



News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
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Memorial U Graduate Student Rudy Riedlsperger Explores Vulnerability of Winter Trails in Northern Communities: Rudy Riedlsperger, a graduate student in Memorial's Department of Geography, knows the importance and vulnerability of northern Labrador's winter trails. The work highlights the necessity of winter trails in the North, as they provide access to hunting grounds, ice fishing spots and firewood areas. "Access to these places puts food on the table and heats homes," said Mr. Riedlsperger. "It is crucial to ensure unimpeded access to subsistence areas for the quality of life for people in the region." As shown through his research, a changing climate can compromise reliable trails for northern dwellers. He hopes people learn that, although ongoing coping mechanisms are in place, there's a bigger picture to look at. "People adapt their travel routes or collect firewood at different times of the year. However, there is no long-term adaptation in place -- no framework that would allow people to adapt thoroughly to anticipated changes beforehand." TODAY.MUN.CA

UVic's Michael Hayes Describes Distribution of Health Outcomes in Populations: Dr. Michael Hayes is a professor in the School of Public Health and Social Policy, and in the Department of Geography at the University of Victoria, where he is also Director of Health Education and Research. In this YouTube video he describes his research into the distribution of health outcomes in populations. He also discusses ways other than the health care system to even the health outcome distribution across populations. [YouTube](#)

U Ottawa's Jennifer Throop and Antoni Lewkowicz Report on Impact of Climate Change on Permafrost Zones: Permafrost zones extend over 50% of Canada's land area. Warming or thawing of permafrost due to climate change could significantly impact existing infrastructure and future development in Canada's north. Jennifer Throop and Antoni Lewkowicz at the University of Ottawa, along with Sharon Smith with the Geological Survey of Canada, have published a [new study](#) that provides one of the first summaries of climate and ground temperature relations across northern Canada. Christopher Burn says the study is unusual because it presents data on permafrost throughout Canada's three northern territories. Most previous reports have concentrated on restricted regions within the North, but this paper presents conditions at the continental scale. The study shows the factors governing the response of permafrost to climate change, and indicates how the emphasis on snow conditions, soil moisture conditions, and surface peat and moss varies across the North. [EurekAlert!](#)

U Western's Tony Weis on Hidden Costs of Industrial Agriculture: Poultry waste fed to cattle, pigs pumped with growth-promoting antibiotics, and mounds of manure dumped in ditches. These and other scenarios are used to take aim at the "largely hidden" costs of intensive livestock operations to public health, the environment and rural community development in a report to be released by the Canadian office of the World Society for the Protection of Animals. The report is the culmination of a project that began when the organization convened recognized experts in their fields and commissioned a multidisciplinary review of the impacts of Canada's industrial animal agriculture practices. The report, bolstered by a chapter on environmental impacts by University of Western Ontario geographer Tony Weis, recommends that all levels of government should regulate intensive livestock operations as they do other major polluting industrial operations — "subject to the same rules regarding waste treatment and pollutants and enforced by independent inspectors with the authority to issue stiff penalties for infractions." [Canada.com](#)

McGill U's Verena Seufert and Navin Ramankutty Shed Light on Debate Over Organic vs. Conventional Agriculture: A new study concludes that crop yields from organic farming are generally lower than from conventional agriculture. Overall, organic yields are 25% lower than conventional, the study finds. The difference varies widely across crop types and species, however. Yields of legumes and perennials (such as soybeans and fruits), for example, are much closer to those of conventional crops, according to the study, conducted by doctoral student Verena Seufert and Geography professor Navin Ramankutty of McGill and Prof. Jonathan Foley of the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment. Yields are only part of a set of economic, social and environmental factors that should be considered when gauging the benefits of different farming systems, the researchers note. "Maybe people are asking the wrong question," Prof Ramankutty says. "Instead of asking if food is organically grown, maybe we should be asking if it's sustainably grown." [McGill News](#)

U Western PhD Candidates Riley Dillon and Hanson Nyantakyi-Frimpong Earn Africa Research Support: Western PhD students Riley Dillon and Hanson Nyantakyi-Frimpong were named among [10 Africa-based and 10 Canada-based graduate students](#) receiving funding from the Africa Initiative Graduate Research to confront critical issues facing Africa. Dillon, Ph.D. candidate in the Migration and Ethnic Relations Program within the Department of Geography, completed her master's degree in Development Studies at the University of Botswana. Her current research employs geographic theories of gender, migration and development to understand how social and cultural forces shape migrant remittances. Nyantakyi-Frimpong, a Ph.D. candidate in Geography and International Development, holds a bachelor's degree in development planning from Kwame Nkrumah University and a master's degree in community and environmental planning from the University of Montana. His research interests focus on development geography and human-environment interactions, rural livelihood security, global environmental and economic change and tropical agricultural systems. His doctoral dissertation applies a political ecology lens to food security and climate change adaptation in Ghana. [Western News](#)

U Waterloo Geography Alumna Barbara Veale Guardian of the Grand River Basin: Barbara Veale grew up by the banks of the Grand, in Fergus. Though her mother worried, she was always down by the water. She has never really left the river. Now the University of Waterloo alumna is co-ordinator of policy, planning, and partnerships for the Grand River Conservation Authority. She has spent nearly 34 years working for the GRCA, mostly on water issues. Veale gained a more academic interest in water issues when she was in high school. She read Rachel Carson's seminal book *Silent Spring*, among others, and took an advanced class in geography. She finished her undergraduate degree in geography in 1976 and started working for the GRCA in 1978, while she was also doing her master's at Waterloo. That initial job was a contract position working on a Grand River basin water management study. [UW Environment](#)

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- Alemu Gonsamo and Petri Pellikka. 2012. [The sensitivity based estimation of leaf area index from spectral vegetation indices](#). ISPRS Journal of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing 70:15–25.
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- Hester Jiskoot and Mark S. Mueller. 2012. [Glacier fragmentation effects on surface energy balance and runoff: field measurements and distributed modelling](#). Hydrological Processes. DOI: 10.1002/hyp.9288
- Josh Lepawsky. 2012. [Legal geographies of e-waste legislation in Canada and the US: Jurisdiction, responsibility and the taboo of production](#). Geoforum. DOI: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.03.006
- Jed A. Long, Colin Robertson, Farouk S. Nathoo and Trisalyn A. Nelson. 2012. [A Bayesian space-time model for discrete spread processes on a lattice](#). Spatial and Spatio-temporal Epidemiology.
- Daniel Ekane Nnane, James Ebdon and Huw Taylor. 2012. [The dynamics of faecal indicator organisms in a temperate river during storm conditions](#). Journal of Water and Climate Change 3(2):139–150.
- Rivera, M. Koppes, C. Bravo and J.C. Aravena. 2012. [Little Ice Age advance and retreat of Glacier Jorge Montt, Chilean Patagonia](#). Climate of the Past 8(2):403-414.
- David Olefeldt, Nigel Roulet, Reiner Giesler and Andreas Persson. 2012. [Total waterborne carbon export and DOC composition from ten nested subarctic peatland catchments – importance of peatland cover, groundwater influence and inter-annual variability of precipitation patterns](#). Hydrological Processes. DOI: 10.1002/hyp.9358
- R. Shipley and M. Snyder. 2012. [The role of heritage conservation districts in achieving community economic development goals](#). International Journal of Heritage Studies. DOI:10.1080/13527258.2012.660886

Other “Geographical” News

Antarctic Ice Melting from Below Due to Warming Ocean: Antarctica's massive ice shelves are shrinking because they are being eaten away from below by warm water. That suggests future sea levels could rise faster than many scientists have been predicting. The western chunk of Antarctica is losing seven metres of its floating ice sheet each year. Until now, scientists were not exactly sure how it was happening and whether or how man-made global warming might be a factor. The answer, according to a study just, is that climate change plays an indirect role – but one that has larger repercussions than if Antarctic ice merely were melting from warmer air. [CBC News](#)

Arctic Ocean May Open to Regular Shipping by 2017: The Arctic Ocean could open for regular commercial shipping within the next five to 10 years. But while that may sound like welcome news for intercontinental commerce, the changing ice conditions could bring new hazards to ships plying the polar seas. With the open water came intense storms. The snow from those storms insulated the multi-year sea ice, which meant that it didn't thicken up as much. In short, the Arctic coast is becoming more like the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. It is turning into a maritime climate that is stormy and largely ice-free during the winter. [CBC News](#)

B.C.'s 1862 Smallpox Epidemic Claimed Over Half the Province's Population: In the spring of 1862, B.C.'s total population was about 50,000. By the fall of 1863, at a conservative estimate, about 32,000 people — virtually all the victims were first nations. The virus obliterated entire villages. Whole tribes disappeared. Of the first nations who dwelt along the B.C. coast, at least half and perhaps more were dead by the end of 1863. Six of every 10 Tlingit on the Stikine River had perished. Almost seven of every 10 Heiltsuk and Haida were gone. Only 15 per cent of the settlements on Haida Gwaii were still occupied at the beginning of the 20th century. These mass deaths tore irreparable holes in the cultural fabric of societies in which oral traditions were the custodians of the genealogies, laws, histories and literature of entire peoples. Those momentous events, which began in April of 1862 and ran through 1863, shaped B.C. Their aftershocks continue to shudder through the political and social bedrock of the present in the form of unresolved land claims, inadequate reserve lands as populations finally rebound from their nadir a century ago, and the legacy of marginalized and impoverished communities that have been alienated from resources and are frequently blamed for their impoverishment. [The Vancouver Sun](#)

Some not so “Geographical” News



“What part of Canada that I know nothing about are you from?”

[The New Yorker, April 23, 2012](#)

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