

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE PROFESSOR EARNS GEMINI NOMINATION

Ottawa, ON, October 31, 2002: An Algonquin College professor has earned a nomination for the 17th Annual Gemini Awards to be handed out this weekend in Toronto.

Donna Leon, graduate and current professor of Algonquin College's Television Broadcasting program, has been nominated for a Gemini Award for her work on the biography documentary *Reluctant Hero: The Donald Marshall Story*. Leon directed *Reluctant Hero*, and shares writing and producing credits with the CBC's Michael Claydon.

Produced for the CBC's Life and Times, *Reluctant Hero* is a documentary based on the life of Nova Scotia native Donald Marshall who was imprisoned in the early 70's for a murder he did not commit. Leon calls Marshall's story "one of the biggest miscarriages of justice in Canada". Marshall was exonerated of any wrongdoing in 1981.

"I'm thrilled about my nomination," says Leon. "It is a real honour to be among the top five documentary makers in the country." Since graduating from Algonquin in 1981, Leon has created several documentaries, including about 20 for various television networks and more than 400 for CBC Radio. This is Leon's first TV documentary for the CBC and her first Gemini nomination.

The Algonquin College connection doesn't stop there. Richard Millen, Leon's husband and editor of *Reluctant Hero*, is also a 1981 grad of Algonquin College's Broadcasting program. Millen and Leon met while at Algonquin College and have been both working in the television industry for more than 20 years.

Algonquin College had more input on the project, as 2002 TV Broadcasting grad Amanda Leuschen was a member of the research team. In addition, two Algonquin students paired up to portray a young Donald Marshall. Current second-year TV Broadcasting student Jeff Chapman played the role of a young Donald Marshall, while Kyle Jamieson, an aboriginal student in the Police Foundations program, provided Marshall's voice.

According to Leon, Marshall's deteriorating health also played a role in the production of this documentary. "I wanted to tell a good story without compromising Donald's health," says Leon. "I was always aware of his comfort level, and I made sure that we were working with his pace in mind, instead of pushing him too hard."

Reluctant Hero: The Donald Marshall Story began production during the spring of 2001 and aired on CBC's *Life and Times* in April of this year.

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