

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

CHEMAINUS SECONDARY TEACHER RECEIVES GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HISTORY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

COWICHAN VALLEY, BC – Chemainus Secondary School teacher Janet Ruest is once again heading to Ottawa to receive an award for teaching; this time, she will be receiving the prestigious Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching.

This award recognizes teachers who have distinguished themselves through innovative projects that allowed students to explore Canadian history from a new angle. Ruest is one of eight teachers across Canada receiving this award.

"On behalf of the Board of Education, we offer Janet our sincere congratulations on this incredible achievement," said Candace Spilsbury, Chair of the Board of Education for the Cowichan Valley School District (SD 79). "We are very proud of her accomplishments, and thank her for her continued dedication to engaging students in their learning."

Inspired by the celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary and the desire to have students make personal connections to the curriculum she was teaching, Ruest asked her Social Studies 10 students to go beyond the textbook and research some lesser-known stories that were of interest to them.

Students were asked to interview someone who was at least 30 years older, and then share their learning and connections in a way of their choosing—some chose to write a short story, create a Prezi or PowerPoint, poster boards, etc. One student took a more unique approach and created a "spy's suitcase" to display their learning, which focused on her discovery that her great-grandfather was a spy for Bulgaria during World War II. A celebration of learning was held to showcase the result of this learning to their school community.

A highlight of this approach, according to Ruest, was that students had a choice in their topic. This meant that students who came from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds were able to celebrate their family history through this project if they chose to, while others explored other topics of interest to them—such as speaking with one of the few remaining war veterans in our area.

"I am proud of my students. I tried to design a project that fit both the history and geography curricula and my students rose to the challenge," said Ruest. "I am accepting this award on behalf of my students. Thank you to the thousands of students who, throughout my career, have helped make me the teacher I am today."

"Pushing learners to think beyond the textbooks and connect with real-life examples that help them make sense of what they are learning is exactly what 21st century learning is

about,” said Rod Allen, Superintendent of SD 79. “Janet’s students are incredibly engaged in their learning, and that is a huge testament to not only what she is teaching, but how she is teaching it.”

On November 22, 2017, Ruest will join seven other teachers and additional award winners from across Canada—including students, community groups, and cultural organizations—at Rideau Hall to receive the award from Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada.

Last spring, Ruest was the recipient of the Prime Minister’s Certificate of Achievement Award for Teaching Excellence, where she was recognized for a series of achievements, including continuously bringing community into her classroom.

For more information on the Governor General’s History Award, please visit the Canada’s History website: <http://www.canadashistory.ca/Explore/Awards/2017-Governor-General-s-History-Awards-Recipients>

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