



University of
Lethbridge

News Release

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Bridge Prize national writing contest announces 2026 winners

A trio of University of British Columbia writers were honoured as University of Lethbridge School of Liberal Education 2026 Bridge Prize winners, with UBC students earning top billing in both the graduate and undergraduate categories.

In all, \$12,750 in cash prizes were awarded to winning writers as the 2026 competition concluded the fourth installment of the only national writing contest of its kind open to post-secondary students in Canada.

“The University of Lethbridge School of Liberal Education congratulates the 2026 Bridge Prize winners and finalists for creating a diverse array of captivating stories. Our local and main juries praised the high quality of writing, inventive characters and imaginative storytelling,” says Harold Jansen, dean of the school of Liberal Education. We celebrate and thank all 124 authors who submitted stories for the 2026 competition. The future of Canadian fiction is very promising!”



Tristan Hay Lee of UBC, a Toronto-based writer of Korean, Japanese and European descent, claimed the \$5,000 top prize in the Graduate Student Category with her short story, *Margo Makes a YouTube Channel*.

“Compelling story about a woman taking charge of her life. Nuanced portrait of a complicated and imperfect character. Reader roots for the protagonist despite her flaws – that’s no easy feat for a writer to pull off,” says juror Sharon Bala of St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador.



Hay Lee, whose work spans multiple genres and forms, from short stories to young adult novels to preschool episodes, says The Bridge Prize is a unique opportunity for young writers to work at their craft.

“The Bridge Prize is a rare bird for post-secondary students: in one fell swoop, it provides the chance to gain literary recognition, to work with an editor and to be in conversation with other talented writers and their stories. The prize money doesn’t hurt, either! I encourage all current students who enjoy wielding their pens to take advantage of this exceptional opportunity,” she says.

Fellow UBC writer Gia Bruce captured the Undergraduate Student Category and \$5,000 prize with her submission, *Blue*.

“The Bridge Prize is the first major acknowledgement I’ve ever received for my writing, and I am beyond grateful to Chancellor Terry Whitehead, Dr. Shelly Wismath, the jurors and the University of Lethbridge for their support,” says Bruce, a fourth-year creative writing student who works in a variety of genres, including poetry, fiction and screenplay. “Trying to get noticed as an undergraduate writer can be disheartening, and I’ve often questioned whether I’m moving in the right direction. This recognition has given me the confidence to forge onward.”

Juror Ian Williams of Toronto says, “The story is bursting with the drama of young life. The characters are richly and convincingly drawn in the best contemporary fluid way. The writing is easy, energetic. The story captures small town life as a fact, without being fashionably critical of it, but esteems it as a legitimate setting.”

In addition to the winners of each category, finalists were awarded \$1,000 for their submissions. Scotty Olsen of UBC was the finalist in the Graduate Student Category for his story, *Three Wolves Howling at the Moon*, and Emma Davis of Concordia University was the finalist in the Undergraduate Student Category for her submission, *Weeds*.

The top story submitted by a ULEthbridge student came from Erik Anvik for *Your Princess is in Another Castle*, and garnered a \$750 award. It was praised by the jury for its unique perspective and for the author playing nicely with the usual rescuing-the-princess tropes.

About The Bridge Prize

- Both category winners worked with Shirarose Wilensky, Editor with House of Anansi Press, and their stories will appear on the [Bridge Prize website](#)
- The Bridge Prize was established in 2020 by the School of Liberal Education at the University of Lethbridge as a biennial competition to encourage creative writing at the post-secondary level in Canada
- The competition is open to all students attending colleges, polytechnics and universities in Canada
- A total of 24 members of the ULEthbridge campus and surrounding communities volunteered to serve on the Local Jury, ensuring each story was read by a minimum of four different jurors
- The Main Jury is composed of notable established and emerging writers from throughout Canada. The Main Jury for the 2028 Bridge Prize will be announced in November

- Winners and finalists also receive a \$200 gift card courtesy of Munro's Books of Victoria
- Submissions for the 2028 competition will open in January 2027

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/bridge-prize-national-writing-contest-announces-2026-winners>

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Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.