

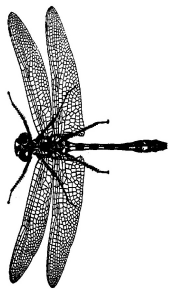
Mary Stuart Education Award 2017:

Regina Street Alternative School

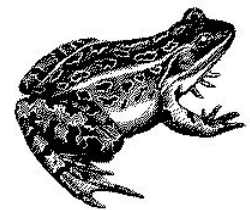


Criterion: For members, non-members or organizations, in recognition for outstanding achievements in the field of natural history education in the Ottawa Region. Potential recipients would include museum personnel (both professional and volunteer), biology teachers, talented and dedicated field trip leaders, authors popularizing local natural history, and other educators of children or adults.

We at the OFNC firmly believe that the well-being of the natural world in the near and distant future lies in the love of nature that is developed in the young. Unless young people are fortunate enough to have access to natural history clubs like the Macoun Field Club, their appreciation of nature is usually acquired through experiences they have with their family and the lessons they learn at school, especially if they have teachers such as those at the Regina Street Alternative School. This school, situated adjacent to Mud Lake in the Britannia area, has over the past six years developed an extraordinary program of general learning based on exposing their



students to a variety of outdoor experiences. Essentially, the teachers have made Mud Lake part of their school. The teachers have both brought nature into the classroom and used the natural environment as the classroom. Robert James, the principal of the school, describes it as follows: *“On a weekly basis students go down to Mud Lake with an educational focus. It could be anything from a math activity to a writing exercise. Students are able to share a common experience in a natural setting and take control of their own learning.”* For example, math classes explored mathematical patterns in nature and then found out how to determine the height of a tree using geometry, how to display data results using graphs, and how to calculate probabilities with regard to the occurrence of natural events. Social Studies classes included drawing maps, finding out how various levels of government preserve natural spaces, and First Nations connections with the environment. The outdoor projects continue into the school hallways with



artwork and conversations, undoubtedly inspiring other students to explore the area. Kathleen Turner, of the MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre, notes that, “*The staff at Regina have learned along with their students. Their curiosity and motivation to explore the natural environment has not only brought the students’ learning to life, but has also helped shape an observant, kind, and curious community of students.*” The students have, in turn, inspired their parents’ interest in the natural world, not surprising because, as we all know, we often learn much from our children.

The imaginative and resourceful teachers at Regina Street School have become mentors throughout the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board based on their experience with inquiry-based lesson plans and classroom management techniques using outdoor spaces. Because of their inspired and inspiring leadership in natural history education, the elementary school teachers at the Regina Street Alternative School are the 2017 winners of the OFNC’s Mary Stuart Education Award.

