statement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2. Mission Statement</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. THE RELEVANCE OF ORAL HISTORY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1. What is Oral History?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.2. Why Do We Need the Oral History Centre Now?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ORAL HISTORY CENTRE TO DATE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. BENEFITS OF THE ORAL HISTORY CENTRE EXPANSION</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.1. Interdisciplinary Collaboration</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.2. Undergraduate and Graduate Teaching and Training</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4.3. Adult Learning and Capacity Building</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4.4. Campus-community partnerships</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4.5. Digitization</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4.6. Funding Opportunities</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5. NEXT STEPS IN OPERATIONALIZING THE ORAL HISTORY CENTRE</b>	
<b>5.1. Establishing a Director</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5.2. Foundational Activities of the Centre (first 2 years)</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5.3. The Long-Term Goals of the Centre</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CONTACT INFORMATION</b>	<b>18</b>

## ***1. INTRODUCTION***

The Oral History Centre, located in Bryce Hall at the University of Winnipeg, is an innovative and dynamic component of the Canadian History Centre at the University of Winnipeg. The Oral History Centre supports the University's vision and priorities of accessibility, community outreach, and capacity building. It strengthens the University's research capacities and moves them forward in dynamic and new directions through enhanced opportunities for faculty and, potentially, graduate research and teaching, innovation in audio and video digitization technologies, and a program of local and international summer institutes, workshops, and conferences. The securing of a national and international reputation for the Oral History Centre within five years of its formal initiation is a realistic objective because it builds upon the University's existing human and physical resources and has significant potential to attract public and private sector support.

### ***1.1. Vision***

*The Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg strives to become a national leader and global innovator in developing excellence in oral history teaching, research and collaborative community development. In so doing, the Centre promotes oral history as a means of democratizing history and thus of working towards social justice and human rights in a globalizing world.*

## ***1.2. Mission***

The Oral History Centre serves as a hub for faculty and students at the University of Winnipeg, for members of Winnipeg's and Manitoba's diverse communities, and for the broader national and global communities of oral history practitioners to collaboratively learn about the practice and theory of oral history, to work together on improving the quality and widening the scope of oral history research, and to develop new ways of using oral history to improve the quality of life for diverse constituencies. To achieve these goals, the Oral History Centre

- promotes interdisciplinary practice, analysis and integration of oral history into academic research and teaching, public policy, and collaborative community development.
- leverages the existing skills, expertise and resources of the History Department, the Centre for Canadian History, the Canadian Oral History Association, and related activities, to establish and promote local, national, and global campus-community partnerships.
- enhances innovative student training to develop new ways of transferring skills and knowledge in diverse settings.
- provides a gateway for Canadians to learn about global oral history practices and for the global community to learn about Canadian oral history practices and projects.
- serves as a virtual and real meeting place for oral historians from around the world.
- seeks external funding for projects of relevance to the communities within which its affiliates engage.
- promotes research projects and programs of research that are consistent with the goals of national funding agencies, such as SSHRC, which urge scholars to assess the relevance of their research in relation to non-academic communities and settings, and to develop knowledge impact strategies for their research.
- strives to develop a substantial grant-funded research program that includes scholars from across the disciplines and universities, as well as relevant partners from the public sector and community organizations.

## **2. THE RELEVANCE OF ORAL HISTORY**

### **2.1. What is Oral History?**

Oral history is a method of historical and social scientific inquiry and analysis that includes life histories, story telling, narratives and qualitative research. The practice of oral history is universal: we all engage in oral history practices in our everyday lives, in telling our stories or listening to others. At every step, oral history is grounded in local knowledge and is connected to global experiences. As a method of exploring the past, oral history builds people's capacity to appreciate the complexities of history, to critically evaluate the role of history in society, and, perhaps most importantly, to participate in the making of history. *Oral history has become a powerful tool for indigenous peoples, women, migrants, working people, minorities, and other groups to find out about their own past, to tell their stories, and to "write" themselves (back) into history.*

As a result, oral history has emerged as a movement to democratize history: to make history more accessible to a wider public, to include a greater diversity of people in the histories that are written and told, and to encourage more people to participate in the practice of history. The full value of oral history as an instrument for individual and community empowerment can be realized through teaching and training in the practice, and in interpretation and analysis of the meanings of stories. Such training increases the quality of oral history and its relevance to everyday life, qualitative research practices, and public policy.

### **2.2. Why Do We Need the Oral History Centre Now?**

The vision for the Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg is timely. Over the last four decades, Canada has emerged as a major site of oral history. Each year, hundreds of journalists, legal authorities, medical researchers, professional historians, social scientists, and other academics, private and community researchers, K-12 teachers and students, conduct interviews with eyewitnesses about past and current events and experiences. Next to lots of experience in oral history, Canadians have also developed a rare expertise in research on indigenous oral traditions. A great amount of this activity has taken place outside of the university and with little academic involvement in

increasing the quality and relevance of oral history. The Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg, in cooperation with the Canadian Oral History Association will be well-positioned to take leadership in building on the strengths of this local and national momentum, and to relate that learning to international settings in collaborative ways.

The Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg is especially timely, because worldwide, but especially in North America, oral history is at three critical junctures:

1. There is an opening in the field for innovation and more interdisciplinary approaches, as **a new generation of oral historians** is transforming the practice of oral history.
2. **A technological revolution** has forced oral historians to change practice as they change from analog reel-to-reel and cassette tape technology to digital audio and video recording and preservation technologies. University-based researchers need to keep pace with these developments **in digitization** and to transform challenges into opportunities for creative new ways of doing oral history and for taking leadership in the non-academic community.
3. Since the end of the Cold War, oral historians have been confronted with new challenges of inquiry: **globalization has created massive socio-economic, political, and environmental changes that must be addressed**. Oral history will play a crucial role in these transformative times in a number of areas, including the empowerment of Aboriginal communities, thinking of sustainability and environments, public policy, and other areas.

The following examples highlight the possibilities for the relevance of oral history in a globalizing world.

***Lands Claims Research:*** “We think of prehistoric North America as inhabited by Indians, and have based on this a sort of recognition of ownership on their part. But this attitude is hardly warranted. The Indians were too few to count.” So wrote Stephen Leacock in 1941. The idea that Canada’s indigenous peoples had no land rights because there were “too few” of them was echoed half a century later by the British Columbia supreme court in its 1991 rejection of Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en land title claims. This time, however, Canadian society and the global community were appalled. In its 1997 landmark decision overturning the ruling, the Supreme Court of Canada admitted oral tradition as evidence in land claims trials. Oral testimony has since become an important tool in helping indigenous populations in Canada

and around the world in their fights for justice and recovery. In a sense, the Supreme Court acknowledged the truth of what indigenous peoples had said to colonizers from the beginning: “If this is your land, where are your stories?”

***Truth and Reconciliation Commissions:*** “We haven’t been the victors so history hasn’t been written by us. It’s only now when we can see the changes coming [...] that people are confident enough to write the story and give the history that has never been told.” Many people testifying in truth and reconciliation commissions and truth telling projects would agree with Gerard McGuigan’s explanation of the importance of truth-telling in post-conflict nations’ transitions to democratic societies. McGuigan, a former local Sinn Fein councilor, was interviewed for a community-based oral history project in Ardoyne in Northern Ireland. While there have been official truth and reconciliation commissions in at least two dozen countries around the world, an increasing number of community-based truth-telling projects have sprung up where states have failed to implement official commissions but also to counteract the narrow focus of official commissions. The Ardoyne Commemoration Project recorded the testimonies of victims and brought the community together in meetings. The project leaders concluded: “This process was itself as important a contribution to post-conflict transition as any outcome might prove to be.

***Social Policy Development:*** When researcher Dr. Ingrid Botting from the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research interviewed aging women in communities that were in economic and environmental crises, their in-depth stories revealed the reliance of the provincial health care system on adult children. Their mothers’ health declined when they left the region. Government and health authorities have since looked to this research to shape future health policies. This case study is an example of how, over the past few years, oral history has emerged as an important tool in developing public policy (including social policy and health services), which is increasingly based on evidence-informed decision-making and applied research. In Manitoba as well, Health Authority planners and policy makers have begun to look to quantitative research such as oral history to transcend the limitations of quantitative research. They have begun to realize that talking to Indigenous people through illness narratives, for example, can illuminate how chronic illness (e.g., diabetes) is experienced and lived by people. Such aspects of people’s lives are not “captured” in secondary data, but they are crucial for improving health systems and people’s and their communities’ well-being.

### **3. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ORAL HISTORY CENTRE TO DATE**

Since 2004, the University of Winnipeg faculty has cooperated with community members, international colleagues, students and University administration towards the creation of the Oral History Centre. In moving forward, the intention is to build on the exciting and innovative locally, nationally and internationally recognized work that has already been accomplished through enhanced campus community partnership building, acquiring research funding, innovative teaching and training, leadership in technological innovation and digitization.

- **An International Oral History Conference was held at the University of Winnipeg in 2005** (*Oral History in Canada – International Workshop-Conference*, 18-20 August 2005, University of Winnipeg). This conference attracted over 100 oral history practitioners. There were workshops on the introduction to oral history, and video oral history, as well as presentations by scholars, archivists, and independent oral historians from across North America, Great Britain and Zimbabwe on research about biographies, natural catastrophes, indigenous oral tradition and oral history, women's experiences, working-class struggles, coming to terms with religion and ethnicity, life in Winnipeg's inner-city, and the challenges of archiving in the digital age. The conference concluded with a roundtable discussion on the future of oral history in Canada, leading to the transfer of the Canadian Oral History Association to the University of Winnipeg.
- **The transfer of the Canadian Oral History Association (COHA) to the University of Winnipeg in 2005.** Nolan Reilly and Alexander Freund took over as co-chairs of COHA in 2005. The executive commissioned the redesign of the website ([www.canoha.ca](http://www.canoha.ca)) and the digitization of the *Guide to Oral History Collections in Canada*, which is available on the website and updated on a regular basis. This web resource has become a major new tool for researchers from across Canada and around the world, and offers much potential for further innovation.
- **The transformation of the *Oral History Forum* into an electronic journal.** Since 2006, Nolan Reilly and Alexander Freund have been transforming the annual journal of COHA into an electronic journal that features interview excerpts in the form of digital audio and video and other research material that cannot be delivered through traditional print media. This process has been supported by University of Winnipeg Library staff. In a first step, volumes 1-25 (1977-2004) of the journal were digitized and made available in pdf-format and free of charge on [www.canoha.ca](http://www.canoha.ca). This too has become a major new resource for researchers from across Canada and around the world.

- **The allocation of space in Bryce Hall through the creation of the Canadian History Centre.** The University of Winnipeg has allocated space in Bryce Hall for the Oral History Centre which will house a recording studio and editing room, as well as offices, library and work space. In 2007, duties of the History Department administrative assistant were reorganized to include support for the Oral History Centre activities.
- **The Abe and Bertha Arnold Oral History Research Fund** has been established, so far amounting to **40K**, in support of research in oral history. This fund has seeded several oral history projects and is currently supporting oral history projects on human rights, palliative care, Filipino immigrant community in Winnipeg, and North End immigrant profiles.
- **Additional investment and support** for the Oral History Centre acquired. The Oral History Centre has received significant investment from a number of sources (including in-kind) at the University of Winnipeg. These sources amount to around 20K and include support from the Chair in German-Canadian Studies and SSHRC conference support.
- **Partnership development:** Over the past few years, the Oral History Centre has already developed informal partnerships with a number of groups including CBC Radio and TV, historical societies, CRC Concordia, journalism programs, communications programs, women's studies, anthropology, folklore studies, sociology, health sciences etc. at UW, UM, Red River College, Library and Archives Canada, Archives of Manitoba, City Archives of Winnipeg, Manitoba Historical Society, International Oral History Association, the Oral History Association (USA), and the Oral History Society (UK).
- The Department of History has developed and offered a third-year, **six-credit-hour course on oral history** since 2006. Students conducted oral history interviews with Aboriginal survivors of Residential Schools, Jewish feminist activists, Ukrainian community workers, Métis from rural communities, Belgian prewar immigrants and German postwar immigrants, lesbian women coming of age in the 1950s, Canadians who fought with the US Army in Vietnam, American war resisters who came to Canada, and Winnipeggers who were part of the local hippie movement.
- The Department of History has actively encouraged and advised faculty on the use of oral history in the **classroom**, resulting in multiple **oral history projects** documenting the diversity of experience in Manitoba.
- Developmental work in establishing **awards in oral history** (e.g. a Barry Broadfoot award in Canadian oral history. Broadfoot was Canada's best-known oral historian and a native of Winnipeg).

#### ***4. BENEFITS OF THE ORAL HISTORY CENTRE EXPANSION***

The vision of the Oral History Centre builds on these past achievements and has enormous potential to benefit the University of Winnipeg and surrounding community in profound ways. The wide scope of the practice and theory of oral history promoted by the Oral History Centre lends itself well to promoting high-quality, relevant **interdisciplinary research**, supporting the development of meaningful **campus-community partnerships**, meeting the needs of **students** in the community (e.g., Aboriginal students, international students, adult learners and others), supporting technological innovation in the **digitization** of oral sources, and attracting external public and private research **funding**.

##### ***4.1. Interdisciplinary Collaboration***

There are many relevant research programs and activities underway at the University of Winnipeg and elsewhere that can build on and integrate oral history into their research activities and research programs. This activity is invaluable for enhanced linkages between the University and the local community.

While the History Department will house the Oral History Centre, an interdisciplinary orientation to the Oral History Centre's activities and affiliated faculty and community members (both within the University and externally) is crucial to its success. In promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and training, the Oral History Centre will be ahead of the curve in building capacity in the value of historical analysis to inform understanding contemporary problems locally and internationally. There is an increasing recognition in the social sciences of the importance of integrating analysis of narrative and life history to inform social research. This is especially significant in Aboriginal studies, case histories for medical professionals, stories for human rights workers, historical accounts of complex sequences, and the process of becoming a refugee, a street worker, revolutionary etc.); and of building community capacity to empower people.

The Centre will bring together faculty and students from a number of University programs, including Aboriginal Governance, Anthropology, Conflict Resolution Studies, Education, Environmental/Urban Studies, Geography, History, International Development Studies, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, and Women's Studies, all of which use qualitative research methods. Connections will be developed with fields within departments, such as film studies, journalism, and folklore studies as well as public administration and health. Because of the increasing significance of brain and memory studies to oral history, colleagues and students from science departments will also be brought in.

The Oral History Centre has a direct relevance to the work of the **Global College** and its integrated fields of global studies, health and human potential, war affected children, and literacy and transformative learning.

The Centre will connect not only students and faculty from different areas of research to work on concepts relevant to all of them; it will also connect academe with community workers, including archivists, museum curators, storytellers, public historians, and artists using oral history in their creative practices.

#### ***4.2. Undergraduate and Graduate Teaching and Training***

The Oral History Centre is an innovative training centre for undergraduate and (eventually) graduate students to become future leaders in oral history practice in the public and private sectors of the city, the country, and the world. It is a place where adult learners can participate in credit courses, workshops and summer institutes. Students of diverse background will learn to conceptualize and carry out oral history projects within the context of social and global diversity.

Oral history training increases the employability of students at graduate and undergraduate levels and builds critical thinking capacity in the next generation. It promotes learning from life experiences and contributes to students' participation in local communities. The Oral History Centre will give students the opportunity to learn rigorous methods of doing oral history, which includes project design, using state-of-the-art technology, conducting interviews and post-interview processing and archiving. Students will also learn the valuable skills of narrative analysis within the conventions of historical inquiry and interdisciplinary research. Student training in project planning will be developed on the principles of community-based participatory research and other creative community development approaches. *These skills are transferable to a number of social sciences graduate programs (e.g. health sciences, education, evaluation, public administration, journalism).*

The Oral History Centre will also be a hub for developing an innovative Masters and Ph.D. Program in oral history with an interdisciplinary orientation. Students will be equipped to conceptualize and carry out not only their own graduate research projects, but will be trained to develop and manage large and complex projects for third parties, teach oral history at the university level, and apply their skills at other forms of research such as journalism, private sector research, public sector research, etc.

The demand for graduates with training in oral history is large:

- According to a roundtable of practitioners at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association in Winnipeg in 2004, private companies doing the vast amount of research on land claims find it difficult to recruit qualified researchers, which they define as graduates with a B.A. and a minor in history or anthropology.

- As certain policy and service delivery areas of the public sector, in particular health care, education, and environmental are developing strategies to increase their responsiveness to local communities, more and more analysts who are trained in interpreting qualitative evidence (based on stories and people's experiences) are going to be needed. But throughout Canada, the public health sector is struggling to find employees with appropriate analytical skills to integrate such qualitative evidence into planning and policy development.
- The use of eyewitness interviews has become a staple of journalism in all media; students with knowledge of oral history will be equipped to conceptualize and conduct qualitatively better interviews and to interpret these interviews in broader theoretical and methodological contexts.
- K-12 teachers throughout the country are discovering oral history as a way of making their students become interested in history, helping them develop a variety of language and cognitive skills (formulating questions, listening patiently, transcribing spoken language) as well as creative skills (producing magazines, websites and theatre plays on the basis of their oral history interviews). They are often inspired by the famous Foxfire oral history project founded in Southern Appalachia in 1966, but are frustrated by the lack of resources and guidance. Education students with training in oral history will be immediately able to develop teaching units around oral history.

#### ***4.3. Adult Learning and Capacity Building***

The Oral History Centre has enormous potential to increase access to the University by promoting adult learning in a variety of ways. In addition to offering undergraduate and, eventually, graduate courses in the practice and analysis of oral history, the Centre intends to offer workshops, symposia, public lectures and summer institutes for adult learners. The demand for hands-on training by genealogical societies, ethnocultural groups, Aboriginal organizations and other non-academic community groups (e.g. environmental groups, arts groups) has already been recognized as increasing. To meet the needs of these students, several **summer institutes** and special **workshops** – and for credit and non-credit and optionally towards the completion of a certificate – will be developed in cooperation with and through input by communities and oral history practitioners. These may include

- **Summer Institutes:**
  - Introduction to Methods and Practice of Oral History
  - Oral History and Oral Tradition in Indigenous Communities
  - How to Plan and Carry-out an Oral History Project in Your Community
  - “Green” Oral History: Researching the Environment and Sustainability
  - Storytelling and Creative Community Development

- Testimony: Towards Social Justice and Human Rights Through Oral History
- Improving Health Through Storytelling and Reminiscing
- Memory and Trauma: Questions of Ethics and Interpretation
- **Workshops:**
  - Introduction to Oral History
  - Equipment Workshop: Tape Recorder or iPod?
  - Digitization of Oral Sources for Program Production and Preservation.
  - Introduction to Video Oral History
  - Oral History in Family Research and Genealogy
  - Oral History and the Private Sector: Using Oral History in Qualitative and Evaluative Research
  - Oral History and the Public Sector: Oral History Benefits for Government and NGO Research
  - Oral History and the Web: Whether and How to Put Interviews on the Internet
  - Getting Funding for Oral History Research
  - Documenting History Through Eye-witness Interviews. A Workshop for Journalists and Film Makers

Adult learning through oral history has enormous potential to empower individuals and communities. With the tools to practice oral history, communities can build their own research capacity and use the experience to develop concepts, apply for funds, and carry out meaningful projects.

#### ***4.4. Campus-community partnerships***

Oral history provides a great opportunity for engaging in campus-community partnerships in research, training, and community development. Oral history is increasingly being recognized as an integral way of knowing about the past, making societies more inclusive and democratic, helping transitional societies deal with legacies of past conflicts (often through Truth and Reconciliation Commissions), and understanding globalization's effects on the ground, including indigenous rights, environmental threats, neo-liberalism's effects, and poverty and poverty-related conflicts at the local and global level.

In recognizing the potential strength of oral history in community development, and students' roles within that, the Centre envisages connecting with a number of community organizations and groups, such as the public sector, health care organizations, labour

organizations, ethnocultural groups, Aboriginal organizations, schools; women's groups, human rights groups, museums, archives, etc. These partnerships will be based on participatory research principles to enhance two-way learning, the relevance of oral history in non-academic environments, and the promotion of social action and social change.

A key concept of campus-community collaboration is that of ensuring the **knowledge impact of research on society**. Universities and funders of research are increasingly recognizing the importance knowledge transfer, knowledge translation and knowledge impact. *Applied research is an important means of making universities and their work relevant and beneficial to the communities in which they are located. Oral history is a proven and highly effective means of achieving knowledge transfer.* The Oral History Centre will be well-positioned to carry this agenda forward through numerous community-based projects and innovative training programs.

This can also be done through providing support and project guidance and equipment loans to community organizations; training through community-based workshops; and connecting local researchers to other local, national and global researchers (local networks and website).

#### ***4.5. Digitization***

Traditionally, oral history has been preserved in analog audio form, using open reel-to-reel or cassette tape technology. Increasingly, oral historians are moving to digital recording technology, including MiniDisk, DAT, CD-R, hard disc and CompactFlash recorders. Oral historians have also increasingly begun to use audio and video editing software to edit their recordings for products and programs such as websites, radio features, or educational DVDs.

These changes present technological, legal and ethical challenges. Major archives and research centres have begun to develop standards for preserving digital audio. Legal associations have investigated the implications of digital dissemination on copyright laws. And Ethics Review Boards have grappled with the implications of informed consent in the era of the internet.

The Oral History Centre will take a leadership role in exploring these challenges and helping oral history practitioners to make decisions about digital recording and its implications. While training students in the use of digital hardware and software, it will also help them ask critical questions about the use of such tools. In cooperation with the Canadian Oral History Association, the Centre will develop best practices for oral history research in Canada. *There is great potential for the Oral History Centre to pursue innovation in audio and video digitization. The Oral History Centre intends to be a leader in digital technologies.*

#### ***4.6. Funding Opportunities***

There are several potential funding opportunities available for projects and research associated with the Oral History Centre. The Canadian Oral History Association's related activities and projects enhance foundational research activities and projects of the Oral History Centre. Some projects of the Centre will involve partnerships with local museums and archives to stress technical innovation in gathering and disseminating oral history to wider non-academic community.

### *Private donations*

The Oral History Centre is well-positioned to attract private donations. It is expected that private donors will be attracted to the Centre's expertise and skills in carrying out oral history projects on a vast array of topic areas and anticipate that donors will step forward with funds for specific projects. Abe and Bertha Arnold so far have contributed 40K to the Oral History Research Fund. This money has seeded a number of oral history projects (e.g. human rights, palliative care, Filipino immigrant community in Winnipeg, and North End immigrant profiles). *The track record in completed projects positions the Centre to attract more project funding from local organizations such as the Winnipeg Foundation; and, based on previous successes, the Centre will be able to make a strong case for soliciting funding from other sources.*

### *External project and research funds*

The Centre also seeks external funding for projects of relevance to the communities within which its affiliates engage. Potential funders of public funds include Heritage Canada, Manitoba Heritage Council, Parks Canada, and other such organizations. This will be made possible by leveraging significant in-kind support (technical, training etc.) from the Centre to bring in external funding for student initiated projects (theses); faculty and community-based organizations (global and local). Project funding sources from national funding bodies might include the Canadian Council on Learning; the Canadian Institutes for Health Research – Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine grants, the University of Winnipeg Marsha Hanen Global Dialogue and Ethics Program, and SSHRC.

The Oral History Centre also strives to develop a substantial **grant-funded research program** that includes scholars from across the disciplines and universities, as well as relevant partners from the public sector and community organizations, with an emphasis on increasing the profile, relevance, and application of oral history within the university and in non-academic settings. Here the Centre will be well positioned to apply for SSHRC Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) initiative and the Leaders Opportunity Fund (Canada Foundation for Innovation). One of the early steps to accomplishing a larger funding proposal will be to apply for Research Development funds from SSHRC and other workshop grants. Oral history falls within the funding criteria for the Trudeau

Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation and other foundations with similar mandates to support academic and community collaborations.

### ***Funds for Digitization and Enhanced Infrastructure***

To support the technical collection, and preservation through **innovations in digitization**, the Centre will seek funding from public funding programs for digital technologies, including SSHRC's "Image, Text, Sound and Technology (ITST)" grants; Heritage Canada's "Digital Future" grants program, which includes the "New Media Research and Development Initiative," the "New Media Research Networks Fund," and the "Partnerships Fund."

The Centre will also seek to partner with businesses to provide in-kind contributions for specific projects and supporting infrastructure. These potential sources of in-kind support include local businesses such as Oakwood Broadcasting, Advance Electronics, and Long and McQuade as well as international corporations that produce professional audio and video equipment, including Marantz, Trascam, HHB and Sony.

## ***5. NEXT STEPS IN OPERATIONALIZING THE ORAL HISTORY CENTRE***

The initiatives towards the creation of an Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg have reached a critical juncture. Several steps must be taken to ensure that the past efforts are now given the support needed to bring the Centre up to the next level of achievement.

### ***5.1. Establishing a Director***

Most importantly, the position of a director needs to be established. The director is cross-appointed between the History Department and the Oral History Centre. This is envisaged as a sessional appointment, evolving to a probationary position as the Centre develops. Duties and responsibilities of the Director will be split between the History Department and the Centre's administrative and research activities. They include teaching existing courses in oral history and developing the Department's methodological courses in oral history.

### ***5.2. Foundational Activities of the Centre (first 2 years)***

Director will be charged with these tasks:

- Oversee the development of the Oral History Centre in Bryce Hall
- On the basis of this proposal, develop a funding strategy.
- On the basis of this proposal, develop a community outreach plan.
- Explore and develop partnership opportunities.
- Develop a governance and advisory structure for the Oral History Centre
- Develop research road map to explore the links between oral history and oral tradition

### ***5.3. The Long-Term Goals of the Centre***

The Oral History Centre will become a virtual and real meeting place for faculty and students at the University of Winnipeg, for members of Winnipeg's and Manitoba's diverse communities, and for the broader national and global communities of oral history practitioners. At this Centre, they will learn oral history skills, collaborate on projects, improve oral history practice, advance oral history theory, and develop new ways of using oral history to improve the quality of life for diverse constituencies.

They will leverage the existing skills and resources of the History Department, the University and the community and develop new skills and resources through creative collaboration and multiple partnerships. Students, faculty and community members will apply their newly-learned skills to enhance the practice and understanding of history in society, to advance their careers in fulfilling directions, and to develop their communities in constructive ways. They will learn from oral historians from around the world and teach them in turn about their Canadian experience and expertise.

The Centre will be funded by diverse sources, including public funding agencies and private partners.

## **6. CONCLUSION: ORAL HISTORY “MAKES FOR FULLER HUMAN BEINGS”**

Oral history is more than the method of interviewing eye-witnesses about events and asking people for the stories of their lives; and it is more than a form of evidence that is fundamentally different from the textual evidence that dominates much of academic research. Oral history is also about testimony and truth. Oral history is about evidence and justice. It is about storytelling and building community. And it is about collective memory and the ways in which our past shapes – and is used to shape – our present and our future. Knowledge and emotion combine to make oral history a powerful tool for reaching out across disciplinary, social and geopolitical boundaries. It has the power to build bridges across ways of knowing, from the ivory tower to its surrounding community, and across continents and oceans.

The great British oral historian Paul Thompson has said the following about the purpose of oral history:

**Oral History** is a history built around people. It thrusts life into history itself and widens its scope. It allows heroes not just from the leaders, but also from the unknown majority of the people. It encourages teachers and students to become fellow-workers. It brings history into, and out of, the community. It helps the less privileged [...] towards dignity and self-confidence. It makes for contact – and hence understanding – between social classes, and between generations. [...] In short it **makes for fuller human beings**.

To make for “fuller human beings” is at the heart of academia. We have some way to go before achieving this goal within universities, and an even longer way to go in making this a reality in the communities in which we work and live. The Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg can play an important role towards achieving these noble goals.

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