

# J. W. DAFOE FOUNDATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***The Company: The Rise and Fall of the Hudson's Bay Empire* by Stephen R. Bown wins the \$10,000 J.W. Dafoe Book Prize for 2021**

Stephen R. Bown has won the 2021 John Wesley Dafoe Book Prize for *The Company: The Rise and Fall of the Hudson's Bay Empire* published by Doubleday Canada.

Stephen R. Bown's historical work is the unanimous choice of this year's J.W. Dafoe Book Prize Jury. Jury Chair Eugene Walz describes the award-winning book in this way: "A thorough and comprehensive history of the international operation that helped create western Canada, *The Company* focuses on vivid portraits of the people whose personalities and actions made the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) what it was and what it failed to be. The book seamlessly weaves together a continuous series of often unlikely adventures, bringing to the fore personalities both familiar (George Simpson and Samuel Hearne) and previously slighted (the Chipewyan woman guide and interpreter Thanadelthur, the bilingual intermediary Matonabee, and the Black translator James Douglas). Written by experienced writer and historian Stephen R. Bown, *The Company* moves at a fast pace with many intriguing twists and turns. It's a well-written corporate biography for this generation."

Juror Emőke Szathmáry adds: "It is the story of the HBC as depicted by the people who created it, led it to its success, and then led it to its demise and the end of its monopoly in North America. There is no question that the author has had to fill in blanks not provided by biographies, autobiographies, letters and other records of the players in the HBC drama. Fortunately Bown is a gifted writer who seems to know relevant details of the landscape over which the HBC story unfolded, and over which the people in his story paddled and walked in every season."

Juror Mary Agnes Welch says "At a time when the downtown Bay is a white elephant in many Western Canadian cities, this book is a timely reminder of the vast and historic successes – and flaws – of the company and how the recent history of Western Canada is really a corporate one. It is also a reminder of just how adventurous and swashbuckling that recent history actually is, full

of weird and admirable and occasionally contemptible colonial characters. This book was, to my surprise, a page-turner and upended many of my vague impressions of the famous men who colonized the west.”

The Prize will be formally awarded at the J.W. Dafoe Foundation’s Book Prize Event this fall in Winnipeg (if circumstances allow). The J.W. Dafoe Foundation thanks this year’s dedicated jury members, Dr. Eugene Walz, Ms. Mary Agnes Welch, and Dr. Emőke Szathmáry, for their service to the J.W. Dafoe Foundation in its awarding of the 2021 J.W. Dafoe Book Prize.

The J.W. Dafoe Book Prize memorializes John Wesley Dafoe, one of the most significant Canadian editors of the 20th century. It is one of the richest book awards in Canada for excellence in non-fiction, with a focus on subjects involving Canada, the West, and Canadians and the Canadian nation in international affairs. In his tenure at the *Manitoba Free Press*, later renamed the *Winnipeg Free Press*, from 1901-1944, Dafoe was known for his advocacy of western development, free trade, national independence, and the British Commonwealth.

The Foundation’s activities also support \$10,000 fellowships for M.A. students pursuing studies in international relations, international conflict resolution, economics, history, law or politics at the University of Manitoba; a \$1,000 writing award for Manitoba post-secondary students; the annual J.W. Dafoe Political Studies Conference (PSSC); and a number of colloquia on Canada in international affairs. For more information on the Foundation and its other activities, visit <https://dafoefoundation.ca/>

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