



John Lehr

Clifford J. Robson Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching

Each year, the Clifford J. Robson Award for Excellence in Teaching is presented to a faculty member who brings a special quality to the classroom—the ability to make a subject truly come alive. In the words of one of the many students who nominated John Lehr for this prestigious award, “He is an excellent professor, but more than that, he is a fantastic teacher.”

Lehr, who began his career as a professor of Geography at The University of Winnipeg in 1976, is a historical geographer. His research interests include agricultural settlement in Western Canada and Ukrainian pioneer settlement in both Western Canada and South America. Lehr is well known for his efforts to make subject matter relevant, and his ability “to impart knowledge in a way that is as accessible as it is enlightening,” writes one student. Acknowledging that different students have different learning styles, Lehr incorporates slides, PowerPoint presentations, case studies, guest lecturers, and field trips—a particular favourite—into each of his courses. “If you experience something, or if you see something, you will never forget it,” explains Lehr.

Similarly, students are encouraged to be active participants in the learning process, sharing their own ideas, research, and diverse personal histories. “Dr. Lehr encourages a dynamic flow of information between the student and the professor that could not possibly be generated by someone who doesn’t recognize the potential in every student he teaches,” wrote one honours student. Another thanked him for acknowledging her cultural background as an Aboriginal student, following a class in which she was asked to share her expertise and unique perspective on history.

As for Lehr, he says the interaction with students is the best part of his work. “It’s great being in contact with younger people, people who’ve got good ideas, who come from tremendously variant backgrounds,” said Lehr, who often has a steady stream of students going to and from his office, looking for advice, assistance with coursework, or mentoring. They know that no matter what he is working on, Lehr is a professor who will take whatever time is needed and go the extra mile. “It is very satisfying when you feel you can help somebody achieve what they want,” says Lehr. “Many of us can hardly believe we get paid for doing what we like. It’s fun!”

On behalf of the students of The University of Winnipeg, the University is proud to present Dr. John Lehr with the Clifford J. Robson Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching.