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Laurier's new Common Reading Program invites 1,400 students to read *Indian Horse*

WATERLOO – Laurier's new Common Reading Program has chosen the novel *Indian Horse*, by Richard Wagamese, as its inaugural book.

Over 50 books were nominated for the Common Reading Program, an initiative which will see Laurier's 1,400 incoming first-year Faculty of Arts students at the university's Waterloo campus receive a free copy of the book this summer and participate in related on-line conversations, discussion groups, and campus events in September.

"Wagamese's book is a beautifully written novel that explores Aboriginal life, personal growth, and the quintessentially Canadian sport of hockey," said Ute Lischke, professor of English and a member of the program's organizing committee. "The novel has been embraced by readers across the country, and I know that incoming students in the Faculty of Arts will find it a thoughtful and engaging read."

Indian Horse tells the story of a northern Ojibway man looking back on a life scarred by his experience in residential school and redeemed through his gift for hockey. Narrated in the first person, the book follows Saul Indian Horse's life from boyhood through adulthood, touching on themes of heritage, identity, nature and hope.

The selection process was carried out by a nine-member committee comprised of Laurier students, faculty members, staff, and local high school teachers. *Indian Horse* was nominated by Laurier Librarian Sharon Brown, who won a \$100 gift certificate to the Laurier Bookstore for suggesting the winning book. She advocated for *Indian Horse* based on its moving narrative, deceptively simple style, and recent success as the unofficial "people's choice" in the CBC's 2013 edition of Canada Reads.

"The book speaks to Laurier's values of excellence, justice, courage and sustainability, and could be discussed across a range of disciplines in the Faculty of Arts. It seems poised to become a Canadian classic," said Deborah Wills, chair of the program's text selection committee.

Richard Wagamese is an Ojibway journalist, television and documentary producer, and author of 11 books. He won the Canadian Authors Association Award for fiction for his third novel, *Dream Wheels*, and was awarded an honorary doctor of letters from Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops.

Laurier's Common Reading Program invites all students entering the Faculty of Arts in September 2013 to share a reading experience as they become members of the Laurier community. The program is supported by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Student Life Levy, the Council for the Intellectual and Cultural Development of the Arts (CICDA), Douglas & McIntyre Publishing Inc. and the Laurier Bookstore.

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