

Toronto Teacher wins North American Environmental Education Award

TORONTO, ON, November 2, 2015 — Nancy Gillis, a grade 2/3 teacher at Toronto’s Cresthaven Public School never dreamed that doing a job she loves would ever bring so much attention...and awards. “Everything I’ve achieved is because I’m a part of a wonderful community,” says Nancy Gillis about her work. “None of my environmental endeavours would happen without the input of wonderful colleagues, support from parents, and lots of passion from my students. I love to see the kids become so engaged with environmental literacy. I think it’s the opportunity to take action and idea that they are doing something to make the world a better place that makes them so passionate about environmental issues.”

At the [North American Association for Environmental Education’s](#) (NAAEE) awards reception in San Diego, California, Nancy Gillis was recognized with The K-12 Educator of the Year Award. This award is peer acknowledgement for Gillis’s efforts in promoting environmental education and utilizing the environment as a context for learning in her teaching.

How did the NAAEE hear about Gillis’ superstar environmental teaching skills? Gillis won the [Classroom Energy Diet Challenge’s](#) (CEDC) Energy Educator of the Year Award for Central Canada in May 2015, a program presented by Canadian Geographic and Shell Canada. It was while Gillis participated in the summer CEDC workshop that her fearless, dynamic approach to environmental teaching shone through. “Nancy Gillis is a trailblazer in the field of environment education,” says Ellen Curtis, Director of Education with Canadian Geographic Education. “We felt her commitment to environmental literacy deserves the recognition that The NAAEE Educator of the Year Award can bring.”

Here’s a sample of some of the environmental educational initiatives Gillis does with Cresthaven students. They conduct waste audits and advocate to make changes to reduce waste and energy within the school. Students get involved in eco-innovation projects like designing and building green solutions such as solar desk lamps. The students also learn about issues relevant to the community – such as changes to a nearby oil pipeline. This issue spurred on Grades 2-6 students to produce a film called “Look What’s Coming Down the Line” which was featured at the United Nations World Environment Day Student Film Festival and placed runner-up for a KidsCan Press Award. Gillis embeds environmental literacy into her teaching throughout the curriculum and has helped lead her school in achieving Platinum status as part of the [Ontario Eco Schools](#) program.

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