

RRC Polytech Portrait Instructor, Jocelyne Hebert, Representing Team Canada in World Photographic Cup 2024.

The following story contains content about mental health illness, including suicide and discusses the death of a close family member, which may evoke strong emotions. It is recommended you read the story when you feel safe and supported. Resources are available for [Mental Health Services in Manitoba \(9-8-8 Suicide Hotline\)](#).

Our minds can be both our greatest challenge and our greatest source of light; they can pull us into darkness, leaving us searching for a way out.

And in those moments, we often wonder: is the fight for the search of light worth it?

The portrait Jocelyne Hebert shot, now representing Team Canada in the World Photographic Cup (WPC) this year, conveys the same message.

As a portrait photography instructor at RRC Polytech, Jocelyne has been inspiring her own students on their artistic journeys for years now. But this time her students were the ones who inspired the portrait and the message behind it.

"Over the years I have observed how some students struggled with mental health which opened my eyes to how deeply rooted this issue can be among the youth," said Hebert. "But the brighter part of my journey toward achieving this goal was my students' unwavering support and their ability to challenge me that truly motivated me toward success."

The girl in the portrait is none other than Hebert's 18-year-old daughter, symbolizing the youth of this generation.

Jocelyne has entered this competition a few times before but would usually make it past the first or second round of the three required to join Team Canada.

This time, when Hebert received emails confirming she passed the first two rounds, she couldn't help but wonder if it would just be a repetition of her past attempts. But, on October 30, her doubts turned into tears of joy as she opened a third email stating her

portrait has been chosen to represent Team Canada in the portrait/natural category—the only Manitoban on the team.

“It’s no surprise that she’s representing Canada—she’s worked incredibly hard and truly deserves this recognition,” said Joanne Struch, Acting Chair, Digital and Creative Industries at RRC Polytech. “Recognition like this not only showcases the exceptional talent of our instructors but also inspires our students and supports their own journeys.”

Struch noted this recognition is not only a significant achievement for Jocelyne but also for the College, as it highlights the value of having an instructor who, as an accomplished practitioner, can show her students the possibility for their future.

Surprisingly, the portrait wasn’t shot at a lake or a pond but at Hebert’s backyard in an inflatable swimming pool with leaves surrounding her daughter.

Hebert showed the BTS shot of the portrait to her students who said the video puts a lot more meaning to the portrait and the story behind it.

“Mental health is a great topic to shine light on and through her portrait it feels more powerful,” said Keiji Hunter, one of Hebert’s students. “It is like the Olympics of photography, and we feel lucky to have her as our mentor... she shoots more than all of us combined inspiring us with her burning passion for photography– a passion that makes her truly deserving of this recognition.”

Graham Burns and Faye Dia, another two of Hebert’s students, said every student’s relationship with her is more of a friendship than that of a teacher-student dynamic.

Beside her students, Hebert also drew inspiration from her brother-in-law, who tragically lost his life to suicide. She, along with her family members, remember him as a warm, cheerful person, making his sudden death even more impactful. The loss brought the importance of mental health into sharp focus for her.

Hebert was disappointed the same portrait– carrying a powerful message about mental health–was not received well when she entered Professional Photographer of Canada (PPOC) competition in February 2024. Though she remains grateful as it did score an excellence award at such a prestigious competition.

“A lot of times, we as a society miss the message,” Hebert reflected.

After consulting with friends, family, colleagues, students, and fellow photographers, she decided to take a bolder step by entering the WPC again.

“It doesn’t matter how old you are—always keep the fire alive,” said Hebert. “I’m proud and overwhelmed, but I did this for me, not for anyone else.”

Grateful for the support and recognition she’s received, Hebert believes it’s always worth fighting for the light, as the journey becomes the most meaningful part of reaching the destination.

Though it’s still uncertain whether her portrait will reach the finals, this achievement is already a significant milestone in Jocelyne’s career and for RRC Polytech.

Congratulations Jocelyne!

[Learn more about her journey.](#)

A reminder If you need someone to talk to about your challenges or anything in general, support and help for students is available through [Campus Well-Being](#). Staff have access to an Employee and Family Assistance Program through [Homewood Health](#). Your well-being is important to us, so please take a good care of yourselves and those around you.

RRC Polytech Faculty named “Instructor of the Year” at Annual Apprenticeship Manitoba Awards

Eric Swanson has been a Carpenter Apprenticeship Instructor at RRC Polytech for just over a decade. Last week, he was shocked and humbled to learn he was receiving the “Technical Training Instructor of the Year” award at the 18th Annual Awards of Distinction hosted by the Apprenticeship and Certification Board at the RBC Convention Centre, where Apprenticeship Manitoba honored him with this award.

“It was unreal. I was so nervous sitting there when the nominations showed up. It seemed something like the Academy Awards, and it was unexpected for me to win that award,” said Swanson. “It was a special moment for me.”

The award honors individuals who have made a significant impact in the skilled trades by mentoring and training apprentices, with nominations coming from the apprentices themselves.

Eric teaches his students everything from wood frame constructions to roof framing, such as site layout (surveying sites), installation of exterior finishing products, and safe operations of tools and equipment. He feels truly honored that all the work he put into his teaching is worthy of the award.

Emotions ran high as he shed tears while receiving this award – not only in front of his peers and the student apprentice who nominated him, but also in front of Swanson’s first instructor when he was attending the program, who ten years later is now the program Chair of Construction Trades at RRC Polytech, Scott Savoy.

“I want to inspire my students just like my instructor [Scott] inspired me to teach. I hope ten or 15 years from now I will be able to watch my students winning awards and can feel the same sense of pride my colleagues felt seeing me be recognized by my students and receive this award,” said Swanson.

Scott Savoy attended the ceremony to watch his student, instructor, and now colleague, Eric, accept the award for his outstanding ability to inspire and impact his students.

“It was a very emotional evening. I was surprised but also felt very, very proud of Eric,” said Savoy, with a big smile on his face. “This recognition solidifies the fact that we’re doing the right thing at this college, that we’re making a difference in the lives of people here.”

Scott believes the future of the trades program and the college is in good hands, as this recognition signifies the positive impact the program has on students.

Alongside Eric, the college is proud to have other nominations as well, including Alex Lagasse (Plumbing), Glenn Schapf (Automotive), and Mark Klimchuk (Autobody).

Since the nominations come from an apprentice, it reflects the positive influence and empowerment the instructors provide through their teaching and training.

Joel Gustafson, a Carpentry apprentice who was a student in Eric’s class last fall, nominated him for the award.

Joel received an email from Skills Manitoba—a not-for-profit organization that has been organizing the Awards of Distinction Gala for five years— to nominate an instructor for this award.

Throughout the course, Joel remembered that email – as his instructor, Eric, constantly demonstrated his dedication that went far beyond just being an instructor. He knew Eric was deserving of this award and recognition for his commitment to his students.

“Eric is more than just an instructor of the year, and I feel great pleasure being the one to be a part of his journey,” said Joel. “I’m glad there is an opportunity for people like Eric to receive prestigious recognition, and I hope humanity continues rewarding the deserving and helping those who have the inability to achieve rewards like this one.”

Eric describes his relationship with his students as one of friendship. He hopes his students continue to treat their colleagues with the same respect, understanding, and compassion they practice in class into their future workplaces.

In a world of flashy celebrations, Eric found peace holding his wife’s hand and celebrating this success with a bottle of water while driving his car to their kids back at home.

Congratulations to all the nominees!

A Message on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

The following message contains content related to gender-based violence that may trigger powerful emotions to arise, especially for those with lived experience of violence and victimization. It is recommended you read the message when you feel safe and supported. Resources are available for those affected by gender-based violence, including [REES \(Respect Educate Empower Survivors\)](#), a community for survivors, a [24-7 Crisis Line](#), [Gender-Based Violence Support in Manitoba](#) and [additional support services](#).

Every year on December 6, RRC Polytech recognizes the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women today. Today marks 35 years since the tragic murders of these 14 young women at Polytechnique Montréal.

We remember: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte, and Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz.

These young women were robbed of their bright futures and opportunities to contribute to our society, with many close to graduating and having jobs lined up for them.

This day serves as a solemn reminder to honour the 14 women who were killed and the 14 others who were injured on December 6, 1989 – at the hands of someone who claimed to be “fighting feminism.”

Though 35 years have passed, the struggle against gender-based violence remains. In Canada and globally, women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face discrimination and violence. **One in 3 women** will experience violence in their lifetime which is not only frightening but also concerning.

This day is not only a time to remember this tragedy but also all those who have experienced gender-based violence. To create a meaningful change, we must work together to eliminate the numbers entirely by protecting our sisters, mothers, friends, colleagues, partners and even strangers from harm.

Everyone — especially men and boys — has a duty to challenge societal norms, attitudes, and behaviors triggering gender-based violence. Together, we can take the first step toward building a future prioritizing the needs and safety of women.

The [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence \(GBV\)](#) (November 25 to December 10) calls for action to end GBV worldwide. Aligning with this year’s theme, **Come Together, Act Now**, reminds us, we all have a responsibility in creating a world free from violence — every day, everywhere.

This morning, RRC Polytech is hosting a [Vigil at The Cave \(Notre Dame Campus\)](#) from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., to commemorate those we've lost, and foster hope and healing for a future free from violence. We invite staff and students to come together in solidarity to honour these 14 women and strengthen our commitment to putting an end to gender-based violence.

Our flags are lowered at half-mast, and we encourage every student, staff and faculty member to attend the vigil or observe a moment of silence at 11:00 a.m., whether in the classroom, your workspace or at home.

Other ways you can show your support:

- Wear a white ribbon as a symbol of your commitment to never engage in, support, or stay silent about violence against women and girls. [Learn where to pick-up ribbon on campus.](#)
- During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based, join the conversation and share how you are contributing to the fight to end gender-based violence. **Use the hashtag #16Days to amplify your voice.**
- [Learn more about gender-based violence and supports available](#)

Today, as we grieve and remember the lives of these 14 women, let us hold onto hope for a safer and brighter future for women, girls, and gender-diverse folks. It is our shared responsibility to create a community and environment where everyone can live free from fear.

December 6 can be an incredibly difficult day for many. If you need someone to talk to, support and help for students is available through [Campus Well-Being](#). Staff have access to an Employee and Family Assistance Program through [Homewood Health](#). Please take good care of yourselves and those around you.