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## MEDIA RELEASE

# \$100,000 SFU Cmolik Prize awarded to impactful mathematics program

April 25, 2017

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SFU's Faculty of Education has awarded the 2017 \$100,000 Cmolik Prize for the Enhancement of Public Education in B.C. to Peter Liljedahl whose mathematics teaching framework is helping to revolutionize classrooms across B.C. and North America.

The Cmolik Prize recognizes recipients who have developed and implemented an invention, innovation, concept, process or procedure that enhances educational practice in the K-12 public school system in B.C.

"From 50 years of research in mathematics education, we know that problem solving is an effective and important mechanism for students to learn to think mathematically and to acquire a deeper knowledge and understanding of the mathematics they are learning," says Liljedahl. "Yet, the majority of mathematics classrooms in B.C. offer students little to no problem solving experiences."

Liljedahl, who is an education professor at SFU, consequently worked on developing and researching Building Thinking Classrooms, which is a set of practices to help math teachers implement problem solving to their classrooms. The framework is designed to encourage collective thinking as well as building a space for students to learn through activity and discussion. His research found 97 per cent of teachers were willing to implement the framework after training and 95 per cent were still using it after six weeks. Since inception he has delivered in-service education for thousands of K-12 mathematics teachers and is currently working with teachers in 14 B.C. school districts.

"I am grateful to the Cmolik's for their dedication to the betterment of education in B.C. and am hopeful that, in winning this prestigious prize, my work to increase student thinking and engagement will gain even greater attention and help transform the experiences of even more mathematics students across B.C. and beyond."

Kris Magnusson, SFU's dean of education says he is extremely excited to award Liljedahl with the 2017 Cmolik Prize.

"Peter's Building Thinking Classrooms framework has helped hundreds of B.C. students experience mathematics in a supportive environment, eliminating social barriers and creating strong classroom communities. We are very grateful for his contributions to public education in B.C."

The award was created through a generous endowment to SFU's Faculty of Education by Russ and Ellen Cmolik, founders of the Cmolik Foundation. They say education has been a powerful tool that has helped them open doors for themselves and would love to share it with others.

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—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada’s leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia’s three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 135,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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