I had the wonderful experience of interviewing Aleesha Singh, a 5-year Anthropology student. Aleesha won the Dean’s Excellence Award for Research and Experiential Learning in April 2019 and was selected as one of Forbes Under 30 Scholars.

When did you know that you wanted to study Anthropology?  
I started off in a Biology major stream but when I reached my third year, I realized that it wasn’t something I wanted to do anymore. I had already taken and loved Anthropology as my minor and decided to make it my major. My gateway course was ANT208 The Culture Machine: The Anthropology of Everyday Life; particularly the discussions on how political messages are embedded into media.

Can you tell me why you won the award, and what it means to you?  
I won it due to a group assignment for my experiential learning course. We created a children’s app that is an interactive garden in which kids can interact with different aspects of food, learn what their benefits are, and how to use them in a healthy diet. This app could be used to instill healthy living habits in young children. The award represents leadership and opportunity; a reminder that you should put yourself out there and have the confidence to ask for things.

What interested you about experiential learning?  
I have always been a hands-on learner and needed an environment in which I could physically interact with the information and apply my scientific knowledge to real situations. I’ve always known I wanted to create my own technology and this course fueled my interest in the many entrepreneur opportunities available.

What would you tell undergraduate students who are considering experiential learning courses (particularly students in Anthropology)?  
You have to go with an open mind and remember that nothing is a stupid idea. You need to be creative but also have the capacity to take constructive criticism. Anthropology really helps with being open and allows for different
perspectives, which is useful in experiential learning.

**Why did you attend the summit?**
I was selected as a Forbes Under 30 Scholar and was invited. I’ve always been interested in entrepreneurial workshops and I knew the summit would be an amazing opportunity that I was grateful for.

**What were the most interesting aspects of attending the Forbes under 30 summit?**
The three most interesting aspects were networking, the technology and entrepreneurial panels, and being able to participate in a Hackathon. I was able to find out about so many different opportunities. The different panel sessions helped me understand how to be innovative. My group came 4th for our creative solution to the harmful algae blooms in Lake Erie; use AI to trace the levels of algae and use an app to notify companies when to address the problem.

**Why is studying Anthropology important to you?**
It allows you to make the unfamiliar familiar. You learn to be more open-minded and less judgmental. I love the concepts and open-minded perspective that is applicable in everyday aspects; the relatability of the discipline drew me in.

**Do you have specific career goals in mind?**
I’d like to take time off to travel the world. It’s important to see the world to know what you could change and to help people better. Tying into my plans after graduation, I want to work a full-time entry-level job at a tech company like Shopify. One day, I would love to create my own technology company so I can be the representation for future generations, a woman of colour running her own technology company.

**What is your current focus? Is there anything specific you would like to share?**
I want to focus on honing down the craft; I’d like to improve my coding skills to create a versatile tool kit that can be applied better.

Thank you very much for talking to *Young Anthropology*! We wish you all the best with your future endeavours.