

Edmonton Folk Music Festival Society
2026 Annual General Meeting
The Don Snider “Go Wildly Forward” Scholarship Report
Submitted by The Don Snider “Go Wildly Forward” Scholarship Committee

Date: March 24, 2026

Submitted by Larry Bejcar, Chair

2025 was the 12th year of the Don Snider “Go Wildly Forward” Scholarship. The Scholarship is an Edmonton Folk Music Festival (EFMF) program that recognizes and honours EFMF volunteers who demonstrate, through their actions and attitudes, a positive motivation to be engaged meaningfully in the community and the world at large. Persons selected will have a spirit of adventure, a desire to communicate, and a willingness to share their knowledge and experience with others. Don Snider embodied these qualities over 40 years of working in the arts, as Production Manager of the EFMF for 21 years, and travelling the world.

The committee considered twelve applications in 2025.

The awards were granted to:

Erica Prins - the two year award of \$6000 in 2025 and 2026.

Erica is a dedicated scholar, mentor, and community volunteer whose academic pursuits and service reflect both independence and a strong commitment to helping others. Currently completing the first year of her PhD in Soil Science, she is on track to graduate in 2028. Her academic path has been shaped by a curiosity about the natural world and an interest in agriculture, including studies and travel related to viticulture—the cultivation of grapes—which have broadened her perspective and enriched her research.

Erica’s journey reflects both determination and self-reliance. While pursuing her studies, she has supported herself by living independently and working part time, demonstrating the discipline and resilience required to balance academic and personal responsibilities.

Beyond her studies, Erica has made meaningful contributions through volunteering and mentorship. Since 2018, she has volunteered with the festival, an organization that holds special significance for her. Having first experienced the festival as a child,

she describes a deep personal connection to it as a place that helped shape her sense of community and belonging. Returning as a volunteer has allowed her to give back and help create the same welcoming environment for others.

Erica also volunteers with You Can Ride 2, a not-for-profit organization that teaches children and adults with special needs how to ride a bicycle. Through this work, she helps participants build confidence, independence, and joy in a supportive environment.

Within the university community, Erica serves as a mentor for undergraduate women through the UA WiSE and WISER programs, supporting students pursuing studies in science and engineering. In this role, she helps guide younger students as they navigate academic challenges and explore opportunities in their fields.

The scholarship committee noted Erica's thoughtful balance between academic focus and an outward-looking engagement with the world around her. Through her research, mentorship, and volunteer service, she demonstrates a commitment not only to academic excellence but also to building stronger, more inclusive communities.

Lisa Schut - one year award of \$3000 in 2025.

Lisa is a British Columbia resident who will begin a nursing program this fall, taking an important step toward her long-term goal of becoming a Nurse Practitioner. In preparation for entering the program, she has been diligently upgrading her educational credentials, demonstrating determination and a clear commitment to building a meaningful career in healthcare.

Lisa's path reflects resilience and independence developed from a young age. Her life experiences, including significant time spent outdoors, have shaped her perspective and taught her how to make the best of challenging situations—an outlook that will serve her well in both nursing and community service.

She has already dedicated considerable time to supporting people in crisis. Lisa has worked with VictimLinkBC and 211, two vital support services that connect individuals with resources and assistance during difficult moments. In addition, she has volunteered as a crisis responder, providing compassionate listening and guidance to people when they need it most. The committee was particularly impressed by this work, recognizing the empathy, responsibility, and emotional strength required for these roles.

Lisa also spoke compellingly about the role music and festivals have played in her life. These experiences have provided community, reflection, and personal meaning. She described feeling a special connection to her late father through the spirit she experiences at EFMF, a place where music, memory, and community come together in a powerful way.

Through her dedication to helping others, her personal resilience, and her clear sense of purpose, Lisa is preparing for a future in healthcare grounded in compassion, service, and human connection.

In 2025, **Maybellene McDonald** received their second year of funding.

Since the scholarship started in 2014, 20 students have received awards and \$135,000 has been paid to recipients. The success of this scholarship is a testament to EFMF's exceptional volunteer program and the positive contributions EFMF volunteers make to society.

A recap of the Don Snider "Go Wildly Forward" Scholarship Committee adjudication process is as follows:

- Copies of all the applications are provided to each committee member and the Edmonton Folk Music Festival Manager of Volunteers through the online portal.
- The Manager of Volunteers looks over the list of applicants and flags any concerns regarding a volunteer's status for the committee to discuss.
- Any conflicts of interest are declared, and that committee member abstains from participating in any conversations or providing any recommendations regarding that applicant.
- Each committee member provides an initial recommendation of "Yes," "No," or "Maybe" for each applicant.
- The recommendations are compiled, and the applicants are organized into tranches based on the number of "Yes" votes they have received. This process allows the committee to focus its discussion in the adjudication meeting on the few applications that received mostly "Yes" votes.
- A discussion at the committee meeting determines the final recommendation to the EFMF Society Board of Directors.

We are grateful to the Edmonton Community Foundation for hosting the application through their online portal system. We plan to continue using this platform and will update the 2025 application to reflect the increased award amounts. A launch page on EFMF's website and can be found here: <https://edmontonfolkfest.org/scholarship/>

In 2025, the committee consisted of:

- Lousie Booker
- Gene Mueller
- Shelly Morrison
- Stu Muir
- Alan Burant
- Marigold Kinley
- Larry Bejcar (Chair and Board Representative)

Dana Fontaine and Richard Stuart have been excellent resources to the committee. We would also like to thank Anna Opryshko from the Edmonton Community Foundation for being a key point of contact. We look forward to continuing this work with the new Volunteer Manager, Dana Fontaine, in the future.

The 2026 award deadline will be on Friday, May 8th. To meet deadlines associated with profiling the Scholarship in EFMF media, the committee will conclude its selection process by May 29, 2026, and bring those recommendations to the June 2026 EFMF Board meeting.

The Don Snider “Go Wildly Forward” Scholarship committee updated the Terms of Reference in February 2025.