



**News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
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Concordia U's Pascale Biron urges Quebec to adopt European flood management model: Parts of western and central Quebec have been battling unprecedented flooding for several weeks. Pascale Biron, a professor of geography, planning and environment at Concordia University, says Quebec lacks a centralized, governmental body to oversee, track and maintain data on potential vulnerable flood risk areas. That pales in comparison to many Canadian provinces, parts of the United States and in particular Europe where, since 2007, countries have had to provide flood plain maps and clearly identify at-risk areas. Biron said a simple Internet search in those jurisdictions leads residents to the valuable information. "You never know where the next flood will hit, but at least there's a much better level of preparation from the public safety perspective and you know exactly who's at risk and you can take action," Biron said. "That's where I say we're really behind, because other countries are prepared because it's a very obvious risk we have in Quebec." In Quebec, water management has shifted increasingly to municipalities, while waterfront homes yield more taxes. Biron said those lucrative tax dollars partly explain why politicians lobby hard to get residents to rebuild in the same spot, despite the risks. "There's no incentive for mayors to stop development because, if you do, you're potentially losing a lot of money," Biron said. The province deals with yearly spring flooding, with particularly terrible damage in 2011 in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, near Montreal. Biron lamented there was no data collected from six years ago to use in models, as well as no notable post-mortem documents. While there is a move toward getting more high-resolution elevation data, rectifying the situation doesn't require reinventing the wheel, she said. "We can just use what's done elsewhere (like Europe) and apply it to Quebec," Biron said. "We have the scientists, we have everyone who can do the job. There's no reason why we're so behind. There's just a lack of political willingness to put the structure in place." [CTV News](#)

Concordia U's Jeannine St. Jacques has some straightforward advice on rebuilding on floodplain after floods: People in many parts of Canada are starting the long process of assessing the flood damage in their homes and consider whether to rebuild. Climatologist Jeannine St. Jacques has some straightforward advice on what this means. "We've been building on the flood plains for years, which is insane," said the Concordia University geography professor. She warns that increased flood risk means some people might have to move — even if they've been living in an area for a long time. She admits that's a hard thing for people to hear from an expert like her but "sometimes just staying in place, it's just not going to work." "I'm saying hard and cruel things," says St. Jacques. "But if somebody rebuilds ... and there's a good chance in their lifetime they're going to get flooded out again and have to start again — well, that seems even harder." St. Jacques hopes the latest floods bring these issues home for Canadians. "What I'm hoping is is an aftermath of all of the floods and all of the misery that we're seeing now is that people will start thinking and having this discussion" she says. "I think there's a good chance." [CBCRadio | The Current](#)

Western Geography receives donation to support Graduate Students: An anonymous donor has provide Western Geography with over \$240,000 which will be dedicated to ongoing travel awards and two new scholarships. The *Sumac Travel Award in Geography*: awarded annually effective May 1 2017 to full-time Master or Doctoral students in the Department of Geography. Awards will be based on academic achievement and will enable students to travel to attend and present papers or posters at scholarly conferences and institutes to advance their knowledge and capabilities in this field of study. Total value of the award(s) \$1,800. Two *Sumac Ontario Graduate Scholarships in Geography*: awarded annually to a full-time graduate student in Geography at the Masters or Doctoral level who is a current holder of an Ontario Graduate Scholarship, based on academic achievement and research merit. The first will be effective May 2019. The second will be effective May 2022. Both are valued at \$5,000 and will be matched on a 2:1 basis, bring the total value of the scholarships to \$15,000. Western Geography expresses its appreciation to the donor, and recognizes the efforts of Professor Dan Shrubsole (former Chair) as well as Alumni Relations and Development.

L'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières Ali Assani, c'est la faute à La Niña: Le professeur Ali Assani de l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières savait déjà depuis six mois que le Québec ne l'aurait pas facile ce printemps. «Ce type de temps d'inondations est toujours associé au phénomène de La Niña», explique-t-il. «Nous vivons une année La Niña. C'était exactement le même cas en 2008», raconte ce spécialiste de l'hydrogéologie au département des sciences de l'environnement. Ceux qui s'étaient arraché le coeur à pelleter leur toiture, cette année-là, se souviendront certainement de l'hiver 2008. «La majorité des villes du Québec ont eu l'un des hivers les plus neigeux de leur histoire», rappelle le site web de MétéoMédia, «le plus neigeux en 60. Or, c'était un hiver La Niña, rappelle le professeur Assani. Contrairement au courant El Niño, qui entraîne de la sécheresse au Québec, La Niña «est un courant marin froid qui provoque beaucoup de précipitations», le tout accompagné de températures froides, précise-t-il. Normalement, durant une année La Niña, comme cette année, «on reçoit beaucoup de quantités de neige en hiver accompagnée de beaucoup de précipitations au printemps», dit-il. Depuis 1950, le Québec n'a enregistré que 10 événements La Niña, dit-il. Le printemps 2017 sera le dixième de la liste. «À chaque année associée à La Niña, les débits printaniers sont toujours très élevés», dit-il. Géographie-UQTR

U Calgary's Brent Else measuring ocean acidification: When Arctic scientist Brent Else was a PhD student, he spent much of his time working on the CCGS Amundsen, Canada's only dedicated research icebreaker. The Amundsen typically allows scientific missions from June to October, and working aboard the ship presented challenges – fighting for time with the other researchers onboard, the ship was always moving, sometimes sailing past places of interest and never staying anywhere too long. One day in 2014, Else, now an assistant professor in the Department of Geography in UCalgary's Faculty of Arts, realized he had to get off the ships, for at least part of the time, and work on a smaller scale. “I realized that to answer questions such as how is the Arctic changing, we have to take some measurements in some spots for a period of time,” Else says. “That meant I needed to move some of my research onto land where it could be more community-based. I wanted to focus on a location and understand what is going on there through the year, as opposed to sailing from place to place.” Else's research concentrates on air-gas exchange processes in the Arctic seas, Arctic marine carbon cycles, ocean acidification and sea-ice energy balance. Additionally, Else conducts sea ice camps on shore, where he and other researchers sample the underlying ocean and sea ice in an effort to understand the impact of physical and biogeochemical processes on the marine carbon system. Sea ice can provide clues regarding where gases are modified and exchanged with the atmosphere. Armed with a \$100,000 Marine Environmental Observation, Prediction and Response (MEOPAR) network grant, Else installed a weather observatory on a small, rocky island in the Northwest Passage. [UCalgary](#)



New in [The Canadian Geographer](#)

Mark Gill and Jon Corbett. 2017. [Downscaling: Understanding the influence of open data initiatives in smaller and mid-sized cities in British Columbia, Canada](#). The Canadian Geographer. DOI:10.1111/cag.12372

It is increasingly acknowledged that open data has the potential to change the way that government, citizens, and organizations exchange, access, and use data. Canada's Open Government Initiative directly supports a more transparent, accountable, and participatory approach to freely licensed, machine readable data at all levels of government. Our research presents an analysis of British Columbia's current open data initiatives. We have developed and tested a heuristic evaluation tool that we applied to all municipal open data websites in British Columbia. The technique assesses the content, accessibility, and functionality of these sites and their associated data. We argue that there is a lack of attention paid to the usability of open data portals in current evaluation tools. In addition, using metrics developed by the Open Data Barometer, we qualitatively assess the data found for specific usability characteristics. Finally, following research on how smaller municipal governments conceive of open data, we test if there is a link between the size of a municipality and the efficacy of their open data portal. Through this analysis, we aim to provide a clearer understanding of how Canada's open data movement is being translated at the smaller and mid-sized city scale in British Columbia.

Adela Tesarek Kincaid and Amber J. Fletcher. 2017. [Policy problems, publics, and the power of definition: Competing discourses and the case of Alberta's free-roaming horses](#). The Canadian Geographer. DOI:10.1111/cag.12373

Implementing policies and laws is difficult in areas where there are interested parties with differing values, attitudes, and perceptions. Another challenge is the democratization of policy and including those who have been systematically excluded from the conversation. The main topic of this paper is human interactions with free-roaming horses (FRH) in Alberta. A multidimensional approach to policymaking is suggested by using situational mapping approaches that visually position and represent diverse perspectives on FRH. Drawing upon qualitative interviews with 24 landowners, business leaders, and First Nations/Métis who share land with FRH, we analyze four key themes: rural alienation, First Nations and the branding of horses, managing FRH on grazing leases, and the representation of FRH interests. Together, the four thematic foci illustrate diverse perspectives and shifting allegiances that exist within and between policy "stakeholder" groups. We present situational mapping as a useful tool to be used by policymakers to address complex environmental problems that include multidimensional perspectives.



U Northern British Columbia's Brian Menounos spoke to Global BC about report indicating that Arctic climate warming at faster pace than expected. [Global News | BC](#)

U Victoria's Chris Darimont was the recipient of an [NSERC PromoScience](#) grant for the 2016 Raincoast Kids: hands-on science education for Indigenous youth in remote coastal British Columbia.

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Michael A. Allen, James A. Voogt and Andreas Christen. 2017. [Towards a continuous climatological assessment of urban surface heat islands](#). Urban Remote Sensing Event (JURSE). DOI:10.1109/JURSE.2017.7924529

Lisa Caulley, Michael Sawada, Kelsey Hinthner, Ya-tung Iris Ko, John A. Crowther and Georgios Kontorinis. [Geographic distribution of vestibular schwannomas in West Scotland between 2000-2015](#). PLOSOne. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0175489

Micah J. Hewer, Daniel J. Scott and William A. Gough. 2017. [Differences in the importance of weather and weather-based decisions among campers in Ontario parks \(Canada\)](#). International Journal of Biometeorology. DOI:10.1007/s00484-017-1364-7

Alexander J. Koiter, Philip N. Owens, Ellen L. Petticrew and David A. Lobb. 2017. [The role of soil surface properties on the particle size and carbon selectivity of interrill erosion in agricultural landscapes](#). Catena 153:194–206.

Camilo Ordóñez, Thomas Beckley, Peter N. Duinker and A. John Sinclair. 2017. [Public values associated with urban forests: synthesis of findings and lessons learned from emerging methods and cross-cultural case studies](#). Urban Forestry & Urban Greening. doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2017.05.002

Nick Revington. 2017. [Pathways and processes: Reviewing the role of young adults in urban structure](#). The Professional Geographer. doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2017.1288574

Stacey L. Strilesky, Elyn R. Humphreys and Sean K. Carey. 2017. [Forest water use in the initial stages of reclamation in the Athabasca Oil Sands region](#). Hydrological Processes. DOI:10.1002/hyp.11220

Travis Swanson, David Mohrig, Gary Kocurek, Mauricio Perillo and Jeremy Venditti. 2017. [Bedform spurs: a result of a trailing helical vortex wake](#). Sedimentology. DOI:10.1111/sed.12383

Andrew Watson. 2017. [Pioneering a rural identity on the Canadian Shield: Tourism, household economies, and poor soils in Muskoka, Ontario, 1870–1900](#). The Canadian Historical Review. DOI:http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/chr.3783

Other “Geographical” News

Environment Canada gives Metro Vancouver 5 sub-regional weather zones: The forecast for Metro Vancouver's weather forecasts? They're going to get a lot longer. Starting this week, Environment Canada's public projections have been divided up into five distinct regions in Metro Vancouver, allowing for greater specificity in their short-term forecasts. "Before, when you were to look up a forecast, you had one choice for Metro Vancouver: Vancouver," said CBC meteorologist Johanna Wagstaffe. "Now, you have six choices, depending on where you live and the micro-forecasts for that area. So, not only will your forecasts be more accurate ... but now they will actually have separate forecast zones. That's not only helpful for day-to-day weather but especially for severe weather events." [CBCNews | British Columbia](#)

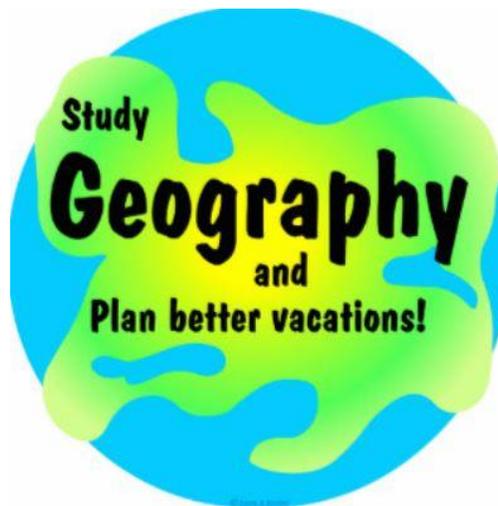
No escaping ocean plastic: 37 million bits of litter on one of world's remotest islands: The beaches of one of the world's most remote islands have been found to be polluted with the highest

density of plastic debris reported anywhere on the planet, a new study shows. Despite being uninhabited and located more than 5,000 kilometers from the nearest major population center, Henderson Island is littered with an estimated 37.7 million pieces of plastic. [ScienceDaily](#)

Some lesser-known truths about academe: Once you enter a doctoral program, the main problem isn't necessarily that you can't finish. I know very few people who left graduate school because they weren't smart enough to finish — it happens, but it's rare. More often people leave because they just decide getting a Ph.D. isn't for them. The truth is: It's very difficult to understand what academic life is like until you actually try it, and lots of people try it and decide it's not a good fit. This, then, is why you should be wary of any advice you receive from professors about graduate school: It's coming entirely from people who decided that academe was a good fit for them. [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

Persuasive cartography: This is a collection of “persuasive” cartography: more than 800 maps intended primarily to influence opinions or beliefs - to send a message - rather than to communicate geographic information. The collection reflects a variety of persuasive tools , including allegorical, satirical and pictorial mapping; selective inclusion; unusual use of projections, color, graphics and text; and intentional deception. Maps in the collection address a wide range of messages: religious, political, military, commercial, moral and social. [Cornell University Library](#)

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>
