



**CANADIAN FINNISH  
INSTITUTE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MAY 1, 2018**

**HUNTINGTON UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES  
CFI COMMEMORATIVE AWARD RECIPIENTS**

(SUDBURY) – Finnish Canadian post-secondary students, Lili Ahopelto of Sudbury, Ontario, and Laina Southgate of Port Hardy, British Columbia, have been selected by Huntington University to receive the *Canadian Finnish Institute Commemorative Academic Award*. The awards, which are being presented in recognition of Vappu – Finnish Labour Day and a national holiday in Finland – serve to commemorate the year 2017 and the dual anniversaries of Canada and Finland. Each award is valued at \$1,500.

2017 marked a historic intersection of our two nations. With the advent of Canada’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation and 100 years of Finnish Independence, it was a year that celebrated milestone anniversaries for both countries, as well as 70 years of diplomatic relations.

Huntington University’s Canadian Finnish Institute hosted numerous events and activities throughout the anniversary year, and established the *CFI Commemorative Academic Award* to salute the rich Finnish history in our region. Greater Sudbury, as well as many parts of our country, are home to a thriving Finnish community whose contributions on multiple levels, from culture to education to politics, have helped weave the colourful fabric of our society.

“Huntington University and the Canadian Finnish Institute are proud to support Finnish Canadian students who are making rich contributions in support of Canada-Finnish relations, through their field of study, volunteer efforts, or personal accomplishments,” said Dr. Kevin McCormick, President and Vice-Chancellor of Huntington University and CFI Chair.

**Lili Ahopelto**

Lili was born in Sudbury to two Finnish parents. She is fluent in Finnish and has traveled to Finland almost every summer, since she was a child. She is a student of Piano Performance at the University of Toronto and also plays the accordion at an advanced level, performing regularly at Finnish events. In December 2016 she performed a solo lecture-recital for the Canadian Friends of Finland Unique Lives Series at the Women’s Art Association of Canada. In 2017, she played alongside the Suomi 100 Choir as the finale for the Centennial Concert, as well as numerous other public events including Sudbury Suomi Fest.

She has studied Kalevala Finnish Folklore through the Finnish Studies program at University of Toronto. At present she is working on a project for a Piano Pedagogy course, reviewing new piano teaching

method series from Finland, and discussing the beneficial pedagogical aspects which distinguish it from standard North American teaching series.

Currently in her final year of undergrad she hopes to continue her Master's studies at Sibelius Academy in Helsinki – one of the top music schools in the world. Since November 2017 she has travelled to Helsinki to study with Erik Tawastsjerna, the head of Piano Studies and an expert on Sibelius, and will return this year for an official audition with the school.

### **Laina Southgate**

Laina Southgate is a Finnish-Canadian post-secondary student, originally from Port Hardy, British Columbia, studying full-time at the University of Toronto. She will graduate in June 2018 with an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature specialist and Finnish Studies minor. There is a rich extracurricular component to the Finnish Studies classes and Laina is a keen participant in these additional activities, volunteering her time to visit Suomi-Koti, a Finnish Canadian seniors residence and nursing home in Toronto. She also plans to attend a Finnish translation conference, in Indiana, in May 2018 and will travel to the University of Helsinki to participate in an immersion Finnish language course over the summer.

Laina also volunteers her time as a Student Director on the board of Canadian Friends of Finland – Toronto (CFF), and also sits on the organization's Education Foundation board. She is heavily engaged in volunteerism at the college level, university-wide, and within the larger community in Toronto. She is a recipient of the Raija Kokko Humanitarian Award in Finnish Studies, in recognition of her outstanding academic success and commitment to Finnish-Canadian relations.

Most recently, Laina won a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council award for her comprehensive analysis of the impact that Shakespeare has had on the cultural development of postcolonial Finland. She also presented her research at the Undergraduate Shakespeare Conference at the University of Toronto in March. Laina will attend the University of British Columbia in September to pursue her Masters in English.

To learn more about Huntington University's Canadian Finnish Institute visit: [huntingtonu.ca](http://huntingtonu.ca)

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