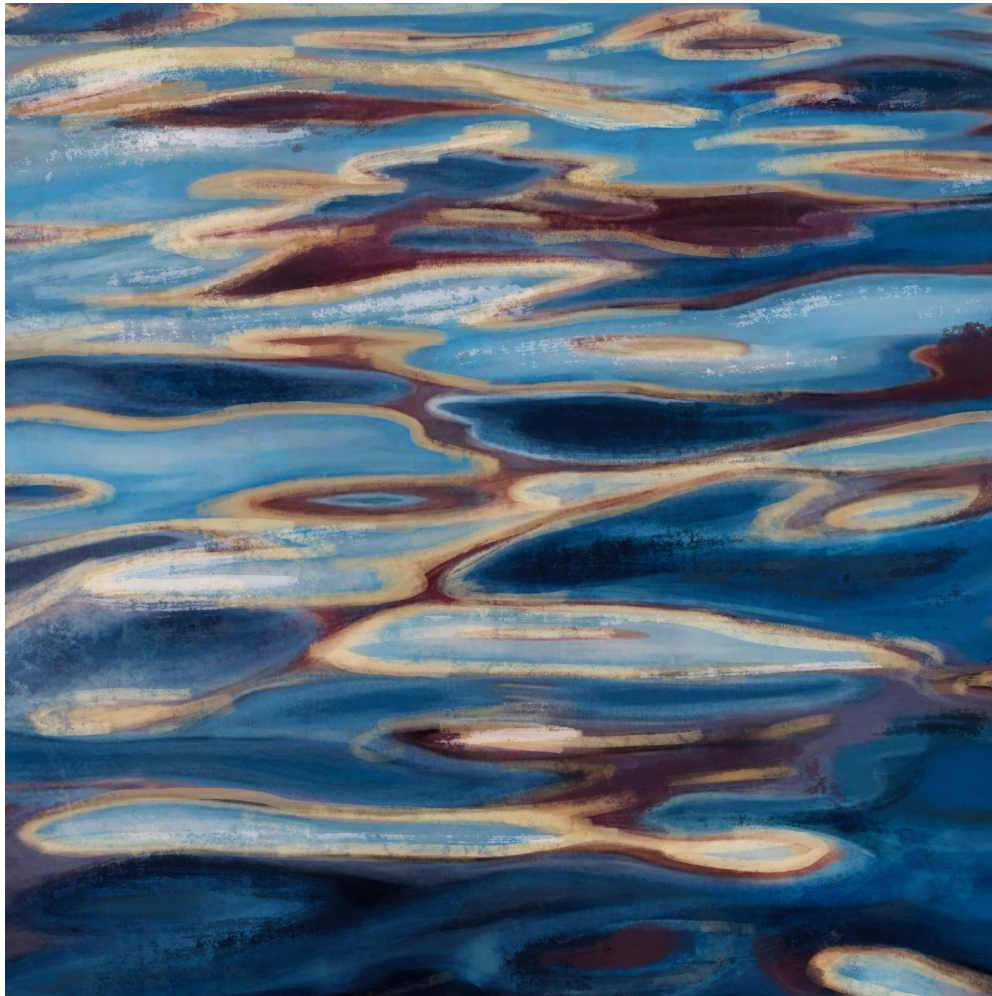


## **Ebbs and Flows.**

### *Reflections on Laidlaw Summer I*

I often find that complex feelings and experiences can be portrayed by a single still image, which conveys its meaning more effectively than a mere verbal description. Truly, my first summer in the Laidlaw Scholars Program has been invigorating. *Ebbs and Flows* is an illustration I drew when reflecting on my experience thus far as a Laidlaw Scholar. It refers to a recurrent and rhythmical pattern of coming and going or decline and regrowth. I used a limited color palette to capture the extremes of my experience – glimmering light and stark shadows. In unison, the distinctions in color aid to form ripples of water. My research experience emulates different types of waves; gentle, rushing, still, and tumultuous.



**Ebbs and Flows**, Digital, 1600 × 1600 px, 2023.

Before applying to the Laidlaw Scholars Foundation, I was surmounted with imposter syndrome. I felt as though my proposed research topic was mediocre and unworthy to be studied. Further, I feared I lacked the skills to conduct independent research meaningfully. However, I am grateful for the encouragement from my research advisor, Dr. Joanne Chung, with whose support I successfully submitted and acquired the scholarship. From the get-go, I learnt the importance of having positive self-talk, and the power it holds in sustaining motivation and optimism.

My enthusiasm and excitement for the project drove my proactiveness to create interview guides, reach out to potential advisory board members, and continue designing study stimuli. A week before having to conduct my interviews, my advisor provided me with an incredible opportunity to participate in a *Qualitative and Indigenous Psychology Methods Workshop*. It was perfect timing! Miguel Silan, the speaker at the workshop, not only solidified my understanding of research methods and techniques (e.g., coding themes, leading interviews and constructing questions) but provided valuable feedback in improving the materials of my own study. I trust that these learnings will be carried throughout my time as a researcher.

The Laidlaw experience has taught me how collaborative research is. Although the study was independently devised and driven, every member of the Chung Lab was incredibly supportive of my research endeavors – never hesitating to check-in and ask how they could support me. As a result, I have cultivated closer connections with my research advisor, the PhD students, and research assistants. My final report is a labor of love. It truly would not take its final form without the support of my Lab, whether that was in advertising, coding, calculating ICR, providing (never-ending) feedback... the list goes on. I particularly look up to the grad students, and feel lucky to have incredible mentors in the research sphere that I can call friends. I am grateful for the laughs, the conversations, and the intellectual stimulation.

One of my favorite parts of the research process was speaking to the participants. I feel privileged to have heard their stories and experiences, especially when the majority have not fully disclosed their sexual identity to the public. I commend their honesty and vulnerability. While I enjoyed conducting the research, I struggled to write it out. I had not fully considered my positionality as a researcher, as someone who has not fully disclosed their sexual identity. I am passionate about expanding the conversations of QT-BIPOC, because I am a part of this community. However, I fear the repercussions of publishing work that goes against my cultural and religious backgrounds. The struggle was emotionally taxing, and delayed my writing. Even as I see my work published today on the Laidlaw Scholars website, I am scared. My garnered strength is drawn from

my participants who shared their voice and knowing that such work has the potential to instigate change.

During the lull period of my research, I was given another incredible opportunity from my advisor to attend the *2023 Association for Research in Personality Conference* in Evanston, Chicago. I cannot forget the feelings I had when meeting some of the researchers whose work I read and cited for my report. I am grateful to Dr. J for helping facilitate these connections and teaching me how to make my own. Attending ARP was also beneficial in understanding the current direction of the field. I expanded my knowledge on personality and identity development, and became curious about niches that I previously had not known about. Much of what I learnt was directly applicable to my study. This experience motivated me highly to advance my study goals.

Towards the end of my research period, I encountered several unexpected personal issues that steered the course of my well-being. While I was grateful for the provision of an extension from Shraddha, Tanya, and Yvonne, I battled feelings of being a failure. My endless gratitude goes to Dr. J who gave me so much grace, at a time I could not give it to myself. My biggest takeaway from the Laidlaw experience is learning how to recalibrate expectations and create manageable goals in the face of change and adversity. It is only through her dedication and support that I was able to complete this report.

As I reflect holistically, I see both the high and the low tides. I am incredibly proud of myself – I am proud of my learnings, my efforts, and my growth. I leave the first summer experience excited to continue pursuing research and in anticipation of what is yet to come next summer.