

Les Scientifines Receives an Award of Excellence for its Exceptional Contribution to the Education of Young Girls

A dynamic mentoring program dedicated to training a future generation of women scientists and engineers

(Montreal, Quebec) – Dr. Tom Brzustowski, President of NSERC, today recognized the contributions to public education of the Scientifines organization by awarding its Chair of the Board, Mrs. Claire Chamberland, the Michael Smith Award for science promotion.

"Les Scientifines is an excellent model not only for the young girls whom it helps, but also for society in general," said the Honourable Brian Tobin, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC). "The four women now working for the organization should be proud of their accomplishments: Their vision and dedication to the education of young girls are exemplary."

"The founders of Les Scientifines and the women who have succeeded them over the years have distinguished themselves by their vision, their determination, and their personal commitment to these young ladies," said Dr. Brzustowski. "These girls are mentored four days a week, even during the summer months, and in the process they acquire a much broader scientific culture."

During the ceremony, Dr. Brzustowski presented a certificate of achievement and a medal bearing the likeness of Michael Smith to Mrs. Chamberland, which she accepted on behalf of Les Scientifines. This non-profit organization also received the sum of \$10,000 from NSERC.

The awards ceremony was held at the headquarters of Les Scientifines in southwest Montreal, and was attended by approximately thirty young girls who are now participating in its educational workshops. A young immigrant who took part in the workshops offered by Les Scientifines over a two-year period, Ms. Nafija Rahman, spoke of how her involvement with the group helped her to adapt to her new environment and how it instilled in her a great intellectual curiosity – not to mention a decidedly Cartesian mindset.

Conferred in honour of the late Michael Smith, whose pioneering research in genetics earned him a Nobel Prize in 1993, this award recognizes the exceptional contribution of people or groups to the promotion of science and engineering in Canada. It rewards candidates who have made sustained and significant efforts to inspire public understanding and develop abilities in science and engineering.

Since 1988, Les Scientifines has been promoting science to young girls between 9 and 12 years old who live in underprivileged areas of Montreal, by giving them free access to

daily scientific activities after school. The workshops focus on chemistry, physics, biology, mathematics, and new information and communications technologies. They are designed to offer these young girls positive role models and to stimulate the skills and interest that will fuel their determination to persevere with their studies and, ultimately, give them the option of choosing a career in the sciences.

The five winners of this year's Michael Smith Award are:

Les Scientifines (Montreal, Que.)
Marie MacBeath (Fredericton, N.B.)
Bob McDonald (Toronto, Ont.)
Scientists in School (Pickering, Ont.)
YES Mag (Victoria, B.C.)

To learn more about the winners, visit NSERC's Web site at:
www.nserc.ca/news/2001/p010712.htm.

NSERC is the primary federal agency investing in people, discovery and innovation. The Council supports both basic university research through research grants, and project research through partnerships among universities, governments and the private sector, as well as the advanced training of highly qualified people.

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