

**Canadian Association of Geographers
Report of the President – Dan Shrubsole
2016**

It has been a busy and successful year. Let me begin by describing what I believe are the two primary objectives of the CAG. The first is to serve the members of the CAG, which has been addressed through activities such as publishing *The Canadian Geographer*, holding national and regional conferences, supporting the work of study groups, and providing a variety of awards. The second is to promote the relevance and importance of the discipline, which has become a more important activity as enrolments in Canadian Geography programs have generally declined and there has been an erosion of geographic curricula across the country. The first objective can be done largely on our own. Over the past year, I have gained a deeper appreciation of the need to effectively and efficiently partner with other organizations, such as the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and GeoAlliance, in order to move that agenda forward. Improving our service to the members and better promoting Geography within our financial resources and volunteer support base will require thoughtful discussions and strategic decision making.

This report summarizes some of the key activities of the CAG over 2016, and offers some personal reflections. It provides a basis for thinking about and making decisions. I look forward to working with all members and stakeholders in accomplishing our aspirations as CAG members and geographers. Awards and Conferences highlights some of the excellence and the vibrancy of our organization and portions of our discipline. Comments on our key events this past year, membership, the 2018 IGU-CAG, K-12 Geographic Education, and looking ahead to 2018 are covered below.

The Past Year – Key Events

It has been a year filled with decisions and action, including:

- Implemented the divestment from fossil fuels decision, which was made at the Halifax Annual Meeting
- Completed an overhaul of the CAG webpages
- Developed web-based materials that better promote careers in Geography
- Implemented electronic banking capabilities
- Attended and promoted the 2018 IGU-CAG Meeting at the IGU Congress in Beijing
- Provided support and engaging with the Organizing Committee in the planning of the 2018 IGU-CAG Meeting in Quebec City
- Responded to the unfortunate developments and decision of the respective leaders in Turkey and the United States
- Re-negotiated our publishing contract with Wiley for *The Canadian Geographer*
- Made the decision to move the CAG Office from McGill University to the University of Ottawa
- Reviewed and revised the responsibilities of the Executive Assistant
- Successful National and Regional CAG conferences were held

Awards and Conferences

Our people are the most important resource of the CAG, and activities and achievement, such as those noted above would not happen without them. In this regard, I wish to acknowledge and thank Valerie Shoffey for her 21 years of service as Executive Assistant and I, on behalf of all CAG members over that time period, wish her all the best in retirement. I also look forward to working with our new Executive Assistant, who will be hired (hopefully) a few weeks prior to our Annual Meeting at York. Volunteers

play a fundamental role in supporting the CAG and I wish to thank them. These include all members of the Executive Committee, and in particular Past President Theresa Garvin and Secretary-Treasurer Neil Hanlon. A special nod to Niem Huynh and Wayne Forsythe for their many contributions to two important projects – the CAG Jobs and Careers initiative and our web pages respectively. Nadine Schuurman, Editor of *The Canadian Geographer* and her assistant Ellen Randall, continue to effectively and efficiently publish interesting and thoughtful articles, and improve the standing of our journal. Many thanks to Dan Smith, who works year-round to assemble, format and distribute on a weekly basis GeogNews.

At our Annual Conference in Halifax (2016), CAG Awards were presented to:

- CAG Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography: Philip Dearden, University of Victoria
- CAG Award for Service to the Profession of Geography: Valerie Preston, York University
- CAG Award for Excellence in Teaching: Ian O’Connell, University of Victoria
- Julian M. Szeicz Award for Early Career Achievement: Simon Springer, University of Victoria
- Starkey-Robinson Award for Graduate Research on Canada:
Andrew Perkins, Simon Fraser University and Katie Hemsworth, Queen’s University
- Robin P. Armstrong Memorial Prize for Excellence in Native Studies:
Joanna Petrasek MacDonald (McGill University)
- President's Award for Outstanding Service: Jean Andrey

In addition to presenting these awards, 355 delegates from 10 countries delivered or heard papers in 35 special sessions and 26 regular sessions. In the report from the Halifax Organizing Committee to the CAG Executive, they recommended that a new financial and administrative arrangement be developed between these two parties in order that a fairer distribution of work, financial risk and reward be achieved. The CAG Executive will be considering this suggestion in the context of its upcoming budget planning.

Regional meetings were held by the WDCAG, PCAG, CAGONT and ACAG over the past year, and details of these events are authored by the Regional Presidents and found in the portions of the background materials.

Membership

As the table below indicates, an ongoing challenge is to maintain and ideally increase our regular membership levels. This can, in part, be explained by the recent period during which funding reductions at universities, colleges and research organizations often meant that full replacement of retiring or resigning geographers was not achieved. It may also reflect that geographers and others considering membership in the CAG also have other demands on their professional development, research or personal funds.

Table 1: CAG Membership – 2010 to 2016

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Regular Member	429	377	437	426	381	346	285
Student Member	362	339	378	332	329	390	274

Other	230	260	280	265	284	293	313
Total	1021	976	1095	1023	994	1029	872

At the upcoming CAG Meetings, your Executive will discuss how we might better promote the CAG to potential members as well as ensure that the benefits of being a member are better communicated and further developed. Some progress in enhancing membership benefits was achieved in the renewal of the Wiley contract to publish *The Canadian Geographer*. As announced in the May Newsletter, Wiley shall provide two articles of the Journal permanently free each year as an incentive for CAG members to submit to the Journal and to provide incentives for invited submissions to the Journal. Second, selected articles authored by CAG members will be eligible to everyone through the Early View system for a brief time. These two initiatives are focused on CAG members and invited authors, and will result in: (i) the cost of publishing two open access articles being assumed by Wiley, and (ii) more early exposure of some articles. Editor of *The Canadian Geographer*, Nadine Schuurman, her editorial board and the CAG Executive will determine and inform members of the process to be considered for the above before the renewal start date in 2018.

In terms of membership numbers, particularly Regular Members, the Executive shall discuss (and report to the Annual Meeting as appropriate) how the 2018 IGU-CAG meeting might be used to increase our numbers while ensuring our other needs are met.

Better Promoting the Discipline: K-12 Geographic Education

At the ACAG Meeting, I was able to attend a session on the progress made on implementing the St. John's Declaration (<http://www.cangeoeducation.ca/programs/declaration/docs/StJohns-Declaration-Nov%2013-2013.pdf>), which is an agreement and action plan to promote geographic education in Canada that was signed by 18 organizations including the CAG. I concluded that the erosion of K-12 geography curricula continues to be eroded and that very few effective actions have been undertaken since the Declaration was signed in 2013. Towards the end of the discussion at the ACAG, I was asked to share some reflections from the CAG perspective, and provided the following "to dos" items.

- 1) Need to establish a compelling vision/statement that could be sent to all Ministers of Education about the importance of a sound K-12 Geography curriculum.
- 2) Continue to develop curricula and conduct research about the teaching and learning of geography.
- 3) Be willing and better prepared to engage in the reform of any K-12 curricula. This can be best achieved by having provincial education bodies 'at the ready' to tailor the geography curricula to the opportunities and constraints of that province. Stuart Semple has some excellent ideas on this aspect.
- 4) Develop and circulate information on employment opportunities in geography to guidance counsellors.
- 5) We must be willing and better prepared to lobby Ministers of Education and policy makers to improve the curricula and make them more aware of the importance of geography.
- 6) There is a need to enhance partnerships with Facilities of Education. One element of this partnership is to upgrade the geographic qualifications of education students who wish to teach geography.

- 7) The CAG should encourage Geography Departments to reach out and adopt a high school (or two) in order to promote exchanges at the high school, on campus and/or in the field.
- 8) Better market the AP and IB geography course to students and the credit transfer at universities.
- 9) Promote class 'success stories' on the web or otherwise.
- 10) Based on compelling vision and specific needs for funding, be prepared to make budget allocations and/or seek funding from other sources as appropriate.

I am aware that the list is long and aggressive, reflects one view, and will require patience and time to be fully achieved. At the CAG, I will be working with our Education Study Group and others to reflect on what our role should and could be in moving this agenda forward, and seeking partnerships among the 18 signatory organizations as well as others as appropriate. Invite interested members to join the Education Study Group and share their ideas and talents in order to enhance geographic education in Canada.

Looking Ahead

I believe the year that was will be similar the 12 months that lie before us – active and full of accomplishments. Our new Executive Assistant and new Secretary-Treasurer (Joseph Leydon) will be 'learning the ropes'. We will continue to work on the membership and further develop web-based materials. We will seek and respond to opportunities to improve our relationships with other organizations – the Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences, Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences and the GeoAlliance. We will continue to work with Laval and the IGU to ensure the success of the 2018 meetings. At all times in the coming year, we will be mindful of our two over-riding objectives: to ensure the needs of our members and promote the discipline of geography.