



Brian Rosborough, Senior Executive Officer
Brantford Campus & University Community Relations
Wilfrid Laurier University
519-756-8228 ext. 5616 or broborough@wlu.ca

Beth Gurney, Associate Director
Communications & Public Affairs
Wilfrid Laurier University
519-756-8228 ext. 5753 or bgurney@wlu.ca

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Young authors take home \$10,000 in winnings at inaugural Laurier Stedman Prize celebration

BRANTFORD – A panel made up of academics, award-winning authors and the Speaker of the Ontario legislature selected *The Lechton Wanderer* by **Abby Traina** as the winner of the first-ever [Laurier Stedman Prize](#). Results of this new writing competition were announced at a special ceremony on Friday evening. A student at Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School, Traina receives a \$3,000 cash prize, possibly the largest prize of its kind for a creative fiction competition open exclusively to high school students.

The Laurier Stedman Prize is funded through an endowment and estate gift given to Wilfrid Laurier University by the late **Miss Mary Stedman** for the purpose of celebrating and promoting arts and culture. Stedman, who passed away in 2014, was a great champion of Laurier's Brantford campus, and during her lifetime served as an executive member of the Canadian Booksellers Association.

The university created the Laurier Stedman Prize program, managed under the auspices of the English department in the Faculty of Liberal Arts, as a way to honour Stedman's wishes. Participants were asked to submit original, unpublished works of fiction, up to 1,500 words in length. The competition was open to students studying within the boundaries of Brantford's local school boards. It drew entries from nearly every secondary school in the Grand Erie and Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District school boards, as well as Six Nations Polytechnic STEAM Academy, W. Ross Macdonald School, and Victoria Academy.

All entries were submitted anonymously and vetted by a series of sub-juries. The top 10 were then passed on to a prize jury to rank the finalists, and ultimately select the winner. The prize jury was chaired by **Kathryn Carter**, Laurier's associate vice-president: teaching and learning, and also included: award-winning author **Deborah Ellis**, whose international bestseller *The Breadwinner*, is currently nominated for an Academy Award; **Emily Urquhart**, award-winning writer and folklorist and Laurier's [current Edna Staebler Writer in Residence](#); the **Hon. Dave Levac**, MPP for Brant and Speaker of the Ontario legislature; and **Heidi Northwood**, dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Laurier.

Ellis was not able to attend the celebration in person, but sent greetings to the writers who took part in the Laurier Stedman Prize competition, stating: "It takes courage to put pen to paper, to expose your thoughts for all the world to see. You all have that courage, and you all have a love for storytelling, something that has been with our human species from the very beginning. I hope you all keep writing. Canada will be richer for the literature you produce."

"Tonight was truly an historic occasion," said Brian Rosborough, Laurier's senior executive officer, Brantford campus and University External Relations. "It's incredibly gratifying to play a role in recognizing the rich talent among this generation of up-and-coming authors. We're so grateful to Mary Stedman for her foresight and generosity. The Laurier Stedman Prize is a program we look forward to continuing for many years to come."

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In all, \$10,000 in prize money was awarded at the Laurier Stedman Prize celebration. In addition to Traina's \$3,000 grand prize, the jury awarded two second-place prizes of \$2,000 each, and three third-place prizes of \$1,000 each. The top 10 submissions as ranked by the prize jury are:

First Place - \$3,000

The Lechton Wanderer by Abby Traina, Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School

Second Place - \$2,000 each (in alphabetical order)

Prospect Hill by Leicia Kelly, Simcoe Composite School

The Butterfly by Taylor Violet Ross, Waterford District High School

Third Place - \$1,000 each (in alphabetical order)

It Is What It Is by Dakota Cipriano, Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School

This Side of Forever by Zoe Oliveira, St. John's College

Melancholy Medic by Morgan Walsh, Assumption College School

Runners Up

Dreams by Taelor Doughty, Hagersville Secondary School

Memories by Darienne Martin, McKinnon Park Secondary School

Blumi Burton and the Glowing Hearts by Olivia McCulloch, Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School

Gift Her With Flowers by Sandra Cheung, North Park Collegiate-Vocational School

The grand prize-winning story and additional information on the Laurier Stedman Prize will be available at wlu.ca/LaurierStedmanPrize as of Monday, Feb. 5, 2018.

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About Mary Stedman

Members of the Stedman family were active in the business, social and cultural fabric of Brantford and Brant County for more than a century. Mary Stedman's father, Samuel W. Stedman, went into business with his brothers in 1904, establishing the first Stedman's Bookstore on Colborne St. in Brantford. They went on to create a chain of five-and-ten cent department stores with locations across Canada. The Stedman name has become synonymous in Brantford with generosity and community building.

Mary Stedman served as managing director of Stedman's Bookstore Ltd. from 1950 to 1974 and was a member of the executive of the Canadian Booksellers Association. She was also the director and former chair of the bursary committee of the Samuel W. Stedman Foundation.

Mary Stedman was an early supporter of the idea of a university in Brantford, providing an important kick-start as one of the first donors to the fledgling campus in 1999. The university's bookstore bears the Stedman family name in recognition of their exceptional generosity. Gifts from Mary and the estate of her sister Ruth supported the construction of the university's Research and Academic Centre. Per Stedman's wishes, the Brantford campus bookstore is open not only to Laurier students, but to everyone in the community.