



NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Science Centre honours five Canadian youths for innovative science projects *15-year-old Ethan Chan of Victoria, BC, wins \$15,000 first prize for kidney data monitoring device*

TORONTO (June 23, 2020) – Watch these young innovators—they're already leaders in their communities! The Ontario Science Centre today announced the five winners of the 2020 Weston Youth Innovation Award for their work developing innovative projects—including a machine to monitor kidney disease data, prototypes to lower noise levels of hand dryers in public washrooms, a wearable device to measure anxiety and depression, and a portable shelter for homeless people.

The winners, from across Canada, used science, technology and innovation—everything from data collection and computer coding to engineering—to develop projects that can bring positive change to their communities. An online award ceremony for the winners is being planned for July.

The top prize of \$15,000 goes to Ethan Chan, 15, of Victoria, BC, who created a device that accurately monitors and records kidney disease data. It uses photo-based colour measurement to provide digital readings that improve on traditional urinalysis test strips and offer more detailed data that will benefit researchers.

"I'm super thankful. I'm also so surprised. I never envisioned I would win," said Ethan, who described working on his device a few hours every day after school for five months. "I had tons of challenges—when the code didn't work, the model didn't print clearly, when I didn't know which wire wasn't working—but I just kept working at it."

Nora Keegan, 14, of Calgary, AB, wins the second-place prize of \$8,500 for her work on measuring the sound volume of hand dryers in public washrooms, research she started when she was only 9 years old, which has led to a prototype to reduce noise levels.

"I noticed my ears were hurting when hand dryers were on, and I saw other kids would cover their ears. I wondered if it was too loud," Nora said. "It was a big moment to see a quieter hand dryer installed at my school this year. I was very happy to see it."

And national finalists, with a \$3,500 prize each, are:

- Adrianna Vutrano and Pasha Jones, both 16, of Pincoot, QC, developed the Portable House, a 2-kilogram backpack that expands like an accordion to help people experiencing homelessness survive a harsh Canadian winter.



- Nethra Wickramasinghe, 17 of Sudbury, ON, spent three years developing a wearable device that alerts users to physiological changes associated with depressive and anxiety disorders. The device then connects with an app that uses biofeedback and cognitive behavioural therapy to provide support.

“These young innovators have shown creativity, hard work and determination in developing their projects. They each pursued a challenge, often because of a personal interest, and sought to find answers and real-world solutions, grounded in science,” said Paul Kortenaar, CEO of the Ontario Science Centre. “We believe science, technology and innovation will help us shape a better future for society and our planet. We are so proud of these young innovators who truly epitomize this ideology.”

“We are so inspired by this year’s Weston Youth Innovation Award recipients,” said Emma Adamo, Director, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation. “Each of these young Canadians responded to a real need with hard work, creativity, and tireless tenacity. Our Foundation is delighted to support this award to spark curiosity and to encourage scientific innovation that improves the well-being of Canadians.”

The annual [award](#), established in 2008, is open to individuals between 14 and 18 who pursue science, technology and innovation to make a positive impact in the world. Applications for the 2021 Weston Youth Innovation Award open October 1, 2020.

About The W. Garfield Weston Foundation

For three generations, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has pursued its mission to enhance and enrich the lives of Canadians. With a focus on medical research and the environment, the Foundation aims to catalyze inquiry and innovation to bring about long-term change. Now in its seventh decade, the Foundation continues to collaborate with a broad range of Canadian charities to further world-class research, explore new ideas and create tangible benefits for the communities in which it works.

About the Ontario Science Centre

Guided by our mission to inspire passion for the human adventure of discovery, the Ontario Science Centre strives to be a global leader in lifelong learning, a vital link in Ontario’s education and innovation ecosystems and a convener of public dialogue about technology, science and society. The Centre has welcomed more than 54 million visitors since opening as a Centennial project in 1969, pioneering an interactive approach now adopted by science centres around the world. An agency of the Government of Ontario, the Centre relies on funding from the province, as well as donations from generous individuals, corporations and foundations that share the Centre’s vision to contribute to a more curious, creative and resilient world. Learn more at OntarioScienceCentre.ca.



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