## UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM
### PROPOSAL FORM

University of St. Thomas

**Due by 4:30 p.m. on the posted deadline**

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<th><strong>Student Applicant:</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Grant</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Community-Based Research Grant</td>
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<th><strong>Grant type</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Full-time (400 hours)</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Title of Proposed Project</strong></th>
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<td>Dakota Land Before the University of St. Thomas</td>
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<th><strong>Faculty Mentor Name</strong></th>
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### PART 1 – PROJECT NARRATIVE (REQUIRED)

(limit: 1,200 words – application will be discarded if violated)

290 possible points – up to 145 from each of two reviewers.

Describe your proposed research project using language that is appropriate to your field(s) and familiar to a specialist in your broad area(s) of study.

Be sure to address all of the following questions, preparing your responses in the appropriate section.

#### 1. BACKGROUND AND/OR LITERATURE REVIEW (80 points)

What is the nature, context, or scholarly background of your topic of inquiry? What is the current state of understanding of this topic? [For Community-Based Research: Who is your community partner, and what is that partner’s identified need?]

The nature of this project is to research the history of the land that St. Thomas occupies, specifically before the school was founded and with a focus on indigenous history. I will be working with the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community as they are directly descended from the original inhabitants of this land. Their role in this research will better shape and develop understanding of the history of this land through historical resources and interviews with Dakota historians to understand what the land looked like before St. Thomas. This project will better recognize the indigenous population of this area and honor their presence on the land that we as a university now hold. As an institution, we can help to end the cycle of violence towards indigenous people caused by their absence in our own written history by including them in our school’s narrative. By beginning our history with a white man who donated land he was given, without including the people that originally lived here, we are complicit in reinforcing that absent narrative. This project seeks to shift our institution of higher education towards a better understanding of our place in history and in work for social justice today.

#### 2. RESEARCH QUESTION(S) AND OBJECTIVE (70 points)

What gap in knowledge or understanding will your inquiry address? What is your specific research question? [For Sustainability Scholars: How does your research question address sustainability?]

My research question is: What is the untold history of land occupied by the University of St. Thomas, and how might Dakota people represent this story? The history of the university - as told on our website and in “Journey to Fulfillment,” the text given to new faculty - begins with William Finn, the Fort Snelling soldier who was given the land after sustaining an injury whilst on duty. What this history doesn't tell us is who lived here before: the names of the area and natural landmarks, and how the land was acquired to establish Fort Snelling. This is significant because the current history of the school is incomplete, we only know the perspectives of the people directly involved in the beginning of the school but nothing of what it looked like before 1885. While the history as currently told is relevant to the origins of the school, it erases the communities that lived here before because it is
posed as if the land was always in the hands of Fort Snelling. This is damaging as it excludes all those that came before over hundreds, even thousands of years. The reason to know the natural landmarks in their original names is significant because it tells us how the land was seen by its original inhabitants and how much the land has changed since. This research is intended to answer these questions, learning who lived here and what the area looked like, as well as how William Finn came to possess it.

3. DESIGN, METHODOLOGY, AND/OR THEORETICAL APPROACH (80 points)

How will you conduct your inquiry? What tools, skills, and forms of analysis will you use? [For Sustainability Scholars: What are the interdisciplinary elements of your research design?]

This research will be conducted through documentary and narrative (qualitative) research, utilizing historical books, articles, and maps, in addition to interviews with Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota historians to understand their connections to the land and to develop a better understanding of the historical knowledge they hold. My first resource and community partner will be the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community. This local organization has a collection of documentary resources that complement Dakota oral histories. I also plan to conduct interviews with members of the Mendota community. I have been in contact with their chairwoman, Sharon Lennartson, who is directly descended from members of the Dakota community who lived in this area during the period before and during colonization. Ms. Lennartson has connected me with the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community historian. He, among other community members, will be interviewed for this research to describe what life looked like for the indigenous community in this area from their own perspective, which is invaluable to the proper representation of the Dakota peoples’ history, and to the history of the University of St. Thomas. My second resource will be the Gale Family Library at the Minnesota History Center. I will use historical texts in order to gain a better understanding of life in this time as well as policies and laws that impacted the people of the area in regards to indigenous peoples and European immigrants. Articles and maps will be used to collect visual and geographic data about how the land looked before this university was formed.

4. RESULTS/OUTCOME AND INTERPRETATION (30 points)

What outcome do you anticipate? How will you interpret your results or draw meaningful conclusions from your inquiry?

I anticipate learning about who lived on this land before it was taken for Fort Snelling, the names of the land and natural landmarks (the indigenous names of the stream, nearby waterfall, and other natural bodies that are on or around campus), and the treaties that allowed claims of ownership. This information will give us a more complete history of the University of St. Thomas, from the people that lived here first to the university it is now. Knowing the groups that were here first and what they named this area can then help us know more about the land on which we live, work, and learn and how we came to be here. This community-based research will contribute to the ongoing work of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community to identify absent narratives and to educate their own community and the larger community about Dakota land and history.

5. ANTICIPATED IMPACT OR IMPLICATIONS (30 points)

What impact will your work have on your field, the wider community, and on you individually? [For Community-Based Research: What is the anticipated impact on your community partner?]

This research will impact how the university community understands its history and how the school came to be. It will also shed light on a broader understanding of the Dakota people that lived in this area. Knowing the names of the natural landmarks that were once on campus can tell us more about how this land was appreciated before it became the institution it is today. This can also lead to a better understanding of how St. Thomas operates within the history of colonization in this area and how we can acknowledge that in the future. I hope this information can be used in official histories of the university and in historical marker on campus. For the Mendota Mdewakanton people this history can provide validation for their presence in this area. As of yet, the Mendota community is not recognized by the federal government as a tribe. This research project could help them towards their mission of acquiring federal recognition by doing some of the ground work to show their presence here before European colonists.
PART 2 - MEDIA SUMMARY (REQUIRED)
(limit: 400 words – application will be discarded if violated)
30 possible points from one reviewer.

As a researcher, you are often called upon to describe your work to people outside your field.

A media summary is a brief description of your project for a general audience. Imagine you are describing your project to a journalist who is going to write an article about your work, or to a funding agency whose reviewers are not in your field and will not fund you if they can't understand you.

To write this summary, **avoid language that only a specialist would understand.** A non-specialist will read and evaluate your summary based on your ability to answer the three questions below. Pitch your summary to an educated, non-specialist reader – someone who is interested in what you are doing, but who hasn't formally learned anything about it yet. Show how you can communicate about your work and educate the general public on the importance of what you are doing.

Address all:
1. What is your project about? (10 points)
2. How are you going to do this? (10 points)
3. Why is it important? (10 points)

My project is to research the history of the land that the University of St. Thomas occupies by focusing on the indigenous history of the land. The current history of the school begins with the land being donated by a Fort Snelling soldier who was in possession of it but gives no reference to indigenous life beforehand. The project will also work to name the stream that once ran through campus, before the buildings were erected, as well as the waterfall that it still feeds to and other natural landmarks, in their original Dakota name. For this research I will be working with the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community, the direct decedents of the people who lived on this land before it fell under the ownership of Fort Snelling. I intend to look at historical documents, maps, and conducting interviews with the Mendota Community to better understand their history and perspective. I also will be working with the historians at the Mendota community as they have compiled a significant amount of information about their people’s history. The Dakota people have a history rich in oral tradition, so conducting interviews draws a further connection between this research project and the people it is focusing on. I will also be using resources provided at the Gale Family Library at the Minnesota History Center as they have maps of this area and documents that can provide context for the events that lead to St. Thomas building on this land. This project is important because it provides a more complete history of our school as the current history begins with the Fort Snelling period. This also will be used to honor those who once lived here and those that are descended from them. Naming the natural landmarks also tells us more about what the land looked like before it was changed, which can also better connect the St. Thomas community to the land it is on. My research project is to include the indigenous people native to this area into the narrative of the University of St. Thomas and to learn the original names of the area.

Review your work. Did you explain:
- **What?**
- **How?**
- **Why?**

PART 3 - PROJECT LOGISTICS (REQUIRED) – 0 points

1. **TIMELINE**
Outline your work plan for the duration of the grant period.
[Recommended: a week by week schedule of tasks and milestones.]
Week one: Preliminary documentary research at the Gale Family Library at Minnesota History Center. Meet with Sharon Lennartson of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community. Complete and submit IRB application for research.

Week two: Continue documentary research focusing on treaties and land claims. Meet with the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community historian. Determine interview questions.

Week three: Continue documentary research, focusing on maps and other geographic artefacts (photographic and artistic representations of the land). Conduct first interview with Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community historian.

Week four: Continue documentary research, focusing on resources held by the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community. Conduct 1-2 interviews with members of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community.

Week five: Conclude documentary research. Conduct 1-2 interviews with members of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community. Begin transcribing interviews.

Week six: Conduct 1-2 final interviews with members of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community. Continue transcribing interviews.

Week seven: Begin coding and analysis of documentary data and interview transcriptions.

Week eight: Continue coding and analysis of documentary and interview transcriptions. Begin drafting findings.

Week nine: Complete draft of initial findings. Present them to members of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community for feedback.

Week ten: Write a final research report based on findings and feedback. Explore peer-reviewed academic journals to submit this research for publication.

2. **FINAL PRODUCT**

Please briefly describe the final product that will be the result of your research/inquiry. This is the product that must be approved by your mentor and submitted to UROP to complete the requirements of your grant, if awarded.

The final product of this research project would be in the form of a research paper, describing the people that once lived on this land, the names they had for this area and the natural objects on it, as well as how exactly the land was transferred from the Dakota to the settler population. In consultation with the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community and the University of St. Thomas, I will also draft a succinct text, written in Dakota and English, to acknowledge this contested history and the work ahead to reconcile this history. My final product will include the text for an historical plaque, that might also inform other official histories of the university.

3. **DISSEMINATION PLAN**

Include a brief dissemination plan for sharing your results after your work is completed (e.g. poster and conference presentations, opportunities for publication, etc.)

After my research would be concluded, I plan to create a poster with a concise visual representation of the information to be able to quickly distribute the information, to be presented at the Fall 2019 Inquiry at UST Poster Session. I will also draft a research paper for submission to peer-reviewed journals for publication, and to be presented at an academic conference: The Peace and Justice Studies Association Conference, October 4-6, 2019, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, and/or a Conference in the field of history. I will also work with campus officials to advocate for an historical plaque to be placed on campus that recognizes the people that came before us as well as the natural environment that existed before our current buildings, and advocates for movement toward recognition and reconciliation.

**PART 4 - ADDITIONAL APPENDICES**

Attach or paste any necessary appendices, figures, etc. to support your proposal. Include any citations used in your proposal. Make sure all appendices are clearly labeled and revised.

**Appendix A.: Citations**


Original Landowning Finns Return to St. Thomas
Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community
http://mendotadakota.com/mn/

The Gale Family Library at the Minnesota History Center
http://sites.mnhs.org/library/

The Minnesota Humanities Center
https://mnhum.org/native-nations-minnesota/

Appendix B. External Letter of Support from the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community