

Grand Prize Winner Grades 9-12:**Student:** Christina MacDonald – Grade 11, age 16**Prize:** \$3,000 for student and \$1,000 for Department/Classroom of Teacher

To be Canadian is not to be of a singular origin, but rather it implies racial and cultural diversity. Unfortunately, indigenous people in Canada have been neglected and treated as inferior throughout history. This year however, Canada has seemingly begun to take significant steps towards truth and reconciliation with the guidance of one man, the Honourable Murray Sinclair, Manitoba's first indigenous judge and a member of the Senate since early April.

Senator Murray Sinclair has been dedicated to being the voice for oppressed indigenous Canadians for several years. He travelled to numerous residential schools gathering empirical evidence of the maltreatment of Aboriginal Canadians in order to bring long overdue awareness to the horrors of the past and present within Aboriginal communities.

He, the former chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—a commission formed to make public record of the legacy of residential schools in Canada— has received numerous awards, including the National Aboriginal Achievement Award and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business's 2016 Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Relations. Through his many successes, he has been a figure of empowerment to Canadians, showing that the most expeditious way to equality is not by forgetting the past, but through making efforts to reconcile and move forward.

2016 proved to be a year with many struggles, including the Attawapiskat crisis and cases of violence against indigenous woman. In the midst of these tragedies, Sinclair's efforts towards mutual respect and action have further resonated with Canadians across the country.

A promoter of truth and forgiveness, Sinclair has truly impacted the lives of all Canadians by challenging the country to educate themselves and become informed about the dire situation regarding those of aboriginal lineage. His active position in government and dedication to this very relevant issue indicate that change is in store.