



**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SKATEBOARD ART PROJECT EARNS ALBERTA TEACHER  
CANADA'S TOP HISTORY PRIZE**

*Sherwood Park educator to receive Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching for unique project that explored Indigenous culture and Canada's legacy of colonialism*

**NOVEMBER 23, 2020** — What do you get when you combine skateboards, art, and activism? An educational project that has earned an Alberta teacher the country's top prize for history teaching.

Kristian Basaraba, a teacher at Salisbury Composite High School in Sherwood Park, Alberta, won the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching thanks to a unique and innovative project that combined skateboard art with a history lesson on Indigenous culture and colonialism. The project's ultimate goal was to raise awareness about reconciliation.

"This project helped facilitate and encourage a dialogue between community stakeholders, students, Indigenous creatives and leaders," Basaraba said. "It demonstrated the power of art and skateboarding and how they can be used as a call to action to decolonize and forge a path toward reconciliation. The recognition this project has garnered allows this conversation to extend even further and continue into the foreseeable future."

Basaraba is one of six recipients of the Excellence in Teaching Award, chosen from sixteen finalists. Each recipient receives a \$2,500 prize. In addition, their schools will receive a \$1,000 prize.

Over a period of six weeks, Basaraba's students researched Canada's history of colonialism and designed skateboard graphics to showcase their learning. Students worked with Edmonton educator Michel Blades and community leader and professional skateboarder Joe Buffalo to explore Indigenous history and to strengthen their understanding of the effects of government policies, legislation and practices on Indigenous cultures and peoples. These conversations helped shed light on how skateboarding can be a form of activism to inspire social change.

Cree artist Jon Cardinal worked closely with the students to share the skills and techniques necessary to convert the teachings of Michel and Joe into skateboard designs that provide social commentary. They organized a public exhibition at an Edmonton skate shop to showcase their decks and bring awareness to oppression and systemic racism against Indigenous peoples. The exhibit ran for a period of five weeks

and received many positive comments and accolades from student peers, the public and school and community leaders. The dialogue between community stakeholders within these venues and platforms was a testament to the power of skateboarding and how it can be used as a call to action to forge the path to decolonization.

“With this award, we celebrate the extraordinary work of teachers who outdo themselves every day to shape our adults of tomorrow,” said Canada’s History Society President & CEO Janet Walker. The award is administered by Canada’s History.

The Governor General’s History Award recipients will also be presenting at the Canada’s History Forum, taking place virtually on November 27, 2020. The Forum is an annual event that brings together historians, educators, museum curators, community leaders and the public to encourage an exchange of ideas around Canadian history. For more information, visit [CanadasHistory.ca/CanadasHistoryForum](http://CanadasHistory.ca/CanadasHistoryForum).

*For more information, please contact:*

Mark Reid

Director of Communications

Canada’s History Society

204-509-1867

[mreid@canadashistory.ca](mailto:mreid@canadashistory.ca)

[www.CanadasHistory.ca/Awards](http://www.CanadasHistory.ca/Awards)

### **About the Governor General’s History Awards**

The Governor General’s History Awards are administered by Canada’s History Society and recognize excellence in five categories: Community Programming, Museums, Popular Media, Scholarly Research, and Teaching. The awards are Canada’s top history honours and involve the leading agencies of Canada’s history and heritage community. Each award category is administered by the presenting organization and has its own jury, selection process and prize structure.

### **About Canada’s History Society**

Canada’s History Society is a national charitable organization with a mission to promote greater popular interest in Canadian history through its magazines, *Canada’s History* (formerly *The Beaver*) and *Kayak: Canada’s History Magazine for Kids*, as well as its education and award programs.