



**Défi BioTalent
sanofi-aventis
BioTalent Challenge**



GenomePrairie

NEWS RELEASE

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Saskatoon Students Shine Two Years in a Row at National Science Competition in Ottawa

Ottawa – 14-year old Rui (Ree) Song won first place at the Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge (SABC) yesterday in Ottawa for her lentil fungus project. Rui attends Walter Murray Collegiate and is the youngest ever winner of the prestigious national award. Her research project on identifying markers in lentils could change the way our lentil crops are grown in Canada.

With Canada as the second largest world supplier of lentils, further research on this project could impact our regional agriculture sector. “Identifying disease markers in lentils is the first step to determining which plant breeding techniques are needed to eliminate the fungus in these pulse crops. This type of research is a step toward growing healthier, more productive lentil crops for Saskatchewan,” said Dr. Wilf Keller, President and CEO of Genome Prairie, the coordinating agency for the SABC-Saskatoon Region for a second year. “We are so pleased to sponsor this program and to encourage these young regional students in the areas of genomics and biosciences – they truly reflect our strong research future here in Saskatoon.”

Last year’s national winner, Scott Adams, also from Walter Murray Collegiate in Saskatoon, was a guest judge at this year’s national competition. Scott’s project was focused on frost-tolerant wheat. Both students were paired with mentors from the University of Saskatchewan.

Rui won \$2500 at the regional competition in Saskatoon earlier this month and \$5000 for the national prize yesterday. She will go on to compete in the International SABC competition in Chicago next week.

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About SABC

Now in its 17th year, the **Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge** is a high-level competition that introduces students to the real world of biotechnology by carrying out research projects of their own design. The SABC program has been held in Saskatoon since 1999.

The competition mirrors the real world of scientific research by:

- Requiring students to submit research proposals for evaluation by a scientific evaluation committee;
- Providing up to \$200 in advance funding to approved student projects;
- Assigning mentors to each team to provide expert advice and access to equipment and supplies; and
- Having each student project judged by fellow students (peer review) and by judges representing government, business, academia and the education community.

Follow-up studies have found that many of the students who compete go on to careers in biotechnology, healthcare, agriculture, and the environment.

More than 100 organizations Canada-wide are partnered in this educational outreach initiative.

Saskatoon's regional sponsors include:

- Government of Saskatchewan – Enterprise Saskatchewan
- Monsanto Canada Inc.
- University of Saskatchewan
- National Research Council – Plant Biotechnology Institute
- Ag-West Bio Inc.
- Cameco
- VIDO-InterVac
- Pan-Provincial Vaccine Enterprise
- Canadian Light Source
- Novozymes Biologicals
- Innovation Place
- Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation
- SaskTel

About Genome Prairie

Genome Prairie manages and supports innovative, large-scale genomics research projects in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Industry sectors such as agriculture, health, mining and energy are benefitting from the organization's research and commercialization initiatives.

With its partners, Genome Prairie has supported more than \$188 million of research activity in plant, animal and human genomics, bioinformatics, instrumentation development and bioethics since its establishment in 2000.

Through network establishment and regional priority consultations, Genome Prairie works collaboratively with all levels of government, universities and industry as well as Genome Canada, a not-for-profit organization implementing a national strategy in genomics and related bioscience research to benefit all Canadians.

About KRYTAR Consolidated Services

Contracted by Genome Prairie, KRYTAR assisted with coordination of this year's SABC Saskatoon region.