



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO



**LIDLAW**  
SCHOLARS

## *Record of Reflection*

**War is Over:  
A Tumultuous Summer in Toronto**

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Although I am nearing the end of my summer research, the research terminology fails to escape me. Therefore, in order to effectively reflect on my Laidlaw summer, I will be conducting a thematic analysis of my key experiences. I will begin by summarizing personally transformative experiences, progressing tying in elements of my fleeting research period.

### **Theme 1: Loss**

I spent the first month of summer back home; I wish I relished it more because it passed by much sooner than I thought it would. By June 14<sup>th</sup>, I was back in sunny Toronto, excited to kick off the research period. I moved into my residence downtown, stocked up on snacks and coffee, then snoozed off to re-energize. I woke up the next morning and thought of starting work on my laptop.... except it wouldn't turn on... and there was no way to fix it. The motherboard chip was burnt, and my laptop was rendered functionally useless. This is by no means the most significant problem in the world, however, in that brief period, it felt extremely consequential because it was actively preventing me from being productive and from doing things on my own time. I adjusted and started going to the library every day to work on the computers; this actually worked out quite well! The screen was big enough for my humongous Excel sheet and working in a library environment forced me to lock in. Problem #1 Solved.

### **Theme 2: Exploration**

I explored many U of T libraries. An unbiased ranking of the Top 5 is as follows: Caven at Knox, Graham at Trinity, the Criminology Library, Gerstein, and then Robarts. While exploring these libraries, I also chatted with many librarians about my research methodology and gained incredible insights. Besides libraries, I explored the city of Toronto, its cafes and its restaurants (my research budget was quite frankly spent on food 99% of the time).

I also hung out with many Laidlaw Scholars! Shout out to Maia, Ashiya and Annie <3 Discussing research and topics beyond with my friends and the cohort provided me with both encouragement and support, instilling in me a deep desire to make my research the best it could possibly be. This led to me re-screening my 2,800 studies — although not the best decision in retrospect as it

deviated me from my planned timeline, re-screening studies allowed me to ensure my shortlisted studies were relevant and aided me in conducting a comprehensive review of my topic.

### **Theme 3: Exhaustion**

Doing research on life-threatening illnesses involves reading interviews and recollections from patients experiencing severe pain or those undergoing chemotherapy at the end-of-life; it is certainly not for the faint of heart. At one point in my research period, I felt emotionally saturated and like I'd reached a point of irreversible cognitive burnout. For anyone reading this reflection and I cannot emphasize this enough, if you feel burnt out, you have to take a break.

With reading-intensive research like a literature review, even if you leave the desk for a while, you are still mentally thinking about the studies you read and the potential connections you can make. Logging off for a while does not mean completely abandoning your research; in fact, it means sitting with your thoughts for a bit, compartmentalizing them and creating strong links between them.

### **Theme 4: Accomplishment**

As I write out the last component of my Laidlaw reflection, it is 10:30 PM on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 5 days after the deadline for the final deliverables. I guess my last piece of reflection would be to go easy on myself because life happens. No matter how much you persevere or how much time you contribute to something, sometimes, circumstances will not work in your favor, and you will fail to deliver on deadlines. In times like these, I tell myself that if I tried my best and did all that I could, there is no possible downside to the experience.

My Laidlaw summer was genuinely one of the most fun summers of my life. Although it got stressful towards the end, the entire experience enlightened me in more ways than one: I made new friends; I discovered new hobbies; I built a relationship with my research supervisor; and most importantly, I produced a work I will be proud of for years to come. I wholeheartedly believe in the importance of my work, and I hope to convey its meaning to communities at large next summer.

Loss, Exploration, Exhaustion and Accomplishment were just the start; I'm excited to see what themes life has in store for me my next Laidlaw summer.