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Media Release
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Coyote Flats Oral History Project wins Governor General's History Award

Picture Butte, AB - An innovative approach to recording and celebrating history has been recognized as the most outstanding (English language) history project in Canada. The Coyote Flats Oral History Project is the winner of the 2015 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Community Programming.

The project is a partnership of Coyote Flats Pioneer Village, Picture Butte High School (PBHS), and the Centre for Oral History and Tradition (COHT) at the University of Lethbridge, and aims to preserve history by video-recording interviews with seniors from Picture Butte and area. The videos produced have been of two types: short, story-focused videos produced by PBHS media students, and longer, life-history recordings filmed by project coordinators.

Mark Lowe, Principal, Picture Butte High School says "Being a partner in this award is most gratifying. It was a privilege to be a member of this partnership that captured our community's history and brought our older and younger generations together!"

Coyote Flats partnered with PBHS to inspire a new generation to be interested in history, and to create opportunities for ongoing mentorship between seniors and youth. Bringing the COHT into the partnership created further opportunities for the students to learn about the study of history, while providing tremendous support and guidance to the project from experts in the field. The COHT also trained project coordinators how to conduct life history interviews, and is archiving the entire collection of videos at the University of Lethbridge.

"The Centre for Oral History and Tradition (COHT) was founded in 2013 and one of the main purposes was to support oral history projects in Southern Alberta.", says Dr. Jenna Bailey, Executive Member COHT. "We are delighted to be a part of such an innovative, exciting and successful local history project. It is a celebration of community and proves that oral history is the perfect fit for intergenerational research."

While the project is ongoing, results to date include 5 outstanding student videos, 48 life history interview videos, and increased community awareness and support for the preservation of history.

"This project has been incredible", says Coyote Flats Oral History Project Coordinator Kimberly Lyall. "From watching the excitement of seniors and students sharing their stories, to recording poignant memories from earlier times in this area, I have been both humbled and inspired by what we have created. Winning this award brings it over the top."

The award will be presented by His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, at Rideau Hall on October 16, 2015.



University of
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Centre for Oral History and Tradition

About the Coyote Flats Oral History Project

The Coyote Flats Oral History Project aims to conduct video-recorded interviews with seniors in Picture Butte and area. The interviews are focused on collecting stories and memories about:

- the history of the people who settled Picture Butte and Southern Alberta
- the development of Coyote Flats Pioneer Village
- the historic buildings and artifacts at Coyote Flats Pioneer Village

The Project was inspired by the comments of Nicole Desauts, Coyote Flats' first summer student. She had remarked that Merle Goode, one of the longest serving volunteers at Coyote Flats, and tour guide extraordinaire, knew so much about history and the facility. She wondered what would happen to the stories and memories when Merle could no longer give tours?

From that comment the Coyote Flats Oral History Project was born! We successfully applied to the federal New Horizons for Seniors Program for a grant to fund the Project, and then partnered with Picture Butte High School (PBHS) and the Centre for Oral History and Tradition (COHT) at the University of Lethbridge. A portion of the grant was used to purchase 4K video cameras for the PBHS media lab, making the lab the production centre for the Project. The COHT has provided the Project with countless hours of training, advice, support and guidance.

The project is focused on conducting two types of interviews with seniors:

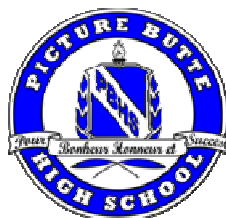
1. Student Interviews

PBHS media students film and interview seniors on site at Coyote Flats as part of a class project to create short videos about Coyote Flats Pioneer Village. These videos are featured at Coyote Flats and online. The first media classes produced 5 outstanding videos, and the newest media classes start production this semester (fall 2015).

2. Life History Interviews

Project coordinators film and interview seniors sharing their stories, memories and knowledge in longer-length interviews. The information gained from these interviews will be used to develop interpretive assets at Coyote Flats, as well as be archived with the COHT at the University of Lethbridge where they will be available for viewing online. Copies of the interviews will also be provided to all interviewees. There are approximately 48 life history interviews completed to date.

This project has created a great deal of pride and excitement in Picture Butte and area. It honours the contributions of our seniors by ensuring their history is recorded and preserved, and helps our communities celebrate its unique heritage. The opportunities the project have created include strong partnerships, mentorship between seniors and youth, and greater appreciation for history.



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