



**News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers  
No. 401, April 22, 2016**

Compiled by Dan Smith [<cag@geog.uvic.ca>](mailto:cag@geog.uvic.ca)

**Mount Allison U's Joshua Kurek receives research funding to study environmental change in lakes and rivers:** Joshua Kurek was awarded funding from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation through the John R. Evans Leaders Fund. With this new research infrastructure funding, Kurek will establish the Environmental Change and Aquatic Biomonitoring Lab at Mount Allison. "My research program focuses on understanding how environmental stressors impact lakes and rivers," explained Kurek. "Having essential equipment both in the lab and in the field will allow us to get a better picture of long-term environmental changes and what they mean to freshwaters". Kurek and his research team, made up of several Mount Allison undergraduate students, will be studying lakes and rivers in Maritime Canada this summer. They will be looking specifically at potential impacts of recent environmental changes, including the freshwater algae didymo (commonly known as rock snot) on juvenile salmon habitat and diet. "Although their impact on salmon habitat is still under assessment, didymo blooms are believed to be caused by changes in environmental conditions now favoring its bloom proliferation (ie shifts in nutrients and indirect effects of climate change)," explains Kurek. "Impacts to aquatic habitat and biota (e.g. juvenile salmon) are expected if blooms persist." [Amherst News Citizen-Record](#) | [Sackville Tribune-Post](#)

**Carleton University's Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre's New Digital Atlas Returns Early Traditional Knowledge to Inuit Communities:** The [Kitikmeot Heritage Society](#) launched the [Fifth Thule Atlas](#), a digital platform that compiles ethnographic information collected by early Arctic explorers and returns it to descendant Inuit populations before it is lost. The atlas is a novel approach to cybercartography, combining various forms of geo-located knowledge to map Inuit stories, artifacts and place names. It has been specifically designed to accommodate Inuit approaches to learning, storing and disseminating cultural knowledge. The framework has lower bandwidth requirements to ensure accessibility in northern and remote communities. This project was initiated by the Inuit community, with the support of the Kitikmeot Heritage Society. In partnership with Carleton University's Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre (GCRC) and the National Museum of Denmark, the group developed this digital knowledge bank. Using GCRC's Nunaliit framework, the atlas allows users to navigate Inuit knowledge through intertwined approaches: physical space, written reports, multimedia images and video. The first phase of work on the atlas is now complete, but this is just the beginning. It has been designed to showcase knowledge related to the Copper Inuit of the Central Arctic, one of four regional Inuit groups encountered by Rasmussen's expedition. [Carleton Newsroom](#)

**U Toronto Mississauga PhD student Léa Ravensbergen receives AAG awards:** U of Toronto Mississauga PhD student Léa Ravensbergen walks the walk. Or perhaps more aptly, she rides the ride. An avid cyclist, and all around healthy-transportation and -lifestyle enthusiast, her research on both health and transportation geography garnered her not just one, but two, prestigious awards that the American Association of Geographers (AAG) gives annually to exceptional graduate students. “I’ve always wanted to be a multidisciplinary researcher, but worried that it’s difficult to be really competent in both,” says Ravensbergen. “So this was a nice validation of my work in each area.” AAG awarded Ravensbergen the Transportation Geography specialty group’s Outstanding Master’s Thesis Award, and the Healthy and Medical Geography Specialty Groups’ Masters’ Level Jacques May Thesis Prize. The submissions were for the two research areas she covers that are separate fields, but they definitely share overlap. “If you think about active travel as a really clear example of how health and transportation are related. When you walk or bike to get to places, your transport is a workout,” says Ravensbergen, who focused on differences in accessibility of children coming from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. [UTM News](#)

**@UNBCGeography researchers study Kokanee Glacier:** While everyone understands that our climate is changing, we don’t always know how it is affecting our environment and what it means for our communities. A team of researchers from the University of Northern BC is on Kokanee Glacier to determine how much snow accumulated over the past winter compared to how much ice melted in the past year. PhD student Ben Pelto is heading up the research team under direction of Dr. Brian Menounos, a Canada research chair in glacier change. “Kokanee is the southernmost glacier in the Columbia region so it is particularly sensitive to climate change,” explained Pelto. “In each year of our study, Kokanee glacier has lost mass or gotten smaller.” Of the two ingredients which determine glacier health, melt and snowpack, melt is the dominant factor. Hotter, longer summers and earlier springs are leading to increased melt, and it takes well above average snowpack to simply break even, or not lose mass, for glaciers like the Kokanee. [Nelson Star](#)

**Memorial U’s Trevor Bell on the Muskrat Falls Project:** Today is both a good day and a bad day for Nunatsiavut and its people, the Labrador Inuit. A good day because they released the results of their project *Lake Melville: Our Environment, Our Health*. The report represents a significant achievement for Labrador Inuit and other Indigenous communities across Canada who are struggling to have their voices heard, constitutional rights respected and social justice realized in resource development projects that directly affect them. This is the study that Nalcor Energy should have done as proponent for the Muskrat Falls project and one that both federal and provincial governments should have made them do, if they had heeded the recommendations of the project’s Environmental Assessment Joint Review Panel. For Nunatsiavut, the downstream impacts of the Muskrat Falls project on their people and homeland are potentially too devastating to leave to chance, or to Nalcor’s speculative calculations. To address this uncertainty, Nunatsiavut initiated the *Lake Melville: Our Environment, Our Health* project. They assembled a team of independent researchers from Memorial University, the University of Manitoba, and Harvard University to carry out a detailed study of Lake Melville estuary, and most notably the downstream fate of methylmercury – a particularly nasty toxin for humans that is abundantly produced in newly flooded reservoirs. It was a bad day because of the report findings. The results of the methylmercury research led by Harvard University not only substantiate the Joint Review Panel’s scepticism of Nalcor’s claims of “no measurable effects” downstream, they also indicate that under the current Nalcor plan for reservoir clearing, there will likely be significant bioaccumulation of methylmercury in the Lake Melville food web. Because of their reliance on fish, seals and other wild foods for their diet, hundreds of Labrador Inuit living on Lake Melville will be exposed to methylmercury above regulatory guidelines. So what is to be done? Must Labrador Inuit be given a chronic dose of methylmercury in order to provide “clean” energy to the rest of the province and beyond? Is it simply the cost of doing business? [Memorial U Gazette](#)

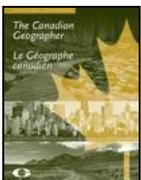
**U Saskatchewan's John Pomeroy warns 'Desert-dry' Saskatchewan primed for wildfires:** “It’s already started in Western Canada and the fires have been going for several weeks in Alberta. And now these massive fires in British Columbia are far earlier than normal,” said John Pomeroy, director of the Centre for Hydrology at the University of Saskatchewan. According to NASA and Environment Canada data, average monthly temperatures in January, February and March have been four degrees warmer than normal over the Prairies. Some areas have been up to six degrees warmer than normal. Pomeroy said he’s seeing “crazy” snow melt and a daytime high of 27 C, smashing the previous record for the date. “What we’re seeing is what Western Canada looks like if you warm it up by the amounts predicted under climate change models,” he said. Pomeroy said the result in Saskatchewan is an early snow melt, exposing soil to dry winds that have sucked out moisture. [Saskatoon StarPhoenix](#)

**Did York U's Bill Mahaney find Hannibal's route through the Alps?** Thanks to some prehistoric mud and a single tape worm egg, a team led by York University Professor Bill Mahaney claims it has evidence proving which pass was used to invade Rome. The answer to one of history's oldest debates might lie in horse dung. In 218 BCE Carthaginian commander Hannibal's army and its famous elephants packed their trunks and invaded Italy by doing what many thought impossible — crossing the Alps. Historical accounts describe different landmarks along the route the troops took, but the actual trail that the force, complete with cavalry and the aforementioned African elephants, used to cross the mountains remains a mystery. Now, a team led by York University professor Emeritus Bill Mahaney claims it's solved the puzzle of which path was taken thanks to ancient horse manure and a tiny tape worm egg. [Toronto Star](#)

**Memorial U's Alistair Bath on co-existing with coyotes:** You are more likely to be struck by lightning seven times before being attacked by an animal predator. With odds like that, why are people so worried about the presence of coyotes? Dr. Alistair Bath, Department of Geography, has studied coyote/human interactions, particularly in Cape Breton Highlands National Park and on the island portion of Newfoundland. When asked if coyotes are common in Newfoundland, Alistair said “Coyotes first appeared in this province on the West Coast in the mid-1980s, so they are still relatively new here. Right now there is limited data available on how many exist, although we do know they are now everywhere on the island. It's not unusual to see coyotes in urban areas. They are naturally expanding their range and are found throughout North America. In many cities, such as Toronto and Vancouver, there are coyote populations in the thousands. In places on the mainland where residents have built a tolerance and acceptance for wildlife, coyotes have been spotted in city parks and they're not seen as a threat towards people. There are instances of coyotes attacking cats and small dogs. Obviously it's a concern to pet owners, but in terms of likelihood it's still a rare event. I have a cat that spent a lot of time outdoors for the past 15 years and have seen coyote scat even on my lawn in Middle Cove, and I haven't tried to restrict her wanderings in light of the coyote population. [Memorial U Gazette](#)

---

New in [The Canadian Geographer](#)



Marcia R. England. 2016. [Being open in academia: A personal narrative of mental illness and disclosure](#). The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. DOI: 10.1111/cag.12270

---

## Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Richard Arsenault, Rachel Bazil, Camille Ouellet Dallaire and François Brissette 2016. [CANOPEX: A Canadian hydrometeorological watershed database](#). Hydrological Processes DOI:10.1002/hyp.10880

Irena F. Creed, Roland Cormier, Katrina L. Laurent, Francesco Accatino, Jason Igras, Phaedra Henley, Kathryn B. Friedman, Lucinda B. Johnson, Jill Crossman, Peter J. Dillon and Charles G. Trick. 206. [Formal integration of science and management systems needed to achieve thriving and prosperous Great Lakes](#). BioScience. DOI:10.1093/biosci/biw030

Matthew C. Elmes, Johan A. Wiklund, Stacey R. Van Opstal, Brent B. Wolfe and Roland I. Hall. 2016. [Characterizing baseline concentrations, proportions, and processes controlling deposition of river-transported bitumen-associated polycyclic aromatic compounds at a floodplain lake \(Slave River Delta, Northwest Territories, Canada\)](#). Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. DOI:10.1007/s10661-016-5277-4

Roberta Hawkins, Karen Falconer Al-Hindi, Pamela Moss and Leslie Kern. 2016. [Practicing collective biography](#). Geography Compass 10: 165–178.

Anthony Jjumba and Suzana Dragicevic. 2016. [A development of spatiotemporal queries to analyze the simulation outcomes from a voxel automata model](#). Earth Science Informatics DOI:10.1007/s12145-016-0260-8

Hanson Nyantakyi-Frimpong, Godwin Arku and Daniel Kweku Baah Inkoom. 2016. [Urban agriculture and political ecology of health in municipal Ashaiman, Ghana](#). Geoforum 72:38–48.

Sergio Rossi, Tommaso Anfodillo, Katarina Čufar, Henri E. Cuny, Annie Deslauriers, Patrick Fonti, David Frank, Jožica Gričar, Andreas Gruber, Jian-Guo Huang, Tuula Jyske, Jakub Kašpar, Gregory King, Cornelia Krause, Eryuan Liang, Harri Mäkinen, Hubert Morin, Pekka Nöjd, Walter Oberhuber, Peter Prislan, Cyrille B.K. Rathgeber, Antonio Saracino, Irene Swidrak and Václav Tremł. 2016. [Pattern of xylem phenology in conifers of cold ecosystems at the northern hemisphere](#). Global Change Biology. DOI: 10.1111/gcb.13317



**U Regina's Emily Eaton** launches new site about her research on oil impacts in Saskatchewan (often forgotten, but Canada's second largest oil producer). [saskoil.org](#)

**U Victoria Chris Darimont et al.** *Science* paper on "[The unique ecology of human predators](#)" drives university rankings. [Nature Index](#)

**Simon Fraser U's Alison Gill** presented with John Rooney Award 2016 for outstanding contributions to the field and discipline of Applied Recreation, Tourism and Sport Geography. [SFU Geography](#)

---

## Other “Geographical” News

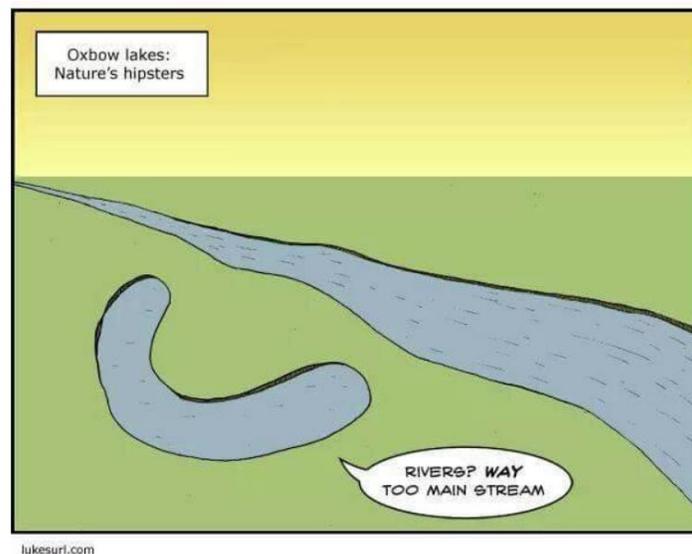
**UBC to consider banning romantic relationships between faculty, students:** The president of the University of British Columbia has directed school officials to examine whether professors should be barred from having romantic relationships with their students, saying there’s an inevitable power imbalance in such liaisons that raise questions about consent. Martha Piper, who is interim president of the university, said she is not aware of any Canadian university that has such a ban. She noted the subject is difficult, but said she is troubled by such relationships. “It’s just like a physician and patient. Is it okay if it’s consensual between a physician and a patient? No. In a power situation where somebody has power over your career, your advancement, your grades, you may say you consent because of the power situation.” [Globe and Mail](#)

**Exam fiascos: what's the worst that could happen?** Months of labouring away over cue cards, revision guides and copious amounts of Red Bull can be sabotaged by an unpredictable disaster. You can take precautions to keep you ahead of the game, but some crises are unavoidable. And sometimes the smallest issues can be the worst. [The Guardian](#)

**University students are struggling to read entire books:** Students have reacted to claims from university professors that they struggle to read books from cover to cover by admitting it is true - but insisting it's because universities don't give them enough time to finish them. University academics caused a furore this week by claiming many students found the thought of reading books all the way to the end “daunting”, due to shorter attention spans and an inability to focus on complex philosophies. [Independent](#)

---

## Some Not So “Geographical” News



The CAG works for geographers on [Twitter](#). Keep up-to-date by following [@CanGeographers](#)  
GeogNews Archives: <http://www.geog.uvic.ca/dept/cag/geognews/geognews.html>  
[@CanGeographers Weekly](#): <https://paper.li/CanGeographers/1394987315>

---