News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
No. 98, October 9, 2010
Compiled by Dan Smith <cag@geog.uvic.ca>

U Winnipeg's Danny Blair on Report Looking at Climate Change: Manitoba's climate could become closer to that of Nebraska's within the next 20 years, which some experts say could be bad news. Danny Blair, a geography professor at the University of Winnipeg, said the change could bring more severe and longer droughts, along with periods of flooding at other times. "There's just such a wide array of negative impacts," said Blair. The report also warned that Canada's temperature could rise by six degrees over the next 100 years, which could also bring more species of mosquitoes and a greater risk of diseases like dengue fever. "The consequences of having an increase of three, four, five degrees are just unacceptable," said Blair. CTV.ca

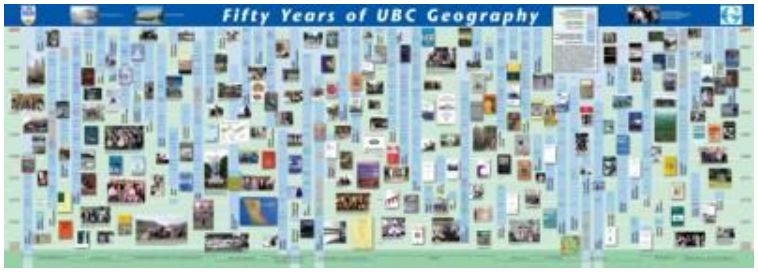
U Guelph's Barry Smit Asserts Science Supporting Existence of Climate Change Unequivocal: Human beings may not be contributing to climate change. Whether you find this statement wildly irresponsible or wildly reassuring, it is what Larry Solomon, a skeptic of climate change science, believes. But Barry Smit, a geography professor and Canada Research Chair in global environmental change, said the connection between greenhouse gases and the earth's climate is "unequivocal" and "accepted by almost every legitimate scientist." "That human activities are changing the chemical composition of the atmosphere, that's pretty well universally accepted by almost any reasonable scientist," Smit added. GuelphMercury.com

Carleton U's Gita Laider Melts the True North at City Hall Art Gallery: In this exhibition, science and art are linked by a shared respect for the North as a lived reality rather than an abstract idea. Cultural geographer Dr. Gita J. Laidler shows a collection of images from her collaborative research projects that rely on Inuit knowledge and partnerships with several Inuit communities in Canada's Eastern Arctic. Gita is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University. She has conducted fieldwork in Nunavut for nearly ten years, and is currently collaborating with Inuit communities to learn about sea ice processes, uses and changes, from their generations of experiences and expertise**.** OttawaStart

McGill U's Dan Crouse and Nancy Ross Co-author Study Linking Breast Cancer and Air Pollution: Women who live in urban areas with high levels of traffic-related air pollution have an increased chance of getting breast cancer, according to a new study by researchers from McGill University and the University of Montreal. The researchers created detailed air pollution maps for the island of Montreal showing rates of nitrogen dioxide, one of the gases present in car exhaust.They compared those maps to ones showing the home addresses of women diagnosed with breast cancer over the same period of time. The results were startling. Post-menopausal women living in the areas with the highest levels of pollution were almost twice as likely to develop breast cancer as those living in the least polluted areas. CBC News | Globe and Mail | Science Daily

---

50 Years of Geography at UBC: As part of the GEOG@50 celebration (September 2009) marking UBC Geography's 50th anniversary, resident cartographer Eric Leinberger created two posters that act as a visual narrative of UBC Geography's history. The timeline poster presents faculty, grad students and their publications in a chronological format, celebrating the many accomplished individuals who have contributed to making this department what it is today.50 Years



Memorial U's Norm Catto Warns Delegates Not to be Shocked by Another Igor: Newfoundland communities still cleaning up after Hurricane Igor should not be shocked to see another storm of similar devastation land in future years. Norm Catto, a Memorial University geography professor, told delegates to a Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador convention that climate change may alter the frequency of storms."It's not that we're seeing new things happening," Catto said. "What we're seeing perhaps are more of them, or more dramatic, or of a broader area, but they're the same sort of things that have happened in the past." CBC News

Laval U's Hannk Margoils Receives Honorary Degree from University of Lethbridge: Dr. Hank A. Margolis, a professor in the Faculty of Geography and Geomatics at Laval University in Quebec, is known as a driving force for Canadian research into the carbon cycle of forests and wetlands, and has been instrumental in the development of several national and international efforts to better understand climate change. Margolis has made significant and long-term contributions to public service in Canada. The major form of this public service has been in the role of principal investigator and program leader of three national research networks in Canada. Honorary Degree Citation

UT Mississauga's Nathan Basiliko Explores Potential of Charcoal to Reverse Climate Change: Biochar, a kind of charcoal that is rich in carbon, traps CO2 from the atmosphere and can store it in soils for hundreds to thousands of years, says Professor Nathan Basiliko, a soil scientist at U of T Mississauga's Department of Geography. Now, Basiliko and colleagues are poised to demonstrate that wood waste from Ontario's forest industry could be used to produce energy and biochar, making the wood a truly carbon-negative biofuel. If the expected benefits of producing biochar pan out, the net effect will decrease atmospheric concentrations of CO2. UTM News | News @ UT

UT Scarborough Welcome Susannah Bunce: Susannah Bunce specializes in urban and environmental geography and planning and joins the department of social sciences as an assistant professor of geography. Her research centres on how the natural environment is produced through social relations in cities such as Toronto. As a previous lecturer at UTSC, she initiated the service learning and community-based research courses in 2009 for the City Studies program, both of which were taught off campus in the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) neighbourhood of east Scarborough. Bunce is principal investigator on a SSHRC-funded research project, "Planning for Urban Community Land Trusts," which focuses on how urban land for affordable housing, parks and gardens is held in trust, and owned and managed by non-profit community-based organizations. She is also part of a study examining housing, identity and belonging for newcomers in KGO. UTSC News

UQTR - La section de géographie procède à 12 forages à Trois-Rivières: Dans le cadre du projet de cartographie des eaux souterraines de la Mauricie, la section de géographie de l'UQTR procède actuellement à une douzaine de forages qui permettront de mieux connaître le sous-sol trifluvien et d'installer des piézomètres qui permettront de mesurer le niveau de la nappe phréatique et la qualité des eaux souterraines. Les forages sont réalisés en collaboration avec l'Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS-ETE). Des forages supplémentaires seront réalisés ailleurs en Mauricie au cours des mois à venir. Ce projet, qui implique des chercheurs et des étudiants de la section de géographie, est financé par le ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs, la Conférence régionale des Élus de la Mauricie et la MRC de Maskinongé. Les piézomètres sont installés sur des terrains appartenant à la ville de Trois-Rivières qui les intégrera à son réseau de piézomètres. Rappelons que près de la moitié de la population de Trois-Rivières est approvisionnée en eau potable à partir des eaux souterraines.

York U Geography Student Elizabeth Miller Wins Northern Research Award: "It's expensive doing research up there" in the High Arctic, says Elizabeth Miller. Flying all your equipment and four months' worth of food and supplies costs thousands of dollars when you have to transfer three times en route from Toronto – via Ottawa, Iqaluit and Resolute – to get to Polar Bear Pass on Bathurst Island. Research grants cover most of these expenses, but the geography graduate student welcomes the $15,000 she won as this year's master's-level recipient of the Garfield Weston Award for Northern Research. The money will help cover her tuition fees, books and living expenses. York U Geography

---

Geographer of the Week: Dr. Robert McLeman, University of Ottawa

Dr. Robert McLeman is an Associate Professor, Department of Geography at the University of Ottawa. He completed a BA in Geography, University of Western Ontario; an M.Sc. in Environmental Management, Centre for Urban Planning and Environmental Management, University of Hong Kong; and, his PhD in Geography, University of Guelph. Robert's fields of interest include: human vulnerability and adaptation to environmental change, particularly climate change; relationship between environmental conditions and human migration; environment and security; environmental limits to urban growth; and, sustainable development.

Dr. McLeman uses innovative methods in the classroom to help students explore challenging concepts and to develop their own ideas and interpretations on the origins of pressing contemporary environmental issues and on possible ways of responding to them. Students in Dr. McLeman's past courses have briefed senior government officials and written editorial pieces for large newspapers. Classroom activities have included simulations of such 'real-life' activities as preparing briefing books for government ministers and conducting international negotiations on implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. Dr. McLeman draws upon regional literature and poetry, film, music and other media to bring to life scientific theories, methods and concepts. Visit his blog at www.thisgeographicallife.blogspot.com

---

Recent Theses and Dissertations

Cynthia A. Jones. 2010. "Grounding Diaspora in Experience: Niagara Mennonite Identity". Unpublished PhD dissertation. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Department of Geography and Environmental Studies. Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario. Supervisor: Dr. Jody Decker.

Jennifer J. Silver. 2010. "Seeking Certainty: A political ecology of shellfish aquaculture expansion on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia". Unpublished PhD Thesis. School of Resource and Environmental Management. Simon Fraser University, Burnaby. Supervisor: Dr. Evelyn Pinkerton.

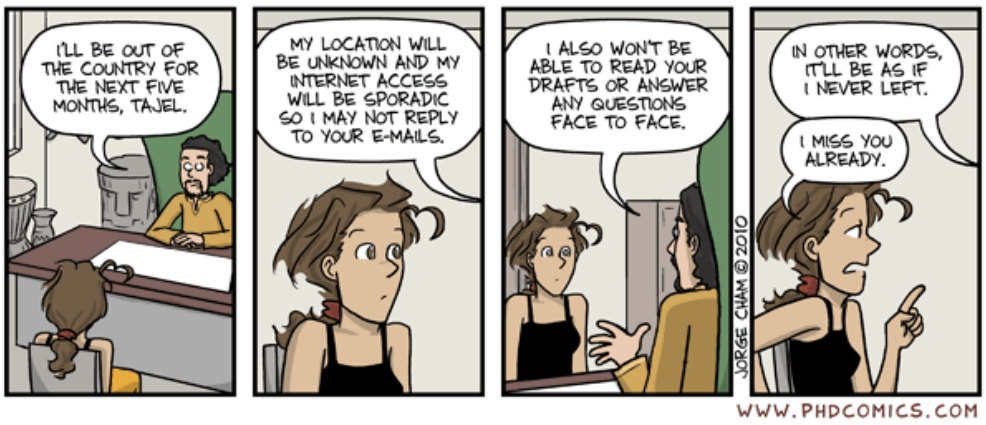
Other “Geographical” News

A Troubling Decline in the Caribou Herds of the Arctic: Throughout the Arctic, many of the great caribou and reindeer herds that once roamed the treeless tundra, providing an indispensible source of meat and clothing for aboriginal groups, are in free-fall. Thirty-four of the 43 major herds that scientists have studied worldwide in the last decade are in decline, with caribou numbers plunging 57 percent from their historical peaks. Some populations have fallen precipitously: The Bathurst herd in Canada's central Arctic has plummeted from a peak of 472,000 in 1986 to 32,000 today - a drop of 93 percent. Yale Environment 360

Volcano Fuels Massive Phytoplankton Bloom: A Canada-US team led by University of Victoria oceanographer Dr. Roberta Hamme describes how the 2008 eruption of the Kasatochi volcano in the Aleutian Islands spewed iron-laden ash over a large swath of the North Pacific. The result, says Hamme, was an "ocean productivity event of unprecedented magnitude" -- the largest phytoplankton bloom detected in the region since ocean surface measurements by satellite began in 1997. Science News

Long-Extinct Passenger Pigeon Finds a Place in the Family Tree: With bits of DNA extracted from century-old museum specimens, researchers have found a place for the extinct passenger pigeon in the family tree of pigeons and doves, identifying for the first time this unique bird's closest living avian relatives. The new analysis reveals that the passenger pigeon was most closely related to other North and South American pigeons, and not to the mourning dove, as was once suspected. Naturalists have long lamented that one of North America's most spectacular birds was also one of the first to be driven to extinction. In the early 1800s it was the most abundant bird species on the planet, even though its range was limited to the eastern and central forests of the United States and parts of eastern Canada. Flocks of passenger pigeons were so vast they darkened the sky; it could take days for a flock to pass overhead. EurekAlert!

Some not so “Geographical” News



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