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Inaugural Bridge Prize student short story fiction writing competition garners 340 entries from across the country

Launched as one of the richest prizes for student short story fiction writing in Canada, participation in the School of Liberal Education’s inaugural Bridge Prize contest has far exceeded all expectations.

When the submission deadline closed at midnight on January 20, 2020, a total of 340 manuscripts were received, representing 61 post-secondary institutions from nine provinces – a truly national competition.



“We are ecstatic with the enthusiastic response from students across the country. The total number of submissions is well beyond our expectations for the first year of the Bridge Prize,” says Vancouver-based U of L alumnus Terry Whitehead (BA ’94), founder and lead donor of the competition. “At Christmas, we were at 59 submissions and quietly optimistic about reaching 100 by the deadline. To get over 300 – it is almost overwhelming.”

The Bridge Prize was launched in March 2019 as a student short story fiction writing competition to be awarded every second year. Open to any student registered in a Canadian post-secondary institution at the time of the submission deadline, its focus is to celebrate excellence in the literary arts, to nurture aspiring student writers and to support the transition between student writing and professional literary art.



“It was exciting to watch the submissions pour in as we approached the deadline, and to see the diversity of colleges and universities represented across the country,” says Dr.

Shelly Wismath, dean of the University's School of Liberal Education. "Having the Bridge Prize housed in the School of Liberal Education speaks to the U of L's commitment to a broad integrated education based on engagement in the communities around us, from local to national to global. Our local jury is eager to start reading, to winnow down to a long list to send on to the main jury, and we look forward to the announcement in September 2020 of our winners."

Each story now enters an evaluation process led by a local jury comprised of campus and community-based academics and cultural leaders who will read the stories and select a top 10 to be forwarded to the main jury by May 30. Thomas King, author and former U of L faculty member, heads the main jury. Other jurors include author and comedian, Charlie Demers, University of Calgary faculty member, Aritha van Herk, The Walrus publisher, Shelley Ambrose, and Leslie Hurtig, artistic director of Vancouver Writers Fest. They will assess the stories and arrive at a winner and three additional finalists in August. The winners will be announced in September.

The Walrus and Munro's Books in Victoria, BC also sponsor The Bridge Prize. The winner of the competition will receive \$7,500, while the three finalists will all earn \$1,000. All four winners also receive a \$200 gift card courtesy of Munro's Books.

Whitehead notes that Canadian writers are renowned globally for the short fiction genre and in helping to launch The Bridge Prize, he sought to create just that, a bridge for writers to explore and build towards writing full novels.

"The number of submissions confirms that the short story genre is very much alive and thriving on Canadian campuses. This bodes extremely well for the future of Canadian literature," he says.

For more on The Bridge Prize, visit the website at go.uleth.ca/thebridgeprize.

To view online: <https://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/interest-bridge-prize-explodes-340-entries>

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Contact:

Trevor Kenney, News & Information Manager
403-329-2710
403-360-7639 (cell)
trevor.kenney@uleth.ca
@ULethbridgeNews

Terry Whitehead, Managing Partner, Alexander Whitehead

604-260-5947

terry@alexanderwhitehead.com

Shelly Wismath, Dean, School of Liberal Education

403-329-2529

wismaths@uleth.ca