

“Hello! My name is **Alvina Block**. My great-great grand parents, all four couples, immigrated to the United States in the 1870s with the first wave of Mennonites who left Russia. They came because they feared their privileges, given them by Catherine the Great, were about to be taken away from them – military exemption and freedom to run their own educational pro-

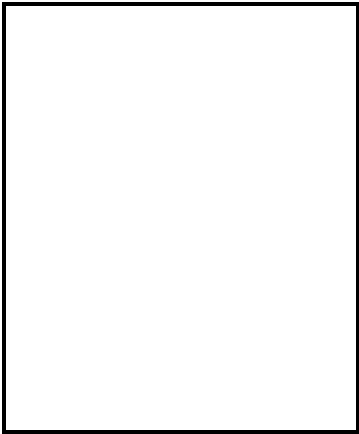
grams. Russian Mennonites had come from Prussia in the late eighteenth century, where they spoke German. It is almost 200 years since my ancestors left Prussia; however, I can still read and speak German, which has been invaluable to me in my research.

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## Scholarship Recipients 2004

*(Continued from page 2)*

grants of the feasibility of coming to Canada and, in most cases, finding a future as farmers. Given the general image of Canada as a barren, snow-covered wasteland, it was imperative for these writers to create a positive and occasionally idealized picture of the environmental conditions Canada had to offer. The third part of my thesis discusses the literary response of German writers to the challenges immigrants faced after being confronted with the landscape, and focuses on works by the German-Canadian writer Else Seel as well as the German authors Ilse Schreiber and A.E. Johann, who wrote extensively on Canada and its German immigrants. (Markus Wust received a German-Canadian Studies Ph.D. Research Scholarship).

### **Johanna Felske:**

twenty-two-year-old undergraduate student at the University of Ottawa in Political Science. I am originally from Calgary, AB, and as a result of my family heritage, I am deeply interested in the experiences of German speaking immigrants to the prairies. My great grandparents, Gottlieb and Johanna Felske, were Germans from the Russian area of Volhynia who immigrated to Nokomis, Saskatchewan at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I believe that it is important to examine the unique cultural heritage of these early Canadians in order to gain insight into their experiences as immigrants to the prairies and to preserve their legacy as Germans from Russia. My essay 'The Germans from Russia and the Canadian Prairies' discusses the immigration and settlement of the Germans from Russia as a cultural

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*The Chair in German-Canadian Studies was established in 1989 with grants from the Secretary of State's Program for Canadian Ethnic Studies and a group of private philanthropists within the German-Canadian community of Winnipeg. It is located in, and affiliated with, the History Department at the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

*The Chair promotes the teaching of, and research into the history and culture of German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in Canada. It interacts with the German-Canadian community in Winnipeg, Manitoba and the rest of Canada through public lectures and the newsletter. The Chair promotes regional, national and international research through conferences, grants and publications.*

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