



## History MA Thesis Defence

**Student:** Sofia Mayer

**Date:** April 24, 2026

**Time:** 1:30pm – 3:30pm

**Place:** Hybrid: email  
[histacademic@uoguelph.ca](mailto:histacademic@uoguelph.ca) for virtual link or  
room location, depending on room capacity.

### “Settler Imaginations: Indigenous Representations in 1970s University Yearbooks”

#### Abstract

This thesis examines how Indigenous Peoples were represented in university yearbooks at the University of Toronto, the University of Guelph, and Trent University during the 1970s. Drawing on student-produced publications, it argues that yearbooks functioned as sites where settler colonial ideologies were reproduced through visual and textual representation. At the University of Toronto and the University of Guelph, Indigenous figures were frequently depicted through caricature, sexualization, and cultural appropriation, reinforcing narratives of inferiority and exclusion. In contrast, Trent University’s early investment in Native Studies and relationships with Indigenous communities contributed to more nuanced portrayals, though these remained shaped by settler perspectives. Situating these findings within broader changes in Indigenous political activism and post-secondary access, this study demonstrates that representation was closely tied to institutional culture and Indigenous presence. Ultimately, the thesis argues that yearbooks not only reflected but actively shaped racialized understandings of belonging in Canadian universities.

**Advisor:**

Dr. Catherine Carstairs

**Committee:**

Dr. Kim Anderson

Dr. Susan Roy

Dr. Ben Bradley (Chair)