

How I Have Demonstrated My Interest in History

by Taylor Quick,

a recent graduate of St. John Catholic High School and
the recipient of the 2019 Tay Valley History Scholarship

I have always been interested in history, not only from a war perspective, but also the history of film and music, and how things fit together in the world.

In high school I have taken four history courses: Grade 10 Academic Canadian History, Grade 11 World History to the 15th century (which we call Ancient History at St. John), Grade 11 American History, and Grade 12 World History since the 15th century with an emphasis on Canadian history. Just last weekend I participated in the four-day American History trip to Gettysburg and Washington with the Grade 11 and 12 history students and really appreciated seeing all the places we learned about in class. Gettysburg stood out to me because of the guided tours we had. The stories of homes with bullet holes and cannon balls still in the brick made me feel like I could see the bloody battle between the Union and Confederate soldiers. The Smithsonian museums were incredible. We didn't have enough time to see everything, but the trip helped me appreciate the opportunity to travel and to really think about how much has happened in Canada and the United States over the past few hundred years.

I have been lucky to visit almost all of the museums in Ottawa, but many of those visits were as an elementary student, when I didn't always understand what I was seeing. After reading *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* in Grade 10, a visit to the Holocaust Museum made what happened to the Jewish people shockingly real to me.

My high school history teachers have really been a great influence on developing my understanding of world history, with countless stories of theirs. My involvement in our annual Remembrance Day assembly, which I have been part of the past three years, has given me a great appreciation of our Canadian military, past and present.

When I began searching for a summer job last spring, I applied to Parks Canada to work as a Rideau Canal Student Lock Operator, and was fortunate to get hired and work at the Newboro Lockstation, from June to September. This coming summer I

will be at Poonamalie Lock, a move that brings me closer to home. When I looked at all the possible job options I had as a high school student, I realized that working at a fast-food restaurant or a grocery store was not for me. My older brother had worked three summers at Beveridges Locks. I learned a lot from him, and knew it was a job I wanted to do. The locks tell so much about the history of the area. Although they were built for military reasons after the War of 1812 against the U.S., they were, in the end, only used for trade routes and we didn't go to war against the U.S. again. I enjoy talking with the many tourists who come through the locks on their boats, and met a couple who were travelling the entire system last summer to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Being a lock operator helps me in my small way to bring the history of the Rideau Canal to life, in conversation and by answering questions.

I am going to St. Francis Xavier University this fall to study History and Archaeology, and courses that complement these. I don't know yet what my future career will be, but I see working in historical research, or maybe in law, and putting my love of history to good use.

Students who apply for the Tay Valley History Scholarship are asked to submit two 500 word essays: (1) describe how you have demonstrated your interest in history, both in and out of school and (2) explain the importance of understanding history in today's society. The successful candidate will demonstrate a keen interest in history, an ability to think critically and communicate effectively, and a range of accomplishments and/or experiences, whether through community involvement, hobbies, clubs, sports, volunteer activities, and/or work.