



News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
No. 54, November 4, 2009
Compiled by Dan Smith <cag@geog.uvic.ca>

Contents

1. UT Mississauga's Pierre Desrochers Attacks the 100 Mile Diet
 2. Queen's University Geographer Warren Mabee on Ontario's Green Energy Act
 3. York U's Ranu Basu on the Demography of School Closings in Toronto
 4. Saskatchewan U's Evelyn Peters Urges Action on Urban Aboriginal Issues
 5. UVic Master's Student Chris Jensen Goes with the Flow
 6. Carleton U's John Clarke Awarded 2009 Ontario Geography Award by CAGONT
 7. McGill's Renovated Walter Hitschfeld Geographic Information Centre
 8. Queen's University Geographer Neil Scott Talks About Research at Lake Opinicon
 9. Geographer of the Week: Dr. Tara Vinodari, University of Waterloo
 10. Other "Geographical" News
 11. Some not so "Geographical" News
-

1. UT Mississauga's Pierre Desrochers Attacks the 100 Mile Diet

No doubt you have heard of ear worms, those songs that just get caught in your head and never leave. There are also news worms, the same story and the same guy popping up on radio, TV and in print everywhere. The news worm of the week in Ontario, Canada is U of T Mississauga geography professor [Pierre Desrochers](#), who is attacking the idea of local food and the [hundred mile diet](#). It isn't news; he first released his study [Yes We Have No Bananas: A Critique of the 'Food Miles' Perspective](#) from the George Mason University Mercatus Institute over a year ago, quickly picked up in an edited version by the [National Post as Food mile myths: Buy Global](#). Treehugger.com

2. Queen's University Geographer Warren Mabee on Ontario's Green Energy Act

Delegates attended the Oct. 22-23 Harness Biomass conference at Nipissing University to heard how to harvest, transport and process millions of cubic metres of forest slash into energy. The Ontario government's open competition for an estimated 10 to 16 million cubic metres of biomass supply has sparked plenty of public dialogue. Queen's University professor Warren Mabee called Ontario's Green Energy Act "an aggressive piece legislation" with an "incredibly ambitious target" of creating 50,000 jobs over three years in this emerging energy sector. But there are knowledge gaps in how to economically harvest biomass which will likely

make up only 1.6 per cent of Ontario's energy supply. "There's been a lot of talk, but little action," Mabey said on the fibre supply issue. [Northern Ontario Business](#)

3. York U's Ranu Basu on the Demography of School Closings in Toronto

A majority of the Toronto schools recommended for review due to falling enrolment are among the most needy in the city - sparking fears that school closures could hit poor kids the hardest. One of the areas on Toronto's proposed list is the Jane-Finch community, where all five schools recommended for review rank among the most needy 60 of the board's 475 elementary schools. "You have to be really, really careful to consider the demographics of school closings, because schools in these neighbourhoods have all sorts of after-school homework clubs and sports and services that you would be taking away from the community," says Ranu Basu, geography professor at York University, whose research has shown poor neighbourhoods often lose their schools more than richer areas. [Toronto Star](#)

4. Saskatchewan U's Evelyn Peters Urges Action on Urban Aboriginal Issues

There has been little movement on aboriginal policy since the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 13 years ago, although its recommendations could have improved the lives of First Nations and Métis people, says Canada Research Chair Evelyn Peters, a professor in the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy on the U of S campus. "If the Royal Commission recommendation that all levels of government should support aboriginal cultures in urban areas had been taken more seriously, aboriginal people living in cities would be facing fewer challenges today," said Peters. For example, she said aboriginal groups are always scrambling to raise funds for important initiatives, and frequently face a jurisdictional roadblock: the federal government regards urban aboriginal people as a provincial responsibility, while the provinces regard all aboriginal policy as strictly federal. Peters praised the Canadian government's Urban Aboriginal Strategy as a positive step forward, but identified several areas where urban aboriginal policy could be improved. [U of S News Release](#)

5. UVic Master's Student Chris Jensen Goes with the Flow

Chris Jensen, a master's student in geography at the University of Victoria, is investigating how to manage rainwater where it falls—on individual buildings, streets, gardens and subdivisions—rather than directing it into storm water systems buried under city streets. "If rainwater is absorbed where it falls, there'll be less risk of overloading our storm water systems and less flood damage to homes, businesses and sensitive aquatic habitats," he says. "It's a gentler, more natural way of managing rainfall." Funded in part by a graduate fellowship from the UVic-led Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, Jensen is using sophisticated computer models to assess the ability of various low-impact development strategies to cope with rainwater. [UVic knowEdge](#)

6. Carleton U's John Clarke Awarded 2009 Ontario Geography Award by CAGONT

John Clarke wasn't present to accept the 2009 Ontario Geography Award the Canadian Association of Geographers, Ontario Chapter (CAGONT) recently conferred upon him. Clarke,

a distinguished research professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, has devoted his career to research in the historical, cultural and economic geography of Ontario. His work has informed public policy, a CBC documentary, and countless publications. His undergraduate courses were fundamental to the evolution of the department. During his tenure at Carleton, he has supervised 57 BA Honours and MA students. This “geographer’s geographer” brought the subject to life for countless students through field trips to Lanark County, in his third-year course, Historical Geography of Canada. [FASS News, Carleton University](#)

7. McGill’s Renovated Walter Hitschfeld Geographic Information Centre

The classroom of the future is already here. BH-511, a high-tech “active learning” classroom in Burnside Hall, and the renovated Walter Hitschfeld Geographic Information Centre (GIC) were officially inaugurated on Oct. 27. Provost Anthony Masi, Teaching and Learning Services Director Cynthia Weston, Trenholme Director of Libraries Janine Schmidt, and Department of Geography Chair Tim Moore each spoke briefly before Geography Department Prof. Nigel Roulet gave a demonstration of the new room’s various features.

The GIC facilitates a unique mode of collaboration among the McGill Library, faculty, and students. A truly interdisciplinary facility, the space blends a diverse range of studying and learning spaces for groups and individuals and various high technology and multimedia installations. With an expansion of the number of computers available, quality services can be provided through a team of specialists whose mission is to encourage effective use of geospatial data and GIS literacy at McGill. [McGill Reporter](#)

8. Queen’s University Geographer Neil Scott Talks About Research at Lake Opinicon

Neal Scott, Department of Geography, Queen’s University is featured in a recent feature on the Daily Planet (Discovery Channel). In the video feature Scott talks about his research on "Forest Photos" at Lake Opinicon in northern Ontario. [Daily Planet](#)

9. Geographer of the Week: Dr. Tara Vinodari, University of Waterloo

Dr. [Tara Vinodari](#) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental, University of Waterloo. Tara completed her B.A. and M.A. degrees at Queen's University, and went to the Department of Geography and Program in Planning at the University of Toronto to complete a doctoral program. Her research interests focus on economic geography, Urban and regional economic development and policy, creative and cultural economy of cities; labour market dynamics and workforce development; and, design, innovation and technological change. Tara is affiliated with the [Centre for Environment and Business](#) in the UW [Faculty of the Environment](#).

10. Other “Geographical” News

Glacier Man

By diverting water that flows down mountainsides in winter into regularly placed stone embankments, Chewang Norphel has built 10 artificial glaciers in the barren, high-altitude desert of the trans-Himalayas, which sustain crops that feed some 10,000 people. It's become his obsession. Part engineer, hydrologist, and glaciologist, Norphel has had to create his own field of expertise. Thanks to his talent, Norphel is now known as "Glacier Man" among the locals in these mountains. [Science Magazine](#)

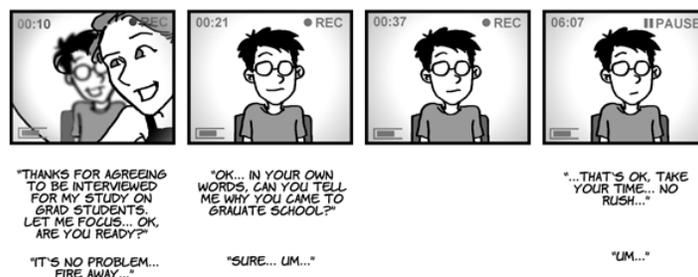
UCLA Geographer Glen MacDonald Gives 2009 Haynes Lecture

UCLA Geography Professor Glen MacDonald will present the Texas A&M University Department of Geography's 2009 Haynes Lecture at 4:00 pm on November 6th in room 208 of Scoates Hall. MacDonald holds a University of California presidential chair and is director of the UCLA Institute of the Environment. MacDonald's lecture, titled "The Pacific Ocean and Perfect Droughts – Past, Present and Future," will explore the issues of climate warming, the Pacific Ocean, and the development of prolonged droughts and wet periods at the California-India hydro-climatic dipoles. Considered an expert in his field, MacDonald studies climate change and its impacts on ecosystems and societies. He works on issues of current and future environmental change with a focus on water scarcity. His research routinely takes him across the world, from California to Siberia. [Media Newswire](#)

The Fanciful Notion of ‘Minerality’ in Wine

Can minerals in soil impart flavor to wine? The notion refers to a wine's "gout de terroir," or "taste of the soil," — the presumed ability of a vine to absorb minerals from the soil and impart them into the finished wine. "The idea is romantic and highly useful commercially, but it is scientifically untenable," wrote Alex Maltman, a professor at the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences at Aberystwyth University. "Whatever 'minerality' in wine is, it is not the taste of vineyard minerals," he wrote. [The New York Times](#)

11. Some not so “Geographical” News



JORGE CHAM ©THE STANFORD DAILY

GeogNews Archives: <http://www.geog.uvic.ca/dept/cag/geognews/geognews.html>