

MAIS Week 5 Assignment

Focus Area Reflection

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Feb. 11, 2023

I'm taking this opportunity to give more thought to the focus area that I feel like I should be drawn to: Heritage and Social History. This is interesting to me because it can provide context and process for my project idea, which is essentially a family history project, as I'll be archiving and assessing cultural artefacts as well as crafting the social history of my maternal lineage (mid-20th century working class settlers).

The heritage and social history focus area tackles questions such as: What does a society define as its heritage? Why are heritage resources significant? How do we conserve the past? And who controls our collective and individual pasts? These questions resonate with me and I feel compelled to dig into them in more detail.

The course readings for this focus area included Gordon Fulton's "[Heritage Conservation](#)" from *The Canadian Encyclopedia* and Jennifer Cartera, Christine Castle and Barbara Sorena's "[Taking Stock: Museum Studies and Museum Practices in Canada](#)" chapter from *Museum Management and Curatorship*. Both articles focused on the heritage aspect of the focus area, rather than the social history. Fulton's article is an introduction and overview of the practice and process of conserving heritage while the "Taking Stock" chapter offered an opportunity to rethink the capacity of cultural heritage institutions in the 21st century.

While I appreciate having a theoretical introduction to this focus area, neither of these readings satisfied my curiosity. I found myself hungering for more information and insight into social history. *The Canadian Encyclopedia* has a long and detailed [article on social history](#), defining it as the "way of looking at how a society organizes itself and how this changes over time." The social history of Canada is made up of elements of climate, geography, industrialization and urbanization. Recent social history also incorporates class (especially the working class), sex, ethnicity and institutions. In particular, I'm interested in how social history investigates these intersections and how all these elements influence and shape society.

Within the heritage and social history focus area, I can identify other disciplines including history, cultural studies, and sociology. I'm eager to dive into these disciplines and find a framework that I can apply to my project idea.

I'm still not fully convinced that I want to fully commit to this focus area, but when I look at the Athabasca course offerings for it, I feel energized. I can see that there are courses that will expand my knowledge and understanding. Of course, the beauty of interdisciplinary studies is that I can use this area as a starting place and change course if I wish. Because it's all interconnected anyways.