

Accomplishments at the ELP Instructors and Student Honoured

By Lynn McGregor, TESL Ontario

Toronto, November 17, 2014 - The Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario (TESL Ontario) congratulates the 2014 winners of its recent province-wide Creativity Contest celebrating ESL education and learning. Two of the six winners - an Instructor and a Student - were from the English Language Program at University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies. The winning entries, selected from 40 submissions, share a mutual passion for teaching and learning, a love of Canada be it their homeland or their newly adopted country, and a desire to make a difference for others and/or themselves.

Instructor Danielle Rychlo's winning entry was a visually intriguing poem in which she compares the ESL network to a Spider Web where "learning happens fast ... and good things take a while". Danielle is now living in Calgary and teaching international students at The University of Calgary. She was also teaching international students in the ELP program at U of T.

In the Learner division, U of T student Gunes Alcan from Turkey created a video called "My Language Learning History". She was part of an entire class of instructor Bill Mboutsiadis that completed individual projects on the digital story of how they learned the English language. In her attempt to fulfil a future dream of becoming a professor so she can publish international articles in mathematics and statistics, Gunes is currently doing a Masters' degree at the University of Texas.

Bill, a teacher for 18 years and an international presenter, explains the nature of the project: "Advanced Academic Skills learners were assigned a project-based activity that had them plan, process, write a narrative, storyboard their visuals, record their voices and create a digital story of their language learning histories. The exercise had the learners reflect on their own past and current independent activities as well as learning experiences with languages, institutions, educators, environments, motivational moments/individuals, travels, university majors, culture and other influential sociolinguistic memories that caused them to connect with the English language. They shared their work in progress with their peers for feedback and at the completion held a class screening of their digital projects".

He adds: "In this teaching style, learners take on increased ownership and become autonomous researchers, while the instructor becomes a learner participant. The students' various initial casual connections to English became powerful motivators for their desire to learn the language. Learning a language is not only what is learned in the classroom, but also in travels, personal experiences, etc. and helps students build autonomy, empowerment and a personal identity".

The ESL Creativity Contest is a feature of ESL Week,

an annual celebration of ESL education and learning held each fall that is endorsed throughout Ontario by more than 60 communities, thousands of ESL educators, students of all ages, and many learning institutions and school boards.

"ESL Week continues to raise awareness of the importance of ESL education for Ontarians and newcomers to Canada," says Renate Tilson, executive director of TESL Ontario. "The ESL Creativity Contest grew out of earlier ESL Week activities as a vehicle to showcase talented ESL educators and learners," she explains.

Contest winners were honoured at TESL Ontario's annual conference held recently.

TESL Ontario, established in 1972, is a non-profit organization serving the needs of teachers of English as a Second Language. It represents more than 4,600 language training professionals working in immigrant serving agencies, school boards, publicly funded sites across Ontario, colleges/universities, elementary/secondary and private language training schools. TESL Ontario's expertise is in teaching, advocacy, accreditation and professional development. The organization is instrumental in influencing the success of many thousands of English language learners throughout the province. For more information visit www.teslontario.org.



Bill Mboutsiadis, Instructor, English Language Program at TESL Ontario's Annual Conference