

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Courtenay Teacher wins Prestigious National Teaching Award

Ottawa, November 18th, 2019 — Andrew Young is a self-proclaimed “geovangelist.” Early in his career, Young volunteered for two summers at St. Theresa’s Secondary Technical School in Gambia with the Nova Scotia Gambia Association, a program funded by Global Affairs Canada. This experience changed his life and taught him about different ways of living, knowing, and learning. Today, Young teaches geography at Georges P. Vanier Secondary in Courtenay, B.C., where he works to connect classroom concepts to real-world issues. For his significant contributions to geographic literacy, Andrew Young has won the 2019 [Alex Trebek Medal for Geographic Literacy](#).

While Young has won awards before, this one in particular holds a special significance. “I am incredibly privileged to be a recipient of the Alex Trebek medal,” says Young. “In order to live up to the philanthropic spirit that Mr. Trebek exudes and to thank him for his tireless support of geographic education, I am donating the entire sum of this award to the British Columbia Cancer Foundation for the 2020 Ride to Conquer Cancer, for which Mr. Trebek has graciously allowed me to ride in on his behalf for his battle with pancreatic cancer.” The Geographic Literacy Award comprises a medal and \$2,500 prize, usually split evenly between the award winner and a donation in their name to a Canadian charitable organization. The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, will present Young with the award at a medal ceremony on November 21st. The ceremony precedes The Royal Canadian Geographical Society’s College of Fellows Annual Dinner, taking place at the Canadian Museum of History.

Young is constantly working to increase his geographic knowledge and skills to teach more students about the wonders that come from geographic learning. Over the past three years, he has piloted an inter-school online version of his Grade 12 geography course to make the course accessible to all three high schools in the Courtenay area. This year, Young is piloting a geographical sciences course that has him co-teaching with a biology teacher to highlight the environmental sciences aspects of geography, as well as the impact of global climate change.

Young’s experience in Gambia, taught him the importance of teaching geography out of the classroom. For the past 15 years, Young has taken Vanier’s graduating students on an annual Mount Saint Helens trip. Hundreds of students have benefited from this hands-on field studies approach to geography. He also taught a geography methods class in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia for almost ten years.

For Greg Kochanuk, District Principal of the Comox Valley International Student Program, Andrew Young is one of the most talented teachers he has worked with in nearly 20 years of education. “He is a brilliant, wonderful ambassador for geography education and simply one of the finest people I have ever met,” says Kochanuk. “Young is one of the most gifted, giving teachers I have encountered in my career.”

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