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Former Brandonite ready to make mark in fashion

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Aspiring fashion designer Ted Whetter has been named one of the top 25 finalists in the upcoming TÉLIO Canada Breakthrough Designers competition.

Whetter, a former Brandonite, now lives in Toronto where he attends George Brown College. The finalists were chosen out of a total of 531 student applicants from across the country.

"I'm very happy. It's great to be acknowledged for your designs," said Whetter, who is in Brandon over the Christmas holidays.

TÉLIO is one of North America's leading import/export and distribution companies with textiles that are "at the cutting edge of fashion," according to telio.com.

Canada's Breakthrough Designers competition is an annual event hosted by the company, which brings together 23 fashion design schools from across the country, challenging fashion design students to compete for scholarships totalling more than \$15,000.

The theme for the 2014 competition is "textures." The company sent out swatches and the students had to choose their favourite. They were given six metres of fabric to use for their creation. The colour palette swings between chalky, inky and clay-tinged tones, with a goal of lighting up the runway by the design's texture alone.

Whetter was drawn to a fabric that reminded him of burned wood.

"I kind of just ran with that one idea and designed the whole thing based on that theme," he said.

Whetter said it was a "gruelling process" to get the designs done on time, but said working on a garment that is quite advanced has been a great learning experience.

Whetter's design will include two pieces — pants and a bodice. He said the garments were designed to "mimic the cruel, dry and twisted patterns of wood that has succumbed to harsh effects of fire."

Whetter, a graduate of Neelin High School, will be heading back to Toronto next week to finish his design, which is due Jan. 13.

"We mail them away, then we don't see them again until we know if we've won or lost," he said. "It's like your baby, you work on this thing for so long and then it's out of your life, so I'm kind of anxious to get it finished."

The finals take place in Montreal in February, where all 25 finalists will have their design featured in a fashion show.

Prizes include scholarships worth \$5,000, \$3,500, \$2,500, as well as two \$2,000 prizes.

Whetter will complete his two-year program in May and hopes to land an internship in Toronto to help him crack into the fashion industry.