



NEWS RELEASE

15-Year-Old Unionville Student Wins Great War Letters Contest

Chosen from more than 3,000 entries received from across Canada

November 11, 2008- On the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War, and with the help of the only living Canadian veteran from The Great War, The Dominion Institute has announced the winner of their Great War Letters Contest.

Shobha Mehta, a grade 10 student from Holy Trinity High School was awarded the Grand Prize for her letter written from the perspective of a young Japanese woman in BC to her brother, a soldier serving in Europe.

The Great War Letters Contest asked young Canadians, age 14-18, to pen a letter as if it were written from the perspective of an individual associated with the conflict (i.e. soldier, a family back home, nurse, a war correspondent). The Institute was delighted with the overwhelming response to the contest as more than 3000 letters poured through the doors.

The winning letters were selected by a panel of well known Canadians including Paul Gross, former governor general Adrienne Clarkson, R.H. Thomson, Charlotte Gray and Christopher Moore. The Dominion Institute was honoured that John Babcock, the only surviving Canadian veteran of the First World War, agreed to be part of the jury.

"I remember fellow soldiers talking about the Passchendaele," said Mr. Babcock. "It was a privilege to read these letters. My wife and me were both very touched and impressed on the high quality of work all the young people submitted."

"This contest has made the Great War come alive to a new generation of young Canadians. The contest allowed so many of them to think of the War as a set of events that real Canadians experiences on both the battle front and the home front," said Marc Chalifoux, Executive Director of The Dominion Institute.

As the winning entry, Sobha will receive an all expenses paid trip to Belgium to tour the battlefields of Passchendaele, courtesy of Butterfield & Robinson and New Wave Travel. As well, a top class submission, will be selected based on their overall number of high quality submissions and will be visited by Paul Gross to learn more of the making of *Passchendaele* and the history behind the film.

The contest was launched in partnership with the producers of *Passchendaele*, the epic motion picture about the famous First World War battle, directed by Paul Gross.

"My inspiration for the film was very personal. I remember, as a young boy, being mesmerized by my grandfather's stories about his involvement in the First World War," said *Passchendaele* writer-director-star Paul Gross. "I was proud to collaborate with The Dominion Institute to allow young Canadians to experience the power of story-telling through this Contest."

On the heels of the contest's success, the makers of *Passchendaele* announced a donation of \$10,000 to The Dominion Institute. These funds will support The Memory Project, which enables veterans to share their story with young Canadians in their schools and communities. Since its creation in 2001, The Memory Project has connected veterans with over 750,000 students.

Visit www.dominion.ca/passchendaele/ Sobha's winning letter, as well as the top ten entries.

For more information

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