

ARBOS AWARD

JULIE ANDREWS' STORY

2022 ARBOS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION



Julie Andrews, a physical education specialist and Native Studies 10/30 teacher in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, is “the kind of educator you hope teaches your children one day,” and this is one of the reasons she has been selected for the 2022 Arbos for Contributions to Education and the Teaching Profession.

She was nominated by teacher and colleague, Jenna O'Connor, who believes Julie serves as a role model for new and experienced teachers through her innovation, dedication, and high expectations. She says Julie supports students by helping staff integrate Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and land-based learning into their teaching and through planning school-wide initiatives. O'Connor appreciates how Julie “finds ways to celebrate and affirm students' cultures.” While she has had many opportunities to observe and learn from Julie's instruction, it was the Ribbon Skirt class O'Connor joined virtually during maternity leave that was most meaningful.

“Julie guided participating staff members—who were learning in preparation for student workshops—through the traditional teachings and provided step-by-step instructions for measuring, cutting, and sewing,” says O'Connor. “My daughter, Claire, watched curiously and assisted with the parts she could. With the help of a few friends, by that evening, my three-year-old was wearing her first ribbon skirt, beautiful and proud of her Woodland Cree culture. I was moved and grateful that so many students would be left with that same good feeling.”

A member of the Fond Du Lac Denesūłiné First Nation, Julie graduated from the University of Saskatchewan in 2003 with a Bachelor of Education and a Bachelor

of Science in Kinesiology. She has 18 years experience teaching in Meadow Lake, Big River, and Wollaston Lake. For the past 12 years Julie has been working at Churchill Community High School, in La Ronge, teaching grades 7 to 12, and has spent many years volunteering as a volleyball coach and has served as Athletic Director.

Julie contributes to culture-based learning opportunities annually including the Jimmy Roberts Memorial Culture Days and Winter Festival. She also finds ways to support her community and school, such as collecting Christmas gifts for local families, inspiring school spirit with Indigenous Pride Week activities, planning door decorating competitions, and striving to eliminate period poverty by ensuring students have access to personal hygiene products. As a parent and member of Pre-Cam's School Community Council, Julie has been advancing important conversations about the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages and advocating for the development of Woodland Cree Immersion programming in the community.

As passionate as she is about teaching, Julie is equally passionate about physical education and getting staff and students moving. She joined the Saskatchewan Physical Education Association board in 2013, where she's been an integral board member for nine years and currently sits as the President Elect. Since 2017, she has been active with the Ministry's Saskatchewan Physical Education 20/30 Curriculum Renewal and a member of the Reference Committee, Writing Team and Implementation Team. She's even created an online group for Northern Lights School Division #113 physical education teachers to share ideas and support one another.



“Julie demonstrates the power of high expectations with clear communication, gentle encouragement and unwavering support,” says O’Connor. “By helping students reach their potential and feel proud of who they are, Julie brings honour to the teaching profession.”

Julie is an incredible role model for students, and she does it all while balancing the needs of her family, which includes husband, Gabe Andrews, and their two

children, Amila, 10, and Hedde, 7. In June 2022, Julie is set to achieve another career milestone when she completes her Master of Education in Curriculum and Pedagogy in Health and Physical Education.

These are but a few of the many reasons Julie was selected for the 2022 Arbos, the highest honour that the Federation can bestow on teachers and the teaching profession.

A CONVERSATION WITH JULIE ANDREWS

What is your earliest memory of wanting to be a teacher?

I have a newspaper clipping from grade two stating this was going to be my career choice. It wasn’t until I got to the middle years, and I had this amazing, strong female role model teaching me, that I realized that I wanted to be a physical education teacher. From that point on, I continued to have strong female mentors in my life who enabled me to see myself in this profession, like Audrey Bullock, Nancy Dragon and Leslie Foss.

What do you love most about teaching?

With most of my teaching being in La Ronge, my favorite part is seeing students grow and change from when they first enter the building in Grade 7 to being adults by the time that they leave the building. Some days I come home and question why I’m doing what I’m doing; other days I have the most fantastic day ever and am reminded that I have a purpose. It’s one of the most fulfilling parts of teaching. Students give me hope. They also turn my hair gray, but they make me want to continue to do what I do.

Tell me about someone who has helped shape your life and leadership approach?

Reg Leidl has been a constant mentor in my life the past ten years. I credit a lot of what I’ve accomplished to his guidance. I met him when I first joined the Saskatchewan Physical Education Association board. He’s always putting little hints in my head of things I should do or things I should apply for. While I would question my leadership, skills, or knowledge, he never did. He always had high expectations. Because of his guidance I’ve had the opportunity to participate in the PhysEd 20/30

curriculum renewal process, which led to me enrolling in the Masters program I’m currently finishing up. And now it’s culminated in me being the president elect of Physical Health Education Saskatchewan.

What is your biggest career-defining moment?

After teaching in Wollaston Lake for two years, I realized I could not teach in the “south” anymore. I learned so much about my Dene culture and how important it is to embed culture into the curriculum. That has become my touchstone for how I teach to this day. I try to create opportunities, both in and out of class, for students to engage in culture-based activities that they might not have otherwise been able to engage in.

Why is important to incorporate Indigenous culture into the curriculum, even for subjects like physical education?

Growing up and attending school in Prince Albert, I had few Indigenous teachers and even less opportunity to explore or see my culture in what was being taught. I didn’t think it was valued within the education system. Through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, I am finally seeing my culture and other Indigenous cultures being valued for what they are and what they can offer. First Nation, Métis and Inuit students of the land known as Saskatchewan need to see themselves in the curriculum to validate their knowledge and the knowledge of Elders and Knowledge Keepers. It’s an opportunity to build relationships with schools, families and communities. We are on a path of Reconciliation. All students will benefit from a curriculum that is reflective of Indigenous peoples’ needs so that relationships can be mended, and a meaningful path forward can be created.