Indigenous History Essay Prize Report, Criteria, Procedures

Department Website Link: http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/history/awards/index.html

Description: This award is given annually for an exceptional undergraduate essay on Indigenous history written by a student enrolled in one of the History Department's Indigenous Course Requirement courses.

Coordinator for the 2025 prize: Leah Kuragano

History of the Prize

The First Year for the Award was Fall-Winter 2016-2017 (the first year ICR courses were offered)

2024-2025 is the Ninth Year of the Award (Spring 2024, Fall/Winter 2024-2025

2025-2026 is the Tenth Year of the Award (Spring 2025, Fall/Winter 2025-2026

General Timeline/Procedure Followed:

Spring 2025: Compile list of ICR instructors for the past 3 terms, email them to ask for submissions (see email language below)

Summer 2025: Gather nominees/submissions, form jury, select award winner

Fall 2025 (TBD): Submit winner to the chair of the Awards Committee, send out an email blast to all pertinent local organizations/individuals asking for donations to the prize

Fall/Winter 2025 (TBD): update this document with a description of the winning essay/student.

Report (updated July 2025):

The Indigenization Committee discussed the prize at great length this past year. In Winter 2025, we received an email from Jolene Deere (j.deere@uwinnipeg.ca) at the UWinnipeg Foundation asking us for an update about how we plan to reach the $25,000 (it used to be $10,000 but has since been raised) threshold to make the prize an endowed fund. Once this threshold is met, the prize will be self-sustaining and permanent, but before that threshold is met, we will have to collect funds on an annual basis.

In May 2025, Leah Kuragano and Mary Jane McCallum (who originally put the prize together) met with UWinnipeg CEO Javier Schwersensky and Jolene Deere. We learned that the Foundation could assist the department in raising funds for the prize as long as it has an updated description that they can use to market/pitch the prize to potential donors. The Foundation can also include our prize in the list of projects in the Fall Campus Campaign. The Indigenization Committee would be responsible for sending out a general email blast every fall during Campus Campaign time to ask people to choose the prize when making their annual donation.

The Foundation is requesting 3 pieces of information about the prize before the Fall Campus Campaign starts:

1. An updated title and new award description sent to Jolene who has agreed to help us to submit this to Senate for approval (see below for info)
2. An updated "marketing pitch" for the prize.
    a. The Foundation can use this to promote the prize to potential donors (we should emphasize that the prize is meant to celebrate and highlight the ICR and student research in Indigenous history, as it is the first of its kind in Canada and sets UWinnipeg apart)
3. A list of past award recipients and their bios (this list is completed, it is included at the end of this document, but can be cleaned up and reformatted)

The Indigenization Committee has been discussing potential changes to the prize itself. Historically there have been very few instructor submissions to the prize, because very few ICRs assign essays. It is much more common, for example, to assign an exam or a creative assignment in a 1000 or 2000 level course.

The Indigenization Committee informally decided that the title and description of the prize should be updated before next year to expand the kinds of nominations that could be accepted. These changes would have to be approved through the Senate, but Jolene has agreed to help us coordinate this process.

*One thing to note is that Mark and Jason raised concerns about accepting essays from exams as part of the prize, because there is apparently a rule against providing written feedback on exams. I (Leah) did not look into this further, but it would be worth confirming.

Basic Prize Criteria (with updates and suggested guidance):

*Note: we decided as a committee to allow instructors to nominate students who submitted written work of any kind (traditional essays, exam responses, creative writing)

as well as those who focused their assignment on the Indigenous past or Indigenous history in a less traditional/disciplinary way. This is a temporary work-around until the title and description of the prize can be officially updated.

1. The essay/assignment must be written in an ICR History Course
    a. ICR courses cross-listed with History count. Courses taught by sessional instructors also count. See this link for all ICR courses: https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/indigenous-course-requirement/icr-approved-course-list.pdf
    b. I used WebAdvisor with the "UWHistory" and "Indigenous Course Req't" search filters to compile a list of all instructors who offered ICR sections in Spring 2024, Fall 2024, and Winter 2025. Note that this information leaves WebAdvisor after the academic year ends. Sandy will have a list of courses offered in past years.

2. The purpose of the award is in part to encourage Indigenous students who take courses in history and to this end, preference will be given to a self-identified Indigenous student

3. Nominations of exceptional essays/assignments only are made by the course instructor of each ICR course taught.
    a. After the grade submission deadline for Winter term 2025 passed, I sent an email to all the ICR course instructors for Spring 24, Fall 24, and Winter 25. See the email language that I used below.

4. ICRs at any level (1000-4000) are eligible; they will be evaluated at the level they are written.

5. Essays/assignments by students in 3 or 6 Credit Hour courses are eligible.

6. One prize per year is given; the year begins Spring Term and ends in Winter Term.

7. Essays/assignments are judged by a 3-person committee made up of ICR course instructors.
    a. In July of 2025, I emailed 3 tenure-track faculty in History who teach ICR courses to ask them to serve on the jury. See the email language that I used below.
    b. The process used for selection was to ask each juror to rank the submissions with #1 being the best essay. The deadline for the rankings sent via email was August 1. If consensus was clear via these initial rankings, we would proceed via email. If discussion was warranted, then a Zoom meeting would be organized in August.

Call for Nominations Email:

SUBJECT: Call for Nominations, History Indigenous Course Requirement Essay Prize

Hello! I am reaching out on behalf of the History Department's Indigenization Committee to all instructors of Indigenous Course Requirement (ICR) courses for the 2024-2025 academic year that were offered by or cross-listed with History. If you have received this message in error, please let me know!

Each year, the Indigenization Committee facilitates a student essay prize for "an exceptional undergraduate essay on Indigenous history written by a student enrolled in one of the History Department's Indigenous Course Requirement courses." If your course had an essay assignment this year, we are asking that you please send us your best student submissions. Ideally, this student essay should be related to "Indigenous history," but this is something that the committee has a lot of flexibility about, so feel free to ask if you are concerned about the eligibility of certain exceptional essays. The student does NOT need to self-identify as Indigenous to receive the prize.

Please send student essay submissions to me by email (l.kuragano@uwinnipeg.ca) by **June 6, 2025**. Thank you for your cooperation, and we look forward to the chance to celebrate the successes of our ICR students!

With my best,
Leah Kuragano (on behalf of the History Indigenization Committee)

Juror Email:

Hello, all — I hope you're having a restful summer! I'm reaching out on behalf of the Indigenization committee to ask if you might be willing to help select the winner of the Indigenous History Essay Prize this year.

The procedure for the prize is that a 3-person committee made up of ICR course instructors should select the winner. The prize is announced as part of the History Department Awards in the fall. Since the early fall is always a terribly busy time, I thought I would offer to start the process off in the summer.

This year there are 7 submissions (attached here) Some of them are traditional essays, but a few of them are pieces of creative work or essay responses from exams. The Indigenization committee had lots of discussion this year about the prize and we decided to be more flexible about what counts as an "essay" this year.

If you do feel you have the capacity to take this on, I will ask that you please rank the submissions from 1-7 with #1 being the best submission. Here are some considerations for ranking that last year's jurors used:

-Was there a clear argument/central idea and did the paper/assignment do what it aimed to do?

-Was the paper/assignment well-organized?

-Did it show that the student understood and could distinguish histories of First Nations being discussed?

-Did the essay show a familiarity with Indigenous history?

-Did the paper deal with the most relevant literature about the issue at hand? Did the essay engage with Indigenous scholarship? Check bibliography: does the paper/assignment rely on outdated or stereotypical assumptions/generalizations about Indigenous history?

-How were primary sources used?

-Were there any outright errors

-Does the essay characterize the objectives of the ICR? https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/indigenous-course-requirement/ICR-criteria.pdf

-Is the essay readable? Has it been carefully proof-read?

Please share your rankings with me via an email by August 1st (but if you need extended time, let me know). If there is a clear consensus, then we can move forward that way without a meeting, but if further discussion is needed then I will organize a very short Zoom discussion in August.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns and thank you for your consideration!

With my best,

Leah

Suggested Selection Criteria:

- Was there a clear argument and did the paper/assignment do what it aimed to do? (thesis statement, argument, and how compelling is the argument?)

- Was the paper/assignment well-organized?

- Did it show that the student understood and could distinguish histories of First/Indigenous Nations being discussed?

- Did the essay/assignment show a familiarity with Indigenous history?

- Did the paper/assignment deal with the most relevant literature about the issue at hand? Did the essay engage with Indigenous scholarship? Check bibliography: does the paper/assignment rely on outdated or stereotypical assumptions/generalizations about Indigenous history?

- How were primary sources used?

- Were there any outright errors

- Does the essay characterize the objectives of the ICR? https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/indigenous-course-requirement/ICR-criteria.pdf

- Is the essay/assignment readable? Has it been carefully proof-read?

Past Winners and Information:

The winner for the 2016-2017 Indigenous History Essay Prize is Jackson W. Anderson for his essay "'A Sense of history, A Sense of Pride'": Constructions of Metis History by the late twentieth Century Metis political movement." The essay showed how prominent Metis political leaders of the 1960s used nineteenth and early twentieth century Metis history in ways that supported the their own political objectives. It shows how important these histories were to addressing "the long term impact of and possible political solutions to Canadian colonization." Anderson's essay engaged with Indigenous history in a deep and innovative way by providing a useful understanding of the ways in which Metis leadership in the 1960s understood history and created historical narratives in an effort to bring about social and political change.

Not sure if we were able to contact about the award or pay them
Conatct: Jackson Wayne Anderson 99 <anderson-j99@webmail.uwinnipeg.ca> (I think he's with the Association for Manitoba Archives) – did a JMP degree after the undergrad one.

The winner for the 2017-2018 Indigenous History Essay Prize has been awarded to Destiny Elcock for her essay entitled "Indigenous Women's Political Movement to Eliminate Sex Discrimination in the *Indian Act* in the 1970s. This essay examines several different historical case studies to show how Indigenous women faced division over and community resistance to removing sections of the act that disenfranchised women band members upon marriage to non-Status Indian men. Looking not just at how Indigenous women political activists were portrayed in mainstream media, the essay looks at how the women portrayed themselves in their own media, and how they reflect on this history as well, considering in particular First Nations women in New Brunswick and Alberta. Elcock's attention to Indigenous scholarship led her to a precise and careful analysis of the recollections and words of Indigenous women in Canada and the Indigenous 1970s more generally.
Destiny Elcock <destinyelcock@gmail.com> (First Nations)
She published the essay with Crossings – the Undergraduate journal

"The winner for the 2018-2019 Indigenous History Essay Prize is Rayna Anderson for her analysis of Brian D. McInnes's *Sounding Thunder: The Stories of Francis Pegahmagabow* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016). In her essay, Anderson emphasizes that the persistence of the Ojibwe language and culture was a matter of critical concern for Francis Pegahmagabow, an early twentieth century Anishinaabe leader and decorated war-hero from Ontario. Additionally, Anderson skillfully connects Pegahmagabow's passion for his people's language with secondary sources that examine contemporary efforts to revitalize and sustain the Ojibwe language in the United States and Canada."
https://news.uwinnipeg.ca/wesmen-player-earns-indigenous-history-essay-prize/
Contact: Rayna Anderson, now in med school: Rayna Anderson anyar2000@hotmail.com

"The winner for the 2019-2020 Indigenous History Essay Prize is Emma Anderson for her essay "Smallpox and Settlers: Indigenous Perspectives in the Kiowa Smallpox Legend." The subject of Anderson's essay is a nineteenth-century Kiowa oral narrative about smallpox. In the narrative, Smallpox, personified as man dressed in European clothes, encounters Saynday, the Kiowa culture hero. Anderson's perceptive discussion of this primary source reveals how the story reflects Kiowa understandings of what smallpox is and how it spreads. She places the story in the context of the history of the Kiowa people,

their relations with other Indigenous peoples and white settlers, and the history of disease epidemics on the Great Plains. The essay is thoroughly researched, original, and demonstrates abundant intellectual curiosity. Anderson underlines the importance of traditional narratives in understanding Indigenous historical perspectives."
https://news.uwinnipeg.ca/2020-indigenous-history-essay-prize-winner/
Contact: Emma Anderson 79 anderson-e79@webmail.uwinnipeg.ca

"The winner of the 2020-2021 Indigenous History Essay Prize is Emily Gartner for her essay "Indigenization at the Manitoba Museum through Métis Exhibits" in Prof. Ryan Eyford's course on the history of the Metis in Canada (HIST-3525). This superbly written and researched essay examines continuity and change in the portrayal of Métis people, as well as shifting voices and perspectives in exhibits on Métis history at the Manitoba Museum in Winnipeg. The essay focuses on three of the permanent exhibits at the museum that showcase Métis heritage. The earliest of these is the *Métis Bison Hunt Diorama* in the Orientation Gallery, which opened in 1970, followed by the *Métis Kitchen Exhibit*, which opened in 1998, and the *Ni Kishkishin/I Remember Ste. Madeleine Exhibit*, which opened in 2019. The essay compares these different exhibits and links them to various scholarly publications including the works of Ruth Phillips, Brenda Trofanenko, and others, who have examined and discussed Indigenization of museums over the last fifty years. The essay shows how Métis exhibits at the Manitoba Museum have changed since 1970, in accordance with wider patterns of increasing Indigenous representation and leading participation in museums and other heritage institutions. For example, while some might consider the older Métis history exhibits at the Manitoba Museum dated, others perceive them as innovative for their time. The essay shows how over the last decades, the Manitoba Museum has made great strides and considerable efforts to not only cooperate and collaborate with First Nations -, Inuit - and Métis communities, but to carefully listen to their input on heritage management and heritage portrayal to place their voices and concerns at the centre of the museum's display designs."
https://news.uwinnipeg.ca/prize-winning-student-essay-examines-indigenization-at-manitoba-museum/
Contact: emily27@mymts.net

The 2021-2022 winner of the ICR was Carolyn Lawton, title "Defining Metis Religion and Spirituality: A Historical Analysis." There was no citation done by the 2021-2022 adjudication committee; here is the link to the story done by UW Communications:
https://news.uwinnipeg.ca/exploration-of-metis-spirituality-earns-student-indigenous-

history-essay-prize/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=exploration-of-metis-spirituality-earns-student-indigenous-history-essay-prize

As of August 13, 2022, it is uncertain if a cash prize was awarded by the Centre for Rupertsland Studies to Lawton.

Contact: Carolyn Lawton-587 <lawton-c@webmail.uwinnipeg.ca>

2022-2023 The 2023 ICR Essay Prize went to Jessica Whyte
https://news.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous-history-essay-prize-recipient-examines-the-historical-division-of-english-and-french-metis-families/

Jolene: "The prize was awarded last year for the 2023-2024 academic year. $143.00 was given to Jessica Whyte." ROLAND ALSO TRANSFERRED A $250 prize to her!

Citation: The winner of the 2022-2023 ICR Essay Prize is Jessica Whyte for her paper entitled, "Socioeconomic Disparities in Rooster Town: An Analysis of the Historical Division Between English Metis and French Métis Families," written in Dr. Ryan Eyford's course HIST-3525 'History of the Metis in Canada.' The essay examines and social, economic, and educationaldistinctions between English and French Métis, pointing out both commonalities and differences among the residents of the urban Métis community of Rooster Town. Demonstrating an outstanding knowledge of the relevant literature, Whyte situates her own family's story within broader context of Red River Métis history.

Contact jessicadwhyte@gmail.com jessicadwhyte@gmail.com (Metis)

2023-2024. The 2024 ICR Essay Prize went to Rene Hince "Historical Use of Permaculture and Agroforestry among Métis Lifeways". No citation; no award announcement.

Roland's comments: Interesting topic that fits well into the growing body of research regarding Indigenous plant management other than corn agriculture. Diverse sources, from First Peoples' and Metis oral histories, to ethnographic accounts and bio-history resources. The fact that Metis agricultural pursuits in and around Red River were highly diverse and well-adapted to changing local conditions has been pointed out time and again by scholars such as Jean Friesen, Gerhard Ens and Jack Bumsted. However, non-Indigenous observers often overlooked, denigrated and downplayed plant-based subsistence activities of First Peoples and Metis. ReneHince's paper does a fine job of pulling together diverse secondary sources that show these Indigenous plant-management activities as the ingenious, well-adapted and sustainable subsistence strategies they were.

Erin's comments: I agree with Roland's assessment. I would add that Metis 'misuse' of land as determined by Euro-Canadian settler colonial standards that equated settlement and agriculture with 'civilization' were often used to challenge Metis claims to Aboriginal

land rights. Hince's essay demonstrates that Metis mixed economies that often included 'untended' gardens that were harvested in the fall, along with specific knowledge of seasonal harvesting, facilitated best-use of lands for both sustenance and commercial activities at a time before the development of Marquis wheat allowed for sustainable commercial crop cultivation on the prairies.
Contact: renehince@gmail.com; hince-r@webmail.uwinnipeg.ca

2024-2025

The 2025 ICR Indigenous History essay prize winner is Caleb White for his essay and presentation, "Indigenous Students and the Nuclear Family: The Colonization of Kinship at Brandon Residential School, 1900-1959." White's work was nominated by Prof. Mary Jane McCallum and jurors for the 2025 Prize were Roland Bohr, Mark Meuwese, and Jason Yaremko. The essay is an analysis of the federal government's racist policy of assimilating Indigenous children through, as White puts it, colonizing kinship ties and Indigenous families. At the same time, it also points out that these families resisted, and continue to resist. This is an important, rigorously researched, well-argued, and eloquently written essay with, as Mark Meuwese commented, "impressive discussion of primary sources from the Brandon R.S. in the 1950s." White was awarded the ICR prize and the information was conveyed to UW communications.