



Canadian Teachers' Federation
Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants

Feature Article

Heather Maclsaac, winner of the 2009 World Teachers' Day poster contest organized by the Canadian Teachers' Federation with financial support by Green Street.

Op-Ed: Born to teach

Born and raised on Cape Breton Island, Heather Maclsaac comes from a long line of women teachers. Her grandmother taught, her aunt taught and her mother taught. Safe to say teaching runs in the family.

Maclsaac's mother, Ardeth, was the most important influence of them all. "My mom was my role model in all things; she had a 30-year career as a wonderful elementary school teacher. She passed away almost 20 years ago," says Maclsaac.

She followed her mother and became a teacher, but she is not teaching little children like her idol did. She is a Graphic Design professor at the Nova Scotia Community College in Halifax.

"I find adult students make a choice to study a program and are committed to the work, which makes it a pleasant experience for the most part," says Maclsaac. "We have a fun, relaxed atmosphere in our classroom with an undercurrent of professionalism and commitment to our work."

Maclsaac considers herself blessed to be able to teach a subject matter that she enjoys thoroughly. "I count my lucky stars every day to be teaching something that I love to do and be around people who are attracted to our program. I had a lovely compliment this year from a student who said that she didn't see me as a teacher but more as a mentor," she says.

More students may soon be turning to her as a mentor when they find out that their teacher won the 2009 World Teachers' Day poster contest. Maclsaac's design was chosen as the winner from over 55 submissions by teachers from across Canada. Underlining the theme *Peace: Live it. Teach it*, her design, depicts two hands reaching out to one another, representing humanity as well as the purity of doves and symbolizing global peace. Her design has earned her the opportunity to join the CTF President and three students to present the final copy of the poster to the Dalai Lama in a private session at the Bell Centre in Montreal on Oct. 3, 2009.

Happily married for 20 years to Mike, the mother of Graydon Maclsaac (3), says she has never won anything comparable to the poster contest. "In 4th grade, I entered a poetry contest and won. That was my last proud win."

As a teacher, MacIsaac believes her role is that of a “fire starter and knowing how to protect and encourage the flame in a safe environment.”

MacIsaac studied design in the 1980's in Sydney, N.S., and now teaches the course that she took as a teenager. She then moved on to study at the Cape Breton University and obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Community Studies with a concentration in Sociology and Fine Arts. Most recently, she completed the Community College Education Diploma Program.

But the learning never ends for MacIsaac. “I am presently taking an online course in Graphic Design to see what it's like to learn in an online environment. As you can see, the learning is constant and ongoing, which I think is necessary with the ever- changing landscape of education.”