

## **Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Geography**

### **Dr Jody Decker**

Dr. Jody Decker is an outstanding teacher who deserves to be recognized as a shining example of dedication to both geography and pedagogy. Jody has demonstrated an unwavering commitment as she challenges students to think critically and grow as engaged, informed citizens. Her energy, multi-faceted teaching style and enthusiasm captivate both university students and community members.



Dr. Decker is committed to the highest standard of geographical pedagogy. The extent of her dedication becomes clear when one reviews the extensive material she has taught over the years. Her curriculum vitae includes undergraduate courses in historical and cultural geography; geographies of health and disease; culture, gender and identities; geographic thought and methodology; native issues in cultural geography; and, cultural heritage landscapes while her graduate courses cover cultural and historical geography, geographic thought & methodology, and gender. Her public speaking engagements cover a range of topics from 'Public Health Impact of Climate Change' and 'The Narrative, The Natives and the Professor' to 'Cultural Heritage Landscapes: Concepts and Practical Implications'.

As a result of her extensive knowledge and multi-disciplinary expertise, Jody is a sought after speaker. She brings her energy, keen mind and incredible breadth of knowledge to university students, faculty and community audiences alike. The number and range of talks she has given over the years speak to her effectiveness as a communicator and teacher. Jody animates a room and brings to life every aspect of the topic she tackles. This is true for undergraduate classrooms, graduate seminars or public appearances. Dr. Decker has been known to read prose and sing songs to connect with her students.

Jody's courses are designed around the student. Her material for every class is updated annually to ensure it is relevant, learner focused and engaging. She inspires and challenges students to stretch their minds. She makes learning pleasurable by bringing geography to life. She engages students outside the classroom through field studies, seminars and community service learning courses. Jody grounds her teaching in the everyday practice of living by integrating her research and volunteer work with her teaching. For example, she serves on the board for the Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation creating linkages for her graduate and undergraduate courses in cultural geography. Her recent research project doing swabs and bacterial counts emerged from an in-class project to connect university health indicators and 'hot spots' as part of her medical geography course. Jody also draws on her many years working as a health practitioner, so that, as one student explained, "Dr. Decker captivates her classes...Vivid personal examples from her own life give a professional and experienced perspective" to Jody's geography classes.

Clearly Dr. Decker is extremely deserving of the Canadian Association of Geographers Excellence in Teaching Geography award. As a student noted in his statement of support, "Geography is no doubt Dr. Decker's primary and foremost interest, and her commitment to it is truly remarkable...Her love for human geography and giving it to others needs to be acknowledged and properly awarded." Jody is an ambassador for geography and a teacher of the highest order.