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**News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
No. 001, November 23, 2008**

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1. Dr. Bruce Mitchell awarded the Royal Canadian Geographical Society Massey Medal

http://www.rcgs.org/awards/massey_medal/winner_massey2008.asp

One may wonder why Bruce Mitchell developed an interest in water management, given that he was born and raised in Prince Rupert, on British Columbia's northwest coast, where water shortages are seldom a concern. But perhaps it's not such a stretch. As a high school and then university student, Mitchell worked in fish plants and as a deckhand on a troller. This first-hand experience in a resourcebased industry stuck with him. He became a geography professor at southwestern Ontario's University of Waterloo and has spent four decades tackling the complexities of wisely governing this precious natural resource. Mitchell's principal contribution has been to "integrated water-resource management," which focuses on selected variables affecting water and surrounding ecosystems, rather than the conventional approach, popular in the 1960s and 1970s, of developing catch-all policies for a river basin's entire watershed. Collecting a broad range of scientific data for a comprehensive approach took too long to be practical, says Mitchell. In the early 1980s, he began to zero in on factors that have a significant influence on water systems. For his critical thinking and pragmatic approach to water-management issues, Mitchell has been awarded the 2008 Massey Medal for outstanding achievement in Canadian geography. Established by Governor General Vincent Massey in 1959, the award is administered by The Royal Canadian Geographical Society. Mitchell's integrated approach has been applied to the Great Lakes. Instead of developing policies for the entire Great Lakes watershed system — a daunting task given the huge population and multiple national, state, provincial and municipal governments involved — the International Joint Commission, which deals with water resource issues along the Canada-U.S. boundary, has concentrated on 42 subecosystems, such as harbours, bays and estuaries. Internationally, Mitchell's expertise has been sought by governments and universities in Australia, Indonesia, China, Nigeria and India. "Bruce is one of the people who first realized that it's not, in fact, the resources that need managing — it's us," says Philip Dearden, a geography professor at the University of Victoria who co-authored, with Mitchell, a book

on environmental science and management. Indeed, when asked what is the most pressing watermanagement issue in Canada today, Mitchell is quick to answer that too many Canadians still believe we have an abundance of water and therefore waste it. "It's way too easy for us as individuals to criticize the governments or industry," he says, "but at the end of the day, we each are water managers."

2. McMaster becomes first Canadian university designated as an ESRI Development Centre

<http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/story.cfm?id=5801>

The School of Geography and Earth Sciences has a long history of teaching and research using the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) suite of products. McMaster was one of the first universities in Canada to sign an annual license agreement with the Institute, and was the first Canadian university to collaborate with a college to offer a certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Consequently, McMaster was a perfect fit for the designation of ESRI Development Centre for Universities (EDC). The inclusion of McMaster as an EDC will further enhance and facilitate the use of GIS in education and research at McMaster. Currently, the School has over 14 undergraduate and graduate courses that make use of GIS as part of training and research. The School predominantly features geographical analysis software as part of its core curriculum. Researchers within the School have developed an international reputation for developing innovative simulation systems. Several development models such as IMULATE, IMPACT-Hamilton and CLIMATE-C and various GIS and Spatial Analysis analytical extensions were developed based on MapObjects which is part of the ESRI development suite. As an EDC, the University will have recognition and special status in the education of students in the advanced development of ESRI's GIS technology. Students will design and develop GIS applications using ESRI's ArcGIS desktop or server technology. The School's researchers will advance their expertise through participation in the annual ESRI Developer's summit and will offer student recognition through an annual achievement award.

3. Geography professor uncovers how military shapes Canadian culture

<http://www.news.utoronto.ca/social-sciences-business-law/geography-professor-uncovers-how-military-sha>

While the Canadian military seems remote from many of our lives, geography professor Deborah Cowen has shown that it has, in fact, played a major role in shaping our social landscape. After combing through restricted files and interviewing past and present policy-makers, Cowen discovered that this unspoken civilian-military connection has influenced Canadian identity for decades, with many of Canada's social programs stemming from the armed forces. "If you look at the postwar welfare state, most of it was modelled directly on what already existed for soldiers," she said. Often resistant to progressive change, but driven by pressing recruitment needs, military researchers and policy-makers have frequently tracked social change years ahead of the universities and the civilian federal government. Military sociologists have already addressed issues surrounding bilingualism and gender rights and in the 1960s, they began tracing the growing gap between urban and rural Canada; their current challenge is to meet the needs of immigrant recruits and their sometimes larger families. However, according to Cowen, this social progressiveness has unintentionally contributed to a polarization between Canada's rural citizens and its urban population, which is for the most part "completely disentangled from military service." While young urbanites, who frequently have diverse backgrounds, greater opportunities and liberal attitudes, have as a group become more educated and professional, high school graduates from rural and lower income families are often drawn to the military's promise of free schooling, income security and social benefits. This dichotomy has been exacerbated since the terrorist attacks of 2001. Cowen noted that at one point within the past two years, "25 per cent of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan were from Newfoundland," whose population is largely under-employed and accounts for only two per cent of Canada's residents. What's more disturbing is that this gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" has allowed "militarism to proceed without a wider debate," said Cowen, who added that it has become too easy for most civilians in big cities to turn a blind eye to Canada's increasing and more aggressive military action because "their lives aren't at stake." Cowen's research is explored in her book *Military Workfare: The Soldier and Social Citizenship in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2008). She and geography graduate student Amy

Siciliano are now further examining the links between class, race and security work.

4. Dr. Brian Luckman receives the Harold C. Fritts Award for Lifetime Achievement in Dendrochronology

<http://cgrg.geog.uvic.ca/news25.pdf>

Brian Luckman has been awarded the inaugural Harold C. Fritts Award for Lifetime Achievement in Dendrochronology. " The award was presented by the international Tree-Ring Society at the First American Dendrochronology Conference in Vancouver on June 25 2008. The Fritts Award is given to a person who has significantly influenced the field of dendrochronology and has made it more recognizable among its peer sciences. The award is dedicated to Harold (Hal) Fritts, an Emeritus Professor of Dendrochronology at the University of Arizona and founder of the discipline of quantitative dendroclimatology. Brian joined the Department of Geography at the University of Western Ontario in 1974 after completing his Ph.D. at McMaster University. His early research focused on alpine and glacial geomorphology in the Canadian Rockies, where he established himself as a leading authority on talus processes and Holocene glacial history. In the early 1980s, Brian's interests shifted to dendrogeomorphology and environmental change and he rapidly became a recognized expert in the use of tree rings to track past changes in alpine glaciers. More recently, Brian and his students have advanced our understanding of climate change in western Canada during the last millennium, including major studies on drought, glacial dynamics, and potential causes of the 'divergence' problem. Brian is a past President of the CGRG (1999 - 2000) and the Ontario Association of Geomorphologists, and former Global Change Coordinator for the Geological Survey of Canada. He serves on the editorial advisory boards of The Holocene, Arctic, Antarctic & Alpine Research, Geomorphology and Dendrochronologia. In 2005, Brian received the Canadian Association of Geographer's Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography. Writing in support of his nomination for the Fritts Award, Brian's colleagues noted the broad scope of his research interests and his enormous contribution to tree-ring science in Canada and abroad. Many recognized his work with the Inter- American Institute for Global Change spearheading a major collaborative research program on the hydrology of the American Cordillera. Brian was also described as "probably the single most important person promoting tree-ring research throughout the Americas, and especially in Latin America". His former students characterized Brian as "an extraordinary supervisor" who is both supportive and challenging. They also made special mention of the effort made by Brian and his family to help international students adjust to life in Canada. Slide show @ <http://www.slideshare.net/scottstgeorge/ameridendro-tribute-to-brian-luckman/>

5. Geography, Political Science collaborate on new major at the University of Guelph

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/atguelph/07-10-24/newsgeography.shtml>

Students coming to U of G who want to tackle environmental issues now have the option of studying the social sciences as a way of addressing some of the planet's most persistent problems. Starting next fall, Guelph will offer a BA major aimed at introducing students to the challenges and opportunities of environmental governance. The environmental governance degree is the first of its kind in Canada and possibly the world, says Prof. Ben Bradshaw, Geography, who helped design the joint program between the departments of Geography and Political Science. "The most challenging environmental problems facing Canada and the world today, such as global warming and the decline of world fish stocks, won't be solved with just better natural science," he says. "They can be solved only through enlightened governance." The program will combine existing and new courses in geography, political science, economics and agricultural economics. Although other universities currently offer courses that include aspects of environmental governance, no other school offers a degree program, says Bradshaw. The program will introduce students to the processes and mechanisms involved in environmental governance, the factors shaping this area, the challenges and innovations occurring in the field, and emerging societal concerns. Prof. Byron Sheldrick, chair of the Department of Political Science, who also worked on designing the new program, says the growing interest in environmental issues has led to an emphasis on environmental governance in both the public and private sectors. "There's a huge demand for people

who have skills and experience in developing policies that bring environmental issues to the forefront," he says. "In the past, environmental governance was handled mostly by government organizations. But as the interest in environmental issues continues to grow, new players are getting involved in governance, such as communities, NGOs and even private corporations, where social and environmental responsibility is emerging as a key concern." Sheldrick says this new degree has the potential to draw students from across Canada and even internationally. "Environmental issues are hot right now, and I don't see that changing anytime soon. I think the environment will continue to be one of the main public policy issues on the agenda, which is one reason why this program is needed." This is the first time the departments of Political Science and Geography have joined to offer a combined program. Bradshaw will be the program co-ordinator for the geography side, and Prof. Jordi Díez will be the co-ordinator for the political science side. "It's exciting that the two departments are working together on this," says Sheldrick. "It's a natural fit because Geography has a number of courses focused on environmental issues and Political Science does a lot of work on governance and environmental policy. This university has carved out its strength in environmental issues, and this new program will add to that.

6. What's good about wind erosion? Insights from the University of Lethbridge

<http://www.uleth.ca/notice/hostedfiles/communityreport0708.pdf>

Dr. Christopher Hugenholtz and his research team are discovering that wind erosion is essential to preserving a balanced ecosystem. Thoughts of wind erosion bring to mind vivid imagery of the 1930s dust bowl – wind ripping away valuable topsoil as it blackens prairie skies and paints a picture of agricultural devastation. Dr. Christopher Hugenholtz, a University of Lethbridge geography professor, is creating a new portrait of wind erosion by examining its positive role in sustaining the biodiversity of prairie grassland ecosystems. "Wind erosion has been given a bad rap, and rightfully so because it removes and relocates valuable soil constituents for agriculture and degrades air quality with fine particulate matter," says Hugenholtz. What he and his research team are discovering, however, is that wind erosion is also essential to preserving a balanced ecosystem. Sand dune areas serve as a habitat for a variety of sensitive and endangered plant and animal species that need bare, sandy surfaces and a level of wind erosion to survive. Through the innovative use of satellite imaging, Hugenholtz has observed a dramatic decrease in the number of active sand dunes across the southern prairies of Alberta and Saskatchewan. "We're seeing a step-by-step reduction in the number of species in a particular area, and we don't know what that's going to do in the long term to other species," says Hugenholtz. Years of managing the dune areas by reducing stresses such as fire, the roaming of bison and the grazing of cattle have encouraged the growth of vegetation. Reduced wind erosion levels are a direct result. "We need these disturbances to maintain biodiversity and keep the ecosystem functioning," says Hugenholtz. His work aims to develop unique strategies for conserving habitat through a better understanding of wind erosion controls and processes. "We want to provide land users with some adaptive strategies to manage the land with a goal of maintaining biodiversity," says Hugenholtz. Dr. Hugenholtz introduced a new course at the U of L this fall that offers students a broad perspective on wind in the environment. Students gain hands-on experience measuring wind and how it interacts with the surface (using instruments like those pictured above). Students are also involved in a new research project that explores the question of wind drought in the Prairies.

7. Mount Allison student receives top prize for research at the Atlantic meeting of the Canadian Association of Geographers

<http://www.mta.ca/news/index.cgi?id=1731>

Mount Allison University environmental sciences student Carrie White is taking X-rays out of the hospital and into the forest in an effort to learn more about climate change. And she's winning awards for this. The third-year student from Maitland, NS received top prize for best student paper at the 20th Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Association of Geographers, hosted at Mount Allison this fall. Carrie's paper, which she researched with Mount Allison geography and environment professor Dr. Colin Laroque and Dr. Dan

Smith, Director of the University of Victoria Tree Ring Lab, looked at various soft-wood species in the Sussex, NB area. These species were previously sampled by Mount Allison master's student Ben Phillips in the Mount Allison Dendrochronology Lab (the MAD Lab). Ben's research made headlines in 2005 when he discovered the world's oldest red spruce tree in New Brunswick, using dendrochronology — the study of tree rings. Carrie took the research another step further using X-rays, the same as those used in humans, on the wood samples. She says, "The tree X-rays, taken at the University of Victoria, which houses the only machine for this in Canada, give us a way to get a different, closer look at tree rings. These images give a clearer connection between tree rings and climate predictor models (temperature or precipitation), giving us a better understanding of the effect climate change has had on our forests." This field of study allows researchers to gain a better indication of past environments, which can help build better climate models in the future. Carrie's study examined over 100 years of data, providing a significant contribution to climate change research in New Brunswick forests.

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