

2023

**Community Sponsored Awards**

RECOGNIZING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Recipients Guide



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# 2023

## Community Sponsored Awards

RECOGNIZING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes that the pathways to student success do not occur in isolation. The responsibility to support over 109,000 students on their K–12 educational journey is a shared one between the Division and the broader community. We work closely with community partners to best leverage the community's interest and investment in the success and well-being of our students and their families.

We are grateful for the generous support provided by community members to sponsor awards and scholarships to recognize the learning and achievement of Division students. Each community sponsored award or scholarship has its own criteria and application requirements. Every year, adjudication teams review applications submitted by the students to determine the recipients who best exemplify the award or scholarship criteria.

Congratulations to the 2023 recipients of the community sponsored awards and scholarships on your well-deserved success!

# Ben Sauv  Artstrek Bursary

This bursary allows young people, who require financial support, to experience the joy of learning while in the Theatre Alberta Artstrek program. Ben was a Grade 12 student who attended the Artstrek program and was passionate about the arts. This bursary was created by Ben’s loved ones in his memory, after he was tragically killed in a traffic accident in 1987.

## Recipient



### **Ronan Faria**

*Victoria School of the Arts*

For as long as Ronan can remember, he has been passionate about acting. During this first year at the school, Ronan actively participated in a variety of art classes and in many performances including Leaps & Bounds, Alumnifest and PlayWorks. He joined the Student Arts Leadership Team and assisted with projects requiring leadership, organization, time management and communication skills. Ronan is also actively involved in the Edmonton arts community as an actor in Edmonton Fringe musicals, and as a member of Vocal Motion and Edmonton Columbian Choirs. He embodies courage, generosity and creative risk-taking, all highly valued qualities within the theatre community. His strong work ethic and dedication to personal growth make him a positive role model to those around him. He is looking forward to experiencing Artstrek and believes it will serve him well in a possible future career in the industry. Ronan will continue at Victoria School of the Arts for Grades 11 and 12.

# Betty Finch Scholarship

The purpose of this scholarship is to assist a student who is completing high school while receiving specialized support to accommodate a learning disability, and who also requires financial support to attend a post-secondary program. Betty worked for Edmonton Public Schools for three decades, mainly as a specialist who focused on students with learning disabilities. This scholarship was established to recognize her commitment to education.

## Recipient



### **Talia Siobhan**

*Victoria School of the Arts*

Talia respects the need for education and the role learning has played to develop her perspective on diversity. Regardless of life's challenges and barriers, Talia demonstrates positivity and resilience, always striving to be an agent of change to make the world a better place for all. Throughout her childhood, Talia's mom taught her how to persevere under adversity and the value of an education. It is important to Talia to continue her great-great grandfather's dream of education for his female descendants. Through great sacrifice, her long departed Grandpa O'Hara managed to send both of his daughters to university during the 1930s. Talia believes post-secondary education provides a stabilizing factor in one's life and will educate not only herself, but will also create opportunities for her family. This fall, Talia will pursue a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology at the University of Alberta.

# Catherine and Robert Povaschuk Scholarship

This scholarship recognizes a Grade 12 student who has honours in academic courses, demonstrates commitment to extracurricular and community involvement and will attend the University of Alberta. Catherine and Robert Povaschuk wish to assist scholarship recipients with expenses associated with proceeding with their studies.

## Recipient



### **Anwi Patel**

*McNally High School*

Anwi has an inspiring passion for bettering her community and she knows how to confidently tackle challenging issues to make the world a better place. She was well respected for being an exceptional representative of the beliefs and attitudes valued at McNally; and as a result, Anwi was the valedictorian of her graduating class. During the pandemic, she was determined to continue creating human connections and bringing people together, and Anwi achieved that as part of the organizing team for the Relay for Life fundraiser. This experience ignited her passion for leadership and she pursued many more leadership roles, including planning Touch of Class and Heritage Fest, leading the South Asian Cultural Club, and hosting live career day panels. As a leader on the City of Edmonton Youth Council, she wrote a memorandum to Edmonton's city council advocating for the implementation of a mask bylaw in the city, and particularly in schools; and she served as the chair of the Internal Affairs Subcommittee, leading a team of 25 whose work resulted in the creation of several reports and policies to improve the council's structure. Anwi is looking forward to attending the University of Alberta to pursue a bachelor of science degree in biological sciences with a minor in French.

## Catherine and Robert Povaschuk Scholarship *(continued)*

### Recipient



### **Conner Kulak**

*Jasper Place High School*

Conner believes a person's charitable acts are catalysts to facilitating a positive world. While maintaining honours with distinction, his volunteer efforts had a beneficial impact on the Jasper Place school community and beyond. Through his student union involvement, Conner helped to build positive relationships, school spirit and a platform for students' voices to be heard. He helped new students entering high school feel a sense of community and pride, and he was a member of the JPTV student-led broadcast team, Mathletes club and jazz band. Conner was honoured to be chosen to represent Jasper Place at the Night of Music. His commitment to improving the lives of seniors included volunteering at senior centres and assisting with the creation of a Global TV commercial aimed at promoting senior engagement and inclusion and building awareness of available services. During the pandemic, Conner worked diligently to move special events for seniors outdoors to ensure safe and engaging interactions. Inspired by his family and a teacher battling cancer, Conner used the power of social media to raise thousands of dollars for the Terry Fox Foundation, Canadian Cancer Society and Alberta Cancer Foundation. Conner is looking forward to attending the University of Alberta to pursue a bachelor of education degree in mathematics with a minor in music.

## Catherine and Robert Povaschuk Scholarship *(continued)*

### Recipient



### **Talia Siobhan**

*Victoria School of the Arts*

Talia, who is also the recipient of three other Division scholarships, is highly involved in both school and community activities and advocacy initiatives. As a member of the Victoria School Indigenous Leadership Team, she helped to plan the Indigenous celebration month and Indigenous graduation ceremony. Talia took an active role in organizing and planning the 2022 Walk for Wenjack, a fundraising initiative on behalf of the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund to commemorate the memory of a young boy who died trying to escape a residential school and other survivors of Canada's residential school system. In her leadership role, Talia collaborated with her peers to create a slideshow to educate her classmates about Chanie and the residential school system. Talia demonstrates exemplary interpersonal skills that show responsibility, respect, and caring in order to establish and maintain healthy interactions. She understands that she, as an Indigenous role model, will continue to contribute to the Indigenous and greater Edmonton community as she seeks higher education. This fall, Talia will pursue a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology at the University of Alberta.

# Esther and Peter Cunliffe Scholarship

This scholarship recognizes a Grade 12 student who demonstrates excellent academic performance, outstanding personal and leadership qualities and who requires financial support to attend one of the following post-secondary institutions: University of Alberta, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology or MacEwan University. In the spring of 2000, Esther and Peter Cunliffe made a commitment for a portion of their estate to be made available for scholarships for students graduating from Edmonton Public Schools.

## Recipient



### **Talia Siobhan**

*Victoria School of the Arts*

Talia, who is also the recipient of three other Division scholarships, is a conscientious honours student who dedicates time, effort and heart to difficult and challenging activities aimed at advancing the work of anti-racism and reconciliation. As part of an anti-racism student initiative, she helped write a letter to the Minister of Education about the debate on whether or not anti-racism should be taught in schools. As a result of the impact of Talia's volunteerism in her community, she was one of the few youth invited to participate in Pope Francis' 2022 visit that was part of the Vatican's actions towards reconciliation. Talia shared in the commemorative experience by selecting gifts of Indigenous art to personally present to the Pope. She believes a post-secondary education will provide the skills necessary to fulfill her goals in walking the path towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. This fall, Talia will pursue a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology at the University of Alberta.



# French Bilingual Awards

The purpose of the French Bilingual Award is to recognize one Grade 6 and one Grade 9 French Immersion student, and one Grade 12 student enrolled in French programming. These students demonstrate overall performance in French and have positive attitudes towards learning French. This award was made possible by the Edmonton French Bilingual Education Society (EFBES).

## Grade 6 Recipient



### **Ryan Risselada**

*Rio Terrace School*

Ryan's enthusiasm for French is evident both inside and outside the classroom. He loves reading so much that he has read almost all the books in his classroom library. Not only does he love reading, but his own stories are imaginative and humorous. In class, Ryan consistently speaks French and encourages his classmates to do the same. Perseverance, risk-taking and critical thinking are all skills Ryan demonstrates during class activities. Ryan enjoys speaking French outside the classroom, too. He can be heard speaking French to family members and to French-speaking strangers needing directions in his neighbourhood. Ryan is an excellent ambassador for French in Edmonton Public Schools.

## French Bilingual Awards *(continued)*

### Grade 9 Recipient



#### **Elise Nordhagen**

*Kenilworth School*

Elise Nordhagen is a high-achieving, conscientious French Immersion student whose creativity shines through. Volunteering is important to Elise and she puts her French to good use by reading with and to younger students in Edmonton Public Library's Copains de lecture program. Elise looks for ways to further immerse herself in French beyond the classroom and enjoys taking part in French community events. For Elise, French is much more than a course at school; it is a passion she pursues. Elise intends to continue her education in French and to become a teacher.

### Grade 12 Recipient



#### **Yoyo Liu**

*Old Scona Academic*

Yoyo is an enthusiastic, kind and dedicated student. She has shown incredible strength and perseverance in her French language learning. She began learning French in Grade 10 and worked diligently to catch up to her peers who had been studying the language since elementary school. She often sought additional support from her teachers in order to enhance her learning. Wanting to share her experience, Yoyo helped her teacher prepare a summer course for students who had a limited background in French so that they would not face the same struggles she did. She was a bilingual youth ambassador and participated in the National Ambassador Youth Forum to involve students in learning about Francophone culture. Yoyo feels that promoting French in her school and community has led her to understand that language is not just a tool for communication, but also a gateway to understanding and appreciating different cultures.

# Garth Worthington Memorial Scholarship

The Garth Worthington Memorial Scholarship recognizes a high school student with outstanding talent and skill in vocal or choral music, who is also actively pursuing vocal or choral music studies. Garth spent three decades teaching music in Edmonton Public Schools, conducting thousands of students in school bands and choirs. He was also a talented musician and singer. The Garth Worthington Memorial Scholarship fund was established to keep his passion for music alive.

## Recipient



### **Mana Middleton**

*Victoria School of the Arts*

From the time Mana was a young child singing along to Disney songs, music has been a means of expression and a source of motivation that has played a large part in shaping the person she is today. Mana demonstrated tremendous artistry and technical skill as a member of her school's concert choir, an advanced choir of 60 singers, and the jazz choir, an auditioned group of 20 singers. She has a very strong understanding of how to best use her voice, and sings musically in all parts of her vocal range. Mana was involved in a number of mainstage school musical productions, most recently as a lead member of *Legally Blonde*. She has been actively involved in community theatre productions with Citadel Young Company, *One Song Glory* and *Artstrek*. As a strong dancer and actor, Mana's musical theatre performances stand out. She believes it is important to inspire the next generation of singers and teaches young children performing arts at 4-H. Beyond music, she is most proud of her public speaking accomplishments at all levels of 4-H competitions. Mana hopes to pursue musical theatre as a career to share her love and passion for the arts with others.

# James P. Jones Scholarship

The purpose of this scholarship is to recognize a Grade 12 student who completes French courses to the 30 level, has a positive attitude toward learning French, a sincere interest in continuing French language studies beyond high school and who demonstrates excellent academic performance and citizenship. James (Jim) P. Jones worked for Edmonton Public Schools for nearly three decades, mainly as a supervisor of second languages. Jim's friends and family, along with language teachers in the Division, established this scholarship to acknowledge his tremendous work and dedication.

## Recipient



### **Anwi Patel**

*McNally High School*

Anwi, who is also the recipient of the Catherine and Robert Povaschuk Scholarship, is a gifted language learner who works to continually improve her skills. She has taken French as a second language since elementary school and completed French 30 IB in Grade 12. Anwi practices her French language skills outside of class by reading in French and by consuming French media through music, movies and television shows. She has had the opportunity to travel to Quebec and France and was delighted to engage in conversations with native speakers and to deepen her understanding of French language, history and culture. She is an active member of her school community and has been a part of the City of Edmonton Youth Council for three years. Having been inspired by passionate French teachers, she plans to become a teacher in the hopes of convincing future students to learn a new language and so that she can share her love for French language and culture with others.

# Kinsey Verbeek Memorial Award

This award recognizes Grade 11 students who have had a positive effect on others in spite of facing personal challenges. Kinsey Verbeek was a Grade 11 student enrolled at Ross Sheppard High School who passed away at the age of 15. Despite the personal challenges Kinsey faced, her loved ones remember her as a friend, an ally, and an inspiration for positive change in the world. The Kinsey Verbeek Memorial Award was created by her family to recognize other young people who help make the world a better place despite the barriers they face.

## Recipient



### **Cristina Iordache**

*Strathcona High School*

Cristina is a positive role model who takes action, makes impactful change and advocates for others. She understands the relationship between culture and learning—Cristina acts respectfully in every environment and dedicates time to engage with people that have different beliefs than her own to understand their backgrounds. Even in the face of adversity, Cristina perseveres with purpose to grow past challenges and contributes to the global community. It matters to her to include everyone, to celebrate differences and be aware of others' needs. At school, Cristina took French and Spanish to better understand the cultures and to communicate with more diverse groups of people. As a member of the International Languages Student Task Force, she helped organize a week-long experience for students that included international cuisine, trivia contests and live cultural performances. Christina represented Canada at the annual Model United Nations and appreciated the opportunity to develop diplomatic skills and work with peers to debate resolutions for global access to education. Cristina claims her passion is in biology, as she sees this science as necessary to understand the fundamental workings of life. She plans to pair this interest with her strengths in mathematics to pursue data analysis and research.

## Kinsey Verbeek Memorial Award *(continued)*

### Recipient



### **Jade Renner**

*Dr. Anne Anderson High School*

Jade is committed to life-long learning and elevating those around her to be their best selves. She understands the importance of honing one's communication skills to become more confident in meeting and working with others.

Jade champions opportunities to overcome barriers and work cooperatively with others needing help with their struggles. She is quick on her feet and can handle situations with thoughtfulness and maturity. At school and in the community, Jade is consistently the team member who leads by example and has no problem undertaking the task that no one else wants to do. As a dedicated and reliable member of her school's work experience crew, Jade went in before school and at lunch to help receive groceries, do basic preparations, clean the kitchen, serve food and work as a cashier in the busy school restaurant. Her involvement in culinary class contributed to serving around 300 healthy meals a day. Jade mastered methods of cooking and baking, especially the art of making sourdough breads; and her greatest strengths were in organization, dedication and leadership. Fellow chefs sought her guidance and followed her lead, including older and more advanced students.

Jade's community volunteer contributions have included assembling food hampers for Little Warriors, delivering hygiene kits to the Operation Friendship Seniors Society, preparing family meal kits and stocking shelves at the Veterans Food Bank. This intelligent, dedicated and good natured young leader makes her school and community better places to be.

# LeRoy Warden and Associates Scholarship

This scholarship is for a Grade 12 student who is in need of financial assistance, who has clear career plans and who will attend one of the following post-secondary institutions: University of Alberta, MacEwan University, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology or University of Alberta Campus Saint-Jean. When LeRoy Warden is asked what motivated him to establish the scholarship, he replies, “I simply want to help because it resonates with my soul, and lending a helping hand may make the world of difference for one person.”

## Recipient



### **Bhakti Mathur**

*Harry Ainlay High School*

Bhakti describes herself as very strong willed when it comes to her passions which forces her to be resourceful and fast thinking when achieving her goals. She has worked multiple part-time jobs throughout high school to save for her future, all while maintaining academic honours. Bhakti credits working while going to school as a way to learn how to budget both her money and time. She is known by her peers and teachers as very personable and interacts comfortably with others, demonstrating a high level of maturity and responsibility at all times. Bhakti looks forward to attending NAIT this fall to complete the computer engineering technology program. While at NAIT, she intends to start a STEM program for women who may be apprehensive of this male-dominated field. In the future, Bhakti hopes to get an internship at the women-led GeroHealth’s eHealthAnalytics department to help the company assist seniors to stay in control of their health and independence, particularly her own grandparents who have helped her become the person she is today.

# Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award

The purpose of this award is to recognize a Grade 8 student who exhibits a sincere dedication to the literary arts and demonstrates personal growth as a writer. Dr. Margaret T. Stevenson served as a Language Arts supervisor with Edmonton Public Schools for 10 years. In recognition of her work, colleagues, friends and family established this award in 1994 and continue to make donations to the fund.

## Recipient



### **Charlie Jordan**

*Westminster School*

Writing is a passion for Charlie. This talented young writer set a goal for himself four years ago during the presentation of this award at his brother's school awards event: Charlie intended to apply when he was in Grade 8 and be the 2023 recipient. Mission accomplished—Charlie captivated the adjudication team with his writing proficiency and the information base from which he developed each piece of writing. He demonstrated a strong sense of self as a writer handling all styles of writing in a masterful way. Exceptional voice came through in every piece and changed to suit the form and subject he chose to write about. Charlie has an astute ability to analyze his writing growth. Each piece of writing in the portfolio had its own significance from different points in his life to illustrate his progression as a writer and fit into different genres and styles, including poems, narratives and non-fiction, pieces told from the first and third person and memories from the perspective of the person who experienced them. Overall, each piece represented a piece of who Charlie is and was, clearly illustrating his interest and ability in the literary arts, which is fueled by his love of the written word.



## Margaret T. Stevenson

### Talented Young Writer Award *(continued)*

#### Honourable Mention



### Rosie Mears

*kisêwâtisiwin School*

In the introduction to her portfolio, Rosie shared that ever since she was a little kid she loved to write, whether that be an essay for a school project or a short story during her favourite summer camp, Word Reference. One of her earliest memories of expressing herself through writing was when she ‘published’ her first book in Grade 1, a handmade short story about her cats that she snuck into the school library. This memory gave Rosie a taste of how exciting it was to get her thoughts out onto a page for others to see. In addition to her creative writing talent, she is a successful technical writer. Whether it is research, comparative or persuasive writing, her writing is accurate, concise, clear, well organized and thoughtful. Rosie is always diligent about perfecting the format by asking questions and seeking feedback in order to create a polished piece of writing. Passionate about the writing process, Rosie challenges herself with all forms of writing inviting the opportunity to experiment, explore, express herself in creative ways, and ultimately, grow as a writer.

## Margaret T. Stevenson Talented Young Writer Award *(continued)*

### Honourable Mention



### **Ishmeet Sekhon** *Donald R. Getty School*

Ishmeet has grown to love writing more than any other subject. She feels at her best when writing serious or daunting pieces rather than fantasy genres. She loves to add suspense into her stories, keeping readers on the edge of their seats or leaving them wondering what happens next. Her portfolio showcased both her strengths and shortcomings as a writer to acknowledge the importance of the writer's learning journey to success. Ishmeet seeks and applies feedback and steadily works to make her writing better until it reaches the very high standards she sets for herself. She masterfully fits the tone of her writing to the audience and purpose; and paints pictures with her words striving to create the same images in her reader's minds that she sees when enjoying her love of reading. For her, every book is a different reality, and sinking into it allows her to let go of real life and lose herself in a new story. Ishmeet brings the same dedication to her writing, striking an emotional chord with almost every piece she writes.

# Opportunity Through Education

## Sandra B. Woitas Scholarship

This scholarship assists a Grade 12 student who has attended Edmonton Public schools for at least four years, demonstrates a commitment to volunteering, has a positive attitude toward school and their studies, and requires financial support to attend a post-secondary institution in Edmonton. Sandra B. Woitas served as Director of the Edmonton Public Schools Foundation from 2009 to 2014. This scholarship was established by Sandra's colleagues, friends and family in recognition of her hard work and many contributions.

### Recipient



### **Talia Siobhan**

*Victoria School of the Arts*

Talia, who is also the recipient of three other Division scholarships, is an exemplary role model with an intrinsic desire to help and serve others at school and in her community. In junior high, she was a member of the school's Culture Club which brought Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth together as knowledge seekers of traditional Indigenous culture and arts, attending workshops and meeting with elders. Through that club, Talia joined the City of Edmonton's Indigenous youth aquatic leadership program, Nikaniw. She was also a member of the Victoria Anti-Racism Student Initiative where she helped research and promote cultural celebrations and served as a representative during the school's annual open house. Talia joined the graduation committee where she organized, planned and orchestrated fundraising events along with her peers and reached out to local businesses to seek sponsorship. Since the onset of the pandemic, Talia has been volunteering in the inner city to prepare sandwiches (using personal funds), make or distribute food hampers and organize clothes for donations to support homeless and low-income families. This fall, Talia will pursue a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology at the University of Alberta.

