

Award for Excellence in Teaching Dr Stuart W. Semple

All too often, long lists of publications, committees, associations and other such professional activities are read off as if to say "this person is getting an award for the number of things he or she has done". Well, Stuart Semple has a strong record of publication, presentations and public advocacy in the field of geographic education. He has chaired and contributed to many local, national and international committees. He has done a very large number of things; those who know Stuart well can attest to the fact that he rises with the sun to begin his workday, and does not finish until long after we have all gone to bed. But that is not all which needs to be said about Professor Semple - and one cannot summarize a person in this brief a time.

After completing his geography degree at the University of Sydney, Stuart embarked on several successful years as a teacher of that subject from grades 7 to 12. He then emigrated to Canada to complete his graduate education at the University of Toronto. In 1968, Stuart moved to Nova Scotia to begin a long and proud career in the School of Education at Dalhousie University. Stuart remained at Dalhousie until the recent closure of the School, but he has continued to hold a faculty position in Dalhousie's Faculty of Graduate Studies. Presently, Stuart is also Adjunct Professor in Geography and Education at Mount Allison University where he continues to excel at teaching geography educators. Stuart has, and continues to, supervise and teach educators at all levels of higher education, from B.Ed to PhD. Stuart also chairs the CAG Atlantic Division Education Committee, where he established the Geography Teachers Workshop Programme, which was funded by the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. He has also had lasting influences on the development of curricula in geography throughout the educational authorities in Atlantic Canada. Stuart's influence is also felt at the Canadian Council for Geographic Education, where he represents the Atlantic region. Stuart's role in helping establish both of these bodies should be noted for the record as an example of not only his desire to improve geographic education, but his willingness to help develop agencies of positive change.

In 1993, Stuart chaired the Halifax meeting of the US based National Council for Geographic Education, which saw over 1000 geography educators from around the world attend. It was at that event where the Canadian Council for Geographic Education was officially launched, and it speaks volumes about Stuart's role and reputation because people still compare other conferences to that one. Stuart was also an instrumental part in the development of the National Standards in Geography, called "Geography for Life", produced in the United States - a document and curriculum guide which continues to have a strong impact in the US and throughout the world.

Most recently, and in what some may describe as a pinnacle but never the end to Stuart's career, he was named Chief Examiner for the International Baccalaureate Program in geography. This is a global responsibility! And it indicates the professional regard with which Stuart is held by his colleagues around the globe. What we in this region have always known and felt through Stuart's influence and activities is now being felt by teachers and students throughout the largest region of all! Talk about having a large audience! He has also been very active in the work of the IGU Commission on Geographic Education. Obviously, Stuart holds no preference of scale - his work is felt at the most local and most global scales.

Above all else, Stuart is most well known for being a teacher of future geography teachers. He is the most staunch and vocal advocate of the discipline within schools. It is this for which we, especially in the Atlantic region, are forever in his debt. This became more evident during the process of nominating Stuart for this award. Teachers and geographers everywhere wrote, phoned, e-mailed and faxed their comments and support. Over and over again, those people remarked on their complete admiration and respect for Stuart as a geographer and "teacher of teachers extraordinaire", and as someone they felt was most responsible for geography remaining a school subject - and someone who provided the most fantastic field trips and the best workshops at teacher conferences! We don't often say to our teachers that we love them. But in

Stuart's case, it is true that he has captured the respect, loyalty, friendship, admiration and love of those who know him or who have been influenced by his teaching.

To those who are teachers of geography because of Stuart, he has come to symbolize all that is best about being a mentor - he is the finest teacher, a wonderful and passionate geographer, a true friend, solidly spiritual, a consummate professional, and, most important to him, a loving and devoted husband and father. Stuart is the epitome of the life well lead, and of T.S. Elliot's words "We shall not cease our exploration, and in the end of all our travels, we will arrive at the beginning and know the place for the first time".

Stuart Semple will be continuing, for many years we hope, to be the great supporter, defender and promoter of geographic education that he is. His are shoes, which cannot be filled. For exceptional service and dedication to the teaching profession and the discipline of geography, it is an honour to present this award to Professor Stuart Semple.