

## IISD Experimental Lakes Area (IISD-ELA) Canadian National Essay Competition 2016

### *Outline*

The essays will be graded based on the rubric below. The grade for each level represents the minimum grade that will achieve that level for a given criteria. For example, a 3, 4, or 5 out of 10 in the Spelling and Grammar category would be ranked at Level 2. Anything below the grade necessary for a Level 2 is a Level 1. Each essay will be read and marked by three referees. All essays graded as Level 4 by at least two referees will then be read by the entire five-member committee for consideration as winners. When evaluating the performance of schools, all essays ranking as Level 3 or higher will be considered in contribution to the performance of a school.

**Eligibility:** Students must be enrolled in Grade 8, 9, 10, or 11 and be returning to high school in fall 2017.

#### **Essay topic:**

- Choose a freshwater body in Canada and propose a plan of action for its sustainable management.
- Explain the importance of this freshwater body to Canadians over the past 150 years.
- Outline a plan of action that addresses a significant anthropogenic (of human origin) threat to that freshwater body's ecosystem.
- Your plan must be supported by current scientific knowledge, with the goal of ensuring that everyone can continue to use this resource for the next 150 years.

**Essay Guidelines:** Essays must be in English and may not exceed 2,000 words excluding references. Students are reminded that good scientific writing is concise, and that length is not a proxy for quality. Essays should be written in 12-point font, single-spaced with one-inch margins and numbered pages. A cover page should give the essay a title, identify the author, and their school and school board, and provide a contact number for both the student and their teacher. Facts, thoughts, and opinions in your essay that are not your own should be cited in text and referenced appropriately. If a source is used that can only be found online, a url should be provided. Citation and referencing format is not strict, but should remain consistent throughout the essay.

#### Sample Citation:

In text: "...lake ecosystems can recover from the negative impacts of acidification, but this recovery will be slower than their initial deterioration [5]."

Sample Reference (article from *Science* magazine, Nov. 2008):

[5] Stokstad, Erik. 2008. Canada's Experimental Lakes. *Science* 322:1316-1319.

The full essay rubric that will be used to evaluate submissions will be made available online.

**Essay Submission Deadline:** Essays must be submitted as a PDF to [education@iisd-ela.org](mailto:education@iisd-ela.org) by no later than **11:59 pm CT** on Thursday, February 16, 2017. Essays electronically time-stamped as having been sent later than this will not be considered.

Winners of the essay competition will be notified on March 17, 2017. Winning essays will be published as part of IISD's celebration of Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Two individual winners will be selected to attend the Blue Cities Conference in Toronto on May 19, 2017 ([bluecities.ca](http://bluecities.ca))! Your conference experience will be facilitated by IISD-ELA, which will cover the cost of flights, accommodation, and conference registration. This experience will offer a unique opportunity to interact with professionals and experts working on urban water issues across Canada, and boost your resume and post-secondary applications!

A winning school, having participated exceptionally in the essay competition, will be awarded the opportunity to send two students to the ELSE field course at IISD-ELA in July 2017.

If you are interested in learning and writing about sustainable development and winning cool things, be sure to check out the international essay competition hosted by the Trust for Sustainable Living here

<http://www.livingrainforest.org/explore/schools-debate/>

**Background:** The Experimental Lakes Area (IISD-ELA) is a world-renowned freshwater research facility in northwestern Ontario. It is operated by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), an international policy think-tank based in Winnipeg, MB. In its 48-year history, IISD-ELA has served as the site for landmark whole-ecosystem studies focussing on the causes and ecological impacts of eutrophication, acid rain, heavy metal contamination, hydroelectric damming, and synthetic estrogen pollution. Each summer, IISD-ELA hosts the two-week Experimental Lakes Student Experience (ELSE) field course for a small group of select high school students on aquatic ecology and environmental science. This course provides a unique opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience in biological field work, complete an independent project at a globally unique outdoor research facility, and work alongside and interact with some of the world's leading freshwater scientists.

**This project is supported by the RBC Blue Water Project.**

