



# Creating Futures

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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Winners of 2011 SSDEC Excellence in Education Awards Recognized

Recipients Announced at Annual SSDEC Staff In-Service in Hay River

Hay River, NT – The South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC) is pleased to announce the recipients of the *SSDEC Excellence in Education Awards* for 2011:

*Program Staff*

- *Virginia (Jenny) English* – Teacher, Lutsel K'e Dene School, Lutsel K'e
- *Janice Fehr* – Regional Literacy Consultant
- *Chuck Lirette* – Teacher, Diamond Jenness Secondary School, Hay River

*Partners in Education*

- *Hay River Interagency* – Hay River

The purpose of the Excellence in Education Awards is to publicly recognize the sustained commitments and outstanding contributions made by staff, parents and/or community members in helping to create the best possible futures for South Slave students.

**Virginia English** is honoured for her dedication and commitment to improving students' lives, both in and out of school in Lutsel K'e. She masterfully teaches in a multi-grade (Kindergarten to grade 2) classroom, with excellent classroom routines and proven instructional strategies that has garnered student ownership for their own behavior and learning... and resulted in significantly improved student achievement results.

**Janice Fehr** is also a master teacher who is distinguished and highly praised for her integral role in the development, implementation and success of the SSDEC's Leadership for Literacy initiative, and for her excellence in facilitating the professional growth in other educators accordingly.

**Chuck Lirette** is celebrated for his long-term and exceptional commitment to teaching excellence, his consistently masterful and engaging lessons, and the resulting rapport and success he has with his students. Mr. Lirette's dedication to building the sport of biathlon in the NWT is also recognized.

**Hay River Interagency** has become a driving force in making the community safer and better for both the youth and the community at large. Community-based interagency committees typically come and go, but the Hay River Interagency has been very productive since 2008, and a model for other communities and organizations wishing to address youth drug and alcohol use and abuse.

Ann Pischinger, SSDEC Chairperson notes, "It is unusual for us to present four awards in the same year, but excellence is becoming such a part of the culture of the SSDEC, and it seemed unfair to reduce the recognition to just two of these very deserving recipients. We are proud of all of our staff and partners as they are all continually raising the bar with their dedication and commitment to improvement."

The *SSDEC Excellence in Education Award* is awarded annually to a recipient(s) nominated by their peers and selected from the following two categories:

- *Program staff* – includes teachers, administrators, consultants and education assistants serving South Slave schools
- *Partners in Education* – includes support staff (eg. secretaries and custodians) parents, students, volunteers and other community members/groups or organizations that work in support of student learning

**2010-11 SSDEC Excellence in Education Awards Recipient Biographies attached. For more information contact Jayne Murray, Public Affairs Coordinator, South Slave Divisional Education Council, (867) 872-5701 x23 or (867) 872-0148 (cell) or [jmurray@ssdec.nt.ca](mailto:jmurray@ssdec.nt.ca)**

**SOUTH SLAVE DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL**  
**2011 Excellence in Education - Educator Award Recipient Background**

***Virginia (Jenny) English – Teacher, Lutsel K’e Dene School, Lutsel K’e***

Jenny is a master teacher who has been on staff in Lutsel K’e for the past eight years. She teaches the multi-grade primary classroom (usually Kindergarten to grade 2) each year, and was selected for this award in recognition of her dedication to her students and the community, as well as her exceptional commitment to teaching excellence.

Given the age of her students and the quality of her teaching over the past several years, Jenny has provided much of the foundation for the significantly improved student achievement results being realized at Lutsel K’e Dene School. She has taught every student in the school, and she has worked extremely hard and showed particular skill in preparing the incoming students for success in her classroom and in the later grades. She models (annually) how to quickly transform pre-school children into quality student learners.

Jenny’s engagement with the research-based practices promoted by the SSDEC literacy initiative has been exemplary. She is described by her peers as “... an excellent model of all that the Leadership for Literacy initiative aspires us to be for our students.” She encourages students to read very early, take on leadership roles, and take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning. Jenny is a model of excellence in her ability to assess on-the-run, and maintain running records and more formal assessments that then guide her instructional decisions and reporting to parents. She also provides for times each day when the children work independently or in flexible groupings on meaningful learning activities while she works with small groups or one-on-one with those who need extra time and support to be successful.

Jenny is always open to new ideas and willing to learn and collaborate with others. She has given many extra hours after school to participate in literacy professional development with fellow staff members and she has been eager to learn and implement new strategies in her classroom. Indicative of her life-long commitment to improvement, Jenny recently completing the Balanced Literacy - Kindergarten training to add to your previous Elementary certification. Jenny has also taken on the responsibility of mentoring new staff and has helped them obtain expertise in Balanced Literacy, L4L strategies and in classroom and behaviour management strategies.

Jenny is a model staff and community member. Her compassion and tireless efforts on behalf of the students, and her understanding of some of their very challenging lives is phenomenal. She makes every effort to help students be their best at all times. She always speaks gently and kindly and she consistently models positive responses to any frustration or issues that arise. Since she first arrived in Lutsel K’e, Jenny has also participated every week in the community bingo. This seemingly simple activity has also served as a foundation for positive community and parent relationships.

**SOUTH SLAVE DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL**  
**2011 Excellence in Education - Educator Award Recipient Background**

***Janice Fehr – Regional Literacy Coordinator, South Slave***

Janice began her education career a little later in life, but you would never know that based on her long list of accomplishments. During her career, she has been a teacher, program support teacher, inclusive schooling consultant, and regional literacy coordinator. She is also a skilled thinker, reader/researcher, communicator/author, and teacher/facilitator... a remarkable educational leader.

We all recognize that the *Leadership for Literacy* initiative, to improve student reading achievement, has been the key focus for the SSDEC for the past four years, but many people may not realize that Janice has been a major factor in the creation, implementation and success of the initiative. She has provided much of the foundation for the literacy initiative through her research on the role and responsibilities and providing an effective model for the school-based literacy coaches. She has also modeled excellent staff training and effectively facilitated group decision-making in the process. Her credibility is further solidified by her proficiency and expertise in the classroom, and her ability to learn, communicate effectively and model research-based best practices.

It was Janice, in her work with Moh and Bernice Odeen in Deninu School, who first learned and brought the *International Reading Association* research-based instructional practices to the South Slave region, a move that proved successful in that school, and that provided the starting point for ramping up efforts region wide. Janice completed an intensive two-year facilitator training program which, in true train-the-trainer form, has been passed on and shared with Literacy Coaches and teachers across the region. Janice has provided vision to the Leadership for Literacy initiative and is always looking to determine what the next step needs to be to take a project, initiative or learning to the next level. Janice has a tremendous drive to learn and improve, is articulate, clear in how she presents her ideas, and is always willing to provide whatever extra effort is required of her. For example, a few years ago she recognized the readiness of some coaches and teachers to more thoroughly integrate research-based literacy processes across the various discipline curricula. The positive feedback from teachers involved in the resulting *Interdisciplinary Curriculum Planning Pilot* has caused more schools and teachers, who want to improve their practice, to jump on board. The grade level curriculum continuum package resources developed by teams of teachers last spring was also an idea that Janice supported and carried through, much of it outside of her regular hours.

Janice has an amazing talent for translating ideas into practice. She is highly motivated, a self-starter and a consummate professional who takes more pleasure in the accomplishments of others than in her own. She epitomizes the *Principles for Working and Learning Together* in Council Policy ADA, namely respect, integrity, loyalty, advocacy and commitment to growth. Not surprisingly, South Slave schools that have maximized the use of her skills have seen student achievement results improve more quickly and more significantly. Almost everything she does becomes a model or a template for others to follow... and beneficiaries have not been shy to share that fact.

It isn't just the South Slave region that recognizes what a prize we have in Janice. She is sought out by other regions as a presenter and facilitator of literacy workshops for teachers. She has also been selected by a national publisher, Scholastic to help write their "Stepping Up" series of resources for teaching reading at the junior high level. She is also an author of one of the SSDEC's children's books, "Rufus Remembers," and she also won a Canada-wide contest for writing and illustrating a children's book in 2001.

**SOUTH SLAVE DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL**  
**2011 Excellence in Education - Educator Award Recipient Background**

***Chuck Lirette – Teacher, Diamond Jenness Secondary School, Hay River***

Chuck Lirette is an engaging and enthusiastic teacher whose exceptional organization skills have helped him to create and deliver lessons that are inclusive, informative, challenging and entertaining. A master teacher, he is a performer in the classroom, aiming to instill a curiosity and love of learning in his students.

Chuck is a northern graduate, and a former Student Council President at Matonabee High School in Point Point. Chuck became a teacher and then vice principal at Samuel Hearne Secondary School in Inuvik before moving to Hay River to teach at Diamond Jenness Secondary School. He then took on the roles of assistant principal and principal of Princess Alexandra School for several years before returning to his first love, teaching science and math at the high school level back at Diamond Jenness.

Chuck's classroom lessons are a pleasure to observe. The ease with which he presents the material to captivate, engage and inform his students belies the meticulous organization and research that goes into preparing his lessons. His lessons are not just for fun either. He is extremely committed to ensuring all of his students can demonstrate curricular outcomes and his focus is on ensuring his lessons do just that. By incorporating hands-on, active and stimulating lessons, more students are able to participate and learn to their maximum potential.

While Chuck has high expectations for himself and his students, this does not take away from his ability to establish a strong rapport with his students which also encourages them to do their best and to try harder. It is especially telling that he was nominated for this award by a student; it is indicative of the respect his students have for him.

Parents are also appreciative of the level of detail and feedback presented at parent-teacher conferences. Even before the literacy initiative was introduced, Chuck always had a better than average knowledge of assessment and records of student achievement that ensured he knew where every student was in their learning continuum and was able to share that with parents.

As an administrator, Chuck was always organized and visible in his school. While he was principal of Princess Alexandra School, it became a model for Effective Behaviour Supports (EBS) and a showcase for its implementation. The "All PAs In" and "PAsitive" slogans helped bring home the EBS concepts for students and helped foster a nurturing and safe school environment.

Outside of school hours, Chuck has been a biathlon coach for many years, and is regarded as being a major player in bringing NWT biathletes onto the national stage. Earlier this year, he was nominated for SportNorth's Coach of the Year.

During his first 25 years in education (so far), Chuck has also received a number of other teaching honours, including:

- 2007 – NWT Science Teaching Award (sponsored by NWT and Nunavut Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists)
- 1992 – Marshall McLuhan Distinguished Teacher Award
- 1992 – ECE Excellence in Teaching Award
- 1991 – Beaufort Delta DEC Outstanding Educator Award

**SOUTH SLAVE DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL**  
**2011 Excellence in Education - Partner Award Recipient Background**

### ***Hay River Interagency***

As the community of Hay River began to deal with the aftermath of the October 2007 murder of RCMP Constable Christopher Worden, there was much debate about what could be done to reduce the negative influence of drugs and alcohol in the community. About the same time, a Diamond Jenness student approached a local professional with concerns about drug use among peers. In May of 2008, a committed group of professionals, community leaders and organizations stepped forward to address the serious drug and alcohol problems in the area. This group became the Hay River Interagency, an organization dedicated to changing the culture of acceptance of drug and alcohol use and abuse that had developed.

The group developed the Hay River Drug and Alcohol Strategy to use as a blueprint. Its key goals are:

- To increase education among youth and the community about drugs and drug issues;
- To lower alcohol, marijuana, ecstasy and cocaine use among local youth;
- To provide information for parents, guardians and community members to recognize drugs, drug use and drug activities so that they can take preventative or responsive actions; and
- To emphasize the message that drug use and abuse have detrimental effects on the community as a whole and that it takes everyone working together to support a healthy community.

Since its inception, the Hay River Interagency has become a driving force in making the community safer and better for both the youth and the community at large. One of the Interagency's main projects, "Lights On", plays a major role in preventing youth drug and alcohol use and abuse by offering alternative activities during high risk times. Other accomplishments and activities undertaken by Hay River Interagency are numerous, and include:

- Accessing more than \$2.5 million in funding for drug and alcohol prevention programs in the South Slave region during the past three years;
- Adoption of the Four Pillars Approach of Drug Reduction, which are: Prevention, Harm Reduction, Enforcement and Treatment;
- Creation of the Hay River Drug Strategy resource web page - <http://www.hayriverdrugstrategy.com/>;
- A series of information sessions for parents and the community on drug trends. To date, more than 12 presenters have addressed different aspects of addiction issues;
- Implementation of a Harm Reduction program at Princess Alexandra School;
- Implementation of the Leadership and Resiliency Program (LRP) at DJSS;
- Surveys of local youth on current drug use trends and deterrent factors to create a baseline and to determine trends and changes in attitude over time;
- The NOT US campaign, which includes the creation and distribution of Northern-themed posters and a book-mark series;
- Implementation of the "2 Cool 4 School" campaign;
- Providing support for Restorative Justice and Mentorship programs in Hay River;
- Promoting and providing support to schools and communities for "Drug Free Zones";
- Providing support for public health programming for youth;

... and many others

Members of the Hay River Interagency have been requested and made presentations on several occasions to other communities and organizations that are interested in starting their own drug prevention initiatives. They have been reported in southern newspapers and been invited to speak at an international conference on Drug Prevention Strategies. One of the most recent undertakings is research into the implementation of Drug Courts and Youth Treatment Practices in the region.