



Q&A

with Ann Makosinski—
Inventor and Entrepreneur



We spoke with inventor and entrepreneur, Ann Makosinski about her beginnings in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), her experiences growing up as a girl in STEM, and her advice for Canada's future scientists and innovators.



How were you encouraged to get into inventing?

When you have less to play with as a child (and as an adult!), you're forced to be more creative with whatever resources you do have around. As a young child, I took to harvesting whatever I could find around the house, and piecing it together to create my first "inventions". These creations never usually worked, but the idea of combining the resources around me to solve a problem (namely my lack of entertainment/toys!) was enforced into my character. My mum comes from a tiny village in the Philippines, and my father was born in Poland during the end of WWII, so growing up they too had to be very crafty with whatever they did have, and I am thankful that they instilled a similar belief in me.

What are some of the challenges that women in STEM face, and how have you overcome them?

Women in STEM often are not taken seriously in professional settings because of the mere fact of being female. Assuming someone has certain "**detrimental**"¹ attributes simply because of their gender or appearance is an outrageous concept that needs to be **eradicated**² in today's modern age. Women are born leaders, yet their presence in science history appears subdued, and instead overtaken by old white men. This needs to change. Women need to feel like they have an equal chance of making a difference in the world, especially when it comes to working in STEM.

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1. **detrimental**: causing harm
 2. **eradicated**: completely destroyed

Additionally, the stereotypes **perpetuated**³ by the entertainment industry of what a “science nerd” typically looks and acts like has both turned many young women away from pursuing STEM and also created a lot of assumptions about females (and males) in STEM that are negative and untrue.

When I began getting media/public attention for my flashlight invention at age 15, I was scared to dress a little fancy or wear “too much” makeup or jewelry, in case people didn’t take me seriously. I regret that I didn’t get the opportunity—or at least feel safe enough—to completely appear like myself at that age. I did a video with Vice a few years ago, and I was delighted to be featured in a colourful creative red/pink set, with a matching outfit, and my hair done in a 1960s style that I loved. It was shocking to see so many angry people in the comments saying I wouldn’t be taken seriously because of my appearance, or that they were upset that my hair and makeup had been done. I thought this was ridiculous and had loved the whole experience of creating the video. Nowadays, I dress however I want and wear as much or little makeup/jewelry as I like. I love expressing myself through fashion and art, and I now don’t have any problem celebrating that. Once I became stronger and more confident with myself, I realized that anyone who didn’t appreciate that was someone I wouldn’t want to work with or be friends with in the first place.

What is the best part about being involved in STEM?

Being able to have the best of both worlds—pursuing art AND science! I am so happy (and feel very lucky) to be able to do both fields, instead of leaving one of my passions behind to work on the other. I encourage all readers to pursue multiple interests in varying fields, it keeps your brain active and inspired.

What advice would you give to young girls to inspire them to pursue STEM?

Be yourself! Don’t let anybody tell you that how you are as a lovely human being is “not good enough”. Try not to care if there are fewer girls than boys around you in STEM-related activities, just show up and do your best! Being in slightly uncomfortable situations is the way I’ve learned the most about myself and grown as a human being. It’s not healthy to be comfortable all the time, there will be nothing to propel you forward!

3. perpetuated: caused something to continue

And always carry around a little notebook and pen, so you can write down your ideas at any time, any place—don't use your phone.

What is up next for you as an innovator and entrepreneur?

It's been such a long journey, and each year I have an equal amount of "successes" and mistakes. At the start of this year, I had to start from ground zero and leave behind a lot of things that wouldn't have induced maximum positive growth and energy in my life. It was absolutely terrifying. However, I am happy to say that I am currently working on some new book and television projects and will resume inventing later this fall/winter once work cools down for me.

Mediaplanet (2021). Q&A with Ann Makosinski—Inventor and Entrepreneur. *Innovating Canada*. <https://www.innovatingcanada.ca/diversity-and-inclusion/qa-with-ann-makosinski-inventor-and-entrepreneur/>

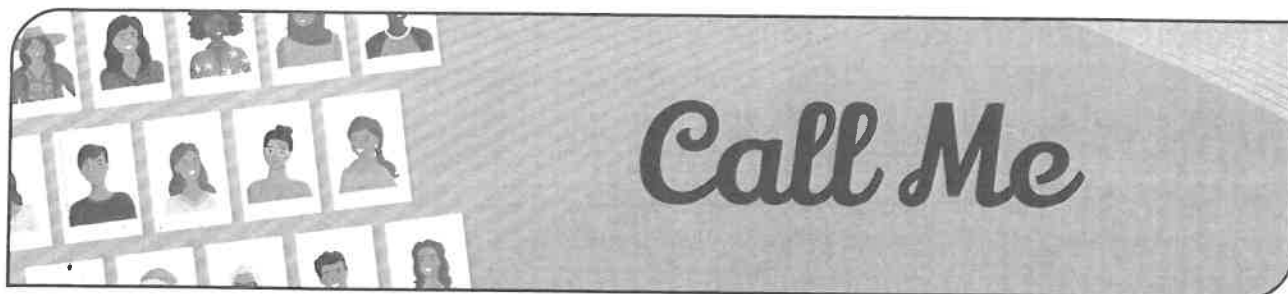
- ### 1. Describe what makes Ann Makosinski successful.

Use information from the text and your own thinking to support your answer.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Score





"I know it's here somewhere." Cheryl drops her book bag at her feet so she can dig through her coat pockets. When she dumps her purse out onto the table, everyone waiting in line behind her groans.

Cheryl glances up at the lunch room clock. Only three minutes until the bell and this is the last day to order a yearbook, if you want your name imprinted in gold on the front. And Cheryl did, if only she could find her wallet. The line begins to move around her.

"Come on, Cheryl." Darcy might as well stamp her foot, she sounds so impatient. "We'll be late for class."

"Darcy, please!" Cheryl snaps back. Best friends or not, Darcy and Cheryl often frustrate each other. They are just so different. Today is a good example. Darcy had "budgeted" for her yearbook and ordered it the first day of school while Cheryl had almost forgotten...again.

"Darcy, my wallet's gone." Cheryl throws her things back into her purse. "My yearbook money was in it." The bell interrupts her search.

"Someone took it!" Darcy, as usual, is quick to point away from the bright side of things.

"Oh, I'm sure I just misplaced it," Cheryl hopes.

They rush into class just before the second bell rings Darcy takes center stage to Cheryl's problem and happily spreads the news about the theft.

By gym the last hour, Cheryl is tired of being stopped and having to say over and over again, "I'm sure I just left it at home." Rushing into the locker room, she changes quickly and checks the list posted by the field door to see where her group is playing soccer, then hurries out to catch up with them.

The game was a close one, and Cheryl's team is the last one back to the locker room.

Darcy stands waiting for Cheryl by her locker. Cheryl brushes past Juanita, the new girl. It's the shocked look on Darcy's face and the startled gasps of those around her that stop Cheryl.

There, at her feet, is her wallet.

"It fell out of her locker!" Darcy points at Juanita. "She stole it."

Everyone speaks at once.

"The new girl stole it."

"Darcy caught her red-handed."

"I knew there was something about her."

"Report her."

Cheryl turns and looks at Juanita. She's never really noticed her before, beyond her "new girl" label.

Juanita picks up the wallet and holds it out to Cheryl. Her hands are trembling. "I found it in the parking lot. I was going to give it to you before gym, but you were late."

Darcy's words spit anger. "I'm so sure!"

"Really. It's true." Juanita's voice is high and pleading.

Cheryl hesitates. Juanita's eyes begin to fill with tears.

Cheryl reaches for her wallet.

"I'm so glad you found it." Cheryl smiles. "Thanks, Juanita."

The tension around them breaks. "Good thing she found it." Everyone but Darcy agrees.

Cheryl does another quick change and then bangs her locker closed. "Hurry, Darcy. There's just enough time to order a yearbook."

"If there is any money left in your wallet."

"Not now, Darcy!"

"You are so naive!"

It isn't until they are standing in line that Cheryl opens her wallet.

"It's all here." Cheryl can't help feeling relieved. A small piece of paper flutters down from her wallet.

"She just didn't have time to empty it yet." Darcy bends down to pick up the note. "I know her type. I had her pegged the first day she came." She hands the note to Cheryl.

Cheryl reads it and then looks up at Darcy. "You had her pegged, all right. Maybe that's the problem. Maybe you spend too much time pegging people."

Darcy grabs the note, reads it and throws it back at Cheryl. "Whatever!" she says and stomps off.

Cheryl reads the note again.

Cheryl,

I found your wallet in the parking lot. Hope nothing is missing.

Juanita

P.S. My number is 555-3218. Maybe you could call me.

And Cheryl did.

Hamond, C. (1998). Call Me. In J. Canfield, M. V. Hansen, K. Kirberger (Eds.), *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul II: More Stories of Life, Love and Learning* (pp. 263-267). Backlist, LLC.

Use information from the text and your own thinking to support your answer.

[illegible]

**What do you have to say?****Be successful!**

- Think about the ideas you want to share.
- Make personal connections.
- Add information and details to support your ideas.
- Make your writing sound like you.

Leading by Example

3. Describe a time when you stood up for something you believed was right.

Your writing could describe your experience or tell a story.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. A small dark speck is located near the top center, and another smaller one is further down towards the middle left. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard sheet of stationery.

Score



End of Part 1

Wait until your teacher tells you to go ahead to the numeracy activity.