News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
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Compiled by Dan Smith <cag@geog.uvic.ca>

U Fraser Valley Geographers and NASA Collaborate on Research Project: Working with NASA is a dream for most scientists. And it's something a group of University of the Fraser Valley students were able to experience during a recent research trip to south central B.C. The group spent two days at Kelly Lake, near Clinton, in late July, collecting data to learn more about the lake's history. The lake is of interest to NASA as it contains unique rock formations called microbialites, which are considered to be rare carbonate rock structures formed by microorganisms. The four students associated with UFV were joined by UFV Geography instructor Olav Lian, and two students linked with NASA Ames Research Center. The expedition's purpose was to core the lake's bottom to collect sediment that has accumulated over time. "We always try to bring as many students with us as we can," said Lian. "We're not the type of scientists that like to work in isolation — mentorship of students is incredibly important to us." "Students are extremely important to any field team and research group," added Lim. "Otherwise things just stagnant, and don't move on and get published, so we totally believe in bringing students in all cases." UFV Today

U Saskatchewan's Bram Noble Critical of Cancellation of 700 Environmental Assessments: The federal government has cancelled nearly 700 environmental assessments in Saskatchewan for oil wells and pipelines, sewage lagoons, hydro projects, a major uranium tailings facility and other operations. Saskatchewan is by far the province most affected by the cancellation of nearly 3,000 assessments nationwide. "It's extremely significant," said Bram Noble, a University of Saskatchewan geography professor who has years of experience teaching and conducting national environmental assessments. "It's a lot to be concerned about. It's the only tool we have." Noble called the decision to scrap the assessments "unprecedented" and "a step backward." Regina Leader-Post | The StarPhoenix

U Toronto-Scarborough's Susannah Bunce on Port Lands Vision: It was a grand vision in contrast to the derelict industrial landscape that has for decades defined Toronto's Port Lands, one with lush parklands and pedestrian-filled promenades overlooking a reimagined waterfront. It was also a vision out of sync with the area's continued industrial reality. A revision, prompted by industry stakeholder complaints as part of an environmental assessment last year, now blends existing industrial uses and the vision of a naturalized, mixed-use neighbourhood on this 400-hectare harbour site. Susannah Bunce, a University of Toronto-Scarborough geography professor familiar with the plans, described the recent revisions to better accommodate industry as a "muddling through" approach, "making planning decisions as you go along based on the reality of the situation." "If the implementation strategy (envisions) any industry, it's light industry," she said, adding that "there are always tensions between post-industrial and industrial uses in urban waterfronts. It's indicative of a changing economy." Toronto-Star

INRS-UQAM's Damaris Rose on Toronto's Social Experiment: Four public housing communities have been slated for mixed-income makeovers, with Toronto Community Housing selling off chunks of public land to pay for new public housing. Don Mount Court is complete, Regent Park is well underway, Lawrence Heights has been delayed and Alexandra Park is ready to go. These housing projects, built from the late 1940s to the 1960s, were conceived when the trend was to house the poor in self-contained neighbourhoods closed to traffic — a design that soon proved problematic. The lack of through streets isolated the communities and made them places where crime thrived. Touted in today's city-approved revitalization proposals is the belief that diluting the concentration of poverty will improve the lives of public housing residents. "That is a widespread belief for which there is very little evidence," says Damaris Rose, professor of urban and social geography at the Quebec Institute for Scientific Research, who has spent a decade studying social mix. Therein lies the uncomfortable truth behind these efforts to transform troubled Toronto communities into neighbourhoods where rich and poor live together in harmony: similar attempts abroad have failed. Toronto Star

Olav Lian Winner of Inaugural UFV Research Excellence Award: Understanding timing of environmental change using grains of sand as "clocks" has been a lifetime's work for Olav Lian. But along the way, he has collected a bachelor's degree in physics, a master's in physical geography, and a doctorate in geology; built state-of-the-art luminescence dating research laboratories in New Zealand and England, and now at the University of the Fraser Valley; participated in and led cutting-edge research on environmental change; and trained and mentored several UFV undergraduate students as they launched their academic research careers. For his collaborative approach to research and his guidance of UFV students, Lian has been awarded the inaugural Research Excellence award at UFV. UFV Today

WLU's Andrew Medeiros Awarded Garfield Weston Fellow to Research Arctic Lakes: Andrew Medeiros, a Post-Doc Fellow in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University has been awarded a W. Garfield Weston Postdoctoral Fellowship to conduct research on Arctic lakes to understand how climate change is affecting the region. Medeiros is looking at both the water chemistry and biology of the lakes. On the biological side, he looks at what species of insects (who live in lakes during their larval stage) inhabit a lake as indicators of change in a system. Most of the insects survive at narrow temperature thresholds – if it's too hot or too cold they will die – and some are simply outcompeted by species that migrate from the south as the lakes warm. This led Medeiros to work with Brent Wolfe, who studies the geochemistry of Canada's northern lakes. Combining Wolfe's research with the biological aspect of his research, Medeiros can learn more about what governs the distribution of these species: whether or not climate temperature has a specific role in their life histories or if nitrogen and nutrients are also playing an important role. WLU Headlines

Who was James White? James White (1863-1928) was a Canadian geographer. White studied geology at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario. In January 1884 White was employed as a topographer on a geological survey of Canada. Later that year and over the course of 1885 he surveyed the Rocky Mountains region, after which he continued his work in the gold district of Madoc, Ontario (1886), the phosphate district of Ottawa (1887-1890) and then the Kingston and Pembroke districts of Ontario (1891-1893). After spending 1894 as the geological survey's geographer and chief draughtsman, White was appointed chief geographer of the department of the interior in 1899. He served on the Alaska boundary commission in 1903 and undertook an investigation into trans-Atlantic passenger steamships in 1906. White and a team of 20 cartographers produced the first edition of the Atlas of Canada in 1906. Wikipedia

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Harald Bauder. 2012. Nation, 'migration' and critical practice. Area. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-4762.2012.01129.x

Tony M. Bowron, Nancy Neatt, Danika van Proosdij and Jeremy Lundholm. 2012. Salt marsh tidal restoration in Canada's Maritime provinces. In: Tidal Marsh Restoration. The Science and Practice of Ecological Restoration, 2012, Part III, 191-209, DOI: 10.5822/978-1-61091-229-7_13

Alexander Brenning, Shilei Long Paul Fieguth. 2012. Detecting rock glacier flow structures using Gabor filters and IKONOS imagery. Remote Sensing of Environment 125:227–237.

Robert Gilbert and Joseph R. Desloges. 2012. Late glacial and Holocene sedimentary environments of Quesnel Lake, British Columbia. Geomorphology. doi.org/10.1016/j.geomorph.2012.08.010

David Ley and Nicholas Lynch. 2012. Divisions and Disparities in Lotus-Land: Socio-Spatial Income Polarization in Greater Vancouver, 1970-2005. Cities Centre, University of Toronto. Research Paper 223.

Yvonne E. Martin and Edward A. Johnson. 2012. Biogeoscience research: Studying interactions of the biosphere with the lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere. Progress in Physical Geography. doi:10.1177/0309133312457107

Tim R. McClanahan, Simon D. Donner, et al. 2012. Prioritizing key resilience indicators to support coral reef management in a changing climate. PLoS ONE 7(8): e42884.

Nathaniel D. Mueller, James S. Gerber, Matt Johnston, Deepak K. Ray, Navin Ramankutty and Jonathan A. Foley. 2012. Closing yield gaps through nutrient and water management. Nature. doi:10.1038/nature11420

Liu Sun, Scott W. Mitchell and Andrew Davidson. 2012. Multiple drought indices for agricultural drought risk assessment on the Canadian prairies. International Journal of Climatology 32:1628–1639.

Colin J. Whitfield and Shaun A. Watmough. 2012. A regional approach for mineral soil weathering estimation and critical load assessment in boreal Saskatchewan, Canada. Science of the Total Environment 437:165–172.

Other "Geographical" News

How many papers is a baby 'worth'?: Natascha Klocker of the University of Wollongong and Danielle Drozdzewski of the University of New South Wales have written an excellent piece in Environment and Planning A on academic metrics and gender equity issues. They ask the question "How many papers is a baby 'worth'?" prompted by recent experiences, working on appointment committees and writing research grants in Australia, where provisions to quantify research track-records 'relative to opportunity' call for applicants to explain how fluctuations in their publication outputs have been impacted by 'career interruptions' such as childbearing. Their commentary seeks to question how decision makers account (or not) for the career impacts of having children. Environment and Planning Commentary

Why I Won't Flip My Classroom: One can hardly check out an education website these day without hearing something about the flipped classroom (sometimes called flipped learning or inverted learning). The basic idea is that the supposed old way of teaching—providing all the information to the class via lectures is tedious and ineffective. In the so-called "flipped" model, students get the basic information outside of class and teachers use the class time to create activities and and projects that help students understand that information more deeply. The grain of truth in the flipped learning model is that – obviously – dry boring lectures in which a professor drones uncontextualized facts for hours is not a good way to teach. But good teachers have known that for millennia. Good lecturing allows for asking questions and considering answers—thing that are best done live and in person — and the very things that flipped learning advocates are looking for. The lecture is not a tyrant. It's a tool – and its virtue, as with all tools, lies in how skillfully it is used. Macleans

Mary Binney Wheeler Image Collection: In 1907, Mary Binney Wheeler was born into a prominent Philadelphia family. She was quite talented in the musical and terpsichorean arts; at the age of 17, she performed at Carnegie Hall as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Later in life, she developed a deep and abiding interest in South Asian art and culture. Over the course of 14 trips to the area, she took over 9,000 photographs in India and Sri Lanka. Her work was recognized by the National Geographic Society, the Indian government, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art as being of tremendous importance as it documented everything from washing laundry to the Himalayan Mountains. This collection is a marvel, and visitors can use the Navigating the Digital Collection are to learn how to most effectively look through the archive. The site also includes six wonderful illustrated lectures here, narrated by Ms. Wheeler. MBW Image Collection

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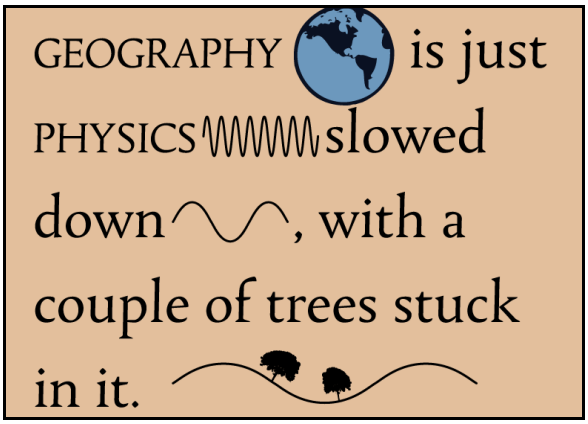
Some not so "Geographical" News



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