

GeogNews



News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
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Carleton U's Fraser Taylor receives CFI award for indigenous project: Carleton's Fraser Taylor, distinguished research professor and director of the Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre (GCRC), has received funding from the Canada Foundation to support the creation of a research system for the collection, analysis, dissemination, active use and preservation of local and traditional knowledge by indigenous experts, researchers and decision-makers. Canada's northern communities are undergoing fundamental changes, and are subject to increasing political interest with respect to sovereignty issues, as well as increasing pressure to extract natural resources. Local and traditional knowledge is disappearing just as it is most needed to respond to these challenges. Integrating this knowledge with existing data management systems is difficult, especially in the North. Internet connectivity, cultural norms, concerns over access, use, and possession of local knowledge, education, technical capacity and the need for unique representations of data derived from predominately oral cultures are all challenges. Taylor has been working to develop a framework that merges crowd-sourced data with official data from government and scientific sources. [Carleton Newsroom](#)

U Toronto's Scott Munro talks about climate change / rising sea levels: Many of the world's coastal cities face severe flooding – unless we stabilize our carbon emissions soon. As gloomy as this sounds, we just don't know how bad it will be. There are also important "feedback" effects that are difficult to measure. As Arctic sea ice melts, says Scott Munro, a retired geography professor at U of T Mississauga who specialized in climate and glaciers, the amount of solar radiation being reflected back into space decreases, causing more ice to melt. "The less ice there is, the less likely it is to sustain itself." Just a few years ago, scientists were predicting an ice-free Arctic in the summer by mid-century; some now think it could happen by the end of this decade. [U of T magazine](#)

U of T sex club, viral feminist art & geography skills at Memorial U: Judith Adler, a Memorial University professor, gave her second-year sociology students blank maps and asking them to identify Europe, Asia, South America and Africa. "The results were really mind-opening to me," she told CBC News. "They should know that they live on the Atlantic Ocean" and "they should be able to know where North America is," she added. Adler is now advocating for remedial courses. From the sounds of it, these students need a lot more than that. [Maclean on campus](#)

U Ottawa's Barry Wellar disagrees that traffic congestion in Metro Vancouver as bad as Los Angeles: Vancouver's traffic congestion is just as bad as Los Angeles and the worst in Canada, says the latest congestion report from TomTom, a company that manufactures GPS devices. The company, which released its third quarterly congestion index on Tuesday, uses its own navigation technology to rate traffic congestion in 57 North American cities. However, a traffic consultant in Ottawa has cautioned that the index is a "pretty shallow analysis," probably tied more to marketing GPS devices. Barry Wellar, a former geography professor at the University of Ottawa, says it's nearly impossible to do a fair comparison of cities. TomTom says its traffic database contains more than six trillion data measurements and is growing by five billion measurements every day. [Global BC](#)

Mount Allison students learn about activism by taking on a favourite cause: A new course at Mount Allison University saw students do their learning outside the classroom as they organized marches and petitions, addressed town council, and harnessed social media to further their favourite causes. Environmental Activism was offered for the first time last semester. The third-year course was taught by geography and environment professor Brad Walters. "It is a very applied course," he says. "They learn about activism and write about it and analyze some issues, but the focus is doing mini campaigns. "It is good for building confidence and leadership skills. It is very much a learn-by-doing approach." The 22 students in the class broke into five groups, each choosing a particular cause to champion and setting an achievable goal to reach by term's end. Third-year environmental science student Robyn Snook of Stephenville, Nfld., was part of a group protesting the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline project in Alberta and BC. "A lot of people look at activism as being really radical and really extreme, but it can be a very conservative thing," she says. "There is a lot of planning that goes into it, it is not just going to a protest and screaming. I am not overly outgoing, but I can still do this." Walters says he was surprised and pleased by some of the things the students accomplished in the short time they had. Read more about the course in the December 2012 issue of [Universities News](#) (News for Universities Worldwide) and the [Sackville Tribune Post](#).

U Toronto's Harriet Friedmann talks about world hunger: Harriet Friedmann, a professor of geography, studies food policies and how food is produced and consumed around the world. She believes there are significant flaws with the West's industrial farming system, starting with government subsidies that make meat products artificially cheap, and which send the wrong signal to consumers and farmers. "Our entire food system has grown up around a mode of consumption that's not sustainable for our current world population, much less a population at mid-century that may be 30 to 40 per cent larger than today's," she says. Friedmann rhymes off other reasons why industrial farming is unsustainable: it uses too much water, fuel and chemical fertilizers; it devotes an increasing amount of cropland to corn and soybeans for animal feed and fuel rather than crops for human consumption; and it eliminates the small farm in favour of huge food-producing areas, which become agricultural monocultures. "It may seem that higher yields are achieved when land is converted from pasture to crops and when animals eat industrial feed," says Friedmann. "But it makes crop farming more dependent on fossil energy used to make fertilizer – and pesticides, because monocultural fields are a banquet for pests." [U of T magazine](#)

In Memoriam Rebecca Tarbotton, 1973-2012: The Department of Geography at McGill University extends its deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Ms. Rebecca Tarbotton who died on December 26th in a drowning accident in Mexico. Becky graduated with a BA Honours in Geography in 1995 and went on to be a world leader in environmental and social advocacy, most recently as the Executive Director of the Rain Forest Alliance Network. She is fondly remembered by her professors as an inquisitive and passionate student whose vivacious and warm manner endeared her to all who knew her in the Department and beyond. Her life's work serves as a model for young people starting out as she did on a journey to build a better world for others. [In Memoriam](#)

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Abdullah BaMasoud and Mary-Louise Byrne. 2013. [The predictive accuracy of shoreline change rate methods in Point Pelee, Canada](#). Journal of Great Lakes Research. doi.org/10.1016/j.jglr.2012.12.010

Genevieve Berard, Daniel Applin, Edward Cloutis, Jessica Stromberg, Raven Sharma, Paul Mann, Stephen Grasby, Ruth Bezys, Briony Horgan, Kathleen Londry, Melissa Rice, Bill Last, Fawn Last, Pascal Badiou, Gordon Goldsborough and James Bell III. 2013. [A hypersaline spring analogue in Manitoba, Canada for potential ancient spring deposits on Mars](#). Icarus. doi.org/10.1016/j.icarus.2012.12.024

Bram Noble, Skye Ketilson, Alec Aitken and Greg Poelzerc. 2013. [Strategic environmental assessment opportunities and risks for Arctic offshore energy planning and development](#). Marine Policy 39:296–302.

P.N. Owens, T.R. Giles, E.L. Petticrew, M.S. Leggat, R.D. Moore, and B.C. Eaton. 2013. [Muted responses of streamflow and suspended sediment flux in a wildfire-affected watershed](#). Geomorphology. doi.org/10.1016/j.geomorph.2013.01.001

Other “Geographical” News

The Canadian County Atlas Digital Project: The maps here have been digitized at McGill University and they cover all of Ontario in 1880. There are a number of maps for each country, and visitors can use the drop-down menus to look for items of particular interest. The menus include Choose a County, Choose a Township, and Choose a Town. By clicking on each map, visitors will be able to look at different township maps that will reveal property boundaries, improvements, and all types of other details. Historians and geographers will find much to admire here and it's easy to see how this website could be used to illustrate historical trends in terms of land development. [Digital Project](#)

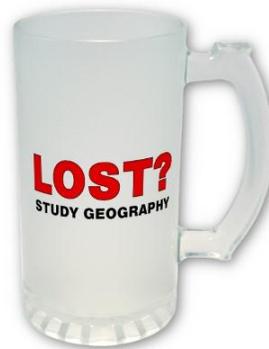
What top-flight researchers mean for the rest of us: These are scarce beasts if Alex Usher is to be believed. In a Globe and Mail op-ed, the Higher Education Strategy Associates president estimated only 100,000 truly high-profile scholars and academic scientists exist in the world. These are not simply good academics, or even great ones, but those rare individuals who institutions fight to get (and keep). Canada's estimated share is 3,000 or so, 10 per cent of the country's full-time academics. So, if these 'superstars' are the currency of the academic world, who exactly are they, and what do they mean for the rest of us? [Western News](#)

2012 sustained long-term climate warming trend, NASA finds: NASA scientists say 2012 was the ninth warmest of any year since 1880, continuing a long-term trend of rising global temperatures. With the exception of 1998, the nine warmest years in the 132-year record all have occurred since 2000, with 2010 and 2005 ranking as the hottest years on record. [Science Daily](#)

Where there's smoke or smog, there's climate change: In addition to causing smoggy skies and chronic coughs, soot -- or black carbon -- turns out to be the number two contributor to global warming. A new study concludes that black carbon, the soot particles in smoke and smog, contributes about twice as much to global warming as previously estimated, even by the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. [ScienceDaily](#)

Limits on global greenhouse gas could reduce climate change damage: Tough limits on global emissions of greenhouse gases could avoid between 20-65% of the damaging effects of climate change by 2100, according to new research. The most stringent emissions scenario in the study keeps global temperature rise below 2 degrees C and global greenhouse gas emissions peaking in 2016 and then reducing at 5% per year until 2050. [Universities News](#)

Some not so “Geographical” News



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