



Mount Douglas secondary Grade 11 student John Evans has been selected as one of 14 Canadians (aged 15 to 17) to partake in the fully-funded Beaverbrook Vimy Prize Aug. 9 – 23, 2018 to Great Britain, Belgium and France to study Canada's role in the First and Second World wars, including visits to Oxford University, museums, cemeteries, battlefields and historic site visits such as the Vimy Ridge monument. Travis Paterson/News Staff

## Visiting Vimy Ridge: Saanich teen set for historic summer tour

Mount Douglas student John Evans will tour historic war sites

- [TRAVIS PATERSON](#)
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It will be a summer abroad for teen historian John Evans, as the 17-year-old is headed to England, Belgium and France to visit First World War sites.

Evans is one of 14 Canadian youths aged 15 to 17 to be selected for this year's [Beaverbrook Vimy Prize](#), a fully-funded educational program from Aug. 9 to 23. The tour is a directive of the Vimy Foundation to spread awareness of Canada's First World War legacy among the upcoming generations. The program explores Canada's roles in the war and the group of

students attend lectures at Oxford University, visit former battlefields, trenches and underground tunnels, as well as visit museums and cemeteries, tour the new Vimy Visitor Education Centre and explore monuments such as the Canadian National Vimy Memorial.

The group also participates in commemorative ceremonies and will meet a few of the remaining veterans and members of the French Resistance.

“[Overall] I’m just really excited to get the experience to learn about the war, how Canada was involved, and how it affected people,” said Evans, who enjoys studying history.

The Grade 11 Mount Douglas secondary student was alerted to the program by Ted Meldrum, coordinator for the school’s challenge program.

It was a challenging entry process in which [Evans responded to a painting from World War 1](#). It’s a particularly harsh piece of Allied war propaganda that is decidedly anti-German. The image depicts women and children clinging to a U-boat which is sailing away to the open sea as a German sailor closes the door. The artifact is a moving piece of Allied war propaganda that also serves as social commentary from a time when German U-boats used torpedoes to sink passenger ships, in particular the Lusitania, which killed 1,198 of the 1,959 passengers.

“I tried to put into context what the image makes me feel now compared to how I [likely] would have thought then,” Evans said.

Another part of the entry process was an essay response on post traumatic stress disorder, which Evans did by recapturing the history of the syndrome and how it went unrecognized both medically and socially for decades.

It’s a departure from Evans’ usual focus as an accomplished musician who has completed Grade 10 of the Royal Conservatory of Music piano program and is pursuing a diploma in music theory and composition. He performed on the piano with the Sidney Classical Orchestra in March 2018.

“What stands out most is the Vimy Ridge monument, it’s such an important symbol for Canadian autonomy,” Evans said.

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