



News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
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Compiled by Dan Smith [<cag@geog.uvic.ca>](mailto:cag@geog.uvic.ca)

McMaster U's Richard Harris writes that most are stumped when asked to define the suburbs and are unsure if they live in one: Richard Harris, a professor in the School of Geography & Earth Sciences at McMaster University, writes "Lately the suburbs have been getting a bad rap from just about everyone. Except those who live there. Who, it turns out, are the majority of Canadians... Suburbs have been getting a bad rap, above all, from the urban experts and planners who, instead, have been promoting "densification." The media has picked up on this theme. Jenna Roberts, another MA student in geography at McMaster, has been tracking coverage of the suburbs in *The Spectator* and the *Toronto Star* during the past two decades. She has found that more than half of all coverage of the suburbs has been critical — usually because of their effects on health and the environment. About a quarter has been neutral, and only a fifth has been positive. Before we start asking how many suburbanites agree with the experts' criticisms, we might ask a more basic question: Are they even getting the message? If a newspaper reader — or a TV viewer or a radio listener — isn't sure about what type of area they live in, then criticism (or, for that matter praise) of the suburbs won't seem very relevant. Maybe, to get their point across, instead of writing and talking about the suburbs the experts need to show more maps." thespec.com

McGill U's Natalie Oswin's thought-provoking interview with Dean Spade: Prof Natalie Oswin's [thought-provoking interview](#) with Dean Spade, a founder of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (a non-profit law collective that provides free legal services to transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming people who are low-income and/or people of color). *Natalie Oswin:* Normal Life is a wonderfully rich and incredibly clear book that advances what you term a critical trans politics. To give our readers a bit of an introduction to the work, can you briefly rehearse your arguments about the shortcomings of equality approaches and the "limits of law" and talk about their genesis? *Dean Spade:* My work is heavily influenced by critiques that many critical intellectual traditions, especially Critical Race Theory, have made of reform projects focused on legal equality. I came of age during a time when legal equality strategies were coming to dominate as the most visible, resourced approaches to transforming the harm and violence faced by queer people. These methods have become so dominant that queer resistance is now synonymous with legal equality frameworks, most commonly identified as marriage law reform, and anti-discrimination laws and hate crime laws that include sexual orientation. Normal Life looks at the current moment in trans politics, understanding that it is often assumed that trans resistance strategies should mimic the lesbian and gay legal rights frameworks that have become so visible in recent decades. [Society and Space –Environment and Planning D.](#)

U Saskatchewan’s Bob Patrick facilitates source water protection planning workshop in Yellowknife: Using a guidance document and template that he developed for the Government of the NWT, Bob engaged NGOs and consultants in Yellowknife to help build local capacity in the North to work with NWT communities wanting source water protection plans. Bob and his grad students are currently working with First Nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan to help protect drinking water sources and maintain water security. Many First Nation communities in Canada face potable water supply challenges with 1 in 5 communities on some form of water advisory. Planning and plan-making is very empowering, unifying, for small communities. Local and traditional knowledge plays a major role in source water protection planning and helps to inform western science. [NWT Water Stewardship](#)

U Montréal’s Patricia Martin writes deportation of Ivonne Hernandez Segura would be a clear case of gender injustice: The proposed deportation of Ivonne Hernandez Segura to Mexico, her country of birth, represents a clear case of gender injustice that is transnational in scope. Actions taken in Canada against her are simply reinforcing rather than disrupting the gender violence that she was attempting to escape in her home country. Hernandez fled Mexico to escape an abusive relationship at the hands of a Mexican federal police officer. Having been denied asylum, Hernandez made the very difficult decision to remain in Canada rather than return willingly to Mexico. She married a Canadian citizen and gave birth to a baby boy in December 2012. Her home environment became increasingly violent psychologically and emotionally. Early last month, she lost custody of her child, and two weeks ago, immigration officials seized her in the Berri-UQAM métro station as she was going to pick up her son for one of her official bi-weekly visits. Immigration officials then placed her in detention, releasing her two days later. In a subsequent immigration hearing, she was instructed to leave Canada. [The Gazette](#)

SFU PhD geography candidate Josh Labove speaks about gentrification in Chinatown: Four years ago this month, former bartender Tannis Ling took a deep breath and opened the glass doors to her very own restaurant, Bao Bei Chinese Brasserie in Chinatown. Concern over who operates and visits Chinatown businesses isn’t just found online. For some, it points to a political question of how success for Chinatown is defined. “The folks at Bao Bei are probably booked solid so job well done for them,” said Josh Labove, a PhD geography candidate at SFU who studies the political geography of Vancouver, including gentrification. “But what is the goal? Is the goal to bring back the Chinese community, is the goal for it to have a mix of all walks of life living in the neighbourhood, is the goal to revitalize the neighbourhood — as if it is in need of revitalization— or is the goal something entirely different, we don’t know”. “It is definitely changing the face of Chinatown, bringing it back in a way to its original days of being the it spot to go partying,” he said. For Labove, questions about new businesses go hand in hand with questions about new condo towers in Chinatown — a 17-storey condo complex is under construction next door to Bao Bei. The towers can sell out, but that doesn’t necessarily mean such developments are good for the community, he said. Ling sits on the Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee, and said she was surprised that established Chinatown members of the committee welcomed the new developments. “I want to preserve everything and keep everything low and quaint,” she said. “Whereas for them, they see this as a development opportunity for the neighbourhood, for more people to move in, more money.” Both Ling and Labove agree that Chinatown is complex and historically important. The best direction forward, remains up for debate even as hungry patrons crowd in to Bao Bei. [Vancouver Courier](#)

SFU’s Nick Hedley and undergraduate student Alex Chan speak about a new geo-visualization tool co-created by SFU researchers: SFU associate professor of geography Nick Hedley and undergraduate student Alex Chan spoke with CKNW about a new geo-visualization tool co-created by SFU researchers. The tool predicts the impact of rising sea levels on coastlines and whether homes are in danger as these erode. CKNW TWTW (~1:10): [TWTW](#)

Geographer Sarah Boon, Editorial Manager of Science Borealis: Today's subject is Sarah Boon, Editorial Manager of Canadian science blogging aggregator [Science Borealis](#). She blogs at Watershed Moments about the environment, science communication & policy, and women in science. She is a member of the Canadian Science Writer's Association, Editor's Association of Canada, and The Explorer's Club, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society in 2013. Find her on Twitter: @snowhydro. Sarah's article in the iPolitics series was [An 'abundance' of bears: Aglukkaq cold-shoulders the science](#). [ScienceBlogs](#)

SFU's Meg Holden talks about a study that examines Metro Vancouver's ballooning population: Meg Holden talks about a study that examines Metro Vancouver's ballooning population and how this growth can be met in a sustainable, affordable way. Podcast (~1:49:59): [CBC Radio](#)

2nd Annual Thesis Improv at UBC Geography: Many people get anxious feeling like they have to present if they show up. A first year graduate student told me he wanted to attend but hadn't started on his thesis yet so he wasn't able to present on anything. And it's fine that he didn't have a thesis yet—you can present about anything! We are also trying to encourage more faculty and staff members to go as well. [UBC Geography](#)

Spatial Knowledge and Information – Canada conference (SKI)

The fourth Spatial Knowledge and Information – Canada conference (SKI) was held in Banff between 6-9 February, 2014 (rose.geog.mcgill.ca/ski) and was a great success. The conference mixes the practical and the theoretical by showcasing presentations by students, professors, and professionals from Canada and beyond, while also providing opportunities for outdoor winter activities (e.g., skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, skating) that promote networking. The mixture of academic and social activities have been a strong draw for attendees at this conference. This year, four awards were distributed to students with exceptional presentations, rated on content, their presentation quality, and delivery. Two winners and two runners-up were selected by a panel of independent and impartial judges. [The Convergence Network](#), an incubator for geospatial innovation, donated two top prizes of \$500 and were presented by Dr. Mir Abolfazi Mostafavi, the network's Director. Two runner-up prizes of \$250 each were donated by the [GIScience Study Group](#) of the Canadian Association of Geographers and were presented by Dr. Tarmo Rimmel, the Chair of the Study Group.

This year's winners were:

Michael Allchin (University of Northern British Columbia): [Application of Growing Self-Organising Maps to the Classification of Catchment Form and Forcing](#)

Mathieu Bourbonnais (University of Victoria): [Quantifying and Predicting Wildlife Movement-A State of the Knowledge Review](#)

This year's runners-up were:

Stephanie Piper (University of Waterloo): [The Value of Open Data](#)

Blake Walker (Simon Fraser University): [Spatial Patterns of Head and Neck Cancers in British Columbia](#)

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Elijah Bisung and Susan Elliott. 2014. [Toward a social capital based framework for understanding the water-health nexus](#). Social Science & Medicine. doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.01.042

Mikhail Kanevskiy, Torre Jorgenson, Yuri Shur, Jonathan A. O'Donnell, Jennifer W. Harden, Qianlai Zhuang and Daniel Fortier. 2014. [Cryostratigraphy and permafrost evolution in the lacustrine lowlands of west-central Alaska](#). Permafrost and Periglacial Processes. DOI: 10.1002/ppp.1800

Oona Morrow, Roberta Hawkins and Leslie Kern. 2014. [Feminist research in online spaces](#). Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography.

Pablo Wainstein, Brian Moorman and Ken Whitehead. 2014. [Glacial conditions that contribute to the regeneration of Fountain Glacier proglacial icing, Bylot Island, Canada](#). Hydrological Processes 28:2749–2760.

Other “Geographical” News

National Survey of Student Engagement: Canadian results: The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) targets first-year and senior-year students with questions about their university experience. In 2013, 27 Canadian schools and 20,795 students took part in the survey, a response rate of 37 per cent. These NSSE charts include schools that conducted the survey in 2012, unless they repeated the exercise last year. Responses are ordered according to the percentage who chose the highest level of satisfaction, e.g. “excellent.” [Macleans.ca](#)

Now that I have tenure, what’s next? Achieving tenure, or its equivalent, is a remarkable feat. In today’s academic environment, it requires years, if not decades, of intense academic study, poorly compensated postdoctoral fellowships and overwhelming sessional teaching responsibilities. So it’s not surprising that once the celebration is over, many recently tenured professors struggle. After thinking about peer-reviewed publications (or, in teaching-focused institutions, innovative course development and delivery techniques) for their entire career, now they face a degree of freedom that can be confounding. Not all those who achieve tenure share the same academic goals. But there should be one theme that ties every post-tenure experience together: a commitment to service. Early-career faculty are rightly encouraged to focus on meeting the qualifications for tenure established by their departments. Since service is rarely a determining factor in tenure cases, it is rarely a priority. Achieving tenure can, and should, change such thinking. [University Affairs](#)

Canada’s new anti-spam law could pose challenges for universities: Universities are grappling with how to comply with provisions of Canada’s new anti-spam law that will prohibit unsolicited electronic messages such as emails and texts. The law, set to come into force on July 1, is meant to crack down on unwanted spam and to protect consumers from harassment, identity theft, spyware and fraud. Once in force, the law will prohibit companies and other organizations from sending “commercial electronic messages” such as emails and texts without first obtaining a recipient’s consent. Universities had sought a blanket exemption from the legislation, arguing that a ban on all electronic messages would inhibit communication practices that are part of their core educational activities. [University Affairs](#)

Toxic kitty litter parasite found in arctic whales: A parasite found in cat feces, scooped out from litter boxes and flushed down the toilet, is showing up in Arctic beluga whales in a finding that is one of the most graphic examples of the world's changing ecosystems. How the parasite made its way into western Arctic Belugas is no mystery. Arctic ice, once a formidable barrier for distant pathogens, is melting, allowing an unprecedented passageway between the far north and warmer climates in the lower latitudes. "What we're seeing with the big thaw is the liberation of pathogens gaining access to vulnerable new hosts and wreaking havoc". [DNews](#) | [UBC News](#)

Some not so "Geographical" News

The End of Snow? The planet has warmed 1.7 degrees C since the 1800s, and as a result, snow is melting. In the last 47 years, a 2.6 million square kms of spring snow cover has disappeared from the Northern Hemisphere. Europe has lost half of its Alpine glacial ice since the 1850s, and if climate change is not reined in, two-thirds of European ski resorts will be likely to close by 2100. The facts are straightforward: The planet is getting hotter. [The New York Times](#)



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