News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
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U Toronto's Deborah Cowen contribute to award-winning NFB series exploring the universe within highrise apartments: Two University of Toronto researchers played a key role in creating the final instalment of the award-winning "HIGHRISE" documentary series, released today by the National Film Board. U of T geography Professor Deborah Cowen and Faculty of Social Work senior research associate Emily Paradis worked with filmmaker Katerina Cizek to conceive of the overall project – and to research, collect and analyze data that informs this last instalment. The online stories take viewers into the hearts, minds and computers of apartment dwellers in 18 cities, including Guangzhou, China, the suburbs of Mumbai, New York's public housing projects and Toronto's Rexdale community. At U of T, Cowen studies the changes in Toronto's inner suburbs. Paradis conducts research on issues of housing and homelessness, and is manager of Prof. David Hulchanski's Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership. For Cowen and Paradis, their research results – some of it funded with a partnership development grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada – opened their eyes to how important digital technology has become in some of Toronto's most impoverished communities. The researchers found that 80% of households in the Rexdale apartment complex they studied – even though it was located in one of Toronto's most precarious and low income communities – had Internet access either at home or through their mobile phone. "When you're working in primarily diasporic communities where most people are tied to people, places around the world, the digital has assumed an importance that was quite stunning to us," Cowen said. U Toronto Media Room

Wilfrid Laurier University's Changing Arctic Network research team awarded 3.2 million in funding from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) to continue to build Laurier's global leadership in cold regions environmental research. CANet is interested in changes in flood frequency of rivers, in changes of water quality and in changes to the fish that inhabit these waters. "CANet will couple state-of-the-science research stations with neighbouring communities to facilitate knowledge development and sharing between scientists and local land users," said William Quinton, associate professor of Geography and Environmental Studies and Canada Research Chair in Cold Regions Hydrology. In addition to research stations, the infrastructure funding will support 20 "living laboratories", each representing a widely occurring bio-physical environment; plus, updates to three environment and natural resources laboratories in the Northwest Territories. Partners on the project include the Government of the Northwest Territories, Université de Montréal, the University of Guelph and the Laurier Institute of Water Science and the Cold Regions Research Centre. Morning Post Exchange

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Memorial U's Arn Keeling on the Boom and Bust Crisis in Labrador West: On the surface, the neighbouring communities of Labrador City and Wabush look prosperous: new homes, new vehicles, a new college campus, major retail outlets and restaurant franchises, as well as an array of new and expanded recreational facilities such as a popular skateboard park. But the outward appearance of prosperity masks the stark realities of a region experiencing an unprecedented economic bust, something that becomes apparent from the many 'for sale' signs on residential properties. As a mineral-dependent region, Labrador West has seen ups and downs before. But a recent visit to the communities and discussions with local residents and officials underscored the speed and worrying depth of this current crisis. Hit by a collapse in global iron prices, the Wabush mine, previously operated by Cliffs Natural Resources, is entirely closed down, while the Labrador City mine, operated by Rio Tinto-IOC, is in slowdown and has been laying off workers. Food bank visits have surged, and in recent days there have been demonstrations by workers in Labrador West against the layoffs. Cliffs Natural Resources recently discontinued health and life insurance benefits for Wabush Mines retirees. Now that the high times are over, families and the region as a whole are scrambling to deal with the bust. Colin Vardy, Mayor of Wabush, says the municipality is also having to make difficult decisions in recent months, but has received some support from the provincial government to ease the pain, according to a formula by which the government support decreases each year. "When Wabush Mines closed we lost in excess of $2 million in grants. So the province came on with a program for us, which gives us 90 per cent [of the lost $2 million grant] in the first year, 60 per cent in the second year, and 30 percent in the third year. "We're actually making cuts on a day-to-day basis," Vardy continues. "I personally want to do this with minimal job loss. The Independent.ca

Concordia U's Jochen Jaeger calls for an innovative approach to studying the success of roadkill prevention: For many Canadians, summer holidays mean hitting the highway — but nothing puts a damper on a road trip like an accidental collision with a deer. For Jochen Jaeger, a professor in Concordia's Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, improving roadkill prevention is best approached through experimentation. In a study recently published in the Journal of Environmental Management, Jaeger and a group of co-authors from international universities show that protecting animals from speeding vehicles doesn't have a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, a more detailed understanding of preventive measures should be gained through scientific experiments. The study looks at the key questions asked by road planners, and uses case studies ranging from examples in the Greater Toronto Area to the wilds of Western Australia to illustrate how best to study the question how well mitigation measures for reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions work. The first questions are the most fundamental: Does a certain type of crossing structure work better than another? What type and size of crossing structures should we use? How many crossing structures are needed on a certain stretch of road? "Now that preventing roadkill has become a concern for both protecting biodiversity and increasing driver safety, planners want to know what types of preventative constructions will result in the least collisions possible — ideally, none at all," says Jaeger. "It's also important to see we can learn more effectively about the features that can improve their performance." The study identifies a set of feasible experiments and recommends that researchers and road planners collaborate as early as possible in any given road project to implement the option that will be the most informative, given the project's constraints. "To build mitigation knowledge that can be applied in a variety of situations, we need to move from asking whether species X uses a wildlife passage at location Z to broader questions relevant to different species, landscapes, other roads or new road projects," says Jaeger. "But there's only so much you can learn on a case-by-case basis. To move to the next level of understanding, we need to do manipulative experiments that allow the application of statistical methods to quantify the relationships between the dimensions of mitigation measures and their benefit for wildlife populations," says Jaeger. Concordia News

U British Columbia's Olav Slaymaker awarded the CAG's Award for Scholarly Distinction. Professor Emeritus Olav Slaymaker who has been awarded the Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography by the Canadian Association of Geographers for his life-long and continuing contributions to Canadian geomorphology and environment-society relations.

U British Columbia's Matthew Dyce wins the CAG Starkey-Robinson Award. Recent PhD (2014) graduate Matthew Dyce was awarded the Canadian Association of Geographers Starkey-Robinson Award for his dissertation, *A Spatial History of Canada: Archives, Knowledge, and Geography*.

Western U's Chantelle Richmond is the 2015 recipient of the CAG's Julian Szeicz Award. This award recognizes her career potential by a Canadian geographer at an early career stage, and her outstanding research achievements in the area of the geographies of Indigenous Health, with a focus on applied Community Based Research and knowledge translation. Since becoming an independent researcher, her major research milestones include a prestigious CIHR New Investigator Award (2010-2015), and more recently, Dr. Richmond was the recipient of the highly competitive Early Researcher Award, Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation (2014-2019).

U Toronto's Don Boyes awarded the CAG's Award for Excellence In Teaching Geography. The award recognizes Don's innovative approaches to teaching and learning GIS.

McGill U Doctoral student Camille O. Dallaire's global map of rivers, Eaurizon Global, is one of 20 finalists in a scientific imagry competition sponsored by L'Association francophone pour le savoir. Click here to cast your vote (image #11).

Western U PhD candidate Nati Bergman telling story about when giant lake covered London 13,000 years ago. London Free Press

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New in The Canadian Geographer

Daniel W. Harrington and Susan J. Elliott. 2015. Understanding emerging environmental health risks: A framework for responding to the unknown. The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. DOI:10.1111/cag.12198

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Jason S. Lessels, Doerthe Tetzlaff, Sean K Carey, Pete Smith and Chris Soulsby. 2015. A coupled hydrology-biogeochemistry model to simulate dissolved organic carbon exports from a permafrost influenced catchment. Hydrological Processes. DOI: 10.1002/hyp.10566

Di Wan, Jody M. Klymak, Michael G.G. Foreman and Stephen F. Cross. 2015. Barotropic tidal dynamics in a frictional subsidiary channel. Continental Shelf Research. DOI:10.1016/j.csr.2015.05.011

Other "Geographical" News

Are there too many PhDs? Turns out, maybe not: A look at where PhDs end up after leaving the Ivory Tower: There are 208,480 PhDs in Canada with more than 6,000 joining the ranks of "doctor" each year. Based on the conventional view that doctorate programs are meant to train students for the breezy life of a tenured prof — but with only 20 per cent achieving that goal — thousands of PhDs are left untrained for post-grad professional life. Are they left unfulfilled and unhappy in jobs which are wasting their skills? "If the purpose of a PhD is to train people for academia, then we produce way too many," said Munro, 42, a researcher with The Conference Board of Canada. "By contrast, if you think the purpose of a PhD is to produce advanced researchers, then, well, maybe we don't produce too many. Maybe we produce just the right amount." Globe and Mail

Time for a teaching-intensive tenure track: We propose, as a way of undoing the deprofessionalization of the profession of college teaching, a teaching-intensive tenure track for nontenure-track faculty members with Ph.D.s and good teaching records. We agree with the American Association of University Professors report "Tenure and Teaching-Intensive Positions," which offers a decisive rebuttal to the idea that tenure is intended solely for research purposes -— as well as an array of models for a teaching-intensive tenure track. As for the charge that our plan is ambitious, we certainly hope so — and we hope that administrators and faculty senates eager to improve their colleges are similarly ambitious. The Chronicle of Higher Education

'Mother Canada' statue doesn't belong on protected Cape Breton land: An 8-storey war memorial planned for the Nova Scotia coastline is making waves with a group who says the massive statue does nothing for veterans and doesn't belong on protected land. "Green Cove is an utterly inappropriate location for such a massive concrete-and-steel complex," said Sean Howard, an adjunct professor at Cape Breton University. "Green Cove would be harmed beyond measure or recovery by the construction — that is, destruction — being planned." Toronto Sun

Geography under threat as pupil numbers plummet in majority of Scottish schools: A poll by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) and the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers (SAGT) found 87 per cent of teachers said there had been a "large drop" in take-up. The survey found the rate of decline varied from a 25 per cent drop to 100 per cent - with geography ceasing to be taught above S3 in some schools. Herald Scotland

Interruption of Gulf Stream may lead to large cooling in Europe: A new record of past climate change shows that a warm climate in northern Europe can be hit by a sudden cooling associated with an interruption of the North Atlantic Ocean circulation and the Gulf Stream. This study investigates the development of northern European climate about 120 thousand years ago. ScienceDaily

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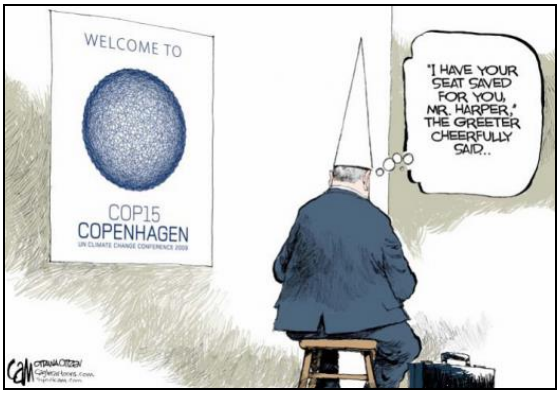
Some not so "Geographical" News



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